

Looking for an alternative holiday outing? Try these two well-executed plays

By **Doni Wilson** | Nov 24, 2025

4th Wall Theatre's 'Our Town' and Main Street Theatre's 'Georgiana and Kitty: Christmas at Pemberley' make for perfect distractions for a little downtime in this hectic season.



Kregg Dailey, Christian Tannous, Christy Watkins, Ellis Holden, Joshua Percy, Faith Fossett, Philip Hays from 4th Wall Theatre Co.'s 'Our Town'

Two of Houston's most respected theaters are ringing in the season with a Pulitzer-Prize winning American classic and a theatrical sequel to Jane Austen's beloved novel, "Pride and Prejudice."

It is fitting that 4th Wall Theater Company is staging Thornton Wilder's 1938 masterpiece, "Our Town," a beloved American play that did exactly that: broke the fourth wall, that imaginary wall separating the audience from the drama being played on stage. An excellent Philip Lehl plays (among other roles) the

ostensible Stage Manager of the play, who employs a clever meta-theatrical move in which he can omnisciently narrate directly to the audience.

He explains the statistics of the town, but also the stories that open up the everyday lives of the people in the small, fictional town of Grover's Corners in New Hampshire. Lehl's is the affable voice that delivers the joys and tragedies of the town directly, even before the characters have lived through these experiences.

Covering the years 1901-1913, multiple characters engage with each other on a small stage, a challenging set up deftly directed by artistic director Jennifer Dean. The Webb and Gibbs families are featured as they are drawn more closely together by the marriage of their children, Emily and George.

The first act of the play allows us to be amateur sociologists and historians, but Wilder is careful to remind us that the physical aspects of this small town cannot really capture the emotions and experiences of its inhabitants. **With Wyeth-like wooden sets (Kirk A. Domer) and a fitting palette of brown and white colored costumes (Donna Schmidt) the production has a sepia toned feel that dovetails with the nostalgia and emotional force of Wilder's script of a supposedly simpler, long-ago way of American life.**

Instead, people are large and contain multitudes, even if those dimensions are not fully appreciated by others in the rounds of everyday life. The first two acts focus on daily life and the marriage of Emily and George, who are naïve teenagers embarking on a life together. The third act reveals a heart-breaking death, with an unforgettable setting in a graveyard, where those who have died can speak beyond the grave, as in many Emily Dickinson poems that try to convey what could not be said while still on earth.

This is such a strong cast, including many Houston veteran actors, Lehl, Christy Watkins, Kregg Daily, Philip Hays, and Patricia Duran. Newer actors, such as Christian Tannous, also shine. Newcomer Elijah Eliakin Hernandez is striking as a young George navigating his romantic feelings for his beloved Emily as well as his role as a young man in a small town.

But Skyler Sinclair as Emily Webb captivates the audience from beginning to end, from her youthful wistful longings to her heartbreaking epiphanies on the ephemerality of life and how we are "blind," unable to fully appreciate life as we are living it. Her pitch perfect possession of an iconic American character is a marvel to watch, never becoming too saccharine or too sentimental in a play that never pretends to be "realistic," yet conveys the hard truth that life is fleeting, and we often overlook the most meaningful things while here on earth. The "ordinary" may seem unimportant, but that is simply not true in "Our Town."

It is a truth universally acknowledged at Main Street Theater that for many, it's a Jane Austen world and we are just living in it. Bring on the delightful spin-off "Georgiana and Kitty: Christmas at Pemberley" by Lauren Gunderson and Margo Melcon, and you have a perfect cocktail of Darcy disdain, Bennet sister chaos, and some feminist flair as musical genius Georgiana Darcy (an impressive Lindsay Ehrhardt) has a meet-cute-again reunion with Henry Grey (a terrific Robby Matlock).

Strap in for a romantic roller coaster of a Christmas that makes you wonder if it is ever too late to undo the damage of Fitzwilliam Darcy (a convincing Spencer Plachy), who didn't learn from "Pride and Prejudice" that it's a bad idea to be too hasty in judging others (remember when Darcy said Elizabeth Bennet wasn't good looking enough to "tempt" him? Of course, you do! Look how that worked out). Luckily, Laura Kaldis's eye-rolling Elizabeth Darcy gives us hope that someone can get Darcy back on the reality track since he cannot seem to understand his own sister.

Ryan McGettican's sets? Divine. The costumes by Donna Southern Schmidt? Lots of excellent empire-waist elegance. Well-directed by Jessica Jaye, it is a pleasure to watch the spectrum of rom-com tragedy and comedy (Lydia Bennet hilariously wonders if she "ruined everything"—when that is her obviously her superpower.)

With a strong ensemble cast, including Clara Marsh as Kitty, Chaney Moore as Mary, and Ian Lewis as Thomas, there is a great chemistry among all of the actors that is a pleasure to witness.

There are many funny lines, keeping the satirical and comedic spirit of Jane Austen but letting us follow beloved characters from the novel into new territory. The beauty of having Georgiana scream at her blockhead brother "How could anyone survive YOU?" is the fact that she does, in more ways than he can imagine.

That heartbreak is balanced by plenty of funny lines, such as Darcy airily and funnily stating the obvious: "There is always a letter"—which for Austen's world, is better than any text or Tik Tok you could ever experience, at least for high drama and dream dashing. But don't worry: in this new incarnation of Jane Austen's world, things are still unfair and things go awry. But it's the holidays, so there's hope that things will also, even if it takes a minute, or six years, go right.