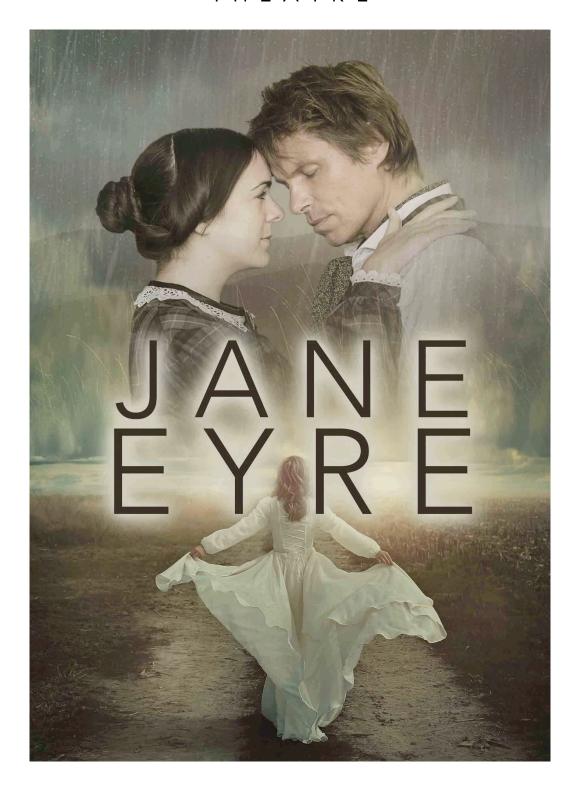
BLACKEYED THEATRE



Media Pack

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Credits

Jane Eyre By Charlotte Brontë Adapted by Nick Lane

Produced by Blackeyed Theatre in association with South Hill Park Arts Centre

Cast

Jane Eyre Kelsey Short

Edward Rochester Ben Warwick Mr Brocklehurst

Mrs Fairfax Camilla Simson

Bertha Mason, Aunt Reed

Blanche Ingram Eleanor Toms

Georgianna Reed, Helen Burns

Adele Varens

St John Rivers Oliver Hamilton

John Reed, Mr Mason

Artistic Team

Writer Nick Lane

Composer George Jeenings Director / Producer Adrian McDougall Musical Director Ellie Verkerk Movement Director Sammy Fonfe Lucy Fennell Assistant Director Set Designer Victoria Spearing Naomi Gibbs Costume Designer Lighting Designer Alan Valentine

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Press Release

Blackeyed Theatre, in association with South Hill Park, presents

Jane Eyre

By Charlotte Brontë Adapted by Nick Lane

UK Tour September 2019 - June 2020

From January 2020, Blackeyed Theatre continues its epic international tour of Nick Lane's thrilling new adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's masterpiece *Jane Eyre*, playing to venues across the UK, The Netherlands and China until June.

A Gothic masterpiece of tempestuous passions and dark secrets, *Jane Eyre* tells the thrilling story of an orphan and her journey from a childhood of loneliness and cruelty to a life at Thornfield Hall and an unlikely relationship with the mysterious Mr Rochester. But her newfound happiness is threatened by hidden pasts in the gloomy, forbidding Thornfield Hall and a terrible secret forces her to make a heart-wrenching choice

This production is a captivating account of one woman's quest for equality in a patriarchal society. In spite of terrible hardships, Brontë's heroine perseveres in order to define her own life and happiness, rather than it being defined for her by others. A woman in a man's world striving to succeed independently, Charlotte Brontë originally published under a male pseudonym. Her and Jane's search for equality and freedom still hit home today.

The cast features **Kelsey Short** as Jane Eyre (*Class*, Spur of the Moment; *F*cking Life Mate*, JamesArts Productions; *Broken*, The White Bear), **Ben Warwick** as Mr Rochester (*Pentecost; The Oedipus Plays*, Royal National Theatre; *The Deep Blue Sea*, Watford Palace; *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theatre Royal York; *Hamlet*, English Touring Theatre), **Camilla Simson** as Mrs Fairfax (*The Merchant of Venice*, The Globe, Rome; *Thin Toes*, The Pleasance; *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Bill Kenwright national tour; *Shakers*, Liverpool Playhouse), **Eleanor Toms** as Blanche Ingram (*The Secret Garden*, The Minack Theatre; *Astley's Astounding Adventures*, New Vic; *Blue Stockings*, Cockpit Theatre), **Oliver Hamilton** as St John Rivers (*Maggie May*, Liverpool Everyman; *Crossroads*, Actors Church, Covent Garden; *A Christmas Carol*, Windsor Castle).

In their trademark style, Blackeyed Theatre's interpretation of *Jane Eyre* will feature an ensemble cast of actor-musicians. The production includes design by award-winning designer, Victoria Spearing, and live music written specially for the production by award-winning composer George Jennings.

Director and Producer Adrian McDougall says, *Bringing* Jane Eyre to the stage with such a wonderful group of artists and to see it thrive has been a sheer joy, to say nothing of the incredible reaction from audiences young and old. In 2020 we'll be bringing Brontë's masterpiece to many more UK theatres, including first-time visits to Crewe Lyceum and Theatre Royal Bath, and sharing it with audiences across The Netherlands and China. At a time when we feel so divided, it's comforting to see how much we have in common when it comes to our love of Brontë and, more broadly, literature and theatre.

Writer Nick Lane comments, *Plays based on books have to be their own thing, no matter the manner in which their stories are related to an audience, and I think this production looks - and perhaps more importantly feels - both strongly connected to the source material and*

also is its own thing. I'm still pinching myself that I was given the chance to adapt such an incredible, iconic novel as Jane Eyre and I'm looking forward to seeing how the show has grown. I've been reading all the lovely reviews for the cast and for the production and I'm certain they'll continue.

Jane Eyre is produced by Blackeyed Theatre in association with South Hill Park in Bracknell and supported by Arts Council England.

Ends

Recommended for age 11+ Running time 130 minutes including interval #JaneEyreTour

Tour Dates – Winter/Spring 2020

Date	Theatre	Town / City	Phone
Jan 10 - 11	Theater Ainsi 8.30pm	Maastricht The Netherlands	+31(0)43 3505555
Jan 13	Park Theater 8.30pm	Eindhoven The Netherlands	+31(0)40 2111122
Jan 15 - 16	Hazzlit Theatre 7.30pm	Maidstone	01622 758611
Jan 17 - 18	Theatre Royal 7.30pm	Margate	01843 292795
Jan 20 - 21	Castle Theatre 7.30pm	Wellingborough	01933 270 007
Jan 22 - 23	Albany Theatre 7.30pm (+2pm Thu)	Coventry	024 7699 8964
Jan 24 - 25	The Kenton Theatre 7.30pm	Henley-on-Thames	01491 575698
Jan 28 - Feb 1	Yvonne Arnaud Theatre Tue - Thu 7.45pm / Fri - Sat 8pm (+2.30pm Thu & Sat)	Guildford	01483 44 00 00
Feb 4 - 5	Lighthouse 7.45pm (+1.30pm Wed)	Poole	01202 280000
Feb 6 - 8	Arena Theatre 7.30pm	Wolverhampton	01902 321321
Feb 10 - 12	Theatre Severn 7.30pm (+2.30pm Wed)	Shrewsbury	01743 281281
Feb 13 - 15	Garrick Theatre 7.30pm (+2.30pm Sat)	Lichfield	01543 412121
Feb 24 - 26	Waterside Arts Centre 7.30pm (+1.30pm Wed)	Sale	0161 912 5616
Feb 27 - 29	The Theatre 7.45pm (+2.30pm Sat)	Chipping Norton	01608 642350
Mar 2- 3	Key Theatre Mon 7.30pm / Tue 2.30pm	Peterborough	01733 207239
Mar 5 - 7	Devonshire Park Theatre 7.45pm (+2.30pm Sat)	Eastbourne	01323 412000
Mar 10 - 11	Capitol Theatre 7.30pm (+2.30pm Wed)	Horsham	01403 750220
Mar 12 - 14	Connaught Theatre 7.30pm (+2pm Fri)	Worthing	01903 206 206
Mar 16 - 18	New Theatre Royal 7.30pm	Portsmouth	023 9264 9000
Mar 19 - 21	Theatre Royal 7.30pm (+2.30pm Sat)	Winchester	01962 840 440
Mar 24 - 25	Town Hall 7.30pm	Loughborough	01509 231914
Mar 26 - 28	Yeadon Town Hall 7.30pm (+2.30pm Fri)	Yeadon	0333 666 33 66
Mar 30 - Apr 1	Hull Truck 7.30pm (+2pm Wed)	Hull	01482 323638
Apr 2 - 3	Performing Arts Centre 7.30pm	Lincoln	01522 837600

Apr 14 - 18	Theatre Royal 7.30pm (+2.30pm Wed & Sat)	Bath	01225 448844
Apr 21 - 22	CAST 7.30pm	Doncaster	01302 303959
Apr 23 - 24	Theatre Royal 7.30pm	Wakefield	01924 211311
Apr 27 - May 2	Theatre Royal 8pm (+ 2.30pm Wed & 4.45pm Sat)	Windsor	01753 853 888
May 5	Palace Theatre 7.30pm	Mansfield	01623 633133
May 6 - 7	Middlesbrough Theatre 7.30pm	Middlesbrough	01642 815181
May 8 - 9	Opera House 7.30pm	Buxton	01298 72050
May 11 - 12	Grand Theatre 7.30pm	Lancaster	01524 64695
May 13 - 14	Venue Cymru 7.30pm (+2pm Thu)	Llandudno	01492 872000
May 19 - 23	Lyceum Theatre 7.30pm (+2.30pm Wed & Sat)	Crewe	01270 368 242
May 27 - June 21	Tour of China		

Box Office Information

Title Jane Eyre

Author Adapted from Charlotte Brontë's novel by Nick Lane

Company Blackeyed Theatre - www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk

Running time Approx 120 minutes plus interval

Type of event Play (Professional touring production)

Style of work Exciting, high energy and theatrical. A faithful adaptation of the

original novel using ensemble storytelling, and including original

live music.

Description A Gothic masterpiece of tempestuous passions and dark

secrets, Jane Eyre tells the thrilling story of an orphan girl and her journey from a childhood of loneliness and cruelty to a life at Thornfield Hall and an unlikely relationships with the mysterious Mr Rochester. Falling in love, she gradually uncovers a hidden past to the gloomy, forbidding Thornfield Hall, a terrible secret that forces her to make a heart-wrenching

choice.

Captivating, brooding and intensely powerful, Jane Eyre is a moving and unforgettable portrayal of one woman's quest for equality and freedom, and lives as one of the great triumphs of

storytelling.

Warnings None

Age suitability 11+

No. performers 5

Additional activities

Post-show Q&As may be available. Please check with venue.

Schools workshops available. Contact company for details.

Education pack available from www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk

Brochure Copy

Blackeyed Theatre
In association with South Hill Park
presents

Jane Eyre

By Charlotte Brontë
Adapted for the stage by Nick Lane

Director Adrian McDougall Composer George Jennings Musical Director Ellie Verkerk Movement Director Sammy Fonfe

"I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will"

A gothic masterpiece of tempestuous passions and dark secrets, *Jane Eyre* tells the thrilling story of an orphan girl and her journey from a childhood of loneliness and cruelty to a life at Thornfield Hall and an unlikely relationship with the mysterious Mr Rochester. Falling in love, she gradually uncovers a hidden past to the gloomy, forbidding Thornfield Hall, a terrible secret that forces her to make a heart-wrenching choice.

Don't miss Blackeyed Theatre's brand new stage adaptation of one of the greatest works of English fiction. Captivating, brooding and intensely powerful, *Jane Eyre* is a moving and unforgettable portrayal of one woman's quest for equality and freedom, and lives as one of the great triumphs of storytelling.

"One of the most innovative, audacious companies working in contemporary English Theatre"

The Stage

Recommended for age 11+

Running time: 130 minutes including interval

www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk

Reviews for Jane Eyre

$\star\star\star\star$

"One of the most compelling, intelligent adaptations of Jane Eyre I've ever seen...

Short's Jane has delightful resolute control, tempered with passion. Her silences are as good as anything she says too because this Jane thinks visibly. It's a near perfect interpretation... This elegant, rather beautiful production is another triumph for Blackeyed Theatre and a real tribute to director Adrian McDougall"

SUSAN ELKIN, SARDINES MAGAZINE

"A whirlwind of a production that tells the story of Charlotte Brontë's classic novel with beautiful, intimate flair...

Director Adrian McDougall has triumphed with a tight ensemble of actor-musicians who handle the text with impressive fluidity, moving through each scene with a wonderfully rich understanding of the emotional rhythms...

overall this Jane Eyre is told beautifully and intimately – you'll leave with your heart swelling" THE SKINNY

"spectacular world premiere...

Kelsey Short is everything I imagined Jane Eyre to be...

This romantic classic of English Literature has been given a new lease of life with this emotionally charged production of Jane Eyre set to a very fitting score" BEHIND THE ARRAS

"Kelsey Short breaks every heart in the audience...

Ben Warwick was born to play the role of Rochester, delivering a stupendously mood-marinated performance...

This superb production by Blackeyed Theatre marks a dramatic milestone and is warmly recommended"

WORCESTER NEWS

"Kelsey Short is just perfect as the heroine, Jane Eyre – she narrates her story as well as acting it and takes us along with her in an inclusive performance as we share her pain, her joy and most importantly her reasoning. She makes us concur with which of life's paths she chooses to follow next and why....

A refreshing and honest adaptation of a classic tale of which I am sure the famous novelist would most definitely approve...

Highly recommended splendid night out"

MALVERN OBSERVER

"Outstanding Blackeyed Theatre production...

Utterly captivating and convincing...

The cast's exceptional use of the minimal props available to them was a credit to their dexterity and the guidance of director Adrian McDougall and set designer Victoria Spearing, with boxes and benches offering in the mind's eye long passageways, doors and dark, secretive rooms"

BROMSGROVE ADVERTISER

"an incredibly immersive experience...

Kelsey Short's performance as our independent Gothic heroine Jane was incredibly moving" MUDDY STILETTOS

"This is a refreshing and honest adaptation of a classic tale of which the famous novelist would most definitely approve"

BASINGSTOKE GAZETTE

Reviews for Blackeyed Theatre

Selected reviews of Sherlock Holmes: the Sign Of Four (2018/19)

"EXCITING AND INCREDIBLY ENTERTAINING" – The Sussex Newspaper

"OUTSTANDING" - Weekend Notes

"A MASTERCLASS IN ALL THINGS THEATRICAL" - Love Shrewsbury

"REALLY WAS FANTASTIC" - What's Good To Do

"A GEM OF AN EVENING" - Theatre News

"VERY ENTERTAINING" - Reviews Hub

"A DARK, GRIPPING STAGE PRESENTATION" – Shropshire What's On

 $\star\star\star\star$

"THOROUGHLY WELL ACTED BY A TALENTED ENSEMBLE CAST" - Guildford Magazine

Selected reviews of The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde (2017/18)

"A SUPERB PERFORMANCE" - The Latest

"SUPERB NEW PLAY" - Weekend Notes

 $\star\star\star\star.5$

"SUPERBLY ATMOSPHERIC" - Reviews Hub

"A TRIUMPH" - Pocket Size Theatre

 $\star\star\star\star$

"A GRIPPING DRAMA" - Plays To See

"INCREDIBLY DRAMATIC" - Gay Times

"GRIPPING & IMMAGINATIVE" - Theatre South East

"GREAT DRAMA" - Always Time for Theatre

"BLACKEYED HAVE TRIUMPHED" - Frost Magazine



Kelsey Short Jane Eyre

Kelsey trained at Rose Bruford.

Theatre credits include *Class* (Spur of the Moment), *F*cking Life Mate* (JamesArts Productions), *Interrupted* (JW3), *Teeth, Shoes* (Theatre 503), *Between a Man and a Woman* (JamesArts Productions), *Broken* (The White Bear), *Another Day* (A Friend of a Friend Productions)

Screen credits include *Between a Man and a Woman* (JamesArts Productions), *Chip* (JamesArts Productions)

Kelsey writes spoken word poetry and is a skilled puppeteer.



Ben Warwick
Mr Rochester / Mr Brocklehurst

Ben trained at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He last appeared with Blackeyed Theatre as Victor Frankenstein. Other credits include Hamlet (English Touring Theatre); The Deep Blue Sea (Watford Palace); Pentecost; The Oedipus Plays (Royal National Theatre); Les Liaisons Dangereuse, A Midsummer Night's Dream (Theatre Royal York); House And Garden (Royal Theatre Northampton); Look Back In Anger (Lichfield Garrick); Arms & The Man. The Captain's Tiger, Saint's Day, The Road To Ruin, Skeletons (Orange Tree); The Trench (Les Enfants Terribles – National and International tours and Southwark Playhouse); The Marquise (Bill Kenwright); Macbeth (US Tour); Miss Julie (Soho Theatre); Moliere Or The League Of Hypocrites (Finborough); Cock (Folktearten Gothenberg); The Seagull, The Picture of Dorian Gray (tour of Russia for Arterie); Great Expectations, She Stoops to Conquer, The Bandwagon, Charley's Aunt, Henry IV pt.1, Hard Times, Our Town, Room Service, Tons Of Money, David Copperfield (Farnham Rep). Feature films include Blood Moon. War Game. Canakkale Yolun Sonu. TV includes Mary Queen of Scots (BBC) Emmerdale (ITV), The Big Picture, Five Years.



Camilla Simson

Mrs Fairfax / Bertha Mason / Aunt Reed / Mary Rivers

Camilla trained at Elmhurst Ballet School and Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art.

Her theatre credits include The Merchant of Venice (Bedouin Shakespeare Company at the Globe, Rome) The Little Things (The Latchmere Theatre), Hounds of the Baskervilles (Greenwich Theatre with Sell a Door), Blithe Spirit (Hever Castle Festival), Fred and Gladys (The Landor), Thin Toes (The Pleasance), The Treason Show (The Komedia, Brighton), Valparaiso (The Old Red Lion), Crystal Clear (The Landor and Edinburgh Festival), Talking Heads – Her Big Chance (Wimbledon Theatre), Dick Whittington (Cambridge Arts Theatre), Lady Windermere's Fan (Bill Kenwright, National Tour), Love Off The Shelf (Harrogate and Nuffield Theatres), Alice in Wonderland (Nuffield Theatre), Shakers (Liverpool Playhouse), Bertie, The Life of Vesta Tilley (Alexandra Theatre Birmingham). Camilla's Television and Film credits include King Of Chaos (Stone City Films C4), London's Burning (ITV), Are You Ready For Love (Carnaby Films) and Funny Bones (Suntrust Films).



Eleanor Toms

Blanche Ingram / Georgianna Reed / Helen Burns / Adele Varens / Diana Rivers

Since graduating from Guildford School of Acting, Eleanor has enjoyed appearing in a variety of theatrical productions such as *The Secret Garden* (The Minack Theatre), *Macbeth* (This is my Theatre), *A Dickensian Christmas* (Ha-Hum-Ah Theatre) *Astley's Astounding Adventures* (New Vic), *Fiddler on the Roof* (Frinton Summer Theatre), *Treasure Island* (New Vic), *Blue Stockings* (Cockpit Theatre), *Peter Pan, Lost Boy* (Catford Broadway, for Action to the Word), *A Little Night Music* (Frinton Summer Theatre) *Paper Hearts* (Upstairs at the Gatehouse and Hamburg).



Oliver Hamilton St John Rivers / John Reed / Mr Mason

Oliver graduated with an MA in acting from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama having previously graduated from Manchester University.

Previous theatre includes *Maggie May* (Liverpool Everyman), *Crossroads* (Actors Church, Covent Garden), *A Christmas Carol* (Windsor Castle) and *Blue Into Gold* (Collfest, London).

Theatre whilst training included *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, *Parade*, *A Bomb on Broadway*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Beweep Outcast*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.

Nick Lane



Nick started his career as an actor until a car accident damaged his back and brought his acting career to a premature end. After that he turned to writing and directing. From 2006-2014 he was the Associate Director and Literary Manager of Hull Truck Theatre, a company with which he has had a long association.

Nick's previous adaptations for Blackeyed Theatre include Sherlock Holmes: The Sign Of Four and The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr Hyde. Other adaptations include The Wakefield Mysteries (Theatre Royal Wakefield), Frankenstein, Lady Chatterley's Lover (Hull Truck) and 1984 (Northern Broadsides), as well as a co-adaptation of Moby Dick for Hull Truck with his friend John Godber. Original adult plays include: The Derby McQueen Affair (York Theatre Royal). My Favourite Summer (Hull Truck), Blue Cross Xmas (Hull Truck), Me & Me Dad (Hull Truck), Housebound (Reform), Seconds Out (Reform), Royal Flush and Odd Job Men (Rich Seam Theatre).

Nick is also an accomplished children's playwright – his credits include: A Christmas Carol, Beauty & The Beast, The Hunchback of Notre Dame and The Snow Queen (Hull Truck); Pinocchio (SJT); Snow White and Little Red Riding Hood (York Theatre Royal); The Elves & The Shoemaker (Hereford Courtyard); and Hansel & Gretel (Pilot). His original work for children includes the acclaimed Ginger Jones and the Sultan's Eye (Polka/ Drum Theatre Plymouth/ York Theatre Royal), 'Twas The Night Before Christmas, When Santa Got Stuck in the Fridge and A Christmas Fairytale (Hull Truck).

Nick's directing credits include *The Glass Menagerie*, *Departures*, *Life's A Beach*, *Studs*, *Beef, Amateur Girl*, *Lucky Sods* and *Ring Around the Humber* (Hull Truck), *April in Paris*, *Two*, *September in the Rain* and *Little Italy* (York Theatre Royal).

'Selling Points'

Below are a few notable facts about the production

Charlotte Brontë published *Jane Eyre* in October 1847 under the male pseudonym Currer Bell. When it became a bestseller, the literary world became consumed with the identity of the writer. Even her publisher didn't know Currer Bell was a woman.

In 2003, Jane Eyre was ranked number 10 in the BBC's survey, The Big Read.

In 2014, *Jane Eyre* featured in the Guardian's '100 best novels written in English', voted in at number 12.

This is the world premiere of Nick Lane's adaptation, commissioned by Blackeyed Threatre. There have been numerous film and television versions of the story, with the most recent major stage adaptation being the National Theatre's 2017 production.

Blackeyed Theatre's interpretation of *Jane Eyre* will feature an ensemble cast of actormusicians, taking on all the characters between them. The performance includes music composed specially for the production by George Jennings and performed live by the cast.

Nick Lane, who wrote the adaptation, was Associate Director and Literary Manager at Hull Truck from 2006 to 2014.

Jane Eyre is recommended and prescribed reading for GCSE English literature by the AQA, OCR and Edexcel examination boards.

Blackeyed Theatre's production of *Jane Eyre* has already toured to more than 20 theatres across England, Wales and Scotland and been seen by more than 10,000 people. Between January and June 2020, it will be performed in over 40 more towns and cities across the UK, the Netherlands and China.

Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë, born on 21st April 1816, in Thornton, West Riding of Yorkshire, was the third of six children born to Rev. Patrick and Maria Brontë. Charlotte had a unique childhood but one also tainted by tragedy. When she was just five years old, Charlotte's mother died and this was closely followed by the tragic deaths of her two elder sisters Maria and Elizabeth, aged just eleven and ten. They died from consumption in harsh conditions of the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, Lancashire to which they were sent by their father. It was surely this, along with her own experiences when she was sent to the school in 1824, that contributed to Charlotte's portrayal of Lowood school in Jane Eyre.

Patrick Brontë continued the education of Charlotte, Emily, Anne and their brother Branwell at home, with the support of their aunt, Elizabeth. The children received a broad and stimulating education that allowed their creativity to flourish. Inspired by the tin soldiers given to them by their father, the siblings became adept at creating vast mythologies set in fictional and fantastical worlds. They chronicled these epic tales in diaries, homemade magazines and even on scrap paper such as sweetie bags, creating tiny books that they would give to the toy soldiers to read. In adolescence they went on to produce elaborate episodic sagas, which became their main preoccupation and prepared them for literary vocations in adulthood. Charlotte also wrote her first poem aged 13 and would go on to write over 200 poems in her life.

In 1831 Charlotte became a pupil at Roe Head School, but the maternal care she felt for her remaining younger sisters drove her to leave the school after just one year to teach them at home. She would return to Roe Head School as a teacher and go on to work as a governess for a number of different families, an experience she would report as unfulfilling. Charlotte's challenging experiences as a governess would inform Jane Eyre's experiences as a governess at Gateshead Hall.

In 1842 Charlotte and Emily moved to Brussels to complete their studies with a view to returning and setting up their own school. However, when Emily returned to England Charlotte remained in Brussels until 1844, perhaps influenced by an unrequited love for the school's headmaster, who provided Charlotte with essential literary training and guidance, though nothing more. The period in Brussels served as a crucial time of reflection and refinement, and provided all sorts of material for the novels Charlotte would go on to write.

Charlotte attempted to set up the school as planned, but the idea never came to fruition, perhaps an indication that her ambitions lay elsewhere. The discovery in 1845 of some of Emily's poetry resulted in the joint publication of a volume of poetry by Charlotte, Emily and Anne published under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. By concealing their gender it was hoped that the sisters would avoid the prejudice and scepticism levelled at female writers of the time. Charlotte would go on to publish her other novels, including Jane Eyre under the same *nom de plume*.

The publication of the volume of poetry opened the way for the sisters to put forward for publication novels they had written, and though Charlotte failed to place her novel *The Professor: A Tale*, she was able instead to interest the publishers with the almost complete *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*, which was more appealing due to its greater level of action and excitement. The novel was published less than eight weeks after submission and was immediately popular. The unusually authentic first person female perspective set people talking and there was much speculation about the identity of the author, which was exacerbated by the publications of works by Ellis and Acton Bell. It was only when people started to suspect that the author was female that '*Jane Eyre*' began to receive criticism that

the content was 'coarse', as well as concerns that it set out to overthrow the natural order of society.

The commercial success of Jane Eyre brought with it Charlotte's introduction to a great many friends in prestigious literary social circles; Elizabeth Gaskell and William Makepeace Thackeray were among her associates. She had begun to work on the manuscript of her second novel *Shirley* when her writing was halted by the deaths, in quick succession, of her siblings. Branwell, Emily and Anne died within only eight months of each other and Charlotte only took up the pen again as a means of dealing with her grief.

This lead to the creation of *Villette* in 1853, which was published just before Charlotte married her father's curate Arthur Bell Nichols, a proposal she had initially declined but later agreed to after advice given to her by Elizabeth Gaskell. It is thought that although she was initially not enamoured by the union, Charlotte went on to experience a previously unknown happiness. She fell pregnant soon after the wedding but sadly this happiness did not last. Charlotte and her unborn child died on 31st March 1855. Her death was thought to be due to dehydration and malnourishment brought about by severe morning sickness. She is buried in the Brontë family vault in St Michael's church in Haworth.

Interview with Writer, Nick Lane

How did you approach adapting Jane Eyre?

The facetious answer would be, "very, very carefully," but we'll get into that in other questions. People think writing is a singular process. It's not entirely true. It's collaborative. The vision has to be the writer's, you know, and the nuts and bolts of sitting down and writing it; that's obviously all you, but beforehand – while you're forming your ideas – it's always good to talk things through, so I approached this adaptation by discussing the book with Adrian McDougall, the Artistic Director of Blackeyed Theatre. That's always good because not only is he a really great sounding board with his artistic director hat on, he's also very clear when wearing his producer hat on what the company's needs are – you know, how many actors can I have to tell this story; will they need to be physical performers, actormusicians, that kind of thing. And from that you come up with a concept; you come up with a way you want to tell the story and a how and a why. Then it's just about making sure your adaptation is respectful to the writer and really honours their vision. That doesn't mean to say that things can't be different – an adaptation is simply that; it's not the book. That's an important distinction to make. I think sometimes it can be healthy and interesting to take a theme that the author was keen on and explore that within the context of the adaptation. I saw a wonderful adaptation of 1984 a few years ago produced by a company called Headlong. It deviated hugely from the novel in parts but retained the very essence of Orwell, and particularly his message. And that's key, because you do have to retain the vision of the author – especially with something like Jane Eyre because it is a book that means so much to a hell of a lot of people!

For you, what are the key challenges?

I'd have to say, number one was always going to be getting Jane right. She's such an important character in literature – at that time in history, to create a female character able to shape her own destiny; to choose, to risk everything to follow her own soul... she's absolutely iconic. Of course it's a wonderful novel for other reasons too, but the eponymous heroine... I think she's been an inspiration to a lot of women – continues to be, of course. And being a bloke, I think I felt some pressure. Maybe it wasn't there; maybe I was putting it on myself. I just didn't want to let anyone down. I have a friend who reads the book every year; she's a smart woman and I consulted with her a lot; so I've at least brought *her* Jane to the stage! And to be honest, a lot of the heavy lifting on that was done by Charlotte Brontë – once you distil the dialogue and craft it for the stage... what she's put on the page is a gift.

After that; it's about getting that connection with Rochester that's so clear in the book; getting that on stage. Making it work with the number of actors we have – five – and telling the story clearly and concisely. The book is so rich and has such depth but I had to try and get it all into one evening's entertainment. That was a big challenge.

How do you see main characters and how do you help bring them to life?

It's interesting; I had a conversation about this with another writer not that long ago – we're both currently in the process of adapting the same book for different Christmas productions and compared notes on our approaches. She's been really bold; she's telling the story from the point of view of other characters not mentioned in the book; ones she's invented, whereas I'm keen to work within the original writer's world. I think you have to understand them, or try to, and put yourself in their place, if you like. In that regard Rochester is just as complex as Jane. I mean of course he is. His journey is, from a certain point of view, one of

simple redemption – 'man loses everything but finds his soul' kind of thing (or at least his true love). Look deeper and he's already lost; he's brash and bluff, dry and funny but he's in pain from the outset, and the key is not to put that on the page; because Charlotte doesn't. She wants you to intuit that – if that's how you see Rochester; and if you don't that's fine too. Jane and Rochester are mirrors of one another in a lot of ways, and that helped I think. Again; Charlotte Brontë to the rescue!

In what ways have you diverged from the source material?

I don't think I have too much. As I mentioned earlier the narrative is compressed, distilled. I've worked on the main tracks of our protagonist; tried to pick out the key narrative beats without it becoming a "this... then this! Then *this!*" rollercoaster ride. The book's far subtler than that and far more delicate.

I confess I do find the book to be rather haunting and, in parts, downright spooky, so there's perhaps more of a nod to that – I've not tried to turn it into a Gothic horror or anything; it's still the book you all love! I hope!

Oh; and one character – shall I name them? I shan't name them because I don't want to spoil it – I *repurposed*, if you like. There's a thing in the book regarding Rochester's secret that always bothered me, so I hate to use the word "fixed" because there's no way I'd claim to have fixed a literary masterpiece – but it won't ruin anything at all. I promise!

Why do you think Jane Eyre is so enduring?

It's everything I've said already; I think... a woman out of her time who endures incredible hardships but manages through sheer strength of will to ascend to a place where she can define her own happiness; not have it defined for her by society. That's it for me anyway. It's going to be different for everybody to be honest; there's so much in it. That's probably the key actually; there's so much in it that people can draw from. There's satire, there's socioeconomic commentary, there's this beautiful ache of a love story; these two characters that find each other. But for me, Jane's an underdog; all her life she's underestimated or treated with resentment and contempt, yet she endures it all and prevails. And who doesn't love an underdog story? I love an underdog story; I'm a Doncaster Rovers fan – we're always underdogs!

What should audiences expect?

To be entertained; to have a quality evening at the theatre – that's what I want; that's what we all want ultimately. That's why we do it. I've tried my best to bring this timeless book to the stage; these wonderful characters to life. Adrian has assembled a terrific cast; the music I've heard already is gorgeous... I'd like to think as a company we can transport an audience into that life; into that world. If they've read the book, the audience might go away and want to pick it up again. And if they haven't, then it'd be lovely to think they might go away wanting to read it, you know. I'll feel we've all done our jobs if we achieve all that.

Cast Interviews

Kelsey Short talks about her portrayal of Jane Eyre.

What's your take on the character of Jane and how do you approach such an iconic role?

I believe I have a lot of similar qualities to Jane, and although of a different time, much of what she says of her experiences resonates with me as a result of my own life experiences. The challenges she faces are so relevant today, and so for me, portraying her on stage is about understanding her. She's a strong, independent woman who is struggling with her insecurities and a need to be loved. For me that's the basis from which I can explore the character further.

What are the challenges of performing a play over such a long period of time, and how do you deal with that?

Keeping everything fresh and organic! Hard though it is over a long period of time, it's so important to be in the moment, reacting and listening as if it's the first and only performance. The beauty of theatre, of course, is that a difference in intonation can change the dynamic of a scene, and of course the audience is different every night too. I guess the idea is to never get complacent, always be willing to keep playing.

What do you love most about bringing a piece like Jane Eyre to the stage?

I love the fact that she is a woman all people - young and old – are likely to know about or at least have heard of. It's a timeless story and will always be relatable. I also love that it isn't your stereotypical love story. For me the Gothic element is such a pivotal factor in the story and will help make this a unique piece of theatre.

Artistic Team

Director

Adrian McDougall

Adrian is the founder and Artistic Director of Blackeyed Theatre. He grew up in Berkshire, studying modern languages at Southampton University, going on to work in marketing and PR, before becoming a theatre producer in 2004.

Since Blackeyed Theatre's very first production, *Effie's Burning*, he has produced 19 national tours, including the world premiere of Steven Berkoff's *Oedipus* and brand new stage adaptations of *The Sign Of Four, The Strange case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde, Frankenstein, The Great Gatsby* and *Dracula*. As a director, his credits include – for Blackeyed Theatre – the world premiere of *The Beekeeper* and national tours of *Oh What A Lovely War, Teechers* and *Alfie*, as well as *Brassed Off* and *House And Garden* (for South Hill Park). He has also worked as an actor, touring the UK with Oddsocks Productions, Premiere Stage Productions and the Phoenix Theatre Company.

Adrian is also a director of CentreStage Partnership, a leading provider of experiential learning and behavioural coaching to organisations from the public and private sectors (www.cstage.co.uk). He lives in Bracknell with his wife and two young children, supporting and participating in community theatre when he can.

Composer

George Jennings

Graduating from the Guildford School of Acting in 2013, George is an actor, musician and composer.

His composition credits include *The Archive of Educated Hearts* (Lion House Theatre), which was awarded a Scotsman Fringe First at the Edinburgh Fringe 2018, *Michael Morpurgo's King Arthur* (UK Tour), *Macbeth* (South Hill Park), *From Dust* (Gilded Balloon), *A Pocketful of Grimm's* (UK Tour), *Acedian Pirates* (Theatre503), *Night Creature* (Adelaide Fringe), *Romeo & Juliet* (South Hill Park), and *This was the World and I was King* (HookHitch Theatre), which was nominated by Musical Theatre Network for best score at the Edinburgh Fringe 2013, before touring the UK and enjoying runs at The Brockley Jack and The Arts Theatre.

George has also written scores for various short films and podcasts. You can hear much of his work at georgejenningsmusic.com As an actor, he has appeared in productions at Shakespeare's Globe, in the West End and in numerous regional theatres around the country, as well as screen appearances on the BBC and History Channel.

Musical Director

Ellie Verkerk

Ellie graduated from the Royal College of Music as a pianist, accompanist and orchestral musician, and has worked with a broad variety of musicians, singers and singer-songwriters, from London's

West End to recording sessions, cabarets, weddings and beyond. She was the assistant to the conductor and production assistant to the film director for *Celebrating John Lord* (Royal Albert Hall) and has worked as a keys player for *Jersey Boys* (Prince Edward Theatre). Her work as Musical Director includes *Beauty and the Beast, Oh What A Lovely War, Mother Courage* and *Dracula* (Blackeyed Theatre), and *Cabaret in the Cellar Bar* (South Hill Park). Her work as Assistant Musical Director includes *Kerrigan-Lowdermilk LIVE* (St James Theatre), and *All I Want for Christmas...* (Julie Atherton, St James Theatre). Recording and session work includes *My Parade* (Stephanie Fearon), and singer-songwriters *Dear Pariah* and *Buswell*. She has appeared as a trumpet player in music videos, and conducted a symphony orchestra at the Shepherd's Bush Empire as part of the *Underground Orchestra Challenge* with Sean Buswell.

Ellie is a passionate supporter of young people, teaching and supporting those who aspire to work professionally in the creative arts industry, and works at the *Read Dance and Theatre College* (Reading, Berkshire). In addition to her musical work, Ellie is also a massage therapist, specialising in the treatment of musicians and performers, and works regularly with people with special needs. www.EllieVerkerk.com.

Movement Director

Sammy Fonfe

Sammy gained a MA in Creative Musical Theatre Practice at Arts Educational School, where she is now the dance tutor on the BA Acting course. Credits for Arts Educational School include Assistant Choreographer/Director on *Evita* for the opening of Andrew Lloyd Webber's new theatre and Associate Choreographer on *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and The *Spelling Bee*.

Choreographic and Movement Direction credits include Beauty and the Beast (Redhill) Judus Excalibur and Love and Information (Arts Education Theatre) Snow White (PHA, The Harlequin Theatre), Romeo and Juliet (RBL, Greenwich Theatre), Twelfth Night (RBL), Henry (RBL) From Up Here (Tristan Bates Theatre, West end), A Night of the Musicals (UK Tour, resident Choreographer), Somewhere Over The West Way (Edinburgh Festival and Portobello), Sweet FA (Theatre Royal, Portsmouth), *The Tenth Kingdom* (Carnival Films), *Dangerous* Corner (UK Tour), Lisa Scott Lee on Tour (Asian and UK Tour), Hot Mikado (The Wilde Theatre). A View from a Bridge (Lyric Hammersmith). Dear Edwina (The Lost Theatre, Assistant Choreographer.) Performing credits include Phantom u/s Columbia in *Rocky Horror* Show (European Tour), Various Pantomime productions for Bill Kenwright Ltd (Theatre Royal Windsor), Lola in *Clandestine* (Riverside Studios), Chloe in Sitting in Silence (Lyric Theatre Hammersmith), Support Act for 911 & Bewitched Tour (UK Arena Tour), Top of the Pops performances (Moloko, Back to My Roots, Ash and Slow Ryder), Smash hits Uk Tour and London O2 Arena. Writer of Deja Vu, which was made into a pilot starring Paul Nicolas and Sue Holderness. Sammy is Managing Director of the Berkshire Theatre Company. Where they give the new generation opportunities to learn with professionals

and perform in theatres throughout Berkshire. www.berkshiretheatrecompany.co.uk

Movement Director

Enric Ortuño

Enric is a Fight and Intimacy Director and certified Stage Combat Teacher by the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat. He holds a 4yr BA in Musical Theatre from the Spanish Conservatoire of Dramatic Art and an MA in Movement Studies by the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

Enric is the resident combat teacher at Drama Studio London, Italia Conti, Kogan Academy of Dramatic Art and the Academy of Performance Training (Guildford) and teaches regularly at RADA, Central School of Speech and Drama and has taught workshops in Spain, Canada, USA and Germany.

Credits include *The Weatherman* (Park Theatre), *The Drag* (Arcola Theatre), *Boris: World King* (Trafalgar Studios), *Croydon Avengers* (Ovalhouse Theatre), *The Amber Trap* (Theatre 503), *Love me Now* (Tristan Bates Theatre), *Escape the Scaffold* (Theatre 503), *Firecracker* (Ovalhouse Theatre), *Verdi's Macbeth* (Iford Arts), *The Autumn Garden* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *Jekyll & Hyde* (Arrows & Traps Theatre Company), *The 3 Musketeers* (ElevenOne Theatre), *Treasure Island* (Oxford Theatre Guild), *The Ladykillers* (Wokingham Theatre), *Men Should Weep* (Landor Theatre), *Candy Cansino Checks In* (Landor Theatre), *Othello* (Barons Court Theatre), *Dangerous Giant Animals* (Underbelly Edinburgh), *Days of Significance* (Landor Theatre), *Titus Andronicus* (Smooth Faced Gentlemen), *Monster* (Worklight Theatre), *Othello* (Smooth Faced Gentlemen).

Assistant Director

Lucy Fennell

Lucy completed her English degree and PGCE in Canterbury and went on to teach English and Drama in secondary schools before becoming a theatre maker, director and performer. She has trained extensively in improvisation and is a founding member of Impromptu Shakespeare, with whom she has performed in a number of festivals and national tours. She recently completed a residency with The Bristol Improv Theatre where she devised and directed *Is it improvised, does it matter?*: an exploration of the divide between scripted theatre and improvisation.

Lucy is an experienced facilitator and has worked extensively as a director of young people in her role as Education officer at The Point and The Berry Theatre. She directed *The Tempest* and *Henry V* (as part of HLF funded Agincourt 600) and was the Youth Theatre Director at the Berry Theatre. Her directing credits include: *The Little Mermaid*, *The Secret Garden* and *James and the Giant Peach*. She also produced *Adventures of the Improvised Sherlock Holmes* 's 2018 sell out Edinburgh Fringe run.

Lucy has taught theatre and performance at a range of universities including: University of Creative Arts, University of Kent and York University and currently teaches at Artemis College whilst also tutoring English for GCSE and A-Level.

She has performed in *Bumper Blyton: The improvised Adventure*, and you can spot her in the BAFTA award-winning educational series *History Bombs*.

Set Designer

Victoria Spearing

Graduating from Bretton Hall in Theatre Design and Technology in 2001, Victoria started work as a freelance set designer with South Hill Park Arts Centre, where she is now resident designer.

This will be the 21st design for Blackeyed Theatre, from *The Caretaker* to the highly acclaimed tours of *Not About Heroes*, *Dracula* and *Teechers*. Her design for *The Beekeeper* was nominated for the Best Set Design in the 2012 Off West End Theatre Awards.

She has designed over one hundred sets for a variety of companies, producing initial sketches and model boxes through to involvement in set building, painting and final dressing.

For South Hill Park she has designed the last twelve pantomimes, as well as a range of in-house productions, including *Brassed Off*, *Stepping Out, Blood Brothers, Calendar Girls* and *Oh What A Lovely War*. She also redesigned South Hill Park's Wilde Theatre Bar and Foyer to create a new performance space.

Her design work for other companies includes the world premier of *A Little History of the World* (Watermill Theatre), *The Dumb Waiter, Miss Julie, Waiting for Godot, Race* and *The Nativity that Goes Wrong* (Reading Rep), *Journey's End, Dancing at Lughnasa, The Madness of George III, Three Men in a Boat* and *Birdsong* (Original Theatre Company), *Lotty's War* (Giddy Ox), *Loserville* (Youth Music Theatre), *The History Boys* and *Danny the Champion of the World* (London Contemporary Theatre), as well as various Christmas shows for The Castle Wellingborough.

She lives in a small village with her husband and daughter and is currently using her design skills to transform her garden, that is of course when she is not busy reading a script, crafting a detailed model box or splattered with paint.

Costume Designer

Naomi Gibbs

Naomi is a Southsea-based costume designer, resident at New Theatre Royal Portsmouth since becoming an associate artist with the Creative Lab during 2016. She has enjoyed frequent projects as a freelancer with theatre and the music industry after engaging with the local community on behalf of the New Theatre Royal as a textile artist in 2010, with the 'Living Memories' project. It documented the Theatre's history through the memories of its patrons. Since then, she has run various costume design, craft and textiles related workshops for school children and community groups through the theatre and local council's art and cultural services.

Naomi continued her work at NTR with her involvement as an assistant costume designer, maker and wardrobe-mistress in their 2010 adaptation of *Treasure Island* and by costume designing four subsequent shows performed at NTR; *The Missing Years, Little Red and the Lonely Wolf, In Service to the True God* by fellow Creative Lab associate Bernie Byrnes, and *Roses and Castles* by Phil Underwood.

Outside of NTR, Naomi has a varied career, which began a decade ago, managing and sewing for a bridal boutique and has much more recently included working with Stopgap Dance company as costume designer for *Moon Language*, which was performed at the Andover

Lights. She has also worked with musician Adam Ant, a long-term client, designing and creating new costumes for his band's next tour of the USA, and she was Costume Designer for Blackeyed Theatre's national tours of Sherlock Holmes: The sign Of Four (2018/19) and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* (2017/18). One of Naomi's current projects at New Theatre Royal is ongoing work towards restoring the boxes in the auditorium to their full Victorian style splendour, the interiors of which she has designed in accordance with the theatre's history. Show-business aside, Naomi also undertakes private commissions to design and make all sorts of costumes and formal wear, including bespoke bridal-wear. Examples of her work can be found at www.societybelle.co.uk.

Lighting Designer Alan Valentine

Alan's previous work for Blackeyed Theatre includes *Teechers*, *Mother Courage* and *Misery*. His other lighting design credits include – for Original Theatre – *The Importance of Being Earnest, The Madness of King George, Dancing atLughnasa, Journey's End, Shakespeare's R&J, See How They Run* and *Twelfth Night,* and – for Youth Music Theatre UK – *A Winter's Tale, Help! Get me out of this Musical, A Teenage Opera, The Great Gatsby, Fagin, Mort, MacBeth, Tess of the D'Urbevilles, Out There and Loserville the Musical* (workshop production).

For South Hill Park Arts Centre, Alan's credits include *Private Peaceful*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V, MacBeth, The Magic Finger, James and the Giant Peach, Just So, Seussical the Musical, The Importance of Being Earnest* and the large-scale outdoor event *Wild Fire.*

He recently worked on *Crazy for You* for Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, and he regularly works as a relighter for James Finnemore (*Terra*) and Hofesh Shechter Company, touring productions of *Sun*, *PoliticalMother*, *Barbarians* and *Show*.

Blackeyed Theatre

Blackeyed Theatre is one of the UK's leading mid-scale touring theatre companies. Since 2004 we have been creating exciting opportunities for artists and audiences by producing theatre that's audacious, accessible and memorable. Blackeyed Theatre has two principal objectives through the work it produces; to provide audiences and artists with fresh, challenging work; and to make that work sustainable by reaching as wide and diverse an audience as possible. Over the past few years, Blackeyed Theatre has balanced these artistic and business objectives by creating new, exciting versions of established classics in unique ways and by identifying relevance with today's audiences.

Recent examples of this include the company's 2016/17 production of *Frankenstein*, which used Bunraku puppetry to portray the Creature, the 2015 production of *The Great Gatsby*, whose cast of seven doubled up as a 1920s jazz band, and the 2012 production of Brecht's *Mother Courage And her Children*, set in a post-apocalyptic world, designed to establish relevance with 21st century world events.

Recent new commissions include Sherlock Holmes: The Sign Of Four and The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde (both by Nick Lane) Frankenstein and Dracula (both by John Ginman), as well as The Great Gatsby (by Stephen Sharkey), which was published by Methuen.

In 2014, Blackeyed's production of *Not About Heroes* by Stephen MacDonald toured to 45 UK theatres. Combining newly commissioned music and projection, this was a highly theatrical, multi-sensory production of an established classic.

Other touring productions include *Teechers* (John Godber), *The Trial* (Steven Berkoff), *Oh What A Lovely War* (Theatre Workshop), *The Madness of George III* (Alan Bennett), *Alfie* (Bill Naughton), *The Cherry Orchard* (Anton Chekhov), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Bertolt Brecht), the world premiere of *Oedipus* (Steven Berkoff) and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Bertolt Brecht).

In 2009 Blackeyed Theatre became an associate company of South Hill Park Arts Centre, and in 2011 it launched its first new writing scheme, Pulse, with the intention to provide a new writer with the opportunity to see their work produced professionally on stage. The winning play, The Beekeeper, was performed initially at South Hill Park in Bracknell before transferring to Waterloo East Theatre in London for a three week run, where it received three Off West End Theatre Award nominations.

We strive to make our work sustainable by producing theatre that audiences want to see in ways that challenge their expectations, by bringing together artists with a genuine passion for the work they produce, and through an appreciation that titles of work with a wide appeal can still be performed in ways that push artistic boundaries. In short, it's about following audiences but also leading them, being affordable and responsive to demand while innovating and challenging expectations.



Images / Online Media / Contact Details

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Marketing Materials

Download from:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/u1kgep7tb83uyxa/AABXzK_yZXJizu0fFyoeTSQfa?dl=0 Includes brochure images, production and press photos, education pack, E-shot images, Twitter/Facebook headers, logos, layered artwork.

Teaser Trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOBSKqf9CYE

Show Trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mP58-1DdNLw

Interviews: Cast and creative team are available for interviews.

Social media links:

Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/blackeyedtheatre/

Twitter

https://twitter.com/Blackeyedtheatr

#JaneEyreTour

Youtube playlist

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1310ED26A6AADB80

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