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Dramatic Publishing

Pride and Prejudice

Adapted from Jane Austen's Novel
by
JANE KENDALL



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(PRIDE AND PREJUDICE)

ISBN 0-87129-686-1

Pride and Prejudice

A Romantic Comedy in Three Acts

FOR FIVE MEN AND ELEVEN WOMEN

The play was originally produced by *Robert S. Blakeslee*, and presented by *The Central Group of the Community Theatres* in cooperation with the *Chicago Park District*, May 17, 1942, at the Goodman Theatre. Costumes were designed by *Beatrice Blakeslee*. The cast was as follows:

MR. BENNET, <i>an easygoing man</i>	Eugene R. McKeen
MRS. BENNET, <i>his flighty wife</i>	Marian Pettigrew
JANE, <i>their gentle daughter</i>	Leana Fitzpatrick
ELIZABETH, <i>their independent daughter</i>	Bourie Davis
MARY, <i>their bookish daughter</i>	Marion Mueller
CATHERINE, <i>their fretful daughter</i>	Mary Grace Quinlan
LYDIA, <i>their flirtatious daughter</i>	Freda Dombek
MR. COLLINS, <i>a pompous young clergyman</i>	Edmund Anthony
MR. BINGLEY, <i>a friendly young man</i>	Charles A. Reinhold
MISS BINGLEY, <i>his haughty sister</i>	Loraine R. Schulz
MR. DARCY, <i>a proud young man</i>	David Pettigrew
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH, <i>his overbearing aunt</i>	
.	Dorothy Fenneman
LADY LUCAS, <i>a neighbor</i>	Helen Burnett
CHARLOTTE, <i>her plain daughter</i>	Dorothy Saunders
MR. WICKHAM, <i>a young officer</i>	Herbert Bakjian
HILL, <i>a maid</i>	Michail Mooney*

*This part may be played by a man or woman.

PLACE: *Longbourn, the Bennet home in Hertfordshire, England.*

TIME: *About 1800.*

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE: *The living-room of the Bennet home. An afternoon in spring.*

ACT TWO: *Scene One. The same. Two weeks later.
Scene Two. The same. The next afternoon.*

ACT THREE: *Scene One. The same. An afternoon in July.
Scene Two. The same. Morning, a week later.*

NOTE: Helpful hints on play production in general, and specific suggestions on producing "Pride and Prejudice" will be found in the Director's Manual at the end of the play.

NOTES ON CHARACTERS

MR. BENNET: He is a man of culture and taste, whose sense of humor has helped to carry him through some twenty-five years of marriage with his frivolous and irresponsible wife. He is handsome, with graying hair and a courteous and pleasing manner. His manner of speaking varies from dry humor to elaborate sarcasm, yet he is devoted to the real interests of his family.

MRS. BENNET: She is frivolous, irresponsible, and an inveterate matchmaker. An eligible young man has but to glance at one of her five daughters and she is ready to announce their engagement. When thwarted in any way she takes refuge in imaginary ailments and complains piteously of her "nerves." She is in her forties, with her hair elaborately done; she is always fashionably dressed. She is still pretty in a plump and florid way. It is easy to see why, twenty-five years ago, Mr. Bennet found her irresistible.

JANE: She is twenty-two, the oldest of the five daughters. Jane has always turned so beautiful and sweet a face on the world that much of it has been reflected back on her. Jane honestly believes that people are better than they are, and so is always ready to find a good excuse for any questionable act. Although docile and much under her mother's thumb, Jane is by no means lacking in spirit.

ELIZABETH: She is a beauty who also happens to have brains . . . a modern girl born in 1800! She is more like her father than any of her sisters, and, although she does not know it, she is his favorite. She is distressed at her mother's airs and obvious

matchmaking, but loyally conceals it and attempts to cover her mother's blunders. She has a quick temper, a proud spirit, and is unaffected and sincere. Mr. Darcy might have resisted her beauty because of her mother's lack of taste. He cannot resist her beauty, plus the fire and spirit that are a part of Elizabeth's charm.

MARY: She is eighteen, the plain one of the family, and a bookworm. Later, Mary will probably outgrow her extreme priggishness. Right now she is prepared to lecture on practically any subject. Mary is smug and pedantic, in direct contrast to all her sisters. She is, however, likeable. You are amused rather than annoyed by her.

CATHERINE: She is seventeen, and much under the domination of her irrepressible younger sister. Catherine is slight and rather delicate in appearance. She has an engaging giggle when fun is in prospect, but, like her mother, she is inclined to whine when things do not please her.

LYDIA: She is fifteen, and utterly frivolous and irresponsible. She thinks of nothing but parties, officers, and clothes. She is not as beautiful as Jane or Elizabeth, but she is very pretty and pert, and could never, imaginably, lack a partner at a dance.

LADY LUCAS: She is in her forties, and a good friend of Mrs. Bennet, though they are rivals in matchmaking, for Lady Lucas has a daughter to marry off. Lady Lucas has a pleasant and matter-of-fact manner. In Act One she has the pleased, complacent air of one who has sighted eligible masculine quarry first.

CHARLOTTE: She is twenty-seven, and Elizabeth's special friend. Her manner is quiet and restrained and she is sweet and reasonable, though lacking somewhat in feminine charm. She does not dream of romance and is quite willing to be guided by her mother's advice.

MR. BINGLEY: He is the catch of the county, handsome, moderately rich, and with charming manners that captivate everyone who meets him. He has eyes only for Jane from the moment he sees her. He is about twenty-three.

MISS BINGLEY: She is in her twenties, and very fashionably dressed. Her surface good manners scarcely conceal her contempt for provincial society. She is proud and conceited, and her chief concern is that her brother shall make a suitable match.

MR. DARCY: He is a little older than Mr. Bingley, and a great deal richer. He is tall, handsome, and aristocratic in appearance, but his manner is cold and stiff. He is secretly just as much attracted by Elizabeth as Mr. Bingley is by Jane, but he is too intelligent not to recognize her mother's lack of taste, and so resists her as long as he can.

MR. COLLINS: He is a tall, heavy-set young clergyman, pompous and pedantic, with absurdly formal manners. Yet, he is extremely servile whenever to be so is to his advantage. He pays ridiculous court to Elizabeth, but when he fears she may not help his "career," he does not lose a moment in consoling himself elsewhere.

MR. WICKHAM: He is a handsome young officer, and cuts a dashing figure in his smart uniform. He has undeniable charm of manner, but is untrustworthy and insincere.

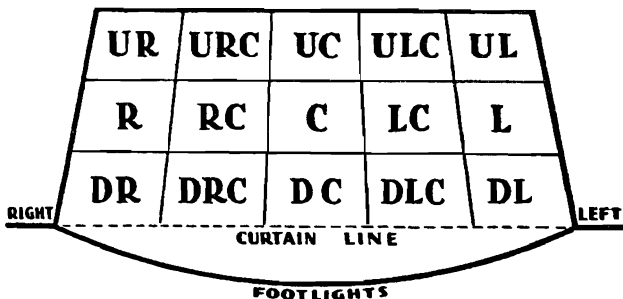
HILL: This part is extremely flexible. It may be played as a young servant girl in her teens or as a quiet, repressed, elderly servant. Or the part may be played as a manservant. Hill is quiet, unobtrusive, and efficient.

LADY CATHERINE: She is the dowager type, expensively dressed, formidable, and superior in manner. When she walks she sweeps; when she sits, it is as if she took her place on a throne. Quite obviously, she expects everyone to scurry at her

least command. She hardly knows how to meet it when Elizabeth dares to defy her . . . but she finally sweeps regally from the room without bidding her good-bye.

NOTE: A complete description of the costumes used in the original production of this play will be found in the Director's Manual at the end of the play.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

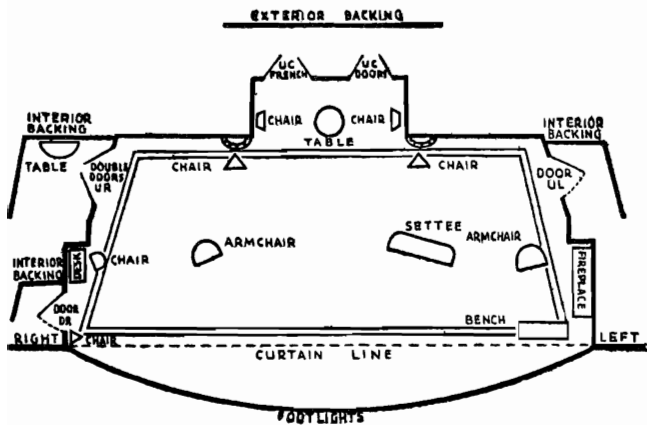


STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

STAGE CHART



Act One

SCENE: *The living-room at Longbourn, the Bennet home. The furniture shows the effect of years of wear, but is well-chosen and attractive. There is a fireplace D L. Above the fireplace is a mantel on which several china figures are displayed. On the wall above the mantel is a mirror. A door U L leads to the library, Mr. Bennet's favorite retreat. Two sets of long glass doors are set off in an alcove U C and open upon a graveled walk, revealing a glimpse of shrubbery and a flower garden. Double doors U R lead to the front hall. There is a door D R which leads to the back part of the house. Above this door is a writing desk and a chair. Below the door is a straight chair. There is an armchair at R C, and a small settee at L C. Downstage of the fireplace, at a right angle to it, is a backless bench. There is another armchair above this bench, half facing the fireplace. Straight chairs are against the wall on either side of the alcove U C. In the center of the alcove is a small round table. Two rather massive, highly-carved chairs face each other from either side of the walls in the alcove U C. The furniture is English, of the period about 1800. Family portraits hang on the walls. This is the home of a family who, although they are well-to-do but not wealthy, live according to the standards of the English gentry. NOTE: To simplify the setting, it is suggested that the alcove U C be eliminated. Merely use one set of glass doors opening out into the garden. The table U C, the only piece of furniture in the alcove actually used, may be set to one side of the doors U C.]*

[AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *It is a sunny afternoon in late March.*

Although this is a spring month, the air is still quite chill, and there is a fire burning in the fireplace. MR. BENNET sits in the armchair near it, with a book, smoking his pipe. He is a man in his forties, whose sense of humor has helped to carry him through twenty-five years of marriage with his frivolous and irresponsible wife. MARY is seated at the writing desk at R stage, copying extracts from a ponderous volume into a copybook. On the desk before her are quill pens and ink. MARY, who is eighteen, is the plain one of the family. She is smug and pedantic, in direct contrast to her other sisters. She is, however, likeable. You are amused rather than annoyed by her. When MARY speaks, it is usually to utter, in a smug voice, platitudes, which she considers gems of wisdom. JANE, twenty-two, is the oldest and the most beautiful daughter. She is sitting in the armchair at R C, doing a piece of fine embroidery. Her natural sweetness and gentleness lead her to think the best of everyone. LYDIA, the youngest, is standing left of the table U C, engaged in snipping the trimming from a new bonnet. The gayly-colored Bandbox it came in lies on the table. LYDIA is fifteen, and utterly frivolous and irresponsible. She thinks of nothing but parties, clothes, and officers. She is not as beautiful as JANE or ELIZABETH, but she is very pretty and pert. CATHERINE, who is seventeen, is standing right of the table. She is a slight, rather delicate girl, who is completely under the domination of her younger sister. She giggles a great deal when happy, but is fretful and peevish if things go wrong. As the curtain rises, CATHERINE and LYDIA run lightly downstage to in front of the settee, giggling. LYDIA tries on the bonnet and glances at herself in the mirror over the fireplace. CATHERINE stands right of her, admiring the effect.]

LYDIA [*holding up a piece of satin trimming which dangles from the bonnet*]. Hold this piece while I snip it off, Kitty.

[*The two girls hurry back to the table U C, giggling. Obediently, CATHERINE holds the piece of trimming, and LYDIA snips.*]

JANE [*looking up from her embroidering*]. Why did you buy the bonnet, Lydia, if you don't think it pretty?

LYDIA [*airily*]. La! I thought I might as well buy it as not. I shall pull it to pieces and see if I can make it up any better.

CATHERINE. There were two or three much uglier in the shop.

MARY [*turning from her writing*]. One of my most sensible extracts says that beauty is often in the eye of the beholder. I consider it a thought worth pondering.

CATHERINE [*lightly*]. When Lydia and I prefer pondering to enjoying ourselves, Mary, we will think about it.

[*CATHERINE and LYDIA giggle and move D L C again. LYDIA tries on the bonnet as before. MARY returns to her writing, slightly put out by CATHERINE'S flip reply.*]

LYDIA [*glancing toward the mirror*]. I think it will be very tolerable when I trim it with some prettier-colored satin.

[*MR. BENNET coughs, annoyed by the chatter, and shifts his position in his chair. LYDIA shushes CATHERINE, who is giggling, and they both return on tiptoe to U C.*]

JANE. I think you just wanted another bandbox.

LYDIA. La! What if I did? [*She tosses her head and continues to snip.*]

[*MRS. BENNET hurries in U R. She is a pretty woman in her early forties, frivolous and irresponsible, and an inveterate matchmaker. An eligible young man has but to glance at one*

of her five daughters and she is ready to announce their engagement. She is forever complaining of imaginary ailments and her "nerves." At the moment, she is somewhat excited.]

MRS. BENNET [*advancing on MR. BENNET, above the settee, to right of his chair*]. My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard the news? Netherfield Park is let at last!

MR. BENNET [*showing little interest, not looking up from his book*]. Is it? [*He continues to read.*]

MRS. BENNET. Mrs. Long has just been here and told me all about it.

[*MR. BENNET makes no answer but a negative grunt. MRS. BENNET pauses expectantly.*]

MRS. BENNET [*impatiently*]. Don't you want to know who has taken it?

MR. BENNET [*looking up with a sigh*]. You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.

MRS. BENNET [*eagerly*]. A young man of great fortune from the north of England.

JANE. What's his name?

MRS. BENNET. Bingley.

[*LYDIA has finished snipping off the trimming from the bonnet and tries it on. She now takes a hand mirror from the table and admires herself.*]

MR. BENNET. Is he married or single?

MRS. BENNET. Oh, single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune—four or five thousand pounds a year. [*She looks about at the girls.*] What a fine thing for our girls!

LYDIA [*posing before the hand mirror*]. Oh, Kitty and I have already heard your news from Aunt Phillips at Meryton.

CATHERINE. A man must wear a uniform, or we can't see him at all. [*She giggles.*]

MRS. BENNET [*reminiscently*]. I remember the time when I liked a red coat myself. [*She crosses U C, takes the mirror from LYDIA, and preens.*]

MR. BENNET. At heart you still do, my dear.

MRS. BENNET. If a smart young colonel, with five or six thousand a year, should want one of my girls, I shall not say nay to him.

JANE. Lydia considers Mr. Wickham the most elegant of the officers at Meryton. [*She adds teasingly.*] Though I doubt if he has a private fortune.

LYDIA. Do you think I'd *ask* him about a thing like that?

[CATHERINE *giggles*. LYDIA *takes off the bonnet.*]

LYDIA. Anyway, he has his eye on my sister Elizabeth. [*She begins to gather up her things.*]

CATHERINE [*helping her*]. Are you going to finish it upstairs?

LYDIA. Yes. [*She crosses U R.*] Bring the satin with you.

[LYDIA *goes out U R, followed by CATHERINE, who brings the rest of the trimmings and the bandbox.*]

MRS. BENNET [*moving toward MARY*]. Mary, my dear. What I have to discuss with your father will be of more interest to your elder sisters.

MARY. Then I shall retire to my room for a little further study. [*She picks up the book and starts U R.*]

[MARY *goes out U R*. MRS. BENNET *moves to right of JANE.*]

MR. BENNET. Now, my dear, how does Mr. Bingley's fortune concern Jane and Elizabeth?

MRS. BENNET. My dear Mr. Bennet, how can you be so tiresome! You know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.

JANE [*protesting*]. But, Mama,* we have not even met the gentleman!

MRS. BENNET [*as if it were a foregone conclusion*]. It is very likely that Mr. Bingley may fall in love with one of you.

MR. BENNET [*dryly*]. Is that his reason for settling here?

MRS. BENNET [*ignoring this remark, crossing to him*]. You must visit him at once.

MR. BENNET. You and the girls may go. You are as handsome as any of them, and Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party.

MRS. BENNET [*her anger momentarily forgotten, pleased*]. My dear, you flatter me. [*She crosses to left of the table U C, takes up the mirror again, and fusses with her hair.*] I certainly *have* had my share of beauty, but I don't pretend to be extraordinary, now that I have five grown-up daughters. [*She replaces the mirror and moves down to behind the settee.*]

[*ELIZABETH comes in U R. She is a beauty who also happens to have brains . . . a modern girl born in 1800. She has a quick temper, a proud spirit, and is unaffected and sincere. She has evidently been walking, for her hair is a little blown and she wears an outdoor wrap.*]

ELIZABETH. What a fine walk I've had! [*She goes down to left of JANE.*] Oh, Jane, you should have come with me!

MRS. BENNET. She had her needlework to finish.

JANE. Elizabeth, Mama has just been telling us that Netherfield is let.

ELIZABETH [*crossing to the bench by the fireplace and sitting*]. So Charlotte Lucas told me this morning. [*She warms her hands.*]

*Pronounced "Ma-ma'" and "Pa-pa'," with the accent on the last syllable.

MRS. BENNET [*reproachfully, moving to C stage*]. And you didn't confide in your own mother!

ELIZABETH. Sir William Lucas and Lady Lucas have already called on Mr. Bingley. Charlotte says he has very pleasing manners.

MRS. BENNET [*crossing over to MR. BENNET*]. Do you hear that, Mr. Bennet? Please consider your daughters. It will be impossible for us to visit him if you do not.

MR. BENNET. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you. I'll send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of my daughters.

ELIZABETH [*shaking her finger at him*]. Now, Papa! [*She takes off her wrap as she moves to JANE.*] Will you come with me to my room, Jane? [*She speaks teasingly.*] Mama may feel she can talk more freely in our absence.

[ELIZABETH starts U R, and JANE follows.]

MRS. BENNET. Order tea served in a few minutes, Lizzy.

ELIZABETH. Yes, Mama.

[ELIZABETH and JANE go out U R. MRS. BENNET turns with new determination to MR. BENNET, who has tried to continue his reading.]

MRS. BENNET. Mr. Bennet, I insist that you call on Mr. Bingley immediately. Only think what an establishment it will be for one of your daughters!

MR. BENNET. H'm? [*He looks up.*] Then I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.

MRS. BENNET [*huffily, moving a step toward C stage*]. You will do no such thing! Lizzy is not a bit better than the others, and I'm sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humored as Lydia.

MR. BENNET. No?

MRS. BENNET. But you are always giving *her* the preference.

MR. BENNET. Am I?

MRS. BENNET. You take delight in vexing me. [*With a plaintive sigh, she sits on the settee.*] You have no consideration for my poor nerves. [*She dabs at her eyes with her handkerchief.*]

MR. BENNET. You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years.

MRS. BENNET [*her voice choked with sobs*]. Ah! You don't know what I suffer!

MR. BENNET [*rising, moving to the settee*]. But you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighborhood. [*He goes U L.*] I hope to be undisturbed in the library.

[*MR. BENNET goes out U L. MRS. BENNET continues to dab at her eyes. Then she sighs, and rises as HILL, a maid, enters U R. HILL is an attractive young girl in her teens. If desired, this part may be played by an older woman, or a man.*]

HILL [*coming to C*]. Lady Lucas and Miss Charlotte Lucas, madam.

MRS. BENNET [*moving to C*]. Show them in. And, Hill, tell Miss Jane and Miss Elizabeth that we have guests.

HILL. Yes, madam.

[*HILL curtsies and goes out U R. MRS. BENNET moves toward the fireplace, dabs at her eyes once more, and turns as HILL re-enters U R with LADY LUCAS and CHARLOTTE. HILL then goes out U R. LADY LUCAS is in her forties, and a good friend of MRS. BENNET, though they are rivals in matchmaking. She has the pleased, complacent air of one who has sighted*

the eligible masculine quarry first. CHARLOTTE, who is twenty-seven, is quiet and restrained, though lacking somewhat in feminine charm. She and ELIZABETH are close friends.]

MRS. BENNET [*moving to C to meet them, effusively*]. Good afternoon, Lady Lucas. [*She kisses her on the cheek.*] And Charlotte, my dear. How well you are looking!

LADY LUCAS. We have but a short time to stay.

MRS. BENNET [*ushering LADY LUCAS to the settee*]. Don't say that—when I have been looking forward to a nice long chat!

LADY LUCAS [*sitting on the settee*]. I thought you would be interested to know that we have called at Netherfield, and our call has been returned. [*She speaks smugly.*]

[*CHARLOTTE sits primly in the armchair at R. C. HILL comes in U R and pauses respectfully at the door.*]

MRS. BENNET [*sitting beside LADY LUCAS*]. So soon! How agreeable of him! [*She is disturbed by this news.*]

CHARLOTTE. I had hoped to see Elizabeth.

HILL. Miss Jane and Miss Elizabeth are coming downstairs.

[*HILL goes out U R as JANE and ELIZABETH come in U R. JANE carries her embroidery with her.*]

ELIZABETH [*going to C and curtseying*]. Good day, Lady Lucas. [*She crosses to CHARLOTTE and kisses her.*] Charlotte! I'm glad you came over.

CHARLOTTE. And I.

JANE [*following ELIZABETH, curtseying at C*]. How nice to see you, Lady Lucas. [*She crosses to CHARLOTTE and kisses her.*]

LADY LUCAS. We are on our way to make other calls, my dear. Has Charlotte told you she has met Mr. Bingley? [*She beams proudly.*]

[MRS. BENNET glances at her daughters with an "I told you so" expression. JANE moves D L and sits on the bench by the fireplace, while ELIZABETH sits in the chair by the desk at R stage.]

ELIZABETH [on the spoken cue, "—met Mr. Bingley?"]. Yes, and that he asked her for the honor of the first dance when he gives his ball at Netherfield.

JANE [sincerely]. How nice for you, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE. It is only a gesture of politeness. He has not yet seen you, Jane.

MRS. BENNET. I am distressed that Mr. Bennet has not called upon Mr. Bingley. A most pleasing young man, I hear.

LADY LUCAS. Very agreeable. His sister, Miss Bingley, who is to keep house for him, is a very fine lady—used to London society.

CHARLOTTE. It will be pleasant to have her in the neighborhood. He has a friend visiting him, too. A Mr. Darcy.

MRS. BENNET [interested]. Oh—another young man?

LADY LUCAS. Reported to have an income of ten thousand pounds a year.

MRS. BENNET [extremely impressed]. Ten thousand pounds!

CHARLOTTE. I thought him handsome, but with proud and disagreeable manners.

MRS. BENNET [distressed]. Why doesn't Mr. Bennet call! [She twists her handkerchief nervously.]

JANE. Do not distress yourself, Mama. No doubt we shall meet him at the assemblies.

MRS. BENNET [with determination]. I must prevail on Mr. Bennet to call upon Mr. Bingley at once.

LADY LUCAS [politely]. Indeed, you must. [She rises.] Come, Charlotte, we must be on our way.

[CHARLOTTE rises. The others rise.]