Welcome to Pendragon’s Dramaturgy Packet!

Jane Austen’s

Pride and Prejudice

adapted by Kate Hamill

Jane in Real Life

Explore Jane Austen's life, work, legacy, and her influences on popular culture that reign to this day.

Kate Hamill

Get to know this revolutionary playwright, actor, and adaptor, and see why her take on Austen's work resets the stage for women in classic roles.

Pendragon Theatre

is a non-profit theatre in Saranac Lake, NY dedicated to preserving the vitality and enhancing the quality of professional theatre through year-round performance and educational programs.

We are thrilled to present this dramaturgical packet as a companion to Pendragon Theatre’s production of Pride and Prejudice, adapted by Kate Hamill. Based on Jane Austen's classic novel of love, loss, and letters, Hamill's play tackles this classic tale with wit and whimsy. Come see us at Pendragon and on tour!
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Primary Stages ensemble members in Hamill’s Pride and Prejudice
Kate Hamill: 
*Austenite Extraordinaire*

Kate Hamill is a playwright and actor from upstate New York who has a penchant for adapting classic novels to thrilling pieces of theatre that show modern audiences why these timeless tales resonate. Since graduating from Ithaca College, Hamill has frequently collaborated with Bedlam, a New York City-based theatre company that produces new takes on classic works. Hamill has adapted Austen’s 1811 novel *Sense and Sensibility* and 1814 novel *Mansfield Park*, premiering in October 2018. She has also adapted William Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* and Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, in addition to her own original works.

Hamill has credited her pastoral upbringing with her affection for Austen, saying that her small town life cultivated her love of literature. Her plays have been produced Off-Broadway and all over the country, from Boston to Dallas. Hamill originated the role of Lizzy in Primary Stages’s *Pride and Prejudice* and has reprised the role various times since.

“I felt a strong sense of kinship with Jane Austen – an intense love for her work that’s gone on to shape my life…”

*Kate Hamill in “Love and Frustration”*
The Real Jane Austen

“We are to have a tiny party here tonight.”

Jane Austen in a letter, May 21, 1801

One of the most prolific and well-known authors in modern history, Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775 in Hampshire, England. Austen had six brothers but was closest with her sister, Cassandra — neither sister ever married. Though she only lived to be forty-one, Austen wrote six novels and portions of others, some of which were published after her death in 1817.

Austen first drafted the story *First Impressions* in 1797, and later reworked it into *Sense and Sensibility*, published in 1812.

Austen is remembered for writing independent and outspoken women, and many of her works discuss the limited roles available to women in the Regency period. She originally published her writing anonymously, as women were not permitted to sign publishing contracts. In her lifetime, Austen acknowledged both the perceived inferiority of the romance genre and her place as a woman writer of romance. “I could no more write a romance than an epic poem,” she wrote in a letter to English naval writer James Stanier Clarke in 1816. “I could not seriously sit down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life [...] I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter.” Even a writer as insightful and accomplished as Jane Austen doubted her abilities, reflecting the internalization of her position as a woman in the society of landed gentry.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>December: Jane Austen born in Hampshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>April: The US War of Independence begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>Mary Wollstonecraft publishes <em>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</em>, calling for the legal enfranchisement of women</td>
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<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>The US defeats British forces at Yorktown, ending the war</td>
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<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>Austen drafts a story called <em>Elinor and Marianne</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>Britain goes to war with France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>Austen's father submits <em>First Impressions</em> (later reworked as <em>Pride and Prejudice</em>) to a publisher, who rejects it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>The Act of Union creates the United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The UK abolishes the slave trade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1811

Sense and Sensibility is published

Austen begins to revise what becomes Pride and Prejudice

1812

Pride and Prejudice is published

1813

Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice both go into second printings

1817

Austen dies at the age of forty-one

1818

Austen’s family submits her novels Northanger Abbey and Persuasion for publication

“Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us”

Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice
Helen Jerome creates a staged version that played at St. James Theatre in London.

Robert Leonard directed movie adaptation starring Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson.

5-episode BBC TV series starring Elizabeth Garvie and David Rintoul directed by Cyril Coke.

Simon Langton directs 6-episode BBC TV series starring Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle.


Jane's Austen's "Pride and Prejudice: A New Musical" by Lindsay Warren Baker and Amanda Jacobs is presented in concert in Rochester, NY.

Seth Grahame-Smith's "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies" is released.

Scientists name a pheromone identified in mouse urine darcin after Darcy as it attracts females.

The opera "Stolthet och fördom" was written and composed by Daniel Nelson based on P&P.

Popular web miniseries "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" is released.

Jo Baker's novel "Longbourn" imagines the lives of the servants of "Pride and Prejudice".

Kate Hamill's adaptation premieres at Primary Stages in NYC.
Life as a Lady in Regency Britain

- Women had to rely on men socioeconomically, but women largely outnumbered men due to infant mortality rates for boys and girls.
- Divorce in this time period was almost impossible for women to obtain.
- Women were expected to only use their education in the private sphere, that is when entertaining guests.
- As a member of the landed gentry, Austen was brought up to study the arts, address adults as “sir” or “madam”, and marry a man of her same social status.
- Austen was concerned with the propriety in her niece Anna’s writing, calling her dialogue “too familiar and inelegant”.
- While the rules of etiquette were meant to be followed, men who harped on such rules in public were considered snobbish.
- Women could not inherit their father’s property; this dilemma is central to the Collins affair in both the play and the novel.

This BBC game explores women’s rights in the UK from the Victorian era on. You can play at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/act_womens_rights_entry.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/act_womens_rights_entry.shtml).
Did you know...?

• Austen cited fellow Englishwoman novelist Fanny Burney as an inspiration, and often mentioned Burney’s novels in her own

• Austen also loved the work of poet William Cowper

• While many of Austen’s romantic-inspired novels rejected melodrama, she indulged themes of gossip that paralleled operas, which were considered an extension of the melodramatic form
  • Members of Austen’s social class were more fond of ballad operas than traditional Italian ones, and this is reflected in Austen’s many poetic and musical allusions

• Jane Austen continued to imagine how the lives of her characters evolved long after she finished a novel

• In A Memoir of Jane Austen, her nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh discusses how after the events of P&P, Kitty Bennet eventually married a clergyman near Pemberley while Mary ended up with a clerk who worked for their Uncle Philips.

Renee Zellweger, Colin Firth, and Hugh Grant in Bridget Jones’s Diary, loose telling of Austen’s novel.
The following is excerpted from Seattle Repertory Theatre’s study guide.

Mr. Darcy is a highly sought-after bachelor because he makes £10,000 a year. It probably goes without saying that £10,000 a year in 1813 is not equivalent to the same amount in 2017. During Austen’s time, the men were inheritors of land. They would then make money off this land by charging farmers to work it and then investing those profits in other land-owning and financial endeavors. In this way, the most successful men were able to allow their land holdings to work for them, thereby never needing to hold down a steady job themselves. Since the amount of money your family had determined where you could go, who you could be friends with, and even who you married, it was very important to be wealthy. Eric Nye, an English Professor at the University of Wyoming, devised a currency calculator that converts currency values from the past into present day dollars. Please refer to the chart below to get a conversion of the yearly salary of characters in Pride and Prejudice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Wages in Austen’s Time</th>
<th>Converted Wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Darcy</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
<td>$653,106.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Bingley</td>
<td>£4,500</td>
<td>$311,897.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Bennet</td>
<td>£2,000</td>
<td>$138,621.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopkeepers</td>
<td>£150</td>
<td>$10,396.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Austen’s England, marriage was necessary and a good match was considered essential, yet occasions to meet eligible men and women were limited. Assemblies and balls provided an arena for introductions,
thereby facilitating the opportunity for courtships to be pursued. The decorum of the participants at a dance determined their worth as individuals. This display of individual worth was evaluated not only by potential partners, but also by the spectators in the room, which included family and neighbors, and married couples. Once an individual was acknowledged a suitable dance partner by a member of the opposite sex, that identification is carried over into the individual’s suitability as a marital partner. The relationships of Jane and Bingley, and Elizabeth and Darcy exemplify the formula of first establishing themselves as suitable dance partners, paving the way for courtship, and triumphing in marriage.

Balls and Balls
A Brief Overview of Regency Era Pastimes and Social Practices

Dances
Dancing was an important social skill and a necessary accomplishment of a lady or gentleman. The Duke of Wellington was reputed to insist that all his officers could dance, and to quote from one of Lord Chesterfield’s letters to his son, “Dancing is in itself a very trifling, silly thing; but it is one of those established follies to which people of sense are sometimes obliged to conform, and then they should be able to do it well.”

Dancing was also, of course, the recognized way to meet young eligible partners and escape for a moment from the watchful eye of their chaperones. The great country houses held lavish balls and every middle-sized town with any pretensions to gentility had its own Assembly Room where balls might be ‘got up by subscription’. Because the old custom of presenting debutantes at court had fallen out of practice, daughters were presented to society at the grand balls and assemblies of the London season.

Lady’s Pastimes
Young ladies of the Regency period were usually trained in some sort of craft or needlework by their mother or governess. Indeed, they often possessed fancy workboxes or bags into which went the needles, threads, and the other implements for “Genteel Females” to use. It was amazing all it could hold. It was the receptacle for the much-worked-on sampler, a labor on which many young girls practiced cross stitch and other kinds of stitches. Some samplers were worked in wool thread. Many of the samplers were worked in colorful silk threads. Most had the alphabet with a motto or verse, initials and date of embroidery on them. These samplers were most often a way for a girl to show she had learned her stitches.
Archery, once a critical skill for protection and hunting, fell out of fashion in England sometime in the 1500s to be resurrected en masse by the upper classes as sport in the late 1700s. By the Regency era, it was an established pastimes for gentlemen and women. It was particularly popular with the ladies because it provided an opportunity to show off their figures, flirt, and mingle with men.

**Children’s Games**

Skipping rope was a common pastime for both boy and girls. In fact, during the medieval era, only boys skipped rope as strenuous exercise was not considered healthy for girls. During the Regency era though, girls clearly enjoyed the sport as well.

Hopscotch is another equally ancient game. It may have originated in ancient Rome, but was certainly popular in the 17th century. In the game, players draw out a grid of numbered rectangles in a specified pattern. They toss a small object into the numbered spaces and hop or jump through the spaces to retrieve the object. Continuing the theme of ancient games, children of both sexes enjoyed the game of battledore and shuttlecock, a predecessor of badminton. Drawings from ancient Greece suggest this game originated there over 2000 years ago. Players, armed with rackets, tried to bat a feathered shuttlecock back and forth, without a net, and keep it in play as long as possible.

Girls risked little fatigue with the game of lawn bowls, a game originating in the 13th century. In this game, the objective was to roll balls so they would stop close to a smaller ball. The game was prohibited by multiple monarchs including Edward III and Richard II for fear it might impinge on the practice of archery.

As for indoor toys, toy theaters complete with doll house like stage and backdrops and metal or paper characters were also comments. Children could act out familiar stories for their playmates or their families. Creative children might write their own stories or even draw or paint their own characters for their miniature stages.

Marble games appeared to have developed during the same period. Marbles have been made of a variety of material including clay, stone, metal and glass. Like jacks, a wide variety of games may be played with these prized objects. At Oxford and Cambridge, students had to be prohibited from playing marbles on the steps of the Bodleian Library and Senate House.
This dramaturgical packet was compiled by Josh Bennett, Kenya Bullock, Kaliph Brown, Noah Fusco, Lissy Gold, Leah Guzick, Mia Merrill, Ashley Tang, and Solomon Zisser, and edited by Mia Merrill and Josh Bennett for Pendragon Theatre.

Bibliography

Austen, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*.


Jane Austen Centre, The. “Jane Austen's Social Background.” *janeausten.co.uk*.


*kate-hamill.com*.


Further Reading

“Interview with Sense & Sensibility Playwright Kate Hamill” by Folger Theatre, *https://spotlight.folger.edu/2016/10/07/interview-sense-sensibility-playwright-kate-hamill/*.
