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Dramatic Publishing

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Adapted
by
ASHLEY J. BARNARD

Based on the novel
by
JANE AUSTEN



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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Based on the novel by JANE AUSTEN

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(SENSE AND SENSIBILITY)

ISBN: 1-58342-319-2

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THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois

Sense and Sensibility premiered February 14, 2002, in Tempe, Arizona, produced by Actors' Renaissance Theatre. The production included the following:

CAST

Thomas Zachary Taylor
Fanny Dashwood Elizabeth Caryl
John Dashwood Shaun Thomas
Mrs. Dashwood Barbara McGrath
Elinor Dashwood Alexandra Gray
Marianne Dashwood Monica McCue
Edward Ferrars James K. Barnard
Sir John Middleton Matthew Cary
Mrs. Jennings Jackie Hayes
Colonel Brandon Drew Kallen
Willoughby Brian T.W. Schlemmer
Mrs. Palmer Elizabeth Caryl
Mr. Palmer Shaun Thomas
Lucy Steele Paulina Glider

PRODUCTION STAFF AND CREW

Artistic Director James K. Barnard
Director Ashley J. Barnard
Stage Manager Peter Bish
Set Designer Ashley J. Barnard/Peter Bish
Lighting Designer Bob Nelson
Sound Designer James K. Barnard
Costume Designer Naj Laliberte

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

A Play in Two Acts

For 7m. and 7w.

(doubling possible to 6m, 6w., no gender flexibility)

CHARACTERS

THOMAS mid-30s to early 40s
FANNY DASHWOOD late 20s to early 30s
JOHN DASHWOOD late 20s to early 30s
MRS. DASHWOOD mid-40s
ELINOR early to mid-20s
MARIANNE late teens to early 20s
EDWARD FERRARS early to mid-30s
SIR JOHN MIDDLETON early 40s
MRS. JENNINGS late 50s to early 60s
COLONEL BRANDON early to mid-40s
WILLOUGHBY early 20s
MRS. PALMER late 20s to early 30s
MR. PALMER late 20s to early 30s
LUCY STEELE early 20s

Fanny Dashwood may also play Mrs. Palmer

John Dashwood may also play Mr. Palmer

2-3 interior sets, minimal requirements beyond sofa, small table, chairs and desk.

ACT I

SCENE ONE

(Norland Manor, Sussex, England, in 1811 at the dawn of the Regency. Lights come up to reveal the drawing room of Norland Manor and the butler THOMAS, who is dusting and tidying the room. There is a sofa in the center of the room with a small table, as well as chairs, a desk and other furnishings set in various places around the room. JOHN and FANNY DASHWOOD enter, halting THOMAS in his routine. He is instantly at full attention, bowing deeply.)

JOHN DASHWOOD. Thomas.

THOMAS. Mr. Dashwood, sir. *(Unconvincingly)*. May I say how pleased I am to see you so soon returned to Norland to take up your residency with us.

JOHN DASHWOOD *(nodding dismissively)*. This is Mrs. John Dashwood, your new mistress.

THOMAS *(hesitates a moment before bowing again)*. Madam. Welcome to Norland. If there is anything you need, please do not hesitate to—

FANNY. Please see that Miss Marianne's belongings are immediately removed from the bedchamber in the upper west wing and placed in any room in the east wing.

THOMAS. Miss Marianne's—

FANNY. My brother will be taking possession of her former bedchamber.

THOMAS. Certainly, madam. (*Bows and exits.*)

FANNY. How inconsiderate of them not to be here to greet us when surely they saw our carriage approaching as clearly as I saw them in their pitiful obeisance in the cemetery. I can foresee already how difficult they mean to be in granting us control of the household.

JOHN DASHWOOD. I am sure they meant no harm by it, Fanny. Obviously their grief is such that—

FANNY. It's already been six weeks. Surely that's sufficient time in which to put grief to rest long enough to pay respects to the new lady of the house. (*Sits down in a chair to fan herself.*) I do hope they find new accommodations soon. I do not see how I can endure many days of their apparent insolence, and such displays of bad behavior will only prove a poor model to little Harry.

JOHN DASHWOOD. I am sure they will endeavor to find new accommodations as soon as possible, but I have already assured my stepmother and my sisters to continue to consider Norland their home, and to remain until they are comfortably settled in a house in the neighborhood. And with the two thousand pounds I intend to bestow upon my sisters, they should have ample funds to rent a decent home—

FANNY. Two thousand pounds! It is very well known that no affection is ever supposed to exist between the children of any man by different marriages, and so why are you to ruin yourself and our poor little Harry by giving away all your money to your half-sisters?

JOHN DASHWOOD. It was my father's last request to me, that I should assist his widow and daughters. Something

must be done for them whenever they leave Norland and settle in a new home.

FANNY (*rising to snoop through the desk*). Well, then, let something be done for them; but that something need not be two thousand pounds. Consider that when the money is once parted with, it never can return.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Indeed not... Perhaps, then, it would be better for all parties if the sum were diminished by half. Five hundred pounds for each would be a prodigious increase to their fortunes! As it is, without any addition of mine, my sisters will each have above three thousand pounds on their mother's death—a very comfortable fortune for any young woman.

FANNY. To be sure. Indeed, it strikes me that they can want any addition at all.

JOHN DASHWOOD. That is very true, and therefore I do not know whether, upon the whole, it would not be more advisable to do something for their mother while she lives rather than for them, something of an annuity, I mean. My sisters would feel the good effects of it as well as herself. A hundred a year would make them perfectly comfortable.

FANNY. To be sure, it is better than parting with a thousand pounds at once. But then if Mrs. Dashwood should live fifteen years, we shall be completely taken in.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Fifteen years! My dear Fanny, her life cannot be worth half that purchase.

FANNY. Certainly not, but if you observe, people always live forever when there is any annuity to be paid them; and she is very stout and healthy, hardly forty-five.

JOHN DASHWOOD. I believe you are right, my love; it will be better that there should be no annuity in that

case; whatever I may give them occasionally will be of far greater assistance than a yearly allowance, because they would only enlarge their style of living if they felt sure of a larger income. A present of fifty pounds, now and then, will prevent their ever being distressed for money, and will, I think, be amply discharging my promise to my father.

FANNY. To be sure it will. Indeed, to say the truth, I am convinced within myself that your father had no idea of your giving them any money at all. The assistance he thought of, I daresay, was only such as might be reasonably expected of you; for instance, such as looking out for a comfortable small house for them, helping them to move their things. I'll lay my life he meant nothing further. Altogether, they will have five hundred a year amongst them, and what on earth can they want for more than that? As to your giving them more, it is quite absurd to think of it. They will be much more able to give *you* something.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Upon my word, I believe you are perfectly right. My father certainly could mean nothing more by his request to me than what you say. I clearly understand it now, and I will strictly fulfill my engagement by such acts of assistance and kindness to them as you have described.

(Enter MRS. DASHWOOD, ELINOR and MARIANNE. MRS. DASHWOOD is still drying her tears, and all three women look startled by the presence of JOHN and FANNY.)

MRS. DASHWOOD. John! We were unaware of your arrival. I trust you've been made comfortable.

JOHN DASHWOOD. Certainly, ma'am. (*Nodding to the girls.*) Elinor, Marianne. You remember Fanny?

FANNY. Mrs. Dashwood. Miss Dashwood. Miss Marianne. (*The three women curtsey.*)

ELINOR. How do you do, Mrs. Dashwood?

FANNY. Well, thank you.

ELINOR. I trust your journey here was satisfactory?

FANNY. Quite.

MARIANNE. And where is little Harry?

FANNY. Touring the house, I believe, with Mrs. Watkins.

MARIANNE. How old is he now?

JOHN DASHWOOD. Harry has just turned four. (*There is a pause of uncomfortable silence.*)

FANNY. My brother should be arriving shortly. He insisted on stopping by the booksellers on the way here for some unaccountable reason, and will be arriving by separate coach.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Your brother?

FANNY. Yes. Mr. Edward Ferrars. Perhaps I failed to mention he would be staying with us for some time.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Oh! I shall send for Thomas to make up a room—

FANNY. No need. I have already taken the liberty of sending him to move Miss Marianne's belongings to another room.

MARIANNE. My—

FANNY. John tells me the view of the picturesque garden from Miss Marianne's window is quite incomparable. My brother has a profound appreciation of the picturesque; I promised him he would find Miss Marianne's

room quite to his liking. I trust this shall cause no inconvenience, Miss Marianne? (*MARIANNE appears as though she might disagree, but after a silencing look from ELINOR, she forces a smile.*)

MARIANNE. Certainly not. I pray it meets his expectations.

FANNY. To be sure.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Dear John...Fanny... If there is anything we can do to ensure your comfort, please do not hesitate to ask. And please be advised that...we mean to quit Norland as soon as possible, in order to avoid being of any further inconvenience.

FANNY. It is no inconvenience, I assure you.

MRS. DASHWOOD. Even so. I have sent out inquiries for new lodgings, and as soon as we find one that our modest income can afford, we shall move at once.

JOHN DASHWOOD (*triumphantly*). And I shall help you move your furniture! I...promised my dear father on his deathbed I would do exactly that.

(Enter EDWARD FERRARS, nervously fidgeting with three books in his hands.)

FANNY. Ah! May I present my brother Edward Ferrars. Edward, this is Mrs. Dashwood, Miss Elinor Dashwood and Miss Marianne Dashwood. (*They curtsy and EDWARD bows.*)

EDWARD (*nodding to them in turn*). Mrs. Dashwood. Miss Dashwood. Miss Marianne. How do you do?

ELINOR, MARIANNE, MRS. DASHWOOD. How do you do?

EDWARD. I brought... (*Starts to extend the books then takes them back again.*) That is, I thought... (*He glances with uncertainty at FANNY, who takes the hint and exits with JOHN. EDWARD clears his throat and begins again.*) The truth is, we are imparting a monstrous inconvenience on the three of you, and at a time when your hearts are still sure to be in the deepest mourning. These are but trifles of my gratitude for your hospitality, and a terribly insignificant token to acknowledge your grief, but I thought perhaps... (*The women exchange curious glances. There is a pause before ELINOR rescues him.*)

ELINOR. This is terribly kind of you, Mr. Ferrars. Completely unnecessary but greatly appreciated.

EDWARD. Well I took a chance, in guessing what might appeal to each of you. I only hope my choices may please, if only in the slightest degree. (*Stepping forward and handing MRS. DASHWOOD a book.*) For Mrs. Dashwood.

MRS. DASHWOOD. *Three Tragedies of William Shakespeare!* Oh, Mr. Ferrars, I daresay these are my three favorite plays! *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet* and...oh...*Titus Andronicus*. This was most kind of you.

EDWARD (*to ELINOR*). For Miss Dashwood.

ELINOR. *The Poetry of Lord Byron*. My favorite poet by far, Mr. Ferrars. I am quite overcome by your uncanny insight.

EDWARD. And for Miss Marianne.

MARIANNE (*brimming with excitement, her face literally falls when she reads the title*). *The Mysteries of Udolfo* by Anne Radcliffe. Oh...thank you kindly, Mr. Ferrars.

EDWARD. You don't...you are not pleased.

MARIANNE. Oh, no, I am quite pleased.

EDWARD. I can see by your expression you are not. I fear I took the bookseller's advice for this one. He assured me that Gothic romances were all the rage for young women these days. You may be honest with me, Miss Marianne. My feelings shall not be wounded.

MARIANNE. I suppose for most young women they are. It's just that...

EDWARD. Pray, go on.

MARIANNE. It is simply this: will the future of woman-kind ever recover from the Gothic romance?

ELINOR. Marianne!

EDWARD. I'm afraid I don't understand you.

MARIANNE. What women suffer at the hands of the likes of Horace Walpole, Anne Radcliffe and—God forbid—Monk Lewis¹! These simpering, whining ninnies that the authors have the gall to name “heroines,” who faint at the very hint of danger, a glimpse of blood, the whisper of a dark intent...all waiting helplessly, powerlessly for the gallant hero to come and rescue them. Well, don't you agree, Mr. Ferrars? (*ELINOR and MRS. DASHWOOD are quite horrified while EDWARD is completely baffled.*)

EDWARD. I'm afraid I lack the insight to honestly answer that question, Miss Marianne. I must confess, I have never read a Gothic romance, nor had I even heard of such a thing before my errand at the bookseller's today.

MARIANNE. And yet we are told you have a “profound appreciation for the picturesque.” Surely, with such a regard, you would have heard of...

1.The author of *The Monk* Matthew Lewis, was nicknamed “Monk Lewis.”

EDWARD. I know nothing of the picturesque.

MARIANNE. But—

EDWARD. I like a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles. I do not like crooked, twisted, blasted trees. (*MARIANNE gasps.*) I admire them much more if they are tall, straight and flourishing. I do not like ruined, tattered cottages. I am not fond of nettles, or thistles, or heath blossoms. I have more pleasure in a snug farmhouse than a watchtower, and a troop of tidy, happy villagers please me better than the finest banditti in the world. (*MARIANNE looks disbelievingly at ELINOR, who is stifling a giggle.*)

MARIANNE. Then the view from my bedchamber is sure to give you nightmares. The only thing missing from the garden below my window is a ruined abbey.

EDWARD. Your bedchamber...?

MARIANNE. You mean Fanny, I mean Mrs. Dashwood—

ELINOR. Marianne—

EDWARD. Has my sister confiscated your room for my use, on the bounds of my...appreciation of the picturesque?

MARIANNE. Well—

EDWARD. This must be amended at once! I have no such desire as to oust anyone from her own bedchamber. God knows you are being usurped enough as it is—

ELINOR. Please, Mr. Ferrars, I beg of you not to mention this to your sister. It would only cause...unnecessary tension. I'm sure Marianne is quite willing to give up her room—

MARIANNE. Oh, yes!

ELINOR. And we shall be leaving this place altogether in such a short time as it is...

EDWARD. I understand you. Though it grieves me that she has misused you so.

ELINOR. Nonsense. Oh! Will you do us the honor of reading from Lord Byron?

EDWARD (*hesitantly taking the book from ELINOR*). Certainly. I'd be...delighted. (*The women excitedly take their seats while EDWARD slowly takes his, reading from the book in a halting, awkward manner. The women listen attentively, all with forced pleasure; MARIANNE'S disapproval the most evident.*)

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:

(*The lights fade as EDWARD continues to read.*)

Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

(*Black.*)

SCENE TWO

(*ELINOR is at the desk drawing. EDWARD enters.*)

EDWARD. Oh, Miss Dashwood. How do you do?

ELINOR. I am very well, thank you. (*He cautiously creeps toward the table, peering over her shoulder at the drawings.*)

EDWARD. Beautiful drawings, Miss Dashwood. Ah, this one is an excellent likeness of my sister.

ELINOR. Mr. Ferrars, you know perfectly well that is a drawing of our dog Crabbe.