

JANE AUSTEN HOME AND AWAY

- Ensemble Hesperii with Penelope Appleyard, soprano
- Jeanice Brooks and Mary-Jannet Leith, presenters
- Introduction by Lizzie Dunford (Jane Austen's House)



Turner Sims | 11th July 2025

PROGRAMME

March (*Judas Maccabaeus*) George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

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Song from Burns (*Their groves of sweet myrtle*) Anon., words by Robert Burns

Mrs Hamilton of Pincaitland's Strathspey Nathaniel Gow (1763-1831)

Miss Morthland's Reel Niel Gow (1727-1807)

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Variations on My Ain Kind Dearie Trad., variations by Domenico Corri (1746-1825)

The Yellow-Haired Laddie Trad., published by Robert Bremner (c.1713-1789)

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Overture (*La buona figliuola*) Niccolò Piccinni (1728-1800)

A Favourite Song [*Che farà senza Euridice*] Christophe Willibald von Gluck (1714-1787)

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Captivity Stephen Storace (1762-96), words by Rev. Joshua Jeans

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Waltz 1, Op. 38 Muzio Clementi (1752-1832)

Que j'aime à voir les hirondelles François Devienne (1759-1803), words by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian

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No. 12 & No. 14 from *Les trois sultanes* Joseph Mazzinghi (1765-1844)

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African Song Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari (1763-1842), words by Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire

Polonese Russe Osip Antonovich Kozlovskii (1757-1831)

Hindoo Girls Song Edward Smith Biggs (1764?-1833), words by Amelia Opie

Grand piano by Broadwood, 1796, kindly loaned by the Department of Music, University of Southampton

Piano tuning and expertise by Cesar Hernandez.

Programme devised and presented by Jeanice Brooks and Mary-Jannet Leith

Please join us after the concert for a question-and-answer session on programme themes. Post-concert discussion led by Dr Gillian Dow (English, University of Southampton), joined by Lizzie Dunford (Jane Austen's House), Dr Kim Simpson (Chawton House), Dr John Mcaleer (History, University of Southampton), Professor Jeanice Brooks and Dr Mary-Jannet Leith

TRANSLATIONS

Que j'aime à voir les hirondelles

How I love to see the swallows at my window every year,
coming to bring me news of the arrival of sweet springtime;
the same nest, they tell me, will once more see the same love,
only faithful lovers may announce the good weather to you.

When the first frosts make the leaves fall in the woodland,
the swallows, gathered together, call each other from roof to roof;
let us leave, let us leave, they say, let us flee the snow and the wind,
let there be no winter for faithful hearts, they remain always in springtime.

If by misfortune during the voyage, victim of a cruel child,
a swallow put in a cage cannot rejoin its beloved,
you will see the swallow die of ennui, pain and love,
while its faithful lover nearby will die the same day.

SOURCES

The music for this concert is drawn from books formerly owned by Jane Austen and members of her family. A manuscript made by Ann Cawley (CHWJA/19/1 – March in *Judas Maccabaeus*), who taught Jane and Cassandra Austen in the early 1780s, may have been used for the girls' musical training. In the 1790s, Jane kept two manuscript albums of her own: one of keyboard music (CHWJA/19/2 - My Ain Kind Dearie, Mrs Hamilton of Pincaitland's Strathspey, *Les trois sultanes*, Polonese Russe) and another of vocal music (CHWJA/19/3 – Captivity). She owned several volumes of printed keyboard and vocal works, including one binder's volume featuring traditional Scottish songs (CHWJA/19/8 – The Yellow-Haired Laddie). Austen was also familiar with music belonging to other family members. A musical scrapbook of mixed print and manuscript items seems to have been started by an older family member (CHWJA/19/7 – Che farò senza Euridice) before belonging to Jane. Manuscript copies made by her sister-in-law Elizabeth Austen were bound up in 1799 (CHWJA/19/6 – African Song), while

her cousin Eliza's volume of harp, keyboard, and vocal music included prints acquired in France in the 1780s (Jenkyns 04 - Que j'aime à voir les hirondelles). Pieces in Jane Austen's hand figure among items copied by other Austen family members in a binder's volume of manuscript material probably bound up after her death (Jenkyns 03 - Song from Burns, Overture to *La buona figliuola*, Hindoo Girls Song).

The Austen family's music books are currently dispersed among museums and Austen descendants, but the majority are now freely available online as digital facsimiles via the Austen Family Music Books project led by Jeanice Brooks. We would like to thank Jane Austen's House, Chawton House, Professor Richard Jenkyns, and Richard Knight for their support in making these volumes publicly available. We are grateful to Julian Ball, Matthew Phillips and the University of Southampton Library Digitisation Unit for their work in preparing the images, and to Dr Gillian Dooley for her creation of catalogue records for this extensive library of pieces.

Jane Austen, Home and Away

The powerful significance of ‘home’ as both a space and a state of mind became firmly established in Austen’s lifetime.

Home was idealised as a site of emotional comfort and a place of intimate sociability, family relationships, and personal privacy: as a material and imaginary setting it informed understandings of identity and subjectivity. But home was not only a place for constructing the self. English homes were also spaces of knowledge production, sites for sifting perceptions of places and peoples from around the globe. This concert asks how Jane Austen’s music making at home created sonic depictions of the world beyond.

The music of Scotland is particularly well-represented in the music books of Austen and her relatives. Popular on the London stage since the turn of the eighteenth century, Scottish dance and song continued to captivate polite audiences across England a hundred years later, variously arranged and adapted for performance in public and private. The enduring popularity of Scottish music was no doubt partly due to its distinctive musical characteristics: robust, well-crafted melodies, filled with distinctive rhythms, and couched in an accessible harmonic language. Yet its appeal also owed much to the craze for an imagined Romantic Scotland that developed in Austen’s lifetime. From the early 1760s, James Macpherson’s ‘translations’ of the epic poetry of the Celtic bard Ossian inspired widespread interest in the ancient history of Scotland, and the landscape of the Highlands in particular became a source of fascination, and indeed a tourist destination towards 1800. As far as we know, Austen did not visit Scotland, but explored the possibilities of Scottish character and identity through the lens of Scottish music and literary culture.



Austen’s niece Caroline remembered her singing one particular Scots song, ‘Their groves o’ sweet myrtle’ (titled ‘Song from Burns’ in Austen’s hand). This is a staunchly nationalist love lyric, whose male protagonist, the ‘brave Caledonian’, wanders abroad but is drawn back to his native land and the love of ‘his Jean’. In Austen’s manuscript copy, ‘Jean’ is changed to ‘Jane’ in both verses, although this is not unique: another manuscript book owned by Mary Egerton, today held at Tatton Park, also bears this alteration. Nonetheless, the text of Austen’s version is otherwise close to Burns’s original, suggesting that she knew his poetry well. ‘The Yellow-haired Laddie’, also a favourite of Austen’s, appears in her printed copy of Robert Bremner’s highly popular collection of Scots song arrangements. She may also have been familiar with the tune from its frequent use on the stage in ballad operas. Scottish dance music features in Austen’s collection, and indeed in her novels, where it is employed as a device to lift the spirits of domestic gatherings. ‘Mrs Hamilton’s Strathspey’ was likely copied from Niel Gow’s *Third Collection of Strathspey Reels*. Niel Gow’s sons, John and Nathaniel, were well known performers in the south of England, providing Scottish dance music for reeling, a hugely popular activity at the entertainments of the ton towards the turn of the nineteenth century.

If Scottish music helped Austen imagine faraway parts of Britain, repertoire from the Continent imbued her home with the international musical styles that dominated houses and concert halls across Europe. London was a magnet for Continental musicians eager for new opportunities as the city rapidly became the largest in the world. Among the most prominent Italian composers established in the capital, Muzio Clementi produced instruments and printed editions as well as keyboard music and pedagogical books. Italian opera was part of London's thriving stage culture, offering many forms of dialogue: as for example in Niccolò Piccinni's *La buona figliuola*, whose libretto was (very) loosely based on Samuel Richardson's popular novel *Pamela*. Italian vocal works were marketed to English consumers through association with famous singers. The superstar castrato Giusto Tenducci's performance of Gluck's famous aria 'Che farò senza Euridice' (from *Orfeo*) at Covent Garden served to advertise the Austen family copy of the piece, which included English words for the use of British amateurs.

Music also produced depictions and viewpoints on Continental events. The French Revolution was a lived experience for Austen's cousin Eliza de Feuillide, whose husband was executed while Eliza sought refuge in England. Eliza's French

songs – such as 'Que j'aime à voir les hirondelles' – provided a reminder of the life she had left behind. While we cannot always know what conversations these pieces may have sparked, in at least one instance Austen's music books are suggestive: her vocal copybook includes the Anglo-Italian composer Stephen Storace's 'Captivity', a song in the voice of the imprisoned Marie Antoinette. Austen copied it next to a song on the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the juxtaposition creates a connection between these two women and their emotions in the face of a tragic destiny determined by political circumstances.

Colonial and imperial threads are woven through the Austen family's music. Pieces on colonial subjects often adopt the musical language of sentimental charity song, used to fuel charitable action by cultivating emotional investment in the situations of orphans, the poor, or the insane. When extending the sentimental song to topics beyond British borders, staking out moral ground was regularly mixed with racialised language and stereotypes. For example, Austen owned a copy of 'Poor Orra tink of Yarro dear', a piece from Charles Dibdin's smash hit *The Islanders*. The opera sets the tale of Caribbean chieftain Yanko and his wife Orra, both played by White actors in copperface. Orra has been enslaved by White invaders and believes that

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Faible de Terpsichore, Prix 1^{re} 4^{re}. A Paris Chez Cousineau rue des Poulies, 83
Romance. Musique de M. . . . Accomp.^t par M. Blatman.

Amoroso

5^e Année

N^o 21.

Harpe

Que j'aime à voir les hi-rondelles, à ma fe-nê-tre, tous les ans, venir m'ap-

Yanko is dead (he is actually alive and will return to free her in an ending that sees the Spanish governor abolish slavery on the island). Orra expresses herself in pidgin, a mark of low status attached to her gender and race; at the same time, her fidelity to Yanko in the face of enslavement and sexual harassment make her a noble character, a quality principally reflected in the serious musical language of her songs. An equally complex example is the ‘Song from Mr Park’s Travels’, which derives from an episode recounted by the Scottish adventurer Mungo Park. Park wrote how he sought lodging in a village near the source of the Niger river, but no one would take him in. Finally, a woman took pity on him, and after feeding Park and showing him his bed for the night, she and her female relatives sang an improvised piece about his plight. Park’s prose translation of their Mandinga lyric was versified by Georgiana Cavendish, and a setting of her poem by G.G. Ferrari was printed as a postscript to Park’s expedition memoir. While the piece adopts the vocabulary of British sentimental song – not Bambara Manding musical traditions – it partly undermines its conventions. African women extend pity to a White subject rather than receiving it, and their voices are in control. At the same time, the depiction of women as particularly open to charitable action is a typically gendered aspect of musical charity discourse.

The ‘Hindoo Girl’s Song’ fits into a larger pattern of British imaginations of Indian music. It was published in 1800 as part of the second book of *Hindoostanie Airs* by the English composer E.S. Biggs, setting texts by Amelia Opie. Other songs in this book were taken from William Bird’s influential *Oriental Miscellany* of 1789, itself based on transcriptions by British women resident in India; however highly mediated through British musical sensibilities, these pieces had loose connections with Indian music-making. The ‘Hindoo Girl’s Song’, however, seems to have been entirely invented, though like the ‘African Song’, it was published with a lengthy backstory to project authenticity. It purports to be the lament of a young Indian woman who had been living with an English man who abandoned her on his return to Britain. She

proclaims her fidelity, warning that the British bride who awaits him at home will not display the same tenderness and submission as she. Both racial and gendered fantasies are played out as the male colonial subject enjoys sexual power over a racially marked other, and the song serves as a rebuke to White British women who fail to be properly submissive.



Such songs present huge challenges in unpicking routes of transmission, relationships to non-European musics and peoples, and forms of mediation. Their presence in British homes, however, generated performances of Black and Brown otherness that musicians like Austen herself could undertake as an exercise in musical imagination – whether as an investment in expanding British hegemony or as an opportunity for critique. Music, that is, could be a tool in thinking through the knotty cultural interconnections, entanglements, and oppressions that marked Austen’s time. As a multivalent personal resource, music encouraged amateur musicians not only to cultivate their own sense of self but to explore the world, to try on alternative identities and to negotiate complex positions toward difference. Jane Austen’s global outlook was in part created at home through occupations like reading history, fiction, and travel literature, looking at maps and illustrations – and through copying, listening to, and performing music.

Jeanice Brooks & Mary-Jannet Leith

Ensemble Hesperì

A dynamic and innovative London-based period ensemble, Ensemble Hesperì has gained a strong reputation for championing rarely heard music, and bringing forgotten stories to life through original historical research. The members of Ensemble Hesperì met during their studies at the Royal College of Music in London, and, since 2019, have performed at leading festivals and venues across the United Kingdom and Europe, including Brighton Early Music Festival, St Magnus Festival, Kings Place, LIFEM, Petworth Festival, Lichfield Festival, King's Lynn Festival, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Snape Maltings, Festival Alte Musik Knechtsteden and Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht Fringe. The ensemble regularly appears on Radio 3's 'In Tune' programme, and has recorded in studio for Classic FM.

Funded by a Lottery grant from Arts Council England, Hesperì's debut project, 'The Pheasant's Eye', celebrated Scottish eighteenth-century music, featuring special choreography from Highland dancer Kathleen Gilbert. In 2020, Hesperì was selected as Britten Pears Young Artists on the Chamber Music Residence

scheme, and won first prize at the London International Festival of Early Music Young Ensemble Competition. In September 2021, the ensemble were prize-winners at the International Van Wassenaer Competition in Utrecht, released its debut album with EM Records, 'Full of the Highland Humours', and were selected as City Music Foundation artists.

In early 2022, the ensemble received a second grant from the Continuo Foundation for a new project, 'Then I play'd upon the Harpsichord', an immersive concert exploring the musical tastes and talents of Queen Charlotte, consort to George III. In autumn 2023, again with the support of the Continuo Foundation, Hesperì launched its vocal ensemble, the Hesperì Voices. In 2024, the ensemble's second commercial recording, 'A Gift for your Garden', which celebrates Telemann's love of gardening in later life, was released with international label BIS Records. It has since been featured on BBC Radio 3's 'Record Review', as well on the channel's 'Essential Classics' show as album of the week.

Penelope Appleyard

'Blessed with a voice of pristine clarity', Penelope is a busy soloist and ensemble singer. Passionate about chamber music and period instruments, she has co-founded both soprano duo Fair Oriana and voice/piano duo The Little Song Party. She enjoys devising entertaining programmes for the concert platform, and, following a period of research, has recently created Jane Austen-themed 'Sense & Musicality' for voice and square piano, of which she has given sold out performances at Jane Austen's House and the Newbury Spring Festival among others. To mark Jane's 250th Anniversary year, Penelope has commissioned a setting of Austen's poem 'Ode to Pity', which will be released in September with a launch concert at Bath Abbey as part of the annual Jane Austen Festival. She is particularly

interested in bringing authentic music to heritage sites and venues. In 2018 she recorded her debut solo album, Handel's 'Neun Deutsche Arien,' to critical acclaim, and has featured as a soloist on BBC Radio 3's Early Music Show. She has performed both as a soloist and ensemble singer at prestigious venues internationally, and has worked with numerous groups including The Monteverdi Choir, The New London Consort, The Taverner Consort, Ex Cathedra, Arcangelo, the AAM, and OAE, and appears on numerous recordings. She currently sings with acclaimed quintet Apollo5, with whom she has a busy international schedule and for whom she arranges new pieces. Penelope graduated with Distinction from The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and was awarded Honorary Membership in 2019.

Further reading

The Austen Family Music Books. <<https://archive.org/details/austenfamilymusicbooks>>

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A concert for the conference The Global Jane Austen: Celebrating and Commemorating 250 Years of Jane Austen at the University of Southampton, 10-12 July 2025.

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