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Dramatic Publishing

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

A Play
by
ROBERT JOHANSON

Based on the novel
by
EMILY BRONTË



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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ROBERT JOHANSON

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(WUTHERING HEIGHTS)

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With grateful appreciation to original designers Michael Anania (sets), Jack Mehler (lights) and Gregg Barnes (costumes) for creating such a stunning atmosphere for this adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* and to the Paper Mill Playhouse for producing it.

FROM THE AUTHOR AND FIRST DIRECTOR

The five most successful British novels are (in this order): *Great Expectations*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Vanity Fair*, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*.

I have now had the great privilege to adapt all of the above novels with the exception of *Vanity Fair*. They had original productions at the Paper Mill Playhouse, the State Theatre of New Jersey, and subsequently were published by Dramatic Publishing and happily have been produced all over the world from Cairo to Alaska. As with my other literary adaptations (*Jane Eyre*, *Great Expectations* and *A Tale Of Two Cities*) I have remained dedicated to preserving the integrity of these great novels. I have not put happy endings where there were none, or cut plot lines or characters because they were too complicated. It is this very complication that makes these novels so rich and wonderful. I advise all actors and directors who embark on these great journeys to keep a copy of the novel as close to you as your script. That is your Bible. Any background that has been left out of the script is provided for you there. In the case of *Wuthering Heights*, I have attempted to dramatize the entire story. The famous Olivier film stops just over halfway with Catherine's death, and most versions do not attempt the great arc of Emily Brontë's creation. Yet, without the denouement of the second generation one does not understand why so much tragedy and revenge has been endured. The true light does not come until the end for these passionate and vengeful characters. Emily did not write her people sympathetically. They are as tough as the bleak and endless moors. Their difficult situation and regrettable choices are compelling and, frankly, often repulsive. She did not create characters we are to admire like her sister, Charlotte, did with *Jane Eyre*. But, she has given us characters that we will never forget. Hopefully, I have provided rich roles for actors to play fully, yet as honestly as possible. There is no safe way to go. If you are going to enter the world of *Wuthering Heights*, you must be willing to go the full measure. I wish you every success.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS was first produced at Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, N.J., February 1998, with the following cast:

AT WUTHERING HEIGHTS:

Mr. Earnshaw DAVID WEYNAND
Young Hindley Earnshaw RICKY FRANCO
Older Hindley Earnshaw DAVID WEYNAND
Young Catherine Earnshaw JENNIFER REYNOLDS
Catherine Earnshaw LIBBY CHRISTOPHERSEN
Heathcliff DAVID LEDINGHAM
Ellen (Nelly) Dean JODIE LYNN MCCLINTOCK
Joseph CHRISTOPHER WYNKOOP
Frances Earnshaw AMY TRIBBEY
Young Hareton Earnshaw NOAH D. PEYSER
Hareton Earnshaw JEB BROWN
Linton Heathcliff CHRIS STAFFORD
Servant's voice RUTH MOORE

AT THRUSHCROSS GRANGE:

Edgar Linton MARK H. DOLD
Isabella Linton (later Heathcliff) ELIZABETH ROBY
Cathy Linton LIBBY CHRISTOPHERSEN
Mr. Lockwood EZRA BARNES

PRODUCTION STAFF

Executive Producer ANGELO DEL ROSSI
Artistic Director, Director ROBERT JOHANSON
Assistant Director PATRICK PARKER
Scenic Design MICHAEL ANANIA
Costume Design GREGG BARNES
Lighting Design JACK MEHLER
Music ALBERT EVANS
Sound Design CRAIG CASSIDY
Hair Design HOWARD LEONARD
Fight Direction RICK SORDELET
Stage Manager ERIC SPROSTY

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

A Play in Two Acts
For 7-8 Men, 4 Women and 3-4 Children

CHARACTERS

AT WUTHERING HEIGHTS:

MR. EARNSHAW master of Wuthering Heights
HINDLEY EARNSHAW his son, the oldest born
CATHERINE EARNSHAW (later Linton) . . . his daughter
HEATHCLIFF his adopted son
ELLEN (NELLY) DEAN servant to Earnshaw
JOSEPH servant to Earnshaw
FRANCES EARNSHAW wife to Hindley
HARETON EARNSHAW Hindley's son
LINTON HEATHCLIFF Heathcliff's son

AT THRUSHCROSS GRANGE:

EDGAR LINTON . . . future master of Thrushcross Grange
ISABELLA LINTON (later Heathcliff) his sister
CATHY LINTON his daughter
FANNY Isabella's dog
MR. LOCKWOOD . . . new tenant of Thrushcross Grange

Children portray

YOUNG CATHERINE

YOUNG HINDLEY

YOUNG HEATHCLIFF

YOUNG HARETON (can double with Young Heathcliff)

(Catherine Earnshaw Linton and her daughter Cathy are portrayed by the same actress.)

(Mr. Earnshaw and his son, older Hindley, can be played by the same actor.)

TIME and PLACE

The action of the play is at Wuthering Heights, Thrushcross Grange and Penistone Crag on the Yorkshire Moors from 1775 to 1801.

ACT ONE

(*Wind—wild and whistling.*)

AT RISE: *The curtain rises on a dark room. A snowstorm rages outside a small leaded-paned window. A branch knocks against the pane. A door opens and a shaft of light pierces the darkness. LOCKWOOD, a slight man in his thirties, is silhouetted in the doorway. He holds a tiny guttering candle.*

FEMALE SERVANT'S VOICE. In there. You can sleep there for the night. Hide the candle and don't make a sound lest the master hear you. He has an odd notion about this chamber.

LOCKWOOD. Why is that, may I ask?

SERVANT'S VOICE. I'm sure I don't know. Mr. Heathcliff would not be telling the likes of me. So many queer goings on. Now, shut the door before he stirs and good night to you.

LOCKWOOD. Will someone be able to see me back to the Grange in the morning?

SERVANT (*moving away, outside*). I couldn't say. Shut the door!

LOCKWOOD (*shutting the door, muttering to himself*). I couldn't say. So many queer goings on. Did I invite this storm to strand me here? Wuthering Heights—you live up to your name this night. (*He moves to the window.*)

The candlelight reveals a window seat which doubles as a bed. Everything else is in darkness. He looks back toward the door.) And thank you, Mr. Heathcliff, for your hospitality and the kindness of your entire household. You've made this stranger feel right at home. Thank you so much. I hope the rest of the inhabitants of the moors are not like you or I'm headed straight back to London. *(He sits on the bed.)* Well, I guess I can freeze here, as well as anywhere else in this house. *(He pulls a folded blanket to him and a book falls to the floor. He picks it up and examines it by the light of the candle.)* Catherine Linton, her book. And a name before crossed out—*Catherine Heathcliff*: And another—*Catherine Earnshaw—1775*. It's her diary—dated a quarter of a century back. This must have been her room. Hmm—my bedtime reading as long as this candle lasts. *(He opens to the middle of the diary, then reads.)* "Poor Heathcliff. My brother won't let him sit with us or eat with us anymore. He threatens to turn him out of the house if he disobeys." I guess Wuthering Heights has always been a hotbed of hospitality. *(He turns pages.)* "Heathcliff will never be free of me. When I am gone, I will still come back. I will be on the moors, in the crags, on every whisper of the wind." Poor thing. What a misery. *(The candle gutters out.)* Even this pathetic candle won't light your way. *(Yawns.)* Ah, Catherine Linton Heathcliff Earnshaw—you will have to wait until morning. *(Falling asleep.)* Queer goings on indeed.

(He lets the book drop at his side. He leans his head back and nods off sitting up in his blanket. His head rests against the windowpane. The banging of the

branch becomes more pronounced. MUSIC sneaks in out of the storm. "Catherine/Storm" theme. Suddenly a hand is banging just to the side of LOCKWOOD's head outside the window. Another hand begins knocking on the opposite side of his head.)

CATHERINE'S VOICE. Let me in—let me in!

(LOCKWOOD starts awake and peers into the storm; a figure is barely discernible.)

LOCKWOOD. Who are you?

CATHERINE. Catherine. I'm come home. I've lost my way on the moors. Let me in! *(She raps so violently the window flies open and snow swirls into the room. She reaches toward him. Grabs his arm.)* Let me in!

LOCKWOOD. Be gone! I'll never let you in—not if you beg for twenty years.

CATHERINE. It IS twenty years—I've been lost for twenty years! Help me!

LOCKWOOD *(overlapping)*. Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!

(LOCKWOOD disengages himself and pushes her out—shutting the window against the screaming wind—all the while screaming incoherently himself. Suddenly the door to the chamber opens, a disheveled man stands silhouetted.)

HEATHCLIFF. Lockwood! God confound you.

LOCKWOOD. Mr. Heathcliff ... sorry ... I screamed out ... a frightful nightmare!

HEATHCLIFF. Who the devil showed you to this room—
I'll turn them out!

LOCKWOOD. I suppose they wanted proof that this place
is haunted. Well, they've got it now. It's bloody swarm-
ing with ghosts and goblins. If that little fiend had gotten
in at the window she probably would have strangled me.
"Catherine Linton" or "Earnshaw" or whoever she is.
Walking the earth for twenty years—

HEATHCLIFF. What can you mean by talking in this way
to me? How dare you—under my roof! (*Striking his
forehead.*)

LOCKWOOD. Look. I found the name here—"Catherine
Linton"—"Catherine Heathcliff"—oh...

HEATHCLIFF (*grabbing the book, deeply moved*). Take
my room the rest of the night. Do you hear me?

LOCKWOOD. Yes sir.

HEATHCLIFF. Take the candle and go where you
please—just go!

*(LOCKWOOD takes the candle and leaves. As he is
closing the door, he sees HEATHCLIFF climbing onto
the bed and throwing open the windows. MUSIC: "Cath-
erine" theme.)*

HEATHCLIFF. Come in! Cathy! Come in! Once more—
my heart's darling. Hear me this time, Catherine, at last!
Cathy! Cathy! Cathy!

*(Blackout. HEATHCLIFF's cries are overlapped in the
dark by LOCKWOOD shouting "Cathy! Cathy!" When
the lights come up he is seated far stage right smothered*

in a blanket, his feet in a basin. NELLY DEAN holds a pitcher of water.)

LOCKWOOD. "Cathy! Cathy!" That's what I heard him cry. All of Wuthering Heights, nay, all of Yorkshire could have heard him, Mrs. Dean.

NELLY (*pouring water into the basin*). Yes, sir, Mr. Lockwood, to be sure.

LOCKWOOD. A rough fellow, rather, Mrs. Dean.

NELLY. Rough as a saw-edge. The less you meddle with him the better.

LOCKWOOD. Yet, Mr. Heathcliff is my landlord and only neighbor on these desolate moors—I know that well enough. Four lonely hours it took to trudge back these two snowy miles and not a soul to be seen.

NELLY. Surely you've caught cold. I see you shivering. You must eat this gruel to drive it out. (*She hands him a bowl of gruel.*)

LOCKWOOD. Mrs. Dean, do you know anything of this Heathcliff's history?

NELLY. Oh, it's a cuckoo's, sir. I know all about it. (*She fetches her sewing and takes up a seat.*)

LOCKWOOD. Where does he come from?

NELLY. That I don't know. Nor his parents, neither. He just appeared into our lives. Old Mr. Earnshaw had been gone three days on a trip to Liverpool, you see. He made the entire journey—sixty miles—on foot.

LOCKWOOD. Surely, a better man than I!

NELLY. I was minding Master Hindley and Miss Catherine—the motherless pair. Before I came here to the Grange, sir, I spent many, many years tending the children up at Wuthering Heights.

(MUSIC: "Wuthering Heights" theme. Lights up on the Wuthering Heights interior. In the immaculate kitchen are shiny pots, pans and utensils ready for use. On the walls, pewter dishes and silver mugs reflect the light of many candles. Above the fireplace are sundry, villainous old guns. YOUNG HINDLEY and YOUNG CATHERINE are watching at a window by the front entry door DL. The lights are fading on LOCKWOOD. NELLY is now in the room.)

YOUNG CATHERINE. When will Father come, Nelly?

NELLY. I expected him by suppertime—he must have been detained.

YOUNG HINDLEY. Buying the fiddle he promised me.

YOUNG CATHERINE. Buying the horsewhip he promised me.

NELLY. Perhaps he's fetching my present out of the kindness of his heart. He promised me a pocketful of apples and pears.

(From a trapdoor above, the wizened old vinegar head of JOSEPH appears. He speaks in a thick Yorkshire accent as he descends the ladder from his garret.)

JOSEPH. What, then? The childer darr be laiking. (dare be playing) Ill childer! (Bad children) Maister Hindley! Miss Cathy! To bed!

NELLY. Joseph—they want to see their father, then. Let them wait up a little longer.

JOSEPH. Woman, it's fair flaysome (terrible) ut yah let 'em go on this gait. (way) Childer, up with ye! You best say yer prayers yer father's not killt!

(The children are objecting when the front door suddenly opens. They squeal with delight as MR. EARNSHAW enters wearily. He wears a broad hat and a huge coat.)

EARNSHAW *(laughing and groaning)*. Stand off. I'm nearly killed—I would not take another walk for three kingdoms. Stand off.

YOUNG CATHERINE & YOUNG HINDLEY. My present! Where is it, Father? Did you remember my fiddle? Where is my whip? *(Etc.)*

EARNSHAW. Not even a “by your leave” or hug for your father, then.

JOSEPH. Selfish childer!

EARNSHAW. A gift you want. A gift from God is what I've brought—though it's as dark almost as it came from the devil.

(From out of the coat EARNSHAW reveals a dirty, ragged, black-haired child. The child stands staring wildly about like a trapped animal. MUSIC: “Heathcliff” theme.)

JOSEPH. A devil, for sure t' feed when there are two bairns bellies t' fill. Fling it o' the door. Devil! *(He climbs back up his ladder.)*

EARNSHAW. It was starving and houseless on the streets of Liverpool. I could not leave it. Not a soul knew to whom it belonged.

JOSEPH. To the devil!

(JOSEPH disappears into his hole. YG. HINDLEY and YG. CATHERINE look under their father's cloak.)

EARNSHAW. What are you doing, then?

YOUNG HINDLEY. Where did you hide my fiddle, Father?

EARNSHAW (*draws out object wrapped in cloth and hands it to HINDLEY who unwraps it*). Here it is, then.

YOUNG HINDLEY (*picks up the fiddle, broken in two. Begins to blubber*). The gypsy broke it! The fiend broke my fiddle! You devil! (*He runs from the room.*)

EARNSHAW. Hindley! Ah—and you, Catherine. (*Feels about for the whip.*) Your whip... I had it here... or was it here? Ah, dear—I'm afraid it's gone.

YOUNG CATHERINE. Stupid devil! (*CATHERINE stomps her foot and spits at the boy. Her father grabs her and gives her a slap.*)

EARNSHAW. You'll have cleaner manners, young lady. You will learn there is such a thing as kindness and charity toward others less fortunate. (*CATHERINE holds her hand to her face and stands frozen.*) Nelly, heat some water, wash it and give it proper clothes.

NELLY. What do I call it, sir?

EARNSHAW. Heathcliff.

(MUSIC: "Heathcliff" theme as EARNSHAW exits. The lights change. LOCKWOOD is once again visible. NELLY turns to him and resumes her story. YG. CATHERINE and YG. HEATHCLIFF still stand in the room.)

NELLY. Heathcliff was the name of Mr. Earnshaw's first son who had died. It has served him ever since as both Christian and surname.

YOUNG HINDLEY (*returning*). Heathcliff! (*He comes to the small child and towers over him, prodding and pok-*

ing.) Imp of Satan! Cast a spell on our father! Dog! Beggar. You will know who is master here. Look at me. *(Grabs him roughly and turns him.)* Look at me! Know who is master here!

(He smacks him hard. YG. HEATHCLIFF falls without uttering a sound. YG. HINDLEY exits. YG. CATHERINE approaches YG. HEATHCLIFF.)

YOUNG CATHERINE *(after looking at him for a moment; forcefully)*. Heathcliff!

(The child looks up at her, she holds out her hand, he puts his hand in hers and she helps him up and leads him to the foot of the stairs where they sit together. MUSIC: "Cathy/Heathcliff" theme.)

NELLY. From the moment Miss Catherine uttered his name, they became inseparable. *(Lights fade on YG. CATHERINE and YG. HEATHCLIFF.)* Heathcliff would do anything Miss Catherine did bid him and Old Mr. Earnshaw took quite a liking to him.

LOCKWOOD. What did Master Hindley think of that?

NELLY. Oh, he hated it and thankfully was sent away to school. So, for several years, Cathy and Heathcliff were safe there together. Then, our kind master declined and died—

(OLDER CATHERINE and OLDER HEATHCLIFF appear in the same spot their younger counterparts had just occupied.)