

**YOU ON THE
MOORS
NOW**

**BY JACLYN
BACKHAUS**



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**

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YOU ON THE MOORS NOW was originally developed with John Kurzynowski and Theater Reconstruction Ensemble at HERE Arts Center (Reed Whitney, Producing Director), New York City, in February 2015. It was conceived and directed by John Kurzynowski, the scenic and costume design was by Joseph Wolfslau, the sound design was by Alex Hawthorn, the lighting design was by Marika Kent, and the production stage manager was Kristy Bodall. The cast was as follows:

ELIZABETH BENNET	Kelly Rogers
JO MARCH	Lauren Swan-Potras
CATHY	Anastasia Olowin
JANE EYRE	Sam Corbin
FITZWILLIAM DARCY	Preston Martin
LAURIE LAURENCE	Nathaniel Basch-Gould
HEATHCLIFF	Harlan J. Alford
MR. ROCHESTER	Jon Riddleberger
PLAYER 1	Lena Hudson
PLAYER 2	Michael Barringer
PLAYER 3	Emily Marro
PLAYER 4	Eben Hoffer
PLAYER 5	Patrick Scheid
PLAYER 6	Claire Rothrock

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The script of *You on the Moors Now* that you hold in your hand is a labor of love and a meeting of minds. Theater Reconstruction Ensemble, my first artistic home in the city, was a devising company helmed by John Kurzynowski—I was their resident playwright for a time, and I crafted texts for their theatrical endeavors on several occasions. The idea to delve into these great 19th-century novels was one that John approached me about, and I was excited to explore them and mine them for content that could become a play. Over the course of several workshops, TRE actors and associated artists mined the source materials for common ground and found our angle into these disparate stories. We held an elegant ball in a rehearsal studio, we devised movement sequences and new scenarios involving our favorite characters, and we crafted several different frameworks for the piece. We performed excerpts from the piece, some that survived revisions and expansions and some that did not, at places like the Brick, HERE's Dorothy B. Williams Theater, and Fresh Ground Pepper. Eventually I was able to take these various inspirations, conversations, and teambuilt works and compile them into this play. John continually acted as a sounding board for this text as director as well as dramaturg, and the ensemble of TRE as well as Reed Whitney, TRE's producing director, were able to continually help me shape it as we readied the piece for production at HERE. The *You on the Moors Now* process felt as much an act of gathering as it did an act of writing, and so I honor those who took part in all of the work's devised genesis here.

I thank now the original cast and design team of *You on the Moors Now*, many of whom were involved in several early workshops: John Kurzynowski (director), Kristy Bodall (SM), Joseph Wolfslau (scenic, costumes), Marika Kent (lighting), Alex Hawthorn (sound), and cast: Kelly Rogers, Lauren Swan-Potras, Anastasia Olowin, Sam Corbin, Preston Martin, Nathaniel Basch-Gould, Harlan J. Alford, Jon Riddleberger, Lena Hudson, Michael Barringer, Emily Marro, Eben Hoffer, Patrick Scheid, and Claire Rothrock.

I also thank the other participants of YOTMN workshops: Nick Smerkanich, Sydney Matthews, Ben Otto, Jessie Barr, Reed Whitney, Keenan Jolliff, Mac V. Wallach, Kristine Haruna Lee, Josh Isaacs, Dylan Lamb, Libby Ricardo.

Further artistic development of the play was done with the Hypocrites in Chicago. I thank them. The team there was: Devon de Mayo (director), Justine Palmisano (SM), Arnel Sancianco (scenic), Izumi Inaba (costume), Heather Gilbert (lighting), Sarah Espinoza (sound), Shannon O'Neill (fight choreography), and Phoebe Gonzalez (dramaturg), and cast: Japhet Balaban, Maurice Demus, Tien Doman, Emjoy Gavino, Desmond Gray, Deanna Myers, Josh Odor, Brittney Love Smith, Chris Acevedo, Breon Arzell, Cruz Gonzalez-Cadel, Edward Mawere, Sarah Price, and Sarai Rodriguez.

Finally, to my agent Derek Zasky, my publishers and editors at DPS (Haleh Roshan Stilwell), and to my community of collaborators and artistic peers: Thank you for the time, the patience, the space, and the generosity of spirit you bring to our collective process.

John Kurzynowski, thank you for believing in me first.

CHARACTERS

the four women

ELIZABETH BENNET
JO MARCH
CATHY
JANE EYRE

the four men

FITZWILLIAM DARCY
LAURIE LAURENCE
HEATHCLIFF
MR. ROCHESTER

six other players play

player 1 (f)

CAROLINE BINGLEY, AMY

player 2 (m)

MR. BINGLEY, OLD MR. LAURENCE FROM NEXT DOOR

player 3 (f)

NELLY DEAN, BETH, JANE BENNET

player 4 (m)

JOSEPH, MRS. MARCH

player 5 (m)

ST. JOHN RIVERS, BHAER, EDGAR LINTON

player 6 (f)

RIVER SISTER, MEG

SETTINGS

The moors

an intersection between girlhood and womanhood
forest encampments, drawing rooms, and ballrooms across time

NOTES

Script may live on page different than on stage! Have the most fun with whatever this means.

Sections with text that is blank (“_____”) should be performed as though there is an implied word, name, or phrase that is too dangerous to communicate out loud. Therefore, it is communicated by ESP to those who need to know it.

Sometimes character names, scene titles, stage directions, book titles, and authors can be evoked throughout the piece (for example, at the top of scenes, or as a solution to impossibility), at the production’s discretion.

This play takes characters and scenarios from *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë. You may invoke the names of these authors and these books if you need to in design, dramaturgy, and, if/when using stage directions as text, in performance.

In Act Four, the actor playing Cathy acts as narrator, taking all of the narrative text. Any dialogue should be spoken by the actor playing the corresponding character. The six players can play museum workers—hang decorations, stir punch...

YOU ON THE MOORS NOW

ACT ONE “GIRLS STANDING ON LAWNS”

1. Moor Parkour

*Soft grasses.
The sound of panting
A breeze washes over a ravine and shudders the blades of grass
A girl, running.
Tripping, falling, up again
Bounding over land
Wearing large cloaks
She seems to be fleeing something
But there is nothing behind or ahead of her
Only grasses
And rocks
And wind
And then, a second panting
Another girl joins the first girl
And they run, together
But not really together, they are of separate worlds
Sameness and separateness in their running
This second girl seems not to flee anything
Rather, she seems intent on running
As though she were proving something to the wind
She laughs with glee
And a third girl joins the second and the first
They run,
Grass, and wind, and rock
Only this girl, she runs, seemingly, through a city street*

*Winding past crowds, dodging carts and carriages
In the rain
And then a fourth girl
Who does not run
She merely walks
She regards the mud
She regards the weather
She walks somewhere resolutely
There is a point of focus just beyond her sight
And the other three continue to run
The four of them, there
Together, and apart
And they run
And they walk
There
On the moors
Now.*

**2. Jane stops. She catches her breath.
She turns to the other girls.**

JANE. I said no.
Did you say no?

JO. I said no.
Did you say no?

ELIZABETH. I said no.
Did you say no?

CATHY. I didn't say anything.
No one asked me anything.
I just like running.

JO. You aren't running away from anything?

CATHY. No. Are you?

JO. I was just proposed to by my neighbor

ELIZABETH and JANE. Me too
But not my neighbor

ELIZABETH. My neighbor's rich guy friend JANE. My Boss
ELIZABETH and JANE. I said no
Yeah me too
CATHY. Oh! So was I. I was just proposed to by my neighbor
ELIZABETH. What did you say?
CATHY. Nothing yet. I ran away from him
JANE. THAT'S WHAT I DID
I said no with my mind.
So you were running away from something
CATHY. No. I was just running home. It wasn't that complicated
I like to run so I ran
Because it was windy and it felt like flying.
Where are you going?
JO. I'm going home.
Which is awkward
Because we had to walk on the SAME TRAIL
From the woods where he proposed back to our cul-de-sac
And his bedroom window looks RIGHT INTO OUR HOUSE
And nobody said anything and it was just...BBLHEHBLBLBBHE-
ARRGGHH
I won't see him for a while and he'll forget all about me
Where are you going?
ELIZABETH. I am going to bed
But it's not my bed
It's a hide-a-bed
I'm visiting friends.
I thought I would be safe here, but then...He showed up.
I want to go to bed.
I want to go home.
JANE. I can't go home
I don't have a home
I am literally going to run over these hills
Until I die—
ELIZABETH. It is strange, how one singular choice
Can alter the course of your life—

JANE. —Or am picked up by a wayward lady
Who drops me off at an inn
But I have no money
And I am nameless
So the inn will not take me

JO. You don't have a name?

JANE. My name is _____

JO. I would let you stay at my house
It's kind of small but you know

JANE. Is it nearby?

JO. It's in America

JANE. Well thanks anyway

CATHY. I live nearby

ELIZABETH. Maybe you can take _____ with you

CATHY. I can't. Sorry.
We have large dogs. And ghosts?

JANE. I HATE GHOSTS

I'll be fine

I'll venture onward

By

Myself

ELIZABETH. The life we've come from.

The life we move toward.

I'm sorry that we are unable to help you.

JANE. Help me?

Sorry for me?

No. You mustn't be sorry for me

You must be sorry for your own self

We must be sorry for our own selves

And sorry for no more than a minute

And after that, we must continue to survive

It's hard to feel sorry for yourself and survive at the same time

And I daresay, no one will do either for us.

We must do it for ourselves.

JO. If we had said yes, it would've been awful.

ELIZABETH. It would have been awful
Yes. You're right. That's why we said no.

CATHY. I might say yes. I don't know.

ELIZABETH. Do you love him?

CATHY. No, but he's rich.

JANE. UGH. I'M sorry
If I think about it—I just. I can't.
I gotta go. Bye.

Jane parkours away from them.

ELIZABETH. Wait! Are you sure you'll be alright!

JANE. (*Far away.*) No!

ELIZABETH. Godspeed, _____.

JO. We're all fucked.

3. "Laurie"

JO. I first met Laurie behind that curtain at that rich people party.
He tried to kiss me but I had given myself a cootie shot
So I was immune.

And then we grew and grew and grew

And my sisters grew and grew

And my parents grew older and older

And then I blinked

And then I blinked and we were 18

And we went hiking

And he was acting so queer, so part of me knew it was coming and
that's how I said no

A forest behind the houses.

LAURIE. Hey Jo. Wait up, will ya?

Hey, stop.

Stop right there. I gotta

I gotta talk to you about something.

JO. No, Teddy! Please! Don't do it!

LAURIE. Don't do what?

YOU ON THE MOORS NOW

by Jaclyn Backhaus

7 men, 7 women

Four literary heroines of the nineteenth century set conventionalism ablaze when they turn down marriage proposals from their equally famous gentlemen callers. What results is a confluence of love, anger, grief, and bloodshed, as the ensemble struggles to reconcile romantic ideologies of the past with their modern ideas of courtship. Everything you've learned about love from the pages of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Little Women* is turned upside down in this grand theatrical battle royale.

"The Brontë sisters' moors become a battleground unmoored from time and space in Jaclyn Backhaus's fascinatingly playful contention with the female literary heroines and gender norms of the 19th century. ...in providing respectfully irreverent new angles on these not-so-little women—complete with an unexpected, gleefully anachronistic but thoroughly satisfying epilogue—... MOORS scores."

—Time Out Chicago

"YOU ON THE MOORS NOW is a witty slice of meta-fiction and a loving tribute to the foundation of feminist literature and activism."

—NewCityStage.com

"...a rip-roaring, hilarious adventure. ...an empowering look at a group of women who say 'no' not only to their ardent suitors but also to the conventions and societal norms expected of them. They lean in and on each other as they embark on a journey that is not without a battle and considerable cost."

—Buzznews.net

Also by Jaclyn Backhaus
INDIA PALE ALE
MEN ON BOATS

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