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Jane Austen Society of North America Southwest June 2015 Newsletter



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June Calendar

Saturday, June 6 at 1:30pm- PRIDE AND PREJUDICE by Jane Austen with the Long Beach Reading Group. Please join the Long Beach Reading Group as they discuss Jane Austen's most popular novel, Pride and Prejudice. For more information, please [email coordinator Gerda Kilgore](mailto:gerda.kilgore@longbeachreadinggroup.com), or call her at (562) 496-4452.

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Jane Austen in the News!



A Jane Austen
themed Inn right
outside of Atlantic
City. [Click here](#) to
find out.



Crime novel by Jane
Austen relative to be
reprinted after many
years of being out of
print. [Learn more](#)
by [clicking here](#).

Sunday, June 7 at 6pm - EMINENT VICTORIANS by Lytton Strachey with the Santa Monica Reading Group. Please join the Santa Monica Reading Group as they discuss the Eminent Victorians, a book originally published in 1918 that recounts the lives of four prominent Victorians. For more information, please call Diana Birchall at (310)394-2196, or [please click here to email her](#).

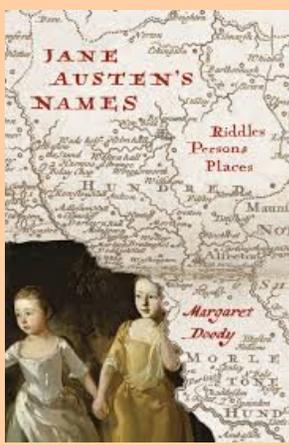
Saturday, June 20 at 11:30am - SENSE AND SENSIBILITY by Jane Austen with the Ventura Reading Group. Please join the Ventura Reading Group as they discuss Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility. For information about the Ventura Reading Group, [please click here for their blog](#).

JASNA-SW Spring Meeting Recap

"Adaptation: Bringing Jane Austen Novels to the Screen and Stage" served as the compelling theme for the JASNA Southwest Spring Meeting at the newly renovated Los Angeles Athletic Club on April 11. Highlights of the day included special preview performances featuring the casts and creators of two stage adaptations of Austen's work that were about to receive their world premieres.

Amanda Jacobs and Lindsay Warren Baker - who wrote the music, lyrics, and book for "Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice: a Musical" - and producer Erin Craig described the 15-year journey from Jacobs' original idea for the musical to its staging at La Mirada Theater for the Performing Arts in Southern California April 17-May 10. The trio had previously workshopped the production in New York and hope to bring the musical to Broadway in the near future.

In Jacobs and Baker's version, Jane Austen appears in every scene, interacting with her sister, Cassandra, as well



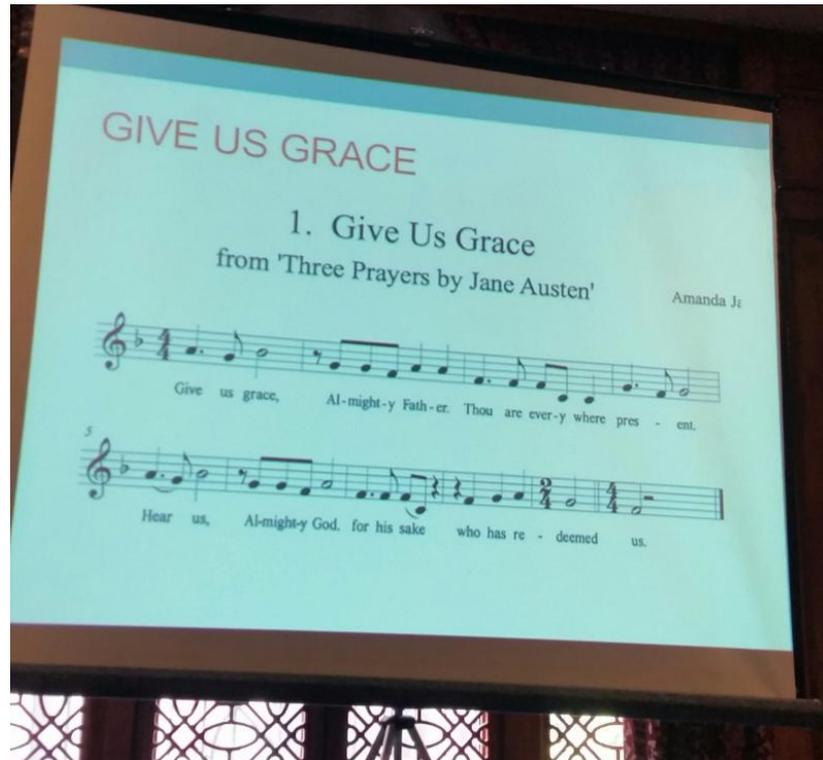
Jane Austen's
Names: Riddles,
Persons, Places by
Margaret Doody.
Read the [review](#)
[here](#).

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as her characters as she takes on the task of revising "First Impressions" into "Pride and Prejudice." With just a week to go before the premiere, several members of the cast - including New York-based Patricia Noonan and Brandon Andrus, the show's Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy - took time away from rehearsal to present a few scenes and songs for JASNA-SW members.



Jacobs also described the six weeks' residency she spent last summer at Chawton House in Hampshire, England, after being chosen for the International Visitors Program by the Jane Austen Society of North America. Her project proposal was to set Austen's prayers to music for congregational worship. While in England, she performed concerts featuring those new works at St. Paul's Church in Covent Garden, London, and at Godmersham, the home of Austen's brother Edward, among other venues. She led JASNA-SW members in one of the three resulting hymns at the Spring Meeting.

JASNA-SW board member Lynda Hall, a professor of English literature at Chapman University, then provided an engaging overview of Austen adaptations for film and television, including clips from several obscure and loose

adaptations.

The afternoon focused on the new play "The Elliots," based loosely on "Persuasion," which was a month away from its premiere run May 9-June 7 at the Fremont Centre Theatre in South Pasadena. Playwright Allison J. Darby described the challenges of adapting "Persuasion," particularly that of making Anne Elliot more active and the need to eliminate some characters and plot points to develop the novel for the stage. Actors Kelly Lohman (Anne Elliot) and Travis Goodman (Capt. Wentworth), along with other members of the cast performed a couple of scenes from the production, including a flashback to Capt. Wentworth's original proposal.

The event also featured adaptation-themed raffle baskets and a quiz.

A Successful Festival of Books



Festival of Books Coordinator, Emily Bergman and Kate Rorick

JASNA Southwest's booth at the 2015 Los Angeles Times Festival of Books at the University of Southern California was a tremendous success, with more than 200 names added to our email list. Many JASNA-SW members and friends also lent their support, chatting with fellow visitors about all things Austen and browsing from a great selection of Austen novels, memorabilia, gift items, and Austen-related titles.



Four authors were on hand over the course of the weekend to sign their books.

- Syrie James ("Jane Austen's First Love", "The Missing Manuscript of Jane Austen", and "The Lost Memoirs of Jane Austen")
- Lisa Pliscou ("Young Jane Austen: Becoming a Writer")
- Sally Smith O'Rourke ("Yours Affectionately, Jane Austen" and "The Man Who Loved Jane Austen")

- Kate Rorick ("The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet: a Novel" (based on The Lizzie Bennet Diaries YouTube series))



JASNA-SW Board Member Sonya Samuels rings up a customer in the booth.

Numerous JASNA-SW members volunteered throughout the weekend, setting up and breaking down the booth, and greeting guests. Special appreciation goes out to Emily Bergman, who once again coordinated the event and managed the volunteers. Sonya Samuels managed book sales, with backup from Nancy Gallagher, who oversaw booth setup and decoration.

The Elliots: An Adaptation of Jane Austen's Persuasion Review



Anne Elliot (Kelly Lohman) and Captain Wentworth (Travis Goodman)



Louisa Musgrove (Madison Kirkpatrick), Captain Wentworth (Travis Goodman), and Henrietta Musgrove (Paula Deming)



Captain Wentworth (Travis Goodman), Anne Elliot (Kelly Lohman), and Reverend Hayter (Ryan Young)

The name of the play is the Elliots, not Persuasion. A very good distinction for any Janeite to remember while watching this adaptation of Jane Austen's last novel. Although there are a lot of departures from the novel, A. J. Darby's adaptation for the stage brilliantly carries out the essence of the book.

The play opens in Kellynch Hall where the audience learns the fate of the Elliots and are given a glimpse into the title family. Sir Walter (Steve Peterson), Anne (Kelly

Lohman), Elizabeth (Emily Greco), and Mary (Musgrove) (Kalen Harriman), the Elliot family, are true to the novel's characters, with the actors portraying their distinct personalities from the beginning. Absent from the conversation (and the play) are Lady Russell and Mrs. Clay. Although these two ladies are not present, Darby's adaptation relays the events in a manner that drives the plot forward and allows for the characters to continue on the journey Austen wrote in the novel.

The play's director, Karissa McKinney, creates a world where the events are seen through Anne Elliot's eyes. McKinney's staging of Anne's memories and the present situations creates a distinction between these timeframes through a dreamlike use of flashbacks that can only be done in the medium of theater.

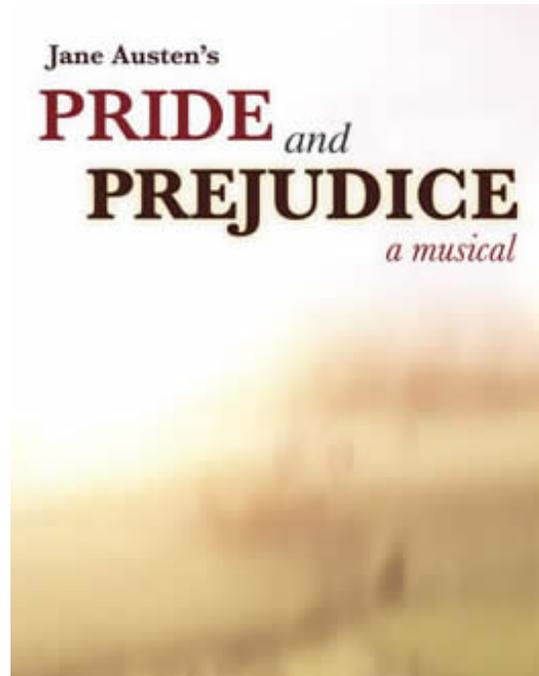
The Musgrove sisters, Louisa (Madison Kirkpatrick) and Henrietta (Paula Deming) are portrayed as happy young women who are easily lovestruck with Captain Wentworth. Their demeanor is beautifully contrasted with that of Mary Musgrove, who like in the novel, is far from charming. As the play continues along the familiar path of the novel, the girls transition into wiser women, particularly in who they marry. Ryan Young's depiction of Reverend Charles Hayter is equally unsettling and sympathetic. Ultimately achieving his goal of courting Henrietta, he does so through brilliant devices that both the playwright and director enhance.

Through the dreamlike flashbacks, we learn of the romance between Anne and Wentworth (Travis Goodman). The two actors masterfully illustrate the young, innocent youth contrasted against the wiser, yet cautious adults. The tension between the two actors in the present is represented so distinctly in Kelly Lohman's face as she shows Anne's emotional suffering.

Ultimately, *The Elliots* is a successful interpretation of the *Persuasion*. Darby's adaptation is not a slavish rendition of the novel, but expertly captures the spirit of what Jane

intended. And, she does have fun with toying with a true Austen fan's expectations when depicting the climactic event of Wentworth's letter to Anne. Overall, the actors were delightful, the directing spot on, and the writing clever and considerate and the entire production demonstrates a labor of love for the story.

A Review of Pride and Prejudice, A Musical



By Kelly Duir

The world premiere of "Pride and Prejudice, The Musical" at the La Mirada Theatre was amazing. It began with Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra discussing what they will send to the publisher next. Cassandra says to send "First Impressions." However, she really has to convince a reluctant Jane who is did not feel it was her best work as she had written years before.

Jane (Bets Malone) and Cassandra (Jill Van Velzer) appear throughout the musical, interjecting to drive the plot forward through dialogue or singing. We see their viewpoint about how they would handle a situation within the story. In addition to their interaction, the entire novel of "Pride and Prejudice" was performed.

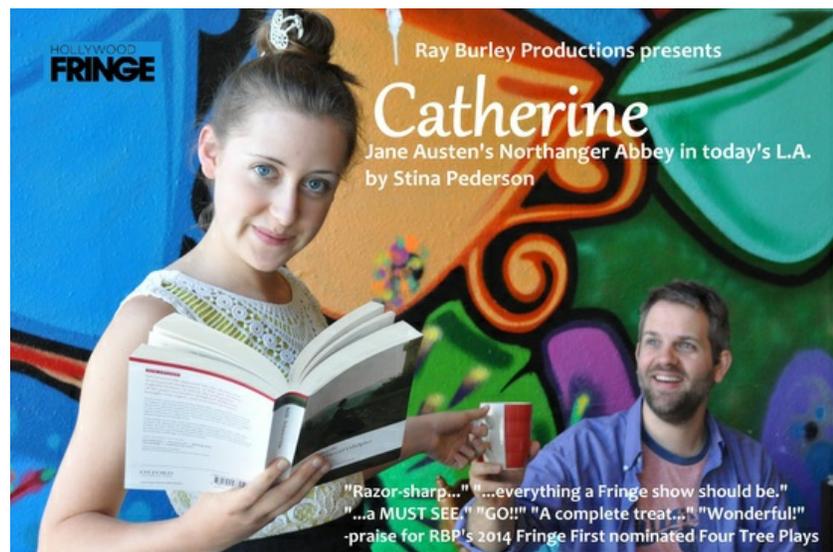
I especially enjoyed the duets and dialogue between

characters Elizabeth Bennett (Patricia Noonan) and Fitzwilliam Darcy (Brandon Andrus). Both actors are from New York, and were superb in their acting and singing. Jeff Skowron had an excellent portrayal of Mr. Collins, particularly when he tried to dance at the ball, continually messing up. He was very comedic. Overall, the dance scenes were beautiful.

Many of the songs performed related to the novel, including "I Will Write of Love" (my favorite) and Lydia Bennett (Arielle Fishman) singing and dancing to "I Love a Red Coat" with male redcoats accompanying her. Most of the songs were romantic, or, as illustrated above, humorous.

The cast definitely impressed me, as I went a second time. The second time there was a talkback with actors, producer, and director. It was about thirty minutes where they shared that they hope to take this production all the way to Broadway.

Catherine: Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey in Today's L.A.



June 8 - June 27, 2015

From the company that produced the much-lauded and

Fringe First-nominated piece [Four Tree Plays](#). Full of whimsy, hope, and imagination, Catherine's just moved to L.A. from the Midwest.

Adapted for the stage by Stina Pederson, Catherine sets Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* in modern day L.A. Guileless and good-hearted Catherine must navigate a new city and the egos of the characters she encounters on her way: fickle friends, unwanted lovers, and perhaps even a murderer. Her wild imagination may humiliate her, but the false rumors others spread could ruin her. With Austen, though, you can guess what wins in the end. For more information and tickets, [click here](#).

Santa Monica Reads Longbourn



JASNA-SW Board Member, Janet Fahey shows off her Regency attire.

The Santa Monica Library did their annual program Reading on Longbourn. Jan Fahey was part of a costume

demonstrate and gave a lecture. JANSNA-SW members and authors, Diana Birchall and Syrie James, were also on a panel discussion.

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