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REVIEW

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*Northern Ballet Theatre**'Wuthering Heights'**April 2009**Hull, New Theatre**by Claire Suddaby*

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A year or two ago my wish-list for NBT revivals was *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Wuthering Heights*, so I've been spoiled this season.

I think WH is one of David Nixon's biggest achievements during his tenure at NBT. Just as *Romeo & Juliet* and *A Christmas Carol* are still essential parts of the company's repertoire, I suspect WH will be entertaining audiences for many years.

Dance seems the perfect medium for a story of obsessive, destructive love and this production doesn't disappoint. For a start it has a clear, accessible narrative, very effective use of a dance vocabulary for each of the characters, a stunning and evocative set as well as a lush, romantic

score by Claude Michel Schonberg. It really is staged so well - the wedding scenes especially effective (Heathcliff's arrival always has a real frisson that reminds me of Adam Cooper's arrival at the ball in the second act of Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*...)

And there's a new generation of dancers to tackle what must be two of the best roles in dance drama. At Thursday's matinee in Hull Georgina May danced Cathy with the aura and technique of a principal dancer. And Tobias Batley was a revelation to me as Heathcliff. He gave such a strong, dramatic performance that I can't believe he's somehow slipped under my radar so far. Heathcliff's seduction (if we can call it that) of Isabella was brutal but compelling.... I wonder what questions the teachers in the school party in the stalls had on the bus back to Bridlington.... How marvellous to see a young British dancer have the chance to perform such a challenging





from 2002 - Charlotte Talbot as Cathy in David Nixon's *Wuthering Heights*

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At Thursday's evening performance, Keiko Amemori was the perfect Cathy, a genuine "wild, wicked slip" whose delicacy contrasted so much with Chris Hinton-Lewis's passionate Heathcliff. A different reading to Tobias Batley's, he brought out the pathos in the character while showing the demons that drive Heathcliff to destruction.

Another excellent production in what's a brilliant season. A nice innovation in the programme too, with great group pictures of the company instead of the usual mugshots.

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written by Claire Suddaby © [email](#)

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