



A life story: Jane Eyre
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Jane Eyre

Lyttelton, National Theatre, London SE1

★★★★

Reader, I loved it! The best thing about Sally Cookson's energetic adaptation of Jane Eyre, revived at the National with a new cast, is that it doesn't obsess over Mr Rochester. The charisma of the sexy bigamist — part Mr Darcy, part Christian Grey — has unbalanced some versions of Charlotte Brontë's novel, distorting its nature. It's a life story, not a love story. So, although the bristle-bearded Tim Delap broods splendidly, the night belongs to Nadia Clifford's honest-to-a-fault Jane. The bits that hit hardest are early scenes in which she defies the cruelty of her aunt (Lynda Rooke), and late ones when she resists the cold courting of a missionary (Evelyn Miller). The real star, though, is the staging. In the boldest flourish, Melanie Marshall croons a chorus-commentary on the action. Numbers include Mad About the Boy and Gnarl's Barkley's Crazy. That they don't seem out of place is testament to the punch this feminist parable still packs. TWH