

NODA Review – Jane Eyre | Michael G Williamson | Noda Representative: District 1

This was the atmospheric adaptation by Willis Hall and the simple presentation on a virtually empty stage, with good lighting and sound effects admirably supported this. A large cast of 19, covering the 37 named characters, worked hard as a team to capture the imagination of the audience and there were no weak links. Scene succeeded scene and the pace never faltered. At the centre of the production was the character of Jane herself and the sensitive portrayal given by Anwen Pugh was both moving and memorable. This was a low-key, but extremely powerful, performance which aroused immediate sympathy and rapport. The role is not an easy one and Anwen is to be congratulated on creating a very sincere and believable interpretation. She was well supported by Bob Pugh as an impressive Mr Rochester. There were also strong performances from Caroline Harbord, Amanda Rogers, Jeanette Brown, and Mark Lamberth. It was excellent to note the large and enthusiastic audiences and the much improved lighting in memory of the late Jack Hyde, a well-loved, long term Member of the Club.

Jane Eyre wins her man ... and the hearts of the 400 people who came to watch us. The feedback has been outstanding, with the production described as 'amazing' and 'superb'. It brought some people close to tears.

Thursday's performance raised several hundred pounds for the Mayor of Huntingdon's charities, with an audience of over 100. Friday's house must be a record – nearly 160 people – and Saturday's was nearly as good. We haven't got the final figures yet, but we certainly made a sizeable profit.

My thanks to Kat Sexton for publicity, and to John Morgan for the atmospheric photograph of Anwen Pugh that we used on the poster – both did a lot to bring in the audiences.

The cast of 19, which included people new to the stage as well as experienced actors, was uniformly excellent. Most of the cast played several parts, from narrators to servants to aristocrats, and differentiated them beautifully.

Of course the play depends very much on the two main roles, Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester, and we had wonderful performances from Anwen and Bob Pugh. Despite being father and daughter they conveyed the passion of the fictional relationship beautifully and thoroughly convincingly, and portrayed the complexities and depth of the two characters very clearly.

The lighting was probably the most complicated we've ever attempted, and after John Morgan and I designed it, Mel Pugsley created it very effectively. Chris Topham came up with perfect sound effects, Carol Wadey did an amazing job rustling up dozens of authentic looking costumes – as well as doing make-up at the performances. Kelly Mason had complete success with hair and wigs, and Richard Meredith likewise with props. Ann Monk, as producer, made sure with her usual efficiency that everything was done on time.

I'm very grateful to all the people I've mentioned and to the many others who helped in one way or another. My thanks to all of you for turning my vision of the play into a triumphant reality.

Michael Black (Director)