A Performer's Guide to Ivor Gurney's The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)

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A Monograph

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in The School of Music

by

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...................................................................................................................... ii

LIST OF MUSIC EXAMPLES ............................................................................................................. v

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................... viii

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 1

CHAPTER 1. IVOR GURNEY’S LIFE AND WORKS ............................................................................. 2
  Biographical Information .................................................................................................................. 2
  Compositional Process, Musical Works and Influences ................................................................. 12

CHAPTER 2. ALFRED E. HOUSMAN ............................................................................................... 15
  Biographical Information .............................................................................................................. 15
  Poetic Collections ......................................................................................................................... 18
  Poetic Style and Literary Influences ............................................................................................. 19
  Greek and Latin Poets .................................................................................................................... 19
  A Shropshire Lad ............................................................................................................................ 20

CHAPTER 3. MARION SCOTT AND IVOR GURNEY ............................................................... 23
  Introducing Marion Scott ............................................................................................................... 23
  Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott’s Partnership ................................................................................. 25

CHAPTER 4. THE WESTERN PLAYLAND (AND OF SORROW) PERFORMANCE GUIDE ............. 30
  Reveille ......................................................................................................................................... 31
  Loveliest of Trees ......................................................................................................................... 38
  Golden Friends ............................................................................................................................. 44
  Twice a Week ............................................................................................................................... 49
  The Aspens ................................................................................................................................... 57
  Is My Team Ploughing .................................................................................................................. 63
  The Far Country ............................................................................................................................ 75
  March ............................................................................................................................................ 80

CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................................................... 87

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................................. 89

APPENDIX A. TEXTS .......................................................................................................................... 91

APPENDIX B. SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY OF SOLO SONGS ..................................................... 95

APPENDIX C. LIST OF PUBLISHED SOLO SONGS .................................................................. 96

APPENDIX D. EMAIL INTERVIEWS WITH PAMELA BLEVINS .................................................. 98

APPENDIX E. EMAIL INTERVIEWS WITH PHILIP LANCASTER ............................................... 102
LIST OF MUSIC EXAMPLES

Example 1: Reveille, mm. 1-4 ........................................................................................................... 33

Example 2: Reveille, mm. 4-11 ......................................................................................................... 33

Example 3: Reveille, mm. 30-37 ....................................................................................................... 34

Example 4: Reveille, mm. 41-45 ....................................................................................................... 35

Example 5: Reveille, mm. 52-60 ....................................................................................................... 36

Example 6: Reveille, mm. 60-64 ....................................................................................................... 37

Example 7: Loveliest of Trees, mm. 1-4 .......................................................................................... 40

Example 8: Loveliest of Trees, mm. 5-15 .......................................................................................... 40

Example 9: Loveliest of Trees, mm. 18-27. ...................................................................................... 41

Example 10: Loveliest of Trees, mm. 30-36 ...................................................................................... 42

Example 11: Loveliest of Trees, mm. 37-44 ...................................................................................... 43

Example 12: Loveliest of Trees, mm. 45-52 ...................................................................................... 43

Example 13: Golden Friends, mm. 1-6 ............................................................................................ 45

Example 14: Golden Friends, mm. 6-10 .......................................................................................... 46

Example 15: Golden Friends, mm. 12-16 ....................................................................................... 46

Example 16: Golden Friends, mm. 16-24 ....................................................................................... 47

Example 17: Golden Friends, mm. 25-29 ....................................................................................... 48

Example 18: Twice a week, mm. 1-2 ............................................................................................... 50

Example 19: Twice a week, mm. 3-12 ............................................................................................. 51

Example 20: Twice a week, mm. 16-20 ........................................................................................... 52

Example 21: Twice a week, mm. 4, 9, and 17 ............................................................................... 52

Example 22: Twice a week, mm. 21-24 ........................................................................................... 53

Example 23: Twice a week, mm. 24-26 ........................................................................................... 53

Example 24: Twice a week, mm. 27-37 ........................................................................................... 54

Example 25: Twice a week, mm. 38-41 ........................................................................................... 55
Example 52: *March*, mm. 86-91
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this document is to serve as a performance guide for Ivor Gurney’s song cycle, *The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)*, a song cycle for baritone, piano and string quartet, consisting of eight songs set to the poetry of A. E. Housman. Within this performance guide an analysis of each song and poem in *The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)* will be explored, along with performance recommendations for each of the eight songs. Given that there were relatively few composers writing works for string quartet, piano and solo voice during the years Ivor Gurney was composing, the author feels an in-depth exploration of this song cycle necessitates the research found in this dissertation.

This document contains information about the life and works of composer and poet, Ivor Gurney, and poet A. E. Housman. Appendices include: the complete solo voice works list of Mr. Gurney, his discography, transcripts of e-mail interviews with the current biography author of Mr. Gurney, and e-mail interviews with Philip Lancaster, Gurney Archivist and letters of permission.
INTRODUCTION

The contributions and importance of the compositions of Ivor Gurney as a poet and music composer are examined in this document. Specifically, his song cycle *The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)*: (Reveille, Loveliest of Trees, Golden Friends, Twice a Week, The Aspens, Is my Team Ploughing?, The Far Country, and March). Chapter 1 includes biographical information on Ivor Gurney, his influences, his works both musical and poetic and his compositional process is discussed. Chapter 2 contains biographical information on the poet, A.E. Housman and a discussion of his poems taken from his book *A Shopshire Lad*, which Ivor Gurney set in his cycle *The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)* and his writing process. Chapter 3 contains biographical information on Marion Scott, musicologist, then examines the relationship between Marian Scott, and Ivor Gurney and how she influenced him both as a poet and as a composer. Chapter 4, “A Performer’s Guide,” includes analysis of the songs and poems accompanied by performance suggestions. Musical examples are included to highlight specific explanations of the performance suggestions, as well as analytical material such as motivic gestures, harmonic coloration, musical expression and phrasing. Appendices include the texts of A.E. Housman, which Ivor Gurney used to set in *The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)*, a discography, and a complete list of published works for Ivor Gurney’s compositions for solo voice. And lastly, the author includes transcriptions of the e-mail interviews with Pamela Blevins, the author of the current dual biography on Mr. Gurney, and Ms. Scott and Philip Lancaster, archivist for the Gurney Estate.
Ivor Gurney was gifted both as a poet and as a composer. His poetic works are prolific and as a composer he is mostly remembered for his songs. In this chapter, Ivor Gurney’s life, influences, musical works and compositional process will be discussed.

Biographical Information

Ivor Bertie Gurney was born on August 28, 1890 at Three Queen Street in Gloucester, England to David and Florence Gurney. Gurney had three siblings: two sisters and a brother. The Gurney family was of middle class status as his father was a self-employed tailor and his mother was a housewife. They lived in a small house on Queen Street that served as both home and tailor shop. Florence, Ivor’s mother, has been described as unstable and high-strung and she made home life uneasy and far from warm and pleasant.¹

On September 24th 1890 Gurney was baptized at All Saints Church in Gloucester. Only Gurney, his parents, the vicar curate, and the Reverend Alfred Cheesman attended. Because of the sparse attendance, Reverend Cheesman offered to be Gurney’s godfather. Cheesman was a bachelor and took this role along with its duties seriously. His support strongly influenced the course of Gurney’s life.² “As Gurney grew, Cheesman quickly recognized the boy’s artistic sensibilities, gave him free access to his considerable library, and thus introduced him to a world of literature, poetry and history.”³

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² Ibid.

³ Pamela Blevins, Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott, Song of Pain and Beauty (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 54.
Education for Gurney initiated at the National School in Gloucester in 1896 and by the age of eight he became a member of the choir on a probationary basis, and in 1899 Gurney became a permanent member.\(^4\) Because of his insights into Gurney’s artistic abilities, Cheesman proposed that Gurney audition for a choir scholarship at the Gloucester Cathedral. Gurney did audition and was granted a scholarship. This scholarship also granted him schooling at the King’s School in the fall of 1900. Also attending the King’s School was a young lad, F. W. Harvey, who eventually became one of Gurney’s dearest friends.\(^5\)

“Gurney was composing music from 1904, at the age of 14, encouraged by two sisters, Emily and Margaret Hunt”\(^6\) Reverend Cheesman introduced Gurney to the sisters, and this became a turning point for him in his development as an artist. The sisters, highly cultured in music, had taught in South Africa at an all-girls school near Grahamstown. Emily was a pianist, and Margaret a violinist. Upon returning to England, the sisters resided with their mother within walking distance of the overcrowded house and tailor shop of the Gurneys. The sisters welcomed Gurney into their home, and provided him a tranquil environment free from the family arguments and clients of his father’s shop, which were frequent distractions to his composing. The sisters had taught music in South Africa, and upon their return they continued to teach in Gloucester. The Hunt sisters had a substantial library, which would assist Gurney in his continuing efforts to learn, and they also gave him positive nurturing guidance that he lacked due to the distant relationship with his mother. Although there was no romantic relationship, Margaret was Gurney’s favorite, as she fueled his musical talents. During this period as a young composer almost everything he composed, he did with the intentions of gaining her approval. The Hunt sisters offered Gurney all of the things he needed: music, books, conversation, affection, and a safe, serene space to learn. The sisters’ music room was filled with music scores and a Bechstein piano, all of which enticed Gurney to continue his studies and growth as a composer. Through their travels to Germany, the sisters’


\(^5\) Boden.

\(^6\) Ibid.
exposure to (and subsequently Gurney’s) exposure to German *lieder* was another important factor that they introduced Gurney to as a song composer.\(^7\)

In 1906, Sir Herbert Brewer, organist at the Gloucester Cathedral, became Gurney’s first music teacher, and by 1908 he had composed his distinguished piano nocturnes along with compositions for piano and violin. Gurney was his assistant, and he along with Herbert Howells and Ivor Novello studied under Brewer’s tutelage. He quickly became close friends with Howells making for a friendship that was long-lasting and fruitful.\(^8\)

In 1908, Gurney rekindled a friendship from his days at the King’s School with Harvey. Harvey had developed a love of poetry as well, and this shared love of poesy connected the two young men. Harvey’s family invited Gurney to their farm-house, where he found solace sailing on Severn River near their home. “If Alfred Cheesman had opened Ivor's eyes and ears to Kipling, Tennyson, Housman and other 'moderns', Gurney and Harvey together discovered the Elizabethans: Fletcher, Nashe, Ben Jonson and, above all, Shakespeare.”\(^9\)

In 1910, at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester, Gurney and Howells encountered another major event that would shape them as composers and artists. Howell made inquiries with Brewer asking if there would be any new works on the festival program, and Sir Brewer answered: “a queer mad work by an old fellow from Chelsea – something to do with Tallis.”\(^10\) The piece described was *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* by Ralph Vaughan Williams, which was unlike anything the two men had ever witnessed. The excitement and inspiration that the two men felt after the concert resulted in a sleepless night filled with intense debates and discussions. “From that moment both men were determined to become composers”.\(^11\)

\(^{7}\) Blevins, 68-70.

\(^{8}\) Boden.

\(^{9}\) Ibid.

\(^{10}\) Ibid.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
From this, Gurney decided to attend the Royal College of Music (RCM). Upon meeting Gurney in the fall of 1911, Sir Charles Stanford, professor of composition said ‘By God! It is Schubert!’ Gurney’s personality was charismatic, driven, vibrant and energetic which was evocative of Schubert. Gurney so impressed both Stanford and Sir Hubert Parry, president of the RCM, that he began studies at the RCM as the recipient of a scholarship. At the RCM, Gurney studied composition with, Stanford who also was the professor of Vaughan Williams, Arthur Bliss, Gustav Holst, John Ireland and many other British composers. Stanford said: ‘Gurney was potentially the biggest of them all, but the least teachable!’ It was at this point that Gurney met Marion Scott who came to be the paramount supporter and influencer in Gurney’s artistic life. Scott was a musicologist at the RCM, and also the editor of *The Royal College of Music Magazine* and secretary of the RCM Union.

1913 witnessed Gurney’s first major battle with mental illness. His usual zest for life became frequently dimmed with bouts of depression, and he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He returned to Gloucester, his safe haven, to rest for several weeks, and took a job in Framilode, a village on the Severn River. This allowed him to recover and return to the RCM in 1914 when he wrote to a friend about his trip back home:

Dear Willy,

It’s going Willy. It’s going. Gradually the cloud passes and beauty is a present thing, not merely an abstraction poets feign to honour. Willy, Willy. I have done 5 of the most delightful and beautiful songs you ever cast your beaming eyes upon. They are Elizabethan – the words – and blister my kidneys, bisurate my magnesia if the music is not as English, as joyful, as tender as any lyric of all that noble host. Technique all right, and as to word setting-models. ‘Orpheus,’ ‘Tears,’ ‘Under the Greenwood Tree,’ ‘Sleep,’ and ‘Spring.’ How did such an undigested clod as I make them? That, Willy, I cannot

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12 Blevins, 19.

13 Ibid.

14 Boden.

15 Ibid.
say. But there they are – ‘Five Songs’ for Mezzo Soprano – 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, and harp and two bassoons.\textsuperscript{16}

During this time, Gurney settled into the life of the common music student, living in ragged rooms in Fulham. In 1914, to supplement his scholarship income, he took an organ post at a church in High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. The churchwarden, Edward Chapman, became fond of Gurney and invited him to his home where he met Mr. Chapman’s four children. Gurney became extremely attached to one daughter, Kitty, and he fell in love with her. He asked for Kitty’s hand in marriage, but she refused the offer, as she was only seventeen years old.\textsuperscript{17}

World War I began in 1914 and Gurney attempted to enlist beside his friend Harvey in the 1/5th Gloster, but was turned away due to his poor eyesight. However, in 1915, he was able to enlist because this time the authorities were not being as strict about enlisting.\textsuperscript{18} Gurney set off for basic training in Essex as a Private in the 2/5\textsuperscript{th} Glosters. Traveling by train, one month later, Gurney’s battalion made their way to Tidworth where they set up camp on Salisbury Plain. Once they arrived, they learned that they had no beds, fires or electric lights forcing them to sleep on the bare floor during a bitter winter’s night of wind and snow.\textsuperscript{19} This letter was written from Park Camp in Salisbury before he was sent off to France after basic training.\textsuperscript{20} He wrote on May 24\textsuperscript{th} 1916 to his dear friend Herbert Howells who had not enlisted because of medical reasons:

Dear Howler,
Finis est, or rather, Inceptus est (?). We go tomorrow. Little Howler, continue in thy path of life, blessing others and being blest, creating music and joy, never ceasing from the

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Hurd, 53.

\textsuperscript{19} Boden.

\textsuperscript{20} Pamela Blevins, e-mail interview with the author, April 7, 2015. Letter, Gurney Archives, May 1916.
attempt to make English music what it should be, and calmly scornful-heedless of the critics. Go on and prosper, and Au revoir.  

After writing to Howler, the grueling nature of trench warfare and its turmoil set in, and Gurney, a signaler, mentally retreated to his love of writing verse because composing music was not an option under these conditions. His disdain for war and his intense homesickness for Gloucester became the themes of many of his poems during this time. War continued to torment Gurney, and in March of 1917 the demolition of Caulaincourt, a section of Paris, catapulted Gurney into mapping out the skeleton for his song _Severn Meadows_.

As a consequence of the restrictions of war, Gurney began to think of himself more as a poet than composer and retreated almost solely to the writing of verse. The poems he authored during the war were delivered into the hands of Marion Scott. She had them typed, and it was she that presented them to the publisher Sidgwick & Jackson. This resulted in the publication of _Severn and Somme_, his first book of poetry, in October of 1917.

The horrible events of war struck Gurney on April 7, 1917 when he was shot in the arm, and sent off to the military hospital in Rouen. On September 17 of this same year, he was admitted to Bangour War Hospital, Edinburgh. While being treated at Bangour, Gurney met a nurse, Annie Nelson Drummond, with whom he became enamored and fell in love. He quickly became aware that his amorous feelings were being reciprocated, and wrote to his friend Howells: “Erbert, O Erbert…I forgot my body walking with her; a thing that has not

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22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.
happened since…when? I really don’t know.” He soon recovered enough to leave the hospital, and returned to his signaling duties at Seaton Delaval in Northumberland. During this time he started to struggle with feelings that life was meaningless and cold and this initiated a return of his depression in 1918. He entered several hospitals, and eventually was in Lord Derby’s War Hospital at Warrington to be treated this time for his first nervous breakdown. This hospitalization provoked Annie Nelson Drummond to break all communication with Gurney, making him heartbroken, and he sank even further into depression. This led to his first suicide letter, which he wrote to Sir Hubert Parry, Principal of the Royal College of Music, and to Marion Scott:

My Dear Friend

This is a good-bye letter, and written because I am afraid of slipping down and becoming a mere wreck – and I know you would rather know me dead than mad, and my only regret is that my Father will lose my allotment. Thank you most gratefully for all your kindness, dear Miss Scott. Your book is in my kit bag which will be sent home and thank you so much for it – at Brancepeth I read a lot. Goodbye with best wishes from one who owes you a lot. May God reward you and forgive me.

Ivor Gurney.

Feeling void of comradeship, love, and hope, Gurney aimlessly roamed along the canal at Warrington, but ending his life at this point was something he did not have the strength to do. This suicide letter was the first of six that Gurney wrote.

Between the summer of 1918 and the fall of the same year life changed drastically for Gurney as well as those around him. On the 4th of July, Gurney was transferred to the Middlesex War Hospital at Napsbury until his discharge from the army in October of that year. He was given a pension of twelve shillings a week, and in

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ivor Gurney, “Suicide letter”, Blevins, 149
28 Boden
29 Blevins, e-mail interview with the author, November 30, 2014.
November of this year the war ended.\textsuperscript{30} Gurney returned home to Gloucester with little hope and overwhelmed with depression culminating in a complete, intense mental collapse. Ronald, Gurney’s older brother, had no patience for his brother’s condition. Friends, however, surrounded him with support, and a pre-war poetry friend, Jack Haines, invited Gurney for a healing and uplifting walking vacation in the Black Mountains, which aided in lifting his depression. Ethel Voynich, novelist and musician, invited Gurney to unite with her and some of her friends on a Cornish holiday. This invitation sparked his creative soul, and he composed the song \textit{Desire in Spring}, a charming setting to a poem by Francis Ledwidge.\textsuperscript{31}

Harvey, Gurney’s long-lost friend, returned home after serving time in enemy prison camps in February of 1919, and this rejuvenated Gurney. Gurney, having returned to Gloucester, gathered his courage and in four weeks, Harvey and Gurney gave a recital together with Harvey singing and Gurney accompanying him. David Gurney, Gurney’s father, died on May 10, 1919. The Harveys then took Gurney into their home in ‘The Redlands.’ This gave Gurney a sense of stability, and in the fall he was strong enough to return to the RCM with Ralph Vaughan Williams as his composition teacher. The year 1919 also brought about another positive event for Gurney. His second volume of poetry, entitled \textit{War’s Embers} was published by Sidgwick & Jackson. The poet John Masefield, invited Gurney and Harvey to his home in Oxfordshire in November of the same year. This gave Gurney an optimistic attitude as it implied that he was becoming reputable and respected for his work. In the same year, Gurney returned to his organ post at Christ Church in High Wycombe, and there he resumed his friendship with the Chapmans. They provided to him a safe home life, allowing his abilities as an artist to be fostered. In the next two years, 1920 and 1921, Gurney produced many songs set to the verse of Jack Haines and Will Harvey, in addition to others.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} Boden.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
From 1919 to 1921, Gurney exerted himself both creatively and physically with late night walks from London to Gloucester, which is 93 miles. “He thought nothing of walking from London to Gloucester, sleeping out in barns or under hedgerows when the weather was good, earning a few pence by singing folksongs in country inns, burdened with little more than his pipe and baccy pouch, pencils and notebooks ready to joy down music or poetry as it occurred to him.” He even took a manual labor job at Dryhill Farm in Gloucester where his chores were digging, excavating, and cutting down trees. This physical exercise helped Gurney in calming his nerves, lifting his depression and stimulating his ideas for composing. This is an excerpt from an essay he wrote, The Springs of Music:

Visions of natural fairness were more clearly seen after the excessive bodily fatigue experienced on a route march, or in some hard fatigue in France or Flanders - a compensation for so much strain. One found them serviceable in the accomplishment of the task, and in after-relaxation. There it was one learnt that the brighter visions brought music; the fainter, verse, or mere pleasurable emotion.

As time went on, Gurney discovered more and more that this physical activity was vital to motivating his aspirations and his ability to find mental solace. This manual labor produced a dichotomy between the discipline and structure required for his studies with Vaughan Williams at the RCM, and his need for serenity that only Gloucester would bring to him. With all of this being said, the years 1919 to 1921 were years, in which Gurney ascended from a minor poet to a major poet.

Gurney’s compulsion for the mental solace he found in Gloucester resulted in his departure from his studies at the RCM and London in 1922. Gurney’s aunt, who resided just outside Gloucester at Longford, permitted him to lodge with her. At this time he tried many jobs: church organist, cinema pianist, farm laborer, and tax clerk. All of them failed including his relationship with his aunt. Gurney then sought housing with his

33 Hurd, 139.
35 Boden.
brother, Ronald. He arrived at his brother’s house to be put up, but Gurney’s unsettling behaviors of late night walks, putting mud on their furniture and waking his brother and wife, Ethel, worried them. He ate strangely, and would often be in fits of delusions believing that the police were torturing him by attacking him with radio waves. His downward decline in mental health forced him to reach out for medical help in September of 1922. At this time, Gurney was certified insane and was taken to Barnwood House, a mental hospital in Gloucester. While in the hospital, Gurney wrote many letters of appeal to ‘the great and the good,’ which is an idiomatic phrase in England meaning important people. He also wrote to the police, to universities, to American States, and to friends and colleagues asking desperately to be released or to be put to death. Achieving no success in his letter writing, Gurney decided to depart on a nighttime jaunt attempting to escape from the hospital wearing his pajamas, breaking a window and slashing his hands, but was soon caught by the police and returned to the hospital. After this episode, with the aid of Marion Scott, Vaughan Williams, Walter de la Mare and Arthur Benjamin, he was taken to the City of London Mental Hospital at Dartford in Kent.36

Gurney coped with the hospitalization by letting his mind escape the walls and mentally returning to the one place he felt safe, the serenity of Gloucester. While in the asylum, Marion Scott, Herbert Howells, and Helen Thomas often visited. Helen Thomas noticed that he would not go outside to the hospital’s gardens where many found solace. Gurney said: “it was not his idea of the country at all – the fields, woods, water-meadows and footpaths he loved so well, and he would have nothing to do with that travesty of something sacred to him.”37 At this point, his thoughts were still as if the war never ended. His finest war poems came from his time in the asylum, but his song writing weakened even though he continued to compose until 1926.38

At the young age of 47 years old, on Boxing Day, 1937, the day after Christmas, Ivor Gurney died of tuberculosis. His body was returned to Gloucester where he was buried on December 31. Canon of Gloucester

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
Cathedral, Alfred Cheesman, his godfather, presided over the service and Herbert Howells was the organist. A sprig of rosemary was lowered into his coffin by his longtime friend Will Harvey, and tied to it was a card that read, ‘Rosemary for Remembrance.’

Attending, as part of the congregation was a young composer, Gerald Finzi, who after hearing soprano Elsie Suddaby sing Gurney’s song *Sleep* in 1920, was determined to bring Gurney’s reputation to the forefront of the music world. Finzi, along with the help of Howard Ferguson, his wife Joy, and Marion Scott began to collect the works of Gurney, both poems and songs through all the sources available. Without Mr. Finzi’s efforts, Gurney’s contributions to the world of literature and music would not be known today.

**Compositional Process, Musical Works and Influences**

The definition of Gurney’s compositional process is not easily determined through the current published resources. Philip Lancaster, Gurney Archivist and liaison to the Gurney Estate helped to codify this as follows:

“The questions regarding compositional style, use of harmony, rhythm and the like, require a book or two to discuss fully. Gurney was that oddly dichotomous thing: a Teutonic impressionist. An extraordinary marriage of the post-Brahms/Schumann manner with the deftness and diffuseness of the impressionist school. It is evident in his writings, his occasional directions as to his performances and in his score directions, and in the music itself, some of which makes so much more sense when treated with the impressionist mind-set and touch. As I say, I will be expanding upon this in the coming few years, but it seems to me that this is the most important aspect of Gurney’s work, and is the one aspect of his work that has been wholly overlooked, to the detriment of the music. Works such as A Gloucestershire Rhapsody, much frowned upon by many in Gurney circles, has impressionistic episodes, which people just haven't understood.”

Current source materials on Gurney are in disagreement regarding the total number of songs Gurney composed. Philip Lancaster again, clarified these inconsistencies as follows:

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39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Philip Lancaster, e-mail interview by the author, August 2, 2014.
“To our knowledge (as determined by my catalogue of musical works), Gurney wrote 330 songs. c.90 of these 330 are published (soon to be 104). There are c.200 songs extant in manuscript that are unpublished (as calculated by Ian Venables). The inequality in the calculations (approx total 290 published and unpublished) is because a number of songs are known to have existed but we no longer have any manuscript material for those songs. They are therefore unpublished and can never be published unless a manuscript turns up. I can't recall whether extant fragments are included in Ian’s calculated 200.”

Although known primarily for his song writing, Gurney also composed: solo piano works, chamber music, choral works, and orchestral works, and of these are 4 sonatas and 17 preludes for piano; 20 string quartets, 13 violin sonatas, quintets, and several miniatures for violin; 3 choral works: Chant to Psalm 23, The Trumpet, and Since I Believe in God the Father Almighty; and finally 3 orchestral works: Coronation March, War Elegy, and A Gloucester Rhapsody.

As mentioned earlier, at times in his life he considered himself a poet before a composer. However, he had great confidence as a composer. Gurney viewed his work as a composer to be his most important. Gurney was most prolific in the genre of song composition. Being both poet and composer gave Gurney an advantage in the setting of text in his songs. He always memorized the poem before beginning the process of composing the music, and often made changes to the original poem. In The Western Playland (and of Sorrow) and several other published works, the original text is written in small type under the altered word. Gurney had little doubts about his melody writing because of his strong connection to the text; however, his harmonic style was used as color instead of structure with his bass line having little to do with traditional harmonic progressions or form.

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42 Philip Lancaster, e-mail interview by author, October 6, 2013.


44 Ibid.

Gurney had a troubled childhood. His unstable parents caused him to seek affection and approval from others in his family. He was guided toward the study of music by Reverend Cheesman who introduced Gurney to the Hunt sisters. They encouraged him and provided guidance and materials for his study. Upon entering the Royal College of Music, he met and formed a lifelong friendship/collaboration with Marion Scott. These influential people helped him achieve a level excellence in his poetry and music. Gurney himself, even in the time of war and his struggles with mental illness continued to create art of a high caliber in his poetry and music. Gurney composed both vocal and instrumental music but he is best known for his vocal literature. His music shows the influence of both German and French schools and has been described as Teutonic Impressionism.
A. E. Housman is one of England’s most celebrated poets. One of his major works, *A Shropshire Lad*, was an influential work of its time. Chapter two will discuss his biographical information, poetic collections and his writing process.

**Biographical Information**

On the 26th day of March in 1859, Alfred Edward Housman was born in Fockbury, Worcester England. The Housmans relocated to the neighboring hamlet of Bromsgrove a year after Alfred’s birth. The place of his birth was not considered a center of intellect or culture, but this did not dissuade him from becoming a scholar and one of the famous poets of his era. Housman was born to Edward Housman, an attorney, and Sarah Jane Housman, a housewife and daughter of a clergyman. He had six siblings. The family was religious and Housman’s father was highly conservative in his values and philosophies. The family would have prayers upon waking and in the evening before bed. This rigid life of religion and the reading of ‘Lempière’s Classical Dictionary turned Housman into a pagan and the age of eight, a deist by the age of thirteen and an atheist at twenty-one.  

In his early life, Alfred’s mother, Sarah Jane, is believed to have had the most influence on him as a poet. Her father, Dr. Williams attained a high level of scholarship and had a great love of writing poetry. Sarah Jane passed the passion for poetry her father instilled in her to her son. Housman’s appetite for words was not a surprise in light of this imparted devotion to poetry from Dr. Williams and his mother. Housman was writing poetry at the age of eight, paving the way for his future as one of the world’s greatest verse writers. Sarah Jane became ill in 1869 with breast cancer, and she held strong in her faith wanting to see a Catholic priest, but

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Edward refused her request standing with his Anglican beliefs. Housman was sent away at this time to friends of the family, the Wises. He remained there until he received a letter at the age of twelve from his father stating that his mother had died. Housman’s six brothers and sisters attended the funeral, but Housman was not there which affected him deeply.\footnote{Hoagwood, 3.} “His sister Katherine said that the death of their mother deprived Housman ‘of a guide and counsellor who were never replaced…From that time he became his own counsellor, confiding to no one his mental troubles or ambitions’.”\footnote{Ibid.}

His early education was at King Edward’s School, later named Bromsgrove School, where he had earned a scholarship in 1870. He won academic excellence for his writing of verse in Latin, Greek, English, and French.\footnote{Ibid, 5.}

In the year 1877, Housman matriculated into St. John’s College, Oxford where he earned first class honors in examinations, also called ‘Mods,’ given at the end of the first term of the degree. After the passing of his exams at Oxford, Housman became distracted by several things causing him to become less focused in his studies. The continuous downward spirals of his father’s financial problems, and his attraction to his heterosexual roommate, Moses Jackson were the main distractions. Housman fell in love with Moses; however, Moses did not reciprocate the feelings causing Housman to become even more unfocused in his studies. This neglect of intense study and preparation put Housman in a difficult position when it came time to take the ‘Greats’ exam, which he failed. ‘Greats’ are general exams given at the end of four years of study to earn a degree.\footnote{Ibid, 49.}
Housman, having failed to earn his degree, returned to Blomsgrove in 1881 where he was offered a teaching position on occasion.52 After learning that his friends, Moses and Pollard had taken first place in their ‘Greats,’ Housman felt like a complete failure.53 “Housman gradually became determined that, in time; the academic world should not only welcome him back, but should learn to respect him – as a great scholar.”54

Housman was diligent about studying in an effort to return to Oxford and re-take his exams to earn his degree. In 1882, he returned to St. John’s College passing his exams but earning what is called a ‘pass’ degree, which is a lesser degree than he originally desired. In this same year, he took the Civil Service exam and passed. This allowed him to be employed at the Patent Office in London where his friend and amorous infatuation, Moses, also worked. Housman was employed there for ten years, and while working, he studied the Roman and Greek classics.55

With time he possessed a broad knowledge of the Roman and Greek poets, and with his writing of twenty-five self-published scholarly papers on the subject, Housman became internationally renowned. Having achieved this high level of scholarship, he sent a letter of intent including seventeen gleaming reviews to The University of London applying for a professorship of Latin. He was invited to present an initiation lecture at the start of the academic year in 1892 to launch his professorship in Latin, a position he retained for nineteen years.56 In 1911, Housman was appointed Kennedy Professor of Latin at the University of Cambridge, and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge positions he occupied until his death.57 Housman kept his wit about him even towards the end of his life writing to his brother, Laurence, in the summer of 1935: “I still go up my 44

52 Ibid, 15.
53 Graves, 54-5.
54 Ibid, 55.
55 Hoagwood, 15.
56 Ibid, 17.
57 Ibid, 39.
stairs two at a time, but that is in hopes of dropping dead at the top.”⁵⁸ On April 26, 1936 he lectured for the last time at Cambridge six days before he died.⁵⁹

Poetic Collections

Housman had three major collections of poems published. *A Shropshire Lad, Last Poems* and *More Poems*. *A Shropshire Lad*, published in 1896 and *Last Poems*, published in 1922 were the only two collections of poems that were published in Housman’s lifetime. Many publishers rejected *A Shropshire Lad* initially, but Kegan Paul published the collection as an independent publisher with Housman’s finances.⁶⁰ *A Shropshire Lad* alone consists of a majority of the poetry Housman wrote in his lifetime. In 1897, John Lane was distributing it in America and in 1898 Grant Richards published a second edition. *A Shropshire Lad* slowly grew in popularity fueled by the middle class’ desire for new poetry at the start of the war. In 1922, *Last Poems* was published; it was gaining international praise mostly due to a positive review in the *The London Times*. The publisher, Grant Richards, requested four-thousand copies initially, but they were sold prior to the books printing. Therefore, more copies were printed, and in the first year of publication 21,000 copies of *Last Poems* were sold.⁶¹ *More Poems* was published in 1936 by Housman’s brother, Laurence per Housman’s final wishes found in his will written in 1832.⁶²


⁵⁹ Ibid, 46.


⁶¹ Hoagwood, 91,

⁶² Ibid, 97.
Poetic Style and Literary Influences

It is important to understand A. E. Housman’s philosophy of poetry and the role he believed that it played. He himself stated in a lecture: “And I think that to transfuse emotion – not to transmit thought but to set up in the reader’s sense of vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer – is the peculiar function of poetry.”\(^6^3\) This statement of philosophy is elucidative to the reader trying to comprehend Housman’s poetry. Simply stated, poetry’s primary function is the communication of emotion from writer to reader.

Housman’s writing of poetry, while fostered from an early age, did not always come easily to him. During his employment at the patent office, he wrote drafts of approximately eighty pages of poems in a notebook. Most of his ideas came to him while walking, sometimes only a sentence at a time, but on a rare occasion an entire stanza would come to him but only as a fragmented notion of the poem it was to become. When he became professor of Latin, these walks served as his way of composing poems in his mind, which was slow but steady.\(^6^4\)

In his life Housman had many literary influences. The inspirations for his verse came from many of the great sources that were before him. Greek and Latin authors, Shakespeare; especially his songs, Scottish border ballads, Folk-song, Kipling, Heine, The Bible, Milton, Tennyson, Lang, and Rossetti to name a few.\(^6^5\)

Greek and Latin Poets

The influences from the poets of this lineage are greatly noted in his use of the theme of death on the battle-field. This theme runs throughout the entirety of \textit{A Shropshire Lad} where Housman gives such admiration to the soldier’s voice in the collection and is influenced by Homer’s \textit{Iliad}. We should always be reminded of the sudden loss of his mother at the age of twelve when we listen to his poetry and consider that there is often a


\(^6^4\) Graves, 98.

\(^6^5\) Marlow, 42, 64, 104.
sense of hopelessness from within present. This theme of hopelessness can also be found in the ancient lyric Greek poets: Archilochus, Theognis and Mimnermus and may be a reason he identified with them. The studying of these Greek and Latin poets, as well as, his editing of Manilius influenced Housman’s facility in the refinements of meter, and his usage of strict accent and quantitative stress in the English language.66

A Shropshire Lad

A Shropshire Lad is the collection of poetry from which Ivor Gurney set his cycle The Western Playland (and of Sorrow). This poetic collection consists of sixty-three poems in its entirety. “Since the poems were written, many of them, to harmonize a sadness which was only occasionally his own it is idle to look to them for more than the vaguest of biographical allusions. Like the Shield of Achilles, A Shropshire Lad shows us a world seen in clear pictures but not entered.”67 Themes of the collection are: murder, suicide, pastoral beauty, nature, unrequited love, death, and early death, the shortness of life, time, British soldiers’ life, and war.68 Gurney was intrigued with the poetry of Housman because it expressed the images of rural Britain, and specifically life in Shropshire, a place that Gurney knew so well.69

A Shropshire Lad’s original title was The Poems of Terence Hearsay, a working title Housman used adopting the fictitious character Terence Hearsay. This permitted him to freely write, unencumbered by restrictions he had previously experienced in his writing process.70 A majority of the poems were written before Housman had even traveled to Shropshire, but as a young boy, Shropshire was a distant view from his home in

66 Ibid., 42-63.

67 Marlow, 19.


70 Graves, 101-2.
Worchester. Housman’s concept of Shropshire is that of an envisioned place, and the locations he names in the poems are used for romantic coloring as opposed to him having a real sense of the area itself. “Housman never spent much time in Shropshire, and though he sometimes used geographical names drawn from Shropshire, his local details are often, by his own admission, quite wrong.” The lyrics, taken separately, are obviously concerned with a number of diverse subjects—war, love, suicide, murder—to name a few of the most frequently recurring topics.” In A Shropshire Lad, Housman is concerned with the “shortness of life, the frailty of beauty, [and] the cruelty of time.” “In the simplest terms, the theme which underlies the sixty-three lyrics of the work represents a concern with the problem of change, the transience which characterizes existence, and a search for some kind of permanence in the midst of change.”

A Shropshire Lad was not fully embraced by many when it was published. “Though many reviewers were quick to point out that a new poetic voice sounded here.” Sales increased after World War I and the start of the Boer War, because of its depiction of British soldiers’ life. Ultimately, A Shropshire Lad has become one of the most widely admired books of poetry from the nineteenth century. Many composers of the time began setting the poems to music increasing the collection’s fame. “Housman’s reputation as a poet was particularly

71 Ibid., 105.

72 Ibid., 105.

73 Hoagwood, 1.


76 Leggett, 12.


strong among composers.” 79 “The brevity of the lines, the essential Englishness, their pastoral atmosphere, their rhythm, and their simple spontaneity of feeling were contributing factors.” 80

A. E. Housman’s early life was greatly influenced by his mother’s love of poetry and her early death. While at St. John’s College, he struggled with his sexuality and his intense emotions for Moses Jackson. This along with other distractions resulted in his lack of academic focus and the failure of the culminating exams for his degree. The embarrassment he felt was enough to motivate a quick return to St. John’s and the awarding of a degree, though a lesser one. He then embarked on a self-motivated study of the Roman and Greek classics and his many publications from this study propelled him to prominence. *A Shropshire Lad*, one of his major poetic collections is the source for Ivor Gurney’s cycle *The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)*. The collection stood apart from other poetry of its time and was ultimately seen as changing the landscape of British poetry. It contains many diverse subjects that continue to be attractive to composers, and its main theme is the constant change involved in human existence.

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79 Graves, 116.

CHAPTER 3
MARION SCOTT AND IVOR GURNEY

Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott formed a unique partnership while both were associated with the Royal College of Music. This chapter will begin with a short biography of Marion Scott. It will then discuss the complicated relationship between Marion Scott and Ivor Gurney and how it influenced Gurney both as a poet and as a composer.

Introducing Marion Scott

Marion Scott was born in London on July 16, 1877, and died in London on December 24, 1953. She was born at a time when the suffrage movement was gaining momentum and her parents both supported the movement and exposed Scott to the movement’s ideology. “She was introduced early to the practice of men and women working co-operatively to achieve common goals.”81 “Her mother…considered tutors and holidays in Europe and adequate substitute for regular schooling, there was more time to read (preferably poetry or history or detective stories).”82 Reading and traveling were not her only diversion. “As she approached her teenage years, Marion set a goal to study the violin and composition at the Royal College of Music (RCM). To gain practical experience, she performed in public at every opportunity.”83

In 1896, she was accepted to the RCM where she studied violin with Enrique Fernández Arbos, and was one of the first women to study composition with Sir Charles Stanford. Additionally, she studied piano with Marmaduke Barton.84 She graduated in 1900 with an ARMN (Associate of the Royal College of Music) in

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81 Blevins, 4.
83 Blevins, 7.
84 Ibid, 8.
violin. In 1906 she formed and became secretary of the Royal College of Music’s Union where students, after graduating, could continue relationships with each other and the college.

Always a promoter, she organized her own string quartet, and arranged concerts of modern chamber works written by English composers. However, while concertizing with some of the most notable groups and conductors, she noticed that women were not being treated as well as their male colleagues. Consequently, in 1911, Marion along with Gertrude Eaton and Katherine Eggar formed The Society of Women Musicians. The group promoted a collaborative environment among its membership from different disciplines within music providing performing opportunities, lectures and general advice to members. The membership was not limited to women and they had many men as associate members. The Society of Women Musicians’ concert series put special focus on the performance of chamber works composed by and performed by women.

“Although she was a gifted violinist, frequent ill health prevented Scott from pursuing a career as a solo concert artist, but she continued to work as a musician giving recitals and playing in orchestras, often serving as leader under conductors including Charles Stanford and Gustav Holst.” She was writer of poetry and music but gained her greatest notoriety as a British musicologist. In 1905 a book of her poems was published under the title Violin Verses. The collection of poems was received unevenly by the critics but she rebounded by publishing articles pertaining to music in several papers and eventually was the first woman to write music criticism for The Christian Science Monitor. One of Scott’s greatest achievements was her study of Beethoven, which began in 1931 and that biography and critical study of Beethoven was published in 1934 to critical acclaim. “The Times Supplement praised her ‘shrewd insight’ and her ability to harmonize

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85 Blevins, 9.
86 Chissell, 62.
87 Blevins, email interview by the author, August 5, 2015.
89 Blevins, 254-57.
Beethoven’s personality and music into a convincing portrait.” She was also extremely dedicated to Haydn, and was cataloging his entire works for the 1954 edition of Grove. She became ill in 1953, and called on the assistance of Kathleen Dale to continue research trips to libraries in search of more of Haydn’s works for her article in Grove. She finished the cataloging in 1953 for Grove, and this was her last major contribution to her fame as a musicologist before her death.

Most source materials omit any discussion of formal studies of Scott as a musicologist. Pamela Blevins, who is the author of a dual biography on Gurney and Scott, also explores the complicate relationship between the two. She is currently editing a book on her writings that will contain an introduction on her life and work:

“You cannot find a reference to where Marion studied musicology because she never did. She learned what she knew entirely through her own passion for music and her incredible mind. She had many natural gifts and the ability to become an insightful musicologist and critic were among them. Her education was largely through classes at the Crystal Palace, tutors and travel. Other than the RCM, she had no formal education as we think of it today. She was very fortunate in having such liberal parents who believed that girls should be educated. No one taught her to write either. It was something she just knew how to do. By all accounts, her mother was a fine writer and was exceptionally well read, a gift she passed on to her children and one that Marion absorbed like a sponge. You realize how extremely well read she was when you read her writings.”

Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott’s Partnership

Ivor Gurney and Marion Scott’s partnership took on many roles throughout the years of 1911 to 1937. Scott often served as mentor, confidant, teacher, advocate, mother, and at the end of his life, primary caretaker. Even after his death she continued their connection through the cataloging of his

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90 Ibid, 257.
91 Dale, 240.
92 Blevins, e-mail interview by the author, July 26, 2014.
life’s works. “For his part, Ivor was eager to introduce her to his world, share it with her and have her participate in it with him. He wanted to spend time with her.”

The relationship between Gurney and Scott was quickly established in 1911 when they first met at RCM; she was thirty-three and he was twenty, “but still very much a boy in his alternate bursts of shyness and self-reliance.” Ivor was immediately calm, collected and focused in her presence and that allowed his wit to charm her. These were qualities that he often hid from his friends and colleagues in London.

Gurney was introverted around his classmates, keeping to himself most of the time. However, this was not the case in the presence of his new friend Marion Scott. As mentioned earlier, she was a woman of great influence, extremely well respected, and a significant figure on the campus. She offered Gurney many avenues to support and further his career. She invited him to events such as dinners, teas, and recitals of England’s elite, which were unique experiences for a student. Many of these events took place at Scott’s parents’ house, which became a refuge to him. As one of Marion’s favored friends, the Scott’s home took Gurney into an entirely new experience from his own childhood. They were a happy and intimate family, affluent, liberal and sought adventure.

For a man like that Gurney who was born in the small town of Gloucester, Scott personified the metropolitan diversity of London. She was clearly impressed with Gurney and took notice of Gurney’s passion. Though she was known to help many young composers her connection with Gurney was

93 Blevins, 46.


95 Blevins, 40-6.

96 Ibid, 29.
unique. She was strong intellectually and poetically acute, and her in-depth knowledge of music inspired him to strive for her approval. Gurney found himself attracted to Scott. Her attention fed his narcissism, his need to be noticed, and he satisfied her need of being around talented enthusiastic young men where she sometimes found romance. However, the romantic side of their relationship was discharged, being that Scott was thirteen years his senior.  

Although Scott was Gurney’s mentor, her most significant role was cataloging his music, letters and poetry. Early on she recognized the character traits of pride, quick temper, abundant generosity, and significant power within him and these traits enamored her. She traveled to Gloucester where she met his family and acquaintances, and soon learned of the challenges he faced in his early life. She was determined to be an advocate of Gurney’s while in Gloucester: “she probed deeply to define qualities in Ivor that she felt made him different from his parents and siblings and, in her mind, superior to them.”

For the rest of her life, she devoted a great deal of time and energy guiding Gurney’s development both as a poet and composer.

When Gurney composed the Five Elizabethan Songs, “The Elizas,” Scott discerned that they were of genius quality, and that Sleep stood out as astonishing with splendor, colored with deep pathos. After hearing this cycle, her commitment to uphold and cultivate his musical talent became steadfast. With “The Elizas,” Scott commented: “[Y]ou have done some songs which will take their place as part of the inheritance of England.” This prompted her to write a letter to Gurney praising him:

“They have the vital beauty, the vital truth that gives life…God had given you that rare gift – He has given you genius instead of the talent which is meted out to most people –

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97 Ibid, 40-46.

98 Ibid, 50.

and I suppose that in nearly every case genius gives to its possessor as much pain and joy.”

While at war, Gurney wrote many letters to friends about poetry, music, and was even at times humorous. However, the most important letters were written to Scott because he believed that she alone knew him and would meet his needs in an honest and caring way. Gurney’s many letters soon became poems for Scott to read. She was so approving of his verse, that she stimulated his writing of poetry. She soon had several of his poems published in the *Royal College of Music Magazine* in 1915. This was the true establishment of their collaboration. Once Gurney entered France during the war in 1916 and 1917, it moved him to write about his life back at home in Gloucester. During this time almost all of his letters had a poem enclosed. By the end of 1917, again with Scott’s positive approval, these poems were to become Gurney’s first book of poetry, *Severn and Somme.*

One of her first series of published lectures to the Society of Women Musicians in 1916 titled *Contemporary British War-Poetry, Music, and Patriotism,* centered on Gurney’s creative time at war and his talent for poetry and music. It was also during this time, that Gurney asked Scott to send him a copy of Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad* stating that he wanted to begin setting it to music. She sent him the copy along with staff paper to begin his writing, but the conditions of trench warfare proved it was the wrong time for him.

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100 Blevins letter to Ivor Gurney, (June 9, 1918) Gurney Archives.


102 Ibid, 103.

103 Ibid, 123.
On the other hand, Gurney was not so quick to applaud Scott’s work. He was direct and truthful about her work she shared with him, as he expected her to be with his. He was not an advocate of her music writing, and said in 1918:

“About your work I am going to be simply honest. I don’t know what to say, and that’s true. Should you go on writing? Well I care only for Music of strong individuality; Bach, Beethoven, Herbert Howells, and Vaughan Williams. It is the same with verse – I care only to hear what I cannot do myself; I like what is beyond me.”

Scott was a strong willed, independent and ambitious woman who also excelled at organization and promotion. Her efforts to promote British music and women in particular helped to proper not only her own performing career but also those around her. Frequent illness caused her to change career focus toward music criticism and scholarship. From her first meeting with Gurney, she was a mentor and the formed a lifelong collaboration. As Herbert Howells wrote about Marion Scott after her death: “…it was obvious that her work for Ivor Gurney – for his songs, his poetry, the general recognition of his genius, and for the care of him in his ultimate utter need – was the paramount responsibility she laid upon herself…Marion Scott had power beyond all his other friends and mentors, to offer him judicious but vital encouragement, and even to give direction and purpose to his rich but tumultuous ideas and enthusiasms.”

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104 Ibid, 102.

CHAPTER 4  
THE WESTERN PLAYLAND (AND OF SORROW) PERFORMANCE GUIDE

At the Royal College of Music, Gurney studied both German lieder and French mélodie traditions, but the influence of, the Impressionists and Brahms are most prevalent in this cycle. “Gurney of course was himself a poet of stature and not surprisingly had a poet’s awareness of the words he was setting.”\textsuperscript{106} Of the thirty-six poems from \textit{A Shropshire Lad}, Gurney set eight of them in this order: IV, II, LIV(54), XVII(17), XXVI(26), XXVII(27), XL(40), and X(10). The main themes found in this grouping of poems are: cruelty of time, pastoral beauty, fleeting youth, death, inconsistency of love, grief, and rebirth. “The typical Gurney song projects long, flexible vocal lines against a warm harmonic background, which is animated by unobtrusive piano figurations.”\textsuperscript{107} The original score for baritone, piano and string quartet was published in 1926, and the piano vocal score was published in 1982 both by Stainer & Bell in London. \textit{The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)} is not harmonically or thematically linked musically; therefore, they can be performed individually, or as selections from the cycle with each having its own voice.\textsuperscript{108}

Gurney’s attraction to Housman’s poetry is magnified by his own war experiences, and the direct parallels of Housman’s themes of death and the battlefield. This cycle of songs presents many technical challenges to the singer: the melodic line has difficult intervals at times, the singer’s entrance note is often not in the harmonic structure, the tessitura is challenging and the rhythm has difficult patterns with many meter shifts throughout.

To execute clarity of diction, the performer needs to maintain the legato line even though the text can be difficult at times. Another difficulty of the cycle is that the text by Housman is in poetic British English, using

\textsuperscript{106} Holden, 116.
\textsuperscript{107} Hurd, 207.
\textsuperscript{108} Sirbaugh, 38.
words that the performer may not understand. Of the eight poems Gurney chose to set in the cycle a majority is in the ballad poetic form, which consists of stanzas of four lines with rhymes being \textit{abc}b or ab\textit{a}b. Ballads are song like, and strongly associated with English poets.\textsuperscript{109} I recommend this cycle for an advanced singer.

\textit{Reveille}

\begin{quote}
Wake: the silver dusk returning \\
Up the beach of darkness brims; \\
And the ship of sunrise burning \\
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters, \\
Trampled to the floor it spanned, \\
And the tent of night in tatters \\
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying: \\
Hear the drums of morning play; \\
Hark, the empty highways crying \\
'Who'll beyond the hills away?'

Towns and countries woo together, \\
Forelands beacon, belfries call; \\
Never lad that trod on leather \\
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber \\
Sunlit pallets never thrive; \\
Morns abed and daylight slumber \\
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover; \\
Breath's a ware that will not keep. \\
Up, lad: when the journey's over \\
There'll be time enough to sleep.
\end{quote}

\textbf{Basic Characteristics}

- Song Form: Through-composed.
- Vocal line: The vocal melody begins in imitation of the opening prelude from the piano. The tessitura is high at the vocal entrance and should be sung in a declamatory style. Many phrases end

\textsuperscript{109} Eric, Simpson, \textit{The Ballad},
in the upper register or in the *severo passaggio* of the baritone voice making the vocal line difficult. It has many altered pitches, which Gurney uses as color changes to highlight the text.

- **Range**: D⁴ - F⁵
- **Tessitura**: Upper register
- **Metric organization**: 4/4. (There are some unexpected entrances for the voice after the piano interludes).
- **Harmonic Structure**: Diatonic F major with a brief interlude to Ab major.
- **Expression and Tempo Markings**: *Poco allegro* (A little quick), *cresc.*. With much use of pedals (often both), *with pedal continually, glorioso, grandioso, dim.*
- **Rhythm**: Eighth notes and triplets make up most of the rhythmic patterns.
- **Accompaniment**: The piano begins the main theme of *Reveille*, with rhythmic motives meant to represent the drum and later the trumpet call of reveille. Because the score is a reduction of the original, which included a string quartet, the pianist must try to represent both. It is driven rhythmically, supporting the text.
- **Level of Difficulty**: Moderately difficult for an advanced singer. The tessitura is high, and it is in declamatory style with complex entrances and vocal phrases often ending in the upper register.
- **Length**: 64 measures; 3 minutes 30 seconds

**Song Overview**

*Reveille* (a wake-up call) portrays exactly what the title states. It is a wake-up call to take action not only for the day but to live life to its’ fullest. The music is jubilant and joyous in the beginning, rhythmically driven forward by the accompaniment. This piece is a ‘call to arms’ for the living of life before death takes the possibility away. Using the metaphor of the passage of time, sunrise to sunset, and the underlying lesson is that we must not sleep or move aimlessly through life, but should try to live each moment as if it were our last.\(^\text{110}\)

The first two lines of the poem directly state this:

\[
\text{Wake, the silver dusk returning, Up the beach of darkness brims} \\
\text{And the ship of sunrise burning stands upon the Eastern rims}
\]

It is no surprise that Gurney begins the cycle with this text as it speaks not only his desire to treasure life, but because his mental illness often made him ill at ease by disrupting both his life and his ability to sleep. *Reveille* is a military duty performed by trumpets or drums, and in this piece drums are the primary instrument Gurney chooses to depict. Looking at the rhythm of the piano in the introduction you can hear the tap, tap, roll

\(^{110}\) Leggett, 67-68.
(eight note, eighth note, triplet) of the drum. This, what I call the ‘reveille theme’, which sets the theme by emphasizing the percussiveness of drums. (Music Example 1)

Example 1: *Reveille*, mm. 1-4

When the voice enters it carries on the ‘reveille’ theme from the piano in a high *tessitura*. The first vocal section of the song is in a declamatory style, authoritative and speech-like, marked *forte*. (Music Example 2)

Example 2: *Reveille*, mm. 4-11
The next section of interest occurs in the transition out of the declamatory telling to ‘wake up’ to a gentler mood, which is decidedly un-militaristic. The commentator is now describing the far-off places that inspire youthful adventure. Gurney moves into Ab major (the bVI) setting up the entrance of the voice as a less aggressive storyteller. (Music Example 3)

Example 3: *Reveille*, mm. 30-37

Immediately after this section, Gurney again shifts the key center using the bVI of Ab major (Fb₆) which the vocal line outlines in a declamatory way in the upper register. This sudden shift in key snaps the singer, pianist and audience back to ‘action’ from the descriptiveness of the previous section. To help accomplish this Gurney returns to the more declamatory style of the beginning and restates the ‘reveille theme’ by m. 45. (Music Example 4)
Example 4: *Reveille*, mm. 41-45

After the return to the ‘reveille theme’, Housman uses metaphors to remind us that we will all die. ‘Clay lies still, but blood’s a rover, Breath’s a ware that will not keep’. Here clay represents stagnation and death, blood represents life and action, and breath represents the decay of life as it is a thing that will not be everlasting. With this realization, the commentator then reminds us to wake up, because at the end of the journey, there will be time to sleep, meaning death.111 Gurney begins this section with a fragment of the ‘reveille theme’ (m52), but quickly changes the use of the triplet (pick up to mm. 53-54) to aid that of the bugle with its rising call affirming the ‘lesson’ of the text. (Music Example 5)

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111 Hoagwood, 50.
Example 5: Reveille, mm. 52-60

In the postlude, Gurney borrows one of Brahms’ and Schumann’s compositional techniques of using a tonic-I, pedal over a traditional harmonic progression of IV-V-IV-V-I. Here Gurney gives the listener a moment of reflection to contemplate the value of life and the vitality with which we should live it.

(Music Example 6)

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112 Lancaster, e-mail interview by the author, August 2, 2014.
Example 6: *Reveille*, mm. 60-64

**Performance Suggestions**

The singer is strongly suggested to begin by speaking the original poem so that the stress and meter of the poem is found. This is particularly important because Gurney’s musical setting of the text alters the original word stress. This will aid in understanding what words and syllables are important to stress. An added obstacle lies in the poems themselves. The singer should do diligent research into the poems to be able to express the actual intent of the words. For example, in *Reveille* in m. 52 (Music Example 5) ‘clay lies still’ refers to a dead body and in m. 53 (Music Example 5) the word ‘ware’ refers to a thing. As mentioned earlier, they are written in poetic British English, which can be challenging to understand.

Gurney’s dynamic and expression markings are clear, so the singer should follow these literally. But remember, he uses color more than harmonic structure; therefore, the singer should look at these as color changes staying within the dynamic markings. Such as in m. 36 (Music Example 3), when the voice enters this is a significant color change both in intent and in the texture of the accompaniment.

Rhythmically it is straightforward. However, the fact that it is set in a declamatory style and has a high tessitura, presents obstacles for some singer to master simultaneously.
At the end of the piece beginning in m. 57 (Music Example 5) the singer should still deliver the text in a declamatory way, but in m. 58 (Music Example 5), on the last two words of the measure, there should be a sudden vocal color shift which helps to set the mood of contemplation.

**Loveliest of Trees**

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,  
And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

**Basic Characteristics**

- **Song Form:** Through-composed
- **Vocal line:** The vocal line is melodic and is supported by the accompaniment. There are several passages that are challenging because of a high tessitura.
- **Range:** D⁴–F⁵
- **Tessitura:** A combination of middle voice and upper register.
- **Metric organization:** 2/4, 3/4.
- **Harmonic Structure:** Melodic in Db major with a modulation to A major. Overall, it revolves around ii⁷, IV, and I.
- **Expression and Tempo Indications:** *Poco andante, poco rit., a tempo, poco cresc., con passione, con Ped, dim.*
- **Rhythm:** The sixteenth note is prominent and consistent in the accompaniment.
- **Accompaniment:** Supports the vocal line with some commenting on the meaning of the text. Fluid melodic lines that are sparse in texture.
- **Level of Difficulty:** Moderately difficult with challenges into the *passaggio* in several passages.
- **Length:** 52 measures; 2 minutes 57 minutes
Song Overview

For the second selection in the cycle, Gurney chooses what has become one of Housman’s most celebrated poems, *Loveliest of Trees*. This particular poem has been set by many composers such as Gurney, Gerald Finzi, George Butterworth, and Leslie Mann to name a few.\(^{113}\) In choosing *Loveliest of Trees* as the second song of the cycle, Gurney continues the idea of the cruelty of the passage of time using a different context. Gurney sets the mood of the piece by choosing a slower tempo in contrast to the opening piece. Additionally, the vocal line is melodic and lyric which contrasts the declamatory setting of the first piece. The theme of the poem is “life is beautiful but it is short; and since it is short, one must enjoy it now.”\(^{114}\) In the first half of the poem, the rural Shropshire setting describes the cherry tree, the loveliest of trees, with its spring blossoms of white.

Loveliest of Trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

The mood is one of joy and happiness of spring time and rebirth and of the rejuvenation associated with Easter. However Gurney uses the key of Db major, a darker key, which generally that has the characteristics of grief and smiling but cannot laugh.\(^{115}\) Gurney’s introduction begins with flowing quarter note chords on the first beat and sixteenth notes on the second beat perhaps depicting a single blossom falling from the tree as we experience its slow decent to the ground, already moving from spring to summer. The entire introduction is on the ii\(^7\) chord, and not until m. 4 do we arrive at the tonic. Also in m. 4, Gurney highlights the vocal entrance with a Db minor seventh chord, which adds harmonic tension leading to the singer’s unaccompanied entrance.

(Music Example 7)


\(^{114}\) Leggitt, 16.

Example 7: *Loveliest of Trees*, mm.1-4

Harmonically, this is one of the most conventional pieces of the cycle in terms of melody and accompaniment. When the singer begins, the melody is in the tonic key shifting from tonic to dominant ending the first four poetic phrases. (Music Example 8)

Example 8: *Loveliest of Trees*, mm. 5-15
Poetically the mood shifts to being more serious and less joyful.

Now of my three-score years and ten
   Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score
   It only leaves me fifty more.

Here the commentator reveals their age to us as 20 (a score equaling 20 years). “The connotations of Easter, of course, contradict the connotations of “snow” – the one implies rebirth, the other death. The fact that the liveliness of youth will not return contradicts the conventional content of the Easter symbolism.”  

In this section, mm. 16-27, we can see the influence of Impressionism upon Gurney’s work through his use of color and non-traditional, quickly shifting harmonic progressions. In m. 18, Gurney moves to A major, which is a raised V in the original key, (Db major), and is a ‘brighter key’. This changes the mood as the music moves through A major, D minor, G minor, and A minor from measure to measure. Gurney uses these sudden key shifts to show the ambiguity of life and to support the text of moving through the different stages of life.

(Music Example 9)

Example 9: Loveliest of Trees, mm. 18-27

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Hoagwood, 49.
Gurney returns to his opening ii\textsuperscript{7} in the piano, mm 30-36, while the melody in the vocal line is in the original key of Db major. This gives the listener a feeling of being settled. He does this to support the text, which speaks in the first person, and more specifically that there is not enough time, 50 years, to enjoy the simple objects we should notice while we are still alive. That nature and time as well as life are always changing as we find the cherry tree here ‘hung with snow.’

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

(Music Example 10)

Example 10: 
*Loveliest of Trees*, mm. 30-36
Beginning in m. 37, Gurney begins the close of the piece supporting the text ‘About the woodland I will go. To see the cherry hung with snow’. He does this with the vocal line beginning in the upper register giving the listener the sense that the person will take the time to walk the woodlands and take in the changing seasons symbolized by the ‘cherry hung with snow.’ (Music Example 11)

Example 11: *Loveliest of Trees*, mm. 37-44

The postlude is of great interest, again, setting the mood for the next piece. Gurney uses the progressions of IV, vii/half diminished with the cadence of IV6/4 to I leaving the listener with a great sense of wonder because this progression sounds suspended and does not resolve. (Music Example 12)

Example 12: *Loveliest of Trees*, mm. 45-52
Performance Suggestions

This song is in contrast with the first song, which is declamatory in narrative. This piece is a description of the surrounding scene and should be approached with more intimacy than the first. The vocal line is lyric in its setting and the singer should sing with as much legato as possible.

At the key change in m. 19, (Music Example 9), the singer should have another color change. In mm 19-24 (Music example 9), Gurney chooses to change keys from measure to measure. These abrupt key changes to A major, D minor, G minor, A minor and G major along with different rhythms, accidentals in the melody, and the shift in text to the first person is different from the descriptive text of what came before. This symbolizes his epiphany that life is passing by quickly, and should be sung with a sense of authority and urgency.

When the singer gets to m. 30 (Music Example 10), it should be delivered with a sense of the joy of life. The text clearly asks for this from m. 30 to m. 36 (Music Example 10). Then from m. 37 to m. 44 (Music Example 11), the approach should be one of acceptance of life’s journey and death.

Golden Friends

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a light-foot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: Through-composed
- Vocal line: The vocal line is moderately challenging in that it is often unaccompanied, and has hymn-like qualities.
- Range: Eb⁴-Eb⁵
- Tessitura: Middle voice
• Expression and Tempo Indications: *Andante, parlando, dim.*
• Rhythm: Straight forward; quarter, eighth, and half notes are the main structure.
• Accompaniment: Simple chordal harmony and is subservient to the vocal line.
• Level of Difficulty: Moderate
• Length: 29 measures; 1 minute and 25 seconds

**Song Overview**

The brevity of the poem is reflected in the cycle, as it is the shortest and most intimate piece. The overall message of the poem is the impermanence of life and passing of youth. For Gurney this probably evoked memories of his disconnection with Gloucester, his place of solace while at war, as well as, memories of his childhood. The simplicity of this piece, the unaccompanied vocal line and hymn-like qualities further denote his anesthetizing of his memories. This is shown in the first two musical examples.

The word choices in this poem are of importance to the flow of the poem such as ‘rue’ and ‘laden’ because he could have used more common words such as ‘sorrow’ and ‘burdens’. The word ‘had’ is important because it lets the listener know that he is speaking of the past. Gurney begins the song with a simple hymn-like introduction to the vocal line, which is unaccompanied. This heightens the feeling of loneliness and sadness. (Music Example 13)

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Example 13: *Golden Friends*, mm. 1-6

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118 Ibid.
The next section, mm. 6-10, is noteworthy because the vocal line outlines F minor while the piano is playing in the tonic key of Ab major V, I 6/4, ii7, and V. Gurney does not arrive at vi, F minor, until measure 10 on the word ‘lad’. This happens again in mm. 17-21. (Music Example 14)

Example 14: *Golden Friends*, mm. 6-10

In m. 13, Gurney takes us in the vocal line again to F minor, vi/I, and in m. 16 he shifts to G minor, which is vii, to cadence in C minor. This is a significant color change, which supports the text before we reach the concluding lines. Even though this piece is through-composed, this is a pivotal point, the bridge if you will, between the two poetic sections, mm 1-10, and mm. 19-25. In this second poetic section we see that the obstacles placed in front of the ‘lads’ are too great to overcome. (Music Example 15)

Example 15: *Golden Friends*, mm. 12-16
At the end of m. 17, Gurney brings us back to F minor in the vocal line while the piano is playing iii, ii, V, and vi in the original key of Ab major. Gurney uses these shifting tonal centers to support and expose the text ‘The roselipt girls are sleeping in fields where roses fade.’ This text symbolizes the fading of youth and that all that comes into this world fades and dies. (Music Example 16)

Example 16: *Golden Friends*, mm. 16-24

The postlude, mm. 25-29, is thought provoking in that it leaves the listener with a feeling that is unsettled and unresolved. Gurney’s postlude is ii\(^7\), V\(^7\), IV\(^6\) with the cadence being ii-I 6/4 which is not as settled as a root position I chord. (Music Example 17)
Example 17: *Golden Friends*, mm. 25-29

**Performance Suggestions**

This poem, although short, brings a powerful message again of ‘living life to its fullest’ and reiterates Housman’s theme of death and fleeting youth symbolizing the death of the maidens (poetically through the image of fading roses) and the death of the lads.

The singer should sing this in strict rhythm as if it were a hymn. There should be no *rubato* in the in the unaccompanied vocal lines. The execution should be one of simplicity. Gurney’s setting of the vocal line is exposed and unaccompanied at times, which brings the text to the forefront. Therefore, the singer should be in tune with the syllabic stress of the poem, so that he knows how to inflect the words. Overall, the stresses of the singing of the text should be on the strong beats 1 and 3 since we are in 4/4. The singer must stay true to the steady rhythmic pulse.

Housman’s use and Gurney’s setting of the words ‘had’, ‘roselipt maidens’, and ‘light-foot lads’ tells the listener that this is in the past as he is speaking of friends from his childhood (Music Example 14). However, childhood cannot last.\(^ {119} \) The singer should also be aware that in mm. 7-10 and in mm 18-24 (Music Example 16), the piano is independent of the vocal line. Gurney achieves this by setting the vocal line in F minor while

\(^ {119} \) Ibid.
the piano is still in the tonic key of Ab major. Again, Gurney’s use of shifting tonal centers exposes and highlights the text.

In mm. 12-16 (Music Example 15), the singer should convey a slightly more declamatory style and authoritative color because of the key changes and depth of the text. Beginning in m. 12 (Music Example 15) the text is saying that some things in life cannot be accomplished; and starting in m. 21 (Music Example 16), that the light in life does eventually go out. In m. 21, the singer should take on an even deeper more inward, sensitive mood and color while singing the text, which symbolizes life’s end.

Twice a week

Twice a week the winter thorough
Here stood I to keep the goal:
Football then was fighting sorrow
For the young man’s soul.

Now in Maytime to the wicket
Out I march with bat and pad:
See the son of grief at cricket
Trying to be glad.

Try I will: no harm in trying:
Wonder 'tis how little mirth
Keeps the bones of man from lying
On the bed of earth.

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: Through-composed
- Vocal line: The vocal line is difficult. It is syllabic in its word setting, and occasionally places the stress on the usual unaccented syllable. It can be rhythmically challenging.
- Range: B₃-F⁵
- Tessitura: Upper register
- Metric organization: 4/4, 2/4, 6/4
- Harmonic Structure: I, IV, ii₇
- Expression and Tempo Indications: Allegro molto, cresc.,
- Rhythm: Aggressively rhythmic
- Accompaniment: Complex in that the beat pattern is syncopated causing the beat center to be askew. This makes the vocal entrances difficult.
• Level of Difficulty: This piece can be challenging in terms of rhythm, tessitura, and execution of diction.
• Length: 41 measures; 1 minute and 15 seconds

**Song Overview**

In the text for the fourth song of the cycle, Housman uses sports as a metaphor, highlighting the frivolousness of participating in them as those who do (either passively or aggressively) ultimately die and ordinary death. In *Twice a week* Gurney draws upon his unhappiness with his childhood, and his “own recollections of his school-days are memorials to cricket and football rather than to high learning.” “Young people took soccer seriously, in its season, as if it were somehow important rather than merely a game (and therefore by definition purposeless); then the season of another sport arrived, and it was taken seriously, as people attempted to be happy; the last stanza then bitterly reflects on how trivial the amusements are which represent life, as opposed to the inevitability of death.” Within the song Gurney’s manipulation of the rhythm helps demonstrate the instability of childhood and the jarring action of sport itself. His use of syncopation in the introduction skews the beat center and blurs the bar line. (Music Example 18)

![Music Example 18](image)

例18: *Twice a week*, mm. 1-2

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120 Hoagwood, 58.

121 Hurd, 13.

122 Hoagwood, 58.
In *Twice a week*, Gurney uses the tempo marking, *allegro molto*, along with *f* *sf* *p* marking for the accompaniment in the first four measures to help create an urgent and suspenseful atmosphere that often surrounds sports competitions. Both poet and composer reflected on the frivolous use of time, represented in the poem as sport, in their own youth. In 1892, Housman stated in a lecture: “The pleasures of the intellect are notoriously less vivid than either the pleasures of sense or the pleasures of the affections; and therefore, especially in the season of youth, the pursuit of knowledge is likely enough to be neglected and lightly esteemed in comparison with other pursuits offering much stronger immediate attractions. But the pleasure of learning and knowing, though not the keenest, is yet the least perishable of pleasures…”¹²³ This is shown in the first vocal entrance in mm. 3-12; it is football season in winter. (Music Example 19)

Example 19: *Twice a week*, mm. 3-12

¹²³ Leggett, 52.
The second vocal entrance in mm. 16-20 announces that now it is spring and cricket season.

(Music Example 20)

Example 20: Twice a week, mm. 16-20

Another rhythmic technique Gurney uses in the song is the eighth note to the dotted quarter note pattern used throughout to emphasize the end of the phrase. In terms of the text, this places the stress on the usual unaccented syllable. Musically this gives forward motion to the end of each phrase, the same as one drives to the goal in sports. Examples of this are at the ends of measures 9 and 17, on the words ‘thorough’, ‘sorrow’, and ‘wicket’. (Music Example 21)

Example 21: Twice a week, mm. 4, 9, and 17
In mm. 21 and 22 Gurney changes the rhythm to include sixteenth notes, adding urgency. Here the lad endeavors to be happy during the meaningless exertion of sport.\textsuperscript{124} (Music Example 22)

Example 22: \textit{Twice a week}, mm. 21-24

Next, the young man states in the first person that there is ‘no harm in trying’ saying even the smallest moments of joy cannot prevent death.\textsuperscript{125} Gurney sets this up in the interlude, which is in 6/4 to delay and create tension before the voice entrance in m. 25. (Music Example 23)

Example 23: \textit{Twice a week}, mm. 24-26

\textsuperscript{124} Hoagwood, 58.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
The interlude in mm. 27 and 28 adds even more tension with the piano playing diminished chords in eighth notes to half notes, which creates a more dense texture. The following vocal line is low in the voice V of I in the original key. Finally on the last line of the text, ‘On the bed of earth,’ the voice has on the words ‘bed’ and ‘of’ the VII/ of I, which cadences on the last word of the piece ‘earth’ on V leaving the phrase unresolved for the piano to do so in the postlude. (Music Example 24)

Example 24: *Twice a week*, mm. 27-37
The postlude that Gurney composed is a plagal cadence harmonic progression in mm. 37-39: a diminished ii chord leading to minor iv. In the next piece, *The Aspens*, the vocal entrance is unaccompanied and in F major. This transition from B minor to F major can make the acquisition of the starting pitch difficult.

(Music Example 25)

Example 25: *Twice a week*, mm. 38-41

**Performance Suggestions**

The singer should note that song four, *Twice a week*, is in great contrast from the folk song characteristics of the piece before it. The tempo is marked *allegro molto* with the piano introduction skewing the beat center, which immediately gives the singer and listener a feeling of instability. Again this is Gurney’s way of conveying the theme that life is unstable and short.

Once again, Gurney has placed a word on almost every note to show the youthful energy and futility of Housman’s text making it declamatory. Therefore, the singer should practice speaking the text with precise articulation in declamatory style.

The performer should also realize that the phrases often end with the interval going up, which places the stress on the unstressed syllable. Two examples of this are in m. 4 (Music Example 21), on the word ‘thorough,’ and in m. 17 (Music Example 21), on the word ‘wicket’. This is important for the singer to know because this takes great breath control and support.
Once the opening declamation is made about playing football, the singer should bring a different color in mm. 16-20 (Music Example 20), when Gurney shifts to F major and the sport being played now is cricket.

In mm. 21 and 22 (Music Example 22), Gurney changes the rhythmic pattern to present the irony in the text revealing that the lad is trying to be happy but is not. This is one of the most important phrases in the piece both rhythmically and textually. This should be one of the most declamatory statements that the singer executes in the piece.

Measures 23 and 24 (Music Example 22), are important in that the harmony is a i diminished chord which creates tension in the music before the next vocal entrance ‘Try I will: no harm in trying’ in mm. 25-26 (Music Example 23). In m. 24 (Music Example 22), an interlude in 6/4 displaces the beat for the singer’s entrance, delaying the vocal line to emphasize the fact that he is trying but will not succeed in being happy playing trivial sports. Harmonically this is reinforced by the harmonic progression of the phrase being: i, iv⁶, i, iv, and ending on vi with a minor 9th and sharped 7 in the chord.

Measure 27 (Music Example 24) is another harmonic, rhythmic and color change in the piano with longer notes giving a broader feeling. Harmonically, Gurney does this by using a measure of sharp VII diminished as an interlude bringing us to the dominant. In mm. 29-33 (Music Example 24) in the melody, the singer is now singing eighth notes, dotted quarter notes, and half notes making the phrases longer which are all on V delaying the cadence which begins in m. 35 (Music Example 24) on the word ‘on.’ All of this is important for the singer to be able to execute this section properly.

When the delayed cadence is finally reached in m. 35 (Music Example 24) with the singer’s entrance on i on the word ‘on,’ the melody line is augmented with the sparse piano allowing the singer to sing the last line of the text mostly unaccompanied. The singer should execute mm. 35-37 (Music Example 24) in a sotto voce or parlando style.
The Aspens

Along the field as we came by
A year ago, my love and I,
The aspen over style and stone
Was talking to itself alone.
‘Oh who are these that kiss and pass?
A country lover and his lass;
Two lovers looking to be wed;
But she shall lie with earth above,
And he beside another love.
And sure enough beneath the tree
There walks another love with me,
And overhead the aspen heaves
Its rainy sounding silver leaves;
And I spell nothing in their stir,
But now perhaps they speak to her,
And plain for her to understand
They talk about a time at hand
When I shall sleep with clover clad,
And she beside another lad.

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: ABCA'B'
- Vocal line: The vocal line is melodic and shows the influence of a folk-song style. Throughout, the voice often enters unaccompanied. It has unusual rhythmic patterns.
- Range: C⁴-E⁵
- Tessitura: Middle voice.
- Metric organization: 3/4, 2/4
- Harmonic Structure: Melodic in F major. Overall, I, IV, and ii⁷. This progression often leads to Bb major.
- Expression and Tempo Indications: andante, dolce, con passione and dim.
- Rhythm: Straightforward with varied rhythms throughout and a few awkward rhythmic combinations in the accompaniment.
- Accompaniment: The accompaniment often imitates the vocal motives. The vocal line keeps the piece together, not the piano.
- Level of Difficulty: Moderately difficult because most vocal entrances are exposed and unaccompanied.
- Length: 54 measures; 3 minutes 12 seconds

Song Overview

The Aspens is the most harmonically, melodically and motivically structured piece in The Western Playland, and of sorrow (and of Sorrow). Gurney uses the harmonic progression of I, IV, ii⁷ leading to IV, as the main harmonic structure throughout the song. The lack of harmonic variety is odd for Gurney and is perhaps
his attempt at a more ‘folk’ spirit. This harmonic progression is shown in the beginning of the song mm. 1-10.

(Music Example 26)

Example 26: *The Aspens*, mm. 1-10

The exposed unaccompanied first vocal entrance in F major must be prepared by the singer from the last measure of the previous piece in B minor. (Music Example 27)

Example 27: *Twice a Week* m. 41 and *The Aspens*, m. 1
The melodic motif is shown in mm. 1-10 (Music example 26), is slightly altered rhythmically and returns again in mm. 30-39. (Music Example 28)

Example 28: *The Aspens*, mm. 30-40

Another interesting section of this piece is in mm. 30-38. Here Gurney composed using open chords often leaving out the third or fifth which helps to obscure the key and give a hollowness to the sound. This is effective as the text is telling us that there is no permanence in love and also aids in the depiction of the enchanting sound of the aspen’s leaves. (Music Example 28)
This poem of Housman’s, *The Aspens*, has two stanzas of tetrameter couplets which has a four beat poetic pattern. This is shown in the first line: ALONG the FIELD as WE came BY. The text tells the story in of two lovers; one that has died and the other has taken a new soul mate. This poem is about the irony of love and its impermanence. Housman, in the first stanza, creates a scene where the aspen tree forecasts the prophecy that of the two young lovers she will soon die and he will soon have ‘another lover’.

Along the field as we came by  
A year ago, my love and I,  
The aspen over stile and stone  
Was talking to itself alone.  
'Oh who are these that kiss and pass?  
A country lover and his lass;  
Two lovers looking to be wed;  
And time shall put them both to bed,  
But she shall lie with earth above,  
And he beside another love.

In the final stanza of the poem, it is disclosed that the prediction of the aspen tree has come true:

And sure enough beneath the tree  
There walks another love with me,

“However, the poem further strengthens its characterization of love’s inconstancy by suggesting an endless cycle of lovers forgotten in death and betrayed by the surviving lover.”

In mm. 45-47, Gurney leaves the melodic flowing melody and accompaniment from before, and composes a section that is chromatic, bringing attention to the text. The vocal line is outlining a flat iv⁷ chord in eighth notes, and the piano in triplets. (Music Example 29)

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126 Hoagwood, 62.
127 Leggett, 33.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
Example 29: *The Aspens*, mm. 44-47

And overhead the aspen heaves  
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;  
And I spell nothing in their stir,  
But now perhaps they speak to her,  
And plain for her to understand  
They talk about a time at hand  
When I shall sleep with clover clad,  
And she beside another lad.

The speaker, when hearing the leaves rustle worries the aspen tree is giving the identical prophecy to his new ‘love’: “what may look like permanent love is a momentary alignment on a road, to be succeeded (with grim certainty) by death, faithlessness, and impoverishment of meaning and human value.”

**Performance Suggestions**

The singer should first note that the tempo of *andante* and the contrast of the quickness of the piece before it. It is also important to note that the singer enters unaccompanied in F major and must acquire the starting pitch from the previous piece’s postlude in B minor. If the performer does not have perfect pitch to achieve this, he must practice this in repetition until the vocal entrance becomes innate.

The singer should pay close attention to the stress of the text. As mentioned before, the poem is in the form of tetrameter. This will guide the singer in understanding the correct words or syllables to stress when

**Footnote**

130 Hoagwood, 62.
singing them. An example is in mm. 2-4: a YEAR aGO my LOVE and I. This ‘poetic pulse’ happens throughout the piece. However, the singer should take caution to not overdo it so that it does not sound robotic, but natural as if singing a folk-song. When Gurney rhythmically alters the ‘poetic pulse’ by elongating some of the ‘pulse points’ the singer should keep the ‘poetic pulse’ framework in mind at all times. Stressing certain words happens naturally in folk-song singing to aid the singer in learning and remembering them since they often were handed down from generation to generation by rote.

The beginning should be sung with even legato while stressing the correct words and syllables. In the next phrase, the aspen tree is talking to itself, which should be a change in character and vocal color. Gurney gives the singer time to word paint in mm. 7-8 (Music Example 26) on the word ‘talking’: three and a half beats on a melismatic passage. The singer should use their imagination to find the right color here as you are imitating the sound of an aspen tree described later in the poem as ‘rainy sounding’.

In the B section (mm. 11-16), the singer should take on a completely new role and color as a question is being asked and the answer is being given. The singer should use an ‘asking color’ for the question (mm. 11-12), and an ‘answer color’ (mm.13-15). In m. 17, which is unaccompanied, the singer should use a more gentle color, sotto voce, moving to mm. 18-19 as we are reminded that death will come to us all.

As the singer moves into section C of the song (mm. 25-29) the singer should maintain the, sotto voce, established at the end of the B section. This will be an effective and mysterious color to use for the aspen tree’s prophecy and goes along with Gurney’s marking of p.

In the interlude, (mm. 25-29), Gurney uses sixteenth notes and half notes to transition to the next section. The singer should use this to transition out of the prophecy and return to a vocal color more like the beginning of the song. Musically this makes sense as we are moving back to the A’ section of the song.

In the A’ section, mm. 30-39 (Music Example 28), Gurney augments the word ‘rainy’ in mm. 36-37 (Music Example 28) as he did in the A section with the word ‘talking’ in mm. 7-8 (Music Example 26), and the
singer should use this opportunity to word paint. However, as in the A section, the singer should not let this brief melismatic passage destroy the ‘poetic pulse’.

The B’ section (mm. 40-50) starts with some interplay between the voice and piano. In mm. 40-41, the singer states that he does not hear anything in the leaves rustling and the piano imitates the ‘unheard’ rustling of the leaves. During this the singer should take on a color of doubt or fear. Then in mm. 42-50 the text reveals that the tree is talking to ‘her’ telling ‘her’ that the male lover will die and she will move on to lie beside another love. It is especially important to note that Gurney uses the vocal line in mm. 45-47 in outlining a flat iv\(^7\) chord, and in mm. 45-46 the piano is in triplets while the voice is in eighth notes bringing tension in the music to deliver this message in the text (Music Example 29). The singer should execute this with a feeling of pulling and elongating the vocal line to emphasize and create expressive tension.

The final measures of the vocal line, mm. 47-50, and into the postlude are best described as sparse. Gurney has indicated a dim. for these last few measures of the vocal line and the singer and pianist should transition out of the previous section into a feeling of ‘fading into dust’.

Is my team ploughing

“Is my team ploughing,
That I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle
When I was man alive?”

Ay, the horses trample,
The harness jingles now;
No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.

“Is football playing
Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?”

Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.

"Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?"

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

"Is my friend hearty,
Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?"

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: ABA'B'A"CA""B"
- Vocal line: Difficult. It is challenging rhythmically with a recitative section where the voice enters unaccompanied on a pitch that is not related harmonically to the previous chord.
- Range: $A^3$ – $E^5$
- Tessitura: A combination of middle voice and upper register
- Harmonic Structure: D minor with Impressionistic harmonies. The main progressions are: I, III, v, VI and flat ii which is the Neapolitan chord. Also Gurney uses many half diminished chords leading to $V^7$-I.
- Expression and Tempo Indications: Allegro, ad lib., a tempo, dim., molto dim., parlando, lunga, poco rit., cresc. and quasi corni.
- Rhythm: The rhythmic pattern is mostly eighth note, quarter note, sixteenth note and half note tied to an eighth note. There are some sections that are patterns of sixteenth notes alone.
- Accompaniment: The piano sets the pattern of repeated eighth notes with half notes above them in the left hand in the introduction. When the voice enters, the piano is supporting the vocal line, and in the interludes transitions into new colors setting up the vocal entrances with half diminished chords. After the first interlude, the texture becomes denser when playing alone and when accompanying the voice.
- Level of Difficulty: This piece is difficult. The vocal entrances are complex with a parlando, recitative section where the singer must enter unaccompanied with no reference of the pitch in the previous chord. I would only suggest this for an advanced singer.
- Length: 61 measures; 3 minutes and 47 seconds
**Song Overview**

*Is my team ploughing* is one of the longest pieces in the cycle. By using this poem in this position Gurney continues the theme of “a triangle of lovers in which one is now in the grave”. The imaginary dialogue between the two men “depicts in inconstancy of love with the unrealistic situation of a dead lover speaking from the grave.” Housman came to think of this poem as one of his best, and his reasons are likely to have involved the poem’s superb craftsmanship and his characteristic combination of simple diction with complex ranges of meaning. The poem is in the ballad poetic form with four quatrains where the second and fourth lines rhyme; however, the first and third lines do not follow the traditional ballad form in that the first and third lines are linked through the use of feminine endings, and the second and fourth lines having masculine endings. The dead man’s questions all start with lines having five syllables, while the living friend’s lines contain six. This shortening of the dead man’s questions brings urgency to them.

Gurney uses the introduction of the piano playing only in the left hand in a percussive eighth note, half note pattern to symbolize the routine manual labor of ploughing and the idea that life continues in the same ordinary way after death. (Music Example 30)

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131 Leggitt, 31.
132 Ibid.
133 Hoagwood, 62.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid, 63.
136 Ibid.
Example 30: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 1-2

When the voice enters, the dead man is asking a question:

“Is my team ploughing that I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle when I was man alive?”

Here Gurney uses the rhythm of eighth notes and quarter notes for the singer’s first part of the question, and then he moves to a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes and eighth notes to symbolize the horses’ harnesses jingling that pull the plough. (Music Example 31)

Example 31: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 3-8
When the living friend answers, Gurney shifts tonality momentarily C minor then to the Neapolitan Eb major in m. 11, ultimately ending the ‘answer section’ on a passing iv chord in m. 14. These harmonic and color changes reinforce the unexpected answer the dead man’s question that life has continued despite his death. (Music Example 32)

Example 32: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 9-14

Gurney chooses to use the Neapolitan chord to strengthen two moments (m. 11 and m. 56) when the dead lover realizes his assumption that life cannot go on without him is not true. He also utilizes the Neapolitan chord at the beginning of the postlude (m. 58), perhaps to convey the living lover’s guilt. (Music Example 33)
Example 3: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 56 and 58

In mm. 15-16, Gurney uses the interlude of eighth notes and triplets as a bridge to the next vocal section in m. 17. Here Gurney establishes a quasi-verse and refrain structure to the song. Although, the vocal line in mm. 17-22, is similar to the beginning vocal line, mm. 2-8, the rhythms are slightly altered from the first making this the A’ section. The dead lover questions further in an effort either through innocence or naïveté to discover if other aspects of life have returned to normal after his death. His question brings back the sports metaphor and Housman’s use of it to show the trivialness of youth. (Music Example 34)

Example 34: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 15-24
Again the B’ section beginning in m. 24 is nearly identical to the B section, mm. 9-15 except for a few rhythmic variations, altered pitches, and a different key center. (Music Example 35)

Example 35: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 24-28

The interlude in mm. 29-30 rhythmically shifts from 6/4 to 4/4. In m. 30, the piano shifts to F# minor, establishing a more serene transition into the dead lover’s next question. (Music Example 36)

Example 36: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 29-30

In the A’’ section, mm. 31-35, the dead lover continues questioning: ‘Is my girl happy that I thought hard to leave’. Here Gurney changes the rhythmic pattern in the vocal line to longer notes, half notes tied to a quarter
note, and giving five beats to the word ‘hard’ to highlight the text. This gives the effect of the dead lover’s hesitation at asking the question. This entire section is in an obscured F# minor key with an F# pedal throughout. (Music Example 37)

Example 37: Is my team ploughing, mm. 31-35

One of the most important sections in the piece is section C, mm. 37-38, which is in recitative style. Before it, in m. 36, Gurney composes a one measure interlude in F# minor, arriving at a chord marked fff. Perhaps this is intended to be the punctuation to the dead lover’s question. This dynamic marking also helps to establish the color and mood shift of the recitative section that follows. (Music Example 38)
Example 38: Is my team ploughing, m. 36

In mm. 37-38, the unaccompanied *recitative* section, the piano interjects three times: the first, a descending chromatic figure at end of the dead lover’s question, and the two remaining chordal moments that help to establish the insensitive answer from the living lover. In m. 37 Gurney gives both singer and pianist great freedom through the elimination of bar lines to express the poignancy of both the question and the answer. (Music Example 39)

Example 39: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 37-38
In section A’’, mm. 42-46, Gurney returns to a similar melodic gesture as he used at the beginning. However, this time it is more declamatory with a jealous intent of jealousy for the singer, higher in the singer’s register and melodically augmented at the climax of the phrase, (a dotted quarter tied to four sixteenth notes on the word ‘bed’). This is followed by a deceptive cadence in m. 46 using bV/iv on the word ‘mine’ as the dead lover finishes his question: ‘has he found a better bed than mine?’ (Music Example 40)

Example 40: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 42-46

Gurney then writes a two-measure interlude in mm. 47-48 moving from G minor to Ab major. It is important to note that in m. 48, this Ab major chord is the Neapolitan of IV, and on the final beat it is placed in an open chord high in the piano, which brings a feeling of anticipation to the listener.

(Music Example 41)
Example 41: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 47-48

When the singer re-enters in m. 49, (Ab major with a C pedal) Gurney indicates *tenuto* marking over the beginning of the vocal line. This is a compositional technique that further heightens the insensitivity of the living lover. To bring the answer to its close, Gurney writes a short interlude of five beats in m. 53 progressing to the augmented chord on the first three beats of m. 54. This augmented F major chord gives a sense of time being suspended as the living lover gives his final answer: ‘Never ask me whose.’ (Music Example 42)

Example 42: *Is my team ploughing*, mm. 49-56
Performance Suggestions

The singer should note the length of this piece, and that pacing is important. The tempo is allegro but should be a moderate allegro not to be taken too quickly. If the singer feels the correct pulse in a broader 2/2 instead of 4/4, the correct tempo will come easily.

This piece is rhythmically driven requiring great agility on the singer’s part above all the other pieces in the cycle. The vocal line begins with eighth and sixteenth notes. The singer should have excellent articulation through these passages keeping the text clear.

Overall, the singer should pay careful attention to the dynamic markings that Gurney chose to color the text. As some of the higher pitches in the vocal line are marked mp, diminuendo, and, forte, the singer must work for breath support and control to achieve these markings. It begins with piano as the dynamic marking and then moves through many dynamic changes as mentioned above.

If the singer understands that this is a dialogue between two men, one living and one dead, his voice must take on the two different characters to deliver the true intent of each. The dead lover is always asking the question, and the living lover is always giving an answer. At the top of the piece the question and answers are friendly and typical. The dead lover is asking basic questions: ‘Is my team ploughing that I was used to drive?’ The living lover answers: ‘No change, though you lie under the land you used to plough.’ However, as the piece progresses they become more personal. This is important for the singer to fully understand which lover he is portraying and the lover’s intent, so that he may correctly inflect and color the voice. An example of this is in mm. 37-38 (Music Example 39), in the parlando, recitative section. The dead lover asks: ‘and has she tired of weeping as she lies down at eve?’ Then the living lover answers: ‘Ay, she lies down lightly, She lies not down to weep, Your girl is well contented, be still, my lad and sleep.’ In this particular section of question and answer the singer should make the question innocent in inflection and the answer deliberate in inflection. As stated before, the last questions and answers become bitter from the dead lover, and the living lover’s answers are insensitive verging on mockery. The living lover’s answer at the end is: ‘Yes lad, I lie easy. I lie as lads would
choose; I cheer a dead man’s sweetheart. Never ask me whose’. In this ending answer the living lover infers that this is the last question he will answer. Gurney adds to the finality of the discussion by setting the ending word of the living lover’s answer on the tonic, i, of the original key of d minor giving it resolution. The singer should work to inflect the final words: ‘Never ask me whose’ in a mysterious tone as a warning to ask nothing further.

The Far Country

Into my heart an air that kills  
From yon far country blows:  
What are those blue remembered hills,  
What spires, what farms are those?  

That is the land of lost content,  
I see it shining plain,  
The happy highways where I went  
And cannot come again.

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: Through-composed
- Vocal line: The vocal melody is highly chromatic with many accidentals. It is exposed at times with difficult intervals.
- Range: C⁴-E⁵
- Tessitura: Upper middle voice.
- Harmonic Structure: F# major, highly chromatic throughout going through keys of D minor, C minor, Ab major and Db major.
- Expression and Tempo Indications: Adagio quasi Andante, con ped., parlando, con agitato, cresc., poco.
- Rhythm: Triplet sixteenth notes, sixteenth notes and eighth notes.
- Accompaniment: The piano introduces the motif of triplet sixteenth notes to quarter note tied to an eighth. Highly chromatic.
- Level of Difficulty: Difficult because of the chromaticism, exposed vocal line and vocal entrances that are not in the previous tonality.
- Length: 29 measures; 2 minutes 35 seconds

Song Overview

Only two stanzas in length, The Far Country, is one of the most expressive songs of the cycle. It is the journey of a Shropshire lad leaving his small town and travelling to the city. It is a remembrance, but a bitter
The opening line of text reveals this immediately: ‘Into my heart an air that kills-From yon far country blows-What are those blue remembered hills.’ Gurney uses a rhythmic motif in the piano introduction of triplet sixteenth notes, followed by a quarter note tied to an eighth note. This rhythmic gesture along with the chromaticism in the vocal line when it enters, supports the text, and creates a mood of looking back with eeriness and skepticism. (Music Example 43)

Example 43: The Far Country, mm. 1-5

In the next vocal entrance, Gurney writes a G# as the first note which is not in the piano’s previous chord and tonal center. This leads to exposed unaccompanied entrance on the word ‘What.’ This is again his way of emphasizing the text, which in this case is a question: ‘What are those blue remembered hills.’ Another interesting part of this phrase is that he writes a D# going to a C double sharp on the word ‘remembered.’ This

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137 Ibid, 70-1.
gives tension to the end of the phrase and brings a sense of pain to the listener, as the memories are not therapeutic. (Music Example 44)

Example 44: *The Far Country*, mm. 6-7

At the end of m. 10, the interlude begins a transition with quick moving sixteenth notes slowing down to quarter notes followed by eighth notes moving through many keys until it cadences on an F major chord in second inversion on the fourth beat of m. 14. Perhaps this is Gurney’s way of depicting the deflating spirit when it is realized that contentment cannot be found, even in memories of a fond place. (Music Example 45)

Example 45: *The Far Country*, mm. 10-14

On the last beat of m. 14, the F major chord is followed by a shift to C minor. This prepares the vocal entrance, which is marked *con agitato* and *parlando*, (with agitation and speech-like). The vocal line moves
between G major, C minor, Ab major and finally ends in A major with the piano harmonically supporting the vocal line throughout the phrase. The shifting tonal center then helps to illustrate the underlying homesick feeling of the singer. The vocal line ends on E⁵ and C#⁵ leaving it unresolved, creating tension and suspension which the piano continues in the interlude. (Music Example 46)

Example 46: The Far Country, mm. 14-18

In the final phrases, Gurney writes in major keys of Ab major and Db major to support the text: ‘The happy highways where I went’, but abruptly goes back to F# minor, the minor tonic key, for the last words: ‘and cannot come again.’ By using this technique of constantly shifting the key center, Gurney is musically underlining the meaning of the poem, the ‘there is no home anymore. (Music Example 47)
**Example 47: The Far Country, mm. 19-23**

**Performance Suggestions**

The singer should note the tempo marking of *adagio quasi andante*, and the time signature. The tendency is to want to rush, but the pulse should be felt in a slow 4 as the time signature says 4/8.

From the top of the piece, the singer and pianist should take on the color and mood of great sadness and longing in order to express the text correctly. The text in this piece, unlike many others in the cycle, is easier to understand. There is only one word from old poetic British English: ‘spires’ which means city. The entire first section mm. 1- 10 (Music Example 43 and 44) should remain in the feeling of pain and longing, and have a sense of being suspended in time.

In m. 15 the text takes on a more assertive tone as the Shropshire lad is now making a statement and not asking questions: ‘That is the land of lost content. I see it shining plain.’ The singer should work to deliver this in a direct and agitated way, and follow the dynamic and expression markings suggested here to *cresc. con agitato and parlando*. The singer should be mindful not to take the marking of *parlando* too far, blending the singing with speech-like effect and only at ‘That is the land of’ portion of the phrase. In this phrase, the word ‘shining’ is given a melismatic flourish, therefore, the singer should work to paint this word with painful memories of the past.
The piano interlude after this phrase is important as it keeps the forward momentum. The singer should enter in m. 19 (Music Example 47) with bitter-sweetness as the underlying intent of this phrase and carry it through m 21. Abruptly in m. 22 (Music Example 47), Gurney goes from Db major to F# minor which allows the singer to deliver these last words ‘and cannot come again’ with a deeper sense of longing and pain than the beginning of the piece. These final words that are exposed and unaccompanied along with this final statement should be delivered with resignation and almost spoken.

During the long postlude of seven measures, the singer should keep the scene alive looking out into the distance with longing. The postlude ends on the tonic of F# major giving finality to the piece.

_March_

_The Sun at noon to higher air,_  
_ Unharnessing the silver Pair_  
_That late before his chariot swam,_  
_Rides on the gold wool of the Ram._

_So braver notes the storm-cock sings_  
_To start the rusted wheel of things,_  
_And brutes in field and brutes in pen_  
_Leap that the world goes round again._

_The boys are up the woods with day_  
_To fetch the daffodils away,_  
_And home at noonday from the hills_  
_They bring no dearth of daffodils._

_Afield for palms the girls repair,_  
_And sure enough the palms are there,_  
_And each will find by hedge or pond_  
_Her waving silver-tufted wand._

_In farm and field through all the shire_  
_The eye beholds the heart's desire;_  
_Ah, let not only mine be vain,_  
_For lovers should be loved again._
Basic Characteristics

- **Song Form:** ABCDC'E
- **Vocal line:** The vocal line is made up of large sweeping phrases that are in a two against three rhythmic pattern with the piano. In the 3/2 section the vocal line becomes more exposed.
- **Range:** C⁴-F⁵
- **Tessitura:** A combination of middle voice and upper register.
- **Metric organization:** For the most part it remains steady in 4/4, 6/4. But in the 3/2 section there are unaccompanied sections.
- **Harmonic Structure:** F major, Db major, C major. Highly chromatic in sections going through many keys. The postlude is Impressionistic in nature.
- **Expression and Tempo Indications:** Allegro con moto, cresc., dim., con amore, poco andante, dim., allargando, a tempo, parlando, and ad lib.
- **Rhythm:** In the vocal line the quarter note to quarter note triplet to a half note is constant throughout. It slows down in the 3/2 section being made up of quarter, half, dotted half and dotted whole notes tied to a quarter note.
- **Accompaniment:** The piano has triplet eight note patterns in both hands throughout most of the piece. But changes to chords made up of half and quarter notes becoming denser in texture at the 3/2 section. It has a 10 measure postlude that is Impressionistic in nature.
- **Level of Difficulty:** Difficult.
- **Length:** 91 measures; 6 minutes and 14 seconds

Song Overview

This is the longest poem of the cycle having five stanzas. *March*, describes a world that rejoices in its youth. The tone is optimistic and gay in spite of recognition of love’s fickleness.138 “The astrological imagery in the poem’s first stanza (‘the silver pair,’ ‘the Ram’) is of course classical, providing a metaphor for the passing of time.”139

With this being said, *March* is the most joyful piece in the cycle having a youthful energy. The piano starts the introduction with a rhythmic pattern of triplets in F major that is a dominant figure throughout the piece. The voice sings large sweeping phrases of quarter notes followed by quarter note triplets, resulting in a two against three configuration against the piano’s triplets which are central to the piece except in two sections. This is another influence of Brahms in Gurney’s work. (Music Example 48)

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138 Leggitt, 105.
139 Hoagwood, 54.
Example 48: March, mm. 1-6

Whenever this two against three pattern stops in the piece, it is meant to highlight the text with augmentation of longer notes in both the piano and the voice. Measures 21-23 are examples of this. When the description on spring is done the text makes a statement. The text before mm. 21-23 is:

So braver notes the stormcock sings
To start the rusted wheel of things,
And brutes in field and brutes in pen

(Music Example 49)

Example 49: March, mm. 21-23
Starting in m. 37 and into the D section of this piece (mm. 43-56) is another instance where the central rhythmic pattern of two against three does not occur. In m. 42, the meter changes to 3/2, the accompaniment becomes denser and the vocal line (when it enters) slows the pace even further with a key change to Db major. This stanza is where the theme of spring and Easter return. The ‘silver tufted wand’ is most likely a peeled willow wand another reference to spring.

A field for palms the girls repair,  
And sure enough the palms are there,  
And each will find by hedge or pond  
Her waving silver tufted wand.

(Music Example 50)

Example 50: *March*, mm. 42-48

In mm. 59-66, we return to the original two against three rhythmic pattern as in the beginning, but in mm. 71-81, with the final two lines of text, Gurney writes a shift in texture while the piano is both commenting on and supporting the vocal line. When the voice enters in m. 71, it is unaccompanied in quarter and half - notes
slowing the pace as he solemnly asks that his love not be in vain. To close the piece beginning in m. 76, the piano plays an A major chord which is held for seven beats giving the spotlight to the voice and text for the final words: ‘For lovers should be loved again’. (Music Example 51)

Example 51: *March*, mm. 71-81

The postlude of *March* is the end of the cycle. It is a long coda that shows Gurney’s Impressionistic traits more than any other section of the entire cycle. It is ten measures in length, and is highly chromatic using augmented and diminished chords. It moves through several keys such as: Eb minor and E major in m. 85, Db major and Bb minor in m. 86, A major and G minor in m. 87 finally cadencing on I, F major, in mm. 90-91 bringing the cycle to a reflective and peaceful end. (Music Example 52)
Performance Suggestions

The singer should first note that this is the longest piece in the cycle, and that pacing is of extreme importance. The tempo marking is *allegro con moto*, which should be strictly followed as this will help in executing the long phrases throughout the piece.

The song form of ABCDC’E should be examined by the singer to guide him through the six sections. Each section should have its own color and mood. Understanding the text fully will be of help in shaping the six different sections. As stated before, the piece is a journey of a young lad who is joyful and innocent despite loves uncertainty, and that love is triumphant in the end.

At the start, the singer should have a bright, youthful and jubilant deliverance in his vocal color and mood from the vocal entrance in m. 2 through m. 23 (Partial Music Example 48) these are the A and B sections. Within these sections, a description of the scene is given of the sun and animals in the fields.

Beginning in m. 26, the C section, the text moves away from the images of animals and the sun and begins to speak of the actual lads. The young boys are hunting in the woods for daffodils, which symbolize
spring, and they return home at noon with many of them. The singer should follow the marking of *con amore* (with love) to create a mood of impassioned youthful love.

In m. 44, the D section brings back symbols of Easter and spring (hope of life’s renewal), as in *Loveliest of Trees*. Therefore, the singer should create a sense of hushed pageantry in his delivery. This is the most challenging section, mm. 42-58 (Music Example 50) as the *tessitura* is high and the phrases are long. In this section the phrase lengths seem even longer because we move to the time signature of 3/2 giving a feeling of elongation. This section requires great breath control for the singer, and needs to be sung with a *legato* line.

In the next section, (mm. 59-66), Gurney takes us back to the joyful beginning for a brief moment. The text is: ‘The eye beholds the heart’s desire.’ The singer should have a youthful color in his voice, which will create a cheerful mood.

Lastly in section D, mm. 71-81, the text intimates a desire not to be alone, and that love should prevail. At the start of the section, which is marked *parlando*, the text is ‘Ah, let not only mine be vain.’ The singer should sing this with the intent of humility, and for the ending text: ‘For lovers should be loved again,’ the singer should sing this with confidence in a deliberate way.
Ivor Gurney’s *The Western Playland (and of Sorrow)* is a song cycle of eight songs. The text is from a collection of poems entitled *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. Both Gurney and Housman had troubled youths but rose above their situations to become artists in their own rights. Gurney’s mixture of Germanic and French styles (Teutonic Impressionism) was recognized as innovative in his time by composers like Gerald Finzi and Ralph Vaughan Williams as well as Marion Scott, a formidable advocate of his works. Housman’s work *A Shropshire Lad*, was not only influential in shaping a new path in British poetry, but it has also drawn the attention of many composers both in its time and to this day. There are two scores; baritone, string quartet and piano; and baritone and piano. The cycle should be sung as art songs in recitals by advanced singers. I was interested in how Gurney brought the textures of the string quartet into the piano accompaniment in the piano vocal score, which is the score that I have written about and performed. It can be performed as excerpts, but I believe it is best to perform it in its entirety as the poetic themes from *A Shropshire Lad* are imbedded throughout the poetic text of the cycle, which brings unity.

The cycle can be used as a tool for mastering vocal pedagogical techniques such as: transitions through the *passaggio*, breath support, breath control, rhythm, intonation, dynamics, expression, *tempi*, and overall musicality. Musically there is no harmonic, thematic or motivic linked material in the cycle. Poetically there is thematic sharing in songs two (*Loveliest of Trees*) and song three (*Golden Friends*): both focus on death, and songs five (*The Aspens*) and six (*Is my team ploughing*): both focus on the death of a loved one.

Pacing is very important in singing the cycle in its entirety. The songs are often in a challenging *tessitura* with difficult unaccompanied vocal entrances, exposed vocal lines, and complicated rhythmic patterns. The Teutonic Impressionistic writing of Gurney’s style must be brought out in the performance. These are subtle nuances in the deliverance of the songs.
Another influence to the score was Gurney’s life story: his troubled childhood, battle with mental illness, time at war and his life as a composer and poet. All of these issues made up this great artist, and attracted him to these poems by A. E. Housman. Gurney’s composing of *A Western Playland (and of Sorrow)* has preserved in history some elements of people’s lives in Shropshire, England that were clearly treasured by Gurney. “When the full story of Ivor Gurney can ultimately be told, nothing more tragic in the history of music and verse will be found…he had no more devoted friend and would be comforter [than Marion Scott].”

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140 Gerland Finzi, Quoted on Pamela Blevins’ cover of her biography on Ivor Gurney.
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________. E-mail interview by the author. Brevard, NC, August 5, 2015.


Lawrence. E-mail interview by the author. UK, October 6, 2013.

Lawrence. E-mail interview by the author. UK, August 2, 2014.


Reveille

Wake: the silver dusk returning
Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,
Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:
Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
'Who'll beyond the hills away?'

Towns and countries woo together,
Forelands beacon, belfries call;
Never lad that trod on leather
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber
Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: when the journey's over
There'll be time enough to sleep.

Loveliest of Trees

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.
And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

**Golden Friends**

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a light-foot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

**Twice a week**

Twice a week the winter thorough
Here stood I to keep the goal:
Football then was fighting sorrow
For the young man’s soul.

Now in Maytime to the wicket
Out I march with bat and pad:
See the son of grief at cricket
Trying to be glad.

Try I will: no harm in trying:
Wonder ’tis how little mirth
Keeps the bones of man from lying
On the bed of earth.

**The Aspens**

Along the field as we came by
A year ago, my love and I,
The aspen over stile and stone
Was talking to itself alone.
’Oh who are these that kiss and pass?
A country lover and his lass;
Two lovers looking to be wed;
And time shall put them both to bed,
But she shall lie with earth above,
And he beside another love.’
And sure enough beneath the tree
There walks another love with me,
And overhead the aspen heaves
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;
And I spell nothing in their stir,
But now perhaps they speak to her,
And plain for her to understand
They talk about a time at hand
When I shall sleep with clover clad,
And she beside another lad.

**Is my team ploughing**

“Is my team ploughing,
That I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle
When I was man alive?”

Ay, the horses trample,
The harness jingles now;
No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.

“Is football playing
Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?”

Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.

“Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?”

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

“Is my friend hearty,
Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?”
Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

The Far Country

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.

March

The Sun at noon to higher air,
Unharnessing the silver Pair
That late before his chariot swam,
Rides on the gold wool of the Ram.

So braver notes the storm-cock sings
To start the rusted wheel of things,
And brutes in field and brutes in pen
Leap that the world goes round again.

The boys are up the woods with day
To fetch the daffodils away,
And home at noonday from the hills
They bring no dearth of daffodils.

Afield for palms the girls repair,
And sure enough the palms are there,
And each will find by hedge or pond
Her waving silver-tufted wand.

In farm and field through all the shire
The eye beholds the heart's desire;
Ah, let not only mine be vain,
For lovers should be loved again.
APPENDIX B
SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY OF SOLO SONGS

*Gurney Songs* (Naxos), 2010. Susan Bickley, mezzo; Iain Burnside, piano.

*Severn and Somme* (Somm Records), 2006. Roderick Williams, baritone; Susie Allen, piano.


*Ludlow and Teme with Vaughan Williams on Wenlock Edge and Venables* (Signum Records) 2008. Andrew Kennedy, tenor; Dante Quartet; Simon Crawford-Philips.

*Ludlow and Teme with Vaughan Williams on Wenlock Edge, Warlock & Bliss* (Linn Records) 2007. James Gilchrist, tenor; Fitzwilliam Quartet; Anna Tilbrook, piano.

*Gurney & Delius-Songs* (Etcetera) 2006. Ian Partridge, tenor; Jennifer Partridge, piano.

*Gurney; Finzi; Ireland-Songs* (Somm Records) 2007. Nathan Vale, tenor; Paul Plummer, piano.

*Western Playland & Ludlow & Temm (with Vaughan Williams)* (Hyperion Helios) 2004. Stephen Varcoe, baritone; Adrian Thompson, tenor; Delme Quartet; Iain Burnside, piano.

*War’s Embers* (Hyperion Helios-a shortened release of the original double disc set) 2006. Michael George, bass; Stephen Varcoe, baritone; Martyn Hill, tenor; Clifford Benson, piano.

APPENDIX C
LIST OF PUBLISHED SOLO SONGS

Five Elizabethan Songs for voice and piano
Poetry by William Shakespeare, John Fletcher and Thomas Nashe

Lundlow and Teme: a song cycle for tenor voice, string quartet and piano.
Poetry by A. E. Housman
London: Stainer & Bell, 1923.

Lights Out
Poetry by Edward Thomas
London: Stainer & Bell, 1926.

The Western Playland (and of sorrow): A Song Cycle for baritone, string quartet and piano.
Poetry by A. E. Housman
London: Stainer & Bell, 1926.

A First Volume of Ten Songs

A Second Volume of Ten Songs
Poetry by Walter de la Mare, Wilfrid Gibson, Robin Flower, W. B. Yeats, John Doyle, John Freeman and J. C. Squire.

A Third Volume of Ten Songs

A Fourth Volume of Ten Songs

A Fifth Volume of Ten Songs
Poetry by John Masefield, Frances Ledwidge, Ivor Gurney, Ethna Carbery, Bliss Carmen, W. B. Yeats, Edward Shanks, Thomas Hardy, Anon Ballad and F. W. Harvey.

Ludlow and Teme: A Song Cycle for Tenor and Piano
Poetry by: A. E. Housman
Introduction notes by Michael Pilkington
London: Stainer & Bell, 1982
**The Western Playland (and of Sorrow): A Song Cycle for Baritone and Piano**  
Poetry by A. E. Housman  
Introduction notes by Michael Pilkington  
London: Stainer & Bell, 1982

**The Singer’s Collection for high voice and piano vol. 1**  
Poetry by John Doyle and Robert Graves  
Bury St Edmunds, 1992.

**The Singer’s Collection for high voice and piano vol. 2**  
Poetry by W. B. Yeats and Walter de la Mare  
Bury St Edmunds, 1992.

**20 Favourite Songs: Voice and Piano**  

**Eleven Gurney Songs**  
Introduction by Michael Hurd  

**Seven Sappho Songs for Soprano and Piano**  
Poetry by Sappho songs edited by Bliss Carmen.  
APPENDIX D
EMAIL INTERVIEWS WITH PAMELA BLEVINS

July 18, 2014

Hi Pam,

I am beginning the chapter on Marion and Gurney's relationship. I have lots of info from your book, but they don't like just having 1 source. I've looked at the bibliography in your book (WOW)! In your opinion, what would be the best sources to get Biographical info on Marion Scott? Online sources, or books that I may be able to get from the library?

Thanks

July 18, 2014

Hi Ridley,

Kathleen Dale, Joan Chissell, Herbert Howells, all wrote pieces about her mainly after her death. I have these sources which are good because they are personal. Right now I am in the middle of working on my book of Marion's writings so give me a little time today. When I take a break I will send you the list -- do you by chance have access to a fax? That would be quicker than my scanning them. These pieces should be available on JSTOR.

More later,
Pam

July 26, 2014

Hi,

I found all of those resources. I know about JSTOR don't know why I didn't look there. If you have any other info I'd greatly appreciate it.

Thanks
R

July 26, 2014

Hi Pam,

I know that she studied violin at RCM, but where did she study Musicology? I cannot find that in any of the articles. I also skimmed your book and cannot find it there either. I know it's in there somewhere.

Thanks
R

July 26, 2014

Hi Ridley,

You cannot find a reference to where Marion studied musicology because she never did. She learned what she knew entirely through her own passion for music and her incredible mind. She had many natural gifts and the
ability to become an insightful musicologist and critic were among them. Her education was largely through classes at the Crystal Palace, tutors and travel. Other than the RCM she had no formal education as we think of it today. She was very fortunate in having such liberal and progressive parents who believed that girls should be educated. No one taught her to write either. It was something she just knew how to do. By all accounts, her mother was a fine writer and was exceptionally well read, a gift she passed on to her children and one that Marion absorbed like a sponge. You realize how extremely well read she was when you read her writings.

Cheers,
Pam

**July 26, 2014**

Thanks so much! Yes I read about her 'home schooling' in one of the articles.

R

**November 29, 2014**

On 11/29/2014 11:34 PM, Ridley Chauvin wrote:

Hi Pamela,

I am in LA getting ready to do my lecture recital on Gurney on Tuesday. Do you know how many suicide letters he wrote? Was it more than 1?

Thanks

Ridley

**November 30, 2014**

Hi Ridley,

Congratulations! Yes, Gurney wrote more than one suicide letter -- six in all. He wrote others to Hubert Parry (enclosed with the note he sent to Marion with the request that she forward it to Parry), Will Harvey, Herbert Howells, his father and Margaret Hunt. Marion was the ONLY person who acted immediately.

Please let me know how your lecture recital goes.

Best wishes,
Pam

**April 7, 2015**

Hi Pam,

Although I passed my defense, there are a few edits left to do. Would you know from where this letter came:

Dear Howler,

Finis est, or rather, Inceptus est. We go tomorrow. Little Howler, continue in thy path of life, blessing others and being blest, creating music and joy, never ceasing from the attempt to make English music what it should be, and calmly scornful-heedless of the critics.

Go on and prosper, and Au revoir
April 7, 2015

Hi Ridley,

You must be feeling quite good and relieved that you have attained your goal after a lot of hard work and study. I am very pleased for you.

About your questions:
I believe that an open scholarship allowed a student to continue studying beyond the initial year. I don't know if a student needed to renew the scholarship or if it just went into effect each year as long as the student maintained good grades. If you need a better answer, someone at the Royal College of Music could explain it better perhaps.

The letter in question was postmarked 24 May 1916 and was sent from Park House Camp in Salisbury just before Gurney shipped out. It is in the Gurney Archive -- item G.3.14 unless the numbering has changed with the complete re-cataloguing of the Archive. It also appears on page 86 of Kelsey Thornton's Collected Letters. Sorry for the delay in getting back to you about the open scholarship, we had a house guest from Belgium for a week so I fell behind on everything.

Best wishes,

Pam

August 4, 2015

On 8/4/2015 8:02 PM, Ridley Chauvin wrote:

Hi Pam,

Just wanted to ask if you had found this text yet?
I am working on chapter 3 now. I will definitely use some of your suggestions. As I am doing these edits, sometimes footnotes and sources shift. For the life of me, I cannot find where I got this:

Frequent illnesses prevented her from pursuing a concert career but her facility at writing and composing sent her career in a different direction. She became a famous British musicologist, and writer of poetry and music. In 1905 a book of her poems was published under the title /Violin Verses/. The collection of poems was received unevenly by the critics but she rebounded by publishing articles pertaining to music in several papers and eventually was the first woman to write music criticism for the /The Christian Science Monitor/. I've found most of the paragraph but not the frequent illness part stopping her from pursuing a concert career.

I know that I got it from somewhere because I would have never made up 'Christian Science Monitor." Would you know the source????

Thanks

August 5, 2015

On Wed, Aug 5, 2015 at 3:14 PM, Pamela Blevins wrote:

Hi Ridley,

Why didn't I think to check in the most obvious place – the entry on Marion that I wrote for Wikipedia. It isn't exactly what you have but here it is:

Although she was a gifted violinist, frequent ill health prevented Scott from pursuing a career as a solo concert
artist, but she continued to work as a musician giving recitals and playing in orchestras, often serving as leader under conductors including Charles Stanford, Gustav Holst.

I think that is about as close as you will get. I first posted it in 2007. I probably reworded something I had written before that time but I cannot recall where/what that might have been. Does this help?

If you have more questions, I'm here.
Cheers,
Pam

August 5, 2015

Hi,

I don't have a fax here at home. But I do have access to JSTOR. I'll do a search in the meantime on her in JSTOR and see what I can come up with.
Thanks again
R
APPENDIX E
EMAIL INTERVIEWS WITH PHILIP LANCASTER

October 2, 2013

Hi Philip,

I also forgot to include in my last email: Would you be willing to do an email interview with me that would be included in my dissertation? I would want to ask you questions such as: What was Gurney's compositional style such as his process and characteristics. You would be cited in the paper and given credit for the interview. Please let me know. I would really appreciate it.

Thanks so much,
Ridley

October 4, 2013

Dear Ridley,

Many thanks for your emails. This is a hasty response for now - I should have a little time early next week to respond properly.

In short: I undertook what work I had time for on the Western Playland edition, preparing a performing version which assimilated various corrections arising from my consultation of all of the sources. One song proved difficult, and I reverted to the original manuscript version of this, and I do need to revisit this, both musically and ethically. It was performed in June and there are plans to record the edition at Easter. I am sure I can ply you with a copy when I have a moment to find the PDF on my machine. I blogged about the edition when I did it. I can't remember what I wrote, but it is somewhere at: http://theunknownregion.wordpress.com

Re. interview: I am not sure I will have much to say, but will gladly participate in such an interview if it might be of some use!

I think that answers things briefly. I'll look more carefully when I can, and also send the PDF of the score. Best wishes,
Philip

October 5, 2013

Hi Philip,

Another question: I am getting different information from many sources on the amount of songs Gurney wrote and how many were published. Some say: 90 published and 300 written, others; 82 published and 200 unpublished. Can you shed some light on this?

Thanks
October 6, 2013

Another quick one:

To our knowledge (as determined by my catalogue of musical works), Gurney wrote 330 songs. c.90 of these 330 are published (soon to be 104).

There are c.200 songs extant in manuscript that are unpublished (as calculated by Ian Venables). The inequality in the calculations (approx total 290 published and unpublished) is because a number of songs are known to have existed but we no longer have any manuscript material for those songs. They are therefore unpublished and can never be published unless a manuscript turns up. I can't recall whether extant fragments are included in Ian's calculated 200.

Does that make sense?

I'll get to your others probably tomorrow afternoon.
Best wishes,
Philip

November 18, 2013

Hi Philip,
I want to also ask these questions:
-How did Gurney deal with song form?
-How did he use harmony?
-How did he treat rhythm?
-What was his overall compositional style?
Thanks so much!
Ridley

August 2, 2014

Going back through my emails, I see that there are a few containing in depth questions to which I just haven't had the time to reply, for which I am very sorry. The questions regarding compositional style, use of harmony, rhythm and the like, require a book or two to discuss fully. One thing which I have been exploring, and will be doing so some more in the coming few years whilst writing my book (I have just been appointed to a post which is going to allow me finally to do this), is that Gurney was that oddly dichotomous thing: a Teutonic impressionist. An extraordinary marriage of the post-Brahms/Schumann manner with the deftness and diffuseness of the impressionist school. It is evident in his writings, his occasional directions as to his performances and in his score directions, and in the music itself, some of which makes so much more sense when treated with the impressionist mind-set and touch. As I say, I will be expanding upon this in the coming few years, but it seems to me that this is the most important aspect of Gurney's work, and is the one aspect of his work that has been wholly overlooked, to the detriment of the music. Works such as A Gloucestershire Rhapsody, much frowned upon by many in Gurney circles, has impressionistic episodes which people just haven't understood.

Sincere apologies once again for not having been a reliable correspondent, but with all good wishes nonetheless,
Philip
October 5, 2014

Dear Ridley,

Many thanks for your emails. This is a hasty response for now - I should have a little time early next week to respond properly.

In short: I undertook what work I had time for on the *Western Playland* edition, preparing a performing version which assimilated various corrections arising from my consultation of all of the sources. One song proved difficult, and I reverted to the original manuscript version of this, and I do need to revisit this, both musically and ethically. It was performed in June and there are plans to record the edition at Easter. I am sure I can ply you with a copy when I have a moment to find the PDF on my machine. I blogged about the edition when I did it. I can't remember what I wrote, but it is somewhere at: http://theunknownregion.wordpress.com

Re. interview: I am not sure I will have much to say, but will gladly participate in such an interview if it might be of some use!

I think that answers things briefly. I'll look more carefully when I can, and also send the PDF of the score.

Best wishes,

Philip

RE: Letter of permission for monogram

1 message

keith@stainer.co.uk <keith@stainer.co.uk> Thu, Jul 3, 2014 at 9:14 AM
Reply-To: keith@stainer.co.uk
To: Ridley Chauvin <ridley.chauvin@morgan.edu>

July 3, 2014

Dear Ridley,

Thank you for your email.

We are delighted to grant permission for the use of excerpts from *The Western Playland*. However, please acknowledge Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, England somewhere in the monogram.

May we take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your doctorate.

Keith

Keith Wakefield
Joint Managing Director
Stainer & Bell Ltd
March 3, 2015

Hello Ridley,

Yes, of course you have my permission to use our email interviews in your monograph.
Pam
VITA

Voice teacher and baritone Ridley Chauvin is one of today’s most sought after vocal instructors. A graduate of The New England Conservatory of Music, The Manhattan School of Music, The Tanglewood Music Center, and Louisiana State University, he has studied voice with some of the leading vocal pedagogues in the United States, including Helen Hodam, Phyllis Curtin, Dr. William Riley, Elena Nikolaidi, Edward Zambara, Edith Bers and Dennis Jesse. He has also coached repertoire with Nico Castel, head diction coach of The Metropolitan Opera, and Margo Garrett, head of accompanying at The Juilliard School.

As a part of his recent doctoral work at Louisiana State University, Chauvin had the opportunity to complete intensive studies in vocal pedagogy and voice science, as well as undertake in-depth research into the life and works of Ivor Gurney. Mr. Chauvin’s final monograph/dissertation is on The Western Playland (and of Sorrow) a song cycle for baritone and piano by Ivor Gurney.

Ridley Chauvin is currently an assistant professor of voice, tenure-track, at Morgan State University where he teaches: applied voice, advanced lyric diction and advanced vocal pedagogy.