

STUDY GUIDE

ENCHANTED APRIL

BY MATTHEW BARBER

COMPANY OF FOOLS
A PROUD PART OF SUN VALLEY CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Company of Fools
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WELCOME TO THE LIBERTY

Dear Theatre-goer,

We're delighted to welcome you to Company of Fools' final production of our 18th season - ***Enchanted April***. Hailed by the Los Angeles Times as "a lush, thoroughly refreshing theatrical holiday" and "a magical triumph" and by NYTheatre as "a play where every single element falls perfectly into place" - we are confident that this production will be a bright spot to your summer.

This study guide is designed to deepen your enjoyment of the play. We encourage you to discover the intoxicating landscape first articulated in Elizabeth Von Arnim's novel and later realized by Matthew Barber's play.

Enjoy.

Ciao!

- Company of Fools





set model created for *Company of Fools* production



costumes created for *Company of Fools* production



drops painted for *Company of Fools* production



PLAY SYNOPSIS

Based on the best-selling classic novel by Elizabeth von Arnim, *Enchanted April* takes two women on a post-World War I journey from London to Portofino, Italy. Eager for an escape, the women join an aging matron and a young socialite at an enchanting seaside castle. Their month-long holiday transforms their discontent in joyful and unexpected ways.

THE SETTING

London, England & Mezzago, Italy
1922

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Rose Arnott	Susan Sanford*
Frederick Arnott	Andrew Alburger
Lotty Wilton	Aly Wepplo
Mellersh Wilton	David Janeski
Lady Caroline Bramble	Suzanne Gray
Mrs. Graves	Irene Ziegler*
Costanza	Jana Arnold*
Antony Wilding	Neil Brookshire*

PRODUCTION STAFF

Direction	Steve Perigard
Stage Management	K.O. Ogilive*
Set Design	Joe Lavigne
Costume Design	Darrin J. Pufall
Light Design	Lynne M. Hartman
Dialect Coach	Ann Price



* Appearing courtesy of Actors' Equity Association -
The Union of Professional Actors and Stage
Managers in the United States



THE PLAYWRIGHT MATHEW BARBER

Matthew Barber was born in Los Angeles, California, and studied film, theater, and literature at UCLA. Moving to San Francisco following graduation, he enjoyed early careers as an arts journalist and publicist, while continuing to work in a creative capacity with a variety of small theater companies and arts organizations. His stage adaptation of the 1922 Elizabeth von Arnim novel *The Enchanted April* premiered at Connecticut's Hartford Stage in 2000, followed by a Broadway production in 2003, earning the John Gassner Award for Outstanding New American Play and Drama League and Tony Award nominations for Best Play. He is the recipient of Wurlitzer Foundation and Art OMI fellowships, and is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America. Matthew Barber currently lives in New York City. His original screenplay, *Independence*, and a new stage play, *Eleanor & Abel*, are in development.

ON THE ADAPTATION

I was first given the novel *The Enchanted April* by a friend and theatre associate who had a hunch I might find it an intriguing possibility for stage adaptation. I was wary. There were flowers on the cover — not a good sign. The jacket copy, all about sisterhood under the Italian sun, didn't sound even remotely like anything anyone would connect with me. And as for the author, Elizabeth von Arnim — despite a bio claiming two dozen popular novels, I'd never heard of her in my life. Still, I obligingly gave it a read — more out of courtesy than interest — and just like eight decades of readers before me, crumbled completely to the charms of the tale told, the pull of its still relevant emotional undercurrents, and its author's captivating, stingingly unsentimental voice. My friend could not have been more correct.

The more I learned about Elizabeth von Arnim, the richer the novel became. Born Mary Beauchamp in 1866 Australia, she had come of age in Victorian London, married the Prussian aristocrat Count Henning von Arnim-Schlagenthin (whom she'd met on an Italian holiday), and dutifully bore him three children in three years. Left alone each spring and summer on her husband's German country estate, however, Mary had quickly found country life, motherhood, and marriage thoroughly tedious, and in 1898 shockingly said as much in a biting humorous, anonymously published journal, *Elizabeth and Her German Garden*. The book was a sensation. Novels followed, and European society embraced this new voice among them — known only as “Elizabeth” — the “proper wife” with the observant eye and acute opinions on a woman's changing role in modern life.

By the publication of her 16th novel, *The Enchanted April*, in 1922, Mary had been widowed, lost a child to illness, returned to London, had a notorious love affair with H.G. Wells, disastrously married and quickly separated from Frank Russell (brother of philosopher Bertrand), watched millions fall in “The Great War,” then thousands more to the Spanish flu pandemic, and witnessed the birth of the women's suffrage movement, the motion picture and automobile industries, and the “Jazz Age.”

All of which, overtly or not, informs *The Enchanted April*. A 1925 stage adaptation of the novel turned the tale — now attributed to Elizabeth von Arnim, as Mary had rather haphazardly become known — into a Noël Coward knockoff revolving not around the novel's central characters of Lotty and Rose, the disillusioned middle-class London housewives, but rather the previously peripheral character of Lady Caroline, the beautiful upper-class sophisticate. An hour-long 1935 film adaptation of the play took even more liberties.

In 1991, a British television production (theatrically released in the U.S. the following year) more faithfully followed Lotty and Rose's journey from stifling London to enchanted Italy, but emphasized the story's elements of romantic comedy over its darker subtext of emotional paralysis in the face of chaotic social change.

I decided to write my adaptation of *The Enchanted April* with two intentions — to shape a true stage piece, utilizing the intrinsic abilities of theatre to create a living audience journey; and to do full justice to the voice, concerns and life of Mary Beauchamp, a.k.a. Elizabeth von Arnim, a remarkable artist whose vision, humor, and dramatic skill still resonate with readers more than a century after she first put pen to paper.

Being true to this author's voice in the form of a stage play, however, presented a distinct challenge. The intrinsic foundation of *The Enchanted April* is that all of its characters are hiding their true thoughts and feelings from each other (and often from themselves). The vast majority of the novel takes place within interior monologues, with characters thinking extravagantly for pages upon pages before choosing only to whisper "Please pass the sugar." Invention was going to be necessary. "What did they say?" had to give way to "What would they say?" and then to "How would 'Elizabeth' say it?". Both action and dialogue had to be constructed, externalizing the characters' internal journeys for an audience without destroying the novel's dramatic fabric. If I've done my job, *Enchanted April*, the stage play, provides a graceful bridge between the theatre audience and a truly unique author and the characters and themes she created with such delicate affection.

WOMEN AND WWII

From War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War Systems and Vice Versa

The World wars shook up gender relations, but only temporarily. Individual British women in the World Wars found new freedoms and opportunities in wartime — "like being let out of a cage," in one woman's words. However, gender changes were short-lived. "Attitudes towards (women's) roles at home and at work remained remarkably consistent over nearly fifty years. Both wars put conventional views about gender roles under strain," but no permanent change occurred in hostility to women in male-dominated jobs, the devaluation of female labor, and the female-only responsibility for home life.

The "reconstruction of gender" in Britain after World War I constrained women's roles and reinvigorated the ideology of motherhood. The feminist movement never regained after the war the status as a mass movement it had held before the war. Where prewar feminists had fought against separate male and female spheres and different constructions of masculinity and femininity, feminists in the interwar period gradually "accepted theories of sexual difference that helped to advance notions of separate spheres." After the "horrific events" of World War I, British society "sought above all to reestablish a sense of peace and security" and this precluded the egalitarian feminism of the prewar years, mandating instead a feminism of separate spheres to avoid "provoking the men to anger."



THE AUTHOR

ELIZABETH VON ARNIM

Elizabeth, Countess Russell, was a British novelist and, through marriage, a member of the German nobility, known as Mary Annette Gräfin von Arnim.



Born Mary Annette Beauchamp in New Zealand while her family resided in Sydney, Australia, she was raised in England and in 1891 married Count Henning August von Arnim, a Prussian aristocrat, and the great-great-grandson of King Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia. By this marriage she became known as Elizabeth Gräfin von Arnim.

She had met von Arnim during an Italian tour with her father. They married in London but lived in Berlin and eventually moved to the countryside where, in Nassenheide, Pomerania, the von Arnims had their family estate. The couple had five children, four daughters and a son. The children's tutors at Nassenheide included E. M. Forster and Hugh Walpole.

In 1898 she started her literary career by publishing *Elizabeth and Her German Garden*, a semi-autobiographical novel about a rural idyll published anonymously and, as it turned out to be highly successful, reprinted 21 times within the first year. Von Arnim wrote another 20 books, which were all published "By the author of *Elizabeth and Her German Garden*".

Count von Arnim died in 1910, and in 1916 Elizabeth married John Francis Stanley Russell, 2nd Earl Russell, Bertrand Russell's elder brother. The marriage ended in disaster, with Elizabeth escaping to the United States and the couple finally agreeing, in 1919, to get a divorce. She also had an affair with H. G. Wells.

She was a cousin of Katherine Mansfield (whose real name was Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp).

Elizabeth von Arnim spent her old age in London, Switzerland, and on the French Riviera. When World War II broke out she permanently took up residence in the United States, where she died in 1941, aged 74.

THE GREAT WAR TIMELINE

The World War of 1914-18 – The Great War, as contemporaries called it – was the first manmade catastrophe of the 20th century. Historians can easily identify the literal "smoking gun" that set the War in motion: a revolver used by a Serbian nationalist to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand (heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian throne) in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. Most of the leaders in 1914 had no real idea of the war machine they were putting into motion. Many believed the War would be over by Christmas 1914. But by the end of the first year, a new kind of war emerged on the battlefield that had never been seen before – or repeated since: total war-producing stalemate, the result of a war that went on for 1,500 days. Before the official Armistice was declared on November 11, 1918, nine million people had died on the battlefield and the world was forever changed.

June 1914: Archduke Franz Ferdinand heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife are assassinated in Sarajevo.

July 1914: Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia. As an ally of Serbia, Russia announces full mobilization of her armed forces.

August 1914: Germany mobilizes her armed forces and declares war on Russia, France and Belgium, and invades in a right flanking move designed to defeat France quickly. As a result of this invasion, Britain declares war on Germany. Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia. "The Battle of the Frontiers" – 27,000 French soldiers die on this single day in an offensive thrust to the east of Paris, towards the German borders.

September 1914: First Battle of the Marne halts German invasion in France, and first trenches in the Western Front are dug.

December 1914: Unofficial Christmas truce declared by soldiers in the trenches along the Western Front.

January 1915: War becomes "Total War" with German Zeppelin air raid on England.

February 1915: Germany declares a submarine blockade of Great Britain. Any ship approaching England is considered a legitimate target.

April 1915: Allies begin nine-month battle for Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli.

May 1915: U-boat sinks the Lusitania. 1,198 civilians, including 128 Americans die.

August 1915: Germany responds to U.S. anger by ceasing to sink ships without warning.

September 1915: Tsar Nicholas takes command of the Russian armies. British use gas in battle near Loos, but shifting winds cause 60,000 British casualties.

THE GREAT WAR TIMELINE

December 1915: Sir Douglas Haig becomes commander of British Expeditionary Force. Allies begin withdrawal of troops from Gallipoli.

February 1916: The longest battle of the war ending in December, the Battle of Verdun, is fought to a draw with an estimated one million casualties.

April 1916: US President Wilson publicly warns Germany not to continue unrestricted submarine warfare policies.

May 1916: the Battle of Jutland, the only major naval engagement of the war is fought with no clear winner.

July 1916: The Battle of the Somme results in an estimated one million casualties and no breakthrough for the Allies. British introduce the tank, an effective weapon but far too few to make much of a difference.

November 1916: Woodrow Wilson re-elected President of the United States with campaign slogan: "He kept us out of the war."

December 1916: David Lloyd George becomes Prime Minister of Britain. Rasputin, the self-avowed holy man and confidant to the Tsarina, is murdered by relatives of the Tsar.

February 1917: Germany again declares unrestricted submarine warfare.

April 1917: President Wilson asks Congress for a declaration of war with Imperial Germany. French launch disastrous offensive at Chemin des Dames, advancing only 500 yards at the cost of 250,000 plus casualties. Over half a million French soldiers mutiny, or "go on strike" and refuse to continue the failed offensive.

May 1917: The United States passes the Selective Service Act empowering the Federal Government to draft men for the armed forces.

July 1917: The first wave of the American Expeditionary Force lands in France.

October 1917: American troops in France fire their first shot in trench warfare.

December 1917: The new Russian government, represented by Leon Trotsky, signs an armistice with Germany. British capture Jerusalem from the Turks and their Arab allies.

1918-1919: Two waves of influenza kill more people than did the war.

January 1918: President Woodrow Wilson declares his 14 points as the path to permanent world peace.

March 1918: Germans launch the first of five major offensives to win the war before American troops appear in the trenches. German advance is finally stopped in late June.

April 1918: British and Australian troops stop the German advance near Amiens.

May 1918: German shells land on Paris. Germans on the banks of the Marne near Paris are stopped by American forces at Chateau-Thierry.

July 1918: German troops being shipped from the Eastern to the Western Front begin to desert in large numbers from their transport trains. Former Tsar Nicholas II, his wife, children, and members of his entourage are murdered by the Bolsheviks.

August 1918: President Wilson agrees to co-operate with Allies in sending "volunteer" troops into Russia. Allied counter offensives on the Somme push the German army back and into retreat.

September 1918: Allied troops break through the German fortifications at the Hindenburg line.

November 1918: Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates. A German republic is founded. At eleven o'clock on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the war ends as Germany and Allies sign an Armistice.

January 1919: A coup launched by German revolutionaries in Berlin is suppressed by paramilitary units. German socialist rebels Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg are murdered.

February 1919: Allies' military intervention in Russia is secretly agreed to.

June 1919: Peace Treaty signed by German delegates and Allies in Versailles.

From <http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/timeline/>



LEARN MORE ON-LINE

A look at Castello Brown, where Elizabeth von Arnim wrote *The Enchanted April*, with history and photos:
<http://www.castellobrown.com>

'Downton Abbey' fever reaches forgotten author Elizabeth von Arnim

<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/jacketcopy/2012/01/downton-abbey-fever-reaches-forgotten-author-elizabeth-von-arnim.html>

'Downton Abbey': Elizabeth von Arnim Returns to Life

http://www.finebooksmagazine.com/fine_books_blog/2012/01/elizabeth-von-arnim-returns-to-life.phtml

A Second Flowering

<http://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets/Essays/Katherine-Mansfield-Society-Essay-Series-A-Second-Flowering-by-Isobel-Maddison.pdf>

Elizabeth von Arnim: The forgotten feminist who's flowering again

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/elizabeth-von-arnim-the-forgotten-feminist-whos-flowering-again-6258398.html>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

LITERATURE

Other Woks by Elizabeth von Arnim:

The Princess Priscilla's Fortnight (1905)

Fraulein Schmidt (1907)

Mr. Anstruther (1907)

The Caravaners (1909)

Priscilla Runs away (1910)

The Pastor's Wife (1914)

Christine (1917)

Love (1925)

Father (1931)

The Jasmine Farm (1934)

All the Dogs of my Life (1936)

Mr. Skeffington (1940)

FILMS

The Enchanted April – Dir. Harry Beaumont.
RKO Radio Productions (1935)

The Enchanted April – Dir. Mike Newell.
BBC Films (1992)

