

think that the rest of the audience might be sharing my guilty secret — that, while we're genuinely awestruck by Radiohead's constant ability to lead us in curious new directions, if we really want our hearts to soar, we play their records from the 1990s. It was a theory that received a definite boost when the Nineties B-side 'Talk Show Host' received much the loudest cheer of the night so far (together with several excited cries of 'Fuck me!'). An ever bigger one then greeted 'My Iron Lung' from 1995's *The Bends*.

But of course, any thoughts that we were in for the traditional rock-show structure of new songs gradually giving way to an anthology of greatest hits were soon dispelled. From there, the new ones continued to crop up, while the old included plenty of the band's more challenging tracks — especially the ones that overlay ballads with drumming that seems to belong to another song completely or that provide the kind of dance music designed not so much to make you tap your foot as stroke your chin.

These songs were all brilliantly, in fact thrillingly performed. Nonetheless, there were times when the whole gig felt like an extended tease, with Yorke himself in on our guilty secret — and almost daring us to wonder if, beneath our impeccable muso exteriors, we might quite like a little more old-fashioned showbiz. Only right at the end did he give us the mass singalong of 'Paranoid Android' from 1997's *OK Computer* — and even then we sang along rather timidly, as if unsure that this was what Thom would have wanted.

All of which made for a classic Radiohead gig. By choosing songs from every period of their career, by playing them so stirringly and by staying uncompromising to the point of slight cussedness, they gave us an authentic expression both of their greatness and of that continuing strangeness. After all, there aren't many bands who, had they gone for more obvious crowd-pleasing, would ultimately have pleased the crowd less.

Dance

Emotional intelligence

Ismene Brown

Jane Eyre

Northern Ballet, touring until 11 June

Obsidian Tear/The Invitation

Royal Opera House, in rep until 11 June

The difference between a poor ballet of the book (see the Royal Ballet's *Frankenstein*) and a good one — indeed two — was cheerily pointed up by Northern Ballet last week, when it unveiled an intensely imagined new *Jane Eyre* in Doncaster

and gave the London première of the efficiently menacing *1984* that I reviewed last autumn.

It wasn't really a surprise that Cathy Marston had a triumph with the Brontë — Royal Ballet-raised but Europe-bred, the choreographer has gradually developed a knack for character empathy and, crucially, a gift for externalising inner feelings in a vividly legible way. So although *Jane Eyre* is such a literary story, with every emotional step of the heroine so painstakingly explained by its author, Marston has danced lightly through the details, compressing it into a chamber ballet, albeit full-length.

It's given a sketchy, suggestive design by Patrick Kinmonth, with translucent grey cloths marked with charcoal lines, like tissue drawings of woods or rooms, though the costumes are wishy-washy (I don't believe that Blanche Ingram is the type of woman who would wear tired raspberry).

MacMillan shared with Dennis Potter an unmatched ability to get under the skin of teenagers's wonky war games

Lit by Alastair West, who creates some excellent fiery effects, the story emerges with a visually dynamic underpinning.

There is also an apt and emotive score by Philip Feeney for Northern Ballet's lively small orchestra, which incorporates heartwrenching movements from the chamber music and songs of Schubert and Mendelssohn (Felix and Fanny), all of which anchor the sentimental temperature in Brontë's period. This crucial piece of good artistic judgment by Marston means that we register Jane's choices and feelings within that era's context, and even though her choreography is written in the whole-body moves of European modern ballet (much more flex in necks and upper torsos than classical ballet), the eloquence is directed towards hidden or suppressed or evasive feelings too.

And this makes the difference between a choreographer spelling out a story and one who aims to speak through character, so that the plot is the result of their individual natures in action and reaction. Jane's character is subtly gradated, her full-blown passions hedged in by practised watchfulness and naivety in half-gestures, and in Dreda Blow's quietly involving performance.

Pleasingly, Marston is just as interested in a little side-figure like Aunt Reed as she is in the ambiguous Mr Rochester. She's transformed him from being middle-aged and bitterly buttoned-up into a more ballet-friendly young man driven by male ego. He sits assertively with spread legs, points his foot out rudely to stop Jane, and then to send her on her way. The Cuban Javier Torres can do handsome macho in his sleep.

And Marston uses the corps de ballet as a psychological emanation, having Jane pur-

sued in her thoughts by an amorphous male corps whose vigorous formations contrast with the cramped, synchronised misery of her classroom at Lowood School.

It is all very good, serious, sensitive, modern and accessible — which Northern Ballet quite rightly wants, and is currently doing extremely well. Incidentally, Marston reached this expert stage only by making a lot of ballets, progressing through shallows, learning from mistakes, building her skills, trying various formats. It's what Frederick Ashton and Kenneth MacMillan did too, practising, practising.

MacMillan probably made the best of all Brontë ballets with his fantasy on a disturbing, claustrophobic family of siblings, *My Brother, My Sisters*. I reckon he shared with Dennis Potter an otherwise unmatched ability to get under the thin skin of teenagers and their wonky, dangerous war games. Everyone is talking about the rape scene in the revival of *The Invitation* by the Royal Ballet, part of its excellent last triple bill of the season. But though the rape is vilely well done, the truly brilliant scene is the one where the teenage children at the garden party are alone together, and a swift, vicious little war begins over who knows what about sex and who might do what.

At the centre is the young girl who's



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Victoria Sibson as Bertha Mason and Javier Torres as Edward Rochester in Cathy Marston's *Jane Eyre*

high on the rush of teenage hormones and has caught the eye of a married man at the party. Or did she catch his? Whose was the invitation? Though the ballet, at 60 minutes, is far too long and wears its period details heavily (the Matyas Seiber score churns out melodrama), the ambitious playing of the encounter by Francesca Hayward and Gary Avis skewered precisely what makes *The Invitation* vibrant still.

Hayward — tiny, delicious, bold — was mesmerising, the kind of girl who can't be

Wayne McGregor's new piece is a real shock — it's full of emotion!

corralled. What a blistering actress she is already. She flew through her jumps like an imp out of Pandora's box, luring her contemporaries to break the rules, but then herself broken by the older man who simply won't control himself when he sees her.

Was Hayward perhaps not quite innocent enough for the story to work? I'm not sure that the totally pure victim would be inter-

esting today. MacMillan's depiction of her brutalisation and the searing pain she suffers afterwards is harrowing, but Hayward infused her character with all sorts of ambivalences, and suckered Avis in. Makes you think.

Wayne McGregor's new piece is a real shock — it's full of emotion! We've heard much from his acolytes about what the celebrated modernist has given the Royal Ballet, perked it up, made it relevant, poor old thing. But what of the Royal Ballet's gift to him as an artist?

Obsidian Tear is the answer. A piece for nine men, it is interested in men as men with feelings, rather than just limitlessly bendy athletes. There is complex emotional experiment, men seeking relationships, and male group behaviour somewhere between *Lord of the Flies* and a Wall Street tae-kwon-do class. I recall that when McGregor started out, his unique gift was to suggest implosive emotion, the bones and sinews scraping through the skin as if trying to stop something unknown and dark from getting out. But this is fully externalised, unafraid sentiment, respond-

ing with heart to a rousingly rich classical orchestral score by Esa-Pekka Salonen — I look forward to a second view as soon as possible.

Radio Sound and fury James Delingpole

There are few jobs more dishonest than being a radio critic in Britain. I know this because it was how I got my first break 25 years ago as a columnist. In those days you used to get sent huge yellow envelopes full of preview cassettes, whereas now it's all digital, but the fundamental lie is just the same: essentially you are telling the reader something they know not to be true — that BBC Radio 4 is a wonderfully civilised place to hang out, brimming with all sorts of marvelously fascinating programmes that transport you to another realm.

Yes, of course it does happen. In the same way that when Grozny was reduced to rubble in the Chechen wars, I expect there was some beautiful old building left standing, a mosque maybe, which you could have gone

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You and Yours — bleeeurrrch

to visit. But if you'd then come back home and told your friends, 'God, you really must go to Grozny. The architecture there is totally amazing,' you wouldn't have been telling the full story, would you?

So it is with Radio 4. (Which, as far as reviewing goes, is radio.) There are times — we've all been there — when you're desperately trying to stay awake on a late-night drive or you're slogging along a tedious stretch of motorway or you're stuck in a jam, and to your rescue comes a documentary or even, on rarer occasions, a play so absorbing that time ceases to exist and you could happily stay there for ever.

Be honest, though: it's not that often, is it? Definitely, I spend far more time shouting at my radio than I do blissing out to it. This is partly a function of the fact that the bulk of Radio 4's daily schedule comprises so many programmes you can barely bear: *Today* — just maddening; *Woman's Hour* — hateful, sanctimonious, man-hating wittering; *You and Yours* — bleeeurrrch; *Costing the Earth* — like being force-fed to death on sackcloth and tofu; *PM* — is there anyone on radio more irritating than Eddie Mair?; *Any Answers* — yes, there is and her name is Anita Anand.

And partly, of course, it's because the BBC's politics only ever go in one direction. They try really hard to be balanced, the BBC's presenters. Unfortunately, no