Sir Richard Field

Jane Clark Dodgson memorial

St Mary's Barnes, 2pm, 20th October 2026

Jane was one of those rare, irreplaceable people who light up the lives of all the people who come to know them. Life without her is unimaginable. She will be dreadfully missed.

My friendship with her began 40 years ago when, together with my wife Lynne and our three lively and noisy children, we moved next door to Jane at 4 Scarth Road, here in Barnes. I had heard from an unreliable source that our new neighbours were late middle-aged, childless intellectuals who relished the peace and quiet of their spacious house and large garden. I was worried that they would not welcome the prospect of living next door to three exuberant children, particularly because we were replacing a family who had lived next door to Jane for many years and whose ten children were kept out of the house as often as possible. They had even erected a large schoolroom-type building in the garden for rainy days. My anxiety was misplaced. For several years after our arrival Jane cheerfully returned the tennis balls, footballs and frisbees that frequently landed in her cherished garden, not only from my house but later on also from number 5, where another family with three children had moved in. To her great credit, Jane took a lively interest in the children and enjoyed chatting to them. She loved to tell the story of how when she greeted outside her house one of the boys from number 5, he stared back and apropos of nothing very much asked, 'How old are you?' When she replied that she was 70, he said very gravely, 'You are very old,' and then fell silent.

After Stephen died, Jane enthusiastically joined in our Christmas celebrations, sometimes for lunch and sometimes, in her late 90s, to participate in the children's fun and games on Christmas Eve including musical statues, pass the parcel and a gentle session, in her case, of 'squeak piggy, squeak!' What fun she was!

Of course she had a serious side. As you've already heard, she was a highly accomplished harpsichordist, the author of an acclaimed biography on Couperin and an expert on Scarlatti and the impact of the Grand Tour on the musical taste of England. For many years she frequently performed and lectured in a number of countries including the United States. But she wore her learning lightly. In a social setting, she was delightful company, sharing anecdotes of interesting and often amusing incidents, usually involving Stephen. She was also a good judge of character and held strong opinions that, occasionally, she could not resist expressing. She had a very high opinion of President Zelensky. And a very low opinion of the 45th President of the United States.

A passerby looking into the front rooms of Jane's house 25 years ago was likely to see Stephen composing at the piano in the room on the left and Jane playing her harpsichord in the room to the right. As someone once remarked, they looked like the

figures you see in the top section of a Swiss cuckoo clock who pop out depending on whether rain or sunshine is expected, perhaps Stephen with the umbrella and Jane with the sunny boater.

She was devoted to Stephen. She happily ensured that Stephen's culinary tastes were catered for, particularly in the case of Christmas pudding. We used to see them lovingly enjoying lunch or supper al fresco in their garden. She lovingly cared for him during his last illness and was a great believer in him as an outstandingly gifted composer.

She was the moving spirit behind the foundation of the Stephen Dodgson Charitable Trust, whose objects are to advance the public's understanding of music with particular reference to Stephen's music. Using a mixture of beguiling flattery and exaggerated references to my supposed administration skills and experience, she persuaded me to be the Chairman of the Trustees of the Trust. She went on to serve as an energetic and wise Trustee right to the last, never failing to spot and comment on the frequent misspellings and grammatical lapses that crept into the Chairman's draft emails.

She was well known in Barnes, particularly by the local shopkeepers and market-stall holders – in the Cheese Shop, the Farmers' Market, the Fish Shop, the Ginger Pig and the Pantry. Even after she needed a walking frame, on Saturdays she would head at pace to the village, across Barnes Green, to do her shopping with dear Miriam, her carer, struggling to keep up with her.

Tradition has it that the harp is the must-have instrument in Jane's new world. There are times during the witching hour late at night that I have a vision of Jane skilfully applying to the CMU, the 'Celestial Musicians Union' to replace the harp with the harpsichord, and I shall not be totally surprised if this year's Christmas cards show angels playing the harpsichord, one of whom will be Jane.

Dear Jane. *Requiescat in pace*.