

Jane Austen's
EMMA



Tracy Wells

Adapted from the novel by Jane Austen

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

Copyright © 2016, Tracy Wells

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Emma is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and all of the countries covered by the Universal Copyright Convention and countries with which the United States has bilateral copyright relations including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and all nations of the United Kingdom.

Copying or reproducing all or any part of this book in any manner is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or videotaping without written permission from the publisher.

A royalty is due for every performance of this play whether admission is charged or not. A “performance” is any presentation in which an audience of any size is admitted.

The name of the author must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play. The program must also contain the following notice: “Produced by special arrangement with Big Dog/Norman Maine Publishing LLC, Rapid City, SD.”

All rights including professional, amateur, radio broadcasting, television, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved by Big Dog/Norman Maine Publishing LLC, www.BigDogPlays.com, to whom all inquiries should be addressed.

**BIG DOG PUBLISHING
P.O. Box 1401
RAPID CITY, SD 57709**

Emma

5

*For my parents,
Jim and Liza Young,
who exposed me to arts and literature,
and who made me believe
I could do anything I set my mind to.
I love you.*

Emma

4

Emma

CLASSIC/ROMANTIC COMEDY. Adapted from Jane Austen's novel. In this humorous romantic comedy, the wealthy, mischievous Emma Woodhouse has a penchant for meddling in the love lives of others and delights in playing matchmaker. Even though Emma imagines herself to be quite skilled at matchmaking, it turns out she's horrible at it! When Emma plays matchmaker for a friend, a wildly hilarious tangle of misunderstandings, mix-ups, and mayhem ensues. And in the end, it may be Emma herself staring love in the face without even knowing it!

Performance Time: Approximately 120 minutes.

Emma

5



Portrait of Jane Austen by her sister Casandra Austen, circa 1810. Illustration of Mr. Knightley and Emma Woodhouse from the 1898 edition.

English novelist Jane Austen (1775-1817) never married and lived with her family for most of her life. Austen had six brothers and one sister and was educated primarily at home and by reading books. By the age of 12, Austen was writing poems, stories, and plays to amuse her family. At 20, Austen met Tom Lefroy, who was a nephew of one of her neighbors. The two spent much time together, but the Lefroy family intervened and sent him away, and Jane never saw him again. Austen received her only marriage proposal in 1802 from Harris Bigg-Wither, who was considered quiet and unattractive. At first, Austen agreed to marry him but promptly changed her mind the next morning. Austen's novels are known for their realism, biting social commentary, and comic elements. *Emma* was published in 1815 and was the fourth and last of Austen's novels published during her lifetime. Austen is best known for her romantic novels *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Mansfield Park*, all of which have become literary classics.

Characters

(8 M, 14 F, 3 flexible)

(With doubling: 7 M, 13 F)

EMMA WOODHOUSE: Wealthy, imaginative, high-spirited young lady who lives with her father and is the mistress of Hartfield; imagines herself to be an expert at matchmaking though she has vowed to never marry; female.

HENRY WOODHOUSE: Emma's kind father who is a bit of a hypochondriac and tends to be resistant to change; male.

ISABELLA KNIGHTLEY: Emma's elder sister who lives in London; female.

GEORGE KNIGHTLEY: Wealthy friend and neighbor of the Woodhouse family who keeps Emma on her toes; elder brother of John Knightley who is married to Emma's sister Isabella; male.

JOHN KNIGHTLEY: George Knightley's elder brother, an attorney who is married to Emma's sister Isabella; male.

HARRIET SMITH: Emma's pretty, unsophisticated friend who is the subject of Emma's matchmaking; female.

ROBERT MARTIN: Kind, respectable farmer who falls in love with Harriet and asks her to marry him but she rejects his proposal after Emma meddles; male.

ELIZABETH MARTIN: Robert Martin's sister who wants Robert and Harriet to marry; female.

MRS. MARTIN: Robert Martin's mother; female.

MRS. BATES: A widow and friend of Mr. Woodhouse who suffers from bunions; mother of Hetty Bates; female.

MISS HETTY BATES: Friendly old maid who loves to talk and who frequently annoys others with her endless chatter; female.

JANE FAIRFAX: Hetty Bates's beautiful niece who is an orphan with little fortune; expected to take a position as a governess; Emma is envious of her because of her talent, beauty, and poise; female

MR. WESTON: A good friend and neighbor of the Woodhouses; male.

ANNE TAYLOR WESTON: Married to Mr. Weston; Emma's close friend and former governess; female.

FRANK CHURCHILL: Mr. Weston's son by his first marriage who Emma is smitten with; amiable and well-liked by the entire village of Highbury; male.

PHILIP ELTON: Ambitious, unmarried vicar of Highbury who wants to marry Emma for her dowry; Emma has picked him as the perfect match for Harriet; wears modest clothes suitable for a vicar; male.

Emma

7

AUGUSTA HAWKINS ELTON: Wealthy, pretentious, haughty young woman who lacks manners and loves to boast; marries Philip Elton after Emma rejects his proposal of marriage; female.

MR. COLE: Nouveau riche merchant in Highbury who has become quite wealthy; male.

MRS. COLE: Mr. Cole's wife who yearns to be fully accepted into high society; female.

MRS. GODDARD: Middle-aged woman who is a friend of Mr. Woodhouse and runs a school for girls; female.

MRS. PERRY: Local herbalist who treats Mr. Woodhouse for his various medical afflictions; female.

HANNAH: Maid at Hartfield; wears a black and white servant's uniform; female.

GYPSY 1-3: Gypsy thieves; wear loose, flowing garb in earth tones; flexible.

Options for Doubling

ROBERT/MR. COLE (male)

GYPSY 1/MRS. GODDARD (female)

GYPSY 2/MRS. PERRY (female)

GYPSY 3/MRS. MARTIN (female)

ELIZABETH MARTIN/AUGUSTA (female)

Costumes

Costumes should reflect the style of the early 1800s. The Woodhouses, Westons, Coles, Knightleys, Frank Churchill, and Augusta should be dressed in clothes befitting the wealthy. All characters should be dressed more modestly.

Setting

Early 1800s, outskirts of London. Hartfield estate, home of the Woodhouses.

Sets

Garden outside of Hartfield. There is a backdrop of a countryside. Additional trees and potted flowers or plants may be used to indicate the outdoors. For the wedding scenes, there are 2-4 benches on each side of an arch CS. The arch is decorated with flowers. For the garden party scenes, tables and chairs are present.

Walking path. A countryside backdrop with miscellaneous plants or trees.

Drawing room at Hartfield. All furniture and décor suggest wealth. A fireplace and mantle is CS and is flanked by two large windows through which the backdrop can be seen. A sofa is on one side with two wing chairs on the other. A small writing desk is present. A Christmas tree, presents, decorations are needed for Act I, scene 4. Decorations for a ball are needed for Act II, scene 2.

Emma

?

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Garden outside of Hartfield.

Scene 2: Walking path through Highbury.

Scene 3: Drawing room of Hartfield.

Scene 4: Drawing room of Hartfield.

Scene 5: Walking path through Highbury.

Scene 6: Drawing room of Hartfield.

Scene 7: Drawing room of Hartfield.

Intermission

ACT II

Scene 1: Garden outside of Hartfield.

Scene 2: Drawing room of Hartfield.

Scene 3: Walking path through Highbury.

Scene 4: Garden outside of Hartfield.

Scene 5: Drawing room of Hartfield.

Scene 6: Walking path through Highbury.

Scene 7: Garden outside of Hartfield.

Emma

10

Props

| | |
|---|---|
| Bouquet of blue flowers | Large cart |
| Bible | Wrapped box |
| Bracelet or ring, for Anne | Card for gift |
| Wedding dress and headpiece, for Anne | Small piano or keyboard (for small piano forte) |
| Penny | Flowers for table |
| Coin | Tea tray with tea and sandwiches |
| Tray with food and beverages | Decorations for ball |
| Doctor's bag with bottles | Piles of sticks |
| 3 Letters | Small box |
| Hat and coat, for Robert | Bandage |
| Canvas, easel, paintbrushes, and paint | Small pencil |
| Single flower | Coins |
| Book | Purse, for Emma |
| Quill pen | Scissors |
| Envelope | Tray of food |
| Tray with a bottle of champagne and glasses | 2 Teacups |
| Framed portrait of Harriet | Wedding gown, for Emma |
| Christmas presents | Bridal bouquet of blue flowers, for Emma |
| Baby doll wrapped in a blanket | Handkerchief |
| Basket | |
| Silver serving tray | |

Sound Effect

Music for ball scene

Emma

11

*“With insufferable vanity
had she believed herself
in the secret
of everybody’s feelings—”*

—From Emma

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: The garden outside of Hartfield. There is a backdrop depicting a lush countryside. The scene is set for a wedding. CS is an arch draped with flowers with benches on each side. Additional flowers and potted plants indicate the outdoors. Elton is standing in the center of the archway holding a bible. Miss Anne Taylor, holding flowers, and Mr. Weston are standing on either side of Elton and are in the process of reciting their vows. Seated on one side on the benches are Mr. Woodhouse, Mrs. Perry, Mrs. Bates, and Miss Hetty Bates. Seated on the other side is Harriet, Mrs. Goddard, and George Knightley.)

ELTON: Do you, Mr. Weston, take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?

WESTON: I do.

ELTON: And do you, Miss Taylor, take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?

ANNE: I—

(Suddenly, Emma rushes onstage and stands between the benches.)

EMMA: Wait!

ANNE: Emma, what is it?

ELTON: Miss Woodhouse, am I to believe that you are objecting to the marriage between Mr. Weston and Miss Taylor? Because if you are, that moment has already passed.

WOODHOUSE: *(To Mrs. Perry.)* Has it? Then I missed my chance.

MRS. PERRY: You don't want Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston to be married? I thought Mr. Weston was your dear friend and neighbor. And wasn't Miss Taylor your governess?

WOODHOUSE: That's just it! If Miss Taylor marries Mr. Weston, then who will look after Emma and I?

EMMA: I'll look after you, Papa.

WOODHOUSE: Yes, of course, my dear, but who will look after you?

KNIGHTLEY: As a great friend of the family, it would be my honor to look after Emma for you, Mr. Woodhouse.

(Knightley crosses to Emma and puts a hand on her arm. Emma shakes off his hand.)

EMMA: I realize you've known me since the days when Miss Taylor was only just teaching me my alphabet, but I assure you, I am no longer a child and can care for myself, thank you very much.

KNIGHTLEY: (*Chuckles.*) You know, Emma, I do believe you can.

WOODHOUSE: Emma, dear, get on with your objection so that we can put this whole wedding nonsense behind us and Miss Taylor can resume her rightful place in our household.

EMMA: I'm not objecting to the wedding, Papa.

WOODHOUSE: You're not? Well someone has to! (*Stands.*) I object!

ELTON: You're too late, Mr. Woodhouse. The time for objections has come and gone.

WOODHOUSE: A lot of things have come and gone, Mr. Elton—my hair, my health, my memory—and I object to them all, including this marriage!

ELTON: (*Chuckles.*) Very well, Mr. Woodhouse. I'll make a note of it.

MR. WESTON: So if you are not objecting to the marriage, Emma, then what is the matter?

(*Emma crosses to Anne and takes her hand.*)

EMMA: I couldn't let my closest friend get married without everything that she needs. (*Touches Anne's bracelet or ring.*) You have your something old. (*Touches sleeve of Anne's dress.*) And this beautiful gown is most definitely something new.

ANNE: It is lovely, isn't it?

WESTON: (*Smiling.*) It certainly is.

EMMA: (*Touching Anne's headpiece.*) And you have your something borrowed.

ANNE: Thanks to you, Emma! It was so kind of you to lend me your mother's wedding headpiece.

EMMA: (*Smiles.*) And you know, I'm going to need that back.

ANNE: I know! For the day when you find your one true love and are standing right here getting married.

EMMA: Me? Get married? (*Scoffs.*) I don't think so! Emma Woodhouse will never get married! Mark my words!

WOODHOUSE: Here, here!

EMMA: I was just going to say that the jewels in that headpiece will look simply stunning with the new gown I bought for the next ball I attend.

ANNE: You say that now, but your heart may change one day.

EMMA: My heart may change, but my head never will, Miss Taylor...of that I can be sure.

KNIGHTLEY: (*Chuckles.*) Is that so?

Emma

14

EMMA: It is indeed, Mr. Knightley. Now where was I? (*Counting each on her fingers.*) You have something old, something new, something borrowed— (*Touches blue flowers in bouquet.*) And right here is your something blue.

HETTY: It sounds like everything is as it should be.

EMMA: But Miss Taylor forgot one important thing.

ANNE: What's that?

(Emma pulls out a penny.)

EMMA: A sixpence for your shoe.

ANNE: Why, that's right! Thank you, Emma.

EMMA: Now give me your foot, and I will rectify this problem. Then you may return to the business of getting married.

(Emma kneels down. Anne places her foot on Emma's knee. Emma places the penny in Anne's shoe and stands.)

KNIGHTLEY: Was the placement of a sixpence in Miss Taylor's shoe really so important that the entire wedding had to be halted?

(Hetty stands.)

HETTY: Of course, it was! The tradition of a bride gathering these five objects to hold with her on her wedding day dates back centuries and has been honored by brides for many generations. The part of the tradition "something old" signifies a link to the bride's past that she brings with her into the marriage. The part that states "something new" represents the hope that the bride and groom have in entering their new life together. The part that states "something borrowed" signifies a sign of respect a bride has to other married women in her life. The "something blue" part symbolizes loyalty, fidelity, and purity. And "a sixpence for your shoe" symbolizes—

EMMA: (*Annoyed.*) We know, Miss Bates. The sixpence symbolizes wealth and prosperity for the couple.

(Hetty sits.)

HETTY: (*Embarrassed.*) Why, yes, Emma. That's exactly right. How clever of you.

MRS. BATES: Why must you always go on and on like that, Hetty? You embarrass yourself and me when you do that.

HETTY: Sorry, Mother.

(Knightley takes Emma's arm and positions her to stand next to him.)

KNIGHTLEY: Well, tradition or not, you have successfully managed to take all of the attention off of your friend on the most important day of her life and put it squarely upon you, Emma.

EMMA: *(Distressed.)* Oh, no! Have I? That wasn't my intention at all!

KNIGHTLEY: Well, intention or not, that's what you have done. Now why don't you hold your tongue for once and let everyone put their attention where it rightly belongs.

EMMA: Yes, of course. Mr. Elton, I am so sorry for the interruption. Please proceed.

ELTON: Certainly. Now where was I? *(Looks at bible.)*

HETTY: You were asking Miss Taylor if she is to take Mr. Weston as her lawfully wedded husband.

ELTON: That's right. *(Continues.)* Do you, Miss Taylor, take Mr. Weston to be your lawfully wedded husband?

ANNE: I do.

ELTON: Then by the power vested in me, I pronounce you husband and wife.

(All cheer as Anne and Weston embrace. All stand as Anne and Weston cross to the others to receive congratulations. Hannah enters carrying a tray and serves food and beverages. Woodhouse crosses to Emma and Knightley.)

WOODHOUSE: *(To Emma and Knightley.)* Well, I suppose there is nothing that can be done now. My dear daughter, I fear you have failed in your attempt to stop this most disastrous marriage of our dear Miss Taylor to Mr. Weston.

EMMA: I was not trying to stop the marriage, Papa. Why would I do such a thing? After all, it was I who orchestrated the match in the first place!

WOODHOUSE: Why would you go and do a thing like that?

EMMA: Mr. Weston is such a pleasant, good-humored man with a wonderful home so close to ours. Would you really expect Miss Taylor—

KNIGHTLEY: You mean, Mrs. Weston.

EMMA: Of course. Would you expect Mrs. Weston to live with us forever and put up with my odd behaviors when she might have a house of her own?

Emma

16

WOODHOUSE: (*Aghast.*) A house of her own? Why would she ever need that? And what odd behaviors could you possibly be referring to? You are perfect, through and through, my dear.

KNIGHTLEY: (*Chuckles.*) Hardly! Emma is a lot of things, but perfect is not one of them!

EMMA: (*Swatting Knightley's arm playfully, chuckling.*) Is that so? And I suppose you have no faults of your own?

KNIGHTLEY: Oh, I have plenty of faults, which you point out to me whenever you have the chance.

EMMA: (*Smiling.*) Well, someone has to.

[END OF FREEVIEW]