

Jane Austen's Songs of the Sea



Gillian Dooley (soprano) • Raechel Damarell (mezzo)

Christine Morphett (harp)

Richard Schaumlöffel (violin)

Kathy Walton (flute and whistles)

South Australian Maritime Museum, Lipson St, Port Adelaide

Saturday 4 November 2017, 6pm

Program

1. Life at sea and homecoming

The Heaving of the Lead – William Shield (1748-1828)

Reading: Mansfield Park Vol. 1 Chapter 6

Mary Crawford, Fanny Price and Edmund Bertram discuss the navy

Yo Heave Ho – Charles Dibdin (1745-1814)

My Love She's but a Lassie Yet (Trad. Scottish)

Reading: Mansfield Park, Vol. 2 Chapter 6

William Price talks about life at sea, and Henry Crawford contemplates a life in the navy

The Lucky Escape – Charles Dibdin

2. Over the seas

William – Thomas Billington (1754-1832) based on an air by Haydn (1732-1809)

The Boatman (Trad. Scottish)

Gigue Angloise – Louis von Esch (c.1750-1829)

Reading: Persuasion Vol. 1 Chapter 11

The story of Captain Charles Benwick and his lost love

Seaton Clifts (Anon., words by Rev. W. Crowe)

Far o'er the Western Ocean – Joseph Major (1771-1828)

Hornpipe from Water Music – George Frederick Handel (1685-1759)

Interval

3. Sailors in love

The Soldier's [Sailor's] Adieu Charles Dibdin

Reading: Persuasion Vol. 2, Chapter 11

A discussion of the relative fidelity of men and women

Oh Susan, Susan Lovely Dear (Anon; words by John Gay)

Peggy, I Must Love Thee (Trad. Scottish)

Reading: Matthew Flinders and music

My Evening Song (Air by Haydn? Words by Matthew and Ann Flinders)

The Glorious First of June (From Preston's *Twenty four Country Dances for the Year 1795.*)

4. War and revolution

Sure 'twould Make a Dismal Story – Samuel Arnold (1740-1802)

Captivity – Stephen Storace (1762-1796)

Reading: Letter from Jane Austen to James Stanier Clarke,

Librarian to the Prince Regent, 1 April 1816

Jane Austen explains her choice of subject matter.

Marseilles March – Rouget de Lisle (1760-1836)

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Christine Morphett plays a beautiful antique pedal harp made in London in 1813 by Erat, and bought at an auction in Adelaide. It is one of only three of these harps left in the world, with a special double action.

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 their 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>

The Music



This evening's program is drawn largely from the Austen family music collection, and includes many pieces which Austen wrote out by hand or owned in printed form. It is not a representative sample: we have chosen music which in some way relates to the maritime theme, given the wonderful setting for tonight's concert.

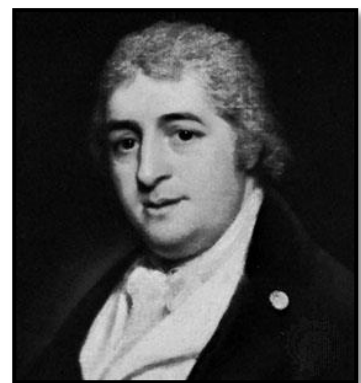
Jane Austen had two brothers in the Royal Navy, Rear Admiral Charles Austen (1779-1852) (pictured left) and

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Francis Austen (1774-1865). This by itself might explain the number of nautical songs in her collection. However, during practically all of Austen's adult life Britain was at war with France, and these songs reflect 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. One often finds a highly romantic ideal of women's fidelity and devotion, and a good deal of wishful thinking. We have interspersed instrumental pieces through the program, reflecting the folk tradition of shipboard music for dancing. Some of these are in the Austen music collections, while others are typical of this type of music.

The first group includes songs by popular composers William Shield and Charles Dibdin, each telling a story about the seafaring life. These comic, knockabout songs by composers like Shield and Dibdin were clearly favourites with Austen and she copied several songs like this into her music books.

The songs in the next bracket show the stress and anguish of women waiting at home for their husbands or lovers who have travelled, or been sent, over the seas – a common fate in those times of war and imperial expansion. 'William' is based on the first movement a piano sonata by Haydn, set to words by Thomas Billington, who apparently made a speciality of adapting the works of other composers. The complete Haydn piano sonata is also copied out in Jane Austen's hand in another of her manuscript books. The other three songs in this bracket have traditional or anonymous tunes, including the rather odd 'Seaton Clifts', which appears in Austen's handwriting without attribution, and one by Joseph Major, about whom very little is known. We conclude the first half with the Hornpipe from Handel's Water Music. Handel, along with Haydn, is one of the few composers in Austen's collection who are still famous today.

After interval, we begin with a bracket of songs about sailors who must leave wives and lovers behind. 'The Soldier's Adieu' is an unusually serious song for Charles Dibdin (pictured right). A notable feature of Austen's copy of this song is that she crossed out the word 'soldier' and replaced it with 'sailor' in the line 'Remember thou art a sailor's wife'. '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. 'Peggy, I must love thee' uses the figure of a shipwrecked sailor as a metaphor for a broken-hearted lover.



We then take a slight detour to a song with words written by Matthew Flinders – who knew Captain Charles Austen, as a brother naval officer. This bracket ends with a dance tune titled 'The Glorious First of June', which was a

famous 1794 naval battle in which Flinders fought before he turned his hand to exploration.

The last group of songs begins 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 song, 'Captivity', is a lament by Marie Antoinette, contemplating her impending doom at the hands of the French revolutionaries, and we draw the concert to a close with a version of 'The Marseillaise', the anthem rallying those very revolutionaries to arms. It is remarkable that these two songs were copied by Austen into her manuscript book within a few pages of each other.

This evening's program is only a small sample of the hundreds of songs and piano works in the Austen music collections. Perhaps the most unexpected thing about the collection is the number of composers whose works are virtually unknown today. Composers such as Handel and Haydn 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: it is pre-Beethoven, and even Mozart makes only a very 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.

The Musicians

Raechel Damarell has performed as soloist for *Adelaide Baroque* (Purcell's *Come Ye Sons of Art*, Handel's *The Ways of Zion do Mourn*, and *Celestial Dyad*) and *Hills Choral Society* (Handel's *Te Deum*). She has also appeared as part of the *Flinders University Lunchtime Concert Series* in 'Music for a While: A Celebration of Henry Purcell's 350th Birthday' and 'Something Rich and Strange: Shakespeare's *Tempest* in Words and Music'. Most recently, Raechel presented Dvorak's *Moravian Duets* and *Biblical Songs in the original Czech*, and Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* at *St Michael's Church, Mitcham*.

Gillian Dooley, recently retired from *Flinders Library*, is an *Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Humanities*. She has published widely on literary topics, and has been researching music in Austen's life and work for more than 20 years. Since 2007 she has presented many concerts of the music from the *Austen family collections* in

Australia and Europe. She was one of the convenors of the 'Immortal Austen' conference held at Flinders University in June this year. As a singer, she appears frequently at concerts of early music in Adelaide and is a member of Corinthian Singers.

Christine Morphett is a passionate Celtic harper and is one third of the band *Teleenn Tri*, who perform at Celtic festivals around Australia. Christine has achieved ABRSM Grade 8 in Lever harp, AMEB Grade 7 piano and is a serving committee member with the Harp Society of SA, Adelaide Scottish Fiddle club and Comhaltas. She has been instrumental in both Australian Harp Festivals that have been held in Adelaide, in 2006 and 2012, and the Australian Harp Festival in Canberra. Christine also conducted a Breton harp workshop at the World Harp Congress in Sydney and participates in harp festivals in Scotland, Ireland and Brittany.

Richard Schaumlöffel started learning the violin at the age of ten. He specialises in baroque violin, orchestral playing and Irish fiddle. For most of his life Richard has been a maker of harpsichords and historical pianos as well as other instruments. A number of his keyboard instruments are owned by various institutions in Australia.

Kathy Walton is a specialist teacher in Irish Traditional Music and is a founding director of Meitheal Cheoil in the UK (1994) and Meitheal Cheoil Australia (2016). For ten years she was coordinator of the internationally acclaimed festival of Irish traditional music, song and dance (Return to Camden Town Festival). Kathy has also performed alongside the Shakespearean actors at The Globe Theatre and the Nobel prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney, and at the Wigmore Hall and the Royal Albert Hall where she appeared at the BBC Proms in 2008. Kathy has directed and produced two full-length CDs of traditional music. In 2014 she was awarded the 'Bliain na Cruinne' medal for her services to Irish culture info@meitheal.com.au