

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

BY

KATE HAMILL

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY

JANE AUSTEN



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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This one's dedicated to my magical friend Vaishnavi Sharma.

The world premiere production of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE was co-produced by Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival (Davis McCallum, Artistic Director; Katie Liberman, Managing Director) on June 24, 2017, and Primary Stages (Andrew Leynse, Artistic Director; Shane D. Hudson, Executive Director) on November 19, 2017. It was directed by Amanda Dehnert, the scenic design was by John McDermott, the costume design was by Tracy Christensen, the lighting design was by Eric Southern, the sound design was by Palmer Hefferan, the assistant directors were Alyssa Miller and Bonnie Gabell, the dramaturg was Christine Scarfuto, the dialect coach was Jane Guyer Fujita, the original choreography was by Ellenore Scott, and the production stage manager was Roxana Khan. The cast was as follows (in alphabetical order):

MR. COLLINS/WICKHAM/MISS BINGLEY Mark Bedard
LYDIA/LADY CATHERINE Kimberly Chatterjee
LIZZY Kate Hamill
MR. DARCY Jason O’Connell
JANE/MISS DE BOURGH Amelia Pedlow
CHARLOTTE LUCAS/MR. BENNET Chris Thorn
MR. BINGLEY/MARY John Tufts
MRS. BENNET/SERVANT Nance Williamson
UNDERSTUDIES Laura Baranik, Michael Broadhurst,
Zach Hodges, Jeremy Peter Johnson, Daniel Liu,
Serena Miller, Luis Quintero, Jade Radford, Maryn Shaw,
Sky Smith, Marielle Young

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE received a presentation as part of The Other Season at Seattle Repertory Theatre (Braden Abraham, Artistic Director; Jeffrey Herrmann, Managing Director) in the 2016–2017 season.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My profound thanks to all of those at Primary Stages and HVSF, as well as Seattle Rep.

Thanks once again to the inimitable Beth Bickers and Tony Cloer!

Special thanks also to Braden Abraham, Erin Daley, Shane Hudson, Kristin Leahey, Katie Liberman, Andrew Leynse, Davis McCallum, Sean McNall, Christine Scarfuto, Joanie Schultz, the amazing Jason O'Connell, and my family—especially my siblings.

My deep gratitude to Amanda Dehnert for being such a thoughtful, kind, and fearless collaborator.

I also have to thank the cast and crew of HVSF/Primary Stages, who were just the most fun playmates imaginable: bing bong, you squirrels!

And last, a very special shout-out to Henry Tufts and Mo Bedard.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Doubling for 8 actors.

Female

ACTOR 1

JANE. Late 20s–early 30s. The eldest and most beautiful Bennet daughter. Kind, idealistic, diffident. Always tries to do the right thing.

MISS DE BOURGH. Lady Catherine's daughter; a gremlin. Probably allergic to sun. Underneath all her veils, she may be covered in scales.

ACTOR 2

LIZZY. A year or two younger than Jane. Clever, spirited; can be sharp-tongued. Gets flustered, which makes her klutzy. Prides herself on good judgment. Not especially beautiful. Very very scared of marriage, after absorbing the lessons of her parents' marriage. (*The actor playing Lizzy must not double.*)

ACTOR 3

LYDIA. 14. The youngest Bennet. Lively, prone to imitating others' behavior and eavesdropping.

LADY CATHERINE. Patrician Caesar-meets-drill sergeant.

Male

ACTOR 4

MR. DARCY. Late 30s–40s. One of the richest men in England. Too proper for his own good; awkward in most social contexts. Prides himself on self-control and good judgment. (*The actor playing Mr. Darcy must not double.*)

ACTOR 5

MR. COLLINS. A pedantic, obtuse man. The original mansplainer. Rector to Lady Catherine.

WICKHAM. An unfairly handsome and charming gentleman. Probably a sociopath. Raised with Darcy.

MISS BINGLEY. A very rich, very beautiful young woman. Fancies herself witty. (*May be played by male or female actor, depending on doubling.*)

Male or Female

ACTOR 6

MR. BINGLEY. Late 30s–40s. Loves the world and the world loves him. Mr. Darcy's particular friend. Almost literally a dog.

MARY. The third Bennet girl. Violent and dark undertones; prone to pedanticism and sulking. A dark goth Brontë character trapped in an Austen world. Coughs to get attention, or to make a point; may fancy that she is dying.

ACTOR 7

CHARLOTTE LUCAS. Same age as Lizzy. A practical girl with a good sense of humor. May be doubled with Mr. Bennet.

MR. BENNET. The patriarch of the Bennet family. Finds amusement in absurdity; often looks for respectable escape from the chaos of his family life. Can be somewhat apathetic; probably a bit depressed, under everything. Enjoys antagonizing. Disappointed in marriage.

ACTOR 8

MRS. BENNET. The matriarch of the Bennet family. Mostly a silly woman, of mean understanding and variable temper. Hypochondriac; when she's upset, she fancies that she's dying. The business of her life is to get her daughters married. She traumatizes her family with some regularity.

SERVANTS. (*All servants with lines in this production happen to be male.*)

Other doubling schemes are possible; your production may choose to double differently or not at all.

However, the actors playing Lizzy and Mr. Darcy must not double.

IMPORTANT NOTES

—Every time someone sees Mary without warning, they get a shock. It's as if she's Nosferatu, and you turn around and OH GOD SHE'S RIGHT BEHIND YOU. She is Captain Bad Vibes.

—If playing another gender identity, please do not play “at” being a man or woman. Play the character, not the gender.

—The cast MUST be at least 50% female/female-identified.

—Scenery/props should be as minimal and flexible as possible. I strongly suggest avoiding fanciness. Let theatricality and imagination do the heavy lifting, and embrace the “play” of it.

—*P&P* should be attacked with energy and irreverence; dialogue should generally be fast, fast, fast; as close to the speed of thought as possible! No languidness, please. Let the audience catch up with the words, go along on the ride.

—If you think something could be a naughty joke, it probably is.

—This play has a lot to do with how we manage shame—shame about one's vulnerabilities and imperfection, about one's family, about love and attraction. The greater the shame, the higher we'll bounce in the release from that shame.

—The Bennet household is pure chaos.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

ACT ONE

Prologue—Blind Man’s Bluff*

Men and women troop out in silence for a Very Formal Dance: England, early 1800s. Music plays. It is all very serious. The ticking of a clock. At a musical cue, four women (Jane, Lizzy, Lydia, and Charlotte) step out in a line—as if being led before a firing squad. Gentlemen tie bandannas around their eyes. A tense pause, then: DING! A bell or triangle rings offstage.

At the ding, all relax. The girls play a 19th-century parlor game: a version of Blind Man’s Bluff. They are pushed and pulled and have to guess who they are touching. The ensemble teases, pokes, shouts, “Come! Comecomecome!” to the blindfolded women—who occasionally catch someone and guess a name: “Mr. Collins? Mr. Bingley? Mr. Darcy?” etc. When the woman calls out the name, the caught person shouts “Go! gogogo”—pushing them towards the next. It’s all quite sexy and naughty. The women reel from person to person; they never catch the right one.

A DING goes off—Charlotte pulls off her blindfold and joins the others. Another DING—Lydia pulls off hers, laughing and joining others. DING—Jane pulls hers off, just as she is grabbed by the actor who will play Bingley. Only Lizzy is left blindfolded. She stumbles around. The actor who plays Darcy steps out; they are left alone in a circle.

The music builds. As she gets closer, the bell rings over and over again—ding ding ding DING DING DING DING

* This prologue is more or less optional, although it ties together several themes and I recommend using it.

DING. *He reaches to pull off her blindfold, just as she also reaches up—*

Scene 1

—Mrs. Bennet pops through, frantically ringing a bell.

MRS. BENNET. MR. BENNET! Mr. Bennet. Mr. Bennet! Come, sir! Come come come!

The Bennets' living room. Mr. Bennet busies himself with a newspaper; he does not move. As Mrs. Bennet ticks off her daughters, they busy themselves. Jane and Lizzy embroider; Mary sits at the piano; Lydia examines her hair for split ends. Mrs. Bennet begins with confidence that everybody will listen to her; nobody listens.

Girls! Jane, Lizzy, Lydia— (*Little shock.*) oh, God, Mary—Lydia! All of you, TRY to Remain CALM—

She grabs the hands of Jane and Lizzy.

but NETHERFIELD PARK! IS LET AT LAST!

Mr. Bennet flips his newspaper back up.

MR. BENNET!

She marches over to him. She tugs on him.

Out with you, up with you, gogogogo this moment, for it is lent to a MR. BINGLEY, a fellow of LARGE INCOME! And Mr. Bennet: HE! IS!...SINGLE!!!

Pause. Mary coughs.

(*No response.*) What a CONQUEST for our daughters, if only you will call on him first—MR. BENNET!

He holds her off with one hand. With the diffidence designed to drive his wife insane:

MR. BENNET. How can it possibly affect them, my dear?

LIZZY. It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife, Pappa.

MRS. BENNET. —exactly, THANK you, Lizzy, and I'm sure that

he'll settle for *one* of them! But you must get there before horse-faced Charlotte Lucas!

JANE. Mamma! Charlotte is our friend.

MRS. BENNET. Well, your horse-faced *friend* Charlotte's MOTHER is a shameless fortune-hunter, Jane, and shall snap him up in a trice if you do not go gogo.

She pulls him so hard that she almost sits. Tug-of-war, as he does not budge. Jane pushes a cushion beneath Mrs. Bennet.

MR. BENNET. Mr. Bingley may have any of the girls he chooses—though I will throw in a good word for Lizzy.

Mrs. Bennet bumps down on the cushion.

LIZZY. (*Drily.*) Thank you, Pappa.

MRS. BENNET. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others—not half so handsome as Jane, nor so good-humored as Lydia—

LIZZY. Thank you, Mamma.

MRS. BENNET. —though you will have your favorite!

MARY. —Mamma?!

MRS. BENNET. And she is not so—so—tall as Mary.

Mary coughs in a revolting manner.

MR. BENNET. They have none of them *much* to recommend, my dear.

MRS. BENNET. Well we NEVER SHALL be rid of them if you will not visit even one VERY PROMISING gentleman who has practically fallen INTO OUR LAPS—

She pulls him; Mary coughs.

Stop that, Mary, you'll tear my nerves to pieces!

MARY. I do not cough for my own amusement!

MRS. BENNET. Fine! Fine.

She steals Mr. Bennet's newspaper, huffing off to her seat and sitting in wounded dignity. She twists and crumples the paper, which pains him.

You delight in vexing me! You have no compassion for my nerves, which may at any moment SNAP and FELL me like a / wounded—

MR. BENNET. My / dear, I have high respect for your nerves! They are my old friends. I have been acquainted with them for twenty years at least.

MRS. BENNET. DO NOT BLAME YOUR father, girls, when he DROPS DEAD—

MR. BENNET. I say—

MRS. BENNET. —before providing for your futures! For as you know this estate is entailed away from us after he dies, and when you are all left penniless old maids—

The younger girls object.

—begging on the street for your bread, it will be TOO LATE THEN to CRY!

JANE. Mamma, please don't work yourself up so, we're almost out of salts.

Lydia joins her mother to wail in a heroic pose. Mass hysteria.

MRS. BENNET. NO no NO TEARS,
LYDIA! Your father DOES as HE
THINKS BEST as the MAN of
THIS HOUSEHOLD—

JANE. Lydia—Lydia—
Lydia!

JANE. Pappa, please!

MR. BENNET. Do not resolve on penury and death quite yet, my dear.

He retrieves his paper.

Live just long enough for me to introduce you to Mr. Bingley.

JANE. Pappa?

MR. BENNET. I met the gentleman yesterday.

He opens up his paper again; it is now full of holes, which he resolutely ignores.

LYDIA. Is he an officer? Is he handsome?

MARY. Is he a scholar? Does he play?

MR. BENNET. I testify to nothing but that he has two eyes, one mouth—presumably two of everything that ought to be in pairs and one of everything single—

MRS. BENNET. Oooh—

MR. BENNET. —that he brings in five thousand pounds a year, and

that he will attend the Longs' ball on Tuesday.

General fluttery; Lydia says, "OH I LOVE balls SO MUCH," etc.

MRS. BENNET. Five thousand a year!!! Oh, Mr. Bennet! Dear Mr. Bennet! How good you are—

She attacks and kisses him.

ooh Mr. Bennet—

MR. BENNET. No, no—!

MR. BENNET. I hope I have bought a MOMENT's peace. Now Mary, cough as much as you choose.

He clutches his rumpled paper and exits.

MRS. BENNET. Lydia, though you are the youngest, I daresay Mr. Bingley will dance with you first—but you must have new slippers. MR. BENNET! MR. BENNET!

She exits.

LYDIA. I am not afraid. For though I am the youngest, I'm the stoutest!

LIZZY. A rich bachelor in the neighborhood, Jane! Whatever shall you do to get him in your clutches? One of us must save the family, after all, and you are the likeliest champion.

JANE. Me, Lizzy? Why not you?

LIZZY. Me? I am an ugly sharp-tongued awkward little creature, but you are good and kind and about five times prettier than any other girl in the county. No no, you shall have to fall on Mr. Bingley's sword, and be quick about it too—the clock is ticking for us old maids!

LYDIA. Then why shouldn't I catch him?

MARY. Or me!

LIZZY. Lydia, you are much too young to think of such things, and Mary, you—

She doesn't really have an answer.

JANE. —Lizzy is talking a lot of nonsense, girls. As usual.

LIZZY. Yes, we are only joking.

Mary sulks off to the piano.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

by Kate Hamill

adapted from the novel by Jane Austen

2 men, 3 women, 3 n/s (doubling)

This isn't your grandmother's Austen! Bold, surprising, boisterous, and timely, this *P&P* for a new era explores the absurdities and thrills of finding your perfect (or imperfect) match in life. The outspoken Lizzy Bennet is determined to never marry, despite mounting pressure from society. But can she resist love, especially when that vaguely handsome, mildly amusing, and impossibly aggravating Mr. Darcy keeps popping up at every turn?! Literature's greatest tale of latent love has never felt so theatrical, or so full of life than it does in this effervescent adaptation. Because what turns us into greater fools... than the high-stakes game of love?

"Hamill...has a gift for condensing three-volume novels into galloping two-act plays. Her screwball PRIDE AND PREJUDICE...is as frolicsome as her earlier efforts. It hasn't met a rib it can't tickle."

—**The New York Times**

"The ever-ingenious Hamill has given us something completely and delightfully different, a smallish-cast period-dress PRIDE AND PREJUDICE... adapted with fizzy, festive freedom, Hamill's [PRIDE AND PREJUDICE] is full of Bringing Up Baby-style slapstick and the kind of barely controlled chaos that you'd expect to see in a five-door Feydeau farce..."

—**The Wall Street Journal**

"...a laugh-out-loud adaptation... Hamill...give[s] Austen's novel a deliciously antic sensibility... This PRIDE AND PREJUDICE has comedy at its heart, but regarding the treatment of women, it shows us enough unsettling similarities between the 18th century and now to make us pause thoughtfully between laughs."

—**TheaterMania.com**

"Hamill's PRIDE AND PREJUDICE has fun and charm to spare... [it] is full of high spirits and genuine mirth... Hamill excels...as a condenser of the story and a conveyer of fun. She cleverly squeezes Austen's wide-ranging drawing-room comedy into the bodies of eight actors, almost all doubling to delightful and even moving effect."

—**New York Magazine**

Also by Kate Hamill
SENSE AND SENSIBILITY (Austen)
VANITY FAIR (Thackeray)

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