

## Q&A: PLAYWRIGHT MARGOT MELCON



Playwright Margot Melcon recently revealed that *Christmas at Pemberley* will be a trilogy! She and Lauren Gunderson are currently working on the final installment, which will feature the heretofore unseen sister Kitty (Catherine Bennet) and Darcy's younger sister, Georgiana.

**How did you and Lauren decide on the new story? How did writing this one compare to writing the first?**

We had such fun writing *Miss Bennet*, and audiences seemed to respond to continuing the story of these beloved *Pride and Prejudice* characters as much as we did. *Miss Bennet* gives a little bit of insight into what has become of Lydia two years into her marriage to George Wickham, but Lauren and I both thought there was more story there. Lydia is such a sparkly and charming character, and she ended the novel sort of stuck in this terrible situation. We wanted to see if we could do better for her.

Since *The Wickhams* is set over the same few days at Christmas as *Miss Bennet*, writing this one was a little tricky in that we had to layer the action of what was happening upstairs in the world of *Miss Bennet* with what was happening downstairs in the servants' hall in the world of *The Wickhams*. We wanted to make sure that when Lydia or Lizzy or Darcy came downstairs, how they were feeling and what they were talking about was informed by what was happening upstairs.

**How is *The Wickhams* experience different from *Miss Bennet*?**

With *Miss Bennet*, we had a little more freedom to realize Mary's fate; Jane Austen didn't give us much about Mary, but we get quite a bit about Lydia's marriage and the backstory of George Wickham and his life growing up at Pemberley. Jane Austen didn't spend a lot of time on the lives of the servants of these grand houses, but they are as much a family as those upstairs. Diving into that family, and what it would feel like for George Wickham to return to the house where he was raised, was a lot of fun, as was exploring that tension between the privilege of upstairs and the hard work of downstairs.

**Is there anything you think audiences might not realize about Mrs. Wickham?**

That marriage isn't necessarily the only option for a happy ending. *Miss Bennet* is a love story, for sure, but it's also about being yourself, and being accepted exactly for who you are by the people who love you. I think *The Wickhams* is also about self-discovery and acceptance, and about being able to lean on those around you who truly love you to become exactly who you're meant to be.



(l-r) Victoria Grace, Katie Grindeland, Amanda Collins, Alexis Bronkovic in *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*. Photo by Meghan Moore.