

DIRGES AND SAD DITTIES

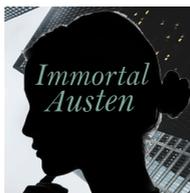
from Jane Austen's Music Collection

Closing concert for 'Immortal Austen': An International Conference
Mead Hall, Flinders Street Baptist Church, Adelaide

2.30pm, Sunday 16 July 2017

*Nicola Hardie-Beveridge (soprano) • Gillian Dooley (soprano) •
Christopher Rawlinson (violin)*

Kirstine Moffat (piano solo) • Alistair Knight (piano accompaniment)



Afternoon tea provided by:

the
devotea

With talk from Robert Godden on Jane Austen and tea.

Jane Austen (1774-1817) and Music

Music was part of Jane Austen's life. She learned the piano from an early age, and we know that she was still taking lessons in 1796 and continued to play throughout her life. In preparation for the move to Chawton from Southampton in 1809, she wrote to her sister Cassandra, 'Yes, yes, we will have a pianoforte, as good as can be got for thirty 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.' (27 December 1808).

Fifty years after Austen died, her niece Caroline Austen reminisced:

Aunt Jane began her day with music – for which I conclude she had a natural taste; as she thus kept it up – 'tho she had no one to teach; was never induced (as I have heard) to play in company; and none of her family cared much for it. I suppose that she might not trouble them, she chose her practising time before breakfast – when she could have the room to herself – She practised regularly every morning – She played very pretty tunes, I thought – and I liked to stand by her and listen to them; but the music (for I knew the books well in after years) would now be thought disgracefully easy – Much that she played from was manuscript, copied out by herself – and so neatly and correctly, that it was as easy to read as print.

In Austen's time, the distribution of sheet music among amateurs involved either purchasing expensive printed material, or the exacting task of copying music by hand. Austen's surviving music books show that she and other women in her extended family spent both time and money pursuing their amateur musical interests. There are 18 books in the Austen Family Music Books collection, now digitised and available on open access at: <https://archive.org/details/austenfamilymusicbooks&tab=about>

Program

She's dead - we miss her so much

Che Faro senza Euridice - Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-87)

Here's the Bower she loved so much - Thomas Moore (1779-1852)

My Phillida, Adieu love - Miss Mellish (dates unknown)

For tenderness formed - Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816) arr.
Thomas Linley.

Sonatina 1 in C (Andante, Maggiore, Andante) - Ignaz Pleyel (1757-1831)

I will suffer unto death -

Silent sorrow - Georgiana Cavendish (1757-1806), words by R.B.
Sheridan

Thy fatal shafts - Philip Hayes (?) (1738-97)

Since then I'm doomed - Antoine-Laurent Baudron (1742-1834)

The Dying Christian to his soul (piano solo) - Edward Harwood (1707-87)

Royal murder and glorious revolution

Captivity - Stephen Storace (1762-96)

Queen Mary's Lamentation - Scottish trad. arr. Tommaso
Giordani (c1730-1806)

Marseilles March -- Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle (1760-1836)

Interval - refreshments provided by Devotea

What if ...?

Somebody - Anon

Nobody coming to marry me - arr. Thomas Simpson Cooke
(1782-1848)

Love never more shall give me pain - Anon

Hush-aby baby - Anon

Piano Sonata in C Hob 16/35 (Adagio) - Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

The Lass that loves a soldier (or sailor)

The Soldier's adieu - Charles Dibdin (1745-1814)

The Soger laddie - Anon

O Susan, lovely Susan, dear - Anon

Sure 'twould make a dismal story - Samuel Arnold (1740-1802)

Vengeance due to broken vows

Colin and Lucy - Tommaso Giordani, words by Thomas Tickell
(1685-1740)

Le Petit Rien - Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858)

But life goes on

Dear is my little native vale - James Hook (1746-1827)

Begone, dull care - Anon

The Music

Today's program is drawn from the Austen family music collection, and includes many pieces which Austen wrote out by hand. It is not a representative sample: in keeping with the 'Immortal Austen' theme, we have chosen music which in some way relates to the theme of death, mourning and mortality.

We begin with a bracket of songs mourning the loss of a beloved woman. The opening aria is Gluck's celebrated lament sung by Orpheus on the death of his wife Eurydice, from the 1762 opera *Orpheus and Eurydice*. Often sung by a contralto or countertenor, this work survives in the Austen Collections as a printed score in the higher key of D major. The book in which it is bound was dated 1778 (when Jane was only 3) so may have belonged to her mother, but later annotations in her handwriting show that she was familiar with it. 'Here's the Bower' by Thomas Moore, whose best-known composition might be 'The Last Rose of Summer', is in Austen's handwriting, as is 'My Phillida', the only known composition by Miss Mellish, about whom nothing else is known. 'For Tenderness Form'd' is an aria from Paisiello's opera *The Barber of Seville*, arranged for a London play, *The Heiress*, by Thomas Linley. This song appears in a print edition in the same book as the Gluck aria which began this bracket.

Ignaz Pleyel, born in Austria, lived in London in the early 1790s, where he was a friend and rival of Joseph Haydn. Pleyel was an extremely prolific and successful composer and many of his sonatas, sonatinas and other piano works appear in Austen's collection.

The second group of songs are all in Austen's own handwriting, and all contemplate the singer's own death with some pathos. The first is an elegant love song composed by the celebrated Duchess of Devonshire, Georgiana Cavendish, to words by the playwright R.B. Sheridan. 'Thy fatal shafts unerring prove' is an agitated poem by Tobias Smollett about the pains of love, set to music probably by Philip Hayes in 1792. 'Since then I'm doomed', like 'For Tenderness Form'd', is an arrangement for

a London play (*The Spoiled Child*) of an aria from a version of *The Barber of Seville*, in this case by the French composer Baudron.

‘The Dying Christian to his Soul’ is a poem by Alexander Pope, and appears in Austen’s music book in a print copy as set by Edward Harwood for three voices.

However, today we are presenting an arrangement of this piece for piano solo. It is in five sections: ‘Preludio’; ‘Vital Spark’, ‘Hark! They whisper angels say’, ‘The world recedes’, and ‘Lend, lend your wings’.

The next group of songs are all written in Austen’s hand within the space of a few pages in the same manuscript book. ‘The Marseilles

March’ is the well-known Marseillaise, adopted as the

national anthem of the French Republic in 1795. It seems ironic that just a few pages later, Austen copied the tragic ballad ‘Captivity’, a lament by the captive Queen Marie Antoinette as she awaits her fate following the French Revolution. This song is by Stephen Storace, a musician who was known to Mozart and whose sister, Nancy, was the first Susanna in Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro*. The next song in Austen’s manuscript book is ‘Queen Mary’s Lamentation’, a setting by Giordani of a Scottish song about another doomed queen, Mary Queen of Scots, whom, as we know from her ‘History of England’, Austen particularly admired.

After interval, the music resumes on a wistful note with traditional songs imagining what might be. Austen’s manuscript version of ‘Somebody’ has a different tune to the other available sources of this charming Scottish song, while Cooke’s arrangement of the petulant comic song ‘Nobody

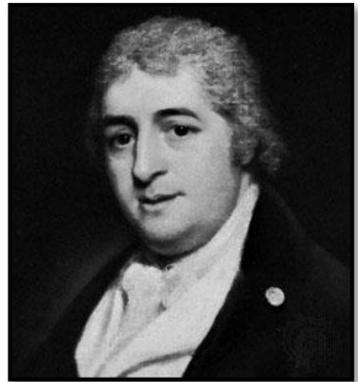


The Duchess of Devonshire,
by Thomas Gainsborough

coming to marry me' is in a book of printed music which belonged to 'Mrs Henry Austen' - probably Jane's brother's second wife, Eleanor née Jackson. 'Love never more' is in a manuscript book dating from the mid-18th century which probably belonged to Ann Cawley, who taught Jane and Cassandra when they were children, and might have been used in Jane's early music education. We follow this plaintive and heart-felt love song with an unfamiliar version of 'Hush-aby baby', which appears in a group of seven nursery rhymes in Austen's hand, in a manuscript book bringing together a wide variety of musical styles from Mozart arias to country dances.

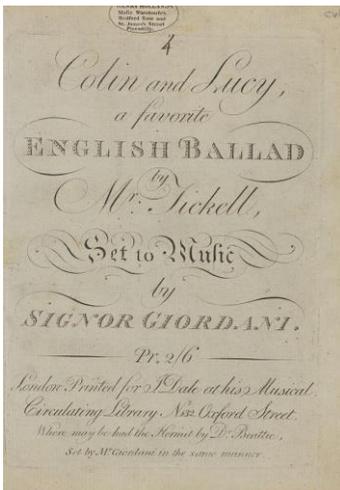
In the same manuscript book we find a complete piano sonata by Haydn written out by Austen. The Adagio movement is lyrical and contemplative. It is interesting that elsewhere in Austen's manuscript books is a song, 'William', by Thomas Billington which borrows its melody from the sprightly first movement of this sonata.

During practically all of Austen's adult life Britain was at war with France, and the next bracket reflects the pervasive influence of this on the lives not only of the men serving in the military but also of the women who were fated to wait for them. These songs represent a highly romantic ideal of women's fidelity and devotion, and involve a good deal of wishful thinking. 'The Soldier's Adieu' is an unusually serious song for Charles Dibdin. Dibdin's comic, knockabout songs were clearly favourites with Austen and she copied many into her music books. They were frequently about life in the navy, and a notable feature of Austen's copy of 'The Soldier's Adieu' is that she crossed out the word 'soldier' and replaced it with 'sailor' in the line 'Remember thou art a sailor's wife'.



Charles Dibdin, the most prolific English singer-songwriter of his time.

In the next song in this bracket, an optimistic young woman cheerfully boasts about her ‘lovely laddie’ who will come home and bestow riches and matrimony on her. This song is in the same early book as ‘Love never more’, while the next two are both in Austen’s own handwriting. ‘Susan’ is a moving appeal by a sailor for his lover to maintain her love for him, and her faith in him, during his absence at sea. This group ends with a short and matter-of-fact morale-boosting song by Samuel Arnold emphasising the duty of women to care for their returned lovers even if wounded in battle.



The next item is a seven-part setting by Giordani, of a celebrated poem by Thomas Tickell, who was highly regarded in literary circles during the 18th century. It tells a highly melodramatic tale of a spurned maiden who goes to unusual lengths to avenge herself on her unfaithful lover and his new bride. The print music to this ballad is in a book which was probably purchased and bound when Austen was still a child, but she later owned the bound volume: her signature appears on the fly leaf.

Cramer, who wrote the piano solo ‘Le Petit Rien’, has the distinction of being the only composer mentioned by name in Austen’s novels. His works are among the music which accompanies the piano that arrives as a mysterious present for Jane Fairfax in *Emma*. (‘Petit rien’, though it literally means ‘little nothing’, can mean a gift or present.)

We finish with a couple of cheerful songs: after all, despite conflict, grief and difficulties, life goes on. Nobody could be better equipped to remind us of this fact than James Hook, whose sunny, cheerful songs like ‘Dear is my little native vale’ make frequent appearances Austen’s music manuscript books. This pastoral idyll admits no darker side to life, while our final duet, ‘Begone, dull care’, warns that ‘too much care will make a

young man grey, and too much care will turn an old man to clay’ and recommends dancing and singing ‘to drive dull care away’.



Kirstine Moffat with an 1824 William Allen piano that came to New Zealand in the early 1840s

This afternoon’s program is only a small sample of the hundreds of songs and piano works in the Austen music collections. Perhaps the most surprising thing about the collection is the number of composers whose works are virtually unknown today. Composers such as Handel, Haydn and Thomas Arne are represented but they take their place alongside dozens of composers whose works are long out of circulation. Some of the music survives, as far as we know, only in Austen’s manuscript books. This collection is therefore important for music history; but for Austen’s readers gives a fascinating and tantalising glimpse into her cultural milieu – the sound-

world in which she lived, and the music she herself made. The musical style is tuneful and harmonically straightforward: pre-Beethoven, and even Mozart makes only an occasional appearance. The song lyrics are often highly sentimental, but sometimes humorous in a slightly mischievous and even vulgar way which might make us think again about the persistent image of Austen as a prim maiden aunt.

Gillian Dooley

The Musicians

Gillian Dooley, recently retired from Flinders Library, is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Humanities. She has been researching music in Austen's life and work for more than 20 years, and since 2007 has presented many concerts of the music from the Austen family collections. Gillian sings with Nicola and Alistair in Corinthian Singers. She is one of the convenors of the 'Immortal Austen' conference.

Originally from Aberdeen in Scotland, **Nicola Hardie-Beveridge** graduated from the Elder Conservatorium in 1983. She is a freelance instrumental tutor (voice, flute and clarinet), choir trainer and soloist, and is Music Coordinator at St John's Anglican Church, Halifax St, Adelaide. Nicola is the longest serving current member of Corinthian Singers of Adelaide.

Alistair Knight is a pianist, organist, choral conductor and a secondary teacher specialising in maths, science and technology. He was organ scholar and assistant organist at St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide from 2004 to 2008 and is currently musical director of Corinthian Singers of Adelaide.

Kirstine Moffat is a Senior Lecture in English and the Associate Dean Postgraduate at the University of Waikato where her research focuses on nineteenth century New Zealand literature and musical culture and on adaptation. She is the author of *Piano Forte: Stories and Soundscapes from Colonial New Zealand*.

Christopher Rawlinson is an experienced amateur chamber music player and enjoys a wide range of classical and folk musical styles, playing on occasions with the folk group Rum and Raspberry. He regularly plays with friends in the Sostenuito String Quartet and has previously accompanied Gillian in various performances. In 2015 Chris established the annual residential Adelaide Chamber Music School for amateur players. The third school will be run in October this year with the Australian String quartet as tutors.

