

THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY PRESENTS

# Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley

Written by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon

Directed by Jeffrey Lo

December 4-29, 2024 (opening night: December 7)

LUCIE STERN THEATRE, PALO ALTO

PALO ALTO, CA (10 October 2024) — TheatreWorks Silicon Valley will present the heartwarming holiday play *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, written by Bay Area playwrights **Lauren Gunderson** and **Margot Melcon**. Following its hit stage adaptations of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Emma*, TheatreWorks returns to the Regency with this *Pride and Prejudice* sequel that is perfect for the whole family. This charming romantic comedy full of festive fun stars a different Bennet sister: bookish Mary, who is tired of being in the middle of her sisters’ romantic mishaps. A new guest’s arrival at Pemberley for the holidays offers Mary the chance to take control of her story. Directed by TheatreWorks Associate Producer of Casting & Literary Management **Jeffrey Lo**, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* will be presented **December 4-29, 2024** (press opening: December 7) at Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. For tickets (\$34-\$115) and more information the public may visit [TheatreWorks.org](https://TheatreWorks.org) or call **877-662-8978**.

*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* was workshopped at TheatreWorks’ Writers Retreat before making its co-World Premieres at Marin Theatre Company, Round House Theatre, and Northlight Theatre. It has since delighted audiences across the country. *Chicago Sun-Times* deemed it, “Utterly beguiling. A gem—ideal for the holiday season.” *The Washington Post* lauded the show as “a gift for Jane Austen fans,” while *DC Theater Arts* called it “a charming, confectionary celebration. Jane Austen’s humor, playfulness and wit in a warm-spirited holiday theatrical production.”

TheatreWorks is committed to creating an environment that is accessible for all audiences in its community. American Sign Language interpretation will be available at the performance of *Miss*

***Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*** at **7:30pm Tuesday, December 17**. In partnership with c2 Caption Coalition, TheatreWorks will include open captioning (a screen displaying all dialogue and a description of sound effects) for the performances **2pm and 7pm on Sunday, December 22** and **2pm Thursday, December 26**. TheatreWorks is collaborating with Gravity Access Services in offering audio descriptions to assist patrons who are visually impaired. This service will be available **8pm Saturday, December 28** and **2pm Sunday, December 29** (To utilize audio description, patrons should pre-register at **877-662-8978** after purchasing tickets). Assistive listening devices are offered at every performance with no advance registration required.

TheatreWorks will host a pre-show artist talk at **6:30pm Thursday, December 5** and will hold post-show discussions with the cast following the **Wednesday, December 11** and **Thursday, December 26** performances. TheatreWorks will require face masks to be worn for the performances of ***Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*** at **8pm Friday, December 13; 2pm Saturday, December 14** and **2pm Sunday, December 22**.

Director Lo has assembled a talented cast to bring to life this regency romance. **Elissa Beth Stebbins** (she/her) returns to TheatreWorks as Mary Bennet, the bookworm middle sister. She recently appeared in last season's *Mrs. Christie* and starred as the titular role in *Nan and the Lower Body* after originating it in TheatreWorks' New Works Festival. She has also appeared in TheatreWorks' *A Civil War Christmas* and toured with TheatreWorks' Oskar program. Stebbins has also acted with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Marin Theatre Company, Shotgun Players, Crowded Fire Theater, Cutting Ball Theater, New Conservatory Theatre Center, City Lights Theatre Company, Custom Made Theatre Company, Berkeley Playhouse, Word for Word, and Livermore Shakespeare Festival.

Seen in *The Prince of Egypt* and *Tuck Everlasting*, **David Toshiro Crane** (he/him) returns to TheatreWorks as Arthur de Bourgh, a studious loner who visits Pemberley for the holidays. Crane has performed with San Francisco Playhouse, Sacramento Theatre Company, Capital Stage, Youth Musical Theater Company, Hillbarn Theatre, and Mountain Play Association.

Seen in the digital reading of *Writing Fragments Home*, **Kausar Mohammed** (she/her) makes her TheatreWorks debut as Lizzy Bennet, Mary's older sister who is married to Mr. Darcy and living at Pemberley estate. Her TV and film credits include Universal Pictures' *What Men Want*, Hulu's *Appendage*, Paramount Picture's *Little*, CW's "Flash," CBS' "Carol's Second Act," Netflix's "Mo," and ABC's "Happy Accident." She has been seen onstage at Greenway Court Theatre, Skiptown Playhouse, and The Complex Theatres and Studios.

Serving as an understudy in *Being Alive: A Sondheim Celebration*, **Adam Griffith** (he/him) makes his mainstage debut as Fitzwilliam Darcy, a formerly disagreeable gentleman now turned reformed romantic. Griffith's credits include *The Play That Goes Wrong* at San Francisco Playhouse, multiple characters in *Sleep No More* (Punchdrunk, New York and Shanghai), the motion capture performer in the immersive one-man adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* titled *Chained* (Future of StoryTelling's Story Arcade), *Alone* (Rabbit Hole Ensemble), and HBO's *Vinyl*.

A swing for *Mrs. Christie*, **Amanda Pulcini** (she/her) makes her mainstage debut as Jane Bennet, the eldest Bennet sister who is married to Mr. Bingley and visiting Pemberley for the holidays. Her TV and film credits include NBC's "Chicago P.D." and Fox's "The Big Leap." She has also performed with Third Avenue PlayWorks, The Shakespeare Forum, Quantum Theatre, Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, Westchester Broadway Theatre, and The Gallery Players.

**William Thomas Hodgson** (he/him) returns to TheatreWorks as Charles Bingley, a rich and charming gentleman. Providing choreography for TheatreWorks' hit production of *Little Shop of Horrors*, Hodgson performed in last season's *Mrs. Christie* as well as *Calligraphy*. His theatre credits also include roles with Oregon Shakespeare Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, San Francisco Playhouse, Center Repertory Company, Marin Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Oakland Theater Project (Ubuntu Theater Project), Berkeley Playhouse, Shotgun Players, and Mixed Blood Theatre.

Seen in *A Little Princess*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Pacific Overtures*, **Sophie Oda** (she/her) returns to TheatreWorks as Lydia Bennet, the youngest Bennet sister stirring up trouble at Pemberley. Her TV and film credits include CBS' "Hawaii Five-0," CBS' "NCIS: Los Angeles," CBS' "The Big Bang Theory," Disney's "The Suite Life of Zack & Cody," Adult Swim's "Robot Chicken," and Warner Bros.' "Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld." She has appeared onstage at San Jose Repertory Theatre and Sacramento Music Circus.

Performing with TheatreWorks' Oskar program, **Maggie Mason** (she/her) makes her mainstage debut at TheatreWorks as Anne de Bourgh, Darcy's cousin who is navigating an uncertain future. Mason has also performed with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Magic Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Center Repertory Company, San Francisco Mime Troupe, Trinity Repertory Company, San Jose Stage Company, Town Hall Theatre, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Portland Stage, Chautauqua Theater Company, Central Works Theater Company, Hunger and Thirst Theatre, and Pacific Repertory Theatre.

**Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley** features scenic design by **Andrea Bechert**, costume design by **Cathleen Edwards**, lighting design by **Spenser Matubang**, and sound design by **James Ard**. **Taylor McQuesten** serves as stage manager with **Emily Anderson Wolf** as assistant stage manager.

**Lauren Gunderson** (Playwright) is a nationally acclaimed playwright, screenwriter, and short story author. She has long been associated with TheatreWorks, where she initially developed **Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley**. According to *American Theatre*, she has been one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015, topping the list thrice. She is a two-time winner of the Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award for *I and You* and *The Book of Will*, the winner of the Lanford Wilson Award, the winner of the Otis Guernsey New Voices Award, a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and John Gassner Award for Playwriting, and a recipient of the Mellon Foundation's Residency with Marin Theatre Company. Her play *The Catastrophist* about her husband virologist Nathan Wolfe premiered digitally in January 2021. She co-authored the *Christmas at Pemberley* plays (*Miss Bennet*, *The Wickhams*, and *Georgiana and Kitty*) with

Margot Melcon, and *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* premiered Off-Broadway and at Audible.com. Other plays include *Silent Sky* (TheatreWorks 2014), *The Revolutionists*, *Peter Pan and Wendy*, *Ada and the Engine*, *Artemisia*, *Bauer*, and *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight*. Gunderson is the book writer for musicals *Jeannette*, *The Time Traveler's Wife*, *Sinister*, *Justice*, *Earthrise*, and *Built for This*. She is a board member of The Playwrights Foundation. Gunderson is a recipient of a commission from TheatreWorks' Susan Fairbrook Playwright Fund and has been co-commissioned by TheatreWorks, City Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre, and People's Light to create a new adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

**Margot Melcon** (Playwright) is an artist, arts administrator, and writer who co-wrote the *Christmas at Pemberley* trilogy (*Miss Bennet*, *The Wickhams*, and *Georgiana and Kitty*) with Lauren Gunderson. She was the director of new play development at Marin Theatre Company for seven years, where she dramaturged over 30 productions—including six world premieres—and administered the company's two annual new play prizes and commissioning program. She has developed plays with TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Crowded Fire Theater, Shotgun Players, Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Ground Floor, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The New Harmony Project, and The Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. She currently manages arts and culture grantmaking at the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

**Jeffrey Lo** (Director) is a Filipino American playwright and director. He is the recipient of the Leigh Weimers Emerging Artist Award, the Emerging Artist Laureate by Arts Council Silicon Valley, and Theatre Bay Area Director's TITAN Award. His plays have been produced and workshopped at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The BindleStiff Studio, City Lights Theater Company, and Custom Made Theatre Company. Directing credits include *Tiger Style!*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Language Archive*, and *The Santaland Diaries* at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley; *The Glass Menagerie*, *Chinglish*, *Hold These Truths*, and *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin* at San Francisco Playhouse; *Every Brilliant Thing* and *Red Bike* at Center Repertory Company; *Vietgone* and *The Great Leap* at Capital

Stage; *Peter and the Starcatcher* and *Noises Off* at Hillbarn Theatre; *The Crucible*, *Yellow Face*, and *The Grapes of Wrath* at Los Altos Stage Company; *Uncle Vanya* at the Pear Theatre (SFBATCC award for Best Production); and *A Doll's House, Part 2* and *Eurydice* at Palo Alto Players (TBA Awards finalist for Best Direction). Lo has also worked with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, San Jose Repertory Theatre, and is a company member of Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company and San Francisco PlayGround. In addition to his work in theatre he works as an educator and advocate for issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion and has served as a grant panelist for the Zellerbach Family Foundation, Silicon Valley Creates, and Theatre Bay Area. He is the Associate Producer of Casting & Literary Management at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley.

**TheatreWorks Silicon Valley**, led by Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli** and Interim Executive Director **Criss Henderson**, presents a wide variety of contemporary plays and musicals and revitalizes great works of the past. Founded in 1970 by **Robert Kelley**, TheatreWorks has grown from a truly original Silicon Valley start-up to become one of the nation's leading professional non-profit theatre companies. TheatreWorks was recently honored as the recipient of the 2019 Regional Theatre Tony Award. TheatreWorks also champions new work, offering artists support and a creative home as they develop new stories for the American theatre. Offstage, TheatreWorks' arts education programs in local schools and arts engagement programs in Silicon Valley neighborhoods uplift its audiences and strengthen community bonds. Onstage and off, TheatreWorks welcomes the mosaic of people that embody the Bay Area and beyond, celebrating the transformative power of theatre to ignite imagination, inspire conversation, and enliven souls.

Media sponsor for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley's 2024/25 season is *San Francisco Chronicle*.

#### **FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** will present the heartwarming holiday play *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, written by Bay Area playwrights **Lauren Gunderson** and **Margot Melcon**. Following its hit stage adaptations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Emma*, TheatreWorks returns to the Regency with this *Pride and Prejudice* sequel that is perfect for the

whole family. This charming romantic comedy full of festive fun stars a different Bennet sister: bookish Mary, who is tired of being in the middle of her sisters' romantic mishaps. A new guest's arrival at Pemberley for the holidays offers Mary the chance to take control of her story. ***Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*** was workshopped at TheatreWorks' Writers Retreat before making its co-World Premieres at Marin Theatre Company, Round House Theatre, and Northlight Theatre. It has since delighted audiences across the country. *Chicago Sun-Times* deemed it, "Utterly beguiling. A gem—ideal for the holiday season." *The Washington Post* lauded the show as "a gift for Jane Austen fans," while *DC Theater Arts* called it "a charming, confectionary celebration. Jane Austen's humor, playfulness and wit in a warm-spirited holiday theatrical production." In-demand director/ playwright and TheatreWorks Associate Producer of Casting & Literary Management **Jeffrey Lo** directs.

**WHEN:** Previews: Wednesday, December 4 – Friday, December 6, 2024  
*Opening: Saturday, December 7, 2024*  
Closes: Sunday, December 29, 2024

**SHOWS:** Previews: 8:00pm  
Tuesdays: 7:30pm  
Wednesdays: 2:00pm, 7:30pm  
Thursdays & Fridays: 8:00pm  
Saturdays: 2:00pm, 8:00pm  
Sundays: 2:00pm, 7:00pm

**ACCESS:** **ASL Interpretation:** 7:30pm Tuesday, December 17, 2024  
**Open Captioning:** 2pm and 7pm on Sunday, December 22, 2024; 2pm on Thursday, December 26, 2024  
**Audio Description:** 8pm Saturday, December 28, 2024; 2pm Sunday, December 29, 2024  
*Please register in advance, as service includes a pre-show talk 30 minutes before the performance.*  
**Assistive Listening Devices available at every performance**

**EVENTS:** **Pre-show Artist Talk:** 6:30pm Thursday, December 5, 2024  
**Post-show discussions with cast:** Following the 7:30pm performance on Wednesday, December 11 and 8pm performance on Thursday, December 26, 2024

**WHERE:** **Lucie Stern Theatre**, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

**TICKETS:** Season 54 Subscriptions and single tickets (\$34-\$115) are available. Pricing inclusive of fees and subject to change.

**INFO:** For information visit **[theatreworks.org](http://theatreworks.org)** or call **877-662-8978**

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**PRESS:** Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co., [lauren@cb-pr.com](mailto:lauren@cb-pr.com)

**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos are available: <https://cbpr.co/press/missbennet/>