



Buffalo Theatre Ensemble
Presents
by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon

Directed by Connie Canaday Howard

A new holiday tale with romance, intrigue and celebration; a companion piece to
Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley

McAninch Arts Center
Playhouse Theatre
November 15 – December 15, 2024

presented by arrangement with Dramatists Play Services, Inc.

Preview: Thursday, November 14, 2024

As the events of Miss Bennet unfold upstairs at Pemberley, during the same celebration the servants below find themselves in the midst of a different holiday scandal. An unwelcome visitor has arrived in the middle of the night disrupting holiday preparations – George Wickham, Lydia’s incorrigible husband and Mr. Darcy’s sworn enemy. *Contains adult themes and language.*

Buffalo Theatre Ensemble sincerely thanks the COD Library for research support for classes studying the script and the production.

Time: December 1815

Place: The lower floor of the grand Pemberley Estate, particularly the common room where servants gather and eat.

There will be a 15 minute intermission for this production

Characters:

Mrs. Reynolds – the housekeeper at Pemberley, knows all and sees all, has been on staff since Darcy was a child, a mother figure to the household.

Brian – A footman, in love with technology and inventions, sincere and earnest, perhaps a bit arrogant

Cassie – The new housemaid, a village girl, an orphan who came from less than nothing. The opportunity to work at Pemberley means security she has never had, and she takes this job very seriously. She is sometimes too eager and a bit headstrong.

Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy – Head and owner of Pemberley

Mrs. Elizabeth Darcy – Mistress of Pemberley

George Wickham – Grew up at Pemberley, son of the former steward, once a soldier, has been in and out of trouble (of his own making) his whole life.

Lydia Wickham – A bright warm and charming personality, if sometimes a bit much, eloped with Wickham at 15 and is now somewhat trapped in this marriage.

Director's Note

It's 1815, two years after the conclusion of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. In this play, the second in a trilogy by Gunderson and Melcon, we are again at Lizzie and Fitzwilliam Darcy's home, Pemberley, for the Christmas holidays. In a very fun convention, the action of this play is happening at the same time downstairs, in the servants' common room, as the action with the Bennet family Christmas upstairs, which BTE produced beautifully last year in *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*.

It is in these ‘below’ rooms that those who keep Pemberley running smoothly can eat and relax, but it is also a working room. It is warm and active; Pemberley is also their home, and they are a proud part of the life of the estate. Mr. Darcy, as a boy, also spent much time in the common room, enjoying friendships and camaraderie with many who lived below stairs. You will soon meet some of those who work for the Darcys through the play’s focus, as well as a sworn enemy of Mr. Darcy.

These characters are full of life: laughter, surprise, intrigue and much love. The celebration of relationships which support one another, and, of course, because it is the Bennet/Darcy clan, of familial relationships, as well as the need to stand up for what’s right - for both one’s self and for those we care about - make this play both satisfying and heart-warming. ~ CCH

The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley Synopsis

CAUTION: CONTAINS SPOILERS

In this delightful companion play to *Miss Bennet*, Gunderson and Melcon once again bring Austen’s beloved characters to the stage for a yuletide sequel to *Pride and Prejudice*. While Miss Bennet depicted the newly wed Darcys’ Christmas gathering on the ground floor of Pemberley, *The Wickhams* takes audiences to the downstairs servants’ quarters for that same celebration. Mrs. Reynolds, a no-nonsense housekeeper; Cassie, an eager new maid; and Brian, a lovesick footman, are bustling with preparations for holiday guests. But their work is interrupted by the midnight arrival of the definitely not invited Mr. Wickham—Lydia’s rogue of a husband and Mr. Darcy’s sworn enemy. *The Wickhams* is a charming holiday tale that explores the confines of class and the generosity of forgiveness.

Source: “The Wickhams.” Lauren Gunderson, www.laurengunderson.com/all-plays/the-wick-hams.

About the Playwrights



Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon, Marin Theatre

<https://www.marintheatre.org/press-release-details/98/write-like-jane>

Lauren Gunderson

Lauren is one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015 topping the list thrice including 2022/23. She is a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the William Inge Distinguished Achievement in Theatre Award, the Lanford Wilson Award and the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award; a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Weisberger Award, and John Gassner Award for Playwriting; and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation's Residency with Marin Theatre Company. She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University, and Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her play *The Catastrophist*, about her husband virologist Nathan Wolfe, premiered digitally in January 2021. She co-authored the *Miss Bennet* plays with Margot Melcon, and *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* premiered off-Broadway and is now at Audible.com. Her work is published at Bloomsbury (*Revolutionary Women: A Lauren Gunderson Anthology, anthropology, I and You*), Playscripts (*I and You; Exit Pursued By A Bear; The Taming and Toil And Trouble*), Dramatists Play Service (*The Revolutionists; The Book of Will; Silent Sky; Bauer, Natural Shocks, The Wickhams and Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book *Dr Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon* is available from Two Lions/Amazon. She is the book writer for musicals with Ari Afsar (*Jeannette*), Dave Stewart and Joss Stone (*The Time Traveller's Wife*), Joriah Kwamé (*Sinister*), Kait Kerrigan and Bree Lowdermilk (*Justice and Earthrise*), and Kira Stone (*Built for This*). She is a board member of The Playwrights Foundation. LaurenGunderson.com

Source: Hamos , Leah. "Bio." Lauren Gunderson, www.laurengunderson.com/bio.

Margaret Melcon

Margot Melcon (Co-Playwright of *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*) is a theatre artist, administrator, and writer. She was the Director of New Play Development at

Marin Theatre Company for seven years, where she dramaturged over 30 productions (including seven world premieres) and administered the company's two annual new play prizes and commissioning program. She has developed plays with TheatreWorks, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Crowded Fire Theater, Shotgun Players, Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor, the Kennedy Center, the New Harmony Project, and the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. She is currently the Program Executive for Promoting Culture at the Zellerbach Family Foundation. Margot is a graduate of California State University, Chico.

Source: "Margot Melcon." Tennessee Shakespeare Company, tnshakespeare.org/team/margot-melcon/.

All Things Regency - Regency Servants' Hierarchy



Regency Servants' Hierarchy: During the Regency era, anyone with pretensions to gentility hired domestic help. There was no electricity or modern plumbing, so running a middle-class home involved a workload we can barely imagine these days. As for the town houses

and country piles of the *haut ton*, an army of servants was needed to operate those grand status symbols.

Fortunately for the upper classes, servants were a dime a dozen and an early 19th century one-penney typically earned 250-1000 times more than a footman. The gender gap in wages also provided the wealthy with more bang for their buck. Two maids, or three if they were really lowly, could be hired for the price of one footman. As a consequence, the presence of male servants was also a status symbol.

In *The Complete Servant* (1825), Samuel and Sarah Adams suggest a household income of £500 was needed before adding a footman/groom and £3000 before hiring a pair of footmen. For a family with an income of £3000, the Adamses propose a staff of 20 servants for a family, comprising: a housekeeper, cook, ladies maid, two housemaids, a laundry maid and a kitchen maid, a nurse and nurse-maid, a valet, a butler, two footmen, a coachman, two grooms, two gardeners and a laborer. The annual budget for this staff plus household equipages, horses, and liveries would amount to about £750 (roughly US\$56,000 in today's purchasing power).

Class and rank were of paramount importance in 19th century society as a whole, and servants could be as snobbish as their employers about upholding this rigid hierarchy. Every servant knew his or her place, and was expected to defer to those of higher rank.

The Regency Servants' Hierarchy

In a home with more than a few servants, the hierarchy was split into upper servants and under servants. The work of supervision fell to the upper servants, the most senior of whom – the housekeeper, butler, and steward (if there was one) – reported directly to the mistress or master of the household. Servants of lesser standing were directed along gender lines; men reported to the butler and women to the housekeeper. A hierarchy existed among the upper servants, all of whom operated with relative autonomy in their own spheres.

Steward: Men who owned grand homes and estates seldom had the time or inclination to supervise staff and operations in person, and hired a steward as their right hand, typically splitting the role between indoor and outdoor. A land steward, also known as a bailiff, would run the estate, collecting rents, arranging building and repairs, supervising farming operations, hunting activities and stables, and managing all the necessary staff. A house steward's job fell somewhere between that of a personal assistant and staff manager. He was responsible for hiring, directing, and firing every domestic staff member. He managed the domestic accounts and oversaw the business of the house. Both the housekeeper and butler reported to him.

Housekeeper: A good housekeeper had to possess the knowledge, judgment and skills to implement her mistress's wishes about the style and comfort of her home. If there was no house steward, the housekeeper added his accounting job to her tasks or split them with the butler. She ran the store room and still room, purchased all provisions, managed inventories, and supervised the

staff. Many housekeepers also made home remedies, soap and cosmetics. She did not report to the butler but might diplomatically defer to him to uphold the example of gender roles. In general, the two worked in tandem and in many households, the housekeeper wielded more power than the butler in everyday staff management. If she did not think a footman was upholding the reputation of the household, he would be gone; the butler would probably break the bad news.

Butler: No upscale Regency household was without a butler. Head of the male servants, he was the visible face of the household, the captain of appearances whose dignified presence provided a reassuring symbol of his master's status. He managed the wine cellars, acting as sommelier as needed, and was responsible for household security measures – locking up at night and vetting people coming and going. Under his auspices, service was smooth and elegant at the dining table, with the footmen kept on their toes. He deputized as the valet if his employer did not keep one – managing his master's clothes and carrying out dressing room functions, morning and evening. If there was no house steward, he undertook household business matters seen as outside of the housekeeper's domain.

Cook / Chef: the autonomous sovereign of the kitchen, the cook (or French male chef in some households) made all the food for the household, the servants' meals, and entertainments. If there was no housekeeper, she also took on kitchen-related aspects of her role – buying provisions and dealing with kitchen accounts. All kitchen servants reported to the cook, and the cook reported directly to the mistress in some households and to the housekeeper in others. Tensions often existed between cook and housekeeper because of overlap in their responsibilities and relationship with their mistress.



The Ladies' Maid. James Gillray, 1810

Valet / Ladies Maid: As personal family attendants, the ladies maid and valet had special status below stairs. The role was seen as a desirable step up for ambitious servants, offering perks like

cast-off clothing and travel. The ladies maid dressed hair and managed her mistress's wardrobe. She was often a companion, reading to her mistress, nursing her when she was indisposed and acting as her discreet confidante. The valet made sure his master was always well presented, acting as a barber, manicurist and dresser. These personal attendants had to be knowledgeable about fashion, etiquette and social mores, so their employers were always correctly presented for an occasion.

Governess / Tutor / Dancing Master: In an awkward category, the governess, tutor and dancing master did not exactly fit the class of "servants" but neither were they the social equals of their employers. They were usually educated people obliged to earn a living by polishing the social skills and accomplishments of other people's children. They did not report to the butler or housekeeper and were seldom seen below stairs.

Lower Servants

The turnover of domestic staff in most Regency households was high. It was rare for lower servants to last more than a couple of years in a position before they moved on.

No servant symbolized the consequence of a household more than its footmen. From their height and good-looks, the turn of their manly calves, and elegance of their liveries, they made a statement and knew it. Satirical essays and cartoons depict lazy, insolent footmen with an inflated sense of their own importance. In real-life, footmen worked long hours and the sole footman in an establishment was usually overworked and exhausted. An ambitious [footman](#) could be promoted to under-butler, performing duties the butler handed over, such as cleaning the silver plate, brewing and bottling, and caring for the master's clothing. Eventually he could work his way up to butler or valet.

Among the other lower servants were hall boys, footboys, running footmen, housemaids, nurses and nursery maids, laundry maids, maids-of-all work, kitchen maids, dairy maids, and scullery maids.



The Wet Nurse. Marguerite Gérard (1761-1837).

The Nursery: The fabled British nanny had not yet emerged in the Regency era. Her precursor was the Nurse, who occupied a position of great trust, as the woman responsible for the well-being of the heirs and spares. She reported directly to the mistress and ran her own kingdom in the nursery. Typically she had her own bedroom/sitting room adjoining the nursery and in a large family, she managed a fleet of nursemaids and wet nurses (who breast-fed infants). She might throw her weight around in the kitchen, ordering special foods for the children, mixing home remedies and treading on the cook's and housekeeper's toes. The education of small children fell in part to her before a tutor or governess took over, but at a time when child mortality was very high, the survival of her charges was her primary concern.

The Estate: Serving outdoors under the direction of the land steward or bailiff, or the master himself, were teams of staff from the estate and stables: the head coachmen and under coachmen, grooms, postillions, outriders/couriers, and stable boys; the head gardener, park keepers, gamekeepers, under-gardeners, and yard boys. The mistress of the house might play a role in the outdoors if she had an interest in gardening or landscaping. The planning of kitchen gardens and [greenhouses](#) could be at her behest, but typically the outdoors was "men's work."

Source: <https://beatriceknight.com/regency-servants-hierarchy/>

Chatsworth House

Some believe that Jane Austen based Pemberley on Chatsworth House. It was used for some locations in the 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice*, directed by Joe Wright and starring Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfayden.

Austen in Bakewell

It is believed that Jane Austen may have based her idea of Pemberley on Chatsworth House and written the novel while in Bakewell.

"The eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of the valley into which the road into some abruptness wound."

"It was a large, handsome, stone building standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned."

Chatsworth was also mentioned in the novel as one of the estates Elizabeth Bennet visits before arriving at Pemberley.

Source: <https://www.chatsworth.org/news-media/chatsworth-on-film/pride-and-prejudice/>

Chatsworth House is renowned for its art, landscape and hospitality, and has evolved through the centuries to reflect the tastes, passions and interests of succeeding generations of the Devonshire family.

Today, Chatsworth is cared for by a registered charity, Chatsworth House Trust, which preserves the house, garden and parkland for everyone to enjoy, and cares for the Devonshire Collections; works of art that span 4,000 years, from ancient Roman and Egyptian sculpture, and masterpieces by Rembrandt, Reynolds and Veronese, to work by outstanding modern artists, including Lucian Freud, Edmund de Waal and David Nash.

There are over 25 rooms to explore*, including the magnificent Painted Hall, regal State Rooms, restored Sketch Galleries and atmospheric Sculpture Gallery.

Source: <https://www.chatsworth.org/visit-chatsworth/chatsworth-estate/house/>

Rank and Class - Jane Austen/Regency Period

<https://www.janeausten.org/rank-and-class.php>

During Jane Austen's time, English society revolved around a social hierarchy that managed much of what one did or could say. This then reflected much on your particular position within the British Empire (and other similar establishments elsewhere). One's rank (title, or lack thereof) greatly determined one's social class and inherent benefits of "the good life". Royalty was always held in the highest position by default though, even among royals, there proved a pecking order of sorts, an order that - in some form - still exists even today. Below is a basic listing of various ranks and their respective orders which prove useful in piecing together a perspective from which Jane Austen approached her very works.

Royalty (called 'your Majesty' or 'your Highness'):

King

Queen

Prince

Princess

Nobility (called 'Lord/Lady'):

Duke

Marquis

Earl

Viscount

Baron

Commoners (called 'Sir/Lady' or 'Mister/Mrs.')

Baronet

Knight

Landed gentry (land-owners)

*To distinguish between a noble Lady (i.e. daughter of an earl) and a non-noble Lady (i.e. wife of a knight), the first name of a noblewoman was used with her title. For example: Lady Catherine de Bourgh is of noble lineage while Lady Lucas is not.

Other Gentlemen (called 'Mister' or rank title 'Captain, Colonel, etc...')

Affluent businessmen

[Navy and Army officers](#)

Clergymen

Source: <https://www.janeausten.org/rank-and-class.php>

Christmas Trees in Great Britain



The Christmas tree at Osborne House in 1873. On Christmas eve that year, Queen Victoria wrote in her journal ‘at 6 we had our tree and presents in the dining room’ © The Royal Collection, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Christmas Trees

Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s consort, is usually credited with having introduced the Christmas tree into England in 1840. However it was actually ‘good Queen Charlotte’, the German wife of George III, who set up the first known tree at Queen’s Lodge, Windsor, in December 1800. Christmas trees became very popular with the upper classes, especially for children’s gatherings. Any handy evergreen tree might be uprooted for the purpose and they were usually candle-lit, decorated with trinkets and surrounded by piles of presents.

In December 1840, Prince Albert imported several spruce firs from his native Coburg, in Germany, to serve as Christmas trees. But it was not until a few years later, when periodicals such as the *Illustrated London News*, *Cassell’s Magazine* and *The Graphic* began to depict and describe the royal Christmas trees every year, that the custom of setting up such trees in homes really caught on amongst the general public in England.

Source: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/histories/christmas-greenery-history/#:~:text=Christmas%20Trees,%2C%20Windsor%2C%20in%20December%201800.>

Jane Austen Regency Period Primer

The Regency Period of Jane Austen's time provided a picture of England that differed greatly from that of today.

The Regency Period officially began when the Prince of Wales (later King George IV) assumed the role of Prince Regent after his father, King George III, was declared unfit to rule in 1811. King George III is believed to have suffered from porphyria, a disorder affecting the production of hemoglobin (a component of blood cells). Symptoms include abdominal pain, sensitivity to light and nervous system issues. Problems with the nervous system can affect both muscle control as well and cognition. After his behavior became erratic and unpredictable, King George III surrendered rule to his son. An example of his 'madness' occurred when he addressed his court as "My Lords and Peacocks" instead of "My Lords and Ladies". George IV, his son, became Prince Regent – not quite King as George III was still alive, but wielding the power of the king when his father became debilitated and lost focus of reality.

While King George III is best remembered for going mad at the end of his life, he is also remembered for being king while the American colonies revolted against British rule in the 1770's. He did not create the taxing policies which led the American colonists to seek independence; those were passed through British Parliament. He opposed the independence of the American colonies however, and the eventual loss of them greatly affected his popularity.

In the 1780's Parliament agreed to increase the young Prince's allowance even though his then-coherent father stated that it was "a shameful squandering of public money to gratify the passions of an ill-advised young man." It was a foreshadowing of what was to come once the Prince took the throne

Once in power in 1811, the Prince Regent was discouraged from making decisions regarding official governing business and issues involving war. Instead, the Prince Regent spent his time indulging in excesses. He spent more money than the Treasury could cover on building projects and lavish parties, thus leaving the burden of restocking the coffers to the people he ruled. He was a great patron of the arts and literature and created Regent's Park, but was extravagant in fashion and indulgent with food, becoming quite obese. This reputation of excesses and self-indulgence likely led to Jane Austen's dislike of him.

Upon finishing her novel, [Emma](#), the Prince Regent gave her 'the honor' of dedicating it to him. Unable to disregard a royal charge, Jane used her words in the dedication to show her disdain:

'To His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, this work is, by His Royal Highness's permission, most respectfully dedicated to His Royal Highness by His dutiful and obedient humble servant, the Author.'

After nine years as Prince Regent, George IV assumed the throne upon the death of his father in 1820, becoming King George IV. As king, all the promises he made to his friends in the Whig party were reneged and King George IV became a staunch supporter of the Tory party and its initiatives, just like his father. He eventually died in 1830, ten years after his father, but left such a legacy as to have a period of history named after him: the Regency.

©JaneAusten.org

Source: <https://www.janeausten.org/regency-period.php>

Five Reasons to Love Jane Austen

A fun video analysis by historian Alice Loxton

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESHWqlz3030>

Source: <https://janeaustens.house/learn/school-visits/online-resources/>

Things to discuss

Things to think about, prior to the performance:

- Have you read *Pride and Prejudice*, or read or seen one of the adaptations of the work?
- Why do you think the Bennet/Darcy clan have such enduring interest? What about the themes of this work, or other Austen works, lend themselves to universality?
- Why do you think that pieces set during the winter holiday months are so popular?

Things to watch for in performance:

- The setting is the common room 'below stairs' (the servants' quarters). How does this room make you feel? How do the people who inhabit, or visit, below stairs feel about their home?

- For those who attended BTE’s production of *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, how do you feel the action *upstairs* is affecting the action *downstairs*?
- The production transpires in just five days, from December 22-Boxing Day, December 26, 1815. How do the light, sound, costumes, the transitions between scenes, and the characters in the scenes, themselves, help us to understand that time is passing?
- Notice the relationship between the characters. What is the effect of ‘station’ in society, in general? How does it affect each of them, and one with another? How does family effect one or all of them? Are these people so very different from one another? If so, why? If not, why not?
- “Orangey biscuits” are a type of cookie that the kitchen makes, and especially at Christmas time. Notice when characters partake of the biscuits. What does that say about each character?
- “Love is about knowing another person and letting them be exactly who they are. If you can’t understand that, you either do not listen, or *you do not care.*” This line is spoken by Cassie, in Act I, but this production believes it resonates for every character. Choose a character and explain how they would feel about this sentiment, from your perspective.
- How does the Christmas tree, a completely new idea to this area and though we only see it for a brief time in this play, as it makes its way to the library, affect the action of the characters?

Things to think about after the performance:

- Beyond their ‘station,’ what do you think the similarities and differences are between Cassie and Lydia, who become friendly during the story?
- Why is family, both genetic and our chosen family, so important to the characters in this play?
- Several characters make challenging decisions during the play. Choose one, and describe the journey to their difficult decision.
- What does “taking care of your family” really mean?
- Though we don’t see other servants, or other members of the family celebrating upstairs, their presence is felt throughout. Why is this important to the story?

Other tools after the performance:

- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but, more importantly, the last thirty seconds? In that time, WHAT happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is ‘about?’
- And what is the significance of the title? Why did the playwright decide that this was the most quintessential title for their work?

The running time for this production is just under two hours, including intermission.

Please note the **pre-show** discussion will take place prior to the preview performance, **Thursday, November 14th, in MAC 140 from 6:45 pm – 7:15 pm**. The pre-show discussion will include the director and designers, and will be a discussion of the approach to this production.

The **post-show discussion** will take place on **Friday, November 22nd, following the performance**. The post-show will include the director, cast and crew who will answer questions from the audience.



ASL Performance: Thursday, December 5th

ASL interpreters will be located near the stage for patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing, seated in an area of the theater that gives the best sight lines to follow the interpretation and the action on stage. To access reserved seating in view of the interpreters for a signed performance, call the box office at [630.942.4000](tel:630.942.4000) or [630.858.9692](tel:630.858.9692) (TDD).