

NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE THEATRE COMPANY AND YORK THEATRE ROYAL PRESENT

PRIDE *and* PREJUDICE

ADAPTED BY SARA PASCOE • BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JANE AUSTEN

15 – 30
SEPTEMBER



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE INSIGHT PACK

**Nottingham
Playhouse**



WITH SUPPORT FROM

NOTTINGHAM
UNESCO City of Literature

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(L-R) MATT WHITCHURCH AS MR DARCY AND SUSANNAH TRESILIAN, DIRECTOR

ABOUT JANE AUSTEN

Jane Austen was an English novelist who wrote in the early 1800s. Jane was famously known for her comically realistic writing style. After her death she became one of the most famous authors in the world. Her novels have inspired many films and televised adaptations such as *Love and Friendship* (2016), *Sense and Sensibility* (BBC series 2008 and 1995 film) and *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC 1995 series and 1940 film), and her stories continue to entertain in print, on film and now in theatres.

A TIMELINE OF AUSTEN'S LIFE AND WORKS

16 December 1775

Jane Austen born in Hampshire to a family of lower gentry

1783

Jane sent away to Oxford with her younger sister, Cassandra, to live with their cousin and receive basic education. They later caught typhoid fever and were sent back home

1785

Enrolled at Abbey House School, a boarding school in Reading

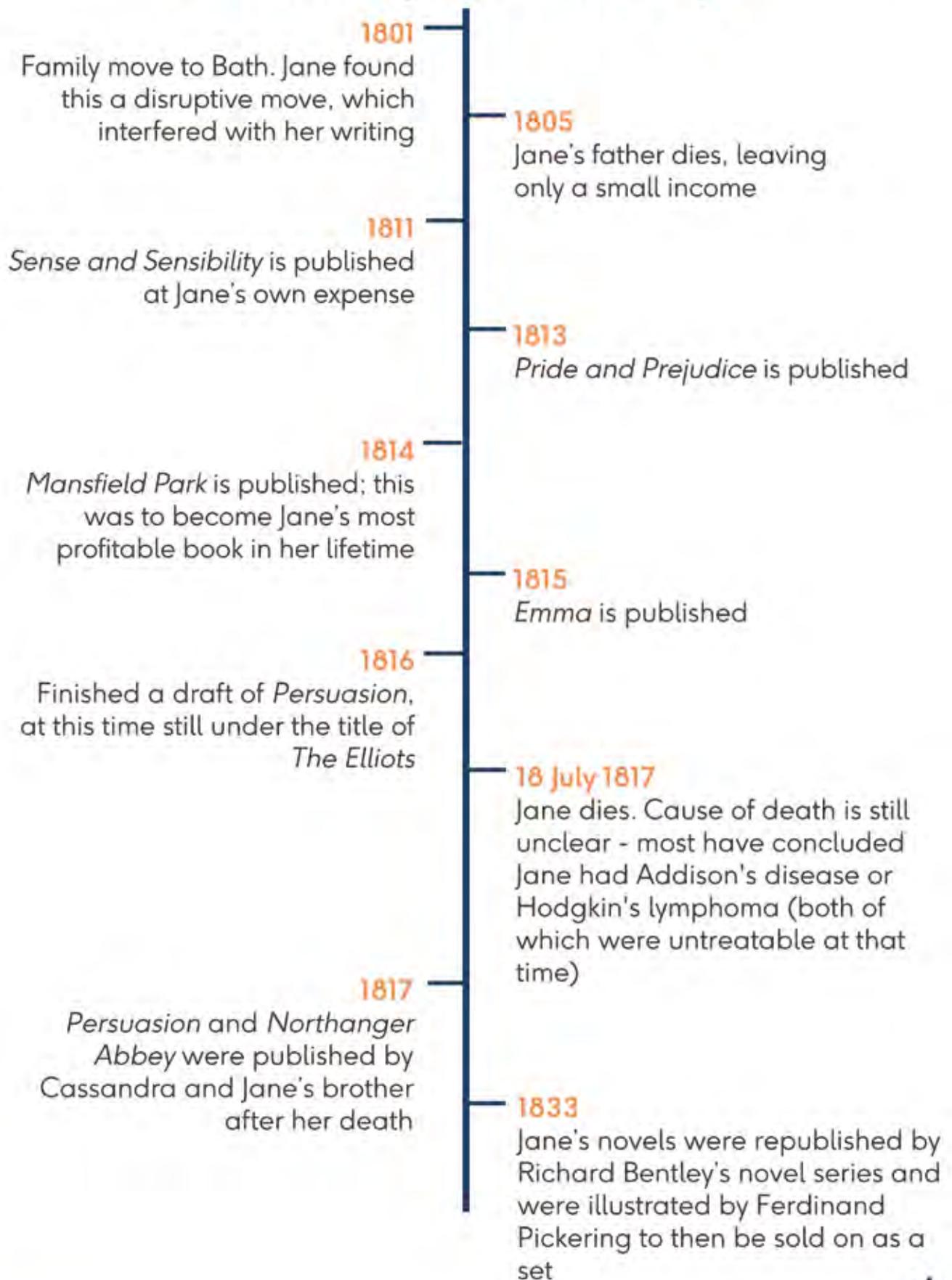
1786

The family could no longer afford to pay for Jane's education at boarding school and so she returned home to learn from the household's extensive library and was taught by her father

1796

Jane begins writing *Pride and Prejudice*, originally entitled *First Impressions*. This was finished three years later and was rejected by publishers. She then returned to her work in progress of *Elinor and Marianne*, an early version of *Sense and Sensibility*, which she began years earlier

A TIMELINE OF AUSTEN'S LIFE AND WORKS (CONTINUED)



REGENCY ENGLAND

Jane Austen's books were published during the Regency Era, considered by some as a second mini-renaissance where art and literature flourished. Yet, being a woman meant that Jane had to keep her authorship private in a time where women were confined to their 'private sphere' of home and family, while men occupied the 'public sphere'.

King George III was deemed too ill to reign as monarch and so his son, George IV, reigned on his behalf from 1811–1820 as Prince Regent, hence why this era is entitled the Regency period.

The Prince Regent indulged the rich at the expense of the poor, causing an unparalleled gap between the classes. The elite in society enjoyed real luxuries, whilst the poor were starving. In the poor districts, drinking, gambling and womanising were all on the rise and some of the richer members of society secretly frequented these districts often for their own enjoyment. It's no surprise Wickham ran up "*such debts*"!

THE HIERARCHY



"We are often wealthy landowners, or do not work. We are known as Gentlemen. Some of us are connected to the Royal Family and have titles of our own. We make up a small amount of the population. We like to show off our wealth through our grand estates, fashion and affluent expenditure on household staff and entertaining."

THE ELITE

“We have high standing social status but we are not as important as the elite. Some of us are doctors, clergymen and bankers. We like to live in spacious houses; however, we do not own grand country estates, or acres of land.”

UPPER MIDDLE CLASS

“We work as accountants, lawyers and architects, to name a few of our professions. We live quite comfortably but we have to maintain tight budgets. We tend to live in smaller apartments, comfortable and well furnished; however, we may only have one or two bedrooms between us all.”

MIDDLE CLASS

“We are shopkeepers, inn keepers and blacksmiths. Money is tight for us, especially if we have many children to feed but we are not as poor as some. We live above our shops or taverns in crowded conditions.”

LOWER MIDDLE CLASS

“We work as farmers on our own land. We lead simple lives but we often enjoy the work that we do, even though we work very long hours.”

YEOMAN

“We are the craftsmen, agricultural workers and household staff. We are very financially stretched and live in squalid conditions. We make up 25% of the population! We are often hungry.”

LABOURING POOR

No matter the background that you were from, inheritance was often a cause for concern or friction between family members. This is apparent in *Pride and Prejudice* as people's statuses are determined by their profession and their annual income from inherited wealth. For the Bennets, inheritance is the catalyst for Mrs Bennet's desperation to marry off all her daughters. Mrs Bennet is highly aware that upon Mr Bennet's death, the family would essentially be forced out of their home and would have to manage on little money, unless, of course, they married well.

Jane Austen is often critical of the prejudices and assumptions of upper class England. Jane loved writing about all classes within her society. Arguably her novels' longevity is due to the wit and intelligence with which she paints such vivid social pictures. Many readers still enjoy her work today, finding our modern class divisions still very apparent and, therefore, her work still relevant.

In the play there is a clear divide between social classes, for example between the Bennet family and the Bingleys. In scene seven of our production, there is a conversation that illustrates perfectly this social segregation:

MRS HURST - *Did you hear that their uncle in Cheapside is a butcher?*

MISS BINGLEY - *The London relative of which they are so proud!*

MRS HURST - *...and in Cheapside of all places.*

MISS BINGLEY - *If I were Jane I would curl up and die.*



PHOTOGRAPH OF CHEAPSIDE IN LONDON 1800s

WHAT WAS IT ALL WORTH?

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT IN AUSTEN'S TIME (EARLY 1800s)	IN TODAY'S MONEY
Mr Darcy's annual income	£20,000	£1,488,000.00
Mr Bingley's annual income	£5,000	£372,000.00
Mr Bennet's yearly income for a family of seven	£2,000	£148,800.00
Jane Austen's income, which had to support her mother and sister too	£450	£33,480.00
The money Jane Austen received for selling <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	£110	£8,184.00

JANE AUSTEN AND ELIZABETH BENNET

Much of Austen's own personal life can be seen throughout all her works and her heroines. Take a look at the ways she was very similar to the strong and independent Elizabeth Bennet.

"I have many siblings"

Jane had six brothers and one sister and Elizabeth has four sisters.

"I am very close to my older sister"

Jane was very close to her older sister Cassandra and they shared a relationship very much like Elizabeth and Jane Bennet.

"I am very close to our father"

"I know that most of my inheritance won't go to me"

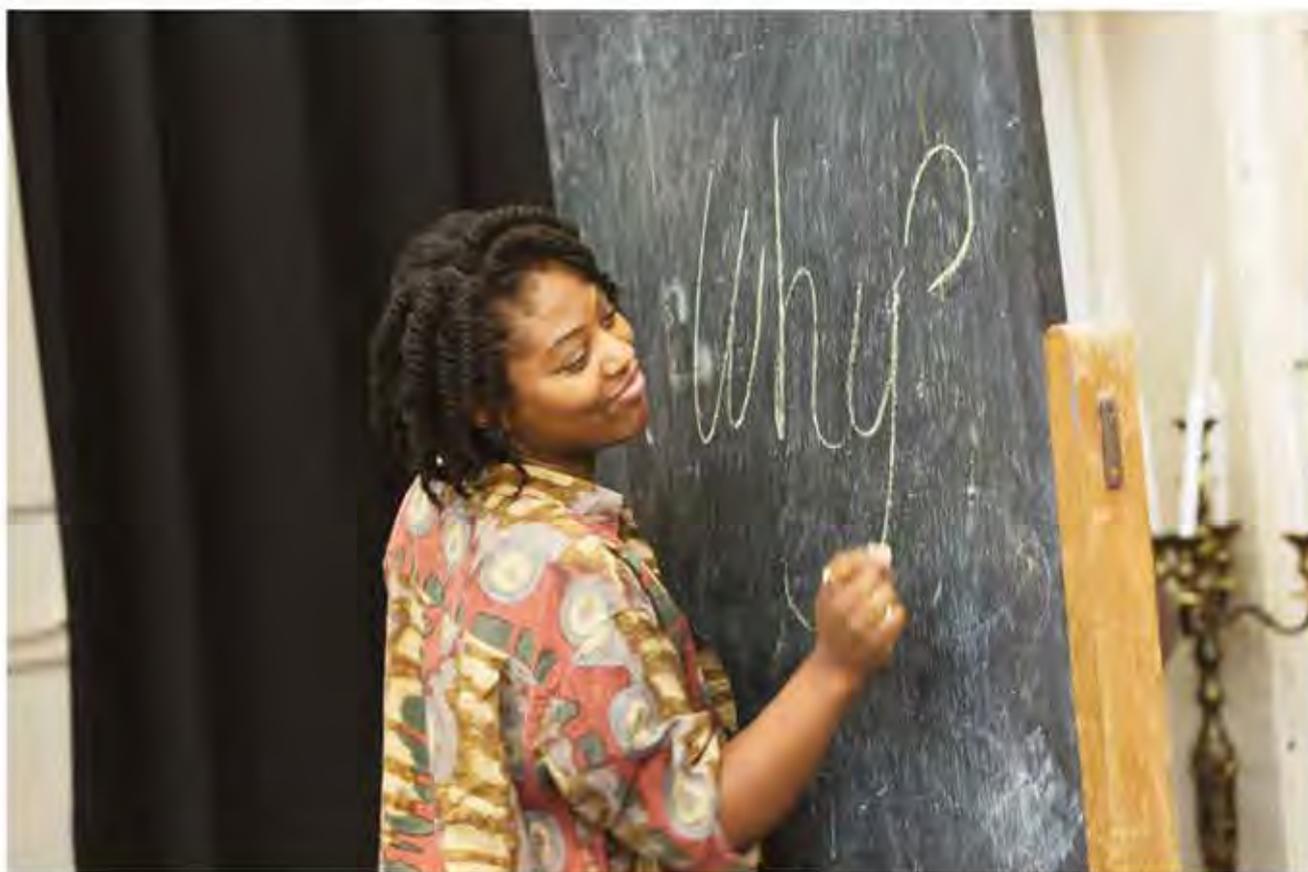
Jane's aunts both received no money upon her grandparents' death and one even moved to India to marry.

"I've fallen in love"

Jane fell in love with an Irish politician, Thomas Lefroy, but unlike Elizabeth and Darcy, they did not have a happy ending as Thomas went on to marry another woman.

WHY IS THIS PRODUCTION UNIQUE?

There have been many productions of *Pride and Prejudice* over the years. One of the most recent productions was at the Jermyn Street theatre in London and featured 21 characters but with only two actors! Below are some of the main ways our Nottingham Playhouse production is unique:



BETHAN MARY-JAMES AS ELIZABETH BENNET

- This is a brand new comic adaptation by stand-up comedian Sara Pascoe with an original score from Emmy the Great and directed by Susannah Tresilian. Prepare yourself for a playful, truthful and occasionally disrespectful take on this brilliant novel.
- **Much like Austen's writing, Sara Pascoe's adaptation has a comedic element that underpins the story and comments upon the absurd way society behaves.**
- This production meanders between the original settings of the novel in the early 1800s, to our modern-day world of 2017.
- **It is more of a comedy than a romance...**
- The production features live and recorded music written by Emmy the Great.

- There is a modern element to the costume, design and language, overlaid onto an 18th century set.
- **Very few adaptations are written by women, directed by women, or from a woman's point of view - Nottingham Playhouse's production does all this.**
- Doubling of characters, so actors play multiple roles. There are 10 actors in this show playing 29 parts! Our costumes change when we swap characters.
- **Instead of long drawn out dialogue, the speech and pace of the production is quick - lines are compact and efficient.**
- There is a strong sense of movement in our production.



(L-R) BETHAN MARY-JAMES AS ELIZABETH AND MATT WHITCHURCH AS MR DARCY



(L-R) SARA PASCOE, WRITER, AND EMMY THE GREAT, COMPOSER

INTERVIEWS WITH CAST AND CREATIVES

CARLA GOODMAN – DESIGNER

How did you blend modern-day and 18th century in your set and costume design?

We've tried to create an environment on stage that can support both the Regency and modern-day time periods within the play. I thought a lot about what materials to use and created a framing device which can quickly transform as we jump back and forth in time. We've used some simple signifiers to denote different locations, and trust in the audience's imagination to take that leap with us.



Which costume is your favourite and why?

Lady Catherine's outfit is probably my favourite, she's such a wonderfully pompous character and that's reflected in her costume. We've used a richly coloured crushed velvet on her gown with lots of beading and lace trim. She's also got a layered tulle ruff-like collar that encourages a very upright and grandiose posture.

When designing costume and the set were there any challenges?

The biggest challenge was how to move quickly between the many different scenes, locations and time periods in the play. The actors are all playing multiple characters so the costumes have to adapt very quickly. The writing is fast paced and comic so it was important that the changes on stage flowed alongside that. Our gilded cage structure has a resonance for the play in its examination of the position of women in society but also creates a flexible framing device for us to hang things on and fly things in to quickly create the different spaces.



If you were designing *Pride and Prejudice*
what would it look like?

REBECCA D'SOUZA - JANE/MODERN JANE

If your character could marry anyone in the play, who would it be and why do you think your character is best suited to that person?

Jane marries Bingley, for love. Fortunately he has loads of cash, so that works out well for her. And he loves her too, so he doesn't care that she doesn't have property or money. That's who she should marry. I do worry about how much he thinks his sisters like Jane though and how they will 'welcome' her to the family. He isn't very perceptive.



(L-R) REBECCA D'SOUZA AS JANE AND MATTHEW ROMAIN AS MR BINGLEY

Have there been any challenges you have come across in the rehearsal process?

Yes. Firstly it's been quite a leap to get the images of regency England I've seen on television out of my head, and realise how much those have infiltrated my thoughts and imagination and even memories of the book. Jane is always very staid in other adaptations, and I just love that in this she gets to be more free when she is home with her

family, and there are those moments where you can see how hard she is working to keep it together. But it's been a challenge (and then very freeing) to get to that realisation. Secondly, and this is a biggy, not laughing during rehearsals. The cast are hilarious. There are still some scenes I haven't made it through without laughing. I've got to be more 'Jane' and hold it together.



(L-R) BETHAN MARY-JAMES AS ELIZABETH AND REBECCA D'SOUZA AS JANE

BETHAN MARY-JAMES - ELIZABETH

What do you enjoy most about your character? Are there any similarities between you and your character?

I enjoy the roughness she has. She is quick-witted and that's cool - she speaks her mind but she speaks sense, most of the time. We both love to walk! And I have two sisters and am definitely the saner out of the siblings!

If your character could marry anyone in the play, who would it be and why do you think your character is best suited to that person?

Elizabeth marries Fitzwilliam Darcy. She definitely marries for love as she has time to get his character all wrong and then time to see who he really is.



BETHAN MARY-JAMES AS ELIZABETH AND THE PRIDE AND PREJUDICE COMPANY

ACTIVITIES SECTION

BE A CASTING DIRECTOR

In our version of *Pride and Prejudice* we chose to double actors, so that they play multiple characters. Imagine you were directing a production of *Pride and Prejudice*. You have a cast size of eight actors. Think about the characters' attributes, behaviours and appearance. Here are a few key main character notes from the director Susannah Tresilian:



Jane Bennet is the eldest of the five Bennet sisters at 22, and her beauty is commented on by many. She smiles a lot. She is easily distracted.

Elizabeth Bennet is the second of the Bennet sisters. A maverick, a truth-teller, she doesn't see why she should have to conform to 'social norms'. It is as if she is wearing Doc Marten boots under her dress...!

Mary Bennet is the third of the five sisters and the least engaged in social niceties, happy in her own world.

Kitty Bennet the fourth Bennet sister. She wants to go to balls and have fun, preferably with soldiers.

Lydia Bennet is the youngest, the cheekiest and most flirtatious of the Bennet sisters. Always looking for fun.

Charlotte Lucas is a friend of Elizabeth. She is pragmatic and is six years older than Elizabeth.

Mrs Bennet's primary goal is to see her daughters get married. She is loud and sometimes inappropriate.

Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy is a wealthy gentleman who owns a large estate called Pemberley in Derbyshire, England. He is widely regarded as a proud, rude, disagreeable man.



Mr Charles Bingley is a wealthy young gentleman who has purchased the nearby estate of Netherfield and become an exciting prospect for the Bennet sisters, especially Jane. Good-natured and well-mannered.



Mr Collins is a socially awkward vicar under the patronage of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. A distant cousin of Mr Bennet, he stands to inherit Longbourn instead of Mr Bennet's daughters.

George Wickham is a member of a military unit stationed in Meryton, who charms the Bennet sisters with his charisma and excellent manners.

Mr Bennet is an affable and yet sometimes sarcastic man, he has chosen to relinquish his responsibilities and be 'entertained' by his wife and daughters rather than steer them to a more secure future.

From the Director's notes above, describe how you would double or group the characters based on traits, appearance and key attributes?

Annotate the character list below:



Mr Bennet

Elizabeth Bennet

Mr Darcy

Mary Bennet

Mr Bingley

Kitty Bennet

Mr Collins

Lydia Bennet

Mr Wickham

Charlotte Lucas

Mrs Bennet

Lady Catherine De Bourgh

MATCHMAKING

Mrs Bennet's main aim is to marry off all her daughters. In *Pride and Prejudice* there are four main couples: **Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet**, **Mr Bingley and Jane Bennet**, **Mr Collins and Charlotte Lucas**, and **Mr Wickham and Lydia Bennet**.



(L-R FOREGROUND) OLIVIA ONYEHARA AS LYDIA AND MATTHEW ROMAIN AS MR BINGLEY

Imagine you were a matchmaker and were asked to matchmake couples using characters from the novel. You might decide that Mr Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet are not that well-suited after all. Using the names above as a starting point, decide who you think would make the most compatible partners.

Couple No. 1and

Couple No. 2and

Couple No. 3and

Couple No. 4and

BE A SOUND DESIGNER



Live music is a large part of our production. Think about the themes, tone or lyrics of music and current artists, singers and bands. Match a song or artist for each of the following moments for dramatic effect:

- **The opening, the excitement of Mr Bingley moving into the local area of the Bennet family**
- **A potential theme tune for the comic character of Mr Collins**
- **Mr Darcy's rejected proposal**
- **The happy ending**

Notes

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JOB CENTRE

In our adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, the modern-day Elizabeth Bennet is a teacher. If you were to recreate the story in modern times, what jobs would each of the following characters do?

Use what we know about the income of the main characters as well as their personality traits (What's It All Worth section and the Casting activity) as a guide.

Elizabeth Bennet Profession.....

Mary Bennet Profession.....

Charlotte Lucas Profession.....

Miss Bingley Profession.....

Mr Darcy Profession.....

Mr Bingley Profession.....



ALEX SAWYER AS WICKHAM



ALICE HAIG AS KITTY



KERRY PEERS AS MRS BENNET



MATT WHITCHURCH AS MR DARCY

REHEARSAL IMAGES



(STANDING) SUSANNAH TRESILIAN, DIRECTOR, AND THE PRIDE AND PREJUDICE COMPANY



(L-R) OLIVIA ONYEHARA AS LYDIA, MATT WHITCHURCH AS MR DARCY, AND BETHAN MARY-JAMES AS ELIZABETH



(L-R) REBECCA D'SOUZA AS JANE AND BETHAN MARY-JAMES AS ELIZABETH



(L-R) RACHEL PARTINGTON AS MARY, BETHAN MARY-JAMES AS ELIZABETH AND OLIVIA ONYEHARA AS LYDIA

USEFUL RESOURCES AND LINKS

Jane Austen: A Life by Claire Tomalin

The Jane Austen Treasury: Her Life, Her Times, Her Novels by Janet Todd

What Matters in Jane Austen? Twenty Crucial Puzzles Solved by John Mullan

Sounds and Sweet Airs: The Forgotten Women of Classical Music by Anna Beer

<http://writersinspire.org/content/anonymous-jane-austen>

http://www.britainexpress.com/History/George_III.htm

THIS INSIGHT PACK WAS CREATED BY JUSTINE SHARP, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ALEX MOXON AND MANYA BENENSON, PARTICIPATION TEAM.

PHOTOS BY STEPHEN CUMMISKEY