

**MISS BENNET
CHRISTMAS AT
PEMBERLEY**

BY
**LAUREN GUNDERSON
AND MARGOT MELCON**



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**

MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY
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MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY was originally produced by Northlight Theatre (BJ Jones, Artistic Director; Timothy J. Evans, Executive Director) in Chicago, Illinois, on November 10, 2016. It was directed by Jessica Thebus, the scenic design was by Richard and Jacqueline Penrod, the costume design was by Melissa Torchia, the lighting design was by Sarah Hughey, the original music and sound design were by Kevin O'Donnell, and the stage manager was Kimberly Ann McCann. The cast was as follows:

MARY BENNET Emily Berman
ARTHUR DE BOURGH Erik Hellman
ELIZABETH DARCY Samantha Beach
FITZWILLIAM DARCY Alex Goodrich
JANE BINGLEY Aila Peck
CHARLES BINGLEY Tosin Morohunfolu
LYDIA WICKHAM Jennifer Latimore
ANNE DE BOURGH Bri Sudia

MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY was also produced at Round House Theatre (Ryan Rilette, Artistic Director; Ed Zakreski, Managing Director) in Bethesda, Maryland, on November 23, 2016. It was directed by Eleanor Holdridge, the scenic design was by Daniel Conway, the costume design was by Kendra Rai, the lighting design was by Nancy Schertler, the sound design was by Matthew M. Nielson, and the stage manager was Che Wernsman. The cast was as follows:

MARY BENNET Katie Kleiger
ARTHUR DE BOURGH William Vaughan
ELIZABETH DARCY Erin Weaver
FITZWILLIAM DARCY Danny Gavigan
JANE BINGLEY Katie deBuys
CHARLES BINGLEY Brandon McCoy
LYDIA WICKHAM Miranda Rizzolo
ANNE DE BOURGH Kathryn Tkel

MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY was also produced by Marin Theatre Company (Jasson Minadakis, Artistic Director) in Mill Valley, California, on November 25, 2016. It was directed by Meredith McDonough, the scenic design was by Eric Flatmo, the costume design was by Callie Floor, the lighting design was by Paul Toben, the sound design was by Sarah Huddleston, and the stage manager was Sean McStravick. The cast was as follows:

MARY BENNET Martha Brigham
ARTHUR DE BOURGH Adam Magill
ELIZABETH DARCY Cindy Im
FITZWILLIAM DARCY Joseph Patrick O'Malley
JANE BINGLEY Lauren Spencer
CHARLES BINGLEY Tommy Gorrebeeck
LYDIA WICKHAM Erika Rankin
ANNE DE BOURGH Laura Odeh

CHARACTERS

MARY BENNET—20. Finally coming in to her own, she is no longer the plain, boring girl she once was. She has a fire in her now. She is intelligent, curious, and lively, but her family only sees her as a future spinster. She does not suffer fools. She wants to live.

ARTHUR DE BOURGH—25. A studious, unsociable only child who has never been around women or large families. He is a loner who prefers books to people. He has recently inherited a large estate and has no idea what to do next.

ELIZABETH DARCY—22, married to Mr. Darcy. Confident, charming, and witty. She makes a fun and surprising lady of the house. She is best friends with her sister Jane.

FITZWILLIAM DARCY—30. A loving, generous, and smart (if slightly stiff) husband. He is quiet and vigilant and thus sees what others often miss. He knows what being lovelorn is like.

JANE BINGLEY—24, married to Mr. Bingley. She is seven months pregnant with her first child and is sweet and optimistic as ever. The kindest heart in the house.

CHARLES BINGLEY—25. Gracious, happy, and ever focused on the love of his life, Jane. A good friend and always ready with a smile.

LYDIA WICKHAM—17. Flirtatious, youthful, self-centered. Her marriage to Mr. Wickham is a sham but she will not admit this. She is the person you want to have at your party: energetic, engaging, unstoppable.

ANNE DE BOURGH—20s. Only daughter of the late Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Lived in her mother's very large shadow, never having to ask for anything or speak for herself her entire life. Judgmental and impatient, just like her mother.

SETTING

December, 1815.

A large drawing room and attached library of Pemberley, the grand estate of Mr. and Mrs. Darcy. In the past quite formal, but Lizzy has warmed it up with a sense of home.

NOTES

The play works best when pacing is swift. The banter and transitions must flow to earn the moments of pause, hesitation, and sincerity.

The writers encourage diverse casting—Jane Austen belongs to everyone.

Mr. Darcy sends you all the love in the world that he can spare from me. You are all to come to Pemberley at Christmas.

—Lizzy, Chapter 60,
Pride and Prejudice

MISS BENNET

CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY

ACT ONE

Prologue

A letter from Mary to Lizzy.

MARY. Dearest Elizabeth,

It is hard to believe it has been nearly two years since we have seen each other—with your duties as the lady of the great house Pemberley and wife of Mr. Darcy it is no wonder that you have not returned to Longbourn to visit us. You will be pleased to know that I continue to practice the pianoforte every morning and afternoon...and evening.

We do not receive many visitors now that my charming sisters are no longer at home. You and Jane are happily married, Lydia is—well—married, and Kitty enjoys London with our aunt and uncle. And I? I read. Of things beyond myself. And I wonder: Can one live a large life in mind alone?

I will arrive at Pemberley with Jane and Mr. Bingley within the fortnight. How lovely it will be to celebrate Christmas together as a family again.

Your sister, Mary

Scene 1

December 22nd, 1815, afternoon at Pemberley Estate. We find the drawing room, which has grand windows letting in the afternoon light, couches and seats. On one side is a library with bookshelves built into the wall that surround a desk. On the other side is a piano. In the center of the room is a large, bare Christmas tree.

Elizabeth Darcy admires the tree, amused by it. Fitzwilliam Darcy enters, shocked to see a tree in his house.

DARCY. Dear God, Mrs. Darcy.

LIZZY. Isn't it grand, Mr. Darcy? Imagine it with ribbons and lanterns on the boughs. Perhaps we can cut out paper stars to decorate it. Would that not be handsome?

DARCY. What is that?

LIZZY. It is a tree! And a large and lovely one too.

DARCY. I can make out that it is a tree, Mrs. Darcy. My foremost question is why the tree is *inside*.

LIZZY. Because it is a *Christmas* tree. A popular German custom. An evergreen reminds us of life even in the deep midwinter. Isn't that wonderful?

DARCY. It would be were we suddenly German.

LIZZY. I'm attempting a new tradition at Pemberley.

DARCY. Which entails cutting down perfectly healthy trees and humiliating them in the drawing room.

LIZZY. I am far from humiliating my tree. We celebrate its beauty and fortitude against the winter.

DARCY. Which I fear I shall never persuade you should happen outside.

LIZZY. No you shall not. Besides, what fun is a marriage of persuasion, when it could be a marriage of surprise?

DARCY. You manage to surprise me by the hour, Mrs. Darcy.

LIZZY. Which will keep us both young and forever intrigued. Now I know you did not seek me out to discuss foliage. What can I do for you, Mr. Darcy?

DARCY. Yes. Well. You recall the news from Rosings that my aunt, the Lady Catherine, has died.

LIZZY. (*Fibbing.*) So sad.

DARCY. Terrible. Indeed.

LIZZY. Terrible for her daughter. Poor Anne. She scarcely seemed to breathe without her mother's permission. Since I rather disrupted Lady Catherine's plan for Anne to marry you, I wonder what will become of her?

DARCY. Anne will be provided for generously—she receives ten thousand, I understand.

LIZZY. In addition to the estate?

DARCY. No, the estate is entailed to the male heir.

LIZZY. But I recall the de Bourghs being adamant that Anne would inherit, despite the usual custom.

DARCY. It appears that was more a circumstance of Lady Catherine's iron will than her husband's *actual* will. There is a cousin, a Mr. Arthur de Bourgh, whom I only know but slightly; it is he who is set to inherit.

LIZZY. And who is this gentleman of whom I've never heard, much less met?

DARCY. He is the only son of the late Sir Lewis de Bourgh's elder brother. I knew him as a boy, mostly. He's an Oxford man, a student of...everything really. I never knew him when he wasn't studying.

LIZZY. Studying what?

DARCY. Snails, when last we met. I recall the too frequent mention of them over dinner.

LIZZY. Mr. de Bourgh and his snail collection.

DARCY. *Lord* de Bourgh, I believe. He inherited the title and some land when his own father passed, and he now has a grand estate to accompany it.

LIZZY. What a Christmas it shall be for His Lordship.

DARCY. Indeed. A Christmas he shall enjoy...here.

LIZZY. Here? What do you mean, "here"?

DARCY. As he has no family to speak of and has not been to Rosings for years, I have made an offer for Lord de Bourgh to join us. Here. Tomorrow.

Thank you.

LIZZY. Mr. Darcy, today it is you who surprise me. Well, the entire family is gathering, why not add one more. I'll let you keep your lord if you grant me my beautiful tree. Are we agreed?

DARCY. Indeed we are, my dear. (*Trying to sound honest.*) And, you know, I rather...like your tree.

LIZZY. You perjure yourself. But I thank you.

A commotion from the main hall.

Oh! That must be Jane! I care not a whit about anything as long as my sister is arrived safely and enormously. Happy Christmas, Mr. Darcy.

DARCY. Happy Christmas, my darling.

They kiss just as the commotion brings in Charles and Jane Bingley. Jane is quite pregnant.

Mary Bennet trails behind them.

JANE. Lizzy, dear!

LIZZY. My Jane is here at last! Happy Christmas to you!

JANE. My darling sister. Happy Christmas!

LIZZY. Look at you! You're radiant.

JANE. I'm as large as a cottage.

LIZZY. And exactly as a cottage, you are warm, full of life, and lit from within.

JANE. I've missed you so much, darling Lizzy.

BINGLEY. Darcy, my friend. How are you?

DARCY. Quite well, Bingley, and I do hope your trip was easy.

BINGLEY. Easy enough for winter.

LIZZY. Certainly easier than it was for our dear Jane. Was it horribly uncomfortable?

JANE. Not horribly. But I am quite relieved to be on solid ground.

DARCY. Sit. Please sit.

MARY. You should elevate your legs as well. I have read that it encourages circulation and will make you vastly more comfortable.

JANE. Thank you, Mary.

LIZZY. Oh Mary, I have yet to even look at you in all the fuss over Jane. Do forgive me, sister. And welcome. Happy Christmas.

MARY. Thank you, Lizzy, though to be perfectly accurate, Christmas is still three days away. You look lovely.

DARCY. Doesn't she? Welcome Mary.

MARY. Mr. Darcy. The estate is as fine as ever.

DARCY. I hope you will all treat it as your home while you are here.

JANE. How kind, Mr. Darcy, thank you.

MARY. Yes thank you—oh! The library.

LIZZY. It took her all of two minutes to find the books. And I'm surprised it took that long.

BINGLEY. Mary was quite the help in the carriage. The bumpier the road the more she distracted us with a summary of whatever it was she had just read.

MARY. (*Taking out her copy of Lamarck, which is ever at the ready.*) Lamarck's *Zoological Philosophy*. It is a captivating survey of the natural inclination for animals to change because of their environments—

LIZZY. Which we can discuss at length later tonight, I'm sure, once everyone has had time to settle in.

MARY. Yes, but—

JANE. After dinner perhaps, Mary.

MARY. That would be suitable, but Lizzy I wonder—

LIZZY. You're always wondering, Mary, what is it now?!

MARY. Why do you have a tree growing in your drawing room?

JANE. Oh! She does, doesn't she?

BINGLEY. I thought it best not to say anything, but I did find it somewhat unusual.

JANE. Whatever is it doing here, Lizzy?

MISS BENNET CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY

by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon

3M, 5W

A sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* set two years after the novel ends, *MISS BENNET* continues the story, only this time with bookish middle-sister Mary as its unlikely heroine. Mary is growing tired of her role as dutiful middle sister in the face of her siblings' romantic escapades. When the family gathers for Christmas at Pemberley, an unexpected guest sparks Mary's hopes for independence, an intellectual match, and possibly even love.

"Droll and delicious, MISS BENNET is a charming, confectionary celebration of fan favorite characters from Pride and Prejudice, multi-generationally honoring the legacy of Jane Austen's humor, playfulness and wit in a warm-spirited holiday theatrical production."

—**DCMetroTheaterArts.com**

"...a perfectly constructed love story... Given its fizzy comedy, sweet spirit and clean structure, [MISS BENNET] seems destined to populate future holiday seasons..." —**San Francisco Chronicle**

"...an unstuffy, highly entertaining and warm-spirited work, the kind of thing multiple generations can enjoy together."

—**Chicago Tribune**

Also by Lauren Gunderson

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ISBN 978-0-8222-3700-6



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