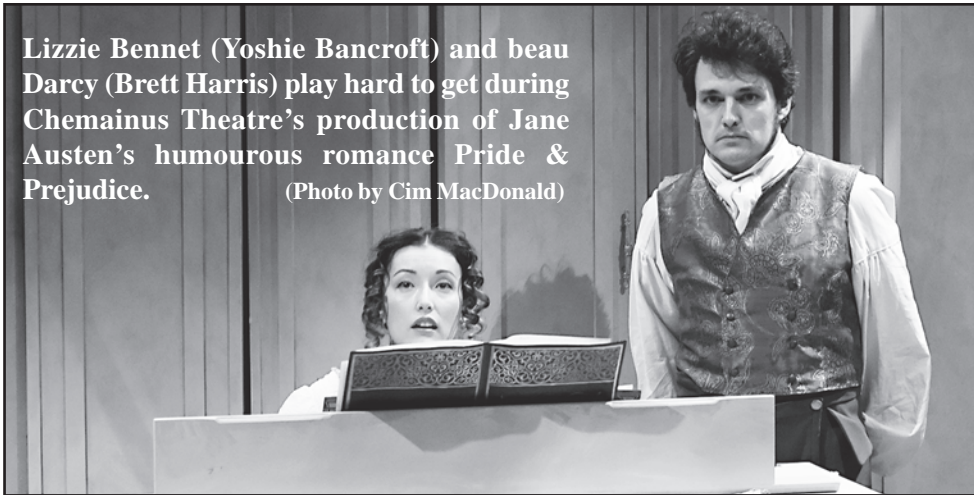


Lizzie Bennet (Yoshie Bancroft) and beau Darcy (Brett Harris) play hard to get during Chemainus Theatre's production of Jane Austen's humorous romance *Pride & Prejudice*. (Photo by Cim MacDonald)



Pride and Prejudice an enduring story of love

**Theatre Review
By Tom Masters
For The Courier**

CHEMAINUS – The novels of Jane Austen (1775-1817), like all great works of art, engender strong opinions, both pro and con.

Some dismiss them as trivial and unimportant, others compare them to the plays of William Shakespeare.

What is not in question is that they are among the best loved stories in the English language, told and retold on stage, in film and television series. Her books have been in print for 200 years.

Chemainus Theatre Festival's 25th anniversary season opener is "Pride & Prejudice", adapted for the stage by Janet Munsil and directed by Julie McIsaac.

The adaptation is finely rendered in touching on all the principal events of the novel while telescoping them in stage time, allowing the audience time to savour the ever evolving relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy.

Sound and lighting are up to Chemainus Theatre's usual high standard. The set is a multipurpose one that must accommodate both the Bennet's comfortable country house and Mr. Darcy's palatial mansion.

Three staircases are cleverly integrated into the story; but the apparently purposeless step separating the centre of the stage from its outer regions seemed a potential hazard and an impediment to scenes of graceful dancing, as well as those filled with numerous family and friends.

The play is a period piece and the simple set is embellished with symbolically elegant Regency furniture, sensible benches and tables where needed, and a surprising collection of family portraits.

Fine costume design is essential to a story set in the early years of the nineteenth century. Here CTF regular Crystal Hanson excels.

Men are elegantly attired in the style of the day. Slaves to fashion, every woman

in the play wears the high-waisted, graceful 'Empire' style dresses, copied from post-revolutionary France, the same people who gave us the guillotine and the metric system.

Casting and direction are excellent and sure-footed. By play's end every one of the 12 performers, several of whom handle more than one role, have established themselves as clearly identifiable personalities. A multi-talented lot, it is the players themselves who provide all the incidental music.

In the story, the heavy lifting is shared by Elizabeth and her mother, Mrs. Bennet, ably assisted by the dreadful Mr. Collins. Mr. Darcy emerges, little by little, into our consciousness as a complex and admirable character.

And when, in the crisis, Elizabeth remarks that, as Mr. Darcy is a gentleman and she is the daughter of a gentleman, therefore they are equals, we understand precisely what that means.

It seems unfair to highlight only a few in such a fine ensemble, but the work of Yoshie Bancroft as the sensible and much put-upon Elizabeth Bennet; Amy Lee Newman as the flighty and emotional Mrs. Bennet; Matthew Hendrickson as fawning and insensitive Mr. Collins; and Brett Harris as the proud and initially unbending Mr. Darcy, must be celebrated.

This is a story about how overweening pride and hasty assumptions of prejudice come near to wrecking a relationship which, in the end, turns out to be one of the most enduring love stories in all of English literature.

No civilized human being could fail to be moved by the final scene between the two principal players. Was ever love so honestly expressed?

Be sure to be seated well before the play begins. You don't want to miss the surprise.

"Pride & Prejudice" runs until Saturday, March 25.

Whiteley and Braithwaite multiple award winners over their brilliant careers

• Continued from Page 35

"It's a rare and good thing when two talented performers join forces," Downbeat Magazine said of the tirelessly touring pair.

Braithwaite descended from Wellington County pioneers. With roots in Florida, her ancestors escaped slavery through the Underground Railroad and lived for four generations in Wellington County, Ontario's first African-Canadian pioneer settlement.

Her bio says Braithwaite combines elements of Nina Simone, Esther Phillips, Lil Green and others "to create her own unique, authentic blues style."

Braithwaite was dubbed a national treasure by Bluz FM radio host Danny Marks and she was chosen by Sarah McLachlan to open Lilith Fair at the Molson Amphitheatre.

Braithwaite's world-level reputation has seen her share stages with Albert Collins, and John Lee Hooker to Jeff Healey.

Multi-instrumentalist Chris Whiteley was born in Kansas. A member of the musical Whiteley clan, he has performed on more than 200 recordings with icons including Leon Redbone and Blind John Davis.

In Canada, Whiteley received Canada's Blues with a Feeling Award, for lifetime achievement in the genre. In January he won the Maple Blues Award as Canada's top blues horn player for the seventh time.

Showtime is 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15, available in advance at Chemainus' Rainforest Arts, 9781 Willow St. Unsold tickets will be available at the door.

We are the pub down by the water!

CROFTON HOTEL Est. 1902

1534 Joan Ave
Crofton, BC

at Osborne Bay

CROFTON HOTEL PUB

LATIN FIESTA NIGHT

LIVE MUSIC WITH

La Familia

LATIN DANCE EXPERIENCE FOR SOUL & BODY

SALSA, CUMBIA, MERENGUE

Gypsy Kings, Santana, Buenavista Social Club & more

SATURDAY MARCH 4th

Show: 8:30 - 11:30 PM

Tickets: \$13 or for \$25 Couples

Advance Tickets available at Crofton Pub

SUNDAY PAT'S HOUSE of JAZZ

Door charges \$15 at the door unless otherwise stated.

Downbeat 2 pm

MAR 5 Jay Jennings presents "Swingsation"

MAR 12 the Craig Henderson Trio - Bill Kent (bass) Gordon Henderson (guitar) Craig Henderson (vocals/piano)

MAR 19 Celebrate Billie Holiday's music in blues and jazz - Vocalists Hannah Brown and Judy Sims with the Sweetwater Band.

MAR 26 Derrick Milton's Swing Shift big band

MARCH 25 Saturday Nite

★ CONNOR STEWART ★

live from New Orleans

CAFÉ: 11am - 7 pm 7 days a week

PUB at 11am

LIQUOR STORE at 9am

A REAL WEST COAST EXPERIENCE!

PUB 250.324.2245 LIQUOR STORE 250.324.2246 CAFÉ: 250.324.2000

Check out www.croftonhotel.ca for upcoming shows