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Jane Eyre

A play

Willis Hall

Adapted from the novel by Charlotte Brontë

Samuel French — London
New York - Toronto - Hollywood



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AND STEPHEN WARBECK (music)

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JANE EYRE

First presented at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, on the 5th of November, 1992, with the following cast:

Jane Eyre	Emma Fielding
Mr Brocklehurst/Mason/Porter	Richard Howard
Lord Ingram/Reverend Wood/St John Rivers	Peter Lindford
Rochester	Jack Shepherd
Bessie/Country Girl/Orphan Girl/Kitty	Charlotte Barker
John Reed/Groom/Manservant/Briggs/Builder	Simeon Defoe
Helen Burns/Adele/Mary Rivers	Susan Gardner
Grace Poole/Lady Ingram/Hannah	Pauline Jefferson
Mrs Reed/Bertha Rochester/Shopkeeper	Valerie Lilley
Miss Temple/Blanche Ingram/Diana Rivers	Shona Morris
Miss Abbot/Mrs Fairfax/Countrywoman	Maggie Wells
Eliza/Leah/Barbara/Mary Ingram/Orphan Girl	Gillian Wright

Directors Robert Delamere and Michael Rudman

Designer Fran Thompson

Music Stephen Warbeck

Musical Direction Sarah Homer and Anna Hemery

Musicians Sarah Homer and Anna Hemery

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(See also page ii)

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CHARACTERS

John Reed

Jane Eyre

Bessie

Miss Abbot

Mrs Reed

Mr Brocklehurst

A Groom, at Gateshead Hall

Miss Temple

Helen Burns

Barbara, a maid

A Nurse

Mrs Fairfax

A Porter

Leah, a housemaid

Adele

Grace Poole

Edward Rochester

Kitty, a housemaid

John, a man-servant

The Dowager Lady Ingram

Lord Ingram

Mary Ingram

Blanche Ingram

Richard Mason

Bertha Mason

The Reverend Wood

Briggs, a solicitor

Shopkeeper

Country Girl

Country Woman

Diana Rivers

Mary Rivers

Hannah

St John Rivers

Annie

Alice

A Builder

Narrators, School children, Guests, Carol-singers, etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

	Prologue
SCENE 1	The Red Room, Gateshead Hall
SCENE 2	The Drawing Room, Gateshead Hall
SCENE 3	The Driveway, Gateshead Hall
SCENE 4	A Classroom, Lowood School
SCENE 5	Miss Temple's Apartment
SCENE 6	The Sick Room, Lowood School
SCENE 7	Outside St Stephen's Church, Lowood
SCENE 8	Jane's Bedroom, Lowood School
SCENE 9	Thornfield Hall
SCENE 10	A Country Lane
SCENE 11	Thornfield Hall
SCENE 12	The Garden, Thornfield Hall
SCENE 13	Rochester's Bedroom
SCENE 14	The Gallery
SCENE 15	The Ballroom, Gorstone Hall
SCENE 16	The Drive, Thornfield Hall
SCENE 17	Thornfield Hall
SCENE 18	Thornfield Hall
SCENE 19	The Garden, Thornfield Hall
SCENE 20	Jane's Bedroom, Thornfield Hall

ACT II

SCENE 1	Thornfield Hall
SCENE 2	The Church, Thornfield
SCENE 3	Bertha Mason's Chamber
SCENE 4	The Garden, Thornfield Hall
SCENE 5	Thornfield Hall
SCENE 6	The Parlour, Moor House
SCENE 7	The Girl's School, Morton
SCENE 8	The Parlour, Moor House
SCENE 9	A Moorland Glen, near Morton
SCENE 10	Outside Thornfield Hall
SCENE 11	The Garden, Ferndean

AUTHOR'S PRODUCTION NOTE

In the original staging, at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, the play was given an ensemble production with a cast of twelve players all of whom (with the exception of Jane and Rochester) doubled several parts. Reference to the original cast list on a preceding page will show how this can best be effected. The play could, of course, also be produced with a larger company and without recourse to doubling. Also, in the original production, the children at both Lowood School and at Morton Girls' School were played by the members of the company—some societies may care to consider using children for these scenes.

The narrative passages, representing the voice of Jane Eyre, were also distributed among the entire cast (again with the exception of Rochester) sometimes entering in unison, sometimes positioned separately around the stage. The numbering of the Narrators' speeches throughout the script is not intended as a guide to casting — as the actor or actress playing the role of First Narrator in the first scene, for example, need not be expected to take the same role in a subsequent scene. It is recommended that, once the casting of the play's characters is completed, the distribution of the Narrators' speeches would be best effected in rehearsal, scene by scene, in order to take into account the availability of the cast at any given moment during the play.

Fran Thompson's ingenious setting for the original production, on the Crucible's thrust stage, incorporated a line of black, Gothic pillars supporting a gallery playing area which was accessible by a flight of stairs. As this edition is based, principally, on the original staging, there are constant references to this gallery. Smaller societies however, whose resources or stage contours preclude the building of a "gallery", should in no way allow this fact to dissuade them from staging their own production — the scenes played on the gallery could equally be accomplished on a lower level.

Indeed, the near cinematic style of this dramatization demands that the scenes flow easily into one another, and without pause — to which end, the scenery should be minimal. The play could, in fact, be performed on an otherwise bare stage with the furniture and props required: a few chairs; a blackboard; some small tables; a bed, etc., carried on and off (or pre-set) whenever possible by the actors and actresses themselves, rather than by stage-management. What is important to the early-nineteenth century feel of any production, is the close, claustrophobic sense produced by small acting areas contained in pools of candlelight.

It is recommended that the piano remain on stage throughout the play and that the pianist and or musicians be dressed in costume to blend with the period of the play.

Willis Hall

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**Christmas Crackers
Kidnapped at Christmas
The Long and the Short and the Tall
The Play of the Royal Astrologers
The Railwayman's New Clothes
A Right Christmas Caper
Treasure Island (musical, adapted from R. L. Stevenson)
Walk On, Walk On
The Water Babies (musical, adapted from Charles Kingsley)
The Wind in the Willows (musical, adapted from Kenneth Grahame)**

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**All Things Bright and Beautiful
Billy Liar
Celebration
Children's Day
Say Who You Are
Sponge Room *and* Squat Betty
Who's Who
Whoops-a-Daisy
Worzel Gummidge**

ACT I

As the House Lights fade there is the sound of a strong wind souging over the Yorkshire moors. As the wind dies away, some half-dozen or so members of the Company, acting as Narrators and the voice of Jane Eyre, enter in phalanx and in measured tread

First Narrator There was no possibility of taking a walk that day.

Second Narrator We had been wandering indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning——

Third Narrator — the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating——

Fourth Narrator — that further outdoor exercise was now out of the question.

Fifth Narrator I was glad of it; I never liked long walks.

Sixth Narrator Dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes——

First Narrator — and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled in the knowledge that I was plain while my cousins Eliza and Georgina Reed were pretty.

Second Narrator John, their brother, was four years older than I, for I was but ten.

Third Narrator He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice a day but continually:

Fourth Narrator — every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near.

Over which, one of the Company steps out of the phalanx, becoming John Reed, and turns to face the rest

John What were you doing behind the curtain?

Narrators I was reading.

John Show the book.

Narrators I fetched it.

John You have no business to take our books. You are a dependent.

Mamma says you have no money. Your father left you none. You ought to beg. I'll teach you to rummage through my bookshelves — for they are mine. All the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years. Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows.

First Narrator I did so —

Second Narrator — not at first aware what was his intention.

Third Narrator But when I saw him lift and poise the book —

Fourth Narrator — and stand in act to hurl it, I instinctively started aside—

Fifth Narrator — with a cry of alarm.

Sixth Narrator Not soon enough however—the volume was flung, it hit me and I fell —

Narrators — striking my head against the door and cutting it.

Over which the Lights fade, the Narrators rush off and Jane is thrust on to the stage by Bessie, the nurse, and Miss Abbot, a lady's maid

The Lights come up on:

SCENE 1

The Red Room, Gateshead Hall

This may be represented by nothing more than a flowing deep red curtain

Jane (*kicking and fighting every inch of the way*) No. (*Pause*) No! No!

Bessie She's like a wild thing! She's like a mad cat!

Miss Abbot For shame! For shame! The devil's in her!

Jane But I have done nothing!

Bessie Nothing, miss? You struck the young gentleman.

Jane He struck me first! He struck me twice! He torments me! He is a bully and a coward.

Miss Abbot He is your benefactress's son. Your young master.

Jane Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant then?

Miss Abbot No — you are less than a servant, miss, for you do nothing for your keep. (*She pushes Jane down on to the floor*) There — stay there and dwell upon your wickedness.

Bessie If you won't stay still, you must be tied down. Miss Abbot, lend me your garters — she would break mine directly.

Miss Abbot is about to hoist her skirt up in order to remove her garter

Jane (*beseeking*) Don't tie me down. I promise not to stir.

Bessie She never did so before.

Miss Abbot But it was always in her, Bessie. I've told missis often about my opinion of the child, and missis agrees with me. She's an under-handed little thing.

Bessie You ought to know, Miss Eyre, that you are under obligation to Mrs Reed. She took you in when your parents died. If she were to turn you out, you would needs must go to the poorhouse.

Miss Abbot And you ought not to think yourself equal with the Misses and Master Reed. It is your place to be humble.

Bessie It's true, Miss Eyre, and for your own good.

Miss Abbot God will strike her dead one of these fine days. You mark my words and then where will she go — straight to hell-fire, I have no doubt. We'll leave her here to think on that.

Jane No. No. Don't leave me! Not in the Red Room. Mr Reed died in here. It's haunted.

Miss Abbot You'll do well to say your prayers then, won't you, miss? For if you don't repent, something evil might be permitted down that chimney to fetch you away — or straight through that window on big, black wings, perhaps. Come, Bessie.

Bessie and Miss Abbot exit

Jane Don't leave me alone! No! Don't leave me alone ...

But Bessie and Miss Abbot are already gone. There is the sound of the wind again as the Lights fade and come up instantly, on:

SCENE 2

The Drawing Room, Gateshead Hall

Mrs Reed and Mr Brocklehurst, a tall, harsh, prim man, enter in conversation. Mr Brocklehurst is carrying a book

Mrs Reed As I intimated in my letter, Mr Brocklehurst, the girl has neither the character nor the disposition I would wish. Should you admit her into Lowood School, I would be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her.

Jane enters nervously

I was just telling Mr Brocklehurst, Jane, to instruct his staff to guard against your worst fault: a tendency to deceit. And I mention it too, in your hearing, that you may not attempt to impose on him or them.

Brocklehurst Her size is small. What is her age?

Mrs Reed Ten years.

Brocklehurst So much? (*He beckons Jane towards him with crooked forefinger*) Your name, little girl?

Jane Jane Eyre, sir.

Brocklehurst No sight so sad as that of a naughty child. Do you know where the wicked go after death?

Jane They go to hell.

Brocklehurst And what is hell, can you tell me that?

Jane A pit full of fire.

Brocklehurst And what must you do to avoid it?

Jane I must keep in good health and not die.

Brocklehurst How can you keep in good health? Children younger than you die daily. I buried a little child of five years old only a day or two since — a good little child, whose soul is now in heaven. It is feared that the same could not be said of you, were you to be summoned thence. (*To Mrs Reed*) Deceit is a sad fault in a child — a deceitful child is the next thing to an outright liar. She shall be watched, Mrs Reed. I will speak to Miss Temple and the teachers.

Mrs Reed I should wish her to be brought up in a manner suiting her prospects: to be useful, to be kept humble. As for the vacations, she will, with your permission, spend them always at the school.

Brocklehurst Your decisions are perfectly judicious, madam. Humility is a Christian grace. Little girl, here is a book entitled *The Child's Guide*.

He gives the book to Jane

Read it with prayer, especially that part containing “an account of the awfully sudden death of Martha Grantham, a naughty child addicted to falsehood”. (*To Mrs Reed*) And now I must bid you good-morning.

Brocklehurst exits

Mrs Reed (*turning on Jane; angrily*) Go out of the room. Return to the nursery.

Jane I am not deceitful. If I were, I should say that I loved you, Aunt Reed. But I declare that I do not love you. I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world. And this book about the Liar, you may give it to your daughter, Georgina, for it is she who tells lies and not I!

Jane throws the book down on the floor at Mrs Reed's feet and storms out of the room as the Lights fade and come up immediately on two of the Narrators, standing at either end of the gallery

First Narrator Five o'clock had hardly struck on the morning of the nineteenth of January. I was already up and nearly dressed.

Second Narrator I was to leave Gateshead that day by coach which passed the lodge at six a.m.

First Narrator Bessie was the only person yet risen.

By which time, the Lights have come up on:

SCENE 3

The Driveway, Gateshead Hall

It is a chill winter's morning before first light and we can hear the sound of impatient horses anxious to be off. The Groom puts down a lantern. Bessie hands him a small trunk and he takes it off to load on to the coach

Bessie picks up the lantern which the Groom has put down as Jane enters

Bessie Did you go in and bid Mrs Reed goodbye?

Jane Your missis, Bessie, has not been my friend — she has been my foe.

Bessie Don't say that, Miss Jane.

Jane What does it matter? I shall soon have another set of people to dread.

Bessie If you dread them, they'll dislike you.

Jane As you do, Bessie?

Bessie I don't dislike you, miss. Why, I am fonder of you than of the other children.

Jane You've never shown it.

Bessie And you're so glad to leave me?

Jane Not at all, Bessie. Just now I am rather sorry.

Bessie I dare say now if I were to ask you for a goodbye kiss, you wouldn't give it to me?

Jane I'll kiss you goodbye and welcome, Bessie.

They embrace, warmly

The Groom returns and gently prises Jane loose

Groom The coach is waiting. Come on, Miss Eyre.

Jane Goodbye to Gateshead Hall.

Jane exits to join the coach

Bessie and the Groom watch her go

Groom How far is it?

Bessie Fifty miles.

Groom What a long way! I wonder Mrs Reed is not afraid to trust her so far alone.

Bessie She's a strange child. A lonely frightened little thing. *(She calls to the coach driver)* Be sure and take good care of her!

As we hear the coach rattle off along the drive, the Groom puts an arm around Bessie's waist which surprises but does not displease her. The Lights fade on the Driveway and come up on the gallery

First Narrator I remember but little of the journey here to Lowood Orphanage — except that we travelled from before first light until very late last night. Yesterday the fear of the unknown drove away my appetite.

Second Narrator This morning I was ravenous except the porridge that

was given to us for breakfast was so burnt that not a single girl that I saw managed more than a spoonful — even a teacher said that it was “abominable stuff” and “shameful”.

Over which, the Lights have come up on:

SCENE 4

A Classroom, Lowood School

Some half-dozen Girl Orphans (Jane is one of them) are standing behind child-size chairs. There is also a blackboard. Miss Temple, the school superintendent, aged thirty, wearing a “purple dress trimmed with black velvet and with a gold watch at her girdle” is in conversation with Mr Brocklehurst

Miss Temple I must be responsible for the circumstance, sir. The breakfast was so ill-prepared that the pupils could not possibly eat it. And I dare not let them remain fasting until dinner time.

Brocklehurst’s reply is intended for the pupils as well as Miss Temple and he prowls around the class as he delivers it

Brocklehurst Madam, allow me an instant. You are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying. Should any little accidental disappointment of the appetite occur, a brief address on those occasions would not be mistimed, wherein a judicious instructor would take the opportunity of referring to the sufferings of the primitive Christians; to the torments of martyrs; to the exhortations of Our Blessed Lord Himself, calling upon his disciples to take up their cross and follow Him; to His warnings that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; to His divine consolations, “If ye suffer hunger or thirst for My sake, happy are ye.” Oh, madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children’s mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies — but you little think how you starve their immortal soul! Have them all sit down — except Helen Burns.

Miss Temple Sit down, girls.

They all sit—with the exception of a frail girl, Helen Burns. Helen's cough has drawn Brocklehurst's attention to her

Brocklehurst (*prowl*ing the classroom) Straighten up, Burns. Burns, you poke your chin out most unpleasantly. Draw it in. Burns, I insist on you holding up your head, you dirty, disagreeable girl.

Unintentionally, Jane drops her slate which crashes on the floor. Brocklehurst speaks without looking round

A careless girl. It is the new pupil I perceive. I must not forget I have a word to say respecting her. Let the child who dropped her slate come forward.

As Jane crosses to the front of the class, Brocklehurst picks up the chair and places it for her to stand on. She does so

Miss Temple, children—you all see this girl? You observe that God has graciously given her the shape that he has given to all of us—who would think that the Evil One had already found a servant and an agent in her? It is my duty to warn you of this girl. Be on your guard against her. Shun her example. Avoid her company. Exclude her from your games. Shut her out of your conversations. Miss Temple, you will advise the staff to watch her carefully—to scrutinize her actions—to punish her body to save her soul—if, indeed, such salvation be possible. For this girl, this child, the native of a Christian land, worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut—this girl is—a liar! She has been sent here by her benefactress to be healed, even as the Jews of old sent their diseased to the troubled pool of ——

Brocklehurst now pauses intimidatingly at an Orphan's side, inviting her to nominate the location—luckily, she is able to do so

Orphan (*nervously*) Bethesda.

Brocklehurst (*patting the Orphan on the head*) Bethesda—I beg of all of you, do not allow the waters to stagnate around her. (*To Miss Temple*) Let her stand half an hour longer on that chair—and let no-one speak to her during the remainder of the day. Good-morning, girls.

Girls Good-morning, Mr Brocklehurst.

Brocklehurst indicates that he wishes to speak in private to Miss Temple, and then moves to leave

Miss Temple Class monitors — you will see to it that there is no talking until the bell rings for prayers. You will then proceed, in single file, and join the rest of the school in the assembly hall.

Helen raises her hand

Yes, Helen?

Helen Should I collect the slates, Miss Temple?

Miss Temple You may.

Miss Temple follows Mr Brocklehurst out of the room

Helen collects in the slates and, as she passes Jane, she manages to give her a brief smile

As a handbell rings somewhere in the school, the Girls file out of the room. Helen, bringing up the rear, pauses long enough to smile again at Jane

Jane, who has stood with bowed head throughout her time in front of the class, is uplifted

Jane (to the audience) How much strength did I draw from that smile! How much friendship glowed in her eyes. It was as if a martyr, a hero, I had read about in books, had passed a slave or a prisoner and given out strength in passing. I was not alone any longer! I was suddenly borne up!

The Light fades, temporarily, on Jane, and comes up on the Narrators about the stage

First Narrator 'Ere the half-hour ended as five o'clock struck——

Second Narrator — It was deep dusk and I retired into a corner and sank down on the floor ——

Third Narrator — overwhelmed with grief that seized me I sank with

my face to the ground—

Fourth Narrator — here I lay crushed and trodden on — could I ever rise more?

Fifth Narrator Never! I thought how ardently I wished to die ——

Sixth Narrator — whilst sobbing, someone approached me. Helen Burns was near.

The Lights come up on Jane who is huddled, sobbing, on the floor. Helen approaches her

Jane Helen, why do you stay with a girl whom everyone believes to be a liar? I know they despise me.

Helen Jane, you're mistaken. Probably not one in the school either despises or dislikes you.

Jane But if others don't love me, I'd rather die than live. I cannot bear to be solitary and hated, Helen. To gain some real affection from you or Miss Temple I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken. Or to stand behind a kicking horse and let it dash its hoof at my chest.

Helen Hush, Jane.

Miss Temple enters

Miss Temple I came on purpose to find you, Miss Eyre. I want you in my room and as Helen Burns is with you, she may come too.

First Narrator We went. Following her guidance ——

Second Narrator — threading through intricate passages and mounting a staircase before we reached her apartment.

Jane and Helen move into the following scene, Miss Temple's apartment

The Lights fade and now come up on:

SCENE 5

Miss Temple's Apartment

Miss Temple's apartment is represented by three chairs and a side-table which is laid with tea and bread and butter for one. Miss Temple tugs an

imaginary bell-rope

Miss Temple Is it all over? Have you cried your grief away?

Jane I am afraid that I shall never do that entirely.

Miss Temple Why?

Jane Because I have been wrongly accused — and you, ma'am, and everybody else will think me wicked.

Miss Temple We shall think you what you prove yourself to be, my child.

If you obey the rules and continue to behave yourself, you will satisfy us.

Jane Shall I, Miss Temple?

Miss Temple You will.

A maid, Barbara, enters

Barbara, I am just about to have tea and have two visitors. Would you bring me extra cups and a little more bread and butter? There is not enough for three.

Barbara goes out

Be seated, girls.

They sit

How are you tonight, Helen? Have you coughed much today?

Helen Not quite so much, I think, ma'am.

Miss Temple And the pain in your chest?

Helen It is a little better.

Miss Temple crosses and takes Helen's pulse

Miss Temple You're both my guests tonight.

Barbara returns with a tray which holds two cups and saucers, which she places with the other tea-things

Where's the extra bread and butter?

Barbara Miss Temple, Mrs Harden says that she has already sent up the usual quantity.

Miss Temple Oh, very well. We must make it do, I suppose.

Barbara goes out

Fortunately, I have it in my power to supply deficiencies for this once.
(*She takes a small package out of a drawer in the table and unwraps it*)
I meant to give you both some of this fine seed-cake to take with you,
but as there is so little bread and butter, you must have it now.

As Miss Temple serves the tea, the Lights fade on the scene and come up on another area of stage where an orphan Girl holds a candle as she sings, with piano accompaniment

Girl My feet they are sore, and my limbs they are weary,
Long is the way, and the mountains are wild;
Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary
Over the path of the poor orphan child.

The Girl has been joined by the other Orphans also carrying candles, and they move forward, slowly, downstage, as they continue the song. During the following a small iron-bound bed, covered with rough blankets, is set behind the Girls

Girls Why did they send me so far and so lonely,
Up where the moors spread and grey rocks are pil'd?
Men are hard-hearted, and kind angels only
Watch o'er the steps of the poor orphan child.

Yet distant and soft, the night breeze is blowing,
Clouds there are none, and clear stars beam mild;
God, in his mercy, protection is showing,
Comfort and hope to the poor orphan child.

As the song continues, Helen Burns, now wearing a night-gown, enters from the rear and gets into the bed

E'en should I fall by the broken bridge passing,
Or stray in the marshes, by false hopes beguil'd,
Still will my Father, with promise and blessing,
Take to his bosom the poor orphan child.

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