



Presents

# The Jane Austen Book Club

A Film by Robin Swicord

“Is not general incivility the very essence of love?”  
Jane Austen

(105 mins, USA, 2007)

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**THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB**  
**Cast**

(In order of appearance)

Jocelyn	MARIA BELLO
Prudie	EMILY BLUNT
Bernadette	KATHY BAKER
Sylvia	AMY BRENNEMAN
Allegra	MAGGIE GRACE
Daniel	JIMMY SMITS
Pastor	ED BRIGADIER
Trey	KEVIN ZEGERS
Dean	MARC BLUCAS
Academic Woman	CATHERINE SCHREIBER
Waiter	NED HOSFORD
Grigg	HUGH DANCY
Girl With Dog Collar	MESSY STENCH
Skydive Instructor	CHRIS BURKET
Corinne	PARISA FITZ-HENLEY
Mama Sky	LYNN REDGRAVE
Mediator	STEPHANIE DENISE GRIFFIN
Lynne	MYNDY CRIST
Editor	GRAHAM NORRIS
Rocknasium Instructor	KURT BRYANT
Parent	RUSS JONES
Very Young Nurse	MICHELLE EWIN
Dr. Samantha Yep	GWENDOLINE YEO
Cat	NANCY TRAVIS
Señor Obando	MIGUEL NAJERA

**THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB**  
**Production Credits**

A John Calley/Robin Swicord Production  
In association with Mockingbird Pictures

Written for the Screen and Directed by  
ROBIN SWICORD

Based on The Jane Austen Book Club by  
KAREN JOY FOWLER

Produced by  
JOHN CALLEY  
JULIE LYNN  
DIANA NAPPER

Executive Producer  
MARSHALL ROSE

Co-Producer  
KELLY THOMAS

Director of Photography  
JOHN TOON, ASC

Production Designer  
RUSTY SMITH

Film Editor  
MARYANN BRANDON, A.C.E.

Music Composed by  
AARON ZIGMAN

Music Supervisor  
BARKLIE GRIGGS

Costume Designer  
JOHNETTA BOONE

Casting  
DEBORAH AQUILA, CSA  
TRICIA WOOD, CSA  
JENNIFER SMITH, CSA

## ***THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB*** **Synopsis**

Today's central California may be far removed from Regency England, but some things never change. We're still every bit as preoccupied with the complexities of marriage, friendship, romantic entanglements, position, and social manners and mores as was Jane Austen at the turn of the 1800s. *THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB* reveals the lives of an ensemble of present-day friends through the witty prism of their literary heroine.

Six book club members, six Austen books, six interwoven story lines over six months in the busy modern setting of Sacramento, where city and suburban sprawl meet natural beauty. While the contemporary stories never slavishly parallel the Austen plots, the six characters find echoes, predictions, warnings and wisdom about their own trajectories within Austen's beloved narratives.

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The members of the Jane Austen Book Club are:

**BERNADETTE** (Kathy Baker), whose life history is a paradox: how could this warm, wise, earthy free spirit possibly have been married six times? Now mid-50s and solo, Bernadette is a supportive friend to all and an island of calm amid the more turbulent lives around her. It's Bernadette's idea to convene her friends in an "All-Austen-All-The-Time" book club, because who better than Jane Austen to cure what ails the world? Once in a while, though, her book club remarks betray a wistful hope that love and romance are not completely behind her.

As ready as Bernadette has been to take the marital plunge repeatedly, her friend **JOCELYN** (Maria Bello) has stayed well out of the romantic fray. She declares that she's never been in love—except, perhaps, with her champion Rhodesian Ridgeback, Pridey, faithful companion and sire of the noble line of dogs she breeds on her small ranch in the country. When Pridey dies, Jocelyn is engulfed with grief, and her friends agree that she needs a distraction. But Jocelyn is far from fragile: gorgeous, confident, energetic, and bossy, she's the engine that drives the book club.

**SYLVIA** (Amy Brenneman) is Jocelyn's lifelong friend; they even dated the same guy back in high school. **DANIEL** (Jimmy Smits) ended up married to Sylvia over 25 years and three children. But when Daniel, a public-affairs lawyer, breaks the news to Sylvia that he has fallen in love with another woman, Sylvia is devastated. She was completely unaware of any discontent in their marriage. Daniel seeks renewal, a fresh new relationship to replace one gone stale with time and familiarity.

Sylvia and Daniel's daughter, **ALLEGRA** (Maggie Grace), 20ish, initially joins the book club just to support her mom; at loose ends romantically and professionally, Allegra has moved back into the family home to keep Sylvia company. Pretty, sporty, and easy-going on the surface, in matters of love Allegra is prone to passions and drama—themes to delve into in her Austen readings and discussions. She's comfortably open about her sexuality (she's gay), but hides from her mother that she's into extreme sports (she skydives, kayaks, and rock climbs).

Quite the opposite of easy-going is **PRUDIE** (Emily Blunt), whose neuroses are perilously close to the surface. A young high school French teacher who's never been to France, Prudie is newly married to **DEAN** (Marc Blucas), who has just cancelled their much-anticipated trip to

Paris because of a business conflict. Dean is good-looking and loving, but his Average Joe sports-buff persona is an apparent mismatch for Prudie's sharp intellect and emotional neediness. That neediness leads back to Prudie's mother **SKY** (Lynn Redgrave), a relentlessly irresponsible aging-hippie pothead. All this makes Prudie vulnerable to a most inappropriate infatuation with flirtatious high-school senior **TREY** (Kevin Zegers), who flusters Prudie with his bad-boy attentions. When Bernadette meets Prudie by chance, she spots her fragility, takes her under her mother-hen wing, and invites her to join the Jane Austen Book Club.

The sixth member of the Jane Austen Book Club—and the only male—is **GRIGG** (Hugh Dancy), a geeky-cute techie in his early 30s whom Jocelyn meets in an elevator when her dog breeders' convention shares a hotel with his sci-fi fan convention. Jocelyn eyes Grigg as a potential younger-man diversion for Sylvia, but she's oblivious to the obvious: that Grigg's interest is focused on Jocelyn herself. He's just too nice and self-effacing to make much fuss about it.

Each month, the Jane Austen Book Club meets to discuss one of Austen's novels, at Jocelyn's pretty old farmhouse, or Sylvia's comfortable family home in town, or Grigg's spanking-new suburban tract house that's surprisingly full of personality on the inside. The book club even squeezes into a Starbuck's and a hospital room, and enjoys a beach outing in honor of an Austen seaside setting.

Austen is the thread that runs through their interconnected lives, as the book club members play out their own stories: the dissolution of Sylvia's settled, married life, and the reinvention of a new Sylvia. The daredevil Allegra who lacks caution in sports and love. The yoga-centered Bernadette, seemingly content to look after everybody else's emotional well-being. Will Prudie figure out how to be a married grownup, or will

she chuck it all for an illicit fling? And will Jocelyn ever get over her literary snobbishness and read the Ursula LeGuin sci-fi classics that Grigg keeps urging her to try?

As always in Austen, marriage, friendship, and finding one's rightful place in the world are the things that really matter.

**THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB**  
**Plots and Parallels: the Novels and the Book Club**

Like a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of a Jane Austen novel, the six members of the Jane Austen Book Club live through romantic hopes and disappointments, the consolations and misunderstandings of friendship, and the infinite complications of life as social beings in a complex community. The book club members need look no further than their monthly reading and discussions to find parallels with their own lives.

Sylvia, in the midst of a divorce, has the misfortune of hosting and leading the Mansfield Park discussion; the novel is replete with dissolving alliances, romantic disappointment, marital pitfalls, and adultery. As Jocelyn says when Sylvia breaks down in tears during the book club discussion, “Reading Jane Austen is a freaking minefield.”

Jocelyn herself has an Austen counterpart: the title character of Emma is lovely, rich, vivacious, and a tirelessly meddling matchmaker who thinks she knows what everybody else needs but is foolishly blind when it comes to herself. Willfully ignoring Grigg’s interest in her, Jocelyn pushes him at Sylvia, who is too busy mourning her marital breakup to notice.

Northanger Abbey, in which the heroine is much captivated by spooky tales of Gothic melodrama, is Grigg’s novel to host for the book club. For fun, he bedecks his suburban-bland house with Halloween-style decorations, but real Gothic melodrama intrudes when the death of a character is revealed.

Ironically, the book club’s Pride and Prejudice discussion is the most fraught with heartache and anxiety. Although Pride and Prejudice is Austen’s most romantic novel, it’s laced with animosity and

misunderstanding among lovers, and portrays the terrible strain of formal-dress soirees with deadly, witty accuracy. The black-tie dinner dance that the book club attends is every bit as emotionally charged as the husband-hunting dances in the novel, and Grigg and Jocelyn bicker as poisonously as Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett. Daughters suffer through their relationships with mothers and fathers as painfully in the present-day book club as they do in the book.

Sense and Sensibility, in which mismatched engagements hamper the romantic hopes of two impoverished sisters, gives the book club members a backdrop to thrash out their discordant perspectives and attitudes. But it's Persuasion, the last of the book club discussions, that resolves the various stories: it's about a couple who, years before, parted bitterly, but find their way back to reconciliation and love after much hesitation and misunderstanding. In its theme of second chances, it's a keystone for Prudie and Dean, and for Sylvia and Daniel. And in its theme of gambling on love, it inspires Jocelyn, Grigg, Allegra, and Bernadette, each in their own way.

The book club's final romantic pairings have a satisfying resolution and rightness—just as marriage and happy endings always have the last word in Austen's novels.

## ***THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB*** **Thoughts From the Writer-Director**

When John Calley asked me to read Karen Joy Fowler's novel, The Jane Austen Book Club, I was at work on an original screenplay about a dysfunctional family of Jane Austen scholars, which I planned to direct for Sony Pictures. I had spent years immersed in Austenalia, not only reading Austen's novels repeatedly, but also absorbing her letters and juvenilia, and making my way through various academic treatises which explored Austen's life and work from every imaginable angle. I joked to my Sony executive that I was on the way to making the only light Hollywood comedy ever to need a bibliography appended to the credits.

However, in reading The Jane Austen Book Club, I found myself no longer in the company of sparring intellectuals. Here were ordinary people more like me; readers, seeking shelter and companionship in books. That contemporary readers have found refuge in Jane Austen's well-ordered novels isn't surprising, given what we're seeking shelter from—congested traffic, ringing cell phones, squealing security wands, waiting rooms with blaring televisions. Recently I noticed that four of Austen's six novels were for sale at the newsstand at the Seattle airport. Spend a couple of hours trapped in a terminal waiting for a flight that's been delayed, and you'll be only too happy to withdraw into a semi-rural English village, two centuries in the past.

When you begin to love Austen, her world doesn't seem that antiquated. Her characters worry about money, deal with embarrassing family members, cringe at social slights, and spend more time than they should hoping to fall in love, even when the local prospects don't seem that promising. In short, her people are just like us—but without the commute and the twelve-to-fourteen hour workday.

After finishing Karen Joy Fowler's book, I found myself mulling over the contemporary impulse to withdraw into private refuges. The pace of our lives has turned us all into introverted extroverts, tucked up at home (for many of us home is now a workplace too); ichatting, tapping out emails, browsing networking sites and on-line bookstores, text-voting for *American Idol* even as our Blackberries vibrate beside the dinner plate. In the "global village", we have never been more available to each other—and paradoxically, never more isolated. In an era of "niche marketing", let's face it, we're all in our niches. And yet here was Karen Joy Fowler's wonderful novel, in which she describes a brave act of full-dimensional, non-virtual community. Smack in the midst of dealing with divorce, dating, bereavement and changing jobs, six people agree to read six books by Jane Austen, and then drive across town to meet in person to discuss them. Such heroism, in such an intimate story!

Adapting any book is essentially an endeavor of interpretation. The first film images that came to me as I sat with Fowler's book became the opening montage of our movie. The story would take place where so many of us live now—at the intersection of suburbia and exurbia, next door to no one we know. At first glance our characters would be strangers we might notice briefly; people, much like ourselves, all of us in the midst of busy lives—in a hurry, on the cell phone, maybe carrying too many things; losing a parking space just when we're late for work; this person loading groceries and wrangling kids, that person just missing the elevator; all of us beset by myriad technological irritations that Jane Austen could never have imagined.

The story would open in a setting of apparent community—a funeral for Jocelyn's dog. Quickly we'd see: Nobody feels terribly communal. Daniel derides Jocelyn's grief, wants to leave early. Allegra takes petty offense.

Sylvia rejects Bernadette's suggestion that they all do something to make Jocelyn feel better. "We really should," agrees Sylvia, then gives everyone the perfect out, "But she lives so far away."

All of Jane Austen's novels examine order in a community, giving particular attention to an individual's responsibility to others. In Pride and Prejudice, Mr. Darcy is disliked initially because he will not provide the community service of dancing at a party where many young women are unpartnered. In Emma, the young heroine is shamed when she inadvertently insults a widow—in Austen's rulebook, people blessed with good fortune must take care not to humiliate those of lower status. Communal order vs. one's personal desire is a subject always lurking in the deep structures of Austen's novels, well below the plot lines that we all love. Where else could a Jane Austen story take place except in or around a village, or in a closed social world, such as in Bath?

And in the absence of a village—say, at the anonymous intersection of suburbia and exurbia—could an Austen story even be told? What would that story look like?

I knew that in our film the character's stories would parallel the story lines of Austen's novels, hewing perhaps even more closely than they did in Karen Joy Fowler's book. And yes, everyone would get each other wrong at first, as in every Austen novel, and eventually they'd find love, of course. But more importantly (at least for me), we'd see the deep subtext of Austen's novels also played out. When we met our characters, we'd recognize ourselves in them, living in a semblance of community, not strangers to each other, but nonetheless somehow estranged. We'd watch each person carry forward their separate storyline—but over the course of the film, we'd witness our characters fighting out their differences in book club, doubting their own ability to keep the group

together, coming up against their own imperfections, and eventually we'd see these people begin to join their narratives as they figure out what it takes to come together in a meaningful way.

After I knew the shape and intention of our story, I had an overwhelming urge to write this movie as soon as possible. As I wrote and planned for the film, the Austenian idea of having to face our own imperfections was never far from my mind. In fact, during pre-production, I had a hoodie sweatshirt embroidered on the reverse, "imperfect". When I wore it to the set the first week, a crew member jokingly objected, saying, "That's so negative, are you saying we can't get it perfect for you?" And our production designer Rusty Smith, quickly stepped in: "No, it's good. It means we have freedom."

-- Robin Swicord

## **THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB**

### **Production Notes**

Like a Jane Austen heroine, director Robin Swicord and her cast and crew had to be resourceful, clever, thrifty, and amicable to make *The Jane Austen Book Club*—and to have fun doing it. With a fast schedule, a lean budget, and a large ensemble cast sharing so much screen time, this witty depiction of modern-day love and friendship needed a real-life atmosphere of harmony, productivity, and authenticity to look great and ring true.

“My most important task was to create an environment for these terrific actors to come together as an ensemble and make the chemistry happen,” says Swicord. “We worked very hard and fast, but we always maintained a spirit of play. Before the shoot, we did some ensemble-building theater exercises, and we named ourselves the SMUJies—Slightly Mentally Unhinged Janeites—complete with cheap T-shirts. I followed the ‘go with your gut’ rule in casting, and so I ended up with a set of actors who were very simpatico. This production was serious fun.”

Jimmy Smits, who has seen many a film shoot, agrees: “I haven’t felt so relaxed on a set in a long time, and I see that with all the actors. I think that will come across onscreen in a big way.”

With only six weeks to prep and thirty days to shoot, Swicord made sure that her actors had as much rehearsal time as they could squeeze in to get comfortable with their characters and each other. “Rehearsal before we began shooting was so valuable in refining the script and the blocking,” recalls Swicord. “This screenplay didn’t go through the usual studio development process of story meetings that can sometimes flatten out a script; Sony Pictures Classics loved the original book, gave my

adaptation the green light, and we were off and running. So working with the actors was the proving ground. I watched where the dialogue ran smoothly, and where actors hesitated or felt awkward, or when they seemed to need a line or a movement, and I'd pick up those cues and make adjustments. Even after we started shooting 12-hour days, I would always set aside an hour for rehearsal in the morning, knowing that we'd make up the time in richer performances and fewer takes."

Indeed, as Kathy Baker marveled: "Robin 'made her day' every single day"—meaning that the very full daily schedule was always accomplished. "That's a record!"

A first-time feature director (though a twenty-year veteran of film production as an acclaimed screenwriter), Swicord was supported by a top-notch production team, from renowned producer John Calley, whose prolific filmography attests to a love for discovering and nurturing directorial talent, to a technical crew "that were all so game," says Swicord. "This film was blessed with amazing filmmakers at the top of their professions. We were able to get these people—a low-budget movie on a very ambitious schedule—largely because we shot in and around Los Angeles, where the best film crews in the world like to go home at night and sleep in their own beds."

One key crew member, however, was very far from home: Director of Photography John Toon agreed to leave his farm in New Zealand after he and Swicord clicked in the course of a four-hour phone call. "I hit the lottery that John Toon would come here and shoot this. He even agreed to stay in my house with my family to save money!"

Swicord's goal of creating an authentic slice of life led to her choice of DP. "I wanted the look of the film to be very real—very 'here's how we live

now,’ just as Jane Austen gave us such a detailed portrait of how people lived day-to-day in her time. I admired John’s camera technique in *Glory Road* and *Sylvia*, because he draws the viewer in to feel like you’re right there, an immediate observer. He invented a camera rigging that’s just a bit looser, more like human movement—barely noticeable, not handheld-jiggly, but not Steadicam-smooth either. He uses a lot of natural light, which strengthens that sense of immediacy.”

And, as John Toon notes, “What budget constraints mean is that you’re in a hurry, and you don’t get a chance to reshoot things that go wrong. So nothing does go wrong because you get one shot at making it look good.”

An anecdote related by Swicord illustrates how director and DP found the sweet spot between swift efficiency and strong performances: “We were shooting the scene of Trey and Prudie about to kiss in the car outside the school when she sees her husband approach. It’s a tense scene. John Toon and I had worked out our coverage: intimate singles from the side, and also sitting in the back seat looking over, and then going out through the windshield for the point of view shot of Dean approaching. When we shot the close-up singles inside the car, the actors were just getting warmed up, and by the time we had the cameras focused through the windshield, they were really getting good—serious chemistry. I whispered to John, “we’re going to reshoot the singles”—which meant resetting lights and cameras—and he said “no, no, we don’t go backwards,” and I said “you’re going to have to trust me on this!” And—warp speed—everybody starting resetting and we shot fast and never fell behind and I got the singles I wanted. That was a baby director’s lesson for me: don’t do the intimate singles first, always warm up with something else. Next day Tooney said “We’re gonna start with a wide shot, awright!””

Swicord forged such strongly collaborative relationships with the rest of her team. “Producer Julie Lynn can marshal armies. She had a two-year-old while we were shooting this, and we agreed that if you can be a mother you could do anything. I needed someone who could make a little money go a long way, and who could stand by my side and be another pair of creative eyes. Plus, she’s a lawyer, so she saved us all kinds of money on legal stuff!”

Rusty Smith, the production designer, designed Swicord’s short film, *The Red Coat*, ten years ago. “He’s become a top big-budget designer, so he said it was refreshing to work on our modest, realistic scale, bringing the details of these characters to life on a shoestring. With an ensemble cast, the viewer has to get to know the characters very fast through their homes and clothes and surroundings, and Rusty was a genius at finding perfect locations that were true to the characters and could also be used and re-used and recycled for several different scenes. Rusty made drawings of every location, and I bought a set of Fisher-Price Little People—I let the cast pick out who they wanted to be—and moved them around to find the blocking.”

That down-to-the-details authenticity extended throughout the production. “The set decorator, Meg Everist, would do things like leave a basket of unfolded laundry on a counter that you couldn’t even see in the shot—but the actors could see it and it brought their characters’ reality to life a bit more. It’s a pet peeve of mine when movie characters live in houses and dress in clothes that are ridiculously beyond their means. I sat down with the costume designer, Johnetta Boone, and figured out where each of these characters would really shop, and that’s where Johnetta bought their clothes. If you’re a schoolteacher like Prudie, you may have style but you sure don’t have a lot of money.”

To cut *The Jane Austen Book Club*, Swicord—surprisingly—sought a film editor with an action-movie background. “When the book club meets and there’s bickering and colliding story lines and tension, Maryann Brandon treats it like an action scene, cutting among the quips and retorts and meaningful glances, creating momentum—we didn’t want a static bunch of talky people stuck in a room together. Her action bona fides pay off in keeping things dynamic.”

The actors, too, brought collaborative warmth and generosity to the project. “Everybody felt inspired to give extra. Emily Blunt came in to do readings with actors when we were casting Trey—I picked Kevin Zegers because he made her blush. Emily paid to have a wig made because she felt that Prudie should have that tidy French bob, and she couldn’t cut her hair because of her next commitment. We couldn’t afford a wig. Maria Bello was the first lead cast. She came in early every day to run lines. She cooked a ziti dinner for everybody. Nobody snoozed in their trailer—they all got together and rehearsed and gave it their all.”

Swicord continues: “The actors saved the day with our only real white-knuckle anxious moment: we originally cast Kathy Baker as Sky, Prudie’s mother, and Kathy said, “I’ll play Sky, but really, I was born to play Bernadette.” A light bulb went off and I switched her to Bernadette, but the actor we then cast as Sky had to drop out at the last minute. Literally two days before Sky’s scenes were scheduled to shoot, Lynn Redgrave, who was in Los Angeles with her one-woman show, agreed to do the role. It was a huge act of generosity. She played with us for two days and then rushed back to her stage show in the evenings.”

Swicord speaks warmly and admiringly of all her cast. “They’re a brainy bunch. I knew Hugh Dancy was an intellectual—he’s such a bookworm—

but he's hysterically funny, too, which I didn't expect. I have a wonderful photo of all these actresses standing around chatting, and in the middle sits Hugh with his book, and every woman's hand is resting lightly on his head and shoulders like he's a beloved pet. I can't enumerate all the wonderful things about this cast, because I'm afraid I'll leave someone out. Amy Brenneman, Maggie Grace, Jimmy Smits, Marc Blucas—these are great actors because they're smart and warm and generous.”

Swicord sums up the satisfying experience of directing her first feature with a quote from Jane Austen, the muse who was never far from the production's heart: “In a letter to her niece, Austen speaks of her writing as “The little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a Brush, as produces little effect after much labour.” Making a movie is a world away from Jane metaphorically carving a piece of scrimshaw, but we're really after the same thing: telling stories that reveal our lives and how we feel about love and friendship.”

## **THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB**

### **About Jane Austen**

December 16, 1775 to July 18, 1817

Jane Austen's brilliantly witty, elegantly structured satirical fiction marks the transition in English literature from 18th century neo-classicism to 19th century romanticism.

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, at the rectory in the village of Steventon, near Basingstoke, in Hampshire. The seventh of eight children of the Reverend George Austen and his wife, Cassandra, she was educated mainly at home and never lived apart from her family. She had a happy childhood amongst all her brothers and the other boys who lodged with the family and whom Mr. Austen tutored. From her older sister, Cassandra, she was inseparable. To amuse themselves, the children wrote and performed plays and charades, and even as a little girl Jane was encouraged to write. The reading that she did of the books in her father's extensive library provided material for the short satirical sketches she wrote as a girl.

At the age of 14 she wrote her first novel, Love and Freindship (sic) and then A History of England by a partial, prejudiced and ignorant Historian, together with other very amusing juvenilia. In her early twenties Jane Austen wrote the novels that were later to be re-worked and published as Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice and Northanger Abbey. She also began a novel called The Watsons, which was never completed.

As a young woman Jane enjoyed dancing (an activity which features frequently in her novels) and she attended balls in many of the great houses of the neighborhood. She loved the country, enjoyed long country

walks, and had many Hampshire friends. It therefore came as a considerable shock when her parents suddenly announced in 1801 that the family would be moving away to Bath. Mr. Austen gave the Steventon living to his son James and retired to Bath with his wife and two daughters. The next four years were difficult ones for Jane Austen. She disliked the confines of a busy town and missed her Steventon life. After her father's death in 1805, his widow and daughters also suffered financial difficulties and were forced to rely on the charity of the Austen sons. It was also at this time that, while on holiday in the West country, Jane fell in love, and when the young man died, she was deeply upset. Later she accepted a proposal of marriage from Harris Bigg-Wither, a wealthy landowner and brother to some of her closest friends, but she changed her mind the next morning and was greatly upset by the whole episode.

After the death of Mr. Austen, the Austen ladies moved to Southampton to share the home of Jane's naval brother Frank and his wife Mary. There were occasional visits to London, where Jane stayed with her favorite brother Henry, at that time a prosperous banker, and where she enjoyed visits to the theatre and art exhibitions. However, she wrote little in Bath and nothing at all in Southampton.

Then, in July 1809, on her brother Edward offering his mother and sisters a permanent home on his Chawton estate, the Austen ladies moved back to their beloved Hampshire countryside. It was a small but comfortable house, with a pretty garden, and most importantly it provided the settled home which Jane Austen needed in order to write. In the seven and a half years that she lived in this house, she revised Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice and published them (in 1811 and 1813) and then embarked on a period of intense productivity. Mansfield Park came out in 1814, followed by Emma in 1816, and she

completed Persuasion (which was published together with Northanger Abbey in 1818, the year after her death). None of the books published in her lifetime had her name on them — they were described as being written "By a Lady". In the winter of 1816 she started Sanditon, but illness prevented its completion.

Jane Austen had contracted Addisons Disease, a tubercular disease of the kidneys. No longer able to walk far, she used to drive out in a little donkey carriage, which can still be seen at the Jane Austen Museum at Chawton. By May 1817 she was so ill that she and Cassandra, to be near Jane's physician, rented rooms in Winchester. Tragically, there was then no cure and Jane Austen died in her sister's arms in the early hours of 18 July, 1817. She was 41 years old. She is buried in Winchester Cathedral.

**Susannah Fullerton** □ **President, Jane Austen Society of Australia**

## **THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB**

### **About the Cast**

#### **KATHY BAKER** (Bernadette)

Kathy Baker won three Emmy Awards, a Golden Globe Award and the Screen Actor's Guild Award for her work on the CBS television series *Picket Fences*. Baker also received a 2003 Emmy nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress in the TNT feature *Door To Door*, which garnered multiple Emmy Awards and an AFI Creative Ensemble Award. She was also nominated for back-to-back Emmys for guest performances on *Touched by an Angel* and *Boston Public*.

Prior to *The Jane Austen Book Club*, Baker's feature credits include the remake of *All The King's Men* directed by Steven Zaillian; the independent feature *Nine Lives* directed by Rodrigo Garcia; the critically-acclaimed *Cold Mountain*; *13 Going on 30*; *Fathers and Sons*; *Assassination Tango*; *The Glass House*; the Academy Award-winning film *The Cider House Rules* (Screen Actor's Guild Nomination for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Theatrical Motion Picture); *Inventing the Abbotts*; *To Gillian on Her 37<sup>th</sup> Birthday*; *Mad Dog and Glory*; *Jennifer Eight*; *Article 99*; *Edward Scissorhands*; *Street Smart* (National Society of Film Critics Best Supporting Actress Award); *Clean and Sober*; *Jackknife*; *Dad*; *Mister Frost*; *A Little Inside*; and *The Right Stuff* in which Baker made her film debut.

Baker recently completed a pilot for CBS called *Babylon Fields*, co-written and directed by Michael Cuesta and also starring Ray Stevenson and Amber Tamblyn. She also co-stars opposite Tom Selleck in the upcoming CBS MOW *Jesse Stone: Sea Change*. Baker's other television credits include a recent guest arc on *Nip/Tuck*; a series regular role on *Boston Public*; *Picking Up, Dropping Off*, directed by her husband Steven Robman; Spike Lee's Showtime feature *Sucker Free City*; *Sanctuary*; *Ten*

*Tiny Love Stories*; *Things You Can Tell Just By Looking At Her*, Showtime's *Ratz*; the CBS mini-series *Shake, Rattle & Roll: An American Love Story*; the TNT series *Bull*; *Lush Life*; *Not in This Town*; the Hallmark Hall of Fame movie *A Season For Miracles*; and *The Image*.

A veteran of the stage, Baker originated the role of 'May' in Sam Shepard's "Fool for Love," and at the playwright's request, took the part to New York along with co-star Ed Harris. The move resulted in a prestigious Obie Award for Baker. During the following year, Baker continued to work on other successful stage productions such as "Desire Under the Elms" and "Aunt Dan and Lemon." She returned to the stage in 2006 in a South Coast Repertory production of the Tracy Letts play "A Man From Nebraska" which was directed by William Friedkin.

Baker resides in Los Angeles with her husband and two sons.

**MARIA BELLO** (Jocelyn)

In a remarkably short time, Maria Bello established herself as a leading actress with a formidable and dazzling presence. Bello segued effortlessly from the spy-adventure series *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* into leading lady roles in film and television.

In addition to *The Jane Austen Book Club*, Bello recently completed *Butterfly On A Wheel* starring opposite Pierce Brosnan and Gerard Butler, due out in 2007, and is currently working on *Downloading Helen*, with Jason Patric.

In 2006 Maria starred in Oliver Stone's critically acclaimed *World Trade Center*, opposite Oscar-winner Nicolas Cage; alongside Alison Lohman and Tim McGraw in Fox's *Flicka*; and in the satire *Thank You For*

*Smoking* alongside Aaron Eckhart, Katie Holmes and William H. Macy, which received excellent reviews. In 2005, she received critical acclaim with her starring role in David Cronenberg's *A History of Violence*, playing opposite Viggo Mortensen & Ed Harris. Bello was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Actress and won the New York & Chicago Critic's Best Supporting Actress category for her role of Edie.

In 2003 Bello captivated audiences in the feature film *The Cooler*, a tale of luck, love and Las Vegas. She was part of an all-star cast including William H. Macy, Alec Baldwin and Ron Livingston. Her performance garnered Bello a Golden Globe & a Screen Actors Guild Nomination for Best Supporting Actress. She also co-starred in the feature *Auto Focus*, based on the complex life of Bob Crane of television's *Hogan's Heroes*.

Bello's other film credits include: *Permanent Midnight* with Ben Stiller and Elizabeth Hurley; Paramount's *Payback* with Mel Gibson; *Duets* with Gwyneth Paltrow, Huey Lewis and Scott Speedman; Jerry Bruckheimer's *Coyote Ugly*; *Secret Window* with Johnny Depp and John Turturro; and John Sayles' film *Silver City* co-starring Chris Cooper, Richard Dreyfuss and Thora Birch. She also starred in *Assault on Precinct 16* opposite Ethan Hawke, Laurence Fishbourne and John Leguizamo; and *Sisters*, based on the Chekhov play "Three Sisters" directed by Authur Allan Seidelman, co-starring Erika Christensen, Mary Stuart Masterson and Chris O'Donnell.

Bello made her television debut as a series regular opposite Scott Bakula in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*. However, Bello is best known for her Screen Actors Guild Award winning role on *ER* as the passionate and headstrong pediatrician Dr. Anna Del Amico.

Bello's extensive theatre credits include the world premiere of "The Killer Inside Me" as well as "Smart Town Gals" at the Currican Theatre; "Big Problems" at the Theatre for a New City; "Urban Planning" at the Theatre del Barrio; "A Lie of the Mind" at Columbia University; "His Pillow" and "Out of Gas on Lover's Leap" at T. Schreiber Studios; "Big Talk" at the Double Image Theatre; and "Talked Away" at the West End Gate.

Bello dedicates her time and energy to working as an ambassador for the Save The Children charity, which aides children in poverty and crisis. She is also involved with LA's Best, Office of the Americas and the American Friends Service Committee.

**EMILY BLUNT** (Prudie)

Emily Blunt shot to international prominence with her lead role in the multi award-winning British movie, *My Summer of Love* (2003) directed by Pawel Pawlikowski, for which she won the Most Promising Newcomer award at the 2004 Evening Standard Film Awards. She was also nominated in the Best Newcomer category at the 2004 British Independent Film Awards, and the film won the Best British Film award at the 2005 BAFTAs.

Emily started her career at the 2002 Chichester Festival, where she played Juliet in a production of "Romeo and Juliet." Her London debut was portraying Gwen Cavendish in a production of "The Royal Family," opposite Dame Judi Dench.

Emily has worked extensively in British television: in 2003, she appeared in the British television drama *Boudica*; in the television adaptation of Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile*; and in the television series *Foyle's War*.

In 2003 she went on to appear in Peter Travis' *Henry VIII*, a two-part television drama documenting the stormy 38-year reign of the king. Emily played Henry's fifth wife, the teenage Queen Catherine Howard. She co-starred with Ray Winstone, Helena Bonham-Carter and Michael Gambon and the series won the Best TV Movie at the 2003 International Emmy Awards

Emily won a 2007 Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actress in Television for her performance in *Gideon's Daughter*, in which Emily starred alongside Bill Nighy and Miranda Richardson, directed by Stephen Poliakoff.

In 2005, Emily returned to feature film in *The Devil Wears Prada* as the intensely neurotic Emily Charlton, senior assistant at Runway Magazine, who is permanently on the verge of a nervous breakdown. David Frankel directed an all-star cast, including Anne Hathaway, Meryl Streep and Stanley Tucci. Critics and audiences made *The Devil Wears Prada* a huge hit. Emily was nominated in the Breakthrough Female category at the 2006 Teen Choice Awards for her performance and was honored with the Breakthrough Award at the 2006 Movieline Young Hollywood Awards. She was also nominated in the Best Supporting Actress category at the Golden Globes and the BAFTAs for the role.

Emily's film career continues to be prolific; in 2005 she starred in horror film *Wind Chill*, directed by Greg Jacobs, with a release scheduled for summer 2007. In 2006 she filmed *The Jane Austen Book Club*; *The Great Buck Howard*, a comedy starring Tom Hanks, directed by Sean McGinly; and *Dan In Real Life*, with Steve Carell, Juliette Binoche and Dane Cook.

Emily started shooting *Sunshine Cleaning* alongside Amy Adams and Alan Arkin in February 2007. She will also be seen in Mike Nicholls's

*Charlie Wilson's War* with Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts and Philip Seymour Hoffman.

Emily's next project will be the Martin Scorsese-produced biopic, *The Young Victoria*. Emily plays Britain's Queen Victoria in the early stages of her life and the film will be written by Julian Fellowes and directed by Jean-Marc Vallée. Filming is scheduled to begin in the UK in Summer 2007.

Emily was nominated in the Rising Star Award category at the 2007 BAFTAs.

**AMY BRENNEMAN** (Sylvia)

In 2005, Amy Brenneman concluded her final season as star, producer and co-creator of the smash hit CBS drama series *Judging Amy*. Her role as 'Judge Amy Gray' has garnered her two TV Guide Awards, three Golden Globe Award nominations, three Emmy Award nominations and a People's Choice Award nomination, as well as her most recent nomination for a Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series. Brenneman is currently in production on *Private Practice*, the *Grey's Anatomy* spin-off co-starring Kate Walsh and Taye Diggs.

Prior to *The Jane Austen Book Club*, Brenneman was most recently seen in *Nine Lives*, directed by [Rodrigo García](#). She will be seen next in *88 Minutes* with Al Pacino and *Downloading Nancy*, again co-starring with Maria Bello.

Brenneman's film credits include roles in Michael Mann's *Heat* opposite Robert DeNiro and Al Pacino, the Universal thriller *Daylight* starring

opposite Sylvester Stallone, and Neil LaBute's *Your Friends And Neighbors* opposite Jason Patric and Ben Stiller. In addition, she starred in the independent film *Nevada* with Gabrielle Anwar Angus MacFayden and Kathy Najimy; *The Suburbans* opposite Ben Stiller and Robert Loggia; *Things You Can Tell Just By Looking At Her*, opposite Glenn Close, Cameron Diaz, Calista Flockhart, Kathy Baker, and Holly Hunter; and was last be seen in the independent feature *Off the Map*, opposite Joan Allen and Sam Elliott.

Other film credits include *Fear* opposite Reese Witherspoon and Mark Wahlberg, Steven Spielberg's *Casper*, Twentieth Century Fox's romantic comedy *Bye Bye Love* and October Films' *Lesser Prophets* opposite Scott Glenn, Jimmy Smits and Elizabeth Perkins.

America first took notice of Brenneman with her Emmy Award-nominated performance in *NYPD Blue* in the role of 'Janice Licalsi'. She continued her role on the hit television series for a year as a recurring regular, which again earned her an Emmy nomination, allowing her the time to do feature film work. She was also a series regular on the CBS critically acclaimed series, *Middle Ages*.

Born in New London, Connecticut and raised in the Hartford suburb of Glastonbury, Brenneman stems from a close-knit, traditional family. She enrolled in Harvard University, where, during her freshman year, Brenneman teamed up with a director, a set designer, a composer and a couple of actors to form the Cornerstone Theater Company. This unique company of professional actors took on the task of customizing the classics and taking them to the back roads of America. With each production they would integrate professional actors with local townspeople in some of the most treasured classics such as "Romeo and

Juliet,” “The Winter’s Tale,” “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” “Three Sisters,” and “Our Town” to name just a few. Consuming over five years of her life, Brenneman is very proud of her hard work with the company.

Brenneman’s college experience also included a semester abroad in Nepal where she studied sacred dances with an indigenous priest. In doing so she became one of only two or three westerners to learn the dances. She also found time to live in Paris for 7 months where she earned her living as an au pair for two autistic children.

Upon completion of her studies at Harvard, Brenneman continued her work with Cornerstone and in 1990 moved to New York to take a shot at the New York Theater scene. She nabbed juicy roles in “The Learned Ladies,” opposite Jean Stapleton at the CSC Repertory, Mac Wellman’s “Sincerity Forever” at the BACA Downtown, and “The Video Store Owner’s Significant Other.” Additionally Amy has performed at the Yale Repertory Company in the role of ‘St. Joan’ in Bertolt Brecht’s “St. Joan of the Stockyards” and starred in the Lincoln Center production of “God’s Heart,” directed by Joe Montello.

**HUGH DANCY** (Grigg)

Born in June 1975 in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, Hugh Dancy first discovered his love for stage acting at Winchester school when he was thirteen. He graduated from St. Peter’s College, Oxford in 1997 and moved to London to pursue acting.

Television provided Hugh’s first acting jobs in the late 90s: he played roles in the psychological drama series *Trial and Retribution II* (ITV); the BBC’s *Dangerfield* starring Nigel Havers; and *Kavanagh QC*.

In winter '98 Hugh was 'over the moon' to be cast as David Copperfield for Hallmark and TNT's production of the Charles Dickens' novel. Directed by Peter Medak, it had a large cast of British and American actors, including Eileen Atkins, Anthony Andrews, Alan Howard, Alec McGowan, Frank McCusker, Nigel Davenport, Paul Bettany, Michael Richards and Sally Field.

Hugh landed the role of Danny in the hugely popular TV series *Cold Feet* (Granada). He next went to France in the BBC's adaptation of *Madame Bovary*, in which he played Leon. Directed by Tim Fywell, this lavish costume drama starred Frances O' Connor, with Eileen Atkins, Hugh Bonneville, Greg Wise and Trevor Peacock. Hugh stayed in France to play D'Artagnan in *Young Blades*, a story inspired by Dumas' The Three Musketeers. Then, Hugh filmed *The Sleeping Dictionary*, a love story written and directed by Guy Jenkin, and almost all shot on location in Sarawak, Borneo.

Hugh returned to the stage in England with "Billy and the Crab Lady" and "To the Green Fields Beyond" by Nick Whitby.

2001 took Hugh to Morocco to film Ridley Scott's Oscar nominated *Black Hawk Down* with Ewan McGregor, Jason Issacs, Tom Sizemore and Josh Hartnett. Next, Hugh filmed the crime thriller *Tempo* on location in Luxembourg and Paris. Directed by Eric Styles, Hugh stars opposite Melanie Griffith and Rachel Leigh Cook.

Hugh returned to the small screen in 2002 with the title role in the BBC's adaptation of George Elliot's emotionally intense *Daniel Deronda*, directed by Tom Hooper. Next, he played on location in Ireland as Prince Charmont in *Ella Enchanted* directed by Tommy O'Haver, followed by the

role of Galahad in Antoine Fuqua's epic drama *King Arthur*, also shot in Ireland. Hugh travelled to Rwanda in July 2004 to take on the lead role in Michael Caton-Jones' *Shooting Dogs*, for BBC Films.

Hugh was nominated for an Emmy Award for his role as the Earl of Essex in the HBO and Channel Four joint venture, *Elizabeth I*, co-starring Helen Mirren as Queen Elizabeth I and Jeremy Irons. The project reunited Hugh with the director Tom Hooper, and was shot during June and July of 2005 in Lithuania. He segued to Bucharest to start work on vampire drama *Blood and Chocolate*, directed by Katja von Garnier.

Most recently, Hugh has completed filming *Evening* directed by Lajos Koltai. Based on the novel by Susan Minot, Hugh stars alongside Claire Danes, Glenn Close, Meryl Streep and Vanessa Redgrave.

Hugh has recently opened in R.C. Sherriff's World War One drama "Journeys End" on Broadway.

### **MAGGIE GRACE** (Allegra)

Maggie Grace is currently filming a lead role opposite Liam Neeson in *Taken* for producer/writer Luc Besson. In addition to *The Jane Austen Book Club*, her upcoming films include a role opposite Sarah Michelle Gellar in *Suburban Girl*, which is based on the best selling novel [The Girl's Guide to Hunting and Fishing](#). Grace is also known worldwide for her starring role on the hit TV series *Lost*.

Having only started acting professionally six years ago, this Ohio native already has an enviable list of credits. She made a stunning television debut two years ago as Martha Moxley in the USA MOW Murder *in*

*Greenwich*. She also starred in the highly rated CBS MOW *12 Mile Road* opposite Tom Selleck. In addition to recurring on *Oliver Beene* on Fox, she has guest-starred on *Law and Order: SVU*, *Cold Case*, and *CSI Miami* (CBS).

**LYNN REDGRAVE** (Sky)

Lynn Redgrave was born in London into a family of actors and has enjoyed a remarkable career on stage, screen and beyond spanning four decades. She has been nominated for 3 Tony Awards, 2 Oscars, 2 Emmys and most recently, a Grammy. Film highlights include *Georgy Girl* (Oscar nomination, Golden Globe, NY Film Critics awards), *Gods and Monsters* (1999 Golden Globe, Independent Spirit Award, Oscar nomination) and *Shine* (BAFTA and SAG nominations). She is a founding member of The Royal National Theatre and is the author of three plays, *Shakespeare For My Father* (which examines her relationship with Sir Michael Redgrave), *The Mandrake Root* (loosely based on her mother, the actress Rachel Kempson) and *Nightingale* (a fictional meditation on the life of her maternal grandmother, Beatrice Kempson), which had its American premiere this autumn at Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum. *Nightingale* will have an East Coast premiere in Connecticut this May at Hartford Stage. She has also written the text for *Journal, A Mother and Daughter's Recovery From Breast Cancer*, featuring photographs by her daughter, Annabel Clark, currently in its third printing from Umbrage Editions. She can now be heard as the voice of Nanny in the animated film series of *Me, Eloise* and in the upcoming animated feature, *My Dog Tulip*, with Christopher Plummer. Ms. Redgrave is a prolific "voice on tape" and her latest audio book release is Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (Grammy nomination).

**JIMMY SMITS** (Daniel)

Jimmy Smits has built a career that allows him to move effortlessly between film, television and stage. The eleven-time Emmy Award nominated and four-time Golden Globe nominated actor recently signed to star in as well as executive produce *Cane*, a drama series for CBS. El Sendero Productions, Smits' own shingle, has also set up two projects with ABC TV Studio, one a miniseries at ABC and the other a drama on FX.

In 2006, Smits completed his role in the long-running and critically-acclaimed NBC series *The West Wing*. As President Matthew Santos, Smits brought to the show his own infusion of energy and added even more depth to the well-written and politically relevant plot line.

Smits' filmography includes such early works as Peter Hyams' *Running Scared* with Gregory Hines and Billy Crystal; John Schlesinger's *The Believers*; *Old Gringo* with Gregory Peck and Jane Fonda; Blake Edwards' comedy *Switch*; the critically acclaimed *My Family/Mi Familia*, directed by Gregory Nava, for which he received an IFP Spirit Award nomination; Carlos Ávila's *Price of Glory*, Chuck Russell's thriller *Bless The Child*; and George Lucas' *Star Wars: Episode II- Attack of the Clones* and *Star Wars: Episode III- Revenge of the Sith*.

Smits began his acting career in the New York theater and returns to theater often. He starred on Broadway in 2004 as the romantic new arrival in a Cuban-American cigar factory in Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Anna in the Tropics*, preceded by the New York Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park presentations of *Much Ado About Nothing* (2004) and *Twelfth Night* (2002). He is also an active member of the New York Public Theatre's Board of Directors.

In addition to his work on the stage and on the screen, Smits has enjoyed an exemplary television career. Coinciding with his *West Wing* Presidency, Smits was also seen in HBO's multiple award-winning television movie *Lackawanna Blues*, George C. Wolfe's colorful tale of boarding house life, love, and blues in 1950's New York.

He received six consecutive Emmy nominations for his role as Victor Sifuentes on *L.A. Law*, winning the Emmy in 1990, and also five Emmy nominations for his role as Bobby Simone on the critically acclaimed, Emmy-winning drama, *NYPD Blue*. Additionally, he received an ALMA Award and an Imagen Award for Best Actor in *The West Wing*, has four Golden Globe nominations—winning as an Actor in a Leading Role, Drama Series, in 1995 for his role in *NYPD Blue*—and four SAG Award nominations. His highly touted departure from *NYPD Blue* also won the Humanitas Award.

In his free time, Smits has involved himself in various charitable organizations over the years and has consistently been a strong advocate for education. In 1997, he co-founded the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts (NHFA), along with actors Esai Morales and Sonia Braga and Washington attorney Felix Sanchez, to promote Hispanic talent in the performing arts. The organization, which just celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, offers graduate scholarships and cash grants at prominent colleges and universities in order to expand career opportunities and increase access for Hispanic artists and professionals while fostering the emergence of new Hispanic talent. Other organizations Smits is involved with include the Red Cross, NY Cares, the National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, The Fulfillment Fund, United Way, and many more.

**MARC BLUCAS** (Dean)

Marc Blucas recently wrapped three back-to-back feature films in addition to *The Jane Austen Book Club*. These include *The Killing Floor*, a psychological thriller produced by Avi Arad and Doug Liman; *Thr3e*, a thriller based on Ted Dekker's dramatic novel; and *After Sex*, an independent ensemble comedy written and directed by Eric Amadio.

Blucas was last seen opposite Katie Holmes in Fox/New Regency's *First Daughter*, directed by Forest Whitaker. He starred in the gritty independent feature *Prey For Rock n' Roll*, which premiered at The Sundance Film Festival and screened to a sold-out audience at the Tribeca Film Festival. Additional film credits include the BBC Films' period romance *I Capture the Castle*, John Sayles' critically acclaimed film *Sunshine State* with Edie Falco and Angela Bassett, Paramount's Vietnam War drama *We Were Soldiers* with Mel Gibson, Miramax's *Jay & Silent Bob Strike Back* and Warner Bros. *Summer Catch*.

For nearly two years, Marc played Riley Finn in the Emmy-award winning "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

Marc lives in Los Angeles.

**KEVIN ZEGERS** (Trey)

Since his work in *The Jane Austen Book Club*, Kevin Zegers has been filming *Normal*, directed by Carl Bessai, playing the lead role of Jordie, a teenager who made a wrong choice and has paid the price, but cannot stop his journey downward.

In 2006 and 2007, Kevin starred in three independent movies including *The Stone Angel*, alongside Ellen Burstyn and Cole Hauser; *Gardens of*

*the Night*, starring John Malkovich and Jeremy Sisto; and *It's a Boy/Girl Thing* for Elton John's Rocket Pictures.

In a bold move, Kevin selected the 2005 indie film *Transamerica*, which gave him the opportunity to further challenge his skills. He stars as a drug-addled hustler living on the streets who dreams of meeting the father he never knew—who turns out to be a conservative transsexual (Felicity Huffman). The film has achieved critical and award acclaim.

Prior to *Transamerica*, Kevin starred in *Dawn of the Dead*, Universal's remake of the 1979 apocalyptic horror classic by George A. Romero. He was also seen in Showtime's feature *The Incredible Mrs. Ritchie*, starring opposite Hollywood legends Gena Rowlands and James Caan.

Kevin has played professional roles since the age of seven when he landed a gig playing the younger version of Michael J. Fox's character in *Life With Mikey*. Since then, he has worked continuously, appearing in over 20 films and numerous television movies and series, including on film the *Air Bud* franchise; *MVP: Most Valuable Primate*; *Komodo* with Jill Hennessy (Crossing Jordan); *Four Days* with Colm Meaney and William Forsythe; *It Came From the Sky* with John Ritter, Yasmine Bleeth and Christopher Lloyd; *Treasure Island* with Jack Palance and *Nico the Unicorn* with Anne Archer.

Kevin splits his time between Los Angeles and his hometown just outside of Toronto.

**PARISA FITZ-HENLEY** (Corinne)

*The Jane Austen Book Club* is Parisa Fitz-Henley's first feature film. Parisa was born in Kingston, Jamaica and then moved to the states where she grew up in Gulfport, Florida. She presently resides in Los

Angeles. She worked as a full-time model for a number of years and has appeared in numerous national commercials and music videos. She accidentally fell into acting while visiting New York when she was approached by a producer and cast in the Damon Dash feature *Death of a Dynasty*. She began acting full-time in 2005, and recently appeared in primetime television shows *Grey's Anatomy*, *The Unit*, *Studio 60* and *CSI: NY*. She is a practicing member of the Baha'i Faith.

**GWENDOLYN YEO** (Dr. Samantha Yep)

Since graduating from UCLA and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Gwendoline Yeo has forged a career in feature film, television, and theater. In addition to *The Jane Austen Book Club*, she has appeared on film in *I Do, I Did* directed by Cheree Johnson; *Night Skies* directed by Roy Knyrim; *Seventy-Five* directed by B. Hooks and V. Taylor; and *A Day Without a Mexican* directed by Sergio Arau.

On the TV screen, she has had recurring roles in *Desperate Housewives*, *24*, *Grounded for Life*, and *General Hospital*, with roles in many other series and host appearances on talk, interview, and music shows.

She has acted extensively on the Los Angeles stage, including the roles of Miranda and Ariel in the East-West Players production of Shakespeare's "The Tempest;" and roles with the Second City, ACME Comedy Theatre, Padua, Cornerstone/Mark Taper, and Ziggurat theater companies.

**NANCY TRAVIS** (Cat)

Nancy Travis was born in New York and grew up in both Baltimore and Boston. She returned to New York to study drama at New York University and soon after joined the national touring company of

Neil Simon's hit play "Brighton Beach Memoirs."

Travis made her feature film debut in the hit comedy *Three Men and a Baby*. Her additional film credits include *Internal Affairs*, *Air America*, *Three Men and a Little Lady*, *So I Married an Axe Murderer*, *The Vanishing*, *Greedy*, *Fluke*, *Destiny Turns on the Radio* and *Bogie*. She was last seen starring alongside Bradley Whitford and Amber Tamblyn in the film *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*.

On the small screen, Travis starred in *Becker* with Ted Danson and *Almost Perfect*, and will next appear in the television movie *The Party Never Stops: Diary of a Binge Drinker*.

Travis's stage credits include "Boy Gets Girl" for director Randall Arney; the Chekhov classic "Three Sisters"; Herb Gardner's "I'm Not Rappaport"; and Athol Fugard's "My Children, My Africa". She is a founding member of the off-Broadway theatre company Naked Angels and resides in Los Angeles with her husband and two children.

## **THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB**

### **About the Filmmakers**

**ROBIN SWICORD** (Director and Screenplay)

Robin Swicord is primarily known for her work as a screenwriter especially for her adaptations of *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Little Women*, *Matilda* (co-written with her husband Nicholas Kazan), *The Perez Family*, and *Practical Magic*. Her first screen credit was on the romantic teen comedy *Shag*, which was not an adaptation. She first emerged as a writer for the stage, with her off-Broadway comedy/dramas “Last Days at the Dixie Girl Café” and “Criminal Minds.” She moved into writing features in 1980, with the sale of her original screenplay *Stock Cars for Christ*, which was bought for Columbia Pictures by the producer Freddie Fields.

Dreamworks bought her spec screenplay, *The Rivals*, about the famed clash between actresses Sarah Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse; it is being produced for Dreamworks by Dan Jinks & Bruce Cohen (*American Beauty*, *Big Fish*), for Nicole Kidman to play the role of Bernhardt. Swicord’s original project *The Jane Prize*, for Sony Pictures and Mandate, about a family of Jane Austen scholars, was set to begin filming in the fall of 2006, pending casting, with Swicord directing. However, Swicord’s adaptation of Karen Joy Fowler’s novel *The Jane Austen Book Club* for the producer John Calley leapt ahead of *The Jane Prize* last summer when Sony Classics agreed to finance the film. Ms. Swicord completed photography on *The Jane Austen Book Club* in December 2006; the film will premiere in September 2007.

To prepare for the transition to film directing, Ms. Swicord wrote and directed a feature short film for Touchstone Films, *The Red Coat*, which

starred veteran Oscar-winner, the late Teresa Wright and Annabeth Gish, and premiered at the Aspen Film Festival.

Born in South Carolina, Ms. Swicord grew up in rural north Florida and southern Georgia. Her father was a military-intelligence officer in the United States Navy who, as a very young man, was among the occupying Allied Forces stationed in Japan after World War II. Her family was stationed in Barcelona during Ms. Swicord's early childhood, but the family returned to settle in a small town on Gulf Coast of Florida not far from the Georgia border. Centered in this part of the world are Swicord's plays, as well as her screenplay *Shag*, a humorous coming-of-age story which takes its title from a Southern coastal dance contest, and not from a wall-to-wall carpet (or anything else).

Ms. Swicord began writing and making short films while she was at Florida State University, studying English Literature and Theatre. She worked as a photographer for local newspapers, a television news program and the Florida Game and Fish Commission; she moved on to writing and producing educational films.

A short training film Swicord made for IBM led to a "day job" in New York City, creating print advertising and commercials for IBM and Barnes & Noble Bookstores. The move to New York allowed Ms. Swicord to pursue her dream to work in theatre and feature films. In 1979 she helped produce her play "Last Days At The Dixie Girl Café," which moved to Off-Broadway. In 1984 Norman Rene's theatre company, The Production Company, presented "Criminal Minds" on Off-Broadway. Both plays are published by Samuel French.

Ms. Swicord is married to fellow playwright and screenwriter & director Nicholas Kazan. They have two daughters. The Swicord-Kazans live in

both Santa Monica, California and Vashon Island, Washington in Puget Sound.

Ms. Swicord is active in the Writers Guild of America West's Screenwriters' Council, which provides guidance to the Board in matters such as creative rights and the professional status of writers. She has also served on the WGA Foundation's board, where she helped start the WGA's educational outreach program to provide working film writers as special lecturers in universities and film schools.

Following her interest in children's literature and education, Ms. Swicord became involved in the development and expansion of Wildwood, an innovative private school in Los Angeles. For ten years, Swicord led the school's strategic planning. She was part of a visionary coalition of trustees who guided the school to financial stability and researched, designed and financed an upper school that would "reinvent high school". Wildwood's upper school was launched seven years ago, and was immediately recognized by the Gates Foundation with a grant to enable Wildwood School to assist in the establishing of similar small high schools. In June 2001, Ms. Swicord resigned as VP of Wildwood's Board of Trustees, to turn her full attention to writing and directing films.

**JOHN CALLEY** (Producer)

John Calley, who most recently produced Columbia Pictures' *The Da Vinci Code*, is a veteran Hollywood executive and producer. Beginning his career in television production in the 1950s, Calley would go on to produce such films as *The Loved One*, *The Cincinnati Kid*, *Castle Keep*, and *Catch-22*. He later served as President of Warner Bros., during which time that studio would release such acclaimed films as *Dirty Harry*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *McCabe And Mrs. Miller*, *Deliverance*, *Enter*

*the Dragon, Mean Streets, The Exorcist, Blazing Saddles, The Towering Inferno, Dog Day Afternoon, Superman and Chariots of Fire.* Following his tenure at Warner Bros., Calley returned to independent production, producing *Postcards from the Edge* and *The Remains of the Day* (which earned him a Best Picture nomination). In 1993 Calley returned to the executive suite as President and Chief Operating Officer of United Artists Pictures, and in 1996, he joined Sony Pictures Entertainment as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, a position he held until 2003. Calley recently produced *Closer*, which brought Oscar® nominations for two of its stars, Natalie Portman and Clive Owen, and, in addition to *The Jane Austen Book Club* for Sony Pictures Classics, is currently producing the television miniseries *The Company*.

**JULIE LYNN** (Producer)

Julie Lynn formed Mockingbird Pictures, an independent film company, in 1999.

While preparing for the release of *The Jane Austen Book Club* with writer/director Robin Swicord and Sony Pictures Classics, Ms. Lynn is in post-production on *Passengers*, starring Anne Hathaway and Patrick Wilson. It is her third collaboration with director Rodrigo Garcia.

Mockingbird's recent releases include *10 Items or Less* (with ThinkFilms) starring Morgan Freeman and Paz Vega from writer/director Brad Silberling and *Nine Lives*, (with Magnolia Pictures) written and directed by Rodrigo Garcia (winner of four awards, including Best Picture, at Locarno, and nominated for three Independent Spirit Awards) with an ensemble cast that includes Glenn Close, Holly Hunter, Sissy Spacek, Kathy Baker, Amy Brenneman, Dakota Fanning and Robin Wright Penn.

Ms. Lynn served as a co-producer on HBO's presentation of Margaret Edson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Wit", directed by Mike Nichols and starring Emma Thompson. The production has won The Peabody Award, The Humanitas Prize, The Christopher, and three Emmy Awards, including "Best Picture." She got her start in Los Angeles as creative executive for Academy Award-winning producer Mark Johnson.

Before moving to L.A., Ms. Lynn practiced law as Director of Programming and the Arts for the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression. She is married to Doug Smith, an author and professor of American History. They have one daughter, Zoe.

**DIANA NAPPER** (Producer)

Diana Napper has been working with producer John Calley for ten years, sourcing and acquiring literary properties for film production. *The Jane Austen Book Club* is her first producer credit and she is currently working with John Calley and Lisa Medwid on *The Swap* for Sony Pictures Entertainment.

Prior to working with John Calley Productions, Diana Napper held the position of Vice President of Creative Affairs at Columbia Pictures in the UK. During this period she was the production supervisor on *Still Crazy*, *S Club*, *Circus* and *Layer Cake* feature films. She was also Managing Director of distribution for Samuel Goldwyn's UK office. The feature films she distributed include *Truly Madly Deeply*, *The Playboys*, *Object of Beauty* and *The Waterdance*.

Diana was also responsible for the international marketing on a number of other films including *Dance With a Stranger*, *The Killing Fields*, *A Room*

*With a View, The Mission, Sid and Nancy, Sex, Lies, and Videotape and Drugstore Cowboy.*

**MARSHALL ROSE** (Executive Producer)

Builder, civic leader and lifelong New Yorker, Marshall Rose has pursued a dual career in business and public service, as Chairman of the Board of The Georgetown Group, Inc., a privately held real estate development and financial services company, and as a driving force in many of New York City's not-for-profit organizations. In the former role, Mr. Rose has overseen many complex, large-scale developments, both in and out of New York City.

Since 1975 as Chairman and CEO of The Georgetown Group, Mr. Rose has developed or overseen the development of office, residential, retail and entertainment properties throughout the United States. He devotes the same commitment and energy to his civic efforts as his commercial ones.

In his 25 year tenure as a leader and two-time Chairman of The New York Public Library, he oversaw the restoration and modernization of the NYPL's four Research Libraries as well as more than half of its 85 branches. During the 1980s & 1990s, Mr. Rose was one of the driving forces behind the restoration of Bryant Park. And as Vice Chairman of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, he oversaw the Master Plan of its redevelopment.

He serves as Chairman Emeritus of the NYPL and has served on the boards of NYU Medical Center, Bryant Park Restoration Corporations, CUNY Graduate Center and the Wexner Center for the Arts.

Born in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, Mr. Rose was educated at the College of the City of New York (BBA, 1958) and New York University (LLB, 1961). He was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from The Graduate School and University Center of the City of New York in 1989.

He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1996 and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

**KELLY THOMAS** (Co-Producer)

Kelly Thomas joined Mockingbird Pictures in 2003. She is the Associate Producer of Rodrigo Garcia's critically acclaimed *Nine Lives* (2005) and Co-Producer of Brad Silberling's *10 Items or Less*, (2006). Ms. Thomas has also produced two short films: *Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves* directed by Andrea Janakas, and *The Bulls* with director Eric Stoltz. In 2003 she was a Post-Production Supervisor for the Showtime Independent feature *Fathers and Sons*.

Before joining Mockingbird, Ms. Thomas worked at Standard & Poor's Evaluation Services division in New York. Prior to S&P, Ms. Thomas was a consultant for higher education and taught English at the University of Michigan and the University of Houston. As a scholar, she has published articles on film and cultural studies. Ms. Thomas holds an MBA from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business and a PhD in English from the University of Michigan.

Ms. Thomas grew up on a ranch in central Texas where her family still lives.

**LISA MEDWID** (Associate Producer)

After a decade of Stage Managing legit theater nationally, regionally and Off Broadway, Ms. Medwid segued into film production working for Sydney Pollack at Mirage Enterprises, where she worked on *Searching for Bobby Fischer* and the Emmy-nominated miniseries *Fallen Angels*.

Following her tenure at Mirage, she began working for John Calley when he returned from retirement to preside as President & COO at the newly revived United Artists Pictures. Ms. Medwid has been with Mr. Calley through his Chairmanship at Sony Pictures Entertainment and his subsequent independent production deal and is presently VP of Production for John Calley Productions, where she has been involved in the production of *Closer*, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the television miniseries *The Company*. Ms. Medwid is producing *The Swap* for Columbia Pictures along with Mr. Calley and Ms. Diana Napper.

**JOHN TOON, ASC** (Director of Photography)

John Toon began shooting film at school in New Zealand. By age 15 he had made his own versions of *The Longest Day* and *Commando* in 8mm. On leaving college, he went to work at the local TV station editing the news, moving on to official camera duties as soon as he obtained a drivers license.

In 1971 John moved to UK and, after a couple of years assisting, began shooting for the BBC, ITV, NZBC, ABC with British TV legend Alan Wicker. John has shot and directed current affairs, documentaries and drama for television in all corners of the globe.

His previous DP feature credits include: *Glory Road* (directed by James

Gartner, 2006); *Sylvia* (Christine Jeffs, 2003); *Rain* (Christine Jeffs, 2001); *Broken English* (Gregor Nicholas, 1996); and *King Pin* (Mike Walker, 1985). John mostly shoots commercials.

He has just completed his third movie with his partner, director Christine Jeffs: *Sunshine Cleaning* starring Emily Blunt.

**MARYANN BRANDON, A.C.E.** (Editor)

Prior to editing *The Jane Austen Book Club*, Maryann Brandon most recently worked with director JJ Abrams editing *Mission Impossible III*. She previously collaborated with Abrams on the TV series *Alias*, for which she received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Single Camera Picture Editing for a Drama Series. In addition to editing, Brandon served as Director on two episodes of *Alias*, (“The Road Home” & “After Six”), and served as Associate Producer for the fourth season.

Her previous feature credits include *A Thousand Acres*, *Grumpier Old Men*, *Born To Be Wild*, *Bingo*, *Bright Lights*, *Big City* and *Black Widow*. Her television credits include *The Shirley Temple Story*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Grapevine*, *Dangerous Minds* and *The Hunley*.

Ms. Brandon will be editing JJ Abram’s upcoming feature *Star Trek XI* that is due to begin lensing in Fall 2007.

**RUSTY SMITH** (Production Designer)

Rusty Smith began drawing at the age of three, while growing up on a small farm in Georgia. After attending undergraduate school at Furman University in Greenville, S.C., he received an M.F.A. from the Yale School

of Drama. He has served as production designer on the films *The Jane Austen Book Club*, *Accepted*, *Meet The Fockers*, *Elf*, *Agent Cody Banks*, *Austin Powers in Goldmember*, *Serving Sara*, *Meet the Parents*, *Austin Powers in The Spy Who Shagged Me*, *Mystery Alaska*, *The Beautician and the Beast*, and *Dunston Checks In*. His first feature film design was for Roger Corman and director Talia Shire's *One Night Stand*. His television credits include Billy Crystal's Emmy nominated *\*61*. Smith also served as art director on the films *The Good Son*, *Diggstown*, and *The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader Murdering Mom*, and as assistant art director on *A League of Their Own*. Smith's theatre credits include the Broadway production of Athol Fugard's "Blood Knot", and the Off-Broadway Second Stage production of Lynda Barry's "The Good Times Are Killing Me". He is married to singer/actress Connie Smith, and has two children, Jackson and Emily Smith, all of whom are aspiring filmmakers and artists.

**JOHNETTA BOONE** (Costume Designer)

Johnetta Boone has come a long way from Washington D.C.'s Duke Ellington School of the Performing Arts. Boone's 25-year career as a costume designer in the still photography, television, commercial, and feature film arenas has been one of great accomplishment, style, and panache.

She began her career working with such notable photographers as Ruven Afanador and George Holtz, while creating editorials for fashion and entertainment magazines. She studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, and looked to Edith Head as inspiration for her future career in film costuming.

She is known for her personal panache and versatility. She has designed a full spectrum of costume looks, from the '40s-inspired glamour of *The Notebook* to the Little League story *Mickey* and the boxing drama *The Contender*. In addition to the stellar cast of *The Jane Austen Book Club*, she has designed for such leading actors as Sam Shepard, John Malkovich, Joan Allen and Rachel McAdams.

Among the many feature films and television shows that Johnetta has enhanced with her work: *Beloved*, assisting Colleen Atwood; *Random Hearts*, assisting Bernie Pollack; *Runaway Bride* assisting Albert Wolsky; and, as Costume Designer, The Showtime series *Linc's*, the HBO series *K Street*, the History Channel's docu-drama *Countdown to Ground Zero*, and numerous TV commercials.

**AARON ZIGMAN** (Composer)

Composer, producer, arranger, and writer Aaron Zigman has created film scores and hit songs for many leading filmmakers and performers.

In addition to *The Jane Austen Book Club*, among the many feature films Zigman has scored are: *Good Luck Chuck*, *Pride*, *Akeelah and the Bee* and *In the Mix* for Lion's Gate; *Bridge to Terabithia* and *Step Up* for Disney; *The Martian Child*, *Take the Lead*, *Alpha Dog*, *The Notebook*, *John Q*, and *Raise Your Voice* for New Line; *Flicka* for Fox; *ATL* for Warner Bros.; indie film *10<sup>th</sup> & Wolf*; Franchise Pictures' *The Wendell Baker Story*; and Showtime's *Crown Heights*. His score for *Akeelah and the Bee* won the 2007 Black Reel Award for Best Original Score, and his song "Sim Shalom" from *Crown Heights* won a 2004 Daytime Emmy for Best Original Song.

As a producer, arranger, and writer, he has worked with performers as varied as Christina Aguilera, Seal, Aretha Franklin, Natalie Cole, Phil Collins, Tina Turner, Carly Simon, Patti LaBelle, the Staple Singers, Dionne Warwick, Jennifer Holiday, Carly Simon, Huey Lewis, and many others.

**KAREN JOY FOWLER** (Author: The Jane Austen Book Club)

The Jane Austen Book Club enjoyed glowing reviews when it was published in 2004 by G.P. Putnam's Sons (a member of Penguin Group). It was on the New York Times 2004 Fiction Bestseller List.

Its author, Karen Joy Fowler (born February 7, 1950), lives in Davis, California, about 15 miles from Sacramento, where The Jane Austen Book Club is set. Fowler has written award-winning science fiction (she won a Nebula Award for her short story *What I Didn't See*, and has also nominated for two other Nebulas and two Hugo Awards); fantasy (winner of the 1999 World Fantasy Award for Black Glass); and literary fiction (PEN/Faulkner Award nomination for Sister Noon). Her work often centers on the nineteenth century, the lives of women, and alienation.

Fowler spent the first eleven years of her life in Bloomington, Indiana, at which point she moved to Palo Alto, California. Fowler attended the University of California, Berkeley, and majored in political science. After having a child during the last year of her master's program, she spent seven years devoted to child-raising. Feeling restless, Fowler took a creative writing class at the University of California, Davis. Fowler began to publish science fiction stories, making a name for herself with *Artificial Things* (1986), a collection of short stories. Her work as a genre writer tended toward eccentric tales of implausible history. Often these tales had a feminist theme or mindset.

