



AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS



LOUIS KARCHIN

Jane Eyre

Libretto by Diane Osen

Zetlan • MacPherson • Meglioranza • Thompson
Thurman • Giordano • Cannedy • Best • Fry
Orchestra of the League of Composers • Karchin



Louis
KARCHIN
(b. 1951)

Jane Eyre (2010–14)

An Opera in Three Acts

Libretto by Diane Osen (b. 1956)

Based on the novel by Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855)

Jane Eyre **Jennifer Zetlan, Soprano**
Edward Rochester **Ryan MacPherson, Tenor**
Roderick Ingram / St. John Rivers . . **Thomas MeglIORANZA, Baritone**
Mrs. Ingram / Diana Rivers **Jessica Thompson, Soprano**
Blanche Ingram **Katrina Thurman, Soprano**
Mrs. Fairfax **Kimberly Giordano, Soprano**
Richard Mason / Mr. Briggs **Adam CANNEDY, Baritone**
Mary Rivers / Bessie **Jessica Best, Mezzo-Soprano**
Mr. Wood **David Salsbery Fry, Bass**

Orchestra of the League of Composers

Louis Karchin, Conductor

Casting Director: Jennifer Rivera • Rehearsal Pianist: Isabella Dawis

The composer wishes to thank James Schaeffer, Director of the Center for Contemporary Opera (CCO), for his championing of *Jane Eyre*, both as a winner of CCO's 2012 competition for new works, and for undertaking the fully-staged world premiere performances in October of 2016, at the Kaye Playhouse in Manhattan. Additional thanks to Director Darren Woods and the Fort Worth Opera for the selection of *Jane Eyre* for their inaugural Frontiers Series in 2012. The recording of the opera, in September, 2017, was supported by deeply appreciated funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, the Research Challenge Fund of New York University, research funds of the Department of Music at New York University, the Samuel and Beverly Sirota Endowment of the Jewish Community Foundation, and individual donors. The composition of *Jane Eyre* was supported, in part, by a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation to the composer in 2011–12.

Act I

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| ① | Scene 1: Bedroom of Edward Rochester, Thornfield
(<i>Eyre, Rochester</i>) | 15:24 |
| ② | Scene 2: Drawing room at Thornfield
(<i>Roderick Ingram, Mrs. Ingram, Rochester, Blanche Ingram, Eyre, Fairfax</i>) | 19:27 |
| ③ | Scene 3: Study of Edward Rochester, Thornfield
(<i>Rochester, Mason, Eyre, Fairfax, Bessie</i>) | 11:07 |

Act II

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| ④ | Scene 1: Drawing Room at Thornfield
(<i>Fairfax, Eyre, Rochester</i>) | 9:57 |
| ⑤ | Scene 2: The orchard outside Thornfield
(<i>Eyre, Rochester</i>) | 13:54 |
| ⑥ | Scene 3: The chapel at Thornfield
(<i>Wood, Rochester, Briggs, Eyre</i>) | 12:13 |

Act III

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| ⑦ | Scene 1: A one-room schoolhouse in a rural landscape
(<i>Diana Rivers, Mary Rivers, St. John Rivers, Eyre, Children</i>) | 24:20 |
| ⑧ | Scene 2: A sitting room of Moor House, home of the Rivers family
(<i>St. John Rivers, Eyre</i>) | 10:07 |
| ⑨ | Scene 3: The parlor at Ferndean, hunting lodge of Edward Rochester
(<i>Fairfax, Eyre, Rochester</i>) | 13:18 |

Jane Eyre

Music by Louis Karchin (b. 1951) • Libretto by Diane Osen (b. 1956)

Louis Karchin's *Jane Eyre* – An interview with the composer

Over the past two decades, composer Louis Karchin has created an *oeuvre* of acclaimed vocal works: two extended pieces for baritone and orchestra – *Gods of Winter* (2006), on poems of Dana Gioia, and *American Visions* (2012), settings of the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko – *Four Songs on Poems of Seamus Heaney* (2014), for soprano and chamber ensemble, the masque *Orpheus* (2003), which employs a poem by Stanley Kunitz, and an hour-long one-act opera, *Romulus* (2005), based on a play by Alexandre Dumas. While he has set some of the most prominent poets of our time, composing a work based on one of the vast and iconic novels of the 19th century, by the beloved author Charlotte Brontë, presented both a challenge and an unparalleled opportunity.

Karchin says, "*Jane Eyre* was composed between 2010 and 2014, and it is, by far, the largest project I have ever undertaken. The libretto itself was a feat of compression, and it was Diane's idea, both from a dramatic and practical standpoint, to introduce Jane as a governess, already serving Edward Rochester. Her inspired decision to open with a fire raging in Rochester's bedroom recreated only one of many dramatic scenes that faithfully echo Brontë's narrative and distinctive syntax." While this is their first collaboration, Karchin and Osen had met many years earlier through their daughters, and Karchin frequently consulted Osen, an established writer with a background in opera, on questions about poetry he was setting.

The first scene of *Act I* is roughly divided into three parts: the opening "fire music," followed by two arias of Jane's. The first traces Jane's transformation from unloved orphan to self-assured governess; the second, following a short freer section, is more reflective and speaks of Jane's growing fascination with Rochester. The scene's placid ending is a direct foil to its turbulent beginning. The opera's second scene, set in the lavish drawing room of Thornfield,

Rochester's home, is layered with reference points, including some tropes from traditional opera. Karchin says, "Diane and I wanted to give Rochester more obvious appeal – so we represented him as a man of culture and decided that he should be an opera lover. Donizetti is a composer with whom he might have been acquainted, and three Donizetti operas are mentioned in the text. All are alluded to as fleeting musical references, but the one most relevant for *Jane Eyre* was *Lucia di Lammermoor*, with its own 'mad' scene. For example, Rochester explains to Blanche's mother that Donizetti is 'a composer, Mrs. Ingram, for the opera, the most sublime art invented by man.' At that moment, Rochester is pensive, though, thinking of his own situation, and recalls a phrase from Lucia's mad scene (here played by the horns). Mrs. Ingram, blithely unaware of Rochester's circumstances, or his train of thought, dismisses the entire art form in a sentence, 'Mr. Ingram never cared for music, nor for the Italians,' and the music correspondingly changes abruptly."

"The second scene also contains folk music," Karchin notes, "and in a few cases, it incorporates songs gleaned from a book of 19th-century English parlor music loaned to me by a musicology colleague." The appearance of Rochester, disguised as a gypsy, references another touchstone from traditional opera, in which the fortune teller is a frequent character type. In Rochester's first major aria, the "gypsy" compliments Jane and searches to uncover her true feelings about him.

Scene 3 includes Rochester's substantial second aria, in which he begins to confide in Jane. The arrival of the servant, Bessie, leads to the largest ensemble piece of the opera, a spirited quartet with Jane, Mrs. Fairfax, Bessie and Rochester that crests to form the act's ebullient climax.

Beginning with *Act II*, the score moves more into the realm of *arioso*, relying less on traditional set pieces. Karchin says, "I felt in the first act that arias for the protagonists would help to establish their characters and the emotions that motivate them. In the second act, with

its constant action, a more contemporary technique of creating monologues not dependent on standard musical forms seemed to best propel the narrative of the tale."

Towards the end of *Act II, Scene 1*, Jane and Rochester sing ecstatically of their love and forthcoming marriage. Then, as the orchestral interlude intimates, Jane begins to fear the future. "It was important that the interlude between *Scenes 1* and *2* – one of the most extended of the opera – gradually transform the mood into its opposite," Karchin notes. "Now Jane is alone, in an orchard at night, waiting for Rochester, who is late, and she is troubled by ominous signs." The scene leads to Jane's "nightmare" monologue, which recalls a trumpet motif from the prior interlude. The climax is a duet in which Jane relates waking to find her wedding veil torn to shreds, and Rochester denies any cause for concern. The duet, some of the most complex music of the opera, is based on a moment in *Act I* when Rochester is caught between praise of Jane and trepidation at Mason's sudden appearance. The duet expands that music greatly, layering it with counterpoint.

There is contrasting levity in the wedding scene, as the pastor, Mr. Wood, plods in his recitation of the marriage vows and Rochester tries to hurry him along. The pastor barely budes (as depicted by the incremental tempo marking in the score, "Only slightly faster than before"). Rochester's final monologue in *Act II* finds him losing control and lashing out, declaring that he is above God's laws.

Musical connections abound in the second act. In addition to the above-mentioned duet, Mrs. Fairfax's entrance in *Act II* expands the music of her previous entrance in *Act I*. Moments later, as Jane reflects on her visit to her Aunt Reed, the music refers back to Bessie's aria of *Act I* in which Bessie requested that Jane return home. The lawyer Briggs's music as he objects to the wedding taking place, is, in fact, the music of the interlude in *Act I* that presages Mason's visit, now overlaid with a vocal part. The moment at the end of Rochester's final monologue, where he pronounces himself above the constraints of traditional morality, transforms music presented in much quieter fashion close to the beginning

of the act, in which Mrs. Fairfax counsels Jane towards a conservative approach to her relations with Rochester before the wedding.

The overture to *Act III* represents Jane's harrowing flight from Thornfield, gradually calming to reveal the pastoral mood of a country setting. The introduction of children is a crucial component of *Act III, Scene 1*. Jane is teaching in a one-room schoolhouse, and providing her charges with the positive educational experience she was denied. "Musically, this opened an opportunity for another orchestral flowering," explains Karchin, "as the music of the chorus builds steadily from an accompaniment of 'one note at a time' to a 'symphony of sound' representing the children's happiness (and even providing for the possibility, towards the end, of a children's ballet). Afterwards the 'sweet side' of St. John's (pronounced "*SINjin's*") character appears, as he cheerfully describes to Jane the news of her good fortune. In *Scene 2*, by contrast, Osen's libretto is deft in turning the tables, showing St. John's puritanical side, as Jane ponders his proposal of a marriage based on single-minded service to God, rather than love."

The transition between *Scenes 2* and *3* is a final orchestral showpiece, depicting Jane's carriage ride back to Thornfield. As this instrumental climax fades and the carriage slows, a bowed flexatone (one of the most innovative touches of orchestration in the opera) suggests the brakes of its wheels. Mrs. Fairfax relates the story of the fire that has destroyed Thornfield and incapacitated Rochester; as the music gains in intensity, it recalls the "fire music" of the very opening of the opera. A slow transition follows as Rochester now nearly blind, gradually intuits that Jane has returned to him. Jane's return provides a redemptive quality to the end of the opera that is underscored by a touching moment. Rochester, one arm incapacitated, attempts to play and sing one of the folk songs that reminds him of happier days with Jane. She joins him in the song as a duet and they affirm their enduring love. The dissonance found during St. John's demands on Jane and her subsequent indecision is banished in favor of a final, moving duet, some of the most resolutely consonant music that Karchin has composed to date.

Karchin's wide-ranging harmonic language in *Jane Eyre* is a hallmark of the work. "This was planned carefully and is intentional," notes the composer. "Opera needs contrast, and in this sprawling work, I felt that the more variety, the greater the possibility of emphasizing drama and delineating character. There are other ways to do it, of course, but this path seemed most appropriate for *Jane Eyre*. The opera also flows from the language of my previous vocal music, with every stylistic element simply more pronounced here due to the vast dimensions at hand. The greatest challenge was to try to create a seamless flow always – the intended effect was the opposite of 'collage.' Ideally, I would like the audience to think not of harmonic shifts, but rather sit back and listen to the work as one continuous entity."

The world premiere staging of *Jane Eyre* took place on 20 and 22 October 2016, at the Kaye Playhouse in Manhattan, under the auspices of the Center for Contemporary Opera. All of the singers from the original production signed on to record the following September. The principals – soprano Jennifer Zetlan (Jane) and tenor Ryan MacPherson (Rochester) – are vocalists experienced in both contemporary music and standard repertoire who have performed on some of the most

acclaimed stages in the world. Two singers from the cast of Karchin's *Romulus* – soprano Katrina Thurman (Blanche Ingram) and baritone Thomas Meglioranza (Roderick Ingram/St. John Rivers) – appear in roles written for them. Karchin is fortunate that the Orchestra of the League of Composers, which he has conducted in many concerts, was available to record the opera. Karchin says, "There is a level of working rapport that I have with these musicians that I value immeasurably. They met every challenge head on." Thus, this recording of the work has the benefit of singers who have inhabited the roles onstage, honing their musical and dramatic interpretations of them, sympathetic and committed orchestral collaborators, and, certainly not least, Karchin's operatic score: an ambitious, multi-faceted, and boldly engaging work.

Christian Carey

Composer, musicologist, and theorist Christian Carey is editor of the contemporary music site *Sequenza 21* and has published articles in *Perspectives of New Music*, *Intégral*, *Musical America*, and *Tempo*.

Synopsis

Act I

As the opera begins, Jane Eyre, an orphaned young governess, is fearlessly dousing a fire set in the bedroom of her employer, the dashing and insouciant Edward Rochester. Despite the difference in their stations, each senses in the other a singular sensibility, and their banter and reveries reveal their unspoken attachment. In *Scene 2*, set in the lavish drawing room of Thornfield, Rochester's manor, Jane's discernment contrasts sharply with the disingenuousness of Blanche Ingram, an imperious beauty determined to marry Rochester. Disguising himself as a gypsy, he exposes Blanche's true nature, while trying to ascertain Jane's. In *Scene 3*, Rochester trusts Jane to tend to Richard Mason, an unexpected guest with a mysterious injury; but further conversation is interrupted by an urgent summons for Jane to attend to her dying Aunt Reed, who has a secret to share as well.

Act II

Rochester's housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax is distressed by the news that Jane, newly returned to Thornfield, is to marry Mr. Rochester – and counsels her to resist his certain advances. That the new couple is deeply in love is unmistakable, but Jane insists on retaining her own identity and remaining Rochester's equal. In *Scene 2*, she confesses that her joy in their imminent nuptials has been dimmed by nightmares and eerie omens, which Rochester dismisses. In the final scene, set in the manor chapel, the groom can barely contain his impatience to exchange vows; but the ceremony is nevertheless cut short when Mr. Briggs, an attorney, declares that Rochester is already married – to Mason's sister. Rochester bitterly recounts his personal history and how his wife, now quite mad, came to live in the attic at Thornfield. He begs Jane to run away with him, declaring that conventional morality should not keep them apart; but despite the pain it will cause them both, she refuses to sacrifice her principles to her passion.



Game of cards in the drawing room at Thornfield

Photo: Steven Pisano

Act III

Jane is now teaching in a schoolhouse far away from Rochester. Her rescuers – sisters Mary and Diana, and their dour brother, pastor St. John – learn Jane's real name and family connections through a letter from Mr. Briggs, who also reveals Jane's surprising, and heretofore unknown, status as the beneficiary of a large inheritance. In *Scene 2*, St. John reveals a far more disturbing secret: he now believes it is Jane's God-given duty to marry him and support his missionary work in India. Still captivated by Rochester, and horrified by the prospect of a loveless marriage, Jane nonetheless considers St. John's proposal – until she hears a voice calling her name. In *Scene 3*, Jane and Mrs. Fairfax converse again, under very different circumstances: Mrs. Rochester has died in a blaze set by her own hand; and in trying to save her, Mr. Rochester has been nearly blinded and maimed. He and Jane are joyfully reunited, secure in their love and they vow never to part.

Diane Osen

Louis Karchin



Photo: J Henry Fair

Over a career spanning more than four decades composer Louis Karchin has amassed a portfolio of over 90 compositions, appeared as conductor with numerous ensembles, co-founded new music groups including the Chamber Players of the League/ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music), the Orchestra of the League of Composers, the Washington Square Ensemble, and the Harvard Group for New Music, and overseen the formation of a graduate program in music composition for New York University's Faculty of Arts & Science. Acclaimed by critic Andrew Porter in *The New Yorker*, his works have garnered distinguished honors, including three awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship, three National Endowment for the Arts Awards, and Koussevitzky, Barlow, and Fromm commissions. The debut album of his first opera, *Romulus* (Naxos 8.669030), was hailed as one of the best recordings of 2011 by *Fanfare* magazine, and a choice of the month in *BBC Music Magazine*. His masque *Orpheus* was previously singled out as one of the ten best new works of 2005 by music critic Alex Ross. Karchin's music is published by C.F. Peters Corporation, and the American Composers Alliance, with recordings on the Naxos, Bridge, Albany and New World labels. Karchin (born Philadelphia, 1951) studied at the Eastman School of Music and Harvard University; he is Professor of Music at New York

University. His principal teachers were Samuel Adler, Joseph Schwantner and Fred Lerdahl; and as a Leonard Bernstein Fellow in Composition at Tanglewood, studied with Gunther Schuller and Bruno Maderna. Additional studies included conducting with Leon Barzin in Paris on a Harvard University John Knowles Paine Fellowship, and opera conducting with Boris Goldovsky. www.louiskarchin.com

Diane Osen



Librettist Diane Osen graduated from Vassar College and earned an MA in English from Rutgers University, before embarking on a career as a corporate communications executive specializing in technology and entertainment. After establishing her own consultancy, she taught writing for several years at New York University while publishing numerous articles and the first of four books. One of these, *The Book that Changed my Life*, is a collection of original interviews with prize-winning novelists, historians and poets Don DeLillo, Alice McDermott, Charles Johnson, David McCullough and Philip Levine, among others. Featured in major print and broadcast media, the book inspired a raft of titles with similar themes. It also inspired her to propose adapting *Jane Eyre*, the book that changed her

life, into an opera. Osen's interest in literature, theater and music was nurtured by her mother Shirley Osen and her father David Osen, who began his singing career at New York City Opera, performing in *The Student Prince*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and *Die Fledermaus*. Her parents' tenth birthday present to her – tickets to a performance at the Met of *Aida* – is a vivid memory she continues to treasure.

Jennifer Zetlan



www.jenniferzetlan.com

Internationally recognized soprano Jennifer Zetlan has appeared on numerous opera and concert stages, as well as recital venues and on Broadway. Known for her passion for contemporary music, Zetlan has featured in the premieres of numerous American operas, including Nico Muhly's *Two Boys* (Metropolitan Opera) and *Dark Sisters* (Opera Philadelphia, Gotham Chamber Opera), John Musto's *Rhoda and the Fossil Hunt* (On Site Opera) and Daron Hagen's *Amelia* (Seattle Opera). Other contemporary works she has performed include arias from David Diamond's *The Noblest Game* (Seattle Symphony), Kaija Saariaho's *The Tempest Songbook* (Gotham Chamber Opera) and György Ligeti's *Requiem* (American Symphony Orchestra).

Ryan MacPherson



Ryan MacPherson combines a vast repertoire with an expertise in modern and contemporary music. Engagements include the Teatro Real, Madrid, the Wiener Konzerthaus and Buxton Festival, and numerous companies throughout North America. His discography includes *Orphée* by Philip Glass, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat* by Michael Nyman, the collected songs of Charles Ives (Naxos), and works by Charles Wuorinen. He received the Richard F. Gold Career award for his contributions to the New York City Opera. A graduate of the University of Missouri and Yale University, MacPherson resides in Wilmington, DE with his wife, soprano Sharin Apostolou.

Thomas Meglioranza



Baritone Thomas Meglioranza graduated from Grinnell College and the Eastman School of Music, and was a winner of the Walter W. Naumburg and Concert Artists Guild competitions. A frequent oratorio soloist, he has also sung Copland's *Old American Songs* (National Symphony Orchestra), Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (LA Philharmonic), and Harbison's *Fifth Symphony* (Boston Symphony Orchestra). His operatic roles include Pierrot in *Die tote Stadt*, Chou En-Lai in *Nixon in China* and Prior Walter in Peter Eötvös' *Angels in America*. Lauded in *The New Yorker*, he has given recitals around the world with pianist Reiko Uchida, and recorded albums of Schubert and Fauré.

www.meglioranza.typepad.com

Jessica Thompson



Highly praised by *The Baltimore Sun*, soprano Jessica Thompson has long been active in the contemporary opera and new music community, not only as a performer, but also as company manager for the Center for Contemporary Opera in New York from 2012 to 2017. Thompson's lush, full lyric voice has been heard in numerous roles, including Violetta in *La traviata*, and the title roles in *Manon*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, and Luigi Zaninelli's *Snow White*. In addition to her performing career, she has developed a second career interest in language pathology.

www.jessicathompsonopera.wixsite.com/jessicathompsonop

Katrina Thurman



Soprano Katrina Thurman has built an impressive reputation performing in traditional opera while also specializing in contemporary works. Her repertoire encompasses over 45 roles in six languages and has taken her to theaters throughout the United States and Europe, including the Opéra National de Lyon, the Festival Lyrique de Belle-île-en-Mer, Oper Bonn, Opera Philadelphia, Dallas Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Florentine Opera, the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera; Opera Omaha, Utah Opera, Tulsa Opera, American Opera Projects, Syracuse Opera, Sacramento Opera, Anchorage Opera, Shreveport Opera, Indianapolis Opera, the Center for Contemporary Opera, and the Aspen and Shippensburg Festivals, among others.

www.katrinathurman.com

Kimberly Giordano



Acclaimed by *The Seattle Times*, soprano Kimberly Giordano's recent performances include the premiere of John Muehleisen's *But Who Shall Return Us Our Children – A Kipling Passion*, Murry Sidlin's *Defiant Requiem: Verdi At Terezin*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, the title role in Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*, and Strauss's *Vier letzte Lieder*. She made her Carnegie Hall soloist debut singing Vaughan Williams' *Dona nobis pacem*. A Pacific Northwest favorite, Giordano has performed with many area companies including Seattle Opera, Tacoma Opera, Spectrum Dance Theater, Music of Remembrance, the Thalia, Cascade and Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestras, and Choral Arts Northwest.

www.kimberlygiordano.com

Adam Cannedy



Baritone Adam Cannedy has appeared with companies including the New York City Opera at Lincoln Center, The Atlanta Opera, Opera Omaha, Opera San Jose, On Site Opera, the Center for Contemporary Opera, the Light Opera of New York, Opera North, and the Wexford Festival Opera, Ireland. A champion of modern music, he has collaborated with and performed for contemporary composers including Carlisle Floyd, William Bolcom, Tom Cipullo, Stephen Paulus, Richard Wargo, Simon Sargon, Peter Ash, Oliver Knussen, Ned Rorem, and Philip Glass. An active recording artist, he can also be heard on several cast recordings with the Light Opera of New York in collaboration with Albany Records.

www.adamcannedy.com

Jessica Ann Best



Jessica Ann Best will make her LA Opera debut this season in Getty's *The Canterville Ghost* and *Usher House*. Best has debuted the *International Carol Suites* by Mark Hayes, a Distinguished Concerts International New York (DCINY) production at Carnegie Hall and premiered the role of *Alice Ryley* by Michael Ching, with the Savannah Voice Festival. Best has been a featured artist with the Savannah Music Festival, the Savannah Voice Festival, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Florida Orchestra, and the Rochester Oratorio Society. She has performed with the Santa Fe Opera, Opera Tampa, the Center for Contemporary Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, Nickel City Opera, and Finger Lakes Opera.

www.jessicaannbest.wordpress.com

David Salsbery Fry



Praised by *concerti* magazine, bass David Salsbery Fry is a tireless advocate for new music. In the same season he created the role of Mr. Wood in *Jane Eyre* he also premiered roles in Scott Wheeler's *Naga* and Chaya Czernowin's *Infinite Now*. Other premieres include song cycles *The Poets* by Juliana Hall and *ten songs of yesno* by Osnat Netzer. Additional recent engagements include *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *Peter Grimes* for Aspen Music Festival, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for Vero Beach Opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Tanglewood, *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Die Zauberflöte* in Tel Aviv, and his Mostly Mozart debut in Stravinsky's *Renard*.

www.davidsalsberyfry.com

Orchestra of the League of Composers



Since 2009, the Orchestra of the League of Composers has presented concerts of new music under the auspices of its parent organization, the League of Composers/ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music). Founded in 2009 by then-ISCM president David Gordon, flutist Sue Ann Kahn, and composer Louis Karchin, the orchestra debuted at the Miller Theatre at Columbia University in a program of works by Elliott Carter, Christopher Dietz, Julia Wolfe, Charles Wuorinen, and Alvin Singleton, which was critically acclaimed by Anthony Tommasini in *The New York Times*. The orchestra has commissioned and premiered ten new works to date, and presented 19 New York or world premieres. The orchestra has been consistently praised by *The New York Times*: in 2010 its

season finale was noted for its spirit and programming, critic Steve Smith again praised its ambitious programming in 2013, and in 2014, the orchestra's performances were lauded. In 2016, the orchestra was invited to participate in the NY Phil Biennial, and in 2017, received a special award and citation from the Fritz Reiner Center for Contemporary Music at Columbia University.

Orchestra of the League of Composers
Louis Karchin, Conductor

Violin I
Keats Dieffenbach, Concertmaster
Emilie-Anne Gendron
Courtney Orlando
Andrea Schultz

Violin II
Deborah Wong, Principal
Arthur Moeller
Mary Rowell
Domenic Salerno

Viola
Lois Martin, Principal
Stephanie Griffin
Jessica Meyer
Lih-Wen Ting

Cello
Christopher Finckel, Principal
Robert Burkhart
Gregory Hesselink
Caroline Stinson

Contrabass
David Romano, Principal
Roger Wagner

Flute
Jayn Rosenfeld
Sue Ann Kahn

Oboe
Jacqueline Leclair
Lillian Copeland

Chorus

Rachel Elezi, Marisa Karchin, Michele Kennedy, Caitlin Mead, Jessica Thompson, Abigail Wright

Clarinet
Benjamin Fingland
Christopher Cullen

Bassoon
Gilbert Dejean
Brad Balliett

French Horn
Sara Cyrus
Aleks Ozolins

Trumpet
Bradford Siroky
Samuel Jones

Trombone
Jonathan Greenberg

Tuba
Dan Peck

Percussion
John Ferrari
William Solomon
Matthew Ward

Harp
Chelsea Lane

Executive Director
Friedrich Kern

Orchestra Contractor
Sue Ann Kahn

Jane Eyre

An Opera in Three Acts
Music by Louis Karchin
Libretto by Diane Osen

Based on the novel by Charlotte Brontë

ACT 1

1 SCENE 1

The curtains part to reveal a darkened stage. At center stage, flames are beginning to spiral up the curtains of the massive canopy bed in which MR. ROCHESTER sleeps; smoke wafts through the air. JANE, wearing only a night dress and a shawl, enters at a run from a door at the left.

JANE, bending over the bed, and shaking MR. ROCHESTER'S shoulder.
Mr. Rochester! Mr. Rochester!

Fearing that MR. ROCHESTER has been overcome, she dashes to the bureau opposite the bed, where a basin and ewer sit. She splashes the water from the basin onto the bed curtains, dousing the fire. Next she hurls the flowers and water from a nearby vase onto MR. ROCHESTER'S recumbent form. As the flames begin to sputter, he stirs.

MR. ROCHESTER, sitting up:
What the devil has happened here?
And who stands panting by the chair?
Has a storm, or flood, perhaps come near?
But no – that's smoke that fouls the air.

JANE:
A fire has been set tonight;
Your very bed has been set alight.

MR. ROCHESTER:
What's this? An elf come to save me?

JANE:
I thank God you're alive, sir!
Shall I light you a candle?

MR. ROCHESTER:
And at these bedclothes have you stare?
I think not; wait a bit, Miss Eyre.

JANE turns her back and walks toward the bureau as MR. ROCHESTER gets out of bed and quickly puts on a dressing gown hanging from one of the bed posts. JANE lights the candle and the room is illuminated.

MR. ROCHESTER:
You may bring the candle here now.

JANE (Walking toward MR. ROCHESTER):
Sir, there is a plot against you!
You must protect yourself, and soon!

MR. ROCHESTER, taking the candle from her and placing it on his desk:
I shall protect us all, I swear!
First tell me what you know, Miss Eyre.

JANE:
I was dreaming in peace, sir,
When startled quite awake
By a low, gurgling murmur
That made my senses quake.
All else was hushed; the clock struck two;
Then footsteps sounded, very near.

A demon laughed – a goblin true!
My marrow froze; I ached with fear.
Still I rose, and called “Who’s there?”
Something moaned, then hissed; the footsteps turned.
With trembling hands the lock I dared;
Saw in your room a fire burned.

MR. ROCHESTER:
You’ve heard that laugh before, I think?
Or a ghoulish sound quite like it?

JANE:
You’ve heard it too! It is Grace Poole,
Who sews and mends in the attic.
Catch her, Sir, lest she strike again –
She’s a creature quite Satanic!

MR. ROCHESTER:
I’ve little fear of that seamstress,
But I shall follow your advice.
I’ll lock her in, so you’ll be safe;
And then return here in a trice.

MR. ROCHESTER departs. JANE wraps her shawl more tightly around her shoulders and begins to pace the room.

JANE:
That mirthless laugh, so weird and low;
A lifetime since I trembled so –
I was but six, an angry child;
Abhorred by all, I acted wild.
Locked in the Red Room, how I cried,
Afraid and trapped where Uncle died.
My jailer? His wife.
Her heart? A stone.
Have pity, I begged; don’t leave me alone.
But proud Aunt Reed refused to stay;
“Jane Eyre,” she said, “You must obey,
You mad, rebellious cat;
You loathsome pest;
The devil’s own.”
A soul without a friend, was I;
There in the Red Room, I yearned to die.

JANE sits down on a chair beside the desk.

But off to school I was sent instead,
To learn among other poor orphans.
How famished we were, eating only stale bread!
No wonder we died by the dozens.
Dear Helen Burns, how I loved her!
Bless those who curse you, she urged me;
Use the power of faith and of prayer.
So I prayed and I drew, I studied and taught;
Aunt Reed, I am now Miss Jane Eyre.
A governess in this great house,
For my master’s charming young ward.
No more haunted by the past,
And blessed in all things by the Lord.

MR. ROCHESTER enters the room.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Still here I see? And quite alone?

JANE, walking toward him:
Is Mrs. Poole locked up? Are we
Now quite safe from her villainy?

MR. ROCHESTER:
Yes, indeed – all thanks to you.
This mistake Grace Poole will rue.

JANE:
What shall you do, sir?

MR. ROCHESTER, leading her back to the chair by the desk, and motioning for her to sit:
You must leave that to me, Miss Eyre.
I trust that meets your approval?

JANE:
By all means, sir. I wouldn’t care
To deal with that fiendish servant.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Yet brave enough to douse a fire!

JANE:
Most men assume women are calm
And content to be left alone
With their knitting or their scones.
But the truth is we crave action!
Just like you, we must be free
To exercise our faculties.

MR. ROCHESTER:
That well may be true; but I trust
You shall not exercise your right
To share tomorrow with the staff
All that’s happened here tonight.

JANE, rising:
You have my word, Sir.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Nor can my house guests be alarmed
By tales of fire in the night.
I know Miss Ingram won’t be charmed
By the story of your courage.
A lady she was bred to be:
Sweet, gentle, accomplished,
A paragon of modesty.
But why do we discuss my guests?
You’re quite fatigued; you need your rest.
Pray wait here just a minute more.
It would not do to have you seen;
I’ll scout the way back to your door.

He closes the door softly, leaving JANE alone again.

JANE, resuming her seat:
My master is a mystery:
Moody; imperious; often severe.
It’s said he has a history
Of bending others to his will.
He does not care for compliments,
And makes no effort to impress.
And yet he can be quite at ease:
He calls me “Witch” and “Sorceress,”
And very slowly, by degrees,
He takes me in his confidence.

JANE rises and begins to pace again, pulling her shawl around her shoulders.

Though our stations be unequal
He hears the music in my soul
As I hear his, despite his growl.
How odd it is, this sympathy:
I dare not hope – but could it be
That we are linked by destiny?

The curtain closes as JANE continues to pace, waiting for MR. ROCHESTER to return.

SCENE 2

The curtains part to reveal the drawing room of Thornfield Hall, MR. ROCHESTER’S home. It is an opulent space, distinguished by elegant furniture and pictures. At stage left, on an overstuffed damask sofa, sit JANE and MRS. FAIRFAX, the housekeeper. Both of the ladies are dressed in plain gray gowns, their embroidery bags in their laps. To the right sit MR. ROCHESTER, MISS BLANCHE INGRAM and MR. RODERICK INGRAM, siblings, and their mother MRS. INGRAM. All four are attired in evening dress, and engaged in a desultory game of cards. Behind them sit two ladies and two gentlemen, similarly attired and also playing cards.

INGRAM:
I’m duly impressed, Rochester!
I thought all you did in Venice
Was woo the beautiful women –

MRS. INGRAM:
And beat the gentleman at whist!

INGRAM:
Quite so! You’ve nearly wiped me out.
But I never knew till now, sir,
That you had devoted yourself
To Lucia de Lammermoor,
Or the treacherous Anne Boleyn,
Or the poisonous Lucretia.

MRS. INGRAM:
And who are these frightful ladies?

INGRAM:
Marvelous creatures brought to life
By an Italian composer.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Donizetti, to be exact.
A composer,
Mrs. Ingram,
For the opera:
The most sublime art
Invented by man.

MRS. INGRAM:
Mr. Ingram never cared for
Music, nor for Italians.

BLANCHE:
But Papa never went abroad;
He did not like the leave the shire.
Our host has seen and heard marvels
Our father could not imagine.

INGRAM:
And what do you know of these, Blanche?
You've never heard an opera!

MR. ROCHESTER:
One need not hear an orchestra
To apprehend the majesty
Of a work by Donizetti.
It has been my honor to whet
Your sister's appetite
For noted musical delights.

BLANCHE:
And my pleasure to hear you sing!

INGRAM:
You are a man of many parts.

ROCHESTER, rising:
I am a slave to novelty –
And to that end, pray excuse me;
I must see to the arrangements
For this evening's entertainment.

MRS. INGRAM:
How delightful!

MR. ROCHESTER:
Miss Eyre, come here and take my place.

JANE, surprised:
!?

MR. ROCHESTER:
You long for action, do you not?

JANE, rising:
But I –

MR. ROCHESTER, cutting her off:
No excuses!
I shall return!
Ladies... Ingram...
Mrs. Fairfax,
Follow me.

*As MR. ROCHESTER and MRS. FAIRFAX depart, JANE
walks to the games table, clearly uncomfortable.*

MRS. INGRAM:
This is most unsettling.

JANE:
For me as well, Madame.
I fear I cannot play.

MRS. INGRAM, coldly, as she turns her cards face down:
We shall not be playing;
You may resume your place.

JANE walks back to the sofa and sits down in the corner.

INGRAM:
I wonder what he plans?

BLANCHE:
Edward knows I love surprises;
It is sweet how he tries to please.
Most of you men fail to realize
That ladies wish to be worshipped.
You gaze at your own reflections,
Stroking your whiskers and sighing.
But Edward needs no correction:
He revels in feminine charms.

And yet, Mama, he plays the fool:
He doesn't send his ward to school –
She learns here with a governess!
Pathetic creatures, every one –
Timid and drab, with naught to say!
Were I the mistress, she'd be gone,
And then the child, without delay.

But I do not wish to compel
Any man to do what is right;
Whomever I marry must be
commanding, resourceful and manly –
Yet willing to yield,
Without my demanding.

MRS. INGRAM, patting her daughter's hand:
Very well said, my dearest Blanche.

*The ladies playing behind them suddenly begin to
applaud, as one of the men quite dramatically throws
down his cards and the other stands to take a small bow.
BLANCHE, INGRAM and MRS. INGRAM join in, to
general merriment. As the company begins to murmur
among themselves, a strange figure enters the Library: a
GYPSY, limping and coughing, and enveloped by a cloak
and hood that hide everything but her eyes. All
conversation ceases as she makes a deep bow to
BLANCHE.*

GYPSY, in a high-pitched voice:
Fear ye not, Lady, nor ye men.
Your host, he has sent me to you,

Your fortune to tell and explain.
Know all that I say will come true.

*The gypsy reaches out to take BLANCHE'S hand, but
she backs off in disgust.*

BLANCHE:
You ugly old creature! I'll go
Where you lead; just don't touch me, I say!
My fate is what I wish to know,
For 'tis best to prepare, come what may.

*BLANCHE strides to the door as the gypsy bows once
again and follows her outside.*

MRS. INGRAM:
How strange that Mr. Rochester
Is acquainted with a gypsy!

INGRAM:
They camp all about the country,
And will do anything for lucre.
Let us resume our game, Mama:
We shall take our turns next, I'm sure.

*INGRAM gathers the cards and proceeds to shuffle them,
while MRS. INGRAM takes a sip of her wine. As he begins
to deal, the game is interrupted by the unexpected return
of BLANCHE to the drawing room. All turn to face her.*

BLANCHE, visibly upset:
Pray, do not ask me what was said;
It was all that one might expect
From a filthy old crone in rags.
And yet I cannot help but fear
That what she revealed is the truth.
Our host has played an awful trick!

BLANCHE turns on her heel and exits the room.

INGRAM, throwing down his cards and following after her:
Blanche, I'm sure it was all in fun!

MRS. INGRAM, *placing her cards on the table and rising:*

Don't upset yourself, dearest!
You don't look well when you're angry!
I say, children, wait for your Mama!

Turning toward the other players:

Don't just sit there like mannequins!
Find that gypsy and throw her out!

As MRS. INGRAM strides out of the room, the other players follow quickly behind her, leaving JANE alone.

JANE, *rising from her spot on the sofa:*

Truly her beauty is eloquent,
Just like her voice, her slashing wit.
What a pupil she must have been:
Apt, of course, but quietly cruel –
That such as she should be his wife!
Mere paste, beside a rough diamond.
What have I wanted all my life?
To love and be loved, equally!
Surely he wishes for this too?
Yet it's Miss Ingram he does woo.

As JANE turns toward the doorway to depart, the GYPSY enters the drawing room.

GYPSY, *making a deep bow, then drawing near:*

Time for your fortune to be told –
But first, cross my palm with silver.
I do but what your host demands.
Are you brave enough to linger?

JANE, *reaching into her purse for a coin, which she hands to the gypsy:*

Surely, you think not to scare me!

GYPSY, *pocketing the coin, and bowing again:*

Who knows what real ladies may fear?
You saw the bride run out of here.

JANE, *stiffly:*

Miss Ingram is still unattached,
And Mr. Rochester quite free.

The GYPSY and JANE sit down at the table.

GYPSY, *gathering the cards into a pile:*

Miss Blanche may no longer be so keen:
I've foretold she'll not get her wish.
Your master is said to be rich,
But his wealth is not what it seems.

The GYPSY gestures to JANE to give him her hand.

JANE:

I've no interest in my master's wealth.

GYPSY:

Any fool could see your future:
The hand is soft; the lifelines clear;
The brow untroubled by regret;
The eyes are bright; the gaze, sincere;
The skin is smooth, the cheeks quite pink;
The mouth, it is quite generous;
Yet what the heart feels is obscured
By a worry without purpose.

Will she seize the joy that beckons
Or persist in guarding her heart?

Will she seek the one who loves her?

Or let scruples keep them apart?

One word, a glance, would pave the way;

The question is: will Miss Eyre try?

If she but wished to, she would find

True happiness in wait close by.

JANE, *withdrawing her hand:*

You've asked many questions, old Gypsy,
But what are the answers? Do tell me!

GYPSY, *snatching back JANE'S hand, and replying in "her" authentic voice:*

The answers are locked within you;
Even a gypsy lacks that key.
You think I rave, yet all I've said
Is naught, Miss Eyre, but what is true.

MR. ROCHESTER removes his hood, revealing his face to JANE'S evident surprise.

JANE:

Sir! Is it you under that hood?

MR. ROCHESTER, *rising:*

It is indeed, Jane; forgive me.

JANE, *rising:*

What sort of silly trick is this?

MR. ROCHESTER:

I did not intend to trick you;
I wanted only to –

MR. ROCHESTER'S apology is interrupted by the sudden return of MRS. FAIRFAX to the drawing room.

MRS. FAIRFAX, *curtseying:*

Pray excuse me for intruding,
I did not think Miss Eyre was here.
A gentleman has come to call
And begs to know when you'll appear.

MR. ROCHESTER:

The devil he does!
What name does he give?

MRS. FAIRFAX:

He said his name is Mason, sir,
From Spanish Town, the West Indies.

MR. ROCHESTER, *gasps and nearly staggers:*

Mr. Richard Mason?

MRS. FAIRFAX:

Aye, that is what he said, sir.

MR. ROCHESTER, *righting himself:*

I'll see him in my study.
Let him know I'm on the way.

MRS. FAIRFAX curtseys again before hurriedly departing. MR. ROCHESTER turns toward JANE.

MR. ROCHESTER:

Jane, I've had a blow –

JANE, *going toward him:*

Lean on me, sir!
What can I do?
I'll give my all
And stand with you.

MR. ROCHESTER, *taking Jane by the arm:*

A comrade true!
Though oh, so slight:
Would that we could stand as one
And fly away into the night.

Releasing her, as he pulls himself up to his full height:

But wishing does not make it so:
I must face facts, and you must go.
Inform my guests the gypsy's fled,
And send them posthaste to bed.
This blasted interruption
Will not set my doom in motion.
Can I trust you with this task?

JANE, *taking Mr. Rochester's proffered arm:*

Need you ask?

3 SCENE 3

The curtains part to reveal MR. ROCHESTER'S study. Bookcases ring three walls; to the left is a sofa, to the right a large desk at which two men are sitting. MR. MASON'S tie is loosened, his sleeves rolled up; he is groaning miserably, and holds his head in one of his hands. MR. ROCHESTER, clearly annoyed, is doing his best to wind a bandage around MASON'S other arm, which is bleeding profusely. On the desk, beside a basin of water and several lengths of gauze, are several bottles of alcohol and crystal glasses.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Come, man, buck up!
'Tis but a scratch!

MR. MASON:
She's nearly killed me!

MR. ROCHESTER:
Courage, Mason!
You've lost a little
Blood; that's all.

MASON:
This wound was not
Made by a knife,
Sir; it's a bite!
She attacked me
Like a tigress!
!!
Her one true friend!
She sucked my blood!
Vowed she would drain
My very heart!

MR. ROCHESTER, *having finished bandaging the wound:*
Enough, Mason!
Ignore her sly gibberish!
What you need is
A good long nap.

MR. ROCHESTER, *reaching for one of the bottles, he pours out a measure of brightly colored liquid, and hands the glass to MASON:*
Drink this, Richard,
And you shall see:
All will be well.

As MASON cautiously drains the glass, neither he nor MR. ROCHESTER notices JANE, who has soundlessly entered the room and stands uncertainly behind them.

MR. MASON:
I could rest easy enough if
I knew she would come to no harm.
Promise me, Edward, come what may,
You'll always treat her tenderly.

MR. ROCHESTER takes MASON by his good arm and helps him to his feet.
I do my best; have done it
And will do it, I guarantee.

With MR. ROCHESTER'S help MASON walks to the door slowly, shakes MR. ROCHESTER'S hand and departs. MR. ROCHESTER watches him walk away before carefully closing the door. JANE moves toward him from the back of the room.

MR. ROCHESTER:
A kitten has a stouter heart;
If only he'd sleep forever!

JANE, *stepping forward:*
Sir!
What a thing to say!

MR. ROCHESTER, *seating himself back at the desk, and pouring himself a glass of whiskey:*
Ah, my good conscience has arrived!

MR. ROCHESTER knocks back his drink.

JANE, *seating herself on the sofa:*
But surely, sir, he must object
If Grace Poole does him injury?

MR. ROCHESTER:
Don't trouble yourself about her.

Rising, he begins to pace:

You've nothing to fear from Grace Poole!
But I stand on a precipice,
And may fall at any moment.

One careless word from Mason,
And happiness will desert me,
'Ere she ever bloomed in this house.

JANE:
I don't understand you, Sir.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Imagine, Jane, a spoiled, wild boy,
A second son with little love
From craven parents to enjoy,
And burdened with so much to prove.
Sent abroad to earn his fortune,
He learns that he has been deceived –
That those he trusted want his ruin.
His bitterness can't be conceived;
In time the wound he cannot bear:
He dissipates; he hates his life.
Debauchery claims him; then despair.
He finds no balm to cure his strife
Save in dice and tawdry affairs
With ladies always short on cash.
He loves them not; his only care
Is securing satisfaction.
But even that he soon disdains
And ventures home, hopes dashed again.
The gentry seek him out at once,
His idle, reckless past unknown;
They boast and preen, they ride and hunt
And in their midst, he's most alone.

MR. ROCHESTER sits beside JANE on the sofa.

Then, a miracle! he is blessed
With a chance to regain his soul,
Thanks to a friend who is possessed
Of a heart that is pure and whole.
Must convention stand in the way
Of transforming his sins into good?
Must he thrust all his hopes away
Because others believe he should?

JANE, *kindly but firmly:*
It is God alone who judges
A sinner's genuine repentance.

MR. ROCHESTER:
But first He sends us an angel,
An instrument of salvation,
And I believe you are she, Jane,
Though it is with trepidation
That I bear my soul.

A knock sounds at the door to the left and MRS. FAIRFAX immediately enters the room with a stranger dressed in mourning. MR. ROCHESTER rises as well.

MRS. FAIRFAX, *curtseying:*
Please forgive me, Sir:
For interrupting twice
In this long night:
I was bid make haste
By this servant from
Miss Eyre's former home.

JANE, *approaching BESSIE:*
Bessie, is it you?
What has happened?

BESSIE, *curtseying first to MR. ROCHESTER, then to JANE:*
Yes; 'tis Bessie, Miss.
I've come with bad news,
I'm afraid. Your aunt
Is nearing the end
And demands to see
You while there's still time.

MR. ROCHESTER:
She said she had no family!

BESSIE, *turning to Mr. Rochester:*
It is true she is an orphan,
Sir; her Uncle Reed took her in
And meant to raise her as his own.
But then he died; and left alone,
The child knew naught but misery,
And no one listened to her pleas.
Jane let her violent temper rule,
And soon they sent her off to school.

BESSIE, *turning now to face JANE directly:*
Still your Aunt Reed's hatred grew;
And when a stranger came for you
Her enmity she did not hide:
With conscience clear, she said you'd died.

JANE:
A stranger, you say – asking for me?

BESSIE:
Aye – and a wealthy man was he!
Her guilt has turned to lunacy;
All she wants is to see Miss Eyre,
So that this wrong she may repair.

JANE, MRS. FAIRFAX, BESSIE, MR. ROCHESTER:
A stranger, you say – asking for me/her?
Aye – and a wealthy man was he!
Her guilt has turned to lunacy;
All she wants is to see Miss Eyre
So that this wrong she may repair.

JANE, *turning to MR. ROCHESTER:*
I must hear what she has to say!
She's dying, sir, I can't delay!

MR. ROCHESTER:
I pray you will keep well, my dear.
My heart rebels; it wants you here.

As the two older women curtsey, JANE leads the way out of the room, without a glance back. As the curtain descends MR. ROCHESTER pours himself another whiskey, his expression unreadable.

ACT 2

4 SCENE 1

The curtains part to reveal MRS. FAIRFAX pacing back and forth in the drawing room, illuminated by the glow of several crystal candelabras.

MRS. FAIRFAX:
No!
It can't be so!
Back home at last, for but an hour
And already overpowered
By the master's 'passioned embrace.
Was it she who tried to erase
The line that surely divides them?
She will lose her reputation!

JANE now enters the drawing room, walking immediately to MRS. FAIRFAX'S side.

JANE:
Mrs. Fairfax, what upsets you?
I saw you run from the foyer
As though frightened through and through.

MRS. FAIRFAX:
Indeed, Miss Eyre, I had a fright,
I saw our master embrace you –
Claim you for his very own –
Yet you failed to resist or take flight.

JANE:
I am to be his bride, m'am;
And he is to be my husband.

MRS. FAIRFAX, *coldly:*
Equality of position
And a favorable fortune
Are what most brides bring to their grooms.
You bring him an heir, I presume?

JANE:
Your presumption is insulting.

JANE turns to leave.

MRS. FAIRFAX, *grabbing her arm:*
He is my cousin
By my late husband,
And you are a girl
In need of a friend:
Gentlemen like him
Are loathe to marry
A mere governess
With whom they dally.

JANE, *shrugging off MRS. FAIRFAX:*
I bring him nothing but myself.

MRS. FAIRFAX, *more warmly:*
I had to be sure, for your sake
As well as Mr. Rochester.
I beg you one promise to make:
To distance yourself, and deter
All entreaties till you are his wife.
His interest this surely will stir,
And virtue will guide your new life.

JANE, *extending her hand:*
I will consider your advice.

MRS. FAIRFAX, *taking her hand:*
I am glad to hear you say so!
Come, let us sit a bit and chat.

MRS. FAIRFAX leads JANE to the sofa, and both sit down.

MRS. FAIRFAX:
All the gentry thought he would wed
Miss Ingram! And I thought so too.

JANE:
I must confess I was surprised –

MR. ROCHESTER enters the room, cutting off the conversation. Both women rise.

MRS. FAIRFAX, *curtseying:*
I wish you much joy, Mr. Rochester.

MR. ROCHESTER bows, and MRS. FAIRFAX curtseys again before exiting. He then draws JANE to him, peering at her face.

MR. ROCHESTER:
You look worried, Jane; pray come near.
Do you repent already, dear?

JANE:
Repent? Of course not! How could I
Unwish what's dearest to my heart?
But others may mock us, by and by –
Even strive to keep us apart.

JANE tries to move away, but MR. ROCHESTER holds her fast.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Jane, do be still:
Don't struggle so,
Like a rare bird
Rending its own
Vivid plumage.

JANE, *relenting:*
Struggle I must:
True happiness
I cannot trust.

MR. ROCHESTER:
You can trust this.

MR. ROCHESTER kisses JANE, who staggers a bit before freeing herself from his grasp and settling herself on the sofa.

JANE:
If that be so, Sir, I pray you solve
The mystery of your sudden love.

MR. ROCHESTER, following *JANE* to the sofa:
I've loved you since the day we met;
But I feared to share my secret.
I feigned proposing to Miss Blanche
In hope that you would dare to glance
At me, the way I look at you:
As my own likeness, deep and true.

They embrace again.

MR. ROCHESTER:
But you still maintain your secret:
What did your aunt say when you met?

JANE:
It was awful, sir, to see her
So close to death, yet full of spite;
I tried my best to make things right,
But she could not undo her nature.

Still, fearing the end that awaits
A sinner who will not repent,
My Aunt Reed confessed that she'd spent
Three years denying my true fate.

MR. ROCHESTER, grasping *JANE'S* hand to his heart:
For her betrayal, I'll atone:
My soul entire will be your own.

MR. ROCHESTER pulls JANE even closer to him.

I'll drape you in diamonds and gold
And your sweet supple shape I'll hold
Closer than close, all through the night –
Let the servants say what they might.
My Maker sanctions what I do;
Mere men's opinions I eschew.
I thank the Lord you're all mine now;
You'll not elude me – that I vow.

JANE, extricating herself a bit from his close embrace:
Sir, you exult like a savage!
I'm not a slave in a harem:
My will is not yours to manage.
Such finery will not suit me:
I do not wish to be displayed,
I have no yen for luxury.
To be your wife is my desire!
An equal partner in your life,
The better half whom you require.

JANE tries to rise.

Release me, now – I've been remiss:
Upstairs my pupil waits to hear
A story from her governess.

JANE pulls away and walks to the door.

Sweet dreams, dear sir.

MR. ROCHESTER, rising too:
No goodnight kiss?

JANE smiles as she exits the Library.

MR. ROCHESTER, calling after her:
Nothing for your groom-to-be?

Then, to himself:

Yet she is all the world to me,
And only God can set her free
After she and I do marry.

The curtain falls as MR. ROCHESTER begins blowing out the candles.

5 SCENE 2

The curtains part to reveal the orchard outside Thornfield; it is evening, but a full moon clearly illuminates the scene. JANE is seated on a stone bench, drawing her shawl tightly around her shoulders, and rubbing her arms to keep warm. To the right looms an enormous, ruined chestnut tree. Its trunk has been split in half by lightning, and the burned branches on either side of the cleft nearly touch the ground. Jane regards the tree for a moment, then stands and walks toward it.

JANE, reaching out to caress the cleft in the trunk:
Despite your scorched bark and scarred limbs,
Some sap must course through you yet:
How fast you hold to each other!
Nothing can tear you asunder.
But what delays my other half?

Pacing back and forth now, JANE begins to sing to herself an old-fashioned tune:

"His coming was my hope each day,
His parting was my pain;
The chance that did his steps delay
Was ice in every vein."

She is so engrossed that she does not notice MR. ROCHESTER entering the orchard.

JANE:
"But wide as pathless was the space
That lay, our lives, between,
And dangerous as the foamy race
Of ocean-surges green."

JANE is surprised to feel MR. ROCHESTER'S hand on her shoulder. As she turns around to greet him, he picks up the next verse:

MR. ROCHESTER:
"I dangers dared: I hindrance scorned;
I omens did defy;

Whatever menaced, harassed, warned,
I passed impetuous by."

MR. ROCHESTER, taking her hands in his:
As I recall, you scorned those lines,
When I sang them in this garden
The day you said you'd be all mine.
And lo! Tomorrow we'll be wed.

MR. ROCHESTER and JANE embrace.

MR. ROCHESTER:
But what is the matter, dear?
Your hands are cold as stone!
How strangely your eyes glitter;
How flushed and damp your face!

JANE:
I believe I am well, sir.

MR. ROCHESTER, leading her toward the bench:
You believe? You're not quite sure?

She rises and slowly walks toward the tree again. MR. ROCHESTER turns to listen.

JANE:
I glory in the life we'll share,
So much more stirring than my own.
No, I was fine until I found
Your gift beneath my wedding gown:
A veil that glows like angel's wings;
Diaphanous; divine.
I smiled as I unfolded it,
To think you schemed to make it mine.
I hung it on the best post, high,
To see it 'ere I closed my eyes.
The air was chilled; the bed was cold;
But I was warmed by your surprise
Until I lapsed into a dream:
A wailing babe was at my side,
And you were mounted on your horse;
Away from us we watched you ride.
I climbed a wall, to shout your name,
And will your horse to stand its ground;

When suddenly the wall gave way –
We crashed to earth, could not be found.
We breathed our last, the child and I,
And you had gone, with no good-bye.

MR. ROCHESTER:

Are you afraid I'll leave you, dear?
I'm yours forever, have no fear.

JANE resumes her seat beside MR. ROCHESTER, who takes her hand and kisses it warmly.

JANE:

Of that I have no doubt, master.
What frightened me was not that dream,
But the nightmare that came after:
A monstrous woman, growling low,
Had donned the veil you picked for me.
She leered, then snatched it off her brow.

MR. ROCHESTER:

A creature of your fevered mind;
All thoughts of her let's leave behind.

JANE, rising again from the bench:

That's what I wished; I even prayed.
But when I woke up in my bed,
I found my hopes had been betrayed:
The ghoul had ripped my veil to shreds.

JANE reaches into her pocket and extracts a strip of torn silk, which she displays to MR. ROCHESTER.

MR. ROCHESTER, leaping off the bench to grab the remnant:

To think I've left you like a fool
Without a word about Grace Poole!

JANE:

But it was not the seamstress, sir.

MR. ROCHESTER:

You must have been mistaken, Jane:
Grace Poole it was! Now leave it.

When we've been married for a year,
I'll share with you her secret.

JANE is silent as MR. ROCHESTER kisses her cheek.

All cares and trouble must now cease
Let's dream as one, of love and peace.

MR. ROCHESTER puts his arm around JANE and leads her offstage as the curtain closes.

▣ SCENE 3

As the curtain rises, JANE and MR. ROCHESTER are standing before the altar in the chapel at Thornfield. Facing them is MR. WOOD, a clergyman; behind them stand the witnesses: MRS. FAIRFAX and JOHN the groom. JANE is dressed in her wedding gown and a simple veil; MR. ROCHESTER in a morning coat. Apparently unseen by the group are a pair of figures in the back of the chapel, their faces obscured. One is RICHARD MASON, MR. ROCHESTER'S erstwhile house guest; the other is MR. BRIGGS, an attorney. MR. WOOD has clearly been sermonizing for some time.

MR. WOOD:

And thus, as I hope I have demonstrated clearly,
The state of matrimony is a holy one,
Which we enter into with hope as well as faith –

MR. ROCHESTER, interrupting:

Get on with it, man!
We know what it is!

MR. WOOD:

Quite so! If anyone knows a reason
Why ye may not be joined together in marriage,
Do now confess it, or forever hold your peace.

As MR. WOOD pauses, the figures at the back of the chapel stride toward the bridal couple.

MR. WOOD, to MR. ROCHESTER:

Wilt thou have this woman for thy wedded wife?

Before MR. ROCHESTER can reply, he is interrupted by one of the two men; the other, his face still partly hidden by the brim of a large hat, hangs back.

MR. BRIGGS:

The marriage cannot go on, sir!
I declare the existence of an impediment!

JANE turns to regard the speaker, but MR. ROCHESTER remains immobile, facing the preacher.

MR. ROCHESTER:

Proceed, Mr. Wood!

MR. WOOD:

But I cannot proceed, Mr. Rochester,
Without some investigation into this charge.
What is the nature of the impediment?

MR. BRIGGS:

That the gentleman is married, and his wife alive.

MR. ROCHESTER, still refusing to turn around:

So you say!
But I say,
Produce a witness,
Or go straight to hell!

MR. BRIGGS:

He is here beside me, if you'd but deign to look:
It is your wife's brother, Mr. Richard Mason;
And he saw her alive, in your home, just three
months ago!

JANE looks at MR. ROCHESTER, who neither returns her gaze nor turns to look at MR. BRIGGS or MR. MASON – though judging from his expression, he is about to explode.

MR. WOOD, to MR. BRIGGS:

May I inquire, Sir, into your connection here?
And the basis for your shocking allegations?

MR. BRIGGS, presenting MR. WOOD with a document he's been holding in his hand:

I am Mr. Mason's solicitor, empow'ered
By him to protect the interests of his sister,
Who cannot protect her own, for she is mad,
And locked in the attic of her husband's home!
Just ask the groom if my account is true.

MRS. FAIRFAX and JOHN greet this declaration with a gasp, while MR. WOOD scans the document. JANE remains silent, as does MR. ROCHESTER.

MR. WOOD, proffering the document to Mr. Rochester:

I'm no expert, but this looks genuine to me.
Surely there is another explanation, sir?

MR. ROCHESTER neither takes the paper, nor replies. After a few moments' consideration, he spins around to face his accusers. Fearing he is about to attack them, both men retreat.

MR. ROCHESTER:

Close your book, Wood; there will be no wedding
today!

MR. WOOD immediately complies. JANE remains silent.

MR. ROCHESTER:

Now, now, Dick; don't be afraid;
It's your sister who bites!

MR. ROCHESTER paces back and forth for a few moments, trying to collect himself. JANE watches, still silent.

MR. ROCHESTER:

Bigamy is an ugly word;
Yet I confess I'm not contrite.
I meant to make Miss Eyre my own,
To salve my pain, to ease my plight.

She did not know my sinful plan;
So innocent, she thought me pure.
But what you say is God's own truth:
Toward Bertha Mason I was lured.

MR. ROCHESTER becomes more agitated, his voice louder:

For gold my father hid the truth:
Her legacy of drink and vice,
Of maniacs in asylums.
Each parent she copied precise,
My mad, bad and murderous wife!

The group looks stunned by this news; but no one says a word as MR. ROCHESTER approaches them menacingly.

MR. ROCHESTER:

Away with you, Dick!
Depart, Mr. Briggs!
John, Mrs. Fairfax:
Go get the carriage!
Bolt from here, like a
Bullet from a gun!
'Ere I throttle you
All with my bare hands.

All, except for JANE, exit immediately. As MR. ROCHESTER slumps into a pew, JANE mechanically removes her veil and takes a seat beside him.

MR. ROCHESTER, sitting up and taking her hand in his:

I did not mean to deceive you;
Nor to stain your reputation.
Once we have arrived in Florence,
You shall have an explanation.

JANE, releasing her hand from his grasp:

But I cannot go to Florence:
You are wed to Bertha Mason!

MR. ROCHESTER resumes his seat beside JANE, visibly trying to collect himself.

MR. ROCHESTER:

That woman was never my wife!
Even before she lost her mind,
Body and soul were corrupted,
By gross depravities defined.
We did not share a moment's love!
Yet I've kept her fed and clothed here,
Despite her murderous nature;
Grace Poole is an expert keeper.
Which choice does your conscience teach?
Driving me to despair –
Or defying a convention
Which harms no one but us in the breach?
I've done all that God and man demand;
Why should I not be free to love,
To take you as my wife, dear Jane,
Our union blessed by Him above?

JANE:

But such a union can't be blessed;
It is immoral, sir; a sin.

MR. ROCHESTER:

No, Jane, it is not!
Whom will it injure?

MR. ROCHESTER tries once again to get in temper in check. He takes JANE'S hand again.

JANE, withdrawing her hand:

My love belongs to you entire,
But I cannot do what you desire.

JANE leans back her head on the pew, clearly exhausted.

MR. ROCHESTER:

You're shocked and scared, and need to think.
I'll fetch some water, while you rest.

Once MR. ROCHESTER has left the sanctuary, JANE lifts up her head, and slowly stands.

JANE:

It's he, not I, who's been deceived;
The devil's work he can't perceive:

JANE gathers her skirts, more resolute now.

To welcome sin, to tempt God's grace –
Such evil, Sir, I won't embrace.
Like plucking out my own right eye
To leave you now with no goodbye.

JANE places her shawl over her head.

I forgive you, my dear master –
I beg God to keep you from harm.
May He guide you, and comfort you,
And join us in the hereafter.

JANE runs from the chapel just a moment before MR. ROCHESTER re-enters, carrying a glass of water.

MR. ROCHESTER, surprised:

Jane?
Jane?

He searches the pews for a moment, before setting the glass down on the pulpit.

MR. ROCHESTER:

My hope,
My deep love,
Are you gone, then?

ACT 3

SCENE 1

The curtains part to reveal a very modestly equipped one-room schoolhouse. On the back wall hangs a small slate, a map of Great Britain, and a Union Jack; a battered desk, topped with an inkwell, a globe and a bell, dominates the center of the room; arrayed in front of it are a few makeshift chairs and stools. To the right a

window overlooks a rural landscape dominated by hills and heather. ST. JOHN RIVERS and his sisters MARY and DIANA are the only occupants of the room; they have only just arrived, and are still wearing cloaks and hats.

DIANA, removing her bonnet and cloak:
Oh, where is Jane when we want her?

MARY, removing her bonnet and cloak, and walking toward the window:

Gone with her pupils to the moor,
No doubt, to name the spring flowers
That have blossomed in the meadow.
She says they see perfectly well,
But do not apprehend at all
The beauty of their native home.

DIANA looks out the window.

ST. JOHN, removing his hat and walking among the desks:

Nor do I, if I must speak true:
Who has need to remark the hills
That have encircled us since birth?
Their dark majesty beckons Jane
Because they are new to her still;
Quite soon they will lose their allure.

MARY:

I believe you are mistaken:
Once she gives it, Jane's heart holds fast.

DIANA, looking away from the window:

So may we hope then, dear Mary,
That her heart belongs now to us –
That she will greet our news with joy,
And embrace us as her kinsmen?

MARY:

I cannot think anything else:
When we found her she was starving,
So weak she could not stand or speak,
Friendless and alone – an outcast!

ST. JOHN:
And thanks to you and Diana,
Her sense and strength have been restored.

DIANA:
And thanks to you, dear St. John,
She has once more her vocation
To pursue, and children to guide.

DIANA turns her attention once again to the scene outside the window.

ST. JOHN:
Yes, we have all done our duty:
But whether Jane stays or leaves us,
She must know we've learned her secret.

DIANA, looking out the window:
She is returned with her pupils!

The threesome move to stand beside one another as JANE enters with five students in tow, all of them young girls. Each carries a fistful of flowers. When they see their guests all stop abruptly, and the children curtsy and bow.

JANE:
Children, look who's come to see us!
How do we greet our guests come to call?

THE CHILDREN:
Good afternoon, Mr. Rivers.
Good afternoon, Miss Rivers.
Good afternoon, Miss Diana.

JANE places the drum on the desk, and after removing her bonnet and cloak, places them on the chair behind her desk. ST. JOHN moves toward the children.

ST. JOHN:
Miss Elliot is teaching you
Botany, or so I've been told.

THE CHILDREN:
Yes, Mr. Rivers.

JANE:
They have learned a great many things,
I daresay; I'm proud of them all.
But now they must go: tea awaits!
Shall we bid our guests good evening
With the rhyme we learned together?

THE CHILDREN:
I had a little doggie that used to sit and beg,
But Doggie tumbled down the stairs
and broke his little leg
Oh Doggie, I will nurse you, and try to make you well;
And you shall have a collar with a pretty little bell.

But, Doggie, you must promise
(and mind your word you keep)
Not once to tease the little lambs or run among
the sheep.
And then the chicks that play upon the grass,
You must not even wag your tail to scare them
as you pass.

ST. JOHN, MARY and DIANA applaud, as JANE strikes a bell, signaling the end of the school day.

THE CHILDREN:
Goodbye, Miss Elliot!
Goodbye, Mr. Rivers!
Goodbye, Miss Rivers!
Goodbye, Miss Diana!

The children tumble out the door, talking excitedly among themselves. JANE follows them with more goodbyes, then turns to face her guests. She embraces DIANA, then MARY, and then extends her hand to ST. JOHN.

JANE:
What an unexpected surprise!

DIANA:
How much these children are learning!

MARY:
I see such delight in their eyes!

JANE:
I am blessed to be their teacher.

ST. JOHN:
That is a noble sentiment:
It becomes you, Miss Elliot.
But as we have come on business,
May I ask you ladies to sit?

MARY and DIANA lay down their cloaks and bonnets alongside JANE'S desk.

JANE, sitting at her desk:
What do you mean, Mr. Rivers?

ST. JOHN, remains standing:
The man who handles my affairs
Writes with an intriguing story
About an orphan named Jane Eyre,
Despised by her rich guardians
And sent off to earn her fortune.

JANE raises her hand to her face, clearly surprised and perturbed.

ST. JOHN:
Miss Eyre becomes a governess
In the old, secluded mansion
Of Mr. Edward Rochester.
They fall in love; are meant to wed –
Until she learns, at the altar,
Another wife has shared his bed:
A lunatic, true – but living.

JANE rises from her chair.

She flees the house that very night
And not a soul has seen her since.
Mr. Briggs wonders if I might
Prove of assistance in his search.

JANE, walking to the window:
Why does Mr. Briggs write to you?

ST. JOHN:
Because I am a clergyman
And obliged to help the needy;
And because she is our cousin,
And needs must own the connection.

JANE:
You say Jane Eyre is your cousin?

ST. JOHN:
The daughter of our long dead aunt
And niece to our late uncle John
Of Madeira, a wine merchant
Who wished to raise Jane as his own.

ST. JOHN walks toward JANE.

But her guardian interfered:
She swore the little girl was dead.

JANE grabs ST. JOHN'S hands.

JANE:
Her lie exposed – what elation!
To be claimed as a relation
By kind and generous Christian souls.

JANE turns to face MARY and DIANA as well.

Mr. Rivers, Diana, Mary:
I proudly own our new connection:
I am the governess Jane Eyre.
Please forgive my gross deception –
I told you lies to save my soul;
I had no wish to play a role.

MARY, rising:
Dear Jane, let us embrace at once!

DIANA, rising:
How glorious to see God's hand
Drawing us close together!

JANE, MARY and DIANA embrace; ST. JOHN offers JANE his hand. The ladies alternate for a moment between laughter and tears.

JANE, dabbing at her eyes:
You say our uncle is deceased?

ST. JOHN:
All this must come as shocking news!
But there is more that I must share:
He left us nothing in his will:
His hard-earned wealth goes to Jane Eyre.
Twenty thousand pounds –
You're a wealthy woman now.

JANE, moving away once more from the group:
Oh my! What an enormous sum!
I can hardly take it all in!

ST. JOHN:
Briggs is the executor;
I shall write to him at once.
You shall not be cheated again.

JANE, walking back:
Oh, five thousand will do nicely!
I have no use for luxury.
The rest I gladly share with you:
My dear, devoted family
Who pitied me when no one would –
Fed me; clothed me; gave me shelter –
Shielded me from all suspicion –
All this and more – for a stranger.
For this God sent me to your door.
Allow me but to live nearby
So I may love you all the more,
And forge a brand new destiny.

DIANA, rising:
How generous you are, dear Jane!

MARY, rising:
How happy we shall be at home!

MARY, DIANA and JANE embrace, and JANE gives ST. JOHN a kiss on the cheek. He does not return her kiss, but rather puts on his hat, and collects his sisters' cloaks and bonnets.

ST. JOHN:
I fear passion overcomes you.
Reconsider your proposal
In private, and at your leisure;
We shall be at your disposal.

ST. JOHN hands MARY and DIANA their things.

Come, my dear sisters: let us now depart.
Jane must be allowed to examine her heart.

The sisters embrace JANE again, before donning their cloaks and following their brother's lead.

DIANA:
Goodbye, Dearest!

MARY:
Goodbye, Sister!

JANE walks to the door behind them and stands there for a moment after the Rivers family departs. Then she returns to her desk and sits down once more. She clasps her hand, bows her head, and prays with eyes closed.

JANE:
How grateful I am to you, Lord:
You have showered me with blessings!

JANE opens her eyes and sits silently for a moment before rising from her chair.

Yet of my Edward, not one word –
I cannot help but love him still.
But better to fight temptation
Than sin by defying God's will,

I must seek solace in this choice
Though it pains me to the marrow –
To see his face, to feel his lips –
Oh, how I long to hear his voice.

8 SCENE 2

The curtain rises to reveal the cozy sitting room of Moor House, the longtime home of the Rivers family, in the evening hours. The room is distinguished by an enormous fireplace in which a fire is burning; an overstuffed sofa and two well-worn arm chairs; and several bookcases standing beneath old family portraits. To the right, JANE is seated at a large round table piled with books; opposite her sits ST. JOHN.

ST. JOHN:
I beg of you, Jane: hear me out.
You are pious, industrious;
Very docile and heroic;
Constant; faithful; and generous.
These qualities are pure and rare –
True gifts that you're obliged to use
To make the world a better place.
What higher calling can you choose
Than teaching heathen our faith?

JANE:
I do wish to please you, St. John,
And perform my Christian duty;
But I feel as though I'm a pawn
In a scheme that does not suit me.
I have no ordination;
I have no sure vocation;
And I have no inclination
To remove myself from this place
And help convert the Hindu race.

ST. JOHN, leaping up:
You can change the bent of nature!
I know this from experience:
My desire to rise higher
Once eclipsed all other feelings.

But my ambition, I renounced;
Its noisome needs I could not meet.
So I obeyed, when God announced,
That I must preach in India.

JANE:
But I've had no such instruction.

ST. JOHN:
Regard me as His instrument!
God speaks through me; and I assert:
It was His will that you were sent
Here, a sickly, starving stranger.

ST. JOHN sits back down, and leans toward JANE.

We nursed you; gave you employment;
And saw you in the schoolroom hide
Your shameful disappointment.
But you need not hide anymore!
Come with me as my wife to India
And see what the Lord has in store
For one who serves him selflessly.

JANE:
This could indeed be my mission:
To serve God would be glorious.

JANE rises and walks toward the fire.

But to go in the position
Of a wife in name and custom
Leads me to a troubling question:
Ought I accept a bridal ring
From a man who feels no passion?

JANE turns to face ST. JOHN.

Every fiber of my being
Tells me no – and I must listen.
But go I will as your sister,
And toil with you as a Christian.

ST. JOHN, *rising and walking toward JANE*:
But I do not want a sister –
And this plan I'll not consider!
What I want is a lawful wife
To mold and guide throughout her life.
Passion is overrated, Jane;
Need I remind you of the pain
Caused by Mr. Rochester,
That passionate imposter?

JANE:
You have no right to speak his name!

She angrily walks away from him, back to the table.

ST. JOHN:
The love you cherish is lawless
And you long since should have crushed it.
I cannot give you up to Hell!
Repent now or die – bit by bit.
God's given you the strength to choose
The duty He's assigned to you.
Come to India as my wife:
Do as you know He wants you to.

JANE, *turning away from St. John*:
If I only knew God's true plan,
I could agree to marry now,
Come what may! But please don't demand
Of me to swear a solemn vow.

ST. JOHN:
As you wish, Jane – but don't forget:
Only your vow will God accept.

ST. JOHN bows his head and leaves the parlor.

JANE:
He is as hard and cold as steel;
Trying to please him would kill me,
And he would never show me love
No matter how much I labored.
And yet the words he spoke were true:
Passion has brought me naught but shame.

If I could but know for certain
That it is God's will that I marry
My cousin and serve by his side,
I know I could forget Edward
And find solace in my duties.
Tell me, God – show me my true path!

JANE throws herself down into an armchair near the fire, burying her face in her hands. She begins to sob; her shoulders shake. But after a few moments, she raises her head and tilts it as if listening. After another moment, she leaps up from the chair as if electrified.

JANE:
Wait for me! Is that Edward's voice I hear?
I am coming!

JANE runs from the room.

9 SCENE 3

The curtain rises on the parlor at Ferndean, the out-of-the-way hunting lodge owned by MR. ROCHESTER. It is evening, and MRS. FAIRFAX is leading JANE toward two matching sofas that have been placed opposite one another in the center of the room. MRS. FAIRFAX is carrying a silver tea service on a tray, which she places atop a table set between the sofas. A fire burns in the grate set into the back wall of the room; and a piano sits in the corner to their left, lit by a candelabra.

MRS. FAIRFAX, *gesturing to JANE to be seated, as she seats herself: she leans forward to pour the tea into a china cup.*

Thirty-six hours in a coach:
Such a journey I've not taken –
And then to find the house in ruins!

MRS. FAIRFAX holds the cup and saucer in her hands for a moment before passing them to Jane.

Three generations lived at Thornfield –
And now it is lost forever!
You've never been to this old lodge –
The master's father hunted here.
I never liked it much before,
But it's all we have to call home.

JANE accepts a cup of tea from MRS. FAIRFAX.

Do forgive my bab'ling, Miss Eyre;
I never thought to see you here.
With all the shocks of this long year,
I have lost my old composure.

JANE, *after taking a sip of tea, and placing the cup back on the tray*:

It is I who must beg pardon,
For appearing without warning.
I did not know you thought me dead;
I'd no idea there'd been a fire.
And when I heard you'd both been spared,
I had no thought but to reach you.

MRS. FAIRFAX:
I thank the Lord that you live too!
Of course, the master feared the worst,
When without a trace you vanished.
He did all he could to find you;
And when he failed, he grew distraught.
He sent Adele away to school;
Broke with every old acquaintance;
Roamed the house like a savage ghost,
Refusing to sleep or to speak.

MRS. FAIRFAX rises from her place on the sofa.

No other Rochester
Was ever brought so low:
Not by wine,
Nor by cards,
Nor racing!

JANE:
Then he must have been at home
When the fire first broke out?

MRS. FAIRFAX, *moving toward the piano*:
Aye, it was he who rescued us,
Before he went back for his wife –
Though it was she who set the blaze.
Without a thought for his own life,
He tried to coax her from the roof,
But all she did was curse and scream.
She wished to die – that is the truth –
So from his outstretched arms she sprang
And tumbled to the ground below:
Head over heels, I saw her go.

It was a fright I'll ne'er forget,
Her bloodied head, those twisted limbs –

JANE:
And Mr. Rochester?

MRS. FAIRFAX:
The walls collapsed, with him inside:
His hand was crushed, his eye knocked out.
Near-blind he is, and lame besides.
He is quite broken down, Miss Eyre.

JANE, *rising abruptly*:
I must see him without delay!

MRS. FAIRFAX, *edging toward the door of the parlor*:
As you wish.

JANE:
Pray, do not tell him I am come;
I will not be put off tonight.

MRS. FAIRFAX nods and exits.

Offstage, MR. ROCHESTER calls out for MRS. FAIRFAX, while JANE curls herself into the corner of the sofa furthest from the piano. MRS. FAIRFAX re-enters immediately with MR. ROCHESTER in tow. He is limping

a bit, and holds her arm with his right hand; his left hand and forearm are hidden inside his coat. His hair is long and unruly, his left cheek is scarred, and he wears a patch over his right eye.

MRS. FAIRFAX, leading him toward the piano, and opening the cover:
Here you are, sir; all is ready.

MR. ROCHESTER, awkwardly sitting down on the piano bench:
That will be all, until I call.

MRS. FAIRFAX:
As you wish, sir.

As **MRS. FAIRFAX** exits, **MR. ROCHESTER** plays a few notes with one hand, to warm up. He waits a moment, squares his shoulders, and begins to play and sing:

MR. ROCHESTER:
The truest love that ever heart
Felt at its kindled core
Did through each vein, in quickened start,
The tide of being pour.

JANE rises from her place on the sofa and walks toward the piano.

Her coming was my hope each day,
Her parting was my pain;
The change that did her steps delay
Was ice in every vein
I dreamed it would be a nameless bliss,
As I loved, loved to be

As she nears the piano, **JANE** sings the last half of the verse along with **MR. ROCHESTER**.

And to this object did I press,
As blind as eagerly.

MR. ROCHESTER stops playing abruptly; as he rises, he knocks over the piano bench.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Who is here?

JANE, setting the bench upright again:
It is I, sir.

MR. ROCHESTER:
Who speaks?

JANE places her hand in **MR. ROCHESTER'S**.

JANE:
I am Jane Eyre.

MR. ROCHESTER, pulling **JANE** closer:
My living darling! In the flesh!
But no, I cannot be so blest:
It is a dream; you'll disappear!
My heart cannot withstand this test.

JANE:
You touch me, sir – this is no dream.

JANE places **MR. ROCHESTER'S** good hand on her breast.

Do you feel how my heart races?

JANE pauses a moment before moving his hand to her face.

Are my lips perhaps familiar?
Did you not memorize my face?

MR. ROCHESTER caresses **JANE'S** face.

Of you I have complete recall:
Of your embraces most of all.

MR. ROCHESTER, removing his hand, and taking a step back:

Can you wish to kiss me now,
Lame and ghastly as I am?

JANE takes a step forward, and kisses both of **MR. ROCHESTER'S** eyes, then the scar on his cheek, and then his hand.

MR. ROCHESTER:
I wronged you Jane, when I proposed
To share with you a life of sin.
I repented, and God forgave –
Can you dare to love me again?

JANE wraps her arms around **MR. ROCHESTER'S** neck, and the pair embrace eagerly until **MR. ROCHESTER** pulls back.

JANE, wrapping **MR. ROCHESTER'S** arm around her waist:
To feel your breath, now, in my ear,
Quite takes away my own, dear sir;
Do give me back my life again,
I love you, Edward Rochester.

JANE wraps her arms around **MR. ROCHESTER'S** neck, and the pair embrace eagerly until **MR. ROCHESTER** pulls back.

MR. ROCHESTER:
My love I pledge, with sealing kiss –
I have at last my deepest bliss.

JANE:
If I ever thought a kind word,
If I ever did a good deed,
If I ever said a pure prayer,
The Lord has now rewarded me.

The curtains close.

THE END



Photo: Steven Pisano



Louis
KARCHIN
(b. 1951)

Jane Eyre (2010–14)

An Opera in Three Acts

Libretto by Diane Osen

Based on the novel by Charlotte Brontë

Jane Eyre Jennifer Zetlan, Soprano
Edward Rochester Ryan MacPherson, Tenor
Roderick Ingram / St. John Rivers
..... Thomas Meglioranza, Baritone
Mrs. Ingram / Diana Rivers Jessica Thompson, Soprano
Blanche Ingram Katrina Thurman, Soprano
Mrs. Fairfax Kimberly Giordano, Soprano
Richard Mason / Mr. Briggs Adam Cannedy, Baritone
Mary Rivers / Bessie Jessica Best, Mezzo-Soprano
Mr. Wood David Salsbery Fry, Bass

Orchestra of the League of Composers

Louis Karchin

1–3 Act I	45:58
4–6 Act II	36:04
7–9 Act III	47:45

A full track list can be found inside the booklet.

The libretto can be found in the booklet, and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/669042.htm

Recorded: 8–10 September 2017 at Theatre C
at the State University of New York at Purchase

Produced, engineered, edited and mixed by Marlan Barry

Publisher: American Composers Alliance

Booklet notes: Christian Carey • Synopsis: Diane Osen

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Production photos by Steven Pisano



AMERICAN OPERA CLASSICS

Over four decades the American composer Louis Karchin has produced a much-admired portfolio of compositions. His one-act opera *Romulus* (8.669030) won numerous accolades. *Jane Eyre* is his largest project to date, in which he and librettist Diane Osen fashion Charlotte Brontë's beloved novel into a vivid and moving opera cast as a fluid and continuous entity. Karchin's wide-ranging harmonic language and his flair for contrast ensure that the novel's drama, its pastoral elements, and most importantly its characterization are fully developed via arias, monologues, arioso and a quartet, to create a boldly engaging new work.

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
2:09:51