Jane Austen’s Music

Songs and piano pieces from her personal collection, held at Jane Austen’s House in Chawton, Hampshire, with readings from her works

Jane Austen Festival, Canberra
18 April 2009

Gillian Dooley (soprano and solo piano)
Phil Dooley (piano accompaniment)

Programme

March in Judas Maccabaeus by Handel (1685-1759) (Chawton manuscript book no. 1)

Sweet Transports by William Shield (1748-1828) (no. 9 in Austen’s song book)
Sweet transports, gentle wishes, go.
In vain his charms have gain’d my heart.
Since Fortune, still to love a foe,

And cruel Duty bid us part.
Ah, why does Duty chain the mind
and part those souls which love has joined?

Thy Fatal Shafts (Anon) (no. 2 in Austen’s song book)
Thy fatal shafts unerring prove,
I bow before thine altar, Love;
I feel the soft resistless flame,
Glide swift thro’ all my vital frame.

Condemned to nurse eternal care,
And ever drop the silent tear;
Unheard I sorrow, unknown I sigh.
Unfriended live, unpitied die.

Lotharia by Thomas Arne (1710-1778) (Chawton manuscript book no. 1)
Vainly now you strive to charm me
All ye sweets of blooming May.
How should empty sunshine warm me,
While Lotharia keeps away.

Go ye warbling birds, go leave me,
Shade ye clouds the smiling sky;
Sweeter notes her voice can give me,
Softer sunshine fills her eye.

Overture to La Buona Figliuola by Nicolo Piccinni (1728-1800) (Second Movement) (appears in several of the Austen family music books)

La Buona Figliuola is an Italian opera based on Pamela by Austen’s favourite author, Samuel Richardson.

The Soldier’s Adieu by Charles Dibdin (1745-1814) (no. 12 in Austen’s song book)
Adieu, adieu, my only life
My honour calls me from thee.
Remember thou’rt a sailor’s* wife.
Those tears but ill become thee.
What though by duty I am call’d
Where thunder’ring Cannons rattle

Where valour’s self might stand appalled
When on the wings of thy dear love.
To heav’n above thy fervent orisons are flown
The tender pray’r thou put’st up there
Shall call a guardian angel down
To watch me in the battle.

*Austen has crossed out ‘soldier’ and substituted ‘sailor’ here.
Captivity by Stephen Storace (1762-1796) (no. 29 in Austen’s song book)
My foes prevail, my friends are fled,
These suppliant hands to heav’n I spread,
Heav’n guard my unprotected head
Amid this sad, sad Captivity.

Victim of anguish and despair!
How grief has changed thy flowing hair
How wan thy wasted cheek with care,
Amid this sad captivity.

(Storace’s intended subject was Marie Antoinette. However, it is likely that Austen saw this song as a lament for her much admired Mary Queen of Scots.)

The Marseilles March (no. 25 in Austen’s song book)
Please join in the final chorus!

Allons enfants de la Patrie
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!
Contre nous de la tyrannie
L’étendard sanglant est levé
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes.

Arise children of the fatherland
The day of glory has arrived!
Against us tyranny's
Bloody standard is raised.
Listen to the sound in the fields

Mugir ces féroces soldats.
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras.
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes!
Aux armes citoyens, formez vos bataillons
Marchez, marchez!

The howling of these fearsome soldiers.
They are coming into your midst
To cut the throats of your sons and consorts.
To arms, citizens, form your battalions.
March, march!

Qu’un sang impur abreuve nos sillons.
Marchons, marchons!

Let impure blood water our furrows.
Let us march!

The Yellow Hair’d Laddie varied by I. Pleyel (1757-1831)
(This song is in a collection of printed folksongs in the Chawton Collection, and several of Pleyel’s variations of folk tunes are said to be among the Austen family music at Chawton manor house)

Robin Adair (Anon)
What’s this dull town to me? Robin’s not here.
What was’t I wish’d to see? What wish’d to hear?
Where’s all the joy and mirth made this town a Heav’n on earth?
Oh! they’re all fled with thee, Robin Adair.

What made th’assembly shine! Robin Adair.
What made the Ball so fine? Robin Adair.
And when the play was o’er, What made my heart so sore?
Oh! it was parting with Robin Adair.
Somebody (Anon) (no. 27 in Austen’s song book)
Were I obliged to beg my bread
And had not where to lay my head
I’d creep where yonder flocks are fed
And steal a look at Somebody.
Poor, dear Somebody, dear, sweet Somebody.

Oh had I eagles wings to fly
I’d bend my course across the sky
And soon bestow one loving eye
On my adored somebody.

Begone, dull care (Anon) (no. 35 in Austen’s song book)
Begone, dull care, I prithee be gone from me.
Begone, dull care, you and I shall never agree.
Long time thou hast been vexing me
and fain thou wouldst me kill.
But in faith, dull care
Thou never shall have thy will.
Too much care will make a young man grey,
And too much care will turn an old man to clay.
My wife shall dance and I will sing
So merrily pass the day,
For I hold it one of the wisest things
To drive dull care away.

The Joys of the Country by Charles Dibdin (1745-1814) (no. 5 in Austen’s song book)
Let Bucks and let bloods to praise London agree
Oh the joys of the country, my jewel for me.
Then how sweet in the dogdays
To take the fresh air,
When to save you expense
The dust powders your hair
Thus pleasures, like snow-balls
Increase as they roll
And tire you to death,
Not forgetting the Bowl:
Where in mirth and good fellowship
Always delighting,
We agree, that is, when we’re not squabbling and fighting
Den wid toasts and pint bumpers
We boddler the head,
Just to see who most gracefully stagger to bed.
Oh! The mountains and vallies...

My Phillida by Miss Mellish (no. 19 in Austen’s song book)
My Phillida, Adieu
Love, for evermore, farewell.
Ah me, I’ve lost my heart’s love
And thus I sing farewell.
Ding Dong, Ding Dong,
My Phillida is dead.
I’ll deck her tomb with flowers
The rarest ever seen
And with my tears, as showers,
I’ll keep them fresh and green.
Ding Dong Ding Dong etc.

Piano Sonata in C major, Hob. 16/35 by Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) (2nd Movement)
(copied in Jane Austen’s hand in a music manuscript book signed ‘C.E. Austen’)

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The Wedding Day by James Hook (1746-1797) (no. 24 in Austen’s song book)

What virgin or Shepherd in valley or grove
Will envy my innocent lays!
The song of the heart and the off spring of love,
When sung in my Corydon’s praise.

Oe’r brook and o’er brake as he hies to the Bow’r,
How lightsome my shepherd can trip,
And sure when of love
He describes the soft pow’r
The honey dew drops from his lip.

References:
Austen Music Online http://bama.ua.edu/~jdonley/austen/index.html
Ian Gammie and Derek McCulloch, Jane Austen’s Music (St Albans: Corda, 1996).

... 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.

Jane Austen, Letter to Cassandra, 27 December 1808.

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 – 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.

Caroline Austen, My Aunt Jane, a Memoir – 1867.

Gillian Dooley started piano lessons at the age of 6, and has studied singing with Eleanor Houston, James Christiansen, Roger Howell and, more recently, Beverley Peart. She was a founding member of the Adelaide Chamber Singers and has recently rejoined Graduate Singers after an interval of two decades. Gillian is Special Collections Librarian at Flinders University Library, having joined the Flinders University Library staff in 1989.

Phil Dooley has studied music since the age of 8; initially classical but then branching out into blues soul and pop in his rebellious years. He has also played in a number of semi- and unprofessional pop and blues bands, and released a couple of CDs of original music, which are not available at reputable music stores. He currently teaches playing by ear in Sydney’s Eastern Suburbs. By day he is a science communicator in the School of Physics at the University of Sydney.

The CD from the performance of Jane Austen’s Music in the 2008 Adelaide Fringe is available for $22 from Gillian Dooley, 08 8201 5238, email gillian.dooley@flinders.edu.au