Luncheon

“Austen Ever After”

A lively discussion of Austen-inspired fiction and drama with authors Karen Doornebos and Syrie James, Lauren Shouse, Literary Manager and Dramaturg, Northlight Theater

Sunday, February 12, 2017
Noon to 3 pm
Marcello’s Lincoln Park
645 W. North Avenue, Chicago IL 60610
Parking Available

LUNCHEON REGISTRATION FORM

Members: $40; Guests: $50
Registration deadline: February 8, 2017

Member Name ____________________________________________

Guest(s) Name(s) __________________________________________

Address __________________________ City __________ State _____ ZIP ________

E-mail __________________________ Phone ______________ Amount enclosed $________

You can register by
1. Going online to www.jasnachicago.org and pay using your Visa or MasterCard.
   or 2. Mailing your check—payable to JASNA-GCR—and this form to Maureen Collins, 2515 Ridgeway, Evanston, IL 60201.
From the Regional Director

Debra Ann Miller

One of my favorite aspects of the Winter Holiday season is the chance to see and reconnect with the family and friends that I never got the time to see all year. Somehow, in the midst of the most hectic, frantic month I find a way to have the dinners, lunches, phone calls and attend the parties that never seem to make it to the top of my “to do” list the other 11 months. Gathering with extended family to honor traditions, and sending out cards and yearly letters become top priority for a lot of us.

As members of JASNA-GCR our celebrations start early in the month of December with our annual Birthday Tea at the Fortnightly. I have missed this chance to see you all and delight in the good company and beautiful surroundings for two years in a row now and I don’t intend for there to be a third. It’s just not the Holiday season without a trip to the Fortnightly and tea with friends. You can see photos and read all about this year’s Birthday Tea on pages 6-8. Luckily, I have 4 other opportunities to see you throughout the year, and I am looking forward to seeing many of you at Marcello’s on February 12 for our Winter Meeting and Austen Ever After panel discussion.

Performances of Jane Austen Speaks and Mrs. Lincoln’s Salon caused me to miss the annual AGM this year in DC as well, and I am just as determined not to let that happen again either. One way to ensure that I don’t miss out is to stay connected with my extended JASNA family through the new JASNA website and the member portal. If you are a lifetime member, you probably received an email around August with a link to your membership. If you don’t have that email anymore, another link was included in the December birthday email. Click on the link in the email. Don’t go directly to the new website and set up a new account, as you already have one.

JASNA-GCR OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Regional Director
Debra Ann Miller
janeaustenspeaks@gmail.com

Treasurer
Maureen Collins
7collins@jmls.edu

Recording Secretary
Linda Reinert
lreinert@cusd200.org

Membership Secretary
Becky Dolin
becky.dolin@gmail.com

Programs
Jeffrey Nigro
jeffnigro@mac.com

Publicity
Elia Rivera
elri912@gmail.com

Publications
Sara Okey
okey.sara@gmail.com

Education Outreach
Diane Capitani
dianecapitani@aol.com

Member at Large
Georgia Cibul
hgcib@comcast.net

Member at Large
Laura Whitlock
ltwhitlock@yahoo.com

Direct newsletter correspondence to: Letter from Chicago, Sara Okey, 11133 Meadow Lark Lane, Belvidere, IL 61008

The JASNA/GCR year begins September 1 and ends August 31. Dues can be paid online at www.jasnachicago.org or mailed to JASNA-GCR c/o Maureen Collins, 2515 Ridgeway, Evanston, IL 60201
I hope this letter has helped you—it certainly has done me some good, as I have
now set up my membership login and can tick that off my “to do” list. I am now
one item closer to being able to spend time with friends. I hope to see you all in
February. As Mr. Weston says “One cannot have too large a party. A large party
secures its own amusement.”

Once you click the link, you will see this page (Figure 1).

Here check to make sure that your name appears next to Account:, choose
a login name and a password. When you press submit, it will take you to
your account (Figure 2)!

From there use the “What would you like to do?” drop down to update your
contact information, make donations, change email preferences and make
sure that your membership is up to date. You do not need to use this
new Member login to visit the usual pages on the website—just the ones
that hold your private information.

There you have it! A way to keep connected to your long distance JASNA
family and friends. If you have not received either one of the emails with
your link included, or if they have gotten lost in the ether, email member-
ship@jasna.org and they will help you.

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As you can read elsewhere in this issue, lovers of Jane Austen throughout the world are commemorating the 200th anniversary of Austen’s passing this year. With a figure as honored and beloved as Jane Austen, the word “death” seems not only depressingly blunt, but also woefully inadequate. Very few people in history can claim the kind of immortality that Austen has achieved and I know I’m not alone in trying to accentuate the positive. The JASNA AGM in Huntington Beach this fall is entitled “Jane Austen in Paradise”, a clever play on both the sun-drenched splendor of the AGM’s location, and on the idea that whatever kind of afterlife you believe in, you know it wouldn’t be “paradise” without Jane Austen.

Thinking along the lines of an “Austen afterlife”, our JASNA-GCR programming for this year will take up the theme of commemorating Austen’s genius and celebrating her legacy, beginning with the GCR Winter Meeting on February 12. Once again, we will enjoy a hearty family-style lunch at Marcello’s, followed by what promises to be a lively and enlightening panel discussion entitled “Austen Ever After”. The panel will consist of a group of thoughtful and enthusiastic Austen lovers who have been inspired by her work, her world, and her worldwide fame.

I’m thrilled that two stars of the ever-growing world of Austen-inspired fiction will be participating in this panel. Syrie James has agreed to fly in from sunny California—and brave a Chicago winter!—to join us for this program. Syrie’s Austen-inspired novels, Jane Austen’s First Love, The Missing Manuscript of Jane Austen, and The Lost Memoirs of Jane Austen, have rightly received rave reviews from professional critics and Austen fans alike. The other author on our panel, Karen Doornebos, a good friend to so many of us and one of our own local stars in the world of Austen-inspired fiction, is the author of Definitely Not Mr. Darcy and Undressing Mr. Darcy. As you know, Karen’s novels explore the world of Austen fandom in all its hilarious, humane glory.

I hope that you all had a chance to see Lauren Gunderson and Margo Melcon’s Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley at Northlight Theatre this past November and December, and that you enjoyed it as much as I did. I found the play funny, charming, insightful, and touching—the perfect holiday show, in addition to being an outstanding example of how to “spin off” from an Austen novel. It was joy to see Mary Bennet come into her own and find not only true love but a genuine outlet for her “improved” mind, artistic talents, and insatiable curiosity about the world. I am delighted to say that Lauren Shouse, Literary Director and Dramaturg at Northlight, will share with us the joys and challenges of creating an “afterlife” for some of Austen’s most beloved (and some not-so-beloved) characters.

What a wonderful way to begin our celebration of the life and legacy of Jane Austen. You won’t want to miss it!
Essay Contest

To foster the study and appreciation of Jane Austen, JASNA conducts an annual student Essay Contest. JASNA-GCR provided a grant in memory of the late Russell Clark and in honor of William Phillips; educators and leaders, friends and JASNA-GCR board members, to support this annual contest.

Students interested in the life and works of Jane Austen are encouraged to enter. The Essay Contest is open to students world-wide at the high school, college/university, and graduate school levels of study. Entrants do not need to be members of JASNA. Students must be enrolled full-time or part-time in coursework during one or more semesters/quarters of the contest year. Home-schooled students at the high school level are also eligible. Part-time is defined for the college/university level as a minimum of six credit hours and for the graduate level as a minimum of three credit hours leading to an advanced degree.

JASNA awards scholarships to the winners in each of three divisions: High School, College/University, and Graduate. First, second and third place authors receive a scholarship, and the First Place winners will be invited to be guests at the AGM in Huntington Beach, Ca.

In keeping with this year’s AGM theme, “Jane Austen in Paradise: Intimations of Immortality,” JASNA is looking for essays that address the following:

Imagine that you are adapting an Austen novel for stage or film. What elements might you be tempted to change—especially for a modern audience—that should not be tampered with if the integrity of the work is to be preserved? These elements could be scenes, characters, dialogue or something else. Explain why they are so crucial to the novel. How does what can and cannot be changed shed light on Austen’s popularity and influence?

If you are an educator, please consider making this information available to your students as soon as possible, as submissions must be received by May 21st, 2017. For more information, visit http://www.jasna.org/essaycontest/index.html

Jane Austen Society of North America 2017 Essay Contest

Essay Contest Topic: On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen’s death, JASNA is looking for short essays that address the following questions:

“Imagine that you are adapting an Austen novel for stage or film. What elements might you be tempted to change— especially for a modern audience—that should not be tampered with if the integrity of the work is to be preserved? These elements could be scenes, characters, dialogue or something else. Explain why they are so crucial to the novel. How does what can and cannot be changed shed light on Austen’s popularity and influence?

Who Is Eligible: Students at the high school, college and graduate levels.

Awards: Judges select first-, second-, and third-place winners in each of the three divisions. Winners will receive:

• Cash scholarships ranging from $250 to $1,000
• Paid registration and two-nights’ lodging for the JASNA Annual General Meeting in Huntington Beach CA, October 6-8 (first place only)
• One-year free membership in JASNA
• Publication of the winning essays on the JASNA website.

Entry Deadline: May 21, 2017

For Details/How to Enter: Visit the Essay Contest page at www.jasna.org
Parenting in Austen Was No Easy Matter

Like most GCR members, I always look forward to the annual tea in December to celebrate Jane Austen’s birthday. In my case this is particularly true ever since the Tea has been held at the Fortnightly of Chicago with its beautiful Victorian setting which was equally beautifully decorated for the holiday season in full Victorian style. Admittedly the largely German inspired style that we usually associate with the Victorian era is a bit later than Austen’s life, but it always strikes me as perfectly appropriate for a crowd of Janeites, gathered, in this case, to celebrate her 241st birthday.

This season’s Tea, on December 3, saw the usual full house of GCR members and their guests for the occasion. We were also happy to have a number of our friends from the Wisconsin Region join us as they frequently do.

Our own Director of Outreach, Diane Capitani, presented an extremely informative and entertaining talk on the pleasures and perils of parenting in Austen’s novels. Diane’s daughter and GCR member, Jennifer, as usual, helped her prepare a splendid PowerPoint to augment the presentation. The talk focused mainly on the parents in two of the novels: *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. In the former we are presented...
with a variety of parents, about whom we are allowed to be mostly ambivalent. In *Emma*, by contrast, Diane noted that the parenting is on the one hand absent—with the deceased mothers of both Emma and Jane Fairfax, and Emma’s father who seems to be the one needing parenting. On the other hand, it is hinted that the parenting by Emma’s sister Isabella is somewhat obsessive, and Mr. Weston’s parenting of Frank was somewhat questionable. By the end of the novel, with the arrival of Anna Weston, it looks as if she might have a fair chance at admirable parenting. The others who are wed during the course of the novel (the Eltons, Frank and Jane, Robert Martin and Harriet, George Knightley and Emma) remain question marks as to whether they will parent or what kind of parents they might become.

As with other absorbing presentations about Austen, Diane raised a fair number of controversial issues, and a very lively and attention-grabbing question and answer session followed.

With their usual efficiency the Fortnightly staff converted the lecture seating into tables at which we could dig into the Tea, which was splendid.

I was honored to be asked to give the toast for Austen’s birthday. I was intrigued to learn that the world’s oldest living person, named Emma, had her 117th birthday just the week before in Italy. It was delightful to me to toast Austen knowing that there is someone who has been alive for more than half of the time since Austen’s own lifetime.

Members had donated a particularly fine set of items for the annual birthday raffle. Having been illuminated, plied with tea and treats, and celebrating lucky raffle winners, we adjourned, looking forward to a great Winter Meeting scheduled for February 12 in 2017.
Birthday Tea continued

Clockwise from top left Risha Kotecha with her doorprize, *The Meryton Murders* by Victoria Grossack; Fortnightly stairway decorations; Michelle and John Strickland, holding his doorprize—an autographed copy of Stephanie Barron’s *Jane and the Twelve Days of Christmas*; Libby Koziarz and Judith Kollar anticipating the program; Play reviewer Brenda Rossini; eiffel tower ornament; holiday spread with Christmas tree; Arlene Kallwitz and Charlene Uney in the holiday spirit; Jane Davis, Faith Hart and Margo Malos sipping post-meal coffee.

Photos courtesy of Margo Malos, Ronnie Jo Sokol and Brigitte Cox.
This Jane Austen production, spun from the imagination of playwrights Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon, has a long title. In full, it is Miss Bennet—Christmas at Pemberley, and one understands this to be a “proper situation” once it gets underway, for the story is indeed about Miss Mary Bennet.

The most memorable scenes are the loving, subtly comic and intellectual repartee between the Christmastime duo: Mary Bennet (Emily Berman) and one Lord DeBourgh (Erik Hellman), heir to Lady Catherine DeBourgh’s Rosings estate where lives with daughter Anne. These two actors play the parts with a finesse that draws the audience to the allurements of their union—no less than what was once felt for Darcy and Elizabeth, and for Bingley and Jane.

“Call me ‘Mr.’Bourgh” and Mary share the stage at Pemberley along with another competitor for attention—the newly-fashionable fir tree. It is, after all, 1813. The giant fir oddly decorates the interior of the Pemberley drawing room to everyone’s surprise and due in part to Elizabeth’s mischievous habits. I thought Prince Albert brought the first tree to England upon his marriage to Victoria. In point of fact, Queen Charlotte, George III’s German-born wife, introduced the tradition to England in 1800. The Christmas tree is change. It will rise to the symbolic, marking the arrival of a particular winter festival with peace and goodwill to all.

The set and costuming are a marvel. We were enlivened by what was both a theatrical and musical program. Mary Bennet is a woman of parts. She has matured. She entertains. She is accomplished and adept in creative pursuits, playing Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart on an elegant maple pianoforte that is always put to use. She plays, she reads, but she feels unmoored in Darcy’s house where she visits with her married sisters. Once Mary meets Mr. DeBourgh in Darcy’s library, a delicious contretemps ensues.

Lydia (Jennifer Latimore) is a flibbertigibbet, grown goofy, flirtatious and needy. Mr. Darcy (Alex Goodrich) is a charming, happy husband. A somewhat Americanized Elizabeth Darcy (Samantha Beach) is bold, brassy, and energetic. Jane (Aila Peck), experiencing a pregnant pause, is not so much Elizabeth’s gentle coach as she is Bingley’s helpless but decorative sofa pillow. Bingley (Tosin Morohunfola) is there to right her pillow, hold her hand, and assist Darcy in Mr. Bourgh’s consternations.

Anne de Bourgh (Bri Sudia) is no longer sickly. But, in the manner of her late mother, Lady Catherine, Anne is still not accomplished on the piano and remains resolutely cross. She does not mention continuing on as patroness of Mr. Collins and so we are removed from his pleasurable experience with “excellent boiled potatoes and exemplary vegetables.” Thanks to the expert talent of the actress, Anne appears as a fashionable future Woman: a modern “big-mouthed broad.” Her fortitude is worrisome. Will she succeed in her matrimonial claim where it isn’t wanted (a twist on Edward’s predicament in Sense and Sensibility)?

Because it’s Christmastime, all the faults, crises, anxieties and despairs are righted.
As one of my group remarked, everyone was forgiving and accepting, including the mean-spirited ladies—who were the ones, along with Mary Bennet, who hurt inside. It was all in the true spirit of the season and during which a bit of Druidical green flora reappears intermittently. At conclusion, Mary, dressed in an emerald green gown, gives the presentation a magical defining twirl. Compliments of Greensleeves season!

**Gift Wrapping**

Elia Rivera, Publicity Director

“Our daughter loves Jane Austen!”, exclaimed a jolly shopper with his wife. On Sunday, December 4th, a band of volunteers put their gift wrapping skills to work in support of JASNA-GCR. Every year, Barnes and Noble Bookstores host gift wrapping stations and invite local non-profit organizations to staff them to help raise awareness and donations in support of their missions. Holiday spirit and books provided the perfect combination to help spread the word about JASNA-GCR. Throughout the afternoon at the Barnes and Noble at Village Crossing (Skokie), our volunteers wrapped gifts as they answered some very important questions: Who was Jane Austen? What did she write? What does your organization do? There’s a whole society dedicated to her? Why? And, we were pleased to hear often: “I’ll have to tell my sister (… my mom, my friend, etc.) about this! She loves Jane Austen!” Thank you to our volunteers who braved the snow to help us out: Debra, Maureen, Michelle, Jan, Clare, and Jane. We hope to have started a new holiday tradition for JASNA-GCR bringing joy to Austen-lovers looking for a special way to celebrate their beloved author among new friends.

Grammar police will be unnerved to hear “dour” pronounced, loudly, as “dower,” and modern malapropisms as “shtrong” and “adminishtra- tion.” These will make you cringe, but be that as it may, Christmas at Pemberley is as festive and dear as is our committed devotion to Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice.*
Smells

About the same time he lost his sense of smell John Sutherland decided to read all the works of George Orwell and the result was the recently published Orwell’s Nose: A Pathological Biography. Sutherland thinks he sniffed out “smell narratives” in Orwell’s writings. In the book’s preface he writes, “I asked Deirdre Le Faye, the doyenne of Jane Austen studies and editor of her surviving letters, what smells there were in the six novels. [Remember, they are the co-authors of So You Think You Know About Jane Austen: A Literary Quizbook.] Deirdre’s reply was interesting and perplexed:

Smell I think is only specifically mentioned in Mansfield Park, with the bad air and the bad smells of the Portsmouth house. This does strike me as slightly odd, because by our standards at least, the past must have been a fairly smelly place.

The ‘Lady’ who wrote Sense and Sensibility was, apparently, short of one sense.

What would the ambient smell of Jane Austen’s world have actually been? Easily answered. Inside the house, the communal toilet sand box. Outside, horse droppings, predominantly—whether in rural Hampshire or urban Bath. The Regency world moved on four legs. Horses deposit between 7 and 14 kg (15 and 30 lb.) of excrement and 9 litres (2 gallons) of urine per day where they will. There is no such beast as a house-trained horse.”

(Just what we needed to know for the new year!)

Beckett

The fourth, and final, volume of the collected letters of Samuel Beckett, from 1929 through 1989, has now been released. The editors selected 2,500 letters, and quote 5,000 more in their annotations, out of the 15,000 letters they found. Among them are a few Austen references.

On February 14, 1935 Beckett, then age 29, writes, “I am now reading the divine Jane. I think she has much to teach me.” Six days later he has apparently finished Sense and Sensibility and says, “I like Jane’s manner, in the sense that there is material that can be treated most conveniently in the crochet mode, and somehow Elinor Dashwood is realised as concubine no less desirable than Fielding’s Sophie [Weston in Tom Jones].”

Concubine, hmm; is this Beckett’s irony?

Twenty-eight years later, he writes on November 16, 1963, “Poor Jane has got herself in a mess at the end of S. and S. The big scene between Elinor and Willoughby could hardly be worse. Perhaps irony is not quite the right word.” By this time his most famous play, Waiting for Godot, had been produced in many languages and in many countries. Beckett called it a tragicomedy in two acts. After one opening in 1956 he writes, “Let people laugh by all means, and then be reminded it is no laughing matter.” One could say the same for Jane.

Waiting for Godot has been called Theater of the Absurd and incomprehensible—but not entirely. One snippet: “Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed... Let us make the most of it before it is too late!”

Perhaps Jane did teach him something, after all.
Letter from Chicago

JASNA-GCR

11133 Meadow Lark Lane

Belvidere, IL 61008

Calendar

Our website is www.jasnachicago.org

Feb. 12, 2017 Winter Meeting. 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm. "Panel Discussion: Austen Ever After." Marcello’s Lincoln Park, 645 W. North Ave., Chicago, IL

May 6, 2017 Spring Gala. Woman’s Athletic Club of Chicago, 626 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL

October 6-8 Annual General Meeting. Jane Austen in Paradise: Intimations of Immortality. Huntington Beach, CA USA

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