Pride and Prejudice
(In Under an Hour!)

One-Act Comedy
by Gerald P. Murphy
adapted from the novel by Jane Austen

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DEDICATION

To Nicole

STORY OF THE PLAY

Although Elizabeth Bennet wishes to marry for love, her parents and suitors see the matter entirely in terms of wealth and status. Then there's Mr. Darcy, whom Elizabeth keeps at more than arm's length for his rudeness and arrogance. Will there ever be a match? Will anyone ever show compassion for Mrs. Bennet's poor nerves? Will Elizabeth be forced to remain in the poverty-stricken filth in which she has been brought up? A perfect choice to perform in conjunction with English literature studies, or any time for that matter. Simple staging. All in under an hour!

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Staged reading at the Siskiyou Performing Arts Center,
Yreka, California
March 2013

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(5 m, 8 w)

MARY BENNET: Co-narrator in the story. A self-declared smart Bennet daughter. Teen.

KITTY BENNET: Co-narrator in the story. A quick-witted Bennet daughter. Teen.

MRS. BENNET: Mother to the five Bennet daughters, eager to see them married.

MR. BENNET: Father to the five Bennet daughters.

ELIZABETH BENNET: Daughter who speaks her mind. About 20.

JANE BENNET: Most attractive, but not so smart Bennet daughter. Early 20s.

CHARLOTTE LUCAS: Somewhat jealous family friend, also looking to marry. Early 20s.

LUCAS BOY: Somewhat cheeky family friend. Teen.

MR. DARCY: Wealthy, eligible gentlemen. Mid 20s.

MR. COLLINS: Local clergyman who attempts to woo Elizabeth. Mid 30s.

LYDIA BENNET: Youngest of the Bennet girls, already married. Around 15.

GEORGE WICKHAM: Married to Lydia. Early 20s**.**

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH: Patroness to Mr. Collins. Around 50.

SET

The set can be as simple or as elaborate as you wish. In this version, we used only straight-backed chairs on stage, while the narrators stood behind a lectern. Lighting is not specified, but it could be used to help create divisions among scenes. If costumes are used, they should be appropriate to the Regency style, 1795 to 1825.

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(AT RISE: KITTY and MARY BENNET stand behind a lectern downstage right. MR. BENNET and MRS. BENNET sit in straight-backed chairs downstage center.)

KITTY: Hello, and welcome to our little stage show of "Pride and Prejudice." My name is Catherine Bennet, but everyone calls me Kitty.
MARY: I am Mary Bennet, and I am older and wiser than Kitty.
KITTY: Older, yes, but hardly wiser.
MARY: No, Sister. You are wrong. I am much wiser than you are! Much!
KITTY: Can we get on with the show?
MARY: I just wanted to make that point. I am older than Kitty and smarter. I read books.
KITTY: Constantly.
MARY: You make that sound like a failing.
KITTY: Just because you read constantly doesn't make you a genius! If you are so smart, why do you have such a small part in "Pride and Prejudice"? I think you have even fewer lines than I do!
MARY: Well, we do get to be the narrators here. That's something.
KITTY: They have us narrating because we are unimportant to the plot!
MARY: That might be true of you, but I am important! And the fact that I was chosen to be a narrator just goes to prove it!
KITTY: Let's face it, Mary. Nobody cares about us. I doubt if one reader in a hundred would remember either one of us!
MARY: I am remembered! I'm the one who delivered the theme of the book!
KITTY: What, pray tell, was that?

MARY: Don't you remember when in Chapter 5 I said, "Pride...is a very common failing, I believe...Pride relates more to our opinion of ourselves; vanity, to what we would have others think of us."
KITTY: That sounds just like you! You always sound as if you had just swallowed of book of platitudes!
MR. BENNET: Girls! Girls! Let's get on with the show!
MARY: Yes, Father.
KITTY: We begin with my mother telling my father about the new fellow in town.
MARY: His name is Bingley.
KITTY: He's single.
MARY: And more importantly, he's rich!
MRS. BENNET: I am Mrs. Bennet, mother of five unmarried daughters! That makes me nervous!
MR. BENNET: I am Mr. Bennet, husband of Mrs. Bennet. A fact which often makes me ill! Seriously ill!
MRS. BENNET: Mr. Bennet!
MR. BENNET: Oh, go have one of your fluttering heart attacks, dearie!
MARY: Our hope is that you will leave this show, not only having enjoyed the efforts of our actors and the struggles of the Bennet family, but also inspired to go out and read the novel and discover for yourselves the genius of Jane Austen.
KITTY: Oh, brilliant, Mary! You're such a pederast!
MR. BENNET: I think you mean pedagogue, Kitty!
KITTY: I can't be expected to know everything!
MR. BENNET: That is because you are short on ears and long on mouth, Kitty!
MRS. BENNET: My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?
MR. BENNET: I had not.
MRS. BENNET: But it is, for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.

(Pause as MR. BENNET makes no answer.)

End of Freeview

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