



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

2023
SEASON

PLAY

PRODUCTION NUMBER 244

Jan. 06 —THROUGH— Feb. 11

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PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

BY:
Jane Austen

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY:
Melissa Leilani Larson

STARRING

Madeline McBeth • Amy Ware

SUPPORTING

Emma Joy Belnap • Bronson Dameron • Sydney Dameron
Courtney Engle • Sasha Fazulyanov • April Fossen • Malin Glade
Morgan Gunter • Spencer Hohl • Laura Jacobs • Alice Johnson
David P. Knight • Parley Lambert • Tanner McKay • Bradley Mackay
Malia Mackay • Melanie Muranaka • Josh Needles • Mariah Proctor
Mark Pulham • Sydney Swalberg • Ian Webb • Mary Jane Wadley
Ryann Bailey Wawro • Morgan Wilcock • Melany Wilkins

DIRECTOR

Barta Heiner

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

Ryan Fallis

CHOREOGRAPHER

Amelia Rose Moore

DIALECT COACH

Dianna Graham

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Joseph Governale

SET DESIGN

Jason Baldwin

COSTUME DESIGN

Dennis Wright

HAIR & MAKEUP DESIGN

Melinda Wilks

LIGHTING DESIGN

Ryan Fallis

SOUND DESIGN

Ryan Fallis
Richie Trimble

PROPERTIES

Linda Hale

TECHNICIANS

Courtney Byrom
Andrew James Keele
Mia Benson
Richie Trimble

COSTUME DIRECTOR

Anne Swenson

ASSISTANT PROPERTIES

Cody Hale

This version of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE was commissioned by Brigham Young University in 2012 in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the novel's publication. It was first produced at BYU in March 2014.

◇ CAST OF CHARACTERS ◇

ELIZABETH BENNETT	Madeleine McBeth (<i>MWF</i>) • Amy Ware (<i>TTHS</i>)
JANE BENNETT.....	Sasha Fazulyanov (<i>MWF</i>) • Ryann Bailey Wawro (<i>TTHS</i>)
MARY BENNETT	Morgan Wilcock (<i>MWF</i>) • Courtney Engle (<i>TTHS</i>)
KITTY BENNETT.....	Malin Glade (<i>MWF</i>) • Sydney Swalberg (<i>TTHS</i>)
LYDIA BENNETT	Emma Joy Belnap (<i>MWF</i>) • Laura Jacobs (<i>TTHS</i>)
MRS. BENNETT.....	April Fossen (<i>MWF</i>) • Melanie Muranaka (<i>TTHS</i>)
MR. BENNETT	David P. Knight (<i>MWF</i>) • Mark Pulham (<i>TTHS</i>)
FITZWILLIAM DARCY.....	Bronson Dameron (<i>MWF</i>) • Spencer Hohl (<i>TTHS</i>)
CHARLES BINGLEY	Parley Lambert (<i>MWF</i>) • Morgan Gunter (<i>TTHS</i>)
WILLIAM COLLINS.....	Josh Needles (<i>MWFS (EVE)</i>) • Bradley Mackay (<i>TTHS (12PM & 4PM)</i>)
GEORGE WICKHAM / COLONEL FITZWILLIAM.....	Tanner McKay (<i>MWF</i>) • Ian Webb (<i>TTHS</i>)
CHARLOTTE LUCAS.....	Malia Mackay (<i>MTHF</i>) • Mariah Proctor (<i>TWS</i>)
CAROLINE BINGLEY.....	Sydney Dameron (<i>MWF</i>) • Alice Johnson (<i>TTHS</i>)
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH.....	Melany Wilkins (<i>MWF</i>) • Mary Jane Wadley (<i>TTHS</i>)

◇ SCENE SYNOPSIS ◇

◇..... ACT I◇

SCENE 1:

- The Bennet Home in Longbourn

SCENE 2:

- A Ball at Lucas Lodge Estate

SCENE 3:

- A Bedroom at the Bennet Home

SCENE 4:

- Countryside near Netherfield Park

SCENE 5:

- The Yard of the Bennet Home

SCENE 6:

- The Bennet Home

SCENE 7:

- Netherfield Park Estate

SCENE 8:

- The Bennet Home

SCENE 9:

- A Walking Path to Meryton

SCENE 10:

- A Bedroom at the Bennet Home

SCENE 11:

- A Ball at Netherfield Park Estate

SCENE 12:

- The Bennet Home

INTERMISSION

◇..... ACT II◇

SCENE 1:

- Rosing Parsonage

SCENE 2:

- Rosing Park Estate

SCENE 3:

- Rosing Parsonage

SCENE 4:

- London

SCENE 5:

- Rosing Parsonage

SCENE 6:

- The Bennet Home

SCENE 7:

- Pemberley Estate

SCENE 8:

- The Bennet Home / A Beach in Brighton

SCENE 9:

- An Inn in Lambton

SCENE 10:

- London

SCENE 11:

- The Bennet Home

SCENE 12:

- London

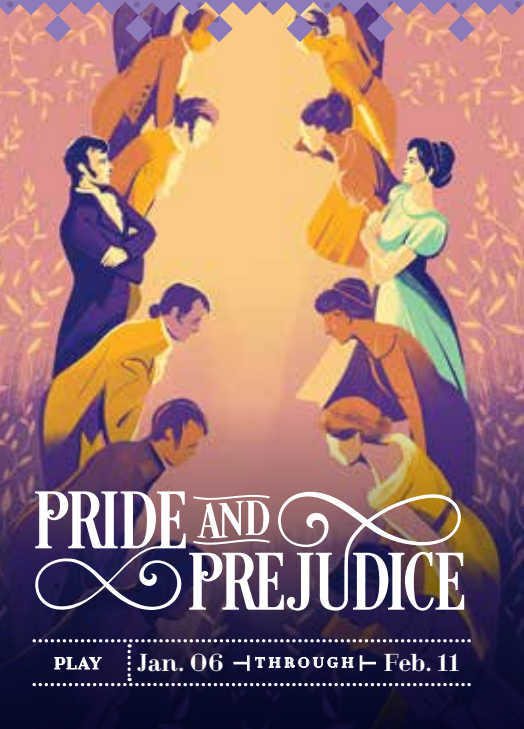
SCENE 13:

- The Bennet Home

SCENE 14:

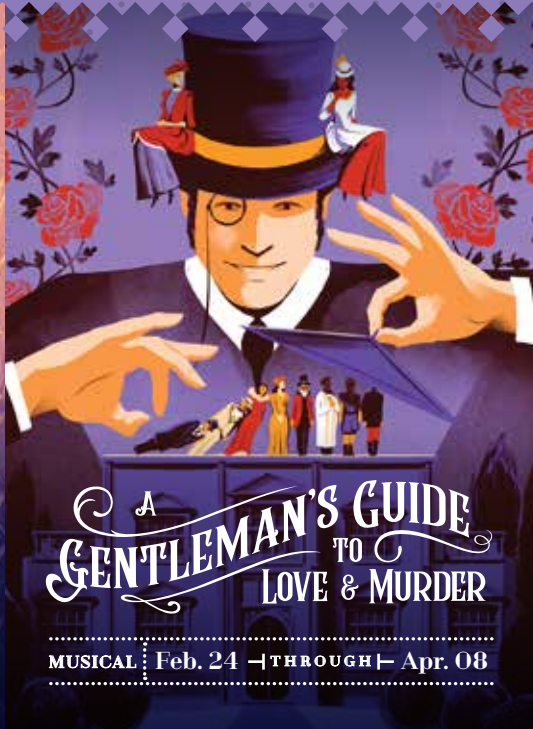
- The Yard of the Bennet Home

HALE CENTER THEATER OREM
2023 SEASON



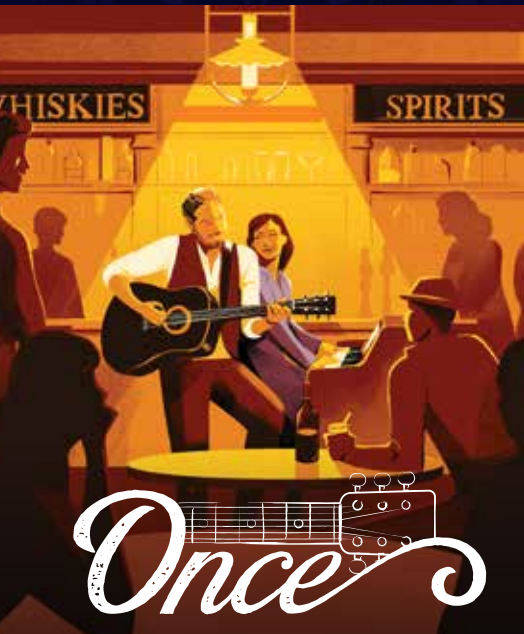
PRIDE AND
PREJUDICE

PLAY | Jan. 06 -THROUGH- Feb. 11



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◇ WHO'S WHO ◇

EMMA JOY BELNAP

Lydia Bennet (MWF)

Emma is beyond ecstatic to be making her HCTO debut! She began acting by doing community theater with friends. Emma was raised in a family full of dancers—her cousins are SYTYCD alums; Heidi Burns, and Benji and Lacey Schwimmer. Emma followed in their latin dance footsteps, performing with the *So You Think You Can Dance* ensemble for National Dance Day. Favorite roles include Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance*, Jane in *Pride and Prejudice*, and now Lydia in *Pride and Prejudice*! Emma would love to thank the endless support from her friends and family, and hopes you enjoy the show!



Emma Joy Belnap

BRONSON DAMERON

Fitzwilliam Darcy (MWF)

Bronson is delighted and humbled to be part of this amazing show with so many talented people! Some of Bronson's previous credits include the Wolf/Cinderella's Prince in *Into the Woods* (Lehi Arts), Antony Wilding in *Enchanted April* (HCTO), Lancelot in *Camelot* (HCTO), Frederic in *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (HCTO), and Clayton in *Disney's Tarzan* (SCERA Shell). Thank you to the stellar production team for the opportunity to be part of something so wonderful, to so many friends and family for the support, and most of all to Sydney—you make every day brighter and more wonderful than ever. Thanks for coming and enjoy the show!



Bronson Dameron

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Sydney Dameron

SYDNEY DAMERON

Caroline Bingley (MWF)

Sydney is so honored to be able to help tell one of her favorite stories on a most beloved stage. She was last seen at HCTO in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* in 2021. A few of her favorite past roles include Cinderella in *Into the Woods*, Martha in *The Secret Garden*, Janet van de Graaff in *The Drowsy Chaperone* and Shelby in *Steel Magnolias*. Sydney would like to thank Barta and the production team for this amazing opportunity, her friends and family for their unfailing support, and her husband Bronson whom she has had the pleasure of ardently admiring for the best year of marriage.

COURTNEY ENGLE

Mary Bennet (TTuS)

Courtney is thrilled to be making her HCTO debut. She is a current BFA theater student at UVU. Some of her favorite credits



Courtney Engle

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Sasha Fazulyanov

include *Les Misérables* (Eponine), *Romeo and Juliet* (Juliet), and *Annie Get Your Gun* (Winnie Tate). She is so excited to bring Mary's spunk to life. Much love to my momma—you are everything. And a huge thank you to my family and friends for your never-ending support. Enjoy the show!

SASHA FAZULYANOV

Jane Bennet (MWF)

Sasha is elated to be back at HCTO! She was most recently seen as Liesl von Trapp in *The Sound of Music* last summer. Some other favorite credits include *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Cecily Cardew), *Man with the Pointed Toes* (Pamela Wright), and *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Ensemble). Sasha graduated from BYU in April with a BFA in Music Dance Theatre. In her free time, Sasha loves watching movies, doing yoga, or baking any assortment of treats. "Big thank you to my incredibly supportive husband and family. I love you!" IG: @sashafazulyanov



April Fossen

APRIL FOSSEN

Mrs. Bennet (MWF)

April was last seen at HCTO in *Sense & Sensibility*, and she is so happy to be back. Other local credits include *Medea* (Classical Greek Theatre Festival); *Mestiza* (or, *Mixed*), *The Audacity*, and *Suffrage* (Plan-B Theatre Company); *Mercury*, *Bull Shark Attack*, and *Blackberry Winter* (Salt Lake Acting Company); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (The Grand Theatre); *Stage Kiss* (Wasatch Theatre Company); *August: Osage County* (Silver Summit/Utah Rep); and *Titus Andronicus* (Pinnacle Acting Company). Regional credits include work with Berkeley Repertory Theatre and the California Shakespeare Festival. April holds a Bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts from UC Berkeley.

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Malin Glade

MALIN GLADE

Kitty Bennet (MWF)

Malin is excited to be making her HCTO debut! Originally from California, she moved to Utah two years ago to study at BYU, where she is currently a Junior in the BFA acting program. Last year, Malin appeared as Mary in *Pride and Prejudice* at BYU, and it has been delightful to return to Longbourn this time as Kitty. Other recent credits include *Microburst 2022* (BYU), *Zombie Botanist in Escape from Planet Death* (BYU), *Carolina in Illusionary Tales* (BYU), and Allison in *Cry-Baby the Musical* (No Square Theatre, Laguna Beach). Outside of performance, Malin loves riding her horse Obi, sitting in coffee shops mulling over imaginary scenarios, and writing. She would like to thank all her amazing teachers and directors for shaping her into the performer she is!



Morgan Gunter

MORGAN GUNTER

Charles Bingley (TTuS)

Morgan is thrilled to be returning to HCTO to participate in this classic story. His previous time here was with HCTO's 2015 production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* as Peter van Dann. From Concord, CA, Morgan received his BFA in Acting from Brigham Young University, and recently graduated with his Master of Fine Arts degree in Acting from the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, CA. Some of his theater and film credits include Jack in *Jack and Jill*, Ernest in *Ernest and the Pale Moon*, Orlando in *As You Like It*, Tom Edison in *Dogville*, and 003/Biochemist in *CRYO*. Morgan has been married to his amazing wife, Jordyn, for 7 years, and been blessed with two incredible children, with a third on the way. IG: @morgansgunter



Spencer Hohl

SPENCER HOHL

Fitzwilliam Darcy (TTUS)

Spencer is a classically trained actor from SLC and is currently serving as the Associate Artistic Director at the Parker Theatre in South Salt Lake. Some of his recent roles include the title character in *Hamlet* at Parker Theatre and Dickens/Fred in *A Christmas Carol* at HCT Sandy. He is thrilled to be making his debut at HCTO! "Perfect. Do it again".

LAURA JACOBS

Lydia Bennet (TTUS)

Laura is delighted to be in her first main stage production at HCTO! Favorite roles include Polly Baker (*Crazy for You*) and Smeek (*Peter and the Starcatcher*) at Orem High School; and Yellow Dog (*Go, Dog. Go!*) at BYU. Laura is a freshman at BYU, and is hoping to pursue a degree in Music Dance Theatre. Love and thanks to Scott Sackett, Chelsea Alley, Marcie Jacobsen, and her amazing family.



Laura Jacobs

ALICE JOHNSON

Caroline Bingley (TTUS)

Alice couldn't be happier back at HCTO, working again with Barta and Mel and such a talented cast. She was last seen on this stage as Annabella/Margaret/Pamela (*The 39 Steps*). A few favorite roles include Elizabeth in *The Crucible*, Mary Musgrove (Mrs.) in *Mel Leilani's Persuasion*, and playing 13 different characters in *The War of the Worlds*. Alice has also appeared as Naomi in *The Book of Mormon Season 1*, as well as a number of independent films. She holds a BFA in Acting from BYU and a Master's in Instructional Design & Educational Technology from the U. She loves to travel almost as much as she loves cuddling her extremely well-behaved French bulldog, Sir Chauncey Wentworth, who is worth 20,000 pounds a year.

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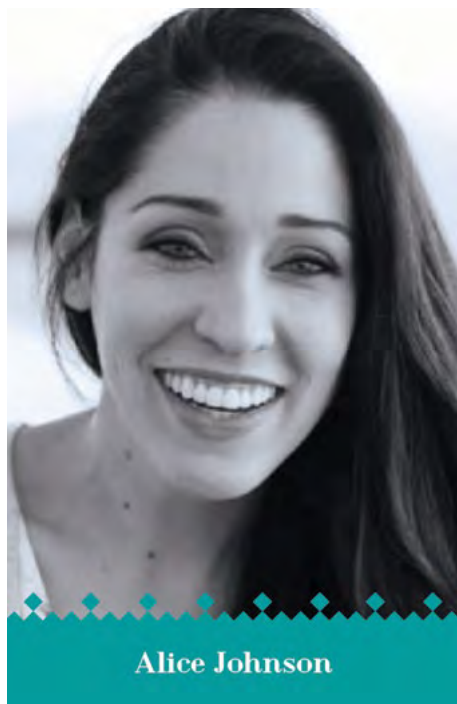


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Alice Johnson



David P. Knight



Parley Lambert

DAVID P. KNIGHT

Mr. Bennet (MWF)

David has loved working with this talented cast and director, and can now check Mr. Bennett off of his bucket list of characters to portray! Some of his previous stage credits include Jacob Marley/Ghost of Christmas Present (*A Christmas Carol*), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Christian), *Star Spangled Girl* (Norman), *The Three Musketeers* (Athos), and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow in Concert* (Narrator). David loves spending time with his understanding wife and 3 beautiful children.

PARLEY LAMBERT

Charles Bingley (MWF)

First appearing on the stage at 6 months old, Parley is excited to make his first return to the HCTO stage in 23 years. Parley is pursuing a BFA in acting at Brigham Young University and is absolutely astounded at the

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wonderful and talented people he gets to learn from and work with every day. When he's not on the stage Parley enjoys rock climbing, playing the guitar, and writing. Special thanks to his parents, friends, and neighbors for supporting him as he pursues his passion to make the world a better place, and for dealing with his tendency to (loudly) rehearse his lines in the shower.

MELISSA LEILANI LARSON

Playwright

Mel is excited to collaborate with such outstanding artists on her HCTO debut—particularly her dear friend, Barta. *Pride and Prejudice* was commissioned by BYU and most recently staged at Chichester College (UK); it will appear at the Texas Shakespeare Festival in July. Recent productions: *Mestiza*, or *Mixed* at Plan-B Theatre; *Persuasion* and *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* at UVU; *Gin Mummy* at Mesa Community College; *Sweetheart*, *Come* at PYGmalion Productions; *Bitter Lemon* at Creekside Theatre Fest. Other plays: *The Post Office*, *Mountain Law*, *Pilot Program*, *Little Happy Secrets*, *Martyrs' Crossing*, *Lady in Waiting*, *Weaver of Raveloe* and *A Form of Flattery*. Film: *Jane and Emma* and *Freetown*. Honors: AATE Distinguished Play award, O'Neill semi-finalist, four AML Drama awards and two City Weekly awards. Dramatists Guild member. MFA, Iowa Playwrights Workshop. melissaleilanilarson.com

MADELINE MCBETH

Elizabeth Bennet (MWF)

Madeline is thrilled to be making her HCTO debut as Elizabeth Bennet. Madeline's favorite credits include *Silent Sky* with HCT Sandy, *Angel Street* and *Blithe Spirit* with The Covey Center for the Arts, and *Macbeth* with Draper Historic Theatre. She holds a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from UVU and works as



Madeline McBeth



Tanner McKay

a copywriter on the creative team at Vivint. "To my own loud and lovely sisters, my sweet and stubborn brothers, my strong and loving parents, and Ben, my favorite dance partner: Thank you for giving me what I need to play this part. Being in this show has been a dream. Thank you to my director and cast mates for making it so!"

TANNER McKAY

George Wickham / Colonel Fitzwilliam (MWF)

Tanner is honored to share the stage at with such an incredible cast in his HCTO debut! He is currently pursuing a degree in Marketing with minors in Entrepreneurship and Social Impact at BYU. Among various hobbies Tanner has enjoyed acting in roles such as Will Parker (*Oklahoma!*), Don Lockwood (*Singin' in the Rain*), and Zebulun (*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*). The pinnacle of Tanner's acting career would be starring in a spinoff Harry Potter TV series about The Marauders, playing opposite Zendaya in anything (watch out Tom), or as Jim Hawkins in a live action adaptation of Disney's *Treasure Planet*. He would like to thank his great grandparents Ruth and Nathan Hale for starting all of this, his ma and pa for their unending love, and his future wife for still being out there somewhere, anywhere!

BRADLEY MACKAY

William Collins (TTuS (12PM & 4PM))

Bradley is thrilled to return to HCTO. He is an actor/storyteller from Utah. Recent credits include: *The Mousetrap* (HCT), *Peter and the Starcatcher* (HCTO), Story Crossroads Storytelling Festival, Great Hall Theatrical Biggest Liar and Hauntings Contests. Bradley is overjoyed to be cast opposite his wife for the first time. He is also excited to host a storytelling podcast sometime this year. Keep an ear out for *Immersive—a storytelling podcast* wherever you listen to podcasts.



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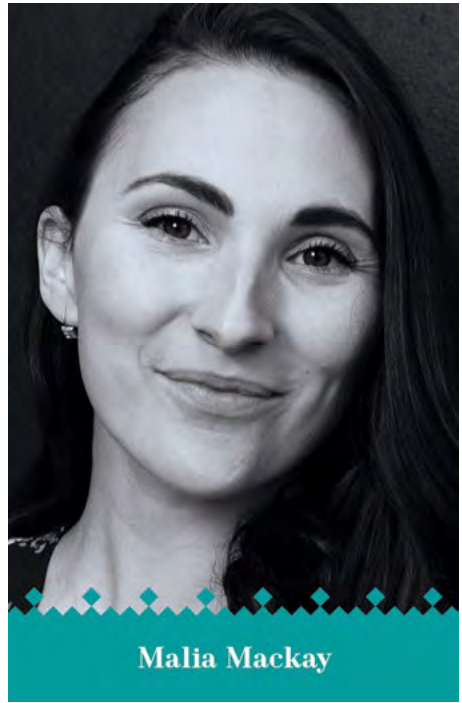
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MALIA MACKAY

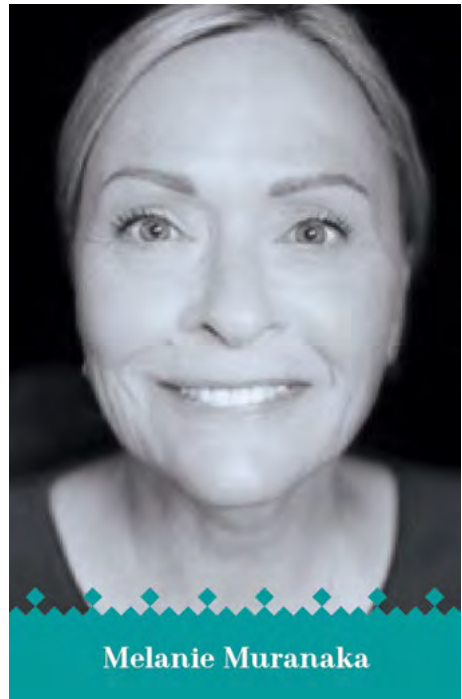
Charlotte Lucas (MWF)

Malia loves any opportunity to create art in this space! This time she is especially happy to be sharing the stage with her husband, Bradley. She has a BFA in Musical Theatre from BYU, and her favorite past roles include Margaret in *Silent Sky*, Eleanor in *Sense and Sensibility*, and Jane in *Tarzan*. When she's not performing, she is working at Lucid Software, watching her two kids and baking elaborate cakes.

MELANIE MURANAKA

Mrs. Bennet (TTuS)

If you've been attending HCTO for many years, you might have seen Melanie perform as Mrs. Frank in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Ruth in *Pirates of Penzance*, The Housekeeper in *Man of La Mancha* or Mrs. Reed in *Jane Eyre*. *Pride & Prejudice* is her return to the stage after an 18 year hiatus (in which she



traveled and lived in Kauai)! Melanie is the proud mother of 5 grown children and their 5 wonderful spouses. She is also a doting grandmother to nearly 14 grandchildren! She would like to thank this amazing cast and crew for their patience and kindness and to especially thank Barta for taking a chance on her. She dedicates her performances to her wonderfully supportive husband Nobu, who is the light of her life!

JOSH NEEDLES

William Collins (MWFS (eve))

Josh graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting from UVU. Some of his credits include Ladislav Sipos in *She Loves Me* (Noorda Center), Jack Scarecrow in *Spookley the Square Pumpkin TYA* (HCTO), *Mamma Mia* (Sundance Summer Theatre), and The Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* (Renaissance Now). Some of his film credits include *Christmas Tree Lane* (Hallmark) and *Rager* (Noorda



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Center). He is an award winning actor (KCACTF Finalist/Best Musical Improv/ etc.) and has a deep love for performing. He always thanks his parents for never missing a show and Evan for being his person. Instagram: @josh_tn

MARIAH PROCTOR

Charlotte Lucas (TTnS)

Mariah is very pleased return to the HCTO stage. She most recently appeared in *A Christmas Carol* at Alpine Community Theater. Other favorite stage credits include *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at Lehi Arts, *The Little Mermaid* at HCTO, *The Elephant Man* at BYU and *Cassandra* at the Great Salt Lake Fringe and The Hive. “Thank you to my husband, Bryan, and our two cute boys for their unending support and love.”

MARK PULHAM

Mr. Bennet (TTnS)

Mark is glad to be back for another ‘Kick-off-the-New-Year’ show. This will be his 5th or 6th time ringing in the New Year with an audience. Happy to play, yet another English father figure, Mark was last seen at HCTO as Emma’s Dad in *Emma: The Musical*. This time it’s Jane Austen’s Mr. Bennet, father to 5 girls. As you can imagine, he doesn’t have a lot to say, but he’s just happy to be a member of the family. Thanks go out to all the staff and crew for making each and every show a delightful experience.

SYDNEY SWALBERG

Kitty Bennet (TTnS)

Sydney is so excited for her first show here at HCTO! Some of her favorite roles include: Wednesday in *The Addams Family*, Wendy in *Wendy & Peter Pan*, Ariel in *The Tempest*, and Thea in *Spring Awakening*. She would like to thank her beautiful fiance for being her biggest support!





Sydney Swalberg

AMY WARE

Elizabeth Bennet (TTuS)

Amy is honored and excited to be performing in such an amazing piece of work at HCTO. Being her first time performing at this theater she wants to thank the amazing production team and cast for providing her with a delightful experience. Previous performances include: *Steel Magnolias* at HCT Sandy as Annelle; *Hand to God* at Salt Lake Acting Company as Jessica; *Spamalot* at the Grand Theater as Dead Fred; *Bus Stop* at CenterPoint Legacy Theater as Cherie, *Picnic at The Grand Theater* as Millie; *Tribes* at Salt Lake Acting Company as Sylvia; *Strangers, Lovers, Family, Friends* as part of the Great Salt Lake Fringe Festival as Annie/Joan; *As you Like It* with Such Stuff Production as Celia.



Amy Ware

RYANN BAILEY WAWRO

Jane Bennet (TTuS)

Ryann is ecstatic to be sharing the HCTO stage in *Pride and Prejudice* with such an incredible cast and crew. Recent credits include *Doctor Who* (Supporting, BBC), *Wendy and Peter Pan* (Tink), and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (Apprentice). Ryann is currently represented by TMG and Whitaker Entertainment. When she isn't on stage, Ryann loves to paint, remodel her old house, and teach theater to middle schoolers with her incredible spouse, Christian. Whom she would like to thank for always supporting her passions and for always being someone to fall back on.

IAN WEBB

George Wickham / Colonel Fitzwilliam (TTuS)

Ian is excited to be a part of another incredible show on the HCTO stage! He's a proud recent product of the BFA acting program at UVU and wouldn't be here without his fantastic professors and cohort. Recent roles include Spookley (*Spookley the*



Ryann Bailey Wawro

Square Pumpkin), Felix (*The Normal Heart*), Ladahlord (*James & the Giant Peach*), Judas (*Godspell*), leading roles in two separate workshops of new musicals, as well as projects for the camera in commercials, TV, and film. When he's not performing, Ian can be found taking his dog, Puck, on long walks and watching as much TV as humanly possible. Massive thanks to Barta and the producing team, Gavin, Puck, and the incredible team at McCarty Talent Agency. Enjoy the show and remember, this is acting, Ian isn't a creep in real life!

MARY JANE WADLEY

Lady Catherine de Bourgh (TTuS)

Making her HCTO debut. Acting highlights include Mrs. Potts—*Beauty and the Beast* (West Valley Arts), Marilla Cuthbert—*Anne of Green Gables* (BYU), LDS Conference Center: Elizabeth (*Savior of the World*), Amy Loader in the film *17 Miracles*, and voice over



Ian Webb



Mary Jane Wadley



Morgan Wilcock

credits. Mary Jane has a B.A. in Theatrical Costuming working much of her career out of her home and 13 years at BYU. She is the blessed mother of two children and the happy grandmother to 6 beautiful angels from Heaven.

MORGAN WILCOCK

Mary Bennet (MWF)

Morgan has been performing since she was a tween, primarily here, in HCTO's youth program. In high school, she earned superior scores during various Shakespeare Festivals with monologues from *A Winter's Tale* and *As You Like It*. Most recently, she's been featured in video projects like *Helpless and Satisfied* with Working With Lemons, and an educational video for Discovery Education. Morgan loves to write poems and fiction, and she has a newfound obsession with watercolor. She's a junior at UVU, studying English Creative Writing with the dream of becoming a published author.



Melany Wilkins

MELANY WILKINS

Lady Catherine de Bourgh (MWF)

It's a delight to spend time in Jane Austen's world. Melany's past roles include Mrs. Graves (*Enchanted April*); Emma (*Over the River And Through the Woods*); Bobo (*The Audience*); Granny (Evermore Park—*Lore*); Egeus (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*); Meg (*Damn Yankees*); Clairee (*Steel Magnolias*); Miss Hannigan (*Annie*); Betty Meeks (*The Foreigner*); Ruth (*Pirates of Penzance*); Golde and Yente (*Fiddler on the Roof*); Ida and Miss Skillon (*See How They Run*); Mrs. Bedwin/ Mrs. Sowerberry (*Oliver!*); various female roles (*A Christmas Carol*). "This performance is dedicated to my parents and my sisters—another family of all girls!"



Melissa Leilani Larson (Photo by Nick Stone)

Melissa Leilani Larson (she/her) is a mixed race Filipino American writer based in Salt Lake City. Her award-winning work has been seen on five continents. She is the youngest writer ever to be presented with the Smith-Pettit Foundation Award for Outstanding Contribution to Mormon Letters, which she received for her body of work in 2019. She is the only woman to receive more than one Association for Mormon Letters Drama Award and is one of only two playwrights to win four (the other is Tim Slover). She currently serves as AML president. Mel holds a BA in English from BYU and an MFA from the Iowa Playwrights Workshop. She is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild, serving Utah for several years as Ambassador and then as Regional Rep.

While the information above is a starting place, I have had the great pleasure of knowing Melissa for many years and working with her in many capacities: acting in plays she's written, directing and workshopping a world premiere, and even working alongside her at Salt Lake Community College. On the occasion of her debut at Hale Center Theatre Orem, I sat down with her for a short interview about being a Utah playwright, working with director Barta Heiner, what attracts her to Jane Austen, and more.

I wanted to ask a bit about your Utah experience. Having a Utah Valley playwright on the Hale Center Theater Orem stage is unique. You moved

to Utah when you were young, right?

I was born in Hawai'i and lived there until the summer before I turned 13. So junior high, high school and undergrad were in Utah. My parents built a house in Orem, and then several years later one in Provo. I went to Lakeridge Junior High, and then Mountain View High. I lived in Provo when I went to BYU.

I know your BYU degree was in English, instead of theatre. Were you interested in being a playwright when you started?

I pursued English with the intent to write fiction. In undergrad, I saw a flyer for a contest—the Lewis Playwriting Contest for Women. The prize was \$500 and a staged reading. I didn't know what a reading was, but I knew what \$500 was. I went home and I wrote a play. I think it took me two weeks? The play was *Lady in Waiting*, about Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII. I didn't win, and I didn't understand why. I thought my play was great! Fall of my senior year, I signed up for Playwriting 1. I took it from an adjunct instructor, Elizabeth Hansen. She gave me good, if stern, feedback. Somehow in that class I became a playwright. I rewrote that first play—I learned it was not as great as I thought—and I entered that contest again a few years later. This time I won, and that play would become my first produced play.

Who were some of the other professors who influenced you at BYU?

Liz encouraged me to apply for BYU's MA in Theatre History when I graduated with my BA in English. During that time, I kind of had a crash course in becoming a theatre person. Liz supported and mentored me, and we continue to collaborate on projects today; she is a great friend. I learned to stage manage from Loraine Edwards, who is still a dear friend—she just directed this version of *Pride & Prejudice* at Chichester College in the UK this past March. I stage managed a show directed by Barta Heiner, as well as a show she performed in. Even though I never took a class from her, she was incredibly supportive of my development as a playwright. It was also during this time that I first met and learned from Eric Samuelsen, who would also become a great friend and mentor.

Among your plays, you have had two very successful Austen adaptations: *Persuasion* and *Pride & Prejudice*. How did that first project, *Persuasion*, come about?

Barta, actually!

I think it was during the third year of my MFA at Iowa. I had called Barta just to say hi and chat, and she told me I would do a lovely job adapting Austen. She suggested *Persuasion*, which was funny, because I considered it my favorite Austen novel. So that was when the idea started to ruminate. Bryan Moore, a friend from my Iowa program who teaches and directs at Concordia University, Nebraska, reached out to me looking for a large cast show, and he directed the first production of *Persuasion* in Fall 2009 and then Barta directed it at BYU in Spring 2011. BYU had never done an Austen before then, which kind of blew my mind. The show sold out completely.

Barta later directed the premiere of *Pride & Prejudice* at BYU in 2014, and you and Barta are collaborating again here. What is your relationship like when working on these plays? Is there a special magic between you, Barta, and Jane Austen?

I like to think there is a bit of magic there. Barta is herself a wonderful stage actor. To see her perform is a gift. She has an innate sensibility for period pieces—she gets the language, and the rules, and the stakes. Working with Barta has helped me make these adaptations work: they are true to the books but they also exist completely as theatrical worlds. They are for people who read the books, and people who don't.

I know that even outside these adaptations and your professional interest in Austen, you are a devotee. What is it about Jane Austen that appeals to you?

Austen wrote real stories about real women, and at a time when that wasn't happening a lot. When I read her novels, I see and hear real people. She wrote about what she knew, and it's a very specific setting. Yet her novels and characters are very distinct. Her novels are time capsules: they give us a very complete picture of the time and place in which she lived. At the same time her prose, and her humor, are peerless.

In 2018 you won the Smith-Pettit Award for Outstanding Contribution to Mormon Letters for your body of work and have received multiple

awards for specific plays from the Association for Mormon Letters Drama (including one for the debut of *Pride and Prejudice* in 2014). You are currently the President of Association for Mormon Letters. You often directly write about issues of faith in your plays, does it inform your work with Jane Austen as well?

I think Austen epitomizes the idea of writing what you know. I used to fight against that a lot. I didn't want to write Mormon stories because I thought they were too small, that audiences wouldn't care. But as I've matured as a writer—and hopefully as a person—I've come to realize that supposedly "small" stories contain a great deal of humanity. I learned that from Austen, and it is something I look to do with my own work.

Why do you think Austen has such a strong appeal in Utah?

Austen is accessible. She has never gone out of print. You can make the argument that she gave us the formula for girl meets boy—the modern romantic comedy. The characters in Austen's novels live in a society with specific rules and expectations for behavior. Marriage and family are important goals. I think Utah audiences relate to those ideas.

I know your Austen plays enjoy a continued life with *Persuasion*'s most recent production at Utah Valley University just last year, and a production of *Pride & Prejudice* at Texas Shakespeare Festival this coming summer. Any more Austen in your future?

I have a goal to eventually adapt all her novels. I think they each hold distinct and interesting theatrical challenges. I also have an idea for a new play that takes place in an Austen-esque world, but with characters in their 40s. Jane Austen died tragically young, at 41, and I think sometimes about what she might have written had she lived longer. And now that I'm in my 40s, I want to see plays about people like me on stage.

If people want to follow your work and career, where can they find you?

My website is melissaleilani-larson.com, and I try to update it regularly. I'm also on Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/mel_leilani/, and my plays are listed on the New Play Exchange: <https://newplayexchange.org/users/452/melissa-leilani-larson>

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SPRING CLASSES

MINI-MUSICAL WORKSHOP

WHAT: Now's your chance to be in a musical! In this workshop, you will be given a part to learn, songs and dances to perfect, and a chance to be in the spotlight! This class is always a hit, so don't miss out!

WHO: Ages 7 – 12

COST: \$160

INSTRUCTOR: Hailey Bennett Sundwall

WHEN: SESSION I: January 10th – February 3rd; Mondays and Fridays from 4:00pm – 5:30pm (First class is on Tuesday January 10th. We will hold class on MLK day.)

SESSION II: March 6th – March 31st; Mondays and Fridays from 4:00pm – 5:30pm

WHERE: Hale Studios (537 North 1200 West in Orem); Final Performance on the HCTO Main Stage.

BROADWAY DANCE WORKSHOPS

WHAT: Success in musical theater requires studying dance separately from singing and acting. Learn technique, body awareness, and dance styles common to musical theater; focusing on storytelling through dance, sharpening skills to perform confidently in dance calls, and more capably land roles in local, school and professional productions. Meet new friends, expand your comfort zone and hone your abilities.

COST: \$160

INSTRUCTOR: Amelia Rose Moore

WHERE: Barlow Arts Conservatory (564 W 700 S, Pleasant Grove, UT 84062); Final performance at Barlow Arts Conservatory

WORKSHOP 1

WHO: Ages 10 – 13

WHEN: January 4th – March 8th; Wednesdays from 4:00pm-5:00pm

WORKSHOP 2

WHO: Ages 14 – 18

WHEN: March 15th – May 17th; Wednesdays from 4:00pm-5:00pm

THEATRE ARTS HOMESCHOOL *(Spring Semester)*

WHAT: Students will participate in a weekly class where our professionally trained faculty will teach them to increase their skills in improvisation, auditioning, monologues, scene study, and performing in a showcase!

WHO: Ages 10 – 18

COST: \$175/semester

INSTRUCTOR: DeLayne Bluth Dayton

WHERE: Hale Studios (537 North 1200 West Orem); Final Performance (March 3rd) on HCTO Mainstage

WHEN: Jan. 9th – Apr. 24th; Mondays from 12:00pm – 1:30pm (No classes Jan. 16th, Feb. 20th or Apr. 3rd)

COMEDIC ONE-ACT PLAY WORKSHOP

WHAT: Join us in learning the ins and outs of comedic acting through this one-act play! Students will each be given a part to learn and direction on how to implement comedic elements such as character voices, physical comedy and comedic timing!

WHO: Ages 7 – 12

COST: \$160

INSTRUCTOR: Becca Ingram

WHERE: Hale Studios (537 North 1200 West Orem); Final Performance (March 3rd) on HCTO Mainstage

WHEN: February 6th – March 3rd; Mondays and Fridays from 4:00pm – 5:30pm

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ADULT ACTING LABS

WHO: Ages 18+

COST: \$165

INSTRUCTOR: Jon Liddiard

WHERE: Hale Studios (537 North 1200 West Orem)

JANUARY ADULT ACTING LAB (*Script Analysis*)

WHAT: Using modern text, explore how to strengthen performance using script analysis, prepare for cold reads, identify character objectives, beat changes, breath, and thought groups. You'll leave this course more ready for your first day of rehearsal, or your next callback.

WHEN: January 7th – January 28th; Saturdays from 3:30pm – 5:30pm

FEBRUARY ADULT ACTING LAB (*Listening and Acting on Impulse*)

WHAT: Using improvisation techniques and games, develop the ability to actively listen, quiet thoughts of doubt, and turn your focus outward and onto your scene partner. You will leave this course able to quickly make creative decisions, and feel less fear during auditions and performance.

WHEN: February 4th – February 25th; Saturdays from 3:30pm – 5:30pm

MARCH ADULT ACTING LAB (*Creating Character Through Movement*)

WHAT: Utilizing Viewpoints, Laban movement, the Alexander Technique, and Pantomime, we will learn to create character from the outside in. Develop the ability to physically transform into character.

WHEN: March 4th – March 25th; Saturdays from 3:30pm – 5:30pm

APRIL ADULT ACTING LAB (*Story Telling*)

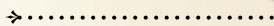
WHAT: Learn to craft a perfect story for sharing at home, during a public speech, a storytelling festival, or around the campfire. Using principles of improv, playwriting, physical theatre, and stand-up comedy, you will work on crafting a personal story that can be told larger than life!

WHEN: April 1st – April 22nd; Saturdays from 3:30pm – 5:30pm

MAY ADULT ACTING LAB (*Comedy and Clowning*)

WHAT: Working with scripts, improv, stand-up comedy, physical theatre, and principles of clowning, we will create both individual and group performance pieces that will inspire laughter in any audience!

WHEN: April 1st – April 22nd; Saturdays from 3:30pm – 5:30pm



YEAR-ROUND CLASSES

PRIVATE LESSONS

WHAT: Includes three 30-minute private voice, acting, or guitar lessons and one master class each month.

WHO: All ages

COST: \$135 – \$165/month

WHEN: Determined by instructor **REGISTRATION:** Year-round; form is available at <https://bit.ly/3rAkjrt>

WHERE: Hale Studios (537 North 1200 West in Orem)

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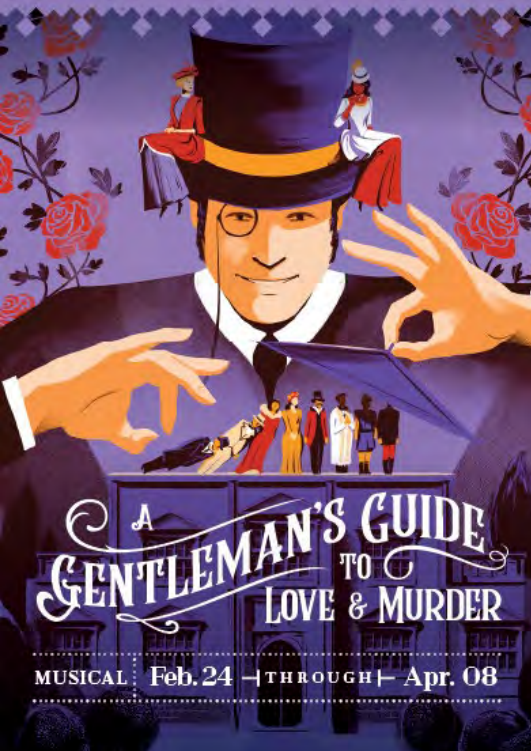
For more information and to register for classes, go to:

<https://tickets.haletheater.org/events>

Sessions limited to 20, masks are recommended. Time, place, safety procedures, and more details available at the link.

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- ◆ No children under the age of 4 or babes-in-arms
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