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**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

CLASSIC  
FICTION



**Jane Austen**  
**Persuasion**

Read by **Juliet Stevenson**

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## CD 1

1	Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch Hall, Somersetshire	10:36
2	'Sir Walter would quit Kellynch Hall'	9:21
3	Captain Frederick Wentworth, a commander of intelligence and spirit	5:30
4	Anne agrees to divide herself between Uppercross Cottage and Kellynch Lodge	7:59
5	The Crofts settle in at Kellynch Hall – and expect a friend	7:59
6	Captain Wentworth joins the social circle	5:23
7	'Altered beyond his knowledge'	8:10
8	A walk in the countryside	9:22
9	To Lyme and the home of Captain Harville	9:15
10	A chance meeting with Mr Elliot	4:48

**Total time on CD 1: 78:27**

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## CD 2

1	An accident on the Cobb	13:05
2	Return to Uppercross	6:09
3	Louisa begins to recover	6:58
4	Anne arrives in Camden Place, Bath	7:31
5	Mrs Clay remains in favour	7:02
6	Anne renews her acquaintance with an old school-fellow	11:57
7	A thick letter from Mary	9:51
8	Another meeting with Captain Wentworth	7:31
9	The concert evening	8:14

**Total time on CD 2: 78:24**

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### CD 3

1	Back with Mrs Smith	10:59
2	'I think you should be acquainted with Mr Elliot's real character'	7:11
3	Further proof	7:57
4	Anne reflects and learns more	4:32
5	An unsought encounter	7:46
6	A morning of thorough confusion	4:40
7	Captain Wentworth resumes conversation	4:02
8	Captain Wentworth asks for writing materials	8:19
9	The letter – 'I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach'	8:11
10	Glowing and lovely in sensibility and happiness	3:57
11	'Who can be of any doubt of what followed?'	7:07

**Total time on CD 3: 74:48**

**Total time on CDs 1–3: 3:51:39**

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**Jane Austen**

**(1775–1817)**

# Persuasion

Jane Austen was born in Hampshire in 1775, the seventh of eight children. Her father was a clergyman who ensured that his children were well educated. After a brief spell at boarding school when they were very young, Jane and her sister Cassandra were educated at home. In 1801 Mr Austen retired and the family moved to Bath. Although Jane Austen never married, she is reputed to have had a romance in 1802, but she parted from her lover, who died the following year. In 1803 she was proposed to by a wealthy Hampshire landowner, and after initially accepting his proposal, she refused him the following morning. In 1805 her father died, and she moved with her mother to Southampton and in 1809 to the village of Chawton.

In 1816 Jane Austen became seriously ill, and was taken to Winchester in search of a cure. She died there in 1817. She is remembered by six great novels: *Sense and*

*Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1816), *Northanger Abbey* (1818) and *Persuasion* (1818).

Jane Austen began writing *Persuasion* in the summer of 1815, but by the beginning of 1816 she was already suffering from the illness which was eventually to prove fatal. However, by July 1816 the first draft of the book was complete, and in August she undertook various revisions, particularly to the scene of the reconciliation of the lovers. She probably continued to revise the book, as she wrote in a letter to a friend in March 1817, "I have something ready for publication, which may perhaps appear about a twelvemonth hence...You may perhaps like the heroine, as she is almost too good for me." Just four months after writing this, Jane Austen died and *Persuasion* was published posthumously in 1818.

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There is no doubt that Jane Austen was right when she predicted that her friend “would perhaps like the heroine”, as Anne Elliot has turned out to be one of her most popular characters. She stands mid-way between the agonisingly virtuous Fanny Price of *Mansfield Park*, and the unbearably arrogant Emma Woodhouse of *Emma*, of whom Austen wrote “no one but myself will much like”.

In *Persuasion* therefore it seems that she consciously set out to create a popular character with real self-awareness. As the novel develops, Anne escapes not only from the passivity imposed upon her by the careless extravagance of her family, but also from her over-dependence upon Lady Russell, who turns out to be an unreliable ally. Gradually Anne reveals herself to be a woman of careful judgements and ready sympathy, one who can assess a situation and act accordingly. In fact it is perhaps in the decisive moment when she takes control after the accident in Lyme, while the other women swoon, that Wentworth accepts his true feelings for her.

In short, Anne becomes less and less susceptible to the “persuasion” which

caused her so much pain in the first place, and which threatens her again when Lady Russell urges her to marry Mr Elliot; but this time Anne stands firm. However, she also rages at herself for her continuing obsession with Captain Wentworth, and it is this quality of self-knowledge and humour which makes her such a sympathetic character.

The resolution of the book is particularly significant. Although at face value we have the usual happy ending – a marriage – this time it is different. Of all the social groupings in *Persuasion*, Anne warms most to the naval contingent. She holds dear the recklessness and good nature of the Crofts, admires the simple but hospitable lifestyle of the Harvilles, and seems to tend more to the itinerant life of the Navy. In contrast she despises her father’s sycophancy towards Lady Dalrymple and the static, hypocritical life of High Society in Bath. In her other novels, Jane Austen stresses the “improving” nature of marriage for her heroines, either financial or moral, but in this book Anne and Frederick will not retreat into the predictable life of the landed gentry. The future is uncertain with

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the prospect of travel and danger, but as this marriage is based on absolute equality and constancy, we feel that it will not only withstand the rigours of a seafaring life but will thrive on its shifting nature. There is a freedom and exhilaration to this match which perhaps has particular resonance for the reader of today.

**Notes by Heather Godwin**



**Juliet Stevenson** has worked extensively for the RSC and the Royal National Theatre. She received an Olivier Award for her role in *Death and the Maiden* at the Royal Court, and a number of other awards for her work in the film *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. Other film credits include *The Trial*, *Drowning by Numbers* and *Emma*. She has recorded *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *To The Lighthouse*, *Persuasion*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park* and *Hedda Gabler* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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**Music programming by Nicolas Soames**



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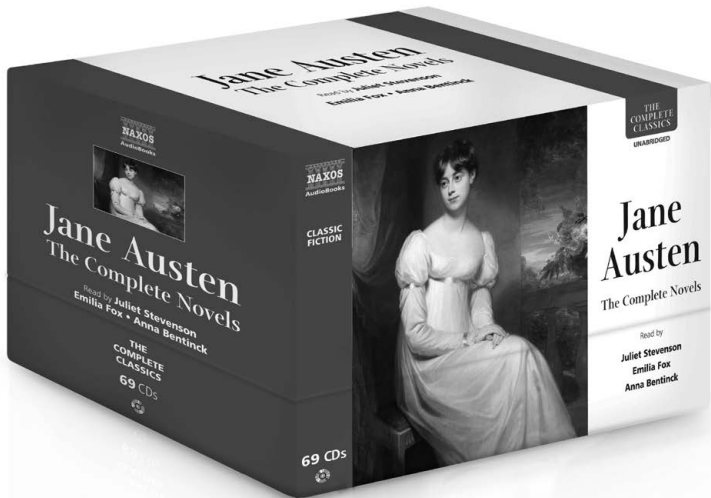
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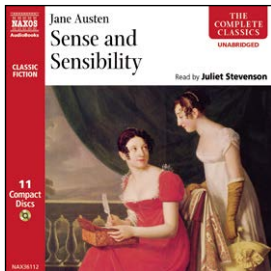
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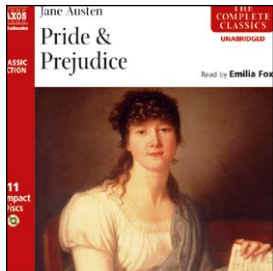
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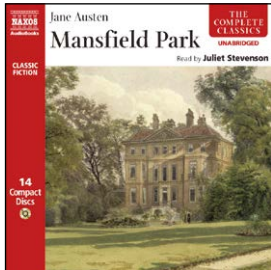
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