

FIRE & ICE

A retelling of *Jane Eyre* in ballet is a highlight of this month's programme at the *Richmond Theatre*. *Absolutely* has a preview

Words **YVETTE MURRELL**

The mad woman in the attic isn't an obvious character for a ballet, but she certainly makes an interesting antidote to the sugar plum fairy. Marking the 200th anniversary of Charlotte Brontë's birth, Northern Ballet's new production of *Jane Eyre* is set to come to the Richmond Theatre this month with its dark tale of secrets and lies.

Staged in three acts, the story follows Jane's life from her dark and lonely childhood through to falling madly in love with her employer, the mysterious Mr. Rochester, a relationship which soon becomes far more complex than she could have anticipated. Despite everything that Jane goes through, the strength of her character does not falter. She is passionate, and her determination to embrace independence, take control of her own destiny and challenge those who seek to control her while fully embracing her femininity, has inspired renowned British choreographer Cathy Marston to create a highly original adaptation for the modern-day audience.

Marston has a long running success of re-telling classic stories, and as she returns to the Northern Ballet for the second time, she is accompanied by critically acclaimed composer Philip Feeney who has compiled both new and existing score for this production. Feeney has been collaborating with the Northern Ballet for over 25 years and is best known for his compositions *Cinderella* and *The*



the Royal Opera House from 2002 to 2006 and Director of the Bern Ballet in Switzerland from 2007 to 2013.

Marston says: 'Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was a novel far ahead of its time and when I think of *Jane Eyre* I feel inspired by images of her passionate but impossible relationship with Mr Rochester, the fire and emotional destruction symbolised by Bertha Mason, the infamous woman in the attic, the contrasting icy moorland through which she seems to run from one chapter of her life to another, and of course her final reunion with Rochester. But these images only touch the surface of a character and a book that continue to provoke and move, generation after generation, re-read after

re-read. After creating ballets inspired by Emily Brontë's *Cathy*, Ibsen's *Mrs Alving* and Nabokov's *Lolita*, it seems both exciting and inevitable that Charlotte's *Jane* is drawing me towards her.'

Richmond Theatre, with its distinctive 19th century features, will provide a suitably atmospheric setting for the London premiere of this exciting and contemporary ballet. This fascinating interpretation promises to be a captivating, must-see experience for all theatre goers and a perfect opportunity for those less well versed in ballet to be introduced to the genre with a familiar and accessible narrative. ♦

Richmond Theatre, 31 May – 1 Jun 2016,
Box Office 0844 871 7651
atgtickets.com/richmond
northernballet.com

●● *Jane Eyre*
CONTINUES TO
PROVOKE & MOVE,
generation after
GENERATION ●●

Hunchback of Notre Dame. In addition, theatrical designer Patrick Kinmouth has designed both the costumes and the set, with lighting by Alistair West.

Jane Eyre will be Cathy Marston's second full-length production for Northern Ballet, following her creation of the Dickens classic *A Tale of Two Cities* for the company in 2008. She was educated in Cambridge and at the Royal Ballet School and was Associate Artist at