Music in Jane Austen’s World

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JASNA ORSWWA Chapter Meeting

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Musical periods

- **Late Baroque begins**: 1650
  - Bach born
  - Handel's first opera

- **Classical begins**: 1700
  - Mozart born
  - Jane Austen born

- **Romantic begins**: 1800
  - Napoleon First Consul of France
  - Jane Austen dies

- **1750**:
  - **1750** classical period begins

- **1800**:
  - **1800** romantic period begins

- **1700**:
  - **1700** late baroque period ends

- **1750**:
  - **1750** classical period begins

- **1800**:
  - **1800** romantic period begins

- **1800**:
  - **1800** romantic period begins

- **19th century**:
  - **19th century** romantic period

- **20th century**:
  - **20th century** modern period
The music – the classical period

- Characterized by homophony – melody played over subordinate harmony
- Move toward simplicity
- Brighter contrasts and “tone colors” achieved by dynamic and key changes
- Composers more directive as to dynamics and phrasing
- Greater emphasis on instrumental music
The composers

Mozart  Haydn  Beethoven  Pleyel
The rise of the piano

• Begins with the harpsichord
• First appears in 1600s
• Sound is made with a quill that plucks the string
• Very light action
• But, player can’t affect the dynamics of the instrument much
The rise of the piano

• First piano built by Bartolomeo Cristofori in about 1700
• Plucking action replaced by hammers
• Originally called *pianoforte*
• Hammer action allowed for dynamic control
The rise of the piano

• Enter the Broadwood piano
• Made improvements like increasing the number of keys and adding pedals
• Favored by Beethoven and Haydn
• Also built square pianos accessible to less wealthy
Some JA music background

- Jane Austen loved music and practiced piano daily
- Kept an extensive collection of sheet music
- Played and sang for family
- Attended concerts
Austen family music collection

• 18 extant volumes
  • Many are binder’s volumes Others are personal manuscript albums made wholly or principally by a single copyist.
  • Majority date from Jane Austen’s lifetime
  • Two volumes are identified as personal albums created by Jane herself
• Total collection includes nearly 600 pieces
  • Mainly songs and works for keyboard or harp
  • Works by both well-known and now lesser to unknown composers
Jane’s music collection

- Keyboard volume
  - Titled “Juvenile Songs & Lessons for young beginners who don’t know enough to practice
  - Features music from 1790 to 1810
- Many are piano reductions of orchestral works
Jane’s music collection

• Second volume
  • Titled “Songs and Duetts”
  • Features music from 1790 to 1805

• Vocal music (solo and ensemble), mainly with keyboard accompaniment
Jane’s music collection

• Volume of printed solo keyboard pieces
  • Features music from 1785 to 1795
  • 14 Favorite Sonatinas, by Pleyel
  • Pleyel’s “Celebrated Overature”
  • Battle of Prague
Jane’s music collection – Battle of Prague

From AGM 2017, Huntington Beach
Performance in Regency England
Performance in Regency England

- Covent Garden
- Venue for performances of Royal Opera
- Jane Austen did attend some performances.
- One such performance was of the Thomas Arne opera, Artaxerxes
Thank you!
Elaine and Stephanie