



News Release
Virginia Repertory Theatre

Contact: Liz Nance
Director of Communications
Virginia Repertory Theatre
lnance@virginiarep.org
804-389-3390

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Virginia Repertory Theatre Presents
***Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* by**
Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon

Richmond, VA – Virginia Repertory Theatre presents the charming romantic play, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* at the November Theatre from Nov 25, 2022 – Jan 1, 2023. Two years after the end of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the Bennet sisters and their spouses are celebrating the holidays with family at the Darcy estate. Mary Bennet, the bookish middle sister, isn't in a festive mood. She is tired of missing out on romantic escapades. The play raises the question of whether an unexpected guest will give Mary the ultimate gift of love.

The play was written by **Lauren Gunderson** and **Margot Melcon**. Gunderson has been one of the most produced playwrights in America since 2015, topping the list twice including 2019/20. 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 and 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.

She studied Southern Literature and Drama at Emory University, and Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School where she was a Reynolds Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship. Her newest play *The Catastrophist*, about her husband, virologist Nathan Wolfe, premiered digitally in January 2021. She co-authored the Miss Bennet plays with Margot Melcon, and her audioplay *The Half-*

Life of Marie Curie is available on Audible.com. Her work is published at Playscripts (*I and You*, *Exit Pursued by a Bear*, *The Taming*, and *Toil and Trouble*), Dramatists Play Service (*The Revolutionists*, *The Book of Will*, *Silent Sky*, *Bauer*, *Natural Shocks*, *The Wickhams*, and *Miss Bennet*) and Samuel French (*Emilie*). Her picture book *Dr. Wonderful: Blast Off to the Moon* is available from Two Lions/Amazon. She is currently developing musicals with Ari Afsar, Dave Stewart and Joss Stone, and Kait Kerrigan and Bree Lowdermilk.

Margot Melcon is a theater artist, administrator, and writer. 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, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Crowded Fire Theater, Shotgun Players, Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor, the Kennedy Center, the New Harmony Project, and the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. She is currently the Program Executive for Promoting Culture at the Zellerbach Family Foundation. Margot is a graduate of California State University, Chico

Sharon Ott, (Director) is thrilled to return to Virginia Rep after directing *A Doll's House, Part 2* last year. She has directed 11 plays by Shakespeare at theaters across the country (including American Shakespeare Center, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and Idaho Shakespeare Festival), four plays by George Bernard Shaw, as well as plays by Chekhov, Ibsen, Lope de Vega, and Bertolt Brecht. Her work with 20th and 21st century authors as a director or producer includes world premieres by such noted authors as Nilo Cruz, August Wilson, Phillip Kan Gotanda, Jose Rivera, Jessica Dickey, Amy Freed, Beth Henley, and Eve Ensler.

She was the Artistic Director of the Berkeley Repertory Theater (for 13 years), and the Seattle Repertory Theater (for 8 years) and has won many awards for her directing and producing, including 3 Bay Area Theater Critics' Awards, several Hollywood Dramalogue awards, and an Obie Award (with Theatre X, Milwaukee). During her final season as Artistic Director at Berkeley Rep, the company received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater. Other directing work includes productions at Playwrights Horizons, the Public Theater, Manhattan Theater Club (all in NYC), Arena Stage, Milwaukee Repertory, Missouri Repertory, the Huntington Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, South Coast Repertory, Ford's Theatre, and many others. She has also directed operas for San Diego Opera, Seattle Opera, and Opera Colorado.

She is an Associate Professor and served as the Chair of the Dept. of Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University from 2017-2021. She currently serves as the Artistic Director of the department. Prior to VCU, she was a Professor at the Savannah College of Art and Design, and

served as the Artistic Director for the Performing Arts Dept. She is a proud member of SDC (Stage Directors and Choreographers Union), served on the SDC Executive Board for 13 years. and is currently the Treasurer of the SDCF Foundation.

The creative team and cast list is below.

Direction & Design

Direction	Sharon Ott^
Assistant Director/Dramaturg	Mia Richards
Scenic Design	Mercedes Schaum
Costume Design	Carolan Corcoran
Lighting Design	Lynne M. Hartman+
Sound Design	Jacob Mishler
Stage Management	Justin Janke*
Assistant Stage Manager	Courtney Holmes
Dialect Direction	Karen Kopryanski

Cast

Jane Bingley	Patricia Austin*
Lydia Wickham	Naomi Bertha
Arthur de Bourgh	Lukas D'Errico
Elizabeth Darcy	Ally Farzetta*
Mary Bennet	Emily Franch*
Fitzwilliam Darcy	Britt Michael Gordon*
Charles Bingley	Cameron Nickel
Anne de Bourgh	Tatjana Shields
Maid	Nicole Boisseau, Emma Tolley (alternating)
Jane Bingley u/s, Lydia Wickham u/s	Reese Bucher
Charles Bingley u/s	Robert McNickle

*Member of Actors' Equity Association

+Member of USA, United Scenic Artists

^Member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society

Ticket Information

Box Office: 804-282-2620

www.virginiarep.org

Tickets range from \$39 and go up to \$62 (Discounted Group Rates and Rush tickets available.)

Press

The play runs 2 hours including the 15-minute intermission

Press Kits will be available at <http://va-rep.org/press.html>

Pass code accessible Hi Res photos available to the media.

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About Virginia Repertory Theatre

Virginia Repertory Theatre is a regional professional theater headquartered in downtown Richmond, and is one of the largest performing arts organizations in Central Virginia. Virginia Rep will stage three primary seasons in 2022-2023: the Signature Season at the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre, the Barksdale Season at the Hanover Tavern. Virginia, and the Children's Season at Virginia Rep Center for Arts and Education, 4204 Hermitage Road in Richmond's Northside. Virginia Rep also tours children's shows, both virtual and live, and provides educational programming to schools throughout Virginia and to major performing arts centers throughout 32 states.

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