

*Acting Edition*

# **JANE AUSTEN'S EMMA**

Adapted by Andrew Davies  
from his original screenplay

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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*JANE AUSTEN'S EMMA* was first performed at Talisman Theatre & Arts Centre, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, England, on Saturday 27 September 2025. The production was directed by Corrina Jacob, with set design by Steve Sanday, lighting by Nigel Elliott, and sound by Colin Thomas. The production coordinator was Stephen Duckham, the props lead was Jane Yates and the wardrobe lead was Rosie Gowers. The production manager was Wendy Elliott. The cast was as follows:

**EMMA WOODHOUSE** ..... Rose Kenny  
**MR WOODHOUSE** ..... Graham Buckingham-Underhill  
**MR KNIGHTLEY** ..... Chris Bird  
**MR JOHN KNIGHTLEY** ..... Richard Morelli  
**ISABELLA KNIGHTLEY** ..... Alice Edwards  
**MR WESTON** ..... Simon Truscott  
**MRS WESTON** ..... Faye Owen  
**FRANK CHURCHILL** ..... Adam Turner  
**HARRIET SMITH** ..... Ellie Chapman  
**MR ELTON** ..... Siôn Grace  
**MRS ELTON/MRS MARTIN** ..... Aoife O’Gorman  
**JANE FAIRFAX/MISS MARTIN** ..... Phoebe Dann  
**MISS BATES** ..... Kathy Buckingham-Underhill  
**MRS BATES** ..... Jill Laurie  
**ROBERT MARTIN** ..... Thomas Holden  
**SERVANT/MAID** ..... Lauren McCann  
**SERVANT/FOOTMAN** ..... Steve Sanday  
**SERVANT/MAID** ..... Jane Yates

## CHARACTERS

- EMMA WOODHOUSE** – Twenties. Handsome, clever and rich. Marries Mr Knightley in the end. Singer preferred but not essential.
- MR WOODHOUSE** – Sixties. Emma's father. Gentle, timid and cautious.
- MR KNIGHTLEY** – Late thirties. The epitome of the English country gentleman. Marries Emma.
- MR JOHN KNIGHTLEY** – Mid-thirties. His brother, a lawyer. Brusque, intelligent, good-hearted.
- ISABELLA KNIGHTLEY** – Late twenties. John's wife and Emma's sister.
- MRS WESTON** – Thirties. Formerly Emma's governess and companion Miss Taylor.
- MR WESTON** – Forties. Very lively and cheerful. Marries Miss Taylor at the beginning.
- FRANK CHURCHILL** – Twenties. Mr Weston's son, who has been adopted by the Churchills. Very charming. Is engaged to Jane Fairfax and is the biggest secret until near the end. (Singer preferred but not essential).
- HARRIET SMITH** – Seventeen. Pretty and naive. Marries Robert Martin.
- MR ELTON** – Late twenties. Local vicar, very good looking.
- MRS ELTON** – Late twenties. An awful snob from Bristol. Appears in Act Two only. Can double as Mrs Martin in Act One.
- JANE FAIRFAX** – Early twenties. A penniless beauty. Niece of Miss Bates. (Singer preferred but not essential). Can double as Miss Martin at beginning of Act One.
- MISS BATES** – Fifties. Jane's aunt. Talks for England.
- MRS BATES** – Eighties or even nineties. **MISS BATES's** mother, slightly deaf.
- ROBERT MARTIN** – Mid-twenties. Farmer and tenant of Mr Knightley. Marries Harriet
- MISS MARTIN** – **ROBERT's** sister – twenties.
- MRS MARTIN** – **ROBERT's** mother.
- FOOTMAN/MAIDS** – As desired.
- DANCERS** – As desired.

## **SETTING**

We visit Hartfield, the grand residence of Emma and her father Mr Woodhouse, close to the village of Highbury. Donwell Abbey is Mr Knightley's mansion which is very near to Hartfield. The local parish church is on his estate with Mr Elton as Vicar. Randalls is the neighbouring estate and Mr and Mrs Weston are resident; Emma exclaims that it's "barely half a mile away". We visit Miss Bates and Mrs Bates's little flat and the celebratory ball, held in The Crown Inn, both are in the village. There is also the eventful picnic at the famous Box Hill and also various countryside locations.

Due to the short scenes, the set can be as minimal as you wish. It has to be inside several grand houses, in addition to countryside and village scenes.

In the Talisman Theatre & Arts Centre production, we had a set area stage right for Hartfield with a large chair for Mr Woodhouse, window with window seat and a fireplace throughout the production. We then used the rest of the stage for all other locations. Benches were used for the carriage. Scene changes were choreographed and executed by servants and maids. Several scenes used different chairs but not everyone in the scene had to sit. The background sounds and lighting can add to the various locations. Be creative.

## **TIME**

Early 19th-century England, during the Regency era.

# ACT ONE

## Prologue

**(MR WESTON and MRS WESTON [MISS TAYLOR], EMMA, MR WOODHOUSE, MR ELTON, MISS BATES, MRS BATES, plus other churchgoers/people as desired.)**

*(We hear the fanfare from the opening of Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' and church bells, which continues as the lights go up to reveal MR ELTON.)*

**MR ELTON.** *(Announcing.)* I now pronounce you husband and wife, Mr and Mrs Weston.

*(MR and MRS WESTON kiss and walk down an 'aisle' as if in a church. The crowd of happy people congratulate and throw confetti over the happy couple. Ending as MR and MRS WESTON and the crowd drift off and the music/church bells fade. MR WOODHOUSE and EMMA cross the stage and sit in Hartfield while other church goers exit in different directions.)*

*(As the music fades, crossfade lights as the scene changes to:)*

## Scene One

### The Drawing Room at Hartfield Evening

(MR WOODHOUSE, EMMA and MR KNIGHTLEY.)

*(We find MR WOODHOUSE and EMMA sitting in silence in the drawing room at Hartfield. MR WOODHOUSE in a large chair and EMMA in the window seat, reading. The fire is lit in the fireplace and it's a cosy evening. After some moments of reflection, MR WOODHOUSE sighs.)*

**MR WOODHOUSE.** Poor Miss Taylor!

**EMMA.** Oh, Father. She is Mrs Weston now – and a very happy Mrs Weston!

**MR WOODHOUSE.** What a pity it is that Mr Weston ever thought of her!

**EMMA.** But Father, you wouldn't have Miss Taylor live with us forever, when she could be mistress of her own house? And it's been a long time since I needed a governess.

**MR WOODHOUSE.** But, Emma, she will never see us now. Randalls is such a distance.

**EMMA.** Randalls is barely half a mile away from here at Hartfield.

**MR WOODHOUSE.** I could not walk half as far, I'm sure.

*(MR WOODHOUSE is only about sixty but carries on as if he's about ninety. EMMA indulges him and is very patient with him,*

*one of her good points. EMMA goes to MR WOODHOUSE.)*

**EMMA.** No, Papa, nobody thought of you walking – we will go in the carriage!

**MR WOODHOUSE.** But James will not like to put the horses to for such a little way – and where will the poor horses be while we are paying our visit?

*(She couches down next to MR WOODHOUSE.)*

**EMMA.** Safe in Mr Weston's stable, Papa. Don't you remember, we talked it all over, weeks ago. And James will always be happy to go to Randalls, because of his daughter being housemaid there. That was your doing, Papa. You got Hannah that good place, and James is so obliged to you!

**MR WOODHOUSE.** Well I hope she will be a comfort to poor Miss Taylor. But really, I do take it very ill when people get married and go away. I think they should not do it.

**EMMA.** *(Sighing.)* Shall we play backgammon?

*(The doorbell rings. MR WOODHOUSE jumps.)*

**MR WOODHOUSE.** Oh! Why will people call at such a late hour?

*(EMMA gets up, eagerly – she knows who is coming. MR KNIGHTLEY comes in. He is brisk and energetic, in his late thirties.)*

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Mr Woodhouse, Emma – how are you? I am just returned from London – everyone sends their love!

**MR WOODHOUSE.** How is my poor dear Isabella?

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Not poor at all, but very well, and so are the children. How did the wedding go? I am sorry to have missed it. How did you all behave? Who cried most?

**MR WOODHOUSE.** Poor Miss Taylor!

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Poor Miss Taylor? Certainly not!

*(MR KNIGHTLEY crosses to stand in front of the fire.)*

**EMMA.** Exactly what I say!

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Consider, sir, she has only one to please now, not two!

**EMMA.** Especially when one of the two is such a fanciful, troublesome creature! Is that what you were thinking?

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Perhaps.

**MR WOODHOUSE.** I'm afraid that's true – I believe I am sometimes very fanciful and troublesome.

**EMMA.** Dearest Papa! I didn't mean you! Mr Knightley didn't mean you! I meant only myself! Mr Knightley loves to find fault with me you know!

**MR WOODHOUSE.** Oh, dear!

**EMMA.** In a joke! It is all a joke!

**MR WOODHOUSE.** Ah. Ah, yes. Of course.

**EMMA.** *(Moving to MR KNIGHTLEY and taking his arm downstage.)* We always say what we like to one another.

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** We do.

*(A look between them carries a lot of affection and trust.)*

**EMMA.** Well, you want to hear about the wedding: we all behaved very well. Everybody punctual, everybody in

their best looks, not a tear and not a long face to be seen.

**MR WOODHOUSE.** Dear Emma bears everything so well.

*(He stands to join EMMA and MR KNIGHTLEY.)*

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** But every friend of Miss Taylor must be glad to see her married.

**EMMA.** And you've forgotten one matter of joy to me – that I made the match myself!

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** No, Emma – you made a lucky guess, and that's all that can be said for you.

**MR WOODHOUSE.** I wish you would not make matches, my dear, for whatever you say always comes to pass. Pray do not make any more of them, Emma.

**EMMA.** I promise to make none for myself, Papa, but I must, indeed, for other people. Mr Elton, now – I must find a wife for him.

**MR WOODHOUSE.** You'd do better to let the poor man alone, Emma.

**EMMA.** But he's been here a full year, and he's fitted out the vicarage so handsomely, it would be a shame to have him single any longer!

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Emma. Let the poor fellow choose for himself, if he wants a wife.

**EMMA.** Of course he can choose for himself. But he may need a little nudge in the right direction, that is all.

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Emma, I despair of you.

*(Music and lights crossfade as the scene changes to:\*)*

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## Scene Two

### Outside of the Church Sunday Morning

(**MR KNIGHTLEY**, **MR ELTON**, **EMMA**, **ROBERT MARTIN**, **MISS MARTIN**, **MRS MARTIN**, **MR WESTON** and **MRS WESTON**, **MR WOODHOUSE** plus other churchgoers as desired.)

*(Church bells ring as people come out, and shake hands with MR ELTON, the young vicar of Highbury. Church bells stop as MR KNIGHTLEY shakes hands with MR ELTON.)*

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Good sermon, Elton, and commendably short.

**MR ELTON.** Thank you, Mr Knightley, you are very kind. I wonder if –

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** *(Interrupting him.)* Forgive me – must get on.

**MR ELTON.** *(A little put down.)* Yes, yes, of course. Good morning, good morning!

*(MR ELTON goes to greet other church goers and ends up with HARRIET SMITH, a very pretty, shy, seventeen-year-old. HARRIET is with ROBERT MARTIN, a young farmer in his twenties, his mother, and his sister, who is seventeen/eighteen. HARRIET is much less shy with them. EMMA is with MRS WESTON, observing from a distance, as MR KNIGHTLEY joins them.)*

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Good morning, Mrs Weston. Good morning, Emma. What mischief are you up to now?

**EMMA.** No mischief at all – but I'm very interested to know who that young lady might be. (*Looking across to HARRIET SMITH.*)

**MRS WESTON.** I can tell you that. Her name is Harriet Smith. She's somebody's natural daughter. She was educated at Mrs Goddard's school, and now she is back there teaching the little ones.

**EMMA.** She seems a very sweet genteel girl.

**MRS WESTON.** I think she is, with no vanity or pretence about her at all.

**EMMA.** And who are her friends?

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** That's Robert Martin standing next to Harriet Smith. He is a tenant farmer on my estate. Excellent young man. Likely to do very well.

**EMMA.** But with such an air, I am sure she might find better company. I think she must be the daughter of a gentleman. I should like to do something for her. And now my Miss Taylor has become Mrs Weston, I'm sorely in need of a companion!

*(She says this jokingly, but it's true.)*

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Emma, don't try to make your friend feel guilty for marrying. And I'm not sure that Harriet Smith is a suitable companion for you.

**EMMA.** Why?

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** You will fill her head with all sorts of ideas about herself that are quite beyond her station in life.

**EMMA.** What makes you so sure of her station in life? I believe she's a gentleman's daughter, and I intend to

ask her for tea next Tuesday. And Mr Elton too – he deserves some relief from his lonely bachelor life!

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Ah – I think I begin to see your plan – and it's a bad one, Emma.

**EMMA.** Why must you always be so hard on me?

*(This little exchange is full of affection – they are both very fond of each other, and both of them know it. EMMA in particular basks in the certainty that whatever she does, he'll always be her dear friend.)*

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** Because I hate to see you making mistakes.

**EMMA.** What mistakes? I was right about dear Miss Taylor and Mr Weston, wasn't I?

**MR KNIGHTLEY.** You were.

**EMMA.** Well then. Wait and see. Good morning!

*(They all go off in opposite directions. Church bells fade, lights fade and music covers scene change, crossfade lights as scene changes to:\*)*

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## Scene Three

### Hartfield

#### Afternoon a few Days Later

(**MR WOODHOUSE, EMMA, MR ELTON, MISS BATES, MRS BATES, HARRIET** and a maid to help serve tea.)

(A tea party, with small tea tables and chairs. **ALL** enter Hartfield and take position. **MRS BATES** is very old and very deaf, **MISS BATES** is in her fifties. **MR ELTON** is very eager to be helpful: he has an eye for **EMMA**, who is totally oblivious to it – **EMMA** intends him to fall for **HARRIET**.)

**MR WOODHOUSE.** Mrs Bates, let me propose your venturing on one of our soft-boiled eggs.

(**MRS BATES** turns her head but she hasn't heard.)

**MISS BATES.** Mr Woodhouse asks if you will take a SOFT-BOILED EGG, mother –

(**MRS BATES** smiles and nods emphatically, but **MISS BATES** continues to **MR WOODHOUSE**, taking the bowl of eggs away from her mother.)

– so very kind – I think she will, you know, she is quite partial to a soft-boiled egg –

**MR WOODHOUSE.** An egg boiled very soft is not unwholesome – Dr Perry himself has been known to recommend a soft-boiled egg –

*(MRS BATES reaches for it, but MISS BATES has more to say, and actually puts the eggs down to say it. MRS BATES keeps looking at the soft-boiled eggs in the hope that she might get one.)*

**MISS BATES.** There now, mother, Dr Perry recommends it! Indeed, she dearly loves a fresh egg softly boiled – do you know last week Mr Knightley was so good as to let us have three dozen of his best fresh laid eggs, and when William Larkins brought them round, he said his master had left himself without any eggs, imagine! No eggs at Donwell Abbey! – but then he is so very generous to us!

*(MRS BATES resigns herself to never getting her egg, but MR ELTON comes to the rescue.)*

**MR ELTON.** Allow me to help you, Mrs Bates.

**MRS BATES.** What?

**MR ELTON.** *(Loudly.)* ALLOW ME TO HELP YOU!

*(But that was too loud and makes the old lady jump.)*

**MRS BATES.** No, thank you.

*(She doesn't want anything to do with MR ELTON who retires in confusion, smiling anxiously. EMMA crosses stage to talk to HARRIET center stage. During the next exchange the maid serves tea to MISS BATES, MRS BATES and MR WOODHOUSE.)*

**EMMA.** So you spent the summer with your friends? On their farm?

**HARRIET.** Yes, they are so kind and hospitable! Lily Martin was at Mrs Goddard's school with me, I have known her since we were both very small. Do you know the