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## Jane Eyre

Novel by Charlotte Brontë, adapted by Polly Teale

Studio Theatre

Tuesday 22 May 2018

Reviewed by Delia Lee on behalf of Brian Oliver, District 12 Representative, South West Region

This is such a well-loved novel; it is always with some trepidation that I watch adaptations. However this one was excellent; really catching the essence of the story and its characters.

The set was exceptional, with a staircase up to the attic room and a cutaway door so that the actors could be seen on both sides. A fireplace and armchair stage right, a simple bench on a raised area stage left and an ingenious pull out bed under the stairs completed what turned out to be a very versatile and interesting space. There were also projections on the back wall to capture the changing scenes and seasons and some very good atmospheric lighting.

Of course it is so important to have an excellent leading lady in the role of Jane Eyre and **Alice Hudson** did not disappoint, fulfilling the role beautifully. She had a lovely serene quality and delivered her lines with clarity and emotion.

Likewise, **Adam Barge** played Rochester with confidence and captured the brooding often abrupt character of the man.

I note from the Director's notes that central to this adaptation is the idea that Bertha is not a separate entity, but rather a different facet of Jane. This wasn't immediately obvious and I am sure that many in the audience, like myself, initially thought the young girl, played by **Sophie Townsend**, was just a friend dancing around as Jane read her book. However it soon became apparent that she was also Jane, playing the more rebellious side of her character and willing her on to be outspoken. I did wonder whether it would have been more obvious if she had worn the same clothes, but realised later in the production that this would not have been possible once she also became Mrs Rochester. When she descended the stairs, you were never sure if she was Jane's alter ego or Bertha, but Sophie played both roles with great emotion. I think it did work in the end, although it was a little confusing at times.

The other actors played an array of characters from clergymen to dogs, children to villagers. They all switched between roles effortlessly and made each character believable. This was a first rate cast who coped admirably with the complexity of this adaptation.

The original score, commissioned from Rupert Egerton-Smith, was a great addition and worked really well. I particularly liked the moment when Jane took off her smock and replaced it with a corset and hooped skirt, signifying her transformation into adulthood; with Bertha at the same time becoming the mad Mrs Rochester in the attic room.

### National Operatic and Dramatic Association

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This accomplished and enjoyable production was very thoughtfully directed by **Tamsin Jacson**, who brought out the best in this talented cast.

Many congratulations to everyone involved and good luck with the rest of your run.

Delia Lee

NB The comments above solely form the view of the representative attending and only reflect the performance seen.

## **National Operatic and Dramatic Association**

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