

Charlotte

All our music this afternoon is contemporary with Jane Austen, and many pieces are found in her family music books, some written in her own hand. We will try to set Jane in the society of her time – not just her immediate circle but the villages she lived in – and to highlight the musical traditions of that period with which she would have been familiar. Details of our music are set out in your programme.

Mrs Gower will interrupt us at times with some of Jane Austen's reflections.

Our band will now play *The London March*, one of the pieces in Jane's manuscript.

D191a The London March**Charlotte**

By the time Jane was born here in Steventon in 1775, there were already six children in the family with one more still to come.

As was the custom of the time, the Austen babies spent the first few weeks with their mother, and then were cared for in the village by Nanny Littleworth, mixing with the cottage children. When they approached the 'age of reason' they were returned to the family.

The only reference to her childhood comes in a poem sent to her brother Frank to commemorate the birth of his son. She recalls her brother's Hampshire accent in this extract:

Diana (Jane Austen)

Thy infant days may he inherit,
Thy warmth, nay insolence of spirit...
May he revive thy Nursery sin,
Peeping as daringly within,
His curly Locks but just desried,
With '*Bet, my be not come to bide.*'

Jane Austen letter to Francis Wed July 26 1809 Chawton

Charlotte

Once the children were settled back in Steventon, the life of a country parsonage dominated. Attending church, visiting the sick, handing out alms, were so usual that Jane rarely mentions them.

Is it surprising that church life was taken for granted? Perhaps it is the reason there are only two religious pieces in her manuscripts?

Sicilian Mariners is one of them, perhaps as a practice piece for piano.

892m Sicilian Mariners Medley, with Psalm 111 vv.1 & 2

Judy

The Austen household was full of life and activity, dominated by the boys in the family and the pupils attending the school, which the Reverend Austen ran.

There were also many local families in the surrounding villages who were brought in for the theatrical productions, which were often embellished by eldest brother James and later by Jane.

Mrs Austen was a lively producer of poems. This extract from a longer poem sent to one of the school-boys, Gilbert East, who had not returned after the Christmas break, shows why the lad returned soon after receiving it, and kept it all his life.

Terry (Mrs Austen)

That you dance very well
 All beholders can tell
 For lightly and nimbly you tread;
 But pray is it meet,
 To indulge thus your feet,
 And neglect all the while your poor head?

So we send you this letter
 In hopes you'll think better,
 And reflect upon what is here said:
 And to make us amends
 Pray return to your friends,
 Fowle, Stewart, Deane, Henry, & Ned.

Poem to Gilbert East Jane Austen A Life by Claire Tomalin pub. Penguin

Judy

Close friendships were formed amongst all the children, which lasted into adulthood. So Psalm 133, often called the 'Fellowship Psalm,' may have been special for Jane and her siblings.

231u Lonsdale, verses as below

Blest are the sons...
 We share our mutual...
 This glorious hope...

Ros

The Reverend George Austen was unusual amongst 18th century clergymen in being conscientious about carrying out his duties. He lived at Deane for 3 years and when he added Steventon to his livings, moved here and employed a Curate for Deane. He continued to walk over for services and churchwarden meetings.

Jane was acquainted with probably a hundred churchmen, and pokes fun at them in Mansfield Park.

Diana (Jane Austen)

A Clergyman has nothing to do but be slovenly and selfish - read the newspaper, watch the weather, and quarrel with his wife. His Curate does all the work, and the business of his own life is to dine.

Jane Austen Mansfield Park

Ros

Mrs Austen was kept busy with her household duties, and looking after a bull and six cows, ducks and chickens, so she did need some help.

Diana (Jane Austen)

We plan having a steady Cook and a young, giddy Housemaid, with a sedate, middle-aged Man, who is to undertake the double office of Husband to the former and sweetheart to the latter.

Jane Austen letter of Jan 3, 1801 (Steventon)

Ros

To pay for these additions to the household, the Austen family relied almost entirely on their income of £35 a year each from the 4 or 5 boys in the school and about £210 a year from tithes collected in the two parishes, all supplemented by the family farming on rented land.

Between 1770 and 1800 the value of church livings trebled despite hard times for labourers. One tenth of all produce went to the churchman and this was a source of great anger.

Jane Austen in Context Ed Janet Todd CUP 2005

John B

We've cheated the parson, we'll cheat him again for why should the blockhead have one in ten? (shouted from place, shaking his fist)

Ros

We will sing these words by Dryden. Please join in.

150e Harvest Home (audience participation) omit We'll step and we'll dance

Celia

Many churches had local musicians to lead the music, and they and the quire sat up in the West Gallery, if there was one, far from the eye of the parson. There are not enough local records to know if Steventon and Deane had their own bands but at nearby Wootton St Lawrence in 1795 the accounts show a bassoon being bought for John Dicker.

75M72/PZ4(1) Wootton St Lawrence Churchwarden's Accounts 1698-1927

As today, life sometimes didn't run smoothly in the churches and tempers frayed. At Wootton St Lawrence Church the patience of the vicar was sorely tested.

Nigel

Thus a Company of Singers have of late met together in the Church in the evening to sing by candle-light, & at the same time ring the Bells, without asking any leave.

I would not at all discourage their practising to sing there, nor yet their exercising themselves in Ringing; but still I insist that the Church is my Freehold. Thos Fenton, Vicar.

75M72/PZ4(2) Typescript of Wootton St Lawrence Churchwarden's Accounts 1698-1927 p37 Vicar 1724-43

Celia

George Austen wrote his own sermons, and sometimes Jane copied them out for him. He seemed particularly fond of the sermon on the text of Psalm 5 verse 9: "For there is no faithfulness in their mouths". Usually a tolerant man, he used it 8 times in Steventon and 7 times in Deane when there was obviously a notable falling off of Christian charity in the two communities.

Jane Austen and Religion by William Jarvis.

We do not have his sermon but we will use that same text in a metrical psalm of the time. I am sure the congregation would be suitably chastised!

901 Psalm 5 NV v. 1, 6, 9

Stephen

From the age of 17 Jane began to attend the Assembly Balls in the Town Hall in Basingstoke, to which the family had subscription tickets. She also writes about dances in Bath, at the Dolphin in Southampton and at private houses.

By far the most popular dances of Jane's lifetime were 'longways sets' with long lines of couples performing figures and progressing up and down the set.

This could lead to very long dances indeed (half an hour to an hour) if there were many couples in a set, and so plenty of time to chat quietly with one's partner or to make observations on those present.

Diana (Jane Austen)

Mrs. B. and two young women were of the same party, except when Mrs. B. thought herself obliged to leave them, to run round the room after her drunken husband. His avoidance, and her pursuit, with the probable intoxication of both, was an amusing scene.

Jane Austen letter of May 12 1801 (Gay St Bath)

Stephen

Jane Austen had piano lessons until she was 21, studying with George Chard - an organist from Winchester Cathedral. She was a keen player and, practised daily before breakfast.

By eighteen hundred and eight she was telling her sister Cassandra:

Diana (Jane Austen)

Yes, yes, we will have a pianoforte, as good a one as can be got for 30 guineas, and I will practice country dances, that we may have some amusement for our nephews and nieces, when we have the pleasure of their company.

Jane Austen letter to Cassandra, Wed Dec 28 1808 Castle Square

Stephen

Our band will now play a country dance, La Tempête from the keyboard manuscript of Jane's nieces.

D189g La Tempête, no repeats

Anne T

As the unmarried daughter of a clergyman, Jane had plenty of time to consider her future prospects.

Diana (Jane Austen)

Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor. Which is one very strong argument in favour of matrimony.

Jane Austen letter of March 13 1817 (Chawton)

A large income is the best recipe for happiness I ever heard of.

Jane Austen Mansfield Park

Anne T

In the Banns of Marriage specimen page of the register for Steventon, Jane took the opportunity to announce the banns of her own marriage. Judging by the names, she is having fun by gradually lowering her sights from possibly a gentleman in London to a merchant in Liverpool and finally a local farmer.

Diana (Jane Austen)

Jane Austen and
Frederick Howard Fitzwilliam of London
Edmund Arthur William Mortimer of Liverpool
Jack Smith

Terry

Mrs Mitford commented on the teenage Jane that she was “the prettiest, silliest, most affected, husband-hunting butterfly she ever remembered.” When she was 20 Jane appears to have fallen for Tom Lefroy, a young lawyer. With the young people’s lack of prospects the families thought things had gone far enough and they sent Tom away. Jane showed her ability to hide her feelings beneath an over-dramatic veneer.

Diana (Jane Austen)

At length the day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy, and when you receive this it will be over. My tears flow at the melancholy idea.

Jane Austen letter of January 15th 1796 (Steventon)

Anne T

Six years later, on 2 December 1802, when Jane and her sister were visiting Manydown House, 21 year old Harris Bigg-Wither proposed marriage to her - and was accepted. Jane was 6 years older than Harris, and a good deal cleverer, but they had known each other a long time. There might have been plenty of mutual regard. But after a night of second thoughts, Jane left Manydown abruptly, having broken off her very short engagement.

Diana (Jane Austen)

Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection.

Jane Austen letter of November 8th 1815 (Hans Place London)

Anne T

Nevertheless Jane was not averse to flirting and chose this 3 part catch for her manuscript book. I wonder who were the others who sang it with her?

893 Catch – Joan said to John A, S, T, B

John B

Jane's brothers Frank and Charles both fought in the Navy during the Napoleonic wars, and both rose to the rank of Admiral.

Diana (Jane Austen)

The navy, I think, who have done so much for us, have at least an equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the privileges which any home can give.

Jane Austen Persuasion

John B

The hope of prize money for the capture of enemy ships could stiffen the resolve of even the most reluctant sailor. The rewards were worthwhile and in *Persuasion* Captain Wentworth returns with enough money to set up a comfortable home. Jane writes of brother Charles' bounty:

Diana (Jane Austen)

He has received £30 for his share of the privateer and expects £10 more – but of what avail is it to take prizes if he lays out the produce in presents to his Sisters. He has been buying Gold chains and Topaz Crosses for us; - he must be well scolded...

Jane Austen letter of May 27, 1801 (Paragon)

Nigel

A contemporary cartoon shows Sailor Jack apparently hiding behind a gun just before an action; an officer accuses him of being afraid.

John B

"Afraid! ... No, sir! I was only praying that the Enemy's shot may be distributed in the same proportion as the prize money - the greatest part among the officers"

from a cartoon of Sailor Jack - Nelson and Emma. Ed. Roger Hudson. Folio Society, London 1994 P220

Nigel

Prayer sheets were published to celebrate notable events. Purchases were recorded in the Deane Churchwarden's accounts, and a prayer sheet cost between 1 shilling and 1 shilling and sixpence. Once paid for they would have been freely used in surrounding churches. Three of the prayers were to celebrate the victories of Sir John Jervis at Cape St Vincent, Admiral Duncan at Camperdown and Admiral Nelson at the Nile.

ref 66M83/PW1 Deane Churchwardens accounts

John B

We celebrate Jervis, Duncan and Nelson in this patriotic Glee by John Davy of Exeter.

272 Glee On Admiral Nelson's Victory

Daphne

Jane's life in Hampshire was enlivened by visits to London but she had an ambivalent attitude to what went on there.

Diana (Jane Austen)

We do not look in our great cities for our best morality.

Here I am once more in this scene of dissipation and vice, and I begin already to find my morals corrupted.

Jane Austen letter of August 23 1796 (Cork St. London)

Daphne

Jane Austen thoroughly enjoyed shopping not just locally in Overton but during her visits to London, particularly once she began to earn a small income from her books. Her letters show that she also went to many popular theatre productions and private parties.

Diana (Jane Austen)

Above 80 people are invited for next Tuesday Evening and there is to be some very good Music, 5 professionals, 3 of them Glee singers, besides Amateurs...

Jane Austen Letter of Thurs 18th – Sat 20th April 1811 (Sloane St. London)

Daphne

This Glee, written out in an Austen MS book, was from the finale of Act I of Robin Hood, produced in 1784. The original words by William Shenstone were replaced in Robin Hood by words by Leonard MacNally.

The music was written by Lord Mornington, celebrated in his day but now better known as Lord Wellington's father.

Imagine the stage production as we sing.

715a By Greenwood Tree

Charlotte

Jane died in Cassandra's arms, aged only 41, on July 18 1816. Country folk believed that a 'fine, fitting send off' was everyone's due and there were many favourite hymns used for funerals.

Jane's funeral at Winchester Cathedral was a simple ceremony without music. It was fitted in before morning service. The mourners were three of her brothers and one nephew. Women were not allowed, of course, so Cassandra could only watch the funeral procession from College Street as it disappeared through Kingsgate.

The inscription on Jane's gravestone recorded her personal virtues and strong faith, but made no mention at all of her writing apart from 'the extraordinary endowments of her mind'.

Many 18th and 19th Century tombstones were not all as worthy as Jane's.

Stephen

I like this epitaph from Shrewsbury -

Here lies the body of Martha Dias,
Who was always uneasy and not over-pious.
She lived to the age of three score and ten,
And gave to the worms what she refused to the men.

Charlotte

208 years after Jane's death we would like to give her a suitable village 'send off'. Few village funerals were complete without singing *The Dying Christian to his Soul*, popularly known as *Vital Spark*, around the grave.

A printed copy of this piece is also in one of the Austen music books.

107 Vital Spark

Cristina

Jane's death may have been mourned by few at the time **but** her influence over the years increased as readers began to appreciate what was revolutionary in the form and technique of her novels. In *Northanger Abbey* Jane expresses in a few words a defence of this 'species of composition'.

Diana (Jane Austen)

And what are you reading, Miss -- -? Oh! it is only a novel! replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame. It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humor, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language.

Northanger Abbey Ch 5

Christina

It is interesting to note that most of Jane's writing was done in the quiet of Steventon or of Chawton. Perhaps there were too many distractions in Bath, Southampton and London.

The Prince Regent took an interest in the published novels and indicated through an intermediary that Jane might chose to dedicate her next book to him – even suggesting she write a Historical Romance about the House of Coburg.

Diana (Jane Austen)

... I could not sit seriously down to write a serious Romance under any other motive than to save my Life; ... I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter.

No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own Way.

Jane Austen letter of April 1st 1816 (Chawton)

Christina

And time has proved that her 'own way' has had a powerful influence on, and delighted readers all over the world.

We finish our programme with a popular version of Psalm 57, found in manuscripts all over the country, which will joyously acknowledge Jane's enduring faith throughout her life.

1024 Psalm 57 OV v 10, 11, 13 Repeat last verse only

Possible encore 267 Giberaltar

To leave by D234 The London Hornpipe