



THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA (JASNA)
NEW YORK METROPOLITAN REGION PRESENTS

EVERYBODY'S JANE AUSTEN

A CONFERENCE FOR READERS, SCHOLARS, AND FANS



Saturday, September 14, 2024 | 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
The Leonard Nimoy Thalia at Peter Norton Symphony Space

www.jasnany.org

11:00 a.m.

Welcome from the JASNA-NYM Regional Coordinators Sarah Rose Kearns and Fran Winter

Appreciating Austen in America

Presentation by Dr. Juliette Wells, author of *A New Jane Austen: How Americans Brought Us the World's Greatest Novelist*

Q&A moderated by Meg Levin

12:00 p.m.

Jane Austen in the Present Day

Live recording of *The Austen Connection* podcast, featuring Renata Dennis and Tia A. Smith in conversation with Janet Saidi

Q&A moderated by Janet Saidi

1:00 p.m.

Break for Lunch on Your Own

Optional Austen-themed games and discussion in Bar Thalia

2:30 p.m.

JASNA-NYM New Members and Book Box Committee updates from Caroline Hewitt, Tabrizia Jones, and Elise Pallay

The Complete Works of Jane Austen, Abridged

Staged reading of the hit comedy by Jessica Bedford, Kathryn MacMillan, Charlotte Northeast, and Meghan Winch — performed by Charlotte Northeast*, Brittany Onukwugha, and Shannon Michael Wamser*

Q&A moderated by Sarah Rose Kearns

* Appears courtesy of Actors' Equity

Many thanks to our **2024 JASNA New York Metropolitan Region donors and volunteers**, people whose sense and sensibility make events like this one possible: Adina Bernstein, Darlene Castro, Linda Dennery, Christina Feicht, Lakshmi Gandhi, Teowulf Gaspari, Cornelia Georgiadis, Melissa Hamilton, Caroline Hewitt, Tabrizia Jones, Emma Kantor, Sarah Rose Kearns, Katelyn Kim-Mulgrew, Michele Kling, Meg Levin, Jen Malat, Pat Maniscalco, Jessica McGivney, Laurie Morison, Bryanna O'Mara, Kerry Murphy, Elise Pallay, Francie Schulz, Anne Silverstein, Zoe Torres, Julie Velazquez, Jesus Ward, Fran Winter, Lena Yasutake, and Suzanne Zullig.

To learn more about JASNA New York Metro and how you can become a part of our community of readers, please visit our (new!) website at www.jasnany.org.

We also wish to express our gratitude to the performers' unions (Actors' Equity Association, the American Guild of Musical Artists, the American Guild of Variety Artists, and SAG-AFTRA) through the Theatre Authority, Inc., for their cooperation in permitting the artists to appear in this program.

Are you teacher or youth leader with an interest in sharing Austen with your students? JASNA New York Metro has a grant for that! Applications are open now through December 1st.

www.jasnany.org/bookbox



Juliette Wells, Professor of Literary Studies at Goucher College, Maryland, is a scholar, teacher, and writer who is passionately committed to helping readers of all backgrounds connect with literature, and who brings her groundbreaking research on Jane Austen to audiences around the world. In summer 2025, The Morgan Library & Museum in New York City will celebrate the year of Austen's 250th birthday with an exhibition guest co-curated by Dr. Wells. "A Lively Mind: Jane Austen at 250" will illuminate Austen's authorship and her American reception by presenting manuscripts from the Morgan in the context of major loans from institutions including Jane Austen's House in Chawton, England.

"A Lively Mind" takes inspiration from Dr. Wells's trio of books on Austen's readers and fans, most recently *A New Jane Austen: How Americans Brought Us the World's Greatest Novelist* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023). *Reading Austen in America* (2017) offers a vivid account of how an appreciative audience for Austen's novels originated and developed in America, and how American readers contributed to the rise of Austen's international fame. *Everybody's Jane: Austen in the Popular Imagination* (2011) explores the importance of Austen to readers and fans today.

2025 will see the publication of Dr. Wells's new reader-friendly edition of Austen's novel *Mansfield Park*, which joins her 200th-anniversary editions of *Persuasion* (2017) and *Emma* (2015). Dr. Wells's more than thirty-five articles and book chapters include examinations of Austen's novels and adaptations, as well as essays on Austen pedagogy. An acclaimed speaker to popular and scholarly audiences, she was a guest on [Jane Austen & Co.'s spring 2021 "Race and the Regency" series](#) and regularly gives lectures to Austen societies and other reading groups.

Janet Saidi is the long-form audio producer at KBIA, the a National Public Radio-member station in Columbia, Missouri; and she serves on the Missouri School of Journalism's faculty and graduate faculty. Janet's many and varied media projects are about building community through audio. She has written and produced pieces for NPR, PBS, the BBC, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, and she spent seven years leading KBIA's award-winning news team.

Her most recent projects include KBIA's podcast *Cover Story with Stephanie Shonekan*; she hosted KBIA's live, national-award-winning talk show *The Check-In*; and she has co-created two award-winning, collaboratively-produced series combining oral history with audio journalism, *You Don't Say* and *Missouri on Mic*. In 2014 and 2016, Janet co-produced two journalism-on-the-stage theater productions with playwright Michelle Tyrene Johnson: *Justice in the Embers*, with Kansas City's Living Room Theatre, and *The Green Duck Lounge* with MU Theatre. Janet began her public-media work at KPBS in San Diego, on a live, nightly talk show called *The Lounge*. While in California, Janet helped produce the national PBS series "Remaking American Medicine" about healthcare in America, and worked as an editor at the *Gay & Lesbian Times* and *Uptown Newsmagazine*.

As vice president for news at Kansas City Public Television, Janet led a team of multiplatform journalists to launch KCPT's digital magazine *FlatlandKC*, and co-produced the *Beyond Belief* interfaith journalism project for AIR's Localore "Finding America" series. Janet lived for several years in England, where she earned her master's in Literature from University College, London.

Her Substack newsletter and podcast is [*The Austen Connection*](#). Ask her anything you want about Jane!

Renata Dennis is an Army brat, having lived mostly along the US East Coast and South until her father was reassigned to Germany, where she graduated from Stuttgart American High School. She holds degrees in biology, nursing, and public health from Wheaton College (Illinois) and Emory University. She also has a German Language proficiency certificate from the University of Marburg, Germany.

Early in her career as a nurse, Renata worked in the pediatric subspecialties of hematology-oncology, public health, medical-surgical, and emergency care. Renata recently retired after 24 years as a clinical research nurse, research nurse supervisor, and continuing education instructor and training coordinator from the School of Medicine at Emory University.

She is a member of North Avenue Presbyterian Church (NAPC) in Atlanta, Georgia, and has been on the boards of the Atlanta Children's Shelter, the Samaritan Counseling Center, and the Wheaton College Advisory Council.

Renata is currently the Georgia Regional Coordinator and at-large Board Member for the Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA). She is Chair of the JASNA DEI Committee. During her tenure, the Committee has contributed to the Society's Diversity and Community Guidelines Statements, selection of the Ombudsperson, creation of the Jane Austen Book Box Program, and most recently, revision of its Bylaws. She has also been a presenter at JASNA's Annual General Meeting and other JASNA and Austen-related events.

In addition to all things Jane Austen, Renata is a peony-obsessed gardener who enjoys good books, baking, long walks, period movies, travel, and visiting the great art museums of the world.

Tia A. Smith, an award-winning executive producer and consultant, is one of the most sought-after creatives in the industry, continually developing culturally shifting projects that leave lasting imprints. Known for spearheading and identifying commercially marketable projects, Smith is a rare creative whose work spans digital, independent, corporate, scripted and unscripted television, film, development/current production, and live events.

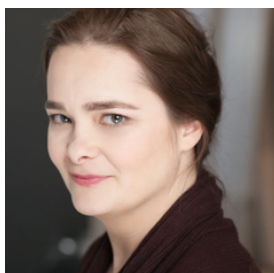
Recently, she received the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award & Medal from President Joe Biden for her service, creativity, and innovation. Smith was given the Trail Blazer Award from the African American Women in Cinema (AAWIC), and a Proclamation from the City of New York and a “Day of Recognition” honoring her artistic contributions. Ms. Smith is a National Member-At-Large within the Producers Guild of America, and was selected to represent the guild as a speaker at the United Nations’ “Commission on the Status of Women: The Role of the Producer” Summit.

As a leading value agent, she has produced over 3500+ hours of television and film including 15 movies, two documentaries, four major awards shows, five national commercial campaigns, serves as a judge for the Emmys, New York Film Festivals, NAACP Image Awards; and sits on the national board of directors for the Gospel Music Association and the Recording Academy/Grammys (Vice President - DC Chapter), respectively.

Smith is the owner of talentedSOL Productions which specializes in developing, consulting, and producing compelling, cultural content to studios, streaming services, and networks domestically and internationally. www.talentedsol.com

Charlotte Northeast (she/her) is an actor, director, educator, and writer. She is a two-time Barrymore Award winner for her work at InterAct and Lantern Theater Company. Graduate: Circle in the Square. Other credits include Philadelphia Artists' Collective (of which she was an Artistic Associate), Act II Playhouse, Theatre Exile, Passage Theatre, Azuka, Montgomery Stage, Hedgerow, Orbiter 3 (Barrymore Nomination), Delaware Theatre Company and Walnut Street Theatre. As a deviser, she has co-created *You Shouldn't Be Doing What You're Doing On That Ladder* with Peter Nicholls (Tribe of Fools) and *Citrus Andronicus* (PAC). As part of the team that created *The Complete Works of Jane Austen, Abridged* and a brand-new adaptation of *Jane Eyre*, she has had the pleasure of appearing in both after which she received a Barrymore Nomination for her portrayal as Jane and a Connecticut Critics Circle Best Actress Nomination for *The Complete Works of Jane Austen, Abridged*.

With 100th Meridian (a company she co-founded), she has toured her solo show *They've All Gone & We'll Go Too* in Philadelphia and the Edinburgh Fringe. She works in the Philadelphia area as an acting teacher, dialect coach and ghostwriter. Much love to Damon, Julian, and the Kitties. Many thanks to JASNA and to Janeites everywhere. And yes, *Persuasion* really is her favorite Jane Austen novel.
www.charlottenortheast.com



Brittany Onukwugha (she/her) is a Philadelphia/NJ based actor, dancer, and graduate of Rutgers University-Camden. Some Regional Credits: *Julius Caesar* (Decius Brutus/Messala, Delaware Shakespeare Festival), *An Army of Lovers* (Chloe, Azuka Theatre), *The Complete Works of Jane Austen, Abridged* (Self, Tiny Dynamite), *To Reach Across a River* (Batya, Theatre Ariel), *The Taming* (Livia, Shakespeare in Clark Park), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Titania/Hippolyta, Arden Theatre). She's also worked on productions in roles such as Associate Choreographer, Dance Captain, Fight Captain, and is the Associate Producer of The Wilma Theater. Brittany has also been expanding into film production. www.brittanyonu.wordpress.com
Social Media: @brittanyonu

Shannon Michael Wamser is a New York City based Actor, Writer, and Fight Director. As an actor he has been seen on some exceptional stages around the US including The Public Theatre, Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, Northern Stage and several Shakespeare festivals. He is thrilled to be returning to *The Complete Works of Jane Austen, Abridged*, which he did with Playhouse on Park with this wonderful team last October. Other credits include Jack in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, George in *Of Mice and Men*, and Fight Directing and playing the role of Thomas Collymore in *The Play That Goes Wrong* at Theatre Raleigh (Nominated for best choreography and best supporting performer, Broadway World Raleigh Awards). Film/TV credits include *Interior*, CBS's *Blue Bloods*, *The Thing Before the Thing* (co-writer-actor-executive producer) available on Amazon Prime, and several award-winning short films. He is an Instructor and Advanced Actor Combatant with Dueling Arts, International, a Professor of Movement and Acting at Molloy University/CAP21 and is a member of The National Alliance of Acting Teachers, SAG-AFTRA, and AEA.
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