

music in pride and prejudice

Music in Pride and Prejudice: A Harmonious Reflection of Regency Society

music in pride and prejudice plays a subtle yet profoundly expressive role in Jane Austen's beloved novel. Beyond the witty dialogue and intricate social maneuverings, music emerges as an essential cultural element that enriches character development and amplifies the social dynamics of early 19th-century England. Whether through piano-playing, singing, or dancing, music in *Pride and Prejudice* offers readers a melodic glimpse into Regency-era life, highlighting the nuances of class, emotion, and courtship rituals.

Exploring the musical landscape within the novel reveals not only Austen's attention to detail but also the importance of artistic accomplishments for women of the period. Let's delve into the role music plays in this classic work and why it continues to captivate readers and audiences today.

The Role of Music in Regency Society

Music during the Regency era was more than entertainment; it was a vital social currency. Young ladies were expected to acquire musical skills as part of their education, demonstrating refinement and suitability for marriage. In *Pride and Prejudice*, this societal expectation is clearly reflected through the Bennet sisters and other characters.

Music as a Marker of Social Status

In Austen's world, playing the piano or singing well could elevate a young woman's desirability. It was a graceful way to exhibit discipline, taste, and gentility. Elizabeth Bennet's musical abilities, for instance, are described as pleasant but not exceptional, contrasting with Jane and Lydia, whose musical talents also differ. This disparity in musical accomplishment subtly underscores their individual personalities and social standings.

Moreover, music performance at social gatherings, such as balls and intimate family evenings, acted as a form of polite entertainment and a means to engage potential suitors. The ability to perform well could impress guests and influence social interactions positively.

Instrumental Music and Gender Roles

During the early 1800s, musical instruments like the pianoforte were predominantly associated with women, symbolizing gentility and domestic accomplishment. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to be listeners or dancers rather than performers in private settings. This gendered distinction in musical engagement is evident in *Pride and Prejudice*, where female characters often practice and perform, while male characters observe or dance.

This dynamic adds to the novel's rich tapestry, revealing how music served as a socially acceptable

outlet for women's expression and a tool for navigating the strictures of Regency courtship.

Music in Key Scenes of *Pride and Prejudice*

Music is woven into several memorable scenes, serving as a backdrop that enhances emotional undertones and character interactions.

The Significance of Elizabeth's Musical Performance

One of the most notable instances is Elizabeth Bennet's piano-playing at Netherfield Park. When Elizabeth visits her sick sister Jane, she entertains the company by playing the pianoforte. Though her performance is "neither very good nor very bad," it reveals much about her character—she is independent, unaffected, and not overly concerned with impressing others through artifice.

Her musical display contrasts with the more polished and practiced playing of other ladies, subtly reinforcing Elizabeth's spirited nature and authenticity. It also allows Mr. Darcy to observe her talents firsthand, deepening their complicated relationship.

Music at Social Gatherings and Balls

Balls are central to the social life depicted in *Pride and Prejudice*, and music is the heartbeat of these occasions. Live musicians provide the dance tunes, setting the rhythm for waltzes, quadrilles, and country dances. These events are crucial for fostering connections, and music facilitates the delicate dance of courtship.

For example, the Netherfield ball showcases how music and dance enable various character dynamics—Elizabeth's interactions with Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley unfold amid lively tunes and shifting dance partners. The atmosphere created by music heightens the tension and excitement, reflecting the characters' inner feelings and social aspirations.

The Musical Culture Reflected in Adaptations

Given the novel's rich musical references, it's no surprise that adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* often emphasize music to bring the story to life.

Film Soundtracks and Period Instruments

Film adaptations, such as the acclaimed 1995 BBC miniseries and the 2005 movie, incorporate period-appropriate music to enhance authenticity. Composers use classical pieces and original scores featuring the fortepiano, violin, and harp to evoke the Regency atmosphere.

This musical backdrop not only sets the tone but also deepens viewers' emotional engagement with characters. The soundtrack becomes a character in itself, reflecting Elizabeth's wit, Darcy's brooding nature, and the story's romantic tension.

Live Performances and Theatrical Interpretations

Stage adaptations often integrate live music, allowing audiences to experience the novel's musical elements firsthand. Performers might sing or play instruments during scenes where music is mentioned, offering a tangible connection to the Regency era's social customs.

Such immersive experiences highlight how integral music is to the narrative, transforming it from mere background detail to a lively, expressive force within the story.

Understanding the Musical References in Pride and Prejudice

To fully appreciate the role of music in the novel, it helps to consider some of the popular songs and dances of Austen's time.

Popular Songs and Their Meanings

Songs like "Robin Adair" and "The Last Rose of Summer," which were well-known in the early 19th century, often carried emotional or romantic significance. These melodies might be performed during social visits or family gatherings, subtly conveying feelings that characters found difficult to express openly.

While Austen does not specify particular pieces in *Pride and Prejudice*, understanding the cultural context of these songs sheds light on the emotional subtext of musical moments in the novel.

Dance Forms and Their Social Implications

The dance styles of the period—such as the minuet, country dance, and quadrille—were not just entertainment but structured social rituals. The choice of dance partner, the order of dances, and the ability to perform the steps gracefully all communicated social status, intentions, and personal qualities.

Music in *Pride and Prejudice* is therefore inseparable from these dance traditions, underscoring the importance of etiquette and social maneuvering in Austen's world.

Why Music Matters in Pride and Prejudice Today

Though music in *Pride and Prejudice* may seem like a minor detail, it serves as a window into the cultural fabric of Austen's England. It reveals much about gender expectations, social class, and the subtleties of human connection.

For modern readers and viewers, recognizing the role of music enriches the experience of the novel. It invites us to imagine the melodies that once filled drawing rooms and ballrooms, adding depth and texture to the characters' lives.

Whether you are a fan of classical music, historical fiction, or simply curious about Regency customs, exploring music in *Pride and Prejudice* offers a fascinating glimpse into the harmony between art and society in one of literature's most cherished works.

Frequently Asked Questions

What role does music play in Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice'?

Music in *'Pride and Prejudice'* serves as a social activity and a means of character expression, reflecting the cultural norms and class distinctions of the Regency era.

Which characters in 'Pride and Prejudice' are associated with music?

Elizabeth Bennet and her sister Jane are both portrayed as accomplished musicians, highlighting their education and refinement within their social class.

How does Jane Austen use music to develop relationships in 'Pride and Prejudice'?

Music scenes often facilitate social interaction and courtship, such as when Elizabeth plays the piano to entertain guests, helping to build connections between characters.

What types of music are referenced in 'Pride and Prejudice'?

The novel references classical and popular music of the early 19th century, including piano performances and singing, typical of genteel society gatherings.

Has the music in 'Pride and Prejudice' influenced adaptations of the novel?

Yes, many film and TV adaptations incorporate period-appropriate music to enhance the setting and mood, often including piano pieces and songs inspired by Regency-era compositions.

Additional Resources

Music in Pride and Prejudice: An Analytical Exploration of Its Role and Significance

Music in Pride and Prejudice is an often overlooked but deeply integral element that enriches Jane Austen's beloved novel and its various adaptations. From the original 1813 text to the numerous film and television renditions, music serves as a subtle yet powerful narrative device that reflects character development, social context, and thematic undertones. This article delves into the multifaceted role of music in *Pride and Prejudice*, examining its historical authenticity, symbolic relevance, and how it enhances the storytelling experience.

The Historical Context of Music in Pride and Prejudice

Music during the Regency era, when *Pride and Prejudice* is set, was not merely a form of entertainment but a vital social skill, especially for women of the gentry class. The novel captures this societal nuance by representing music as an essential accomplishment for young ladies like Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Bennet. Playing the pianoforte or singing at social gatherings was a means of showcasing refinement, education, and even desirability.

Jane Austen's inclusion of music scenes is historically accurate and reflective of the period's cultural expectations. The presence of music in social settings such as balls, family gatherings, and intimate parlor rooms illustrates the social fabric of the time, where music was both a leisure activity and a medium for interaction. Understanding music in *Pride and Prejudice* from this historical perspective reveals its dual role as both a narrative device and a cultural artifact.

Music as a Reflection of Character and Emotion

Throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, music functions as a mirror to the inner lives of characters, providing insights into their personalities and emotional states. Elizabeth Bennet's musical performances, for example, are often portrayed with a sense of natural talent but lack of pretension, paralleling her straightforward and independent character. In contrast, characters like Mary Bennet, who is overly serious and pedantic, use music to appear more accomplished, yet her performances often lack genuine emotional expression.

The novel's adaptations have used music to amplify these traits. The 1995 BBC miniseries and the 2005 film directed by Joe Wright both feature carefully selected musical pieces that underscore Elizabeth's vivacity or Jane's gentle nature. Music in *Pride and Prejudice* is not just background ambiance; it is an emotional language that deepens the audience's connection to the characters.

The Symbolism and Thematic Role of Music

Beyond character development, music embodies broader themes in *Pride and Prejudice*, such as social class, courtship, and restraint versus expression. The act of playing music often accompanies dialogue and social encounters that reveal underlying tensions or affections. For instance, Elizabeth's reluctance to perform for Mr. Darcy early in the story symbolizes her resistance to

conforming to societal expectations and her guarded feelings toward him.

Moreover, music scenes frequently highlight contrasts between characters and their social environments. The lively, spontaneous music-making at the Bennet household contrasts with the more formal and restrained atmosphere of the Darcy estate. This juxtaposition underscores themes of pride, prejudice, and the clash between individual authenticity and social convention.

Music in Film and Television Adaptations

The transition of *Pride and Prejudice* from page to screen has brought music to the forefront, allowing composers and directors to reinterpret and emphasize its importance. Each adaptation approaches music differently, providing a rich tapestry for analysis.

1995 BBC Miniseries

The 1995 BBC adaptation employs period-authentic music, with compositions that include classical pieces and folk tunes suitable to the early 19th century. The soundtrack, primarily composed by Carl Davis, uses piano and string arrangements that evoke the novel's atmosphere. The music complements the pacing and tone, enhancing moments of tension and romance without overwhelming the dialogue.

One notable feature is how music is integrated diegetically—characters are often seen playing instruments or singing, making music a part of the narrative world rather than just a background score. This approach aligns closely with the novel's original depiction, reinforcing the social significance of music.

2005 Film Adaptation

Joe Wright's 2005 film adaptation introduced a more modern sensibility to the musical landscape of *Pride and Prejudice*. Composer Dario Marianelli crafted an original score that blends classical instrumentation with a contemporary emotional resonance. The piano-driven themes, particularly the haunting "Dawn" and "Liz on Top of the World," have become iconic for their ability to convey Elizabeth's internal journey.

Unlike the 1995 series, the 2005 film uses music more expressively to guide the audience's emotional response. Music in *Pride and Prejudice* here serves as a narrative voice, sometimes filling in unspoken feelings and enhancing cinematic visuals. This modernized approach to the score has been praised for its artistic depth but also critiqued by some purists who prefer strict period accuracy.

Comparative Insights

When comparing music in these adaptations, it's clear that each reflects different priorities: the

1995 version prioritizes historical authenticity and social realism, while the 2005 film emphasizes emotional storytelling and atmospheric mood. Both approaches have advantages:

- **1995 BBC:** Accurate to Regency musical styles; integrates music as a social activity; subtle and supportive of the narrative.
- **2005 Film:** Uses music as emotional shorthand; creates memorable thematic motifs; appeals to contemporary audiences.

This diversity demonstrates music's flexibility as a storytelling tool in adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, reinforcing its essential role beyond mere period detail.

The Role of Music in Social and Romantic Dynamics

Music in *Pride and Prejudice* also plays a critical role in the social rituals that govern courtship and relationships. In the early 19th century, musical performances at balls and gatherings were more than entertainment—they were opportunities for social positioning and subtle flirtation.

Music and Courtship Rituals

The act of playing or singing for another person was often loaded with meaning. A well-chosen song or a skilled performance could signal interest, intelligence, or refinement. Elizabeth's musical talents make her a subject of admiration, yet her reluctance to perform on demand reflects her resistance to superficial social expectations.

Mr. Darcy's response to Elizabeth's music is telling—his admiration is genuine and personal rather than performative. This dynamic underscores how music in *Pride and Prejudice* serves as a medium through which social barriers can be negotiated or reinforced.

Music as a Social Divider and Unifier

While music can bring characters together, it can also highlight social divisions. Characters like Miss Bingley use music strategically to impress and dominate social interactions, whereas others, such as Elizabeth, use it more authentically. This duality reflects the broader social commentary of the novel on class distinctions and personal integrity.

Incorporating Music in Modern Interpretations

Current stage productions and new adaptations continue to explore music's role in *Pride and Prejudice*, often blending traditional elements with innovative approaches. Contemporary composers

experiment with instrumentation and style to resonate with today's audiences while respecting the novel's heritage.

The enduring popularity of musical adaptations, including operatic and theatrical renditions, testifies to music's powerful connection to Austen's themes. Music in *Pride and Prejudice* remains a vibrant and evolving medium that bridges the past and present.

Music in *Pride and Prejudice* is far more than an ornamental detail; it is an integral part of the narrative fabric that enriches character portrayal, social commentary, and emotional depth. Whether viewed through the lens of historical authenticity or modern artistic interpretation, music continues to resonate as a vital force within Austen's timeless story.

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music in pride and prejudice: *The Palgrave Handbook of Sound Design and Music in Screen Media* Liz Greene, Danijela Kulezic-Wilson, 2016-12-14 This book bridges the existing gap between film sound and film music studies by bringing together scholars from both disciplines who challenge the constraints of their subject areas by thinking about integrated approaches to the soundtrack. As the boundaries between scoring and sound design in contemporary cinema have become increasingly blurred, both film music and film sound studies have responded by expanding their range of topics and the scope of their analysis beyond those traditionally addressed. The running theme of the book is the disintegration of boundaries, which permeates discussions about industry, labour, technology, aesthetics and audiovisual spectatorship. The collaborative nature of screen media is addressed not only in scholarly chapters but also through interviews with key practitioners that include sound recordists, sound designers, composers, orchestrators and music supervisors who honed their skills on films, TV programmes, video games, commercials and music videos.

music in pride and prejudice: *Pride & Prejudice (Songbook)* , 2012-12-01 (Instrumental Solo).

Dario Marianelli composed the music from this 2005 film starring Keira Knightley. This book features 9 selections from the movie arranged for violin: Another Dance * Arrival at Netherfield * Darcy's Letter * Dawn * Georgiana * Leaving Netherfield * Meryton Townhall * Mrs. Darcy * Stars and Butterflies.

music in pride and prejudice: The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen

Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan, 2007-05-10 A collection of essays covering many different aspects of literature on screen.

music in pride and prejudice: Jane Austen and Critical Theory Michael Kramp, 2021-06-15

Jane Austen and Critical Theory is a collection of new essays that addresses the absence of critical theory in Austen studies—an absence that has limited the reach of Austen criticism. The collection brings together innovative scholars who ask new and challenging questions about the efficacy of Austen's work. This volume confronts mythical understandings of Austen as Dear Aunt Jane, the early twentieth-century legacy of Austen as a cultural salve, and the persistent habit of reading her works for advice or instruction. The authors pursue a diversity of methods, encourage us to build new kinds of relationships to Austen and her writings, and demonstrate how these relationships might generate new ideas and possibilities—ideas and possibilities that promise to expand the ways in which we deploy Austen. The book specifically reminds us of the vital importance of Austen and her fiction for central concerns of the humanities, including the place of the individual within civil society, the potential for new identities and communities, the urgency to address racial and sexual oppression, and the need to imagine more just futures. Chapter 4 of this book is freely available as a downloadable Open Access PDF at <http://www.taylorfrancis.com> under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND) 4.0 license.

music in pride and prejudice: Contemporary Film Music Lindsay Coleman, Joakim Tillman, 2017-05-30

The purpose of this book, through its very creation, is to strengthen the dialogue between practitioner and theorist. To that end, a film academic and musicologist have collaborated as editors on this book, which is in turn comprised of interviews with composers alongside complementary chapters that focus on a particular feature of the composer's approach or style. These chapters are written by a fellow composer, musicologist, or film academic who specializes in that element of the composer's output. In the interview portions of this book, six major film composers discuss their work from the early 1980s to the present day: Carter Burwell, Mychael Danna, Dario Marianelli, Rachel Portman, Zbigniew Preisner, and A.R. Rahman. The focus is on the practical considerations of film composition, the relationship each composer has with the moving image, narrative, technical considerations, personal motivations in composing, the relationships composers have with their directors, and their own creative processes. Contemporary Film Music also explores the contemporary influence of electronic music, issues surrounding the mixing of soundtracks, music theory, and the evolution of each composer's musical voice.

music in pride and prejudice: Stille als Ambivalenz moderner chinesischer Musik Attila Kornel-Markula, 2022

Diese musikwissenschaftliche Studie untersucht jene Intentionen, die chinesische Komponistinnen und Komponisten nach 1976 dazu führten, Stille ins Zentrum ihrer Stücke zu stellen. Aus der chinesischen Kulturgeschichte heraus zeigen sich divergierende musikästhetische Konzepte der Stille weniger als Gegenpol zum Lärm als vielmehr im ambivalenten Austarieren einer harmonischen Mitte. Diskutiert werden heterogene Kompositionen von Qu Xiaosong, Chen Qigang und Chen Xiaoyong ebenso wie von Guo Wenjing und Jia Daqun. Einerseits wird dabei die Ästhetik der Stille bei Tan Dun als merkantiler Kunstanspruch hinterfragt, andererseits etablierte Komponistinnen wie Chen Yi, Xu Yi und Wang Ying als musikalische Avantgarde besprochen. Die Werkanalysen und Gespräche exemplifizieren die künstlerischen Begegnungen als Einblick in zeitgenössische Klangsprachen: Die Semantik der Stille, deren Ästhetik zwischen Philosophie & Spiritualität und historisch zwischen Tradition und transkultureller Inszenierung. Attila Kornel studierte Philosophie und Musikwissenschaft an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster. In China erlernte er die meditativen Wudang-Xuanwu-Kampfkünste und unterrichtet diese als zertifizierter Lehrer. Neben der Musikästhetik der Stille forscht er u. a.

zum transkulturellen Austausch von Klangsynthese im 20./21. Jahrhundert, zu Musik & Humor sowie progressiver Populärmusik.

music in pride and prejudice: *Soundtracks* Stewart R. Craggs, 2019-05-03 First published in 1998, music scored for film has only relatively recently received the critical attention which it merits. Many composers in the twentieth century have written works for films or documentaries, a number feeling that this aspect of their output has been undervalued. This dictionary complements other studies which have appeared in recent years which look at the technical and theoretical issues concerned with film music composition. Arranged alphabetically by composer, the volume comprises over 500 entries covering all nationalities. Each entry includes very brief biographical information on the composer, followed by a list of the films (with dates) for which he or she has composed. Details of recordings are also given. The dictionary's international coverage ensures that it will become a standard reference work for all those interested in the history of twentieth-century music and the development of film.

music in pride and prejudice: Jane Austen and the Arts Natasha Duquette, Elisabeth Lenckos, 2013-12-04 The essays collected in *Jane Austen and the Arts; Elegance, Propriety, and Harmony* examine Austen's understanding of the arts, her aesthetic philosophy, and her role as artist. Together, they explore Austen's connections with Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Madame de Staël, Joanna Baillie, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, and other writers engaged in debates on the sensuous experience and the intellectual judgment of art. Our contributors look at Austen's engagement with diverse art forms, painting, ballet, drama, poetry, and music, investigating our topic within historically grounded and theoretically nuanced essays. They represent Austen as a writer-thinker reflecting on the nature and practice of artistic creation and considering the social, moral, psychological, and theological functions of art in her fiction. We suggest that Austen knew, modified, and transformed the dominant aesthetic discourses of her era, at times ironically, to her own artistic ends. As a result, a new, and compelling image of Austen emerges, a "portrait of a lady artist" confidently promoting her own distinctly post-enlightenment aesthetic system.

music in pride and prejudice: There She Goes Again Aviva Dove-Viebahn, 2023-12-15 *There She Goes Again* interrogates the representation of ostensibly powerful women in transmedia franchises, examining how presumed feminine traits—love, empathy, altruism, diplomacy—are alternately lauded and repudiated as possibilities for effecting long-lasting social change. By questioning how these franchises reimagine their protagonists over time, the book reflects on the role that gendered exceptionalism plays in social and political action, as well as what forms of knowledge and power are presumed distinctly feminine. The franchises explored in this book illustrate the ambivalent (post)feminist representation of women protagonists as uniquely gifted in ways both gendered and seemingly ungendered, and yet inherently bound to expressions of their femininity. At heart, *There She Goes Again* asks under what terms and in what contexts women protagonists are imagined, envisioned, embodied, and replicated in media. Especially now, in a period of gradually increasing representation, women protagonists demonstrate the importance of considering how we should define—and whether we need—feminine forms of knowledge and power.

music in pride and prejudice: Men, Women and Pianos Arthur Loesser, 2012-04-27 A renowned concert pianist traces the instrument's design, manufacture, and music in a delightful piano's eye-view of the social history of Western Europe and the United States from the 16th to the 20th centuries.

music in pride and prejudice: Jane Austen on Film and Television Sue Parrill, 2010-06-28 Jane Austen's career as a novelist began in 1811 with the publication of *Sense and Sensibility*. Her work was finally adapted for the big screen with the 1940 filming of *Pride and Prejudice* (very successful at the box office). No other film adaptation of an Austen novel was made for theatrical release until 1995. Amazingly, during 1995 and 1996, six film and television adaptations appeared, first *Clueless*, then *Persuasion*, followed by *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, the Miramax *Emma*, and the Meridian/A&E *Emma*. This book traces the history of film and television adaptations (nearly 30

to date) of Jane Austen manuscripts, compares the adaptations to the manuscripts, compares the way different adaptations treat the novels, and analyzes the adaptations as examples of cinematic art. The first of seven chapters explains why the novels of Jane Austen have become a popular source of film and television adaptations. The following six chapters each cover one of Austen's novels: *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion*, and *Northanger Abbey*. Each chapter begins with a summary of the main events of the novel. Then a history of the adaptations is presented followed by an analysis of the unique qualities of each adaptation, a comparison of these adaptations to each other and to the novels on which they are based, and a reflection of relevant film and literary criticism as it applies to the adaptations.

music in pride and prejudice: The Public's Open to Us All Laura Engel, 2020-10-27 "*The Public's Open to Us All*": Essays on Women and Performance in Eighteenth-Century England considers the relationship between British women and various modes of performance in the long eighteenth century. From the moment Charles II was restored to the English throne in 1660, the question of women's status in the public world became the focus of cultural attention both on and off the stage. In addition to the appearance of the first actresses during this period female playwrights, novelists, poets, essayists, journalists, theatrical managers and entrepreneurs emerged as skillful and often demanding professionals. In this variety of new roles, eighteenth-century women redefined shifting notions of femininity by challenging traditional representations of female subjectivity and contributing to the shaping of eighteenth-century society's attitudes, tastes, and cultural imagination. Recent scholarship in eighteenth-century studies reflects a heightened interest in fame, the rise of celebrity culture, and new ways of understanding women's participation as both private individuals and public professionals. What is unique to the body of essays presented here is the authors' focus on performance as a means of thinking about the ways in which women occupied, negotiated, re-imagined, and challenged the world outside of the traditional domestic realm. The authors employ a range of historical, literary, and theoretical approaches to the connections among women and performance, and in doing so make significant contributions to the fields of eighteenth-century literary and cultural studies, theatre history, gender studies, and performance studies.

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marginalize women's experience from Austen's time. Contesting the distinctions between professional and amateur musicians, public and domestic sites of musical production, and performers and composers of music, the contributors reveal how women's widespread involvement in the Georgian musical scene allowed for self-expression, artistic influence, and access to communities that transcended the boundaries of gender, class, and nationality. This volume's breadth of focus advances our understanding of a period that witnessed a musical flourishing, much of it animated by female hands and voices. Published by Bucknell University Press. Distributed worldwide by Rutgers University Press.

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