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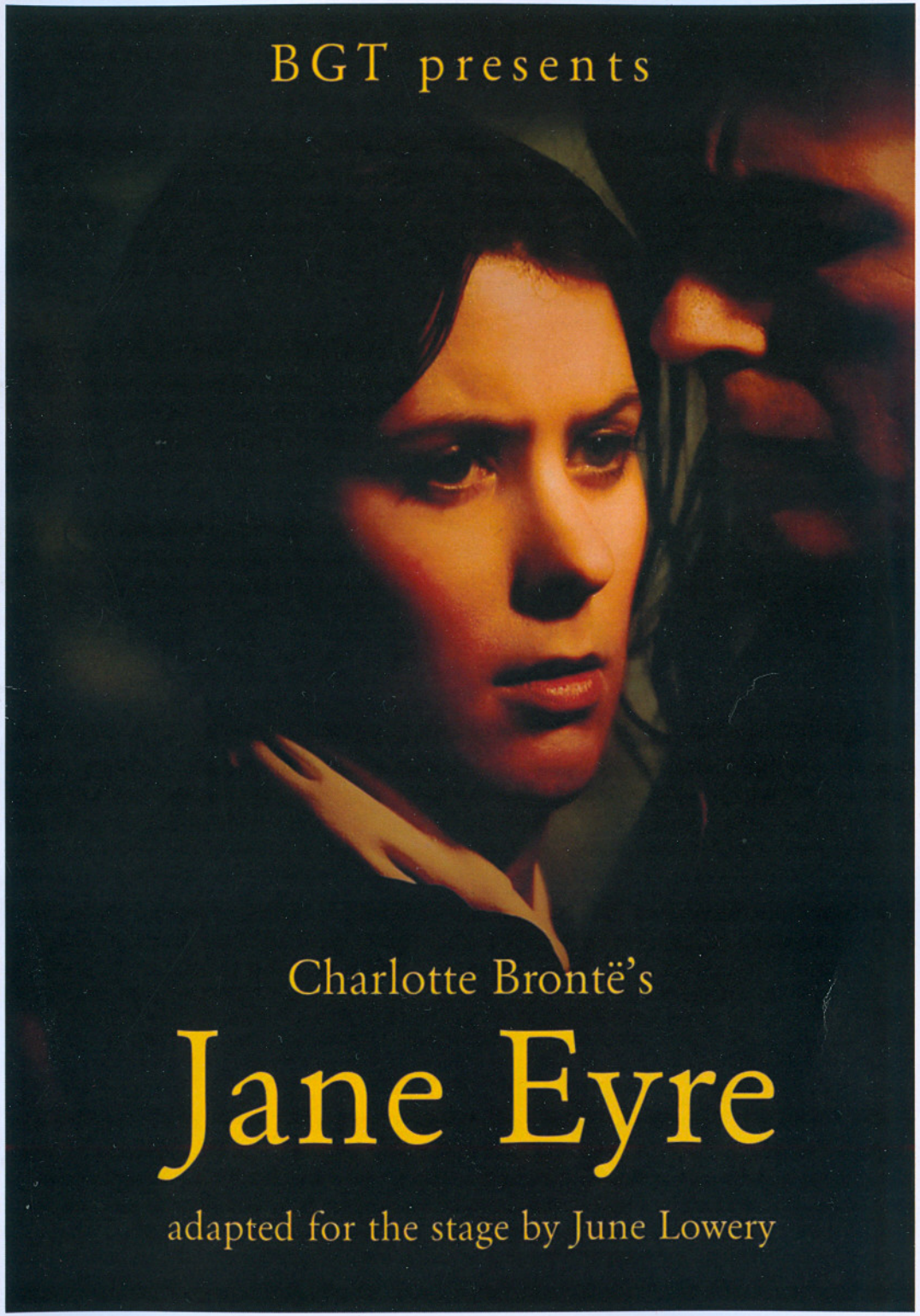

Charlotte Brontë's

Jane Eyre

adapted for the stage by June Lowery

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Charlotte Brontë and "Jane Eyre"

All the published works of the Brontë sisters draw on personal experiences, giving their fascinating tales a genuine grounding in reality. In the hearing of Mrs Gaskell, Charlotte even defended Rochester's mysterious cry to Jane that interrupts the Rivers proposal, saying "But it is a true thing; it really happened."

Charlotte and Emily's protagonists are all orphans. Only Anne, who was a baby when their mother died, portrayed a happy if impoverished family life in "Agnes Grey." Equally, the sisters all created troubled heroes or anti-heroes, inspired in part at least by their brother Branwell, whose despair in love led to debt, alcoholism and opium abuse, so contributing to his early death. The Lowood School section of "Jane Eyre" was inspired by the period in 1824/1825 which the four eldest Brontë children, Maria, Elisabeth, Charlotte and Emily spent at Cowan Bridge, a school for Clergymen's daughters. Maria and Elisabeth returned home to die of tuberculosis, aged 11 and 10. Losing both their mother and their eldest two sisters profoundly affected the surviving children, and Charlotte herself identified the saintly and precociously intelligent character of Helens Burns as her sister Maria. Like Jane Eyre, Charlotte, Emily, Branwell and Anne all worked for various lengths of time either as governess/tutor or school teacher. In 1842 Charlotte and Emily studied in Brussels, with Charlotte later returning there alone, as she had fallen passionately in love with her (married) employer, M. Heger. After disappointing sales of their self-funded publication of a book of poems in 1846 (two copies in one year) the three sisters sent the manuscripts of their first novels, "Wuthering Heights", "Agnes Grey" and "The Professor" to various publishers. "The Professor" by Charlotte was repeatedly rejected, but Smith, Elder & Co expressed interest in any other works by the same author. Charlotte had started writing "Jane Eyre" in August 1846 while nursing her father in Manchester as he recovered from an eye cataract operation. Charlotte sent the completed "Jane Eyre", which was promptly accepted and published in October 1847. "Wuthering Heights" and "Agnes Grey" had been accepted earlier, but were only published in December 1847 following the success of "Jane Eyre". However personal tragedy swiftly followed artistic success. Charlotte lost her three remaining siblings within the space of nine months: Branwell (aged 31) died suddenly of tuberculosis in September 1848, followed by Emily (30) in December and Anne (29) in May 1849. Battling against depression and loneliness, Charlotte went on to publish two further novels: "Shirley" (1849) and "Villette" (1853). She visited London several times and met many famous literary figures, including Elisabeth Gaskell and Thackeray. She married her father's curate Arthur Nicholls in June 1854. Like Jane, Charlotte found great happiness in marriage, writing: "if true domestic happiness replace Fame - the exchange will indeed be for the better." But unlike Jane, who closes her autobiography some ten years after her marriage, Charlotte's married life was tragically brief. On 31 March 1855 she died, aged 38, from the early stages of pregnancy. Her works "The Professor" and the fragment "Emma" were published posthumously.

Did you know? Victoriana and other snippets learnt while preparing for Jane Eyre

Fashion Our costumes are based on the fashions of the late 1840's and early 1850's. A slight anachronism is that hoops were introduced later, with the steel cage crinoline appearing in 1856 (in Mrs Gaskell's *Cranford* stories one is mistakenly ordered as a bird cage). For the sake of our actresses, operating under hot theatre lights, we have found a solution that avoids both wearing too much cloth, (although the "party dresses" are heavy enough, one ruffle comprising around 7 metres) or a steel hoop! To avoid lighting problems we have basically chosen not to use hats, especially since most scenes take place indoors.

Sailing to Madeira 2009 Royal Ocean Racing Club results show that a racing yacht sailed from Cowes to Madeira (around 1500 miles) in 8 1/2 days. So it is technically possible that Jane's letter and her uncle's prompt reply could have been both been delivered within one calendar month.

Emanicipation of slaves 25 years after the slave trade was abolished by Great Britian (1807), slaves in most British-held territories, including the Caribbean, were finally given their freedom through the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. As of August 1834, all slaves in the British Empire were emancipated, but still indentured to their former owners in an apprenticeship system which was finally abolished in 1838. The Act also included the right of compensation for slave-owners who would be losing their property. In all, the British government paid out £20 million in over 40,000 separate awards, which was equivalent to 40% of the government's total annual expenditure. "The Wide Sargasso Sea" draws on this period in depicting Rochester's and particularly Bertha's back story.

Weddings Queen Victoria's wedding to Prince Albert in 1839 was significantly different to previous royal marriages. Firstly Victoria wore a white wedding dress, rather than the ermine-trimmed opulent robes worn by previous royal brides, with a wreath of orange blossom instead of a jewelled tiara. Until Victoria's wedding couples usually married in their "Sunday best", but brides all over Europe and America were quick to copy her style, so starting the fashion for what we now consider to be a "traditional" white wedding. Secondly this was the first royal wedding to take place during the day, allowing crowds to witness the procession from Buckingham Palace. Previously royal couples had been married at night, to avoid attracting attention. Victoria's wedding was in effect the first British "media event" royal wedding, a trend that continues to the present day.

Writing Letters The first machine-made envelope was patented in 1845, but still had to be sealed by wax. Before then envelopes were a novelty for those with the time and money to cut a diamond shape from a larger piece of paper. The Penny Black, the world's first gummed postage stamp to be used in a public postal system, dates from May 1840. A beautifully-written letter by Anne Brontë survives, showing the common practice of cross-writing, which is writing at 90° over an already-written page. This practice saved both paper and postage as postage was charged by the number of sheets used

Pens were still dipped into ink holders at this time, but steel tips had become widely used instead of quills made from cut feathers.

Pencils Writing instruments made from sticks cut from high quality natural graphite mined at Cumberland in England and wrapped in string or inserted in wooden tubes came into use around 1560. The term "black lead pencil" was in use by 1565, even though "lead" pencils in fact contain graphite, not lead. Britain's first pencil factory opened in the Lake District in 1832, and a bundle of pencils from 1850 looks remarkably like the pencils we know and use today, but with no decoration on the plain wood casing.

Money There are several ways of calculating the current equivalent of historical values of money. Using the site www.measuringworth.com and taking 1847 as year of comparison, here is an indication of how the sums mentioned in the play convert into today's money. In British pre-decimal money there were twenty shillings to a pound (and twelve pennies to a shilling). You can convert from pounds to euros!

	1847	2010
Jane possesses	5 shillings	17 pounds
Jane's annual salary	30 pounds	22 000 pounds
Inheritance of	20 000 pounds	1.3 million pounds

The Brussels Brontë Group

Did you know Charlotte Brontë had lived in Brussels ? In 1842-3 she and her sister Emily came to Brussels to improve their French with a view to starting their own school, staying at the Pensionnat Heger, a girls' boarding school close to Place Royale. Charlotte recorded her impressions of her time in the city in her novels The Professor and Villette.

The Brussels Brontë Group, the Belgian branch of the Brontë Society, promotes interest in the Brontës' lives and writings. It organises a wide range of activities including talks, a 19th century reading group, guided Brontë walks in Brussels and social events. The Group also has members in Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

The group often invites speakers from the UK and members have the opportunity to attend the annual Brontë Society weekend in Haworth, Yorkshire.

To join the Brussels group mailing list just email helen.macewan@ec.europa.eu
Website: www.thebrusselsbrontegroup.org
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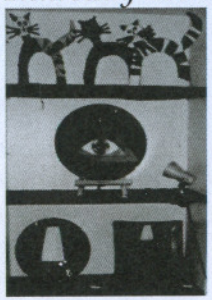

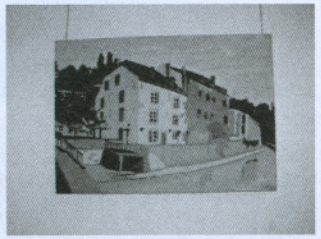

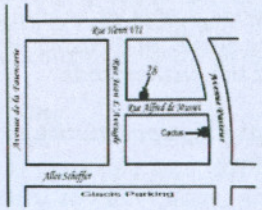

For more details please contact Janice Allgrove

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*The **Berliner Grundtheater e.V (BGT)** was founded in 1991 and is dedicated to producing a wide range of **English-language** plays, while integrating players of different nationalities. The BGT has performed shows by authors as varied as Peter Shaffer, Anthony Minghella, Oscar Wilde and William Shakespeare. As well as playing in Berlin, the company has appeared in Luxembourg, at the Edinburgh Festival and at Anglo-Deutsch Festivals around Germany. Recent successes have included Christopher Hampton's "Les Liaisons Dangereuses", and a multi-media production of Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus". The BGT has played several times in Luxembourg, most recently in 2009 with a production of Agatha Christie's **VERDICT** at the Abbaye de Neumünster.*

"The BGT will be back with our next major production at the Mierscher Kulturhaus in October 2011"

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INSPIRING LEARNING

JANE EYRE

CAST LIST

Jane Eyre	Jacqueline Milne
Young Jane	Nia Morgan
Mr Brocklehurst, governor of Lowood school	Peter Milne
Mr Brocklehurst's daughter	Holly Fraser
Miss Temple, headmistress of Lowood school	Laure Schreiner
Helen Burns, Young Jane's friend	Louise Racké
Mrs. Reed, Jane's aunt	Elke Murdock
Bessie, Mrs Reed's maid	Barbara Hall
First Girl	Anna Murdock
Second Girl (Charlotte Bell)	Ferelith Kingston
Outraged Man, second girl's guardian	Steve Anderson
French Teacher	Ariane Spicq
Third Girl	Holly Fraser
Mrs Fairfax, housekeeper of Thornfield Hall	June Lowery
Grace Poole, a maid	Elke Murdock
Adèle Varens, Mr Rochester's ward	Eline van den Bossche
Sophie, Adèle's maid	Ariane Spicq
Edward Rochester, owner of Thornfield Hall	Bjørn Clasen
Céline Varens, Adèle's mother	Ariane Spicq
Young Man, Céline's lover	Joachim Cour
Mr Eshton, a local gentleman	Steve Anderson

in order of appearance

Louisa Eshton, his first daughter	Laure Schreiner
Amy Eshton, his second daughter	Clea du Toit
Lord Freddy Ingram	Robin Edds
Lady Ingram, his mother	Barbara Hall
Blanche Ingram, his elder sister	Lindsay Schomaker
Richard Mason, a friend of Mr Rochester	Pierre-Yves Lanneau-St. Léger
A Gypsy	Elke Murdock
Dr. Carter	Joachim Cour
John Eyre, Jane's uncle	Peter Milne
Mr Wood, a clergyman	Peter Milne
A Clerk	Joachim Cour
Mr Briggs, a lawyer	Steve Anderson
Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife	Ariane Spicq
A Doctor in Jamaica	Joachim Cour
A Lawyer in Jamaica	Steve Anderson
Hannah, the Rivers' family maid	Barbara Hall
St. John Rivers, a pastor	Glen Campbell
Diana Rivers, his sister	Laure Schreiner
Mary Rivers, his sister	Lindsay Schomaker
Rosamund Oliver, a local girl in love with St. John	Clea du Toit
A Coach-boy	Robin Edds

Other maids, servants, etc are played by members of the cast.

Script adapted for the stage by	June Lowery
Set design and construction	Karl Pierce
Lighting	Matthew Swithinbank
Sound design	Deborah Anderson
Costumes	Deborah Cocking
Makeup	Lindsay Schomaker
Assisted by	Ferelith Kingston Bénédicte Souy & Laure Schreiner
Hair design	Karine Frisch
Assisted by	Lindsay Schomaker
Backstage Assistant	Filiz Daď
Poster Design	Florian Gärtner
Press photos	Michele Jamrozik
Rehearsal photos	Fotini Kaparelou
Producer	June Lowery
Director	Tony Kingston

The action takes place at the Lowood School for Girls, Gateshead Manor, Thornfield House and Moor End.

There will be one interval of 15 minutes.

Thanks to

- Our families for their patience at our absences on Brontë business
- The parents of our "girls" for all their taxi-driving;
- Carol Poull;
- Jean and Ron Lowery, Bob and Kay Kingston for all their support
- Lina Saulinskaite, for the notebook that made writing the first draft by hand a real pleasure;
- Ann Lloyd, Doris Turnbull and Holy Cross Church, and Richard Charlton and Father Cornforth of St John Vianney Church for the loan of the cassocks;
- Martha Nesbitt, Margaret Tansey and Doris Turnbull for the trays;
- NWTC Youth Workshop and Christine Probst;
- NAMSA Print Shop;
- École privée de Théâtre Luxembourg (ecoledetheatre@theatreinfo.lu);
- All the friendly, helpful people we met via e-bay;
- Some of the sound effects used in Jane Eyre are from The Freesound Project (www.freesound.org) under the Creative Commons "Sampling Plus" licence
- And finally, the script was produced with no thanks at all to Microsoft Vista....

The BGT would like to thank the New World Theatre Club for all of their help and assistance on this production.

Special thanks also to Mady Weber, Diane Tobes and the staff and crew of the Abbaye de Neumünster.

Adaptor's notes: Why Jane Eyre in 2010?

Since it was first published, Jane Eyre has been adapted for stage, film, TV, ballet, opera, musical, and has been parodied, pre-quelled and sequelled on an unparalled scale. Within months of its first edition, the first stage adaptation, "*Jane Eyre, the Secrets of Thornfield Hall*", was being performed at the Victoria Theatre in London. C21st spin-offs include *The Eyre Affair* by Jaspar Fforde; *Becoming Jane Eyre* by Sheila Kohler; *Jane Airhead* by Kay Woodward and even a zombie version *Jane Slayre* by Sherri Browning Erwin. So why adapt it again in 2010 for the Luxembourg stage?

"Jane Eyre" is a classic love story with all the usual ingredients: a young, relatively poor but independent woman falls in love with an older and richer man, whose apparent indifference or hostility to her turns out to mask a deep passion that leads him to defy social custom to marry her. It is the plot of Pride & Prejudice, Jane Eyre, and even the more recent Twilight series. For me it is probably the best and most clear-sighted such story. Although my main motivation was the wish to share my love of the book with others, in my opinion three other factors make an adaptation now both timely and relevant: sex, religion and multilingualism.

Sex. The UK has the highest teenage birth rates in Western Europe - twice as high as in Germany, three times as high as in France and six times as high as in the Netherlands. The U.K. also has a higher rate of abortion than most European countries. As the mother of a nearly teenage daughter, I find it remarkable that a book written in the 1840's addresses the age-old question of "Will you still love me tomorrow?" Jane leaves Rochester, despite her "veins running fire" for him, because she respects herself more than she desires him. Rochester hates the memory of the time spent with his three previous mistresses, and Jane draws "the certain inference that if I were to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling" and determines that "the more friendless [I am] ... the more I will respect myself". Though a runaway success from the first edition, the book was criticized as "coarse" and immoral. GH Lewes provoked an explosive reaction from Charlotte when he told her "There ought to be a bond of sympathy between us ... for we have both written naughty books." It is the clear-sighted and frank analysis of love, passion and self-respect, of whether marriage should be an economic necessity or a meeting of equals, and whether love can or should mean sacrificing principle for pleasure, that makes the book so timely and modern for me

Religion. Despite being a clergyman's daughter, the book's two clergymen, Mr. Brocklehurst and St John Rivers, are both strongly criticized as being merciless and self-righteous in their beliefs. This contrasts sharply with Jane and Rochester. Jane sets high standards for herself, but while aware of the limitations and faults of others, she even forgives Rochester after the wedding. Rochester is also well aware of his faults and says as much to Jane in their first conversation at Thornfield.

The framework is clearly Christian: Rochester literally is punished by fire for his attempted bigamy and seduction of Jane, and it is only after he has lost his physical sight that he comes to see the full impact of his past behaviour. But once he genuinely repents, a happy ending is possible. "God sees not as man sees..." The underlying religious message therefore is about self-awareness, self-respect and self-development, rather than the formal trappings of religion. The only time Jane is mentioned as attending church, is on her wedding day.

Multilingualism. The British reputation for not speaking foreign languages is sadly well-deserved. According to Eurostat figures, 51% of secondary school students in the UK studied no foreign language. (The next worst and only other double-digit result was Ireland with 19%.) It is therefore all the more extraordinary, that parts of *Jane Eyre* are written in French, that Jane wishes to study German, and in the novel even learns Hindustani.

Jane Eyre came 10th in the BBC's The Big Read, of 2003, coming second as a 19th century book only to Pride and Prejudice. In 2009 Mills & Boon readers voted Mr Rochester the most romantic character in literature. And in preparing for the show, we have encountered fans who have read the book in Spanish, French, Greek, Romanian, Slovakian.... So wherever you are from, and whether you are here for the romance, the literature or the lust, we hope you enjoy our version.

Literary allusions in the script

Rasselas *a novella by Samuel Johnson, published in 1759. Rasselas, son of the King of Abyssinia, travels with his sister and a philosopher to discover the secret of a happy life. His observations eventually lead him to the conclusion that there is no easy path to happiness. The figure of Helen Burns is based on Charlotte's eldest sister, Maria Brontë, whom Charlotte described as "superhuman in goodness and cleverness". The Lowood section of Jane Eyre was inspired directly by Charlotte's experience at Cowan Bridge School, which resulted in the death of her two elder sisters, Maria and Elisabeth, aged 11 and 10 respectively.*

Mrs Radcliffe *(1764 - 1823) a pioneer of the gothic novel. Her books tend to involve innocent but heroic young women who find themselves in gloomy, mysterious castles ruled by even more mysterious barons with dark pasts. In The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), her fourth and most popular novel, an Italian count imprisons his wife and her niece in his castle in an attempt to control his wife's fortune. The book plays an important role in Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey.*

The Castle of Otranto *the first gothic novel. Published in 1764 by Horace Walpole (brother of the English prime minister), this is a short, entertaining tale complete with a haunted castle, mistaken identities, virtuous damsels in distress, knights, ghosts and indeed a painting that moves. Perhaps not great literature, but still a fun read.*

Ellis Bell *the pseudonym used by Emily Brontë. Charlotte and Anne published under the names Currer and Acton Bell respectively. The book Freddy is referring to is Wuthering Heights.*

Miss Jane Austen *Blanche is referring to Pride and Prejudice, first published in 1813. The story follows the main character Elizabeth Bennet, the second eldest of five daughters of a country gentleman, whose estate is entailed, i.e. left to the nearest male relative under terms that cannot be altered.*

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