

Preshow Notes:

Welcome to this introduction to *Sense and Sensibility*

Written by Kate Hamill, based on the novel by Jane Austen. It is presented by the State Theatre Company South Australia in association with Adelaide Festival Centre

The audio described performances at **The Dunstan Playhouse** will be on:

Tuesday May 22, 2018, 6:30 pm with a touch tour commencing at 5.30pm and

Saturday May 26, 2018, 2:00 pm with a touch tour commencing at 1pm.

The performance will run for 2hrs and 40mins, including a 20min interval.

My name is Emma Bedford and the audio description for this work is by Emma Bedford and Kari Seeley

Sense and Sensibility:

The newly widowed Mrs Dashwood, under much reduced circumstances, must move herself and her three daughters, the very sensible Elinor, the wild romantic Marianne and the spirited Margaret, from their grand family home to a modest cottage. But reduced social circumstances do not lead to a reduction in troubles of the heart. Suitors circle and gossip swirls as all of the Dashwood's try to find their place in the world.

Set and Props –

The Dunstan Playhouse is a black box theatre, the floor is 1m higher than the auditorium floor, with raked seating in long rows that bend in a gentle U-shape. The theatre holds seats for about 450 people.

Sense and Sensibility is drawing room drama, set in a large, flexible space that is ostensibly a drawing room. Like a room from a dolls house—there are three high walls and in each wall, two sets of high double doors, these have round, brass, centrally located door knobs and they all open inward, allowing for multiple options for items and people to enter and leave. The doors are rarely all closed. The walls themselves are 6m

high, the doors are oversize too, 4m high and each around about 70cm wide. We have a sense of largess from the get-go.

There is a gap at the front, additional wall panels that might lead into other rooms, suggesting of a much greater residence. This gap allows people and things to be carried on from the very front of the stage without travelling through any of the doors.

Nine footlights along the front to illuminate faces.

The walls are lilac at from the bottom, fading into green by the very top, a gentle air brushed gradient. By contrast, all detail on the walls and doors is white, the room's baseboards and panel mouldings, a chair rail that runs around all three walls, heavy doorway casings, door panel detail, the picture rails, all outlined in white.

Upon the walls, 10 identical, tall, slender vertical rectangles, outlined in white, half a meter wide by 4m tall. These break up the sections of wall between the doors, their outline takes up space between the chair railing and the picture railings on each of the three walls.

Similarly, there are wide panels outlined in white above each of the sets of doors. This white, piping-style detail gives the room a neat, busy, finished look, like a cake.

The light coloured floor is smooth and has evenly spaced white lines that mark out floorboards.

Around the room, brass, wall-mounted candle fixtures, above head height they flickering warmly. A piano tucked up in the right rear corner and three, round, high backed chairs against the back wall.

In the centre a suspended lighting feature - a decadent confection made up of long, fluffy white feathers that droops, layer upon layer. It hangs about 6m high, 1.5m deep and 1.5m in diameter. It glows from within and the colour changes from time to time.

As the play commences, it is glowing pink.

The cast move all furniture to change from one scene to the next. The smoothness of the floor allows for a nifty feature, chairs can be slid rapidly through the doors into a new position in the drawing room, allowing for swift, accurate positioning of furniture.

From the first, a long, dark, wood table is pushed silently into position by everyone. The table is 1.8m long, about 80cm high and quite narrow. It comes to rest lengthwise in the space, underneath the fluffy chandelier. This table will go on to become a writing desk for Elinor Dashwood.

As the late Mr Dashwood lies down on the table, a long white coat rack with 12 evenly spaced hooks lowers from the ceiling, coming to rest so that the longest garments hanging on the rack just touch the floor.

Actors use two halves of a coconut to make their own foley - live on stage - the clop clopping of horses hooves is performed in this way.

The Dashwood's sitting room is represented by a small, 2 seater sofa that comes on from our left. This small couch is upholstered in a greenish grey fabric and the frame is delicate, dark wood and is placed at an angle on the left side, on the fringes of the room, closer to us than the first set of double doors on that side. Mrs Dashwood sits on it, closest to the audience.

All the meals are served at an absurdly long banquet table that seats 7 people, leaving one long side totally vacant. This table is virtually groaning with food offerings, from a suckling pig to fruits, cakes and candelabras on a white tablecloth. It is on wheels. The food is fixed down and no one eats any of the dinner. Tea sets and picnic trays are similarly glued down.

The cottage where the Dashwood's go to live – is indicated by a white, wooden 5-panel foldout room divider. The panels are made of two-tone purple-and-green material that matches the walls. This screen protrudes into the room about a third of the overall width, and affords the big room a more intimate feel.

The lighting, is bold in this play. There are sudden, stunning lighting changes – from normal daylight - fresh, white tones to vibrant blues or a cold strip of side light that just picks up two actors. It's clever and sharp, like another character. I'll talk a little more about the lighting for Act 2 just prior to the end of interval.

Scene and location changes are sign posted quite literally by large pieces of card, with the name of the place for instance 'the cottage' in cursive text, black on white and held up on a large sign in a spotlight. The signs

are at times presented by an actor on roller skates, or simply held up by one of the chorus, or ridden in on a small bicycle.

The great outdoors comes into the drawing room,— the lawn of Barton Park where Elinor and Colonel Barton play croquet for example is a strip of merry green astro turf, 2m wide. It appears through one set of double doors and runs the width of the room before disappearing out the other side, also through the doors.

Before the play opens, a luxuriant blue material curtains the stage, there is a pleasing wide oval of light shining onto the fabric. The curtain will rise at the commencement of the piece.

Production Credits

Director Geordie Brookman

Designer Ailsa Paterson

Musical Arrangements Stuart Day and Cast

Fight Consultant Ruth Fallon

Lighting Designer Geoff Cobham

Stage Manager Micola Filsell

Assistant Stage Manager/ Sound Assistant Mark Heuer

Characters and Costumes:

The COSTUMES indicate the setting as the late 1790's, with women's dresses following the Empire line: a low scooped neckline, without revealing any cleavage, fitting tightly to the torso just below the bust, with the generous skirt flowing loosely down to the floor. Sleeves are to the elbow or wrist. The dresses are mostly made of white, almost translucent, muslin material with different white-on-white patterns, and are dressed up with aprons or sleeveless overcoats. Adornments include bonnets and/or feathers.

The men wear snug fitting breeches with a fall front, white silk stockings and either flat shoes or long riding boots. The higher the social status, the longer the trousers. Servants' trousers reach just below the knee, gentlemen's trousers are full length. White, collared shirts, with full sleeves, are worn under tailored waistcoats and cutaway coats with tails and tall standing collars.

CHARACTERS

Anna Steen plays **ELINOR Dashwood**- the eldest Dashwood sister. She is sensible, measured and cautious, well aware of the social impact of the family's reduced circumstances.

Elinor is slim, her nose is a little pointy and she has blue eyes and very curly blonde hair, she is no longer in the first bloom of youth

Her's is the most plain of white dresses, elegantly understated, with no adornments. For the ball, she dons a sophisticated sleeveless ivory satin sleeveless overcoat with a large floral print in soft pink peach colours.

The curls of her long blonde hair are swept back from her face and pinned up off her neck.

Miranda Daughtry plays **MARIANNE Dashwood**, the middle Dashwood sister, who is outspoken, honest, and impulsive. Her dark hair is pinned up like her older sister's, although stray curls frame her face. She has fleshy lips and big round eyes. She's younger than Elinor with flawless, creamy skin. Her white dress is understated, and she dons an elegant grey silk shawl printed with large pink flowers when venturing out for a walk. For the Ball, she adds a sleeveless overcoat of wispy chiffon with a pale grey floral print.

The rest of the cast each play several characters.

Rachel Burke plays **MARGARET Dashwood** - the youngest of the three sisters. She is 11 or 12 years old, with childish enthusiasm and petulance. Her long straight blonde hair is worn loose, with a large pink ribbon tied at one temple to hold her hair off her face. She has a wide honest face and a creamy complexion. Margaret wears a heavy, white lace dress with so much floral patterning as to appear almost fluffy, with two layers at the hem. She wears a long smock apron adorned with brightly embroidered flowers and slippers.

Rachel also plays **LUCY Steele**- exceptionally pretty and petite but without education. Rachel's hair is bouncy red ringlets swept up into two fashionable bunches that frame her face.

She and her sister Anne, both wear bright yellow chiffon coats over their white dresses,

Caroline Mignone plays **MRS DASHWOOD**, mother to the 3 Dashwood sisters. She is a woman of impeccable manners, devoted to her daughters. A lean, shorter older woman with black curly hair tied up and mostly hidden by a mop cap of white muslin and black chiffon. Over her white dress, she wears a stylish black chiffon overcoat, that buttons to the waist and flows to a modest train.

Caroline also plays **ANNE Steele** - Lucy's older sister. She wears a bright yellow chiffon coat over her white dress, and her red hair is up, with fussy curls around her face. Her hair bounces and dances with her excited gesturing.

Dale March plays **JOHN Dashwood** - a half-brother to the Dashwood sisters but no blood relation to Mrs. Dashwood. His hair is grey, neat, longer on top than it is at the sides and swept away from his forehead in a side part with long sideburns and no other facial hair. He wears dark grey breeches that button just below the knee, with white silk stockings and black shoes. His gold brocade waistcoat is topped by a bright green cutaway tail coat with a tall collar with a white cravat. He carries a black cane with a brass top and a black top hat.

Dale also plays **COLONEL BRANDON** - an older bachelor, in his early 40's. He is stiff and formal, with dark short, heavily tamed hair that is practically strapped to head in a smooth side part and mutton chops, but no moustache. Across his rigid chest, a double-breasted, grey striped cutaway coat with brass buttons, above dark grey breeches that button just below his knee, white silk stockings and black shoes.

Lizzy Falkland plays **FANNY Dashwood**, a most unpleasant, angular, older woman, who is married to John Dashwood. Her white dress has long sleeves and a high collar, buttoned just under her chin. She wears an olive green chiffon overcoat buttoned at her waist. Her wavy, long dark hair is pinned back from her face, but covers her ears and a comically large white feather is secured to a headband, extends from above her right ear, over the top of her head and well beyond her left shoulder. It often ends up on other people's face! Her two brothers are Robert and Edward Ferrars.

Lizzy also plays **MRS. JENNINGS**, who is a good-natured, boisterous woman, mother-in-law to Sir John Middleton. Her unstructured pale

pink coat has a broad dark purple collar and dark purple sash at the waist, with a purple frill hem. Her full skirt is a solid dark pink with a stiff undergarment holding the skirt out like hooping. She has several fluffy pink feathers around her bonnet. As she turns her back, we see that the whole outfit is worn like an apron only covering the front half, leaving the back of another character's plain white dress exposed.

Nathan O'Keefe plays **EDWARD Ferrars** - a well-educated bachelor who is financially dependent on his mother. He is a timid and socially awkward, sallow skinned with a mop of blonde hair a longer than it should be so it curls up at his collar that accentuates Nathan's high cheekbones and aristocratic nose. He is skinny. Edward wears white long breeches with a fall front, black shoes, a golden waistcoat, and a green/grey cutaway tails coat, with a white shirt and a white cravat.

Nathan plays **ROBERT Ferrars** who is a callow young man. Although Edward's younger brother, Robert sports a comb-over to cover an almost completely bald head. He has wildy exaggerated sideburns that connect with a bushy moustache. His clothes match those of Edward.

Nathan also plays **LADY MIDDLETON** who loves to entertain. Her overcoats are opulent and *her* head feather extends over her head and down to her waist. As with Mrs Jennings, Lady Middleton's outfit is actually worn as a smock apron, leaving the back exposed, revealing the white breeches and overcoat of another character as she turns her back.

Rashidi Edward plays **John WILLOUGHBY**, an unusually handsome young man. Rashidi is tall, dark skinned, with full lips and a high forehead. His hair is hidden under a white, curled wig that contrasts dramatically with his dark skin. He wears tight, white breeches over muscled thighs, with long black riding boots that have a tan turnover. His golden waistcoat is topped by an elegant white cutaway tailcoat, and a white top hat.

Rashidi also plays the aged butler, **Thomas**, who wears a long white apron over white breaches, black shoes, a golden waistcoat and white shirt with billowing sleeves and a white cravat.

Geoff Revell plays **SIR JOHN Middleton**, a jovial and generous country gentleman and a distant relation to Mrs. Dashwood. He does his best to ensure the comfort of Mrs Dashwood and her daughters. He wears grey

breeches, with a matching grey top hat, black riding boots, a cream waistcoat, shirt and cravat, and a brown cutaway tailcoat.

Geoff also plays **Mrs Ferrars**, a sour, stupid, snob of a woman. She is rather statuesque, with a dark grey/green overcoat, with a high collar, worn over a white dress buttoned up under her chin. Her white mop hat has a matching grey/green ribbon and two large grey feathers extending up and over her head from the centre front.

The Gossips are a chorus of high society creatures. They chatter away, watching or whispering or contributing to the action. The intent is to create an atmosphere in which someone is almost always lurking, observing and judging, oppressive and constricting, but not necessarily unfriendly; it is all great fun for the Gossips.

Seven of the nine cast members become part of the “Gossips” chorus at one time or another. They are distinguished from other characters by the exaggerated bonnets they wear, regardless of any other costuming. These conical grey bonnets have an oversized visor, rimmed in pink ribbon that frames the face, extending well above the forehead to tie under the chin in a jauntily angled bow. A single white feather extends straight up from the back of the bonnet, bending forward over the top of the visor.

Access information

Tickets are available through BASS on 131 246 to request access seating and to inform the operator of your requirements.

The production takes place in the Dunstan Playhouse, which is part of the Adelaide Festival Centre. When planning your trip to the venue, please note that the Adelaide Festival Centre is currently undergoing renovations and access is restricted. The tram works on North Terrace also impact heavily on traffic flow through the city.

With construction works at Adelaide Festival Centre, recommended drop off locations have changed. The recommended Dunstan Playhouse and Space Theatre drop off zone is at the northern end of the Riverbank Footbridge on War Memorial Drive (walk across the Footbridge to Dunstan Playhouse) or at the Intercontinental Hotel (walk north along the lane way to the Riverbank). There is also a drop off area and two accessible car spaces on lower Festival Drive, accessible from the west via Montefiore Road.

Taxi ranks are located on King William Street, outside the Casino or Railway Station.

Ticket holders can access pre-purchased discounted rates at Wilson Adelaide Central car park at 225 North Terrace.

The Dunstan Playhouse is guide dog friendly and there are accessible toilets in the venue. One is close to the Space foyer and another is between Door 1 and the stairs to the Art space.

Headsets will be available prior to the performance from the Audio Describer in the foyer.

For more information on audio described performances please contact Access2Arts using the email address audio.describer@access2arts.org.au

These notes are correct at the time of recording.

Notes on Act 2 – to be read at interval

In Act 2 the central panel in the back wall becomes a high backed day-bed, leaving a rectangular black opening in the rear wall. It's also a sofa, long enough to seat 2 persons comfortably, it's tucked back away for the 'Ball'.

Costume changes remain minimal, Ball gowns for the Dashwood sisters are put on over their dresses. Marianne's is a sleeveless, floor-length diaphanous addition and Elinor's is a thicker, floral patterned sleeveless overdress with a stiff collar.

The loud ballroom scene is a sudden change, unexpected and radical. As *What I like about You* kicks into full throttle, the floor lights up like a zebra crossing. The feather chandelier flashes red and blue, the cast have formed one line across the stage and will step out of this into free form dancing; joyous, chaotic. There's strobe, then large white circles of light in an otherwise red room that move extremely fast, followed by glowing pink floor light up the back, whilst the rest of the room is radiant in blue.

All the dancers form another line, from front to back and then they peel off - one right, one left and so on until the party is scattered, Marianne

at the rear, Willoughby down the front, to the right. The music is too loud to describe this in detail and it all happens very quickly, it's a riotous collection of moments and ends as suddenly as it has begins. It's a romp, in contrast to a sedate ball.

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In just a moment, to start the second act, two members of the ensemble will enter from our left, walking along the front, carpeted edge of the auditorium before mounting the 4 steps onto the front of the stage.