

NOVEMBER 13 - DECEMBER 16, 2018 | QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE

MISS BENNET CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY

By **Lauren Gunderson & Margot Melcon** | Directed by **Kimberly Senior**

Play
Guide

CORPORATE SPONSOR

**Rockwell
Automation**

Executive Producers:
Julia & Bladen Burns

The Rep
MILWAUKEE
65TH ANNIVERSARY

www.MilwaukeeRep.com | 414-224-9490

NOVEMBER 13 - DECEMBER 16, 2018 | QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE

MISS BENNET CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY

By **Lauren Gunderson & Margot Melcon**

Directed by **Kimberly Senior**

Play
Guide



Mark Clements
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Chad Bauman
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLAYGUIDE WRITTEN BY
Lindsey Hoel-Neds
Content Writer

Frances White
Contributing Writer

PLAYGUIDE EDITED BY
Jenny Toutant
Education Director

Lisa Fulton
Chief Marketing Officer

Auburn Matson
Education Administrator

Jeffrey Mosser
Education Administrator

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Jeff Meyer

Table of Contents

<i>The Play</i>	3
<i>Creative Team</i>	3
<i>The Characters</i>	4
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	5
<i>Jane Austen</i>	6
<i>Jane Austen in Popular Culture</i>	7
<i>Christmas in Regency England</i>	8
<i>Gender Roles in England in the Early 1800s</i>	9
<i>Fine Ladies and Rational Creatures: Miss Bennet's Creative Team</i>	10
<i>Designing Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley</i> .	11
<i>Featured Artist</i>	12
<i>Resources</i>	13

The performance of Netta Walker is sponsored by Dwight and Marleen Morgan.

THE PLAY

The play begins two years after the events of *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are now married and living at the Pemberley estate where they will host Christmas celebrations for Elizabeth's family. As the play opens, Darcy reveals that they will also be hosting his distant relative, Lord Arthur de Bourgh, an eternal student. Jane and her husband, Mr. Bingley, arrive with Mary, their single middle sister, in tow. In the first scenes, we learn that Mary is obligated to care for their parents, but perhaps Mary is dissatisfied with her assigned circumstances and longs for more in her life. When Lord de Bourgh arrives, it is Mary he first encounters and the two of them strike up a conversation of literature and life, which is awkward, but holds promise. Lydia and her huge personality arrive, interrupting their interaction. Lydia is unhappily married, and flirts with Lord de Bourgh relentlessly. As the holiday progresses, relationships blossom, secrets are revealed, and the family gains greater understandings of each other.

CREATIVE TEAM



Kimberly Senior
Director

**Lauren Gunderson
& Margot Melcon**
Playwrights

Courtney O'Neill
Scenic Designer

Mieka van der Ploeg
Costume Designer

Noele Stollmack
Lighting Designer

**Pornchanok
Kanchanabanca (Nok)**
Sound Designer

Eva Breneman
Dialect Coach

Frank Honts
Casting Director

Audra Kuchling
Stage Manager

Rebekah Heusel
Assistant Stage Manager

Ismael Lara
Assistant Director

CHARACTERS

(Excerpted from the script of *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*)



Rebecca Hurd

Mary Bennet - 20. Finally coming into her own, she is no longer the plain, boring girl she once was. She has a fire in her now. She is intelligent, curious, and lively, but her family only sees her as a future spinster. She does not suffer fools. She wants to live.



Sarai Rodriguez

Jane Bingley - 24, married to Mr. Bingley. She is seven months pregnant with her first child and is sweet and optimistic as ever. The kindest heart in the house.



Jordan Brodess

Arthur de Bourgh - 25. A studious, unsociable only child who has never been around women or large families. He is a loner who prefers books to people. He has recently inherited a large estate and has no idea what to do next.



Fred Geyer

Charles Bingley - 25. Gracious, happy, and ever focused on the love of his life, Jane. A good friend and always ready with a smile.



Margaret Ivey

Elizabeth Darcy - 22, married to Mr. Darcy. Confident, charming and witty. She makes a fun and surprising lady of the house. She is best friends with her sister Jane.



Netta Walker

Lydia Wickham - 17. Flirtatious, youthful, self-centered. Her marriage to Mr. Wickham is a sham, but she will not admit this. She is the person you want to have at your party: energetic, engaging, unstoppable.



Yousof Sultani

Fitzwilliam Darcy - 30. A loving, generous, and smart (if slightly stiff) husband. He is quiet and vigilant and thus sees what others often miss. He knows what being lovelorn is like.



Deanna Myers

Anne de Bourgh - 20s. Only daughter of the late Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Lived in her mother's very large shadow, never having to ask for anything or speak for herself her entire life. Judgemental and impatient, just like her mother.

pride and prejudice

Jane Austen's classic novel has wooed readers for over two hundred years. First published anonymously in 1813 as a three-part series, the book tells the story of the Bennet sisters and their romantic entanglements, focusing on the second eldest sister, Elizabeth, and the haughty Mr. Darcy. The novel gives a glimpse into the life of this genteel family in the village of Longbourn. The back and forth between the older of the five daughters and their various suitors crafts quite the tale.

The story begins when a rich eligible bachelor, Mr. Bingley, moves to the neighborhood, and Mrs. Bennet has designs to marry off one of her five daughters to him. The girls meet Mr. Bingley at a ball and are impressed by his outgoing personality. Unfortunately, they are less impressed by his snooty and uptight friend, Mr. Darcy. Mr. Bingley and the eldest daughter, Jane, start to form an attachment, much to the distaste of Bingley's closest social companions, including Mr. Darcy. While Darcy has objections to the lesser standing of the Bennet family, he can't help but be entranced by the fiery spirit of Elizabeth, the second eldest daughter.

Darcy grows more interested in Elizabeth, but she continues to despise him due to his seemingly classist viewpoints. She begins a flirtation with George Wickham, a childhood friend of Mr. Darcy's, who relays a story that makes Darcy seem not only proud, but also cruel, cementing Elizabeth's hatred. In the midst of this love triangle, Mr. Collins, a relative of Mr. Bennet's, arrives and informs the family that he would like to choose a wife from the Bennet daughters. When he proclaims his intention to marry Elizabeth, she refuses him and he seeks refuge with the family of her friend, Charlotte. After several days, Mr. Collins proposes to Charlotte, and she accepts out of practicality. Elizabeth is surprised by the news.

Bingley leaves Longbourn for London without informing Jane, and his sister, Miss Bingley, sends a letter telling Jane that he is to be engaged to Darcy's sister, as Miss Bingley is trying to keep the two apart. Jane accepts her fate, but Elizabeth is angry at those trying to keep her sister from happiness.

Elizabeth goes to visit Charlotte and is extended the invitation to meet Mr. Collins' prestigious benefactor, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and her daughter, Anne, at their wealthy and imposing estate, Rosings Park. It is during this visit that Elizabeth meets Mr. Darcy again. His behavior is perplexing throughout the visit, and Elizabeth is caught off guard when he proposes to her. As Elizabeth believes Darcy to be the instigator in keeping Jane and Bingley apart and the cruel perpetrator of Mr. Wickham's misfortunes, she refuses him. The next day, Darcy outlines his role in both incidents via letter, which causes Elizabeth to rethink her judgement of him and his actions.

When Elizabeth later makes a visit to Darcy's estate at Pemberley, he is gracious and kind, and the feelings between the two begin to be mutual affection. While away, Elizabeth receives a letter that her sister Lydia has run off with Mr. Wickham, sullyng her reputation in the process. When she is found, the two are married, thanks to Mr. Darcy's intervention, and the family's and Lydia's reputations are preserved.

As the book concludes, Bingley returns to Longbourn to ask for Jane's hand, and Mr. Darcy proposes to Elizabeth once again, which this time, she gladly accepts.



Lady Catherine confronts Elizabeth about Darcy, on the title page of the first illustrated edition. Photo: wikipedia.org.



Photo credit: CNN.

jane austen

Jane Austen was born on December 16th, 1775 to Reverend George Austen and Cassandra Austen. The seventh of eight children, Jane was one of only two girls in the large family. Early in life, the Austen children were immersed in a world of creativity and learning, where their father taught other children, wrote in the rectory, and formed a close bond with Jane.

At the age of eight, Jane was sent to boarding school for her formal education. At school, Jane and her sister Cassandra learned French, dancing, and music. At home, they were encouraged to explore their father's extensive library and to create and stage theatrical productions, allowing their creativity to shine through. As Jane entered adolescence, she started to take writing more seriously, and began to fill notebooks with her stories and poems.

When Jane was twenty, she met a young man named Tom Lefoy, with whom she began to spend time. The two maintained a romantic relationship, but as her family could not add anything to Tom's financial or social prospects, his family sent him away, losing Jane the one documented love of her life.

Upon completion of her formal schooling, Jane returned home permanently, and began to pen *First Impressions*, which later became *Pride and Prejudice*. She completed the first draft in 1799, which her father, believing so strongly in his daughter's talent, attempted to get published. Unfortunately, the publisher he contacted never even opened the package.

In 1802, a family friend, Harris Bigg-Withers, proposed to Jane, which she accepted to seal her family's future, but then rescinded the next day. In 1805, Jane's life changed drastically upon the death of her beloved father. The women in the family moved from place to place, eventually settling in Chawton Cottage, upon the estate of her brother Edward, which became a place where Jane had a resurgence of her vigor as a writer.

In 1811, Jane's brother sought publishing for her first novel, *Sense & Sensibility*, which was released and became a financial and critical success. Over the next several years, Jane's books were in high demand. Several different publishers released *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Catherine*. All of Jane's works were published anonymously, so she received no recognition during her lifetime for her very popular novels.

In 1816, Jane's health began to rapidly decline, but she chose to ignore it in pursuit of new projects. As the year progressed, her health regressed, and Jane died in 1817 at the age of 41. Upon her death, her brother Henry and sister Cassandra had her works published into sets. Henry wrote a beautiful portrait of his sister in the introduction to the work, revealing her identity to the world for the first time.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

jane austen in popular culture

Jane Austen and her works are popular fodder for writers, filmmakers, and artists of all kinds. While her books were written two hundred years ago, her stories and her life continue to be pervasive in cultures throughout the world. Dozens of film and television adaptations of her works have been made, and looser interpretations of her stories abound in cinema and literature.

1

Two popular recent adaptations of Austen's most famous works, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*, combine her classic stories and characters with monster horror stories.

Photo credits: wikipedia.

2

Bridget Jones's Diary, a popular novel and film, takes the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* and places it in contemporary London. The sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* is loosely based on *Persuasion*.

Photo credit: Amazon.

3

Clueless, a popular 90s teen movie, takes the matchmaking plot of *Emma*, and moves it to the privileged world of Beverly Hills.

Photo Credit: Paramount Pictures.

4

Becoming Jane is a feature film based on a biography of Austen, released in 2007.

Photo Credit: Hanway Films.

5

A giant sculpture of Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy from the 1995 BBC miniseries of *Pride and Prejudice* appeared in the Serpentine Lake in Hyde Park, London as a publicity stunt by UKTV's Drama channel in 2013.

Photo credit: Metro.

6

Regency Love, a video game released in 2013, is inspired by Austen's work and storylines.

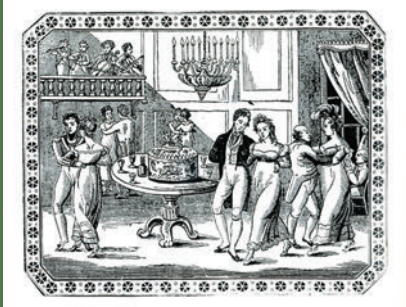
Photo credit: Amazon.

7

In 2017, a new 10£ note was released featuring an image of Austen.

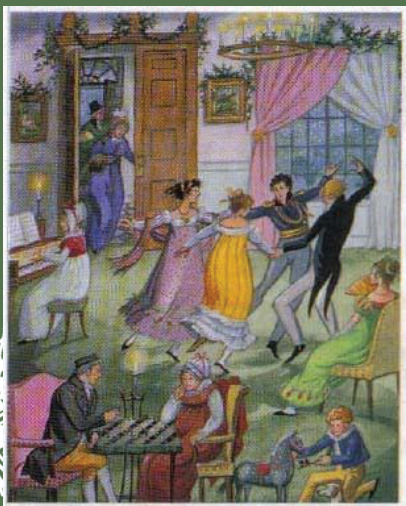
Photo credit: APH.com.

CHRISTMAS IN REGENCY ENGLAND



Christmas Celebrations in the Regency. Photo credit: reginascott.com.

Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley takes place in 1815, a year right in the middle of the Regency era in England. In the play, we see Elizabeth introduce a common German custom of a Christmas tree into the Darcy household much to everyone's surprise, but what exactly were Christmases like in a estate such as Pemberley?



Christmas Celebrations in the Regency. Photo credit: austenonly.com

Decorations - Decorations were an important part of the Christmas festivities. Families decorated their homes with greenery such as rosemary, pine boughs, holly, ivy, hawthorn, or Christmas rose. Decorations went up on Christmas Eve and stayed up until Epiphany on January 6th. A Christmas tree, like the one Elizabeth brings to Pemberley, was not a common English tradition at the time. While some mention of the German custom has been documented, widespread acceptance of the Christmas tree in England did not occur until the late 1820s.

City vs. Country Celebrations - Christmas was not a popular holiday in London until after Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* took England by storm in the 1840s. Christmas celebrations were much more common in the country, both in the homes of common folk and estates such as Pemberley.

Christmas Greetings - Friends and relations would greet each other with "Happy Christmas," but only on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The tradition of sending Christmas cards was not yet popular in England.

Christmas Carols - While the play depicts the playing and singing of Christmas carols, it appears that the tradition of singing carols outside of church or in groups going wassailing was not common during the Regency era. Carol singing became a popular part of Christmas in England during the Victorian period.

The Christmas Season - The period between Christmas Eve and Epiphany, or Twelfth Night, was considered "Christmastide." Some sources indicate that Twelfth Night, the end to the Christmas season was celebrated more elaborately than Christmas itself.

Gift Giving - It appears that gift giving was not a major part of the Christmas celebrations during this period, except perhaps giving a gift to children.

Celebrations - Christmas was often celebrated by going to church, having a large meal, and spending time visiting family.



Regency holiday gathering. Photo credit: CharlotteBetts.com.

GENDER ROLES IN 19TH CENTURY ENGLAND



A Receipt for Courtship, 1805. Photo Credit: BYU.

Much of the popularity of Austen's books stems from their focus on women as primary characters, which brought women to the forefront of her works, if not the forefront of society, in Austen's time. Austen's female characters are complex and struggle to find their places within the strict structures placed upon them and their lives. Many scholars have written about Austen's works and whether she created an idealized vision of the role of women in her time or whether she created her women as an actively progressive comment on society.



Dance scene from *Becoming Jane*, 2008. Photo credit: Jane Austen's World.



Darcy and Elizabeth's Wedding, BBC *Pride and Prejudice*, 1995. Photo credit: pinterest.

Women did not have any legal rights at this time. All rights passed from a woman's father to her husband upon marriage. A woman did not even have rights to her own children if she were widowed, unless her husband had left her guardianship in his will.

Men were considered the ones with reason that must be nurtured, and **women were considered the "softer sex"** who must not be hardened by more intellectual or physical pursuits.

While, in Austen's novels, we see marriages based on love, we also see the pressure to marry advantageously. **Marriages at the time were a way for families to cement their landholdings or wealth**, and to ensure stability not only for the daughters they married off, but also the family as a whole.

Education for middle or upper-class women was focused on skills such as painting, dancing, embroidery, perhaps learning French, music, and other arts that might help ensure them a good husband.

Educating women in more academic pursuits was considered uncouth, and so women, such as Mary and Elizabeth, often taught themselves from reading extensively.

While jobs for women were scarce and frowned upon by the middle and upper classes, being a novelist or other type of writer was the pursuit of many women, although they often used pseudonyms or published their works anonymously like Austen.

In 1792, Mary Wollenstonecraft published *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which argued that women were the intellectual equals to men, a concept that was unheard of at the time. We see the influence of this ideology in Austen's work and in the play through bright, independent characters such as Elizabeth and Mary.

Unmarried women were expected to live with their families and to care for elderly family members. **Being single and independent was not allowed during this period.**

FINE LADIES AND RATIONAL CREATURES: MISS BENNET'S CREATIVE TEAM

"I HATE TO HEAR YOU TALK ABOUT ALL WOMEN AS IF THEY WERE FINE LADIES INSTEAD OF RATIONAL CREATURES. NONE OF US WANT TO BE IN CALM WATERS ALL OUR LIVES." - JANE AUSTEN

The creative team for *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* is a group of talented, innovative, and creative women. For the first time in Milwaukee Rep's 65 year history the entire creative team is women! How fitting this milestone occurs with a play written by two talented women who created a sequel to one of the most cherished novels by a female author in Western literature. Elizabeth and Mary, as well as Austen herself, we are sure, would approve, and applaud louder than anyone at this turning point for Milwaukee Rep.



Courtney O'Neill, Scenic Designer; Kimberly Senior, Director; and Mieka van der Ploeg, Costume Designer.
Not pictured: Noele Stollmack, Lighting Designer; Pornchanok Kanchanabanca, Sound Designer; Eva Breneman, Dialect Coach.

Photo Credit: Milwaukee Rep.



Photo Credit: TCG.

Lauren Gunderson (right) on the play: "There is a great burgeoning of stories that nerd women can get a chance at love and a life of their own. That is a perfect combination of now and then. It's really a fun way to bring the feminism and social criticism that is inherent in Jane Austen to now. . .We get this sense of this speaks to us now in the way classic literature always does."

Margot Melcon (left) on the play: "One foot lives in Jane Austen land and one foot lives in now... it feels like Jane Austen, but also feels like it relates to you."

DESIGNING MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY

"We are going to have some boxes of snow that live up in the catwalks.

We call them 'shaker boxes' because they shake and as they shake, they gently let the snow out during the course of the show."

-COURTNEY O'NEILL, SCENIC DESIGNER

"I was surprised by how funny and lively and how much of a page-turner it was as I was reading it, which definitely lends itself to the sensibility of where the set is going - **to have it feel fresh and modern.**"

- COURTNEY O'NEILL, SCENIC DESIGNER



"We started with talking about what, historically, this period looked like. It's very formal and it has a lot of ornate details, both in the architecture and the clothing . . . We wanted to start from those silhouettes and those ideas, and **simplify, and streamline, and modernize.**"

- MIEKA VAN DER PLOEG,
COSTUME DESIGNER



"The language in the play is really modern and easy to relate to, so **we didn't want them to have all this fussy, detailed clothing with the fancy ringlets in their hair** - anything that was going to take them out of being easy to relate to."

- MIEKA VAN DER PLOEG,
COSTUME DESIGNER



FEATURED ARTIST INTERVIEW

KIMBERLEY SENIOR

MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY DIRECTOR



Kimberly rehearsing *Rapture, Blister, Burn* at Goodman Theatre.

FRANCES WHITE: What exactly is this play about? What does it focus on?

SENIOR: *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* deals with a family of sisters. It centers on family coming home for the holidays and the events that take place over that time where there are too many people for the size of the space [and] it's impossible to carve out a moment of privacy. And then the actual storyline involves a romance between an unexpected guest at the Christmas holiday and one of the sisters.

WHITE: What will someone who loves Jane Austen think about this play?

SENIOR: I think it's really exciting to see people that you know and love and recognize from another point of view.... there's a shared knowledge and

intimacy of these people which is so wonderful and then to see them in another place, you're like, "I get to spend more time with them in a new way!" And there's the other side of that, for someone who is not fully fluent in Austen that it is a charming reference to a time period or things that feel iconic without you having to know the backstory.

WHITE: What is the play going to look like?

SENIOR: There is something that we're really wanting to respect of the period, and I keep using the word "silhouette". The shapes are shapes you recognize, that are period appropriate and accurate, but perhaps the textures and colors are slightly different or more modern. It's a very lush visual world. Speaking with our designers, you hear a lot of things about 'turquoise' and 'fuchsia' and 'gold'. But we made the decision to not wig the women. Let's just let them have their contemporary heads on. It's a wonderfully empowering play in that way. There's a sense that the women in this play have a lot of agency, and I want to be able to create the space for them to behave in a way that feels also accessible to the audience, and that we see ourselves in them. It's just really watching the women drive the action. Which is also what made Austen's novels remarkable in the first place, right?

WHITE: Kind of in that same vein, you have put together an entire female creative team. It is written by two women, it is based on a novel by a woman and it features women. How exciting is that? And why is that important?

SENIOR: It's the best!! Some of it is a personal journey for me. I've been working in the theater professionally for about 24 years now and a lot of my collaborators are male. Mentorship is something that I'm very devoted to and I realized that in particular in the field of design I was kind of relying on my old collaborators, and I had wonderful collaboration with our terrific designers, but I wasn't branching out. I had an opportunity to really create dynamic design teams of experienced women working with perhaps less experienced women so they could perhaps mentor one another in that way. Also, I had the question of what would it feel like to collaborate in a room full of women – does it feel different or the same? What are the things that are the same? How do we solve problems? So it's been an experiment. And Milwaukee Rep has been such an amazing partner in that. From every conversation I have with Mark Clements to talking to Jared Clarkin, everybody's been like, "Yes, of course. Yes. Great. Yes." There's been no hesitation and clearly it's a passion that lies at the heart of this theater too, in terms of aiming for parity and a space where everybody has a voice.





RESOURCES

Pride and Prejudice

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/p/pride-and-prejudice/book-summary>

Jane Austen

<https://www.janeausten.org/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Austen_in_popular_culture

<https://metro.co.uk/2013/07/08/giant-floating-mr-darcy-hits-london-3873254/>

Christmas in Regency England

<http://www.reginascott.com/christmas.htm>

<https://jobev.com/xmasarticle.html>

<https://austenonly.com/jane-austen-and-christmas/>

Gender Roles in 1800s England

<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/node/1765>

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/g/gender-ideology-and-separate-spheres-19th-century/>

<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number10/swords.htm>

<https://byuprideandprejudice.wordpress.com/2014/01/24/a-wom-ans-economic-opportunities-during-the-regency-era/>

Production Info

<https://vimeo.com/280823407>

<https://vimeo.com/186030417>



VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Quadracci Powerhouse is located on the Mezzanine and can be accessed via escalator or elevator.

THE REP VALUES YOUR SUPPORT

Financial support enables The Rep to:

- ★ Advance the art of theater with productions that inspire individuals and create community dialogue;
- ★ Provide a richer theater experience by hosting Rep-in-Depth, TalkBacks, and creating PlayGuides to better inform our audiences about our productions;
- ★ Educate over 20,000 students at 200+ schools in the greater Milwaukee area with Rep Immersion Day experiences, student matinees, workshops, tours and by making connections with their school curriculum through classroom programs such as Reading Residencies;
- ★ Maintain our commitment to audiences with special needs through our Access Services that include American Sign Language interpreted productions, captioned theater, infrared listening systems and script synopses to ensure that theater at The Rep is accessible to all;
- ★ Educate the next generation of theater professionals with our EPR Program which gives newly degreed artists a chance to hone their skills at The Rep as they begin to pursue their theatrical careers.

We value our supporters and partnerships and hope that you will help us to expand the ways Milwaukee Rep has a positive impact on theater and on our Milwaukee community.

Donations can be made on our website at www.MilwaukeeRep.com or by phone at 414-224-9490.

THE REP RECEIVES SUPPORT FROM:

The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation
The Richard & Ethel Herzfeld Foundation

