Acting Edition

DEATH COMES TO PEMBERLEY

Based on the best-selling novel by
P. D. James

Adapted by Duncan Abel and
Rachel Wagstaff

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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concordtheatricals.co.uk
concordtheatricals.com

FOR PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

United States and Canada
info@concordtheatricals.com
1-866-979-0447

United Kingdom and Europe
licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk
020-7054-7298

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DEATH COMES TO PEMBERLEY was first commissioned and produced by The Mill at Sonning Theatre from May 1st to June 28th 2025. The production was directed by Joe Harmston and Jonathan O'Boyle, with set design by Sean Cavanagh, costume design by Natalie Titchener, lighting design by Mike Robertson, sound design by Graham Weymouth and Henry Horn, the Musical Director/Arranger was David Osmond, the Casting Director was Kate Plantin CDG, the Production Manager was Joan Farnese and the Deputy Stage Manager was Andrea Duncan. The cast was as follows:

ELIZABETH DARCY ..... Jamie-Rose Duke
MR DARCY .....James Bye
COLONEL FITZWILLIAM ..... Sean Rigby
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH ..... Sarah Berger
GEORGE WICKHAM .....Sam Woodhams
LYDIA WICKHAM/ LOUISA BIDWELL ..... Mogali Masuku
GEORGIANA DARCY .....Celia Cruwys-Finnigan
HENRY ALVESTON .....David Osmond
SIR SELWYN HARDCASTLE.....Todd Boyce
MRS BIDWELL / JOAN / MRS PIGGOT .....Louise Faulker
MR BIDWELL / DR MCFEE / JIM PRATT ..... Paul Jerricho
WILL BIDWELL.....Sam Woodhams

CHARACTERS

ELIZABETH DARCY
MR DARCY
COLONEL FITZWILLIAM
LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH
GEORGE WICKHAM
LYDIA WICKHAM
GEORGIANA DARCY
HENRY ALVESTON
SIR SELWYN HARDCASTLE
MRS BIDWELL
LOUISA BIDWELL
MR BIDWELL
JIM PRATT
DR MCFEE
WILL BIDWELL
JOAN
MRS PIGGOT

SETTING

The majority of the action takes place on the Pemberley Estate in Derbyshire, England.

TIME

1803

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Doubling may be used at the director's discretion.

… indicates a trailing off, or that a character can't or won't speak

- indicates an interruption

The play should move easily and fluidly from scene to scene, with music flowing during scene changes – if possible, from an ever-present pianoforte.

THANKS

Dan Usztan; Adam Rolston; Sally Hughes; Joe Harmston; Jonathan O'Boyle; Andrea Duncan; the P.D. James Estate; Clare Flook; Jane Villiers; the cast and crew and everyone involved in the initial production; Joe Bence for press night; Oli Gordon, Emma Anacootee and the team at Concord; our family and friends, and all those who support our work.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(1803. Derbyshire.)

(Pemberley drawing room.)

(The night before the Pemberley Ball. The whole house is taut with anticipation. **GEORGIANA** *sits at the pianoforte. She is a talented pianist; more importantly, she plays with heart.)*

*(***ELIZABETH** *enters. Stands to* **GEORGINIA***'s side, listens appreciatively.)*

*(***DARCY** *enters. The look of a busy man.)*

*(***ELIZABETH** *gestures for quiet;* **GEORGIANA***'s music deserves to be heard.)*

(As **GEORGIANA** *plays,* **ELIZABETH** *and* **DARCY** *share a smile.* They are still in the infancy of their marriage and very much in love.)*

*(***COLONEL FITZWILLIAM** *enters.)*

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*(**DARCY** gestures for hush. **FITZWILLIAM** stops. Watches **GEORGIANA** at the piano. **ELIZABETH** notices. **ELIZABETH** and **COLONEL FITZWILLIAM** share a look.)*

*(They all sit/stand listening to **GEORGIANA**. Her music is appreciated by all.)*

*(**LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH** enters self-importantly. **DARCY** signals for quiet, but…)*

LADY CATHERINE. How on earth are your guests supposed to dance to that at the Pemberley Ball? It's hardly La Boulangère.

*(**GEORGIANA** stops playing.)*

*(**LADY CATHERINE** seats herself as if a queen on a throne.)*

FITZWILLIAM. I believe we were all enjoying the –

LADY CATHERINE. Yes, yes.

Georgiana, would you play the music to which we are expected to dance tomorrow?

*(**GEORGIANA** begins to play "La Boulangère". She plays with style.)*

Elizabeth, you must take charge. *(To **ELIZABETH**.)* You are a surprisingly tasteful dancer, despite your…

ELIZABETH. Despite my…?

LADY CATHERINE. Never mind.

*(**ELIZABETH** and **DARCY** share an amused look. **DARCY** nods to **ELIZABETH**, turns to leave. **ELIZABETH** grabs **DARCY**'s hand.)*

ELIZABETH. Practise with me.

DARCY. I know perfectly well how to dance.

ELIZABETH. Then you should have no trouble.

DARCY. I really must see to –

ELIZABETH. *(Urgent but discreetly.)* My love.

DARCY. What is it?

*(***ELIZABETH** *and* **DARCY** *take hands and dance.)*

ELIZABETH. Colonel Fitzwilliam spoke to me before dinner.

(They look to **FITZWILLIAM***, and continue discreetly.)*

He declared his intentions for Georgiana. He wishes to propose tomorrow at the ball.

DARCY. He asked *your* approval?

ELIZABETH. He didn't ask my approval; he asked if I thought *you* would approve.

DARCY. So, you're speaking for me now?

ELIZABETH. He simply wanted to know how you might respond to such an entreaty. I fear you are focusing on the wrong issue.

(As they begin to disagree, the dancing becomes faster, almost combative.)

Well?

DARCY. I would certainly be assured by such a match for my sister. He is a Viscount now. His wife would be a Countess; she would live in a castle.

ELIZABETH. That granite fortress in Scotland? It's more prison than castle.

DARCY. She'd be in want of nothing.

It would be a more than suitable match.

ELIZABETH. Doesn't she deserve a marriage born of love?

DARCY. Love is something that grows.

ELIZABETH. Surely, you'd want her to have what we had?

DARCY. Had?

ELIZABETH. *(Smiling.)* You know what I mean.

Perhaps we are now living in an age where she can make her own choice.

DARCY. Why, has anyone else shown interest?

ELIZABETH. Not to my knowledge but the season has barely begun.

DARCY. I can't think of a better match for Georgiana than Colonel Fitzwilliam. Besides, I'm not sure her own choice could be trusted. Not after the scandal with George Wickham.

(But the music has stopped and everyone hears "George Wickham".)

LADY CATHERINE. "Wickham"? I won't hear that rake's name spoken in civilised society.

DARCY. Apologies, Lady Catherine. We were not speaking his name in sentimental terms, I can assure you.

FITZWILLIAM. Whatever wrongs Wickham may have inflicted upon your family, he distinguished himself in the Irish campaign.

LADY CATHERINE. As did many others. And they did so without eloping with every woman they met.

(The maid, **JOAN***, enters.)*

JOAN. Mrs Darcy. Do you have a moment?

ELIZABETH. What is it, Joan?

JOAN. The flowers, madam. They need to be selected from the hothouse.

ELIZABETH. *(Smiling, to* **DARCY**.*)* You are excused.

DARCY. Then I'll go and make sure Mr Bidwell has gone home.

> *(As* **ELIZABETH** *and* **JOAN** *exit together,* **DARCY** *leaves the opposite way.)*

LADY CATHERINE. But we need to practise for tomorrow! We've got a messy Boulangère and an even worse Cotillion.

FITZWILLIAM. I'm not sure we should even be having the Pemberley Ball.

LADY CATHERINE. Now that the wonder of Mr Darcy's choice of bride has worn of, we have to re-establish the pride of the Darcy family name.

FITZWILLIAM. With the poor harvest and imminent war with France, I'm sure people of the county have more pressing concerns than to spread the same gossip and exchange the same views with the same group of people.

LADY CATHERINE. What? And give Paris the satisfaction of knowing that the Pemberley Ball was cancelled because of that little man, Bonaparte? Now, dance, Colonel Fitzwilliam. Georgiana.

> *(***GEORGIANA** *plays.** **FITZWILLIAM** *starts to dance, alone. It's awkward.* **ELIZABETH** *returns. She goes to* **FITZWILLIAM**. *Takes his hand. They dance together.)*

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ELIZABETH. Colonel.

FITZWILLIAM. *(Quietly.)* Have you had a chance to speak to your husband about…about the matter we previously discussed?

ELIZABETH. *(Lying.)* Y… No. Not as yet.

FITZWILLIAM. I do think the time is right for me to declare my intentions towards Georgiana. I'm sure these matters are contingent on timing.

ELIZABETH. If you and Georgiana are meant for each other, I'm sure timing is arbitrary.

FITZWILLIAM. I believe is it our destiny.

ELIZABETH. Is destiny equal to love?

FITZWILLIAM. I would love her wholeheartedly, and with loyalty. She is a beautiful young woman and, with our being cousins, her wealth will stay within the family. I'm sure Mr Darcy would agree.

ELIZABETH. I'm sure Mr Darcy trusts Georgiana to make her own choice, so my advice would be to court *her,* not him.

*(***BIDWELL** *enters with* **ALVESTON**.*)*

*(***ALVESTON** *entranced by the music.***)*

BIDWELL. *(Introducing.)* Mr Henry Alveston.

*(***GEORGIANA** *stops playing the music.)*

*(***BIDWELL** *exits.)*

(A shy smile/glance between **ALVESTON** *and* **GEORGIANA**.*)*

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ALVESTON. *(Sincere.)* That was beautiful.

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.

ELIZABETH. You're very welcome.

(To the room.) This is Henry Alveston. A friend of the Bingleys. He is staying with us for tomorrow's ball. This is Lady Catherine de Bourgh; our cousin, Colonel Fitzwilliam; and my sister-in-law, Georgiana.

*(***DARCY** *enters.)*

Ah, and you know my husband, of course. Mr Darcy.

DARCY. *(Shaking hands.)* Good to see you again, Alveston.

ALVESTON. I was just complimenting your sister on her piano playing.

ELIZABETH. Georgiana has been kind enough to play for us, that we may practise our steps for tomorrow's ball.

LADY CATHERINE. Colonel Fitzwilliam thinks it best we cancel the ball. He's worried about the French!

(A sudden rumble of thunder. The beginnings of a storm.)

ELIZABETH. Perhaps Colonel Fitzwilliam is right to be concerned. Here we sit at the beginning of a new century, citizens of the most civilized country in Europe, while outside there is another world, in which men are as violent and destructive as is the animal world. Perhaps even the most privileged of us will not be able to keep it at bay forever.

(This silences everybody. Awkward.)

LADY CATHERINE. Well. Until the French *do* invade, let us turn our attention back to the dancing.

*(***BIDWELL** *enters.)*

DARCY. Ah, Bidwell, I was looking for you. I thought you must have gone home.

BIDWELL. The silver is all polished, sir. The candlesticks have been placed in the conservatory on Mrs Darcy's request. And extra chairs have been dusted and placed for the chaperones.

DARCY. Then take yourself home and rest for tomorrow.

BIDWELL. I'm as fit as men half my age.

DARCY. You've done more than enough. Go home to your wife and… how is Will? Any improvement at all?

BIDWELL. The bad days are certainly outnumbering the good, sir. Dr McFee's calling round to see my son this evening.

DARCY. Then take your leave. Be with your family. You don't want to be on foot through the woods when this storm breaks.

BIDWELL. Perhaps if a gentleman could help me lift the final chair into place, then I'll be on my way.

LADY CATHERINE. Darcy, why aren't you dancing?

DARCY. *(Taking the opportunity.)* I'm afraid Mr Bidwell needs my assistance.

*(***DARCY** *and* **BIDWELL** *exit.)*

LADY CATHERINE. Nobody is practising. We'll be an embarrassment to the county. How is your Boulangère, Mr Alveston?

ALVESTON. No cause for concern, Lady Cath –

LADY CATHERINE. I shall decide how concerning it is. Georgiana! The Boulangère.

*(***GEORGIANA** *plays again.** **ELIZABETH** *takes* **ALVESTON***'s arm and they dance.* **ALVESTON** *can't take his eyes of* **GEORGIANA**. **ELIZABETH** *notices this.)*

ELIZABETH. You dance very well, Mr Alveston. I am sure you will impress the young ladies tomorrow.

*(***ALVESTON** *demurs.)*

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife…?

ALVESTON. *(Smiles.)* I'm sure I've heard that said before. But alas, I'm a little way short of a fortune.

ELIZABETH. So you're not hoping to meet someone.

ALVESTON. That wasn't my intention…

…Miss Georgiana, there, on the pianoforte… Is she…?

ELIZABETH. I'm afraid Georgiana's card may already be marked.

ALVESTON. Ah. *(Disguising his disappointment.)* Of course.

*(***JOAN** *enters* **ELIZABETH** *stops dancing.)*

JOAN. Sorry to interrupt, Miss.

ELIZABETH. Joan.

JOAN. It's just, the logs have been cut. Pastry chef has the sweet tarts in hand.

ELIZABETH. And the almonds?

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JOAN. Grated.

ELIZABETH. And the wine?

JOAN. It's been brung up from the cellar.

ELIZABETH. Oh, Joan, you didn't strain your bad back, did you?

JOAN. No, Miss.

And so… I was wondering if I could be finished for the evening? I know it's a bit early but I've done all my jobs.

ELIZABETH. What are you up to?

JOAN. Nothing, Miss.

ELIZABETH. Very well. Good night.

*(**JOAN** turns to leave.)*

Joan… Thank you, for all your work.

*(**JOAN** curtseys and scampers off.)*

*(**COLONEL FITZWILLIAM** is looking at his pocket watch.)*

LADY CATHERINE. The French invasion behind schedule, Colonel?

*(**COLONEL FITZWILLIAM** tries for a smile, puts the watch away.)*

*(**GEORGIANA** brings the piece of music to a finish.)*

ALVESTON. You play with such heart, Miss Darcy.

Apologies, I didn't mean to…

GEORGIANA. No. I find music a language that speaks in those spaces where words fail us.

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