

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte Adapted by Willis Hall

Directed by Natalie Crompton

22nd – 30th March 2024

Synopsis

Based on the novel of the same name this is a drama which follows the story of its orphaned titular heroine. Jane uses her mind, her love of learning and her resilience to rise above the difficulties of her start in life. Having become a governess she meets the enigmatic Mr Rochester, despite an antagonistic start and differences in their social station they fall in love but their story far from straightforward. This play uses an ensemble approach to create and people Jane's world and to deliver the gothic underbelly of the story.

Character Breakdown

This is an ensemble piece, a cast of eleven with nine actors doubling and everyone undertaking some of the physical storytelling. Playing ages are just that and not actual ages, although it is important to have some distinctions e.g. Rochester is older than Jane. Everyone's track will be quite complicated, and it'll be key to this production that we get the base blocking done quickly so we can add in the movement sections early on.

The play is set in 1840s England and there are a range of accents required (as per the character listing) however this mostly be northern, and RP (heightened for some characters).

Jane – Playing Age 18- 25 (Female)

Passionate, articulate and brave, Jane is a remarkable woman. This can't be a one dimensional 'corseted heroine' type, Jane is quite modern in her outlook, she is not without flaw - possessing a quick temper but she is also fiercely bright, loving and loyal to those she loves. She is onstage for the vast majority of the play and has a lot of lines. Leading role.

Edward Rochester – playing age 30 - 45 (Male)

Brooding, damaged and passionate, Edward has shut himself away from the hope of love and family life after his disastrous arranged marriage to Bertha. He carries the pain of that experience and his efforts to forget it with him until gradually his connection with Jane gives him hope. This is a difficult role to get right, he isn't likeable at the outset and only when he shows his despair after the abandoned wedding do the audience see the vulnerable man beneath. He is witty and intelligent and it's that connection of minds which draws him to Jane, as well as her sense of stillness. Leading role although he doesn't appear until halfway through Act One.

Ensemble

Each of the ensemble play several named characters as well as undertaking some of the narrator lines and creating elements of physical world of the characters. I've allocated all the narrator lines to balance these roles out so that everyone has significant stage time. This ensemble is very much a team and so anyone auditioning needs to feel comfortable working in a group. I've detailed the main characters each ensemble member plays, there are some roles with more lines and others e.g. Bertha who are very prominent and yet don't speak.

Woman 1 – playing age 45 – 65

This actor plays Miss Abbott and Mrs Fairfax – the former is Mrs Reeds Ladies Maid and the latter the housekeeper at Thornfield Hall – one of the larger ensemble roles lines wise. Both roles are generic northern with Miss Abbott being a meanspirited woman and Mrs Fairfax, a warm and kind woman.

Woman Two – playing age 45 – 65

This actor plays Mrs Reed, Grace Poole, Lady Ingram and Hannah. Mrs Reed (Jane's Aunt) and Lady Ingram (Rochester's neighbour and Blanche's mother) are both unpleasant women who speak with a heightened RP. Grace Poole (Bertha's nurse) and Hannah (the Rivers Housekeeper) both speak with generic Northern accents. Grace is a great role, Jane suspects her of being the dark mischief maker of the house and she must come across as a candidate for this. One of the larger ensemble roles lines wise.

Woman Three – playing age 25 – 40

This actor plays two roles with lines: Bessie, a servant in Mrs Reed's house who tries to help Jane and Kitty a servant in Mr Rochester's house. They also play Bertha Rochester, the insane first wife of Edward who lives in a secret room at Thornfield Hall. This role is very physical and needs an actor who is confident express big emotions, rage passion etc and confident to undertake fight choreography.

Woman Four – playing age 25 – 40

This actor plays Miss Temple, Blanche Ingram and Mary Rivers. Miss Temple is the kind teacher who sees Jane's academic ability at Lowood School and mentors her. Blanche is the 'belle of the county' whom local society expect to marry Rochester and Mary Rivers is sister to St John and friend to Jane. Miss Temple and Blanche speak with RP and Mary speaks with a light northern accent. This character dances and needs an actor who is physically confident.

Woman Five – playing age 20 - 30

This actor plays two characters as children Helen Burns, Jane's schoolfriend and Adele (Rochester's French ward). They also play Diana Rivers – St John's sister and Jane's friend. Helen has a light RP, Adele has a strong French accent and speaks in French and Diana has a light northern accent. This character dances and needs an actor who is physically confident.

Woman Six – paying age 20 – 30

This actor plays Leah, housemaid to Mr Rochester and Mary Ingram (sister to Blanche), Leah has a northern accent and Mary speaks with RP. It would be beneficial if this actor was a confident singer. This actor leads many of the ensemble sections and will act as Ensemble Captain.

Man 1 – playing age 40 - 60

This actor plays Brocklehurst, the tyrannical headteacher of Lowood School, John (a servant to Rochester), Mason (Bertha's brother) and a local Builder. Brocklehurst and Mason speak with RP and John and the Builder speak with a northern accent. This is a lovely range of characters with real variation between them.

Man 2 – playing age 25 - 40

This actor plays the Groom, Lord Ingram (Blanche's effete brother) and Briggs the solicitor. The Groom has a northern accent, Lord Ingram a heightened RP and Briggs either light northern or RP. There's a lot of variation between these characters which should be fun. It would be beneficial if this actor was a confident singer.

Man 3 – playing age 25 - 40

This actor plays John Reed (Jane's cousin), Reverend Wood and St John Rivers. John and the Reverend both speak with RP. St John, the young curate who rescues Jane from the moors and asks her to marry him, (a sizeable role in Act Two) speaks with a light northern accent.

Rehearsals will start in January and will be three per week (dates tbc) and there will be two Sundays one of which will be dress rehearsal.

If you are coming to workshop on the 16th April at 7.30pm please let us know via the event on Facebook. It would also be helpful if you could state which role you're interested in so that Natalie can plan the second section of the evening which will focus on script work.

There will be a workshop style audition on the 16th April at 7.30pm and, if needed a mop up audition tbc.