



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO

## do you dream

by

Robrecht Joris van Ysselsteyn

an original long-form musical composition

### What is this all about?

Over two centuries old and still referenced in media almost daily, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* remains a subject of ongoing analysis and reinterpretation. But here's the question: was Shelley truly telling Victor Frankenstein's story—or was it the daemon's all along? In the novel's final pages, the creature asks, "...and do you dream?" prompting us to consider not just his words, but why Shelley chose to spell his name the way she did. Listen closely—to the score, to the story—each element drawn faithfully from Mary's original text. This is the ultimate tale of being different, isolated, and longing for connection.

### How did this come about?

Driven by a deep desire to create a long-form musical work, I turned to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* as my inspiration. Over the course of more than 25 years, this journey evolved into *do you dream*. Along the way, I came to see the heart of Shelley's story—at least from my perspective—as a reflection of a universal longing: the desire for "one like me." This theme is captured in my composition *This Face*.

### Who might this be aimed at?

Shelley's *Frankenstein* is studied around the world at nearly every level of education. Its themes—love, longing, isolation, social alienation, identity, even sexual preference—continue to spark discussion and debate among students and teachers alike. The internet is filled with countless resources, from in-depth analyses to entire websites dedicated to "How to Teach *Frankenstein*," reflecting the story's enduring relevance and impact. From classrooms to scholars, Romanticists to theatre lovers, *do you dream* offers a new approach for everyone to discover and to feel inspired.

## What is Daemon's personality?

The daemon is not inherently evil, initially. He is sensitive, intelligent, and yearns for acceptance and companionship. After being abandoned, he learns language and human customs by observing a family in secret, becoming eloquent and capable of deep thought and emotion. The creature's longing for kindness and connection is repeatedly thwarted by the horror and violence he encounters due to his appearance.



## What is the arc of Daemon's story?

His relationship with Victor is central to the novel. The daemon pleads with his creator for understanding and to create a companion for him. But when he refuses, the creature vows revenge. As he is spurned and isolated, the daemon's actions become increasingly violent. He kills those close to Victor, including his brother William and his bride Elizabeth, as acts of vengeance for his own suffering and loneliness. Is it the creature's tragic nature and the role of societal rejection that shapes his behaviour? Or is his a conscious choice to commit evil acts, making him both a villain and a victim?

## Why is this story still so compelling to modern audiences?

The daemon embodies themes of alienation, the consequences of unchecked scientific ambition, and the complex interplay between nature and nurture. He is a figure who elicits both horror and sympathy, occupying a unique space between antagonist and tragic protagonist.

*“He did not have any genetic makeup to contribute to his actions. His appearance altered the way others treated him, but not did impact the way he acted towards others. If people treated him kindly, he returned the gesture. If people treated him cruelly, he matched their efforts. All of his actions and emotional reactions were products of his environment.”*

## THE AUTHOR

The name Robrecht Joris van Ysselsteyn is a nom de plume adopted by the Composer/Lyricist/Librettist Robert George Asselstine. The ancestral Dutch version of my name.

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# do you dream

AI generated staging concept (Shutterstock)

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**THE PROMPT:** a gothic distressed warehouse interior as a theatre. the room is dim. there are 150 folding chairs randomly set in the room each with an audience member seated on them. there are 11 4' x 4' x 2' box shaped performances spaces placed randomly within the chairs. on each chair, there is a gothic style dressed singer sitting with one leg up on the bar stool. beside each chair is a lighted pole light as well as a pole style clothes rack. there are two floor lights on either side of the boxes.

**PERFORMANCE NOTES:** Artists enter the performance space on their first appearance in the story then exit as their character assignments end. As each character is called upon to perform, the artist lights the adjacent pole light and stands to perform - moving within the performance space on the mini-stage to address audience members throughout the room as well as the other characters which whom the character is interacting. The featured characters' pole light overhead lighting is brightest, the others characters in the scene less bright. The LX design should enable the LX operator to control lighting (overhead grid would be ideal) on each mini stage. The feature characters should receive the most enhanced lighting. All characters will be choreographed to move from stage to stage as their character assignment changes, utilizing wardrobe racks to "become" other characters. Coats and hats should be the principle wardrobe changes.

**CONCEPT:** Robert Asselstine  
**PROJECT:** do you dream  
**PHASE:** 1