



Mansfield Park (1999)

Release Date: November 24, 1999 (Limited)

Genre: Comedy, Drama, Romance

Director: Patricia Rozema

Writer: Patricia Rozema, Jane Austen

Cast: Benny Pest, Charles Edwards, Hannah Taylor-Gordon, Hilton McRae, Sophia Myles, Victoria Hamilton, Justine Waddell, Hugh Bonneville, James Purefoy, Sheila Gish, Lindsay Duncan, Harold Pinter, Frances O'Connor, Alessandro Nivola, Jonny Lee Miller, Embeth Davidtz

Studio: Miramax Films

Running Time: 99 minutes

MPAA Rating: Rated PG-13 for brief violent images, sexual content and drug use

Patricia Rozema's daring adaptation of MANSFIELD PARK is a witty look at romance and reality, Jane Austen-style. Rozema has taken Jane Austen's third and most controversial novel and infused its lead character with the irreverent and mischievous nature at the heart of Austen's own life and writings. The result is an original social satire with a strong-willed, spirited heroine at its center who d la Austen attempts to outsmart the dizzying labyrinth of marriage and social status without compromising her ideals or her heart. This is the story of Fanny Price, who emerges from this comedic maze having discovered the rightness of one true love.

Fanny Price (Frances O'Connor) is ten years old when she is shipped from her rat-infested, hard-luck Portsmouth home to live with her wealthy relatives The Bertrams in Mansfield Park. There, she is raised by Sir Thomas Bertram (Harold Pinter) and Lady Bertram (Lindsay Duncan) as the family's "poor relation," seen as inferior to her aristocratic, and eminently marriageable, cousins Tom (James Purefoy), Edmund (Jonny Lee Miller), Maria (Victoria Hamilton) and Julia (Justine Waddell). Fanny is reminded daily that the other family members have every advantage over her, and that she should be grateful for whatever tidbits come her way. The only flickers of kindness amidst this prejudice emerge from Edmund, who shares Fanny's passion for dreams and story-telling, as well as her uncommon sensitivity.

When Fanny first arrives at Mansfield Park, she pours her amusing insights, deep feelings and fierce intelligence into secret letters, journals and other writings that are drawn directly from Jane Austen's teenage writing, sharing them only with Edmund. Like Austen-who wrote her first book at the age of 14, a clever and farcical history of England-Fanny is addicted to free self-expression in Rozema's MANSFIELD PARK and becomes a writer.

The grown up Fanny is alluring, vital and with a tongue as sharp as a guillotine. This is the Fanny who greets Henry Crawford (Alessandro Nivola) and Mary Crawford (Embeth Davidtz), a modern-thinking, dangerously charming brother and sister pair from London who set off sparks at Mansfield Park. Edmund, still the light of Fanny's life, is smitten with Mary, while Henry, who is desired by, and flirts with, almost every woman at Mansfield Park, begins to woo the ever more challenging Fanny. Yet even as the party goes on, there are dark intimations that Mansfield Park is falling into disarray, its slave-trade wealth threatened by a new moral atmosphere.

As Fanny becomes the must-have object of Henry Crawford's affections, her status is radically uplifted. Suddenly, society takes notice of her and she learns to use her influence. But when Henry Crawford proposes to Fanny, she must make a decision. Her actions throw Mansfield Park into a comic tailspin of adultery, betrayal and truth-telling, from which will emerge, among other things, a deliciously reluctant romance that slowly simmers to a union of true love.