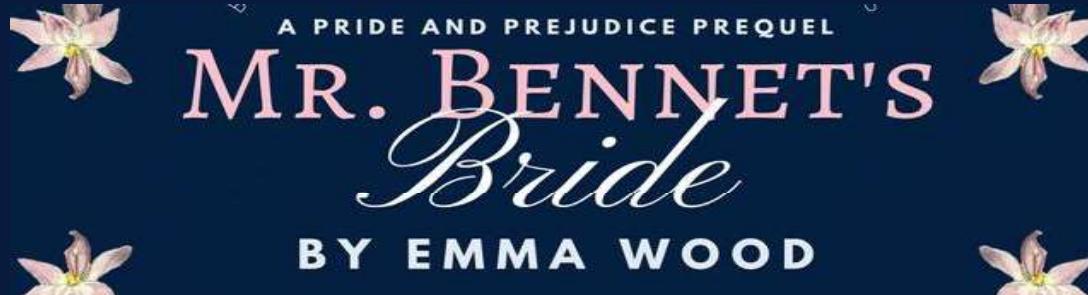


A PRIDE AND PREJUDICE PREQUEL

MR. BENNET'S

Bride

BY EMMA WOOD



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Emma Wood has offered up a play with
DIVERSE APPEAL, EDUCATIONAL VALUE, & PROFITABILITY

OLD & NEW

Utilizing beloved characters from one of the world's most famous novels, *Mr. Bennet's Bride* attracts aficionados but as it is an original play, it also delivers fresh material.

ANY BUDGET

While this is a period piece, and should be done with appropriate costuming and setting, it doesn't have to sport period garb. Implications of status and age allow a more scaled-down version when budget is an issue.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

For regional and local theatres as well as universities, With a diversity of ages and strong roles for men and women, the author encourages a multitude of casting ideas.

QUALITY

Its stunning reviews at previous productions ensure that the work is quality yet still fresh

... and it's a fun play, too.

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Emma Wood



The theater has long been a male-dominated field, with female voices often marginalized. However, the past few decades have witnessed a remarkable rise in the prominence of female playwrights. Historically, women playwrights faced significant barriers to entry in the theater world. Figures like Lorraine Hansberry and Sarah Ruhl broke through these barriers in the mid-20th century, paving the way for future generations. Today, female playwrights are making waves on Broadway, off-Broadway, and in regional theaters. Notable figures such as Lynn Nottage, Quiara Alegría Hudes, and Alice Birch are celebrated for their innovative storytelling and ability to tackle complex social issues. The emergence of female playwrights has led to a diversification of themes and perspectives in theater. Their works often explore identity, family, and societal challenges, providing audiences with new lenses through which to view the world.

Emma Wood is an award-winning, internationally produced playwright. With a determination to write stories both entertaining and thought-provoking, Emma's plays have been widely acclaimed by audiences

and critics around the world. Emma's ability to create passionate, substantial roles of all ages delights actors and audiences. Her full-length plays are very different but have common threads: engaging characters, sparkling dialogue, and a satisfying story to tell.

Emma has become known for writing plays that feature challenging, dynamic lead roles for middle aged and older women and narratives exploring issues that affect them.

Previous Productions

Emma's work has been produced by professional and community theatre companies in UK, Australia, USA and Asia. Her most recent play, Piece of Mind, premiered in L.A. with Write Act Repertory, receiving rave reviews. Her perfectly pitched prequel to Pride and Prejudice, Mr Bennet's Bride, has garnered wide acclaim and full houses in 10 productions to date.

Other producing companies include Newcastle Theatre Company, Malvern Theatre Company, Lilydale Atheneum, Priory Theatre, Canberra Repertory, Ballarat National Theatre, KrisP Productions, Grassington Players and Elanora Players among others.

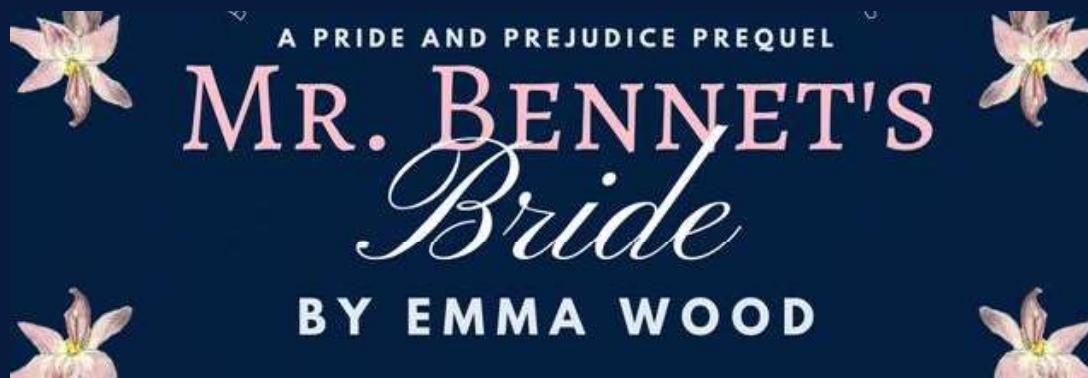
2021 SEMI-FINALIST:

- A Hit and Miss Christmas, Creede Repertory Headwaters Colorado New Play Festival
- A Hit and Miss Christmas, Dreamcatcher Rep New Jersey (now known as Vivid Stage)
- The Third Act, Act Your Age Showcase (Manchester UK)

2020 FINALIST, A Hit and Miss Christmas, B Street Theatre Sacramento New Comedies

2017 AUDIENCE CHOICE Award, 'Women of the World', Short and Sweet Manila

2014 NOMINATION Best New Play, Mr. Bennet's Bride, City of Newcastle Drama Awards



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Mr. Bennet's Bride is a fascinating take on where it all began for two beloved characters created by one of the world's most beloved authors: Jane Austen

Austen's influence on literature is profound and far-reaching. She is often credited with pioneering the modern novel, particularly in her focus on the inner lives of her characters. It is this that first drew Emma Wood to write this prequel – Mr. Bennet's Bride – her chance to explore, enhance, and share two of the story's most pivotal characters' intricacies and ironies. The Bennet's own marriage is explored in Emma Wood's prequel and is a jumping off point to the classic novel Pride and Prejudice and shows the obstacles formed when one marries for the wrong reasons -- and how it affects other generations.

It's difficult to duplicate Austen's sense of irony –but author and playwright, Emma Wood does by creating an engaging and thought-provoking backstory of the Bennets.

Wood absorbed the critique of the societal norms of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, particularly the limited roles available to women and deftly displays them as a parable for the world of today. While Mrs. Bennet is described of a lower status than her “refined” husband one might see her as ahead of her time –strong, determined and vivacious. Emma Wood's play opens the door for further discovery of this theme.

The enduring appeal of Austen's work is evident in the numerous adaptations across various media. From film and television adaptations to modern retellings and literary sequels, her stories have been embraced by audiences worldwide.

This is, however, the first PREQUEL to the famed novel.

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A Prequel?



The theatrical landscape has long been characterized by a fascination with sequels and prequels, often sparking debate regarding their artistic merit and commercial viability. While one might expect that in the cinema, since the 80s, the same desire to create backstory has been part of live theatre.

The success of these extensions of original narratives can be attributed to several key factors, including audience demand, brand loyalty, and the potential for expanded storytelling.

Jane Austen supplies flawless fodder for this.

One of the most significant reasons for the success of sequels and prequels is the established fan base. When audiences connect with characters and storylines, they foster a desire to see more of that world.

The nostalgia associated with beloved characters and familiar settings motivates viewers to return to theaters, ensuring a robust box office performance.

Additionally, sequels and prequels provide opportunities for expanded storytelling. They allow creators to explore themes, backgrounds, and character arcs that may have been underdeveloped in the original work.

Prequels, in particular, can delve into the origins of characters and events, enriching the overall narrative. One needs but take *WICKED* for example of a successful stage prequel.

The "Harry Potter" franchise, for example, has successfully expanded its universe through the "Fantastic Beasts" series, providing fans with deeper insights into the wizarding world.

The ability of sequels and prequels to resonate with audiences speaks to their place in contemporary stage and screen worlds.

The success of sequels and prequels is a multi-faceted phenomenon driven by audience loyalty, strategic marketing, and the potential for enriched storytelling.

Emma Wood has supplied us with the just such enrichment.

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'The Story'



Mr. Bennet's Bride delves into two of Pride & Prejudice most engaging characters -- the courtship of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, examining a time earlier in their lives, twenty-five years before the novel is set (1780s).

Mr. James Bennet, the only son of Robert Bennet, owner of the attractive estate Longbourn, a man in his late twenties, has -- up until now resisted all pressure to marry a suitable girl, largely because he resents his father's attitude towards him.

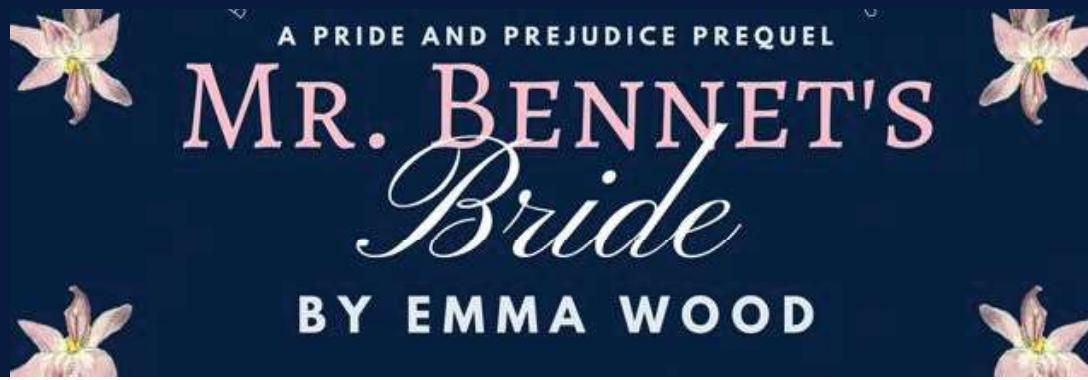
His father, Robert, does not seek happiness for James, but rather wishes to expedite a match which will ensure some male heirs, and keep his cousin Benedict Collins out of the picture. Collins has recently fathered a son, who will inherit if James does not provide an heir.

Thus, he offers up an ultimatum to James be engaged for six months.

He has his lawyer draw up a contract to hold James to the deal or throw him out of the house. The family lawyer sees an opportunity to throw his attractive, but youngest daughter in the way of the young landowner. She is "not suitable" for James. When he presents his daughter Emily, James is immediately struck by her beauty, and by the fact that she is not on his father's list of suitable choices - making her more attractive in James' eyes. He sets about wooing her in secret. He is initially taken in by her unmannered ways, seeing them as a sign of a spirited nature.

Benedict Collins attempts to ensure the way is still clear for his new son to eventually inherit all, but James chooses this provocative moment to drop the bombshell that he is engaged to Emily, frustrating both Benedict's desire for his son's succession and Robert's desire for a marriage into a suitable family.

Ironically, Robert decides he would rather James marry anyone at all than have his estate passed to a Collins, so he throws Benedict out of the house and agrees to the marriage of Emily and James. At a final meeting of the families, it becomes apparent that Emily is an entirely unsuitable match for James and that he has acted rashly. The play finishes on his realization that he has bound himself for life to the wrong woman.



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The Characters

Depending on each company's needs, the play can be done with seven actors as opposed to ten (doubling three roles)

Robert Bennet

The master of Longbourne has never recovered from being widowed early in life

James Bennet

Mischievous and highly intelligent, adept at play acting to avoid responsibilities

Mary Ellingworth

Decent, caring, considerate; burdened by widowhood early in life, helped raise James

Benedict Collins

Abrasive, over-familiar, self-important, greedy, he carries a strong resentment for Robert

George Gardiner

Attorney, highly intelligent, knows how to operate socially, ambitious

Sarah Gardiner

Attractive, likeable but superficial, spoils her daughter, easily excited

Emily Gardiner

Striking, has an irrepressible spirit, lacks modesty, flirtatious, superficial in her judgments

Mrs. Graves

The housekeeper; clever, good-humored, her service has earned her familiarity and respect

Mrs. Bowman

Pleasant natured, excitable in company, eager to make a good match for her daughter

Clara Bowman

Serious, sensitive, not particularly pretty, has a great deal of intelligence and dignity

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Presenting at Educational Institutions



The presentation of plays in university settings is more than just an artistic endeavor; it serves as a vital educational experience. The multifaceted educational benefits of engaging with theater, including its impact on student development, community engagement, and academic achievement is invaluable to education and the maintaining the viability of the arts.

Presenting plays at universities offers numerous benefits:

Cultural Enrichment: Theater fosters a vibrant cultural atmosphere, exposing students to diverse narratives and artistic expressions. This can enhance their appreciation for the arts and promote cultural awareness.

Critical Thinking: Engaging with plays encourages students to analyze complex themes, characters, and societal issues, sharpening their critical thinking and interpretative skills.

Community and Collaboration: Theater productions involve collaboration among students from various disciplines, promoting teamwork and communication skills. This sense of community can strengthen social bonds within the university.

Creative Expression: Performing arts provide a platform for students to express their creativity, allowing them to explore ideas and emotions in innovative ways.

Career Development: For those interested in the arts, participating in or attending plays can offer valuable experience and networking opportunities in theater, performance, and production.

Emotional Intelligence: Engaging with dramatic works can enhance empathy and emotional understanding, as students relate to characters' experiences and motivations.

Entertainment and Engagement: Theater productions can be a fun and engaging way to bring the university community together, creating memorable experiences and fostering school spirit.

Overall, presenting plays at universities contributes to a well-rounded education, promoting personal growth, artistic appreciation, and a sense of community.



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Investing

Investing in new plays helps to cultivate a diverse range of voices within the theatrical canon.

Historically, theater has often favored established playwrights, sometimes to the detriment of innovation and inclusivity. By prioritizing new authors, theaters can contribute to a more equitable representation of stories and perspectives. This diversification not only enriches the art form but also ensures that theater remains a relevant and vibrant medium. Audiences are increasingly seeking works that reflect their own experiences and identities, and new plays can fulfill this demand.

The successful investment in new plays also has significant implications for audience development. Engaging with emerging authors can attract younger and more diverse demographics, who may be seeking relatable and contemporary narratives. When theaters take risks on new work, they can create buzz and excitement, drawing in patrons who are eager to support innovative voices. This engagement can lead to a loyal audience base that is invested in the theater's mission and willing to return for future productions.

Investing in new plays by emerging authors is a vital strategy for theaters seeking to remain relevant and impactful in today's cultural landscape. By embracing fresh perspectives and diverse voices, theaters not only enhance the quality of their offerings but also foster a deeper connection with audiences. The success of this investment lies in its ability to challenge the status quo, promote inclusivity, and cultivate a loyal following, ultimately enriching the theatrical experience for all. As the landscape of theater continues to evolve, the support of new authors will play a crucial role in shaping its future.

Investing in new plays by emerging authors has become an increasingly popular and impactful strategy within the theater community. This trend is driven by a variety of factors, including the potential for fresh perspectives, the cultivation of diverse voices, and the opportunity to attract new audiences. The success of investing in these works not only benefits playwrights and theaters but also enriches the cultural landscape.

One of the most compelling reasons to invest in new plays is the opportunity to showcase innovative storytelling. Emerging authors often bring unique experiences and viewpoints that challenge conventional narratives.

By supporting their work, theaters can introduce fresh ideas and themes that resonate with contemporary audiences. For instance, plays that address current social issues or explore underrepresented communities can spark important conversations and foster a deeper understanding of our world. This relevance can enhance the appeal of a production, inviting audiences who may not have previously engaged with theater.

'This sophisticated and stylish production contains subtle shifts and nuance changes; from laugh out loud humour and satire to moments of genuine human frailty and awareness...Jane Austen aficionados and thespians in general will embrace this sophisticated and clever script. Maybe they should start screen printing the T-shirts now.'

Sydney Arts Guide



'The script is witty, charming and quite delightful whilst at the same time being loyal to the Jane Austen style. Particular praise must be given to Emma Wood for her clever and sophisticated script of which I'm sure even highly devoted Austenians would approve.'

Elementary Whatson



'An ingenious look at Jane's Austen's characters. This very clever play is a prequel to Pride and Prejudice and this production captured perfectly the manners and tradition of the era...This reviewer could envisage some of these characters or their offspring 50 years thence in Pride and Prejudice.'

Charles Essex, Warwickshire World



'You must see this one-of-a-kind telling of what came before the marvellous Miss Bennet and her Mr Darcy. Austen knew what she was doing when she created her characters with their petty personal dramas and Wood's work is an honourable and true descendant of this great literary creation.'

The Plus Ones



'It is amazing to recognise the brilliance of Emma Wood in absorbing and then matching the brilliance of Jane Austen. I can imagine an e-talking book beginning with Mr Bennet's Bride and naturally continuing with no apparent break with Pride and Prejudice. For another 200 years.'

Canberra Critics Circle



'Austen is a hard act to follow (or to precede) but Emma Wood's version of the Bennets' wooing has an emotional and verbal accuracy about it that is highly convincing and very enjoyable.'

Alanna Maclean, Canberra Critics Circle

'Mr. Benner's Bride is that rarest of treats -- a story of characters we thought we knew delivered alongside characters that are new to us, yet surprisingly recognizable... It is a delightfully Austentatious -- that is to say rapturously elegant -- experience.'

Brad Rudy, Atlanta Theatre Buzz

