Flowers of the Great War
## The Complete Works of Frederick Septimus Kelly (1881-1916)

1. **It Is Not Dawn Till You Awake**<sup>*</sup>  
   (Hunter’s Inn, Heddon’s Mouth, Devon, 6 April 1901)  3’45  
   Louise Page *soprano*,  
   Alan Hicks *piano*

2. **In May**<sup>*</sup> *(To My Mother)* (Eton, 1895)  3’03  
   Tamara-Anna Cislowska *piano*

3. **A Dirge**<sup>*</sup> (Eton, summer, 1899)  0’59

4. **The Isle**<sup>*</sup> (Eton, summer 1899)  1’38

5. **Break, Break, Break**<sup>*</sup> (SS Rome, August 1899)  2’44  
   Tamara-Anna Cislowska *piano*

6. **Crossing the Bar**<sup>*</sup> (Glanyarrah, Double Bay, Sydney, 14 November 1899)  2’31

7. **One Word Is Too Often Profaned**<sup>*</sup>  
   (Glanyarrah, Double Bay, Sydney, 14 November 1899)  1’45

8. **Aghadoe, op. 1 no. 2**<sup>*</sup> (1903)  6’04  
   Christina Wilson *mezzo-soprano*,  
   Alan Hicks *piano*

9. **Monograph No. 6 for piano**  
   (11 May 1913 – 4 May 1916)  1’43

10. **Monograph No. 9 for piano**  
    (1911 – 4 May 1916)  1’37

11. **Monograph No. 21 for piano**<sup>*</sup>  
    (11 May 1913 – 4 May 1916)  1’01  
    Tamara-Anna Cislowska *piano*

12. **The Widow Bird**<sup>*</sup> (Eton, summer 1899)  1’16

13. **March**<sup>*</sup>, No. 1 from Six Songs, Op. 6 (1910)  4’32

14. **The Daffodils**<sup>*</sup>, No. 6 from Six Songs, Op. 6 (Bisham Grange, Marlow, 15 October 1910)  4’36

15. **The Sage’s Dance**<sup>*</sup> (1910)  1’25

16. **Harvest Eve**<sup>*</sup> (34 Wimpole Street, London W1, April 8 1910)  2’32

17. **When the Lamp Is Shattered**<sup>*</sup>,  
    No. 3 from Six Songs, Op. 6 (1910–13)  3’29  
    Louise Page *soprano*,  
    Alan Hicks *piano*

18. **Monograph No. 5 for piano**<sup>*</sup>  
    (11 May 1913 – 4 May 1916)  1’42

19. **Monograph No. 19 for piano**<sup>*</sup>  
    (1911 – May 4 1916)  1’05

20. **Monograph No. 23 for piano**  
    (1911 – May 4 1916)  1’49  
    Tamara-Anna Cislowska *piano*

21. **Music, When Soft Voices Die**, No. 4 from Six Songs, Op. 6 (Bisham Grange, 13 April 1910)  2’15  
    Louise Page *soprano*,  
    Alan Hicks *piano*

22. **Shall I Compare Thee?** Op. 1 No. 1 (1901)  3’25

23. **Fulfilment**<sup>*</sup> (34 Wimpole Street, London W1, March 31 1910)  3’15  
    Christina Wilson *mezzo-soprano*,  
    Alan Hicks *piano*

24. **A Cycle of Lyrics, op. 4** (1907–08)  
    24. No. 1 *Lament*<sup>*</sup> (July 1907)  4’17
    25. No. 2 *Sea-Piece*<sup>*</sup> (January 1907)  3’22
    26. No. 3 *Idyl*<sup>*</sup> (December 1907)  3’50
    27. No. 4 *Caprice*<sup>*</sup> (January 1908)  2’23
    28. No. 5 *Choler*<sup>*</sup> (February 1908)  2’50
    29. No. 6 *Reminiscence*  
       (February 1908)  4’32  
       Tamara-Anna Cislowska *piano*

30. **To the Daisy**<sup>*</sup> (Bisham Grange, Sept. 4 1910)  2’13

31. **The Pride of Youth**<sup>*</sup>  
    (August 15, 1910, Bisham Grange, rev. Jan. 3 1915)  1’29

32. **The Cherry Tree**<sup>*</sup>, No. 5 from Six Songs, Op. 6 (87 Wimpole Street, London, 1 May 1913)  0’58  
    Louise Page *soprano*,  
    Alan Hicks *piano*

33. **Weep No More Sad Fountains**<sup>*</sup>  
    (Higher Combe, Haslemere, 21 March 1909)  5’02

34. **Mirrors**<sup>*</sup> (Bisham Grange, Marlow, 6 January 1910)  3’16

35. **The Summer is Ended**<sup>*</sup>  
    (1910? - premiered Balliol, November 23 1913)  2’44

36. **Away! The Moor is Dark Beneath the Moon**<sup>*</sup> (Bisham Grange, August 27 1910)  7’32  
    Christina Wilson *mezzo-soprano*,  
    Alan Hicks *piano*

37. **Monograph No. 22 for piano**<sup>*</sup>  
    (11 May 1913 – 4 May 1916)  n 5’29  
    Tamara-Anna Cislowska *piano*

38. **It Is Not Dawn Till You Awake**<sup>*</sup>  
    (Hunter’s Inn, Heddon’s Mouth, Devon, 6 April 1901)  3’57  
    Andrew Goodwin *tenor*,  
    Alan Hicks *piano*

*World-premiere recordings
A Race Against Time: Gallipoli and France, 1915–16

1. Elegy – In memoriam Rupert Brooke (Gallipoli, notated 29 June 1915, Alexandria) 9'09
   Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Johannes Fritzsch conductor

   The Gallipoli Sonata for violin and piano (Cape Helles, Gallipoli, Friday 31 December 1915)

2. I. Allegro non troppo 11'22
3. II. Adagio con moto 10'38
4. III. Ground: Allegro non troppo 6'43
   Christopher Latham violin,
   Caroline Almonte piano

5. Monograph No. 18 for piano
   (11 May 1913 – 4 May 1916) 2'17
6. Monograph No. 13 for piano
   (1911 – May 4 1916) 1'14
7. Monograph No. 24 for piano*
   (11 May 1913 – 4 May 1916) 1'40
   Tamara-Anna Cislowska piano

8. Green Grow the Rushes, Oh*
   (Traditional, arranged F.S. Kelly, 1914) 3'55
   Louise Page soprano, Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano, Andrew Goodwin tenor, Simon Lobelson baritone, Adrian Tamburini bass, Christopher Latham violin, Alan Hicks piano

9. The Somme Lament* arr. violin and piano (Mesnil, near Thiepval, 28 October 1916) 4'30
   Christopher Latham violin,
   Tamara-Anna Cislowska piano

10. Piano Sonata in F minor*
    (France, unfinished, 1916) 13'48
   11. Movement 2: Adagio 10'52
   12. Movement 3: Allegretto 1'07
   Tamara-Anna Cislowska piano

13. Has Anyone Here Seen Kelly?
    (Music and lyrics by C.W. Murphy & Will Letters) 1'45
    Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano,
    Tamara-Anna Cislowska piano

*World-premiere recordings
Youth, Genius and Loss

Frederick Septimus Kelly is Australia’s greatest cultural loss of the First World War. Born in Sydney in 1881, he was the greatest amateur rower of the period, a brilliant pianist and a composer of true genius.

To give a clear comparison, if Ralph Vaughan Williams had also died at the age of 35, their musical output would be an almost exact match in quality and quantity, but with Kelly writing more piano works, and Vaughan Williams writing more chamber works. It seems impossible that such a significant talent could still be largely unknown in the country of his birth.

The person who knew Sep best was his brother Bertie Kelly, an amateur violinist who had studied with Joseph Joachim.

To the unobservant, all babies seem alike, but nothing is more remarkable than the very definite way an individual asserts its true nature from birth. My brother Sep was an excellent example.

As the youngest member of a musical family, he soon decided to try to copy his elders. I can remember him as a baby climbing onto a music stool and imitating the actions of a pianist. This became his favourite pastime. For a while Sep was limited to what he could create with his small closed fist, but clearly was not satisfied. To the astonishment of his family he rapidly succeeded in playing what he wanted. He seemed to pass in one bound from the stage of a boisterous child using the piano as a toy, to that of a miniature musician.

I cannot remember him ever learning the piano. He just seemed to play it as a duck suddenly finds it can swim. From the very beginning his performances were pleasant to listen to; they soon became a source of delight and astonishment to all our friends.

Sep did not take his music or anything else at all seriously. He played because he loved it. He practised because he wanted to play things. At the age of eight Sep had a considerable repertoire. He learnt things by heart with astonishing rapidity – he seemed to find it irksome to read music and much preferred to play without it, entering into the spirit of the music instantaneously.

Sep’s nature was such that he readily made warm friendships. Even as a 12-year-old Australian arriving as a complete stranger at Eton, he soon found his feet. His vitality and spontaneous merriment seemed to win him friends and his music brought him to prominence from the start. He had a piano in his room and even the most unmusical seemed to tolerate his constant playing. He made up his mind from the beginning that he would explore music as his profession.

In Paris he played for the famous piano...
teacher Antoine Marmontel, Chopin’s last surviving pupil. The old man listened with evident interest and pleasure to Sep’s playing. He sat close to the piano murmuring ‘Bien, bien,’ under his breath, showing his satisfaction with the young boy’s interpretation of the music. Marmontel declared afterwards that Sep had exactly the right spirit in all Chopin’s works. Meetings like this took place wherever we went.

Sep’s introduction to rowing was through being a cox of one of the boats at Eton. He had always loved the water. However his eventual celebrity as an oarsman put many obstacles in the way of his success as a musician. The public thought he was an athlete dabbling in music, rather than the other way round.

Kelly’s idyllic childhood would come to a quick end with the death of his father Thomas Kelly in 1901 and mother Mary the following year. Sep was 21. This great shock can be seen in the hollowness in his eyes which caused him to hate being photographed. In the very few mature photographs that exist, his eyes are marked by a shocking blankness born of deep world weariness. It is the face of the genius boy saddened and wary. He buckled academically under the weight of this grief, and only just passed his degree at Oxford.

His songs from this time are miniature elegies that speak of death and dying.

Germany

At Eton College, Sep studied piano under Gustav Morsch, who had played viola under Wagner at Bayreuth and at the premiere of some of his operas. He would have undoubtedly told Kelly that the Frankfurt Conservatory, founded by Clara Schumann, was the finest place in the world to study music. Sep spent five years studying piano and composition there, along with such other composer-pianists as Percy Grainger, Cyril Scott and Roger Quilter. During this period he began a diary, which documents his development as pianist and composer, until the end of his life.

Wednesday 4 December 1907 Frankfurt

I read about 70 pages of Professor Hamer’s Talks on Psychology and Life’s Ideals. I was particularly struck by a passage ‘if only you care enough for a result, you will almost certainly attain it.’ I thereupon decided to be a great player and a great composer.

Monday 17 February 1908 Frankfurt

At 4pm I went to Andre’s shop and asked if I might hear the (reproducing) Mignon piano … and I sat there for half an hour to the playing of Paderewski, Busoni and d’Albert. I came away bursting with ambition to become a great player and have my playing recorded.

Tuesday March 3 1908 Frankfurt

At 6pm I went to the evening concert at the Conservatorium, where Franzen and I gave the first performance of my Theme, Variations and Fugue for two pianos. It was greeted with a good deal of applause. Afterwards at lunch Lulu Engesser brought in an absurd little wooden boat with a wooden figure in it which rowed when wound up by clockwork and which was placed in front of me in full rowing action. The effect was instantaneous and we all laughed ourselves silly. On the boat was inscribed in pencil: “To Mr Kelly – in eternal memory – whoever can command soundwaves, he is certainly a great man”.

Kelly’s final performance in Frankfurt came on Sunday 31 May 1908. It was a performance of Brahms’s Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major, and also the premiere of his own orchestral Suite in E-flat major.

I sat by myself while my Suite was being played and was much gratified by its going twice as well as it ever did in the rehearsals. It had a much greater success than I anticipated and I had to bow twice afterwards.

When it came time for the Brahms Concerto I was not the least nervous. The whole work went better than it had done in any of the rehearsals and all the difficult passages came off well. I thoroughly enjoyed playing it and played with complete ease and freedom.

There was a good deal of applause after each movement and at the end I was recalled twice. Professor Engesser was delighted with the way it had gone and at dinner that night his wife left me a letter which read,

– from Johannes Brahms, No. 1 Paradise Lane, Valhalla,
Dear Colleague,

Many thanks for playing my concerto so beautifully. I had great joy listening to you from above.
Greetings Johannes Brahms
After saying goodbye to all I went home and spent a dreary two hours packing.

The next day Kelly would leave his studies in Frankfurt behind and return to live with his sister Maisie near Henley, to start to train for the London 1908 Olympic Games.

The Olympics

Friday 31 July 1908, Henley
I hardly slept a wink the whole night in anticipation of having to race the Belgians in the Olympic finals of the 8s and when we assembled for our morning run it appeared nearly everyone had had a sleepless night. We went out for a warmup and then hung around the club in misery. We knew we should win but we wanted to establish once and for ever the dominance of our British style of rowing over theirs.

After ten strokes we were travelling faster than we had ever done and we began steadily to draw ahead. We had never settled down so well as we did in this race and our stroke was beautifully long and together for the whole of the way. The Belgians had a grande attaque at the top of the island but made no impression upon us and indeed we increased our lead to a little over half a length, and it became evident that every stroke, very gradually, increased our lead.

Wanting to win by a comfortable margin, we had decided before the race to go as hard as we could the whole way. The Belgians had a lookout for changes during my absence of ten years and was struck by the number of houses on Middle Harbour, Watson’s Bay and Point Piper. We reached Circular Quay about 9 45am and my brother Bertie was on the wharf to greet me. We drove to Double Bay, where we spent the afternoon. I had sent my Steinway out from London and it was already ensconced in Glenyarrah [the family home]. After tea I played through my Cycle of Lyrics but of course was entirely out of practice.

Saturday 11 February 1911, Glenyarrah, Double Bay, Sydney
There was a full moon after dinner and I walked about the ground in front of the house and by the water’s edge composing and considering programs for the upcoming piano recitals I will give in Sydney.

Thursday 8 June 1911, Glenyarrah, Double Bay, Sydney
I am beginning to be alarmed at the close proximity of my concerts. I have never undertaken such a large task as a series of three piano recitals before and as about a third of the things are new to me I am not feeling particularly bright at the prospect.

Kelly would appear as soloist with the Sydney Symphony in Beethoven’s Fourth Piano Concerto in an all-Beethoven program on Friday 16 June 1911, in the Sydney Town Hall. The review in the Bulletin read, ‘The orchestra had the help of F.S. Kelly, a returned Australian, in a Beethoven concerto for piano and orchestra. This was his first appearance in Sydney after many European successes; and his brilliant performance justified a remarkable outburst of enthusiasm, though Beethoven worshippers gasped at the introduction of cadenzas in a composition of the master!’

He also played three enormous piano recitals in ten days in the since demolished St James Hall, near St James Church in King Street, including the then ‘modern’ composers Scriabin and Debussy, as well his own Studies and his Cycle of Lyrics. He also conducted a chamber orchestra concert there, consisting of the Grieg Holberg Suite, Mozart’s Eine kleine Nachtmusik and his own Serenade for Flute, Harp, Horn and Strings, before finishing with two chamber recitals, the first of which included the premiere of his masterful String Trio.

Kelly in London
On his return to London Kelly threw himself into concertising with customary gusto, performing recitals and appearing as soloist with the London Symphony and the Queen’s Hall Orchestra. He was the Artistic Director of London’s Classical Concert Society, a similar (but smaller) organisation to Musica Viva Australia today, and often appeared in recital with the cellist Pablo Casals.

In March of 1909 Kelly had been asked to introduce to London Jelly and Adila d’Arányi, two Hungarian violin virtuoso sisters. Kelly and Jelly made a powerful musical connection and performed together as often as they could during this period, Kelly even conducting her concerto performances and finally forming a piano trio with her and Casals. He composed a number of very fine songs during this period and also began his cycle of 24 Monographs for solo piano.

Most of Kelly’s songs were written for Maisie Kelly, Sep’s beloved sister who he lived with at Bisham Grange on the
weekends, on the border of the Thames, where Kelly loved to row. She called him ‘Bootface’ and clearly loved him. While the death of both parents and their brother Carleton had been a terrible blow to endure, it also meant that as a result of the division of the family’s significant estate, both Sep and Maisie were able to pursue their interests without any concerns about making a living. Like Kelly, Maisie was a fine pianist and also a singer who Sep would use to try out his new compositions. He constantly appealed to her to take her singing seriously and turn professional but she seemed more interested in the goings-on of the London social scene. He would dedicate his first published song, *Shall I Compare Thee?* (op. 1 no. 1), to her.

After Sep’s death, it was Maisie who would receive his pack containing his kit and all his belongings. She could not bring herself to open it for almost 20 years.

The Outbreak of War

When war broke out in 1914, Kelly was in London. He rushed to sign up and was soon commissioned as an officer in Churchill’s Royal Naval Division (RND), an infantry division made up of Royal Navy and Royal Marine reservists and volunteers who were not needed for service at sea. In the RND he became a member of the famous ‘Latin Club’, a group of officers of the Hood Battalion which included the poet Rupert Brooke, the composer William Denis Browne, the British Prime Minister’s second son Arthur ‘Ock’ Asquith, Lord Ribblesdale’s son Charles Lister, Patrick Shaw Stewart, a great Classics scholar, fluent in Ottoman Turkish, who at 25 was already a director of the Barings Bank, and finally the New Zealand adventurer Bernard Freyberg, later commander of the NZ forces in WW2 and the first NZ-born Governor General of that country. The war would take all of them but Asquith, who lost his leg, and Freyberg, who was wounded seven times, eventually dying from one of those wounds when it ruptured almost 50 years later. They would call Kelly ‘Cleg’, after the adventurous hero of the popular novel *Cleg Kelly: Arab of the City* by Samuel Rutherford Crockett.

Before leaving for Gallipoli, Kelly wrote:

**Sunday 3 January 1915, Bisham Grange**

For an hour and three quarters before dinner I looked through most of my recent unpublished songs and revised some passages before going to bed. In view of going to the front I am somewhat conscious of the spirit of Keats’ sonnet:

> When I have fears that I may cease to be
>
> Before my pen has glean’d my teeming brain
>
> and am anxious to leave my unpublished work as far as possible ready for the press...

Unfortunately there is no time for any of the works which I have not yet set on paper – the Symphony in E major, the Lyric Phantasy (for large orchestra), the F minor Piano Sonata, the Aubade for flute with accompaniment of strings, horn bassoon and harp, a String Quartet in E minor and about a dozen songs.

Sep composed his music in his head without referring to a piano, polishing the works until they were perfect, before he committed them to paper. There are very few corrections in his mature works, and very few drafts. As with Mozart, the pieces seem to come into being perfectly formed, as if they had always existed.

Between January 3, 1915 and November 13, 1916, there would not be enough time to write down all those works, and record them for history. They live now only as titles, the music dying with the bullet that cleaved his ‘teeming brain’.

The Loneliness of F.S. Kelly

It is not dawn till you awake
and shew your radiant eyes:
It is not day, though day may break,
til sun, like you, arise.

In vain the lark shall pierce the sky
to find the heav’n of blue:
There is no blue but in your eye,
there is no heav’n but you.

It is not dusk while yet you keep
those eyelids open wide...
There is no light where you are far,
there is no love but you!

*R.T. Warner*

In his beautiful song *It Is Not Dawn Till You Awake*, to words by his Eton schoolfriend, we are left wondering who is the ‘you’ that Kelly is writing about. Kelly, in his diaries, is surrounded by people and yet each night seems to sleep alone. There is no mention of anyone for whom he felt this deeply, and one wonders if he was terribly lonely, or if there was a part of his life that he kept secret even from his diaries. Or else, in his personal race against time, did his utterly single-minded focus on rowing, piano playing and composing displace any chance of having an intimately close companion in his life?

There is no doubt that Kelly loved Jelly d’Arányi’s playing, and that she loved him. She wished that he was her fiancé and later told people that he was, although that might have been a surprise to Sep. After his death she told of how he came to say goodbye to her. She heard him playing the opening tune of the violin sonata he had written for her, coming from afar, as if over a large
Flowers of the Great War

The Death of Rupert Brooke

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there’s some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England.

From The Soldier by Rupert Brooke
(1887–1915)

After the Hood Battalion left England, the friendship between Kelly and Rupert Brooke deepened. Kelly’s diary records frequent references to their being together on group outings on leave, nights spent together at the dinner table, of W. Denis Browne and Kelly entertaining their fellow officers with Brooke at the fore, and, towards the end, accounts of Brooke coming alone to Kelly’s cabin to read his poems and to discuss literature.

What happened next, however, rocked the Latin Club to their core.

Friday 23 April 1915, SS Grantully Castle, Skyros

The events of today have made a deep and grave impression on me. Rupert Brooke died suddenly from infection, on board the French hospital ship at 4.45pm and, in view of the ship’s orders to sail at 5am the following morning due to the upcoming Gallipoli landings, arrangements were at once made to bury him on the island he loved so well. It was about a mile from the shore to the grove over very difficult stony ground and the petty officers who bore the coffin were obliged to go very slowly. We reached the grove at 10.45pm where in the light of a clouded half-moon the burial service was read... It was a most moving experience. The olive trees in the narrow valley and the scent of the wild sage gave a strong classical tone, almost pagan, which was so in harmony with the poet we were burying that to some of us the Christian ceremony seemed out of keeping. When all others had gone, Lt Commander Bernard Freyberg, Ock Asquith, Charles Lister, Denis Browne and I covered the grave with stones and as many pieces of marble as we could find... The body lies looking down the valley towards the harbour and, from behind, an
olive tree bends itself over the grave as though sheltering it from the sun and rain. No more fitting resting place for a poet could be found than this small grove, and it seems as though the gods had jealously snatched him away to enrich this scented island. For the whole day I was oppressed with the sense of loss, but when the officers and men had gone and when at last the five of us, his friends, took a last look in silence – then the sense of tragedy gave place to a sense of passionless beauty, engendered both by the poet and the place.

**Friday 21 May 1915, Cape Helles, Gallipoli**

There is a very active body of snipers somewhere up by the firing line and the whole of the afternoon bullets have been whistling continuously over my dug-out. Ever since the day of Rupert Brooke’s death, I have been composing an elegy for string orchestra, the ideas of which are coloured by the surroundings of his grave and circumstances of his death. Today I felt my way right through to the end of it, though of course, much still has to take on definite shape. The modal character of the music seems to be suggested by the Greek surroundings as well as Rupert’s character, some passagework by the rustling of the olive tree which bends over his grave. It should work out to some nine minutes in performance.

On June 4 1915, Kelly was wounded in the foot and was evacuated to Alexandria where he was able to buy manuscript paper and finally notate the Elegy.

**Tuesday 29 June 1915, Majestic Hotel, Alexandria**

I worked at my Elegy for string orchestra in the morning and from 2.45 until 4.45 p.m., by which time I finished filling in the phrasing and marks of expression. It is so entirely bound up with Rupert Brooke and the circumstances of his burial that in a sense I feel myself the chronicler of its ideas rather than the composer. As we slowly made our way behind the coffin to the olive grove a particular phrase constantly recurred to my mind. The work is a true portrayal of my feelings on that night and the passionless simplicity of the surroundings with occasionally a revealing of my personal anguish.

**Kelly at Gallipoli**

Following Kelly’s return to the peninsula on July 11, he spent the remainder of the summer maintaining the RND’s defensive positions. At the end of August, he began work on a violin sonata for Jelly d’Arányi. Jelly had long been requesting a concerto, but Kelly wrote to her from Gallipoli to say he had written a violin sonata for her instead.

I began composing it about three and a half months ago and I have now about half of it written down...You must not expect shell and rifle fire in it! It is rather a contrast to all that, being somewhat idyllic.

**Monday 4 October 1915, Hood Battalion, Cape Helles, Gallipoli**

Two of our Officers provided a great luxury for dinner in the form of seven fish which they had caught by throwing hand grenades into the sea. We now have a cook who is quite the artist. I felt quite proud of the menu - soup, fried fish, fried steak and onions, jelly and stewed prunes and savoury relish on toast, Vermouth, French red wine, beer, orange curaçao and coffee! I was rather hung up with the first movement of my violin sonata and had to give the matter some hard thought to get the details right.

**Sunday 28 November 1915, RND Winter camp just north of X Beach, near Tekke Burnu**

I was obliged to leave my dugout about 3 a.m. when I found it was sleeting. The north wind blew a gale all day and it was bitterly cold. I worked a little at the slow movement of my G major violin sonata. I heard several days later that one of these nights went down to 20 degrees below freezing.

**Thursday 16 December 1915, RND Winter camp just north of X Beach, near Tekke Burnu**

I began the morning with a bathe in the beach just below the camp. I wrote several letters and before dinner I did a little work at my G major violin sonata (2nd movement). I very nearly came to an end at 10 a.m. I was talking with Heald when a shell pitched in a dugout... about 35 yards away. We went along to lend assistance to a few men who were wounded and, as we stood there, a second shell exploded a couple of yards away from me, blasting me with stones and earth – which stung like blazes. By chance, I only received a scratch on my neck.

**Sunday 19 December 1915, new camp in French area, North East of Sedd el Bahr**

I heard that they had carried out a successful evacuation of Suvla last night, and that Anzac was to be evacuated tonight. There is much speculation as to whether we shall evacuate this end of the Peninsula. Meanwhile I worked again on the slow movement of my Violin Sonata after tea.

**Tuesday 21 December 1915, new camp in French area, North East of Sedd el Bahr**

A south wind had sprung up during the night and it was blowing pretty hard all the morning. Rain came about midday and a very heavy shower flooded the uncovered trenches. I spent nearly my whole day writing down the ground bass for the last movement of my G major Violin Sonata.

**Friday 31 December 1915, rest camp, North of Sedd el Bahr**

Every sign seems to point to an evacuation including suspicious notices coming round as to all Officers’ gear having to be ready at a moment’s notice.

I spent the morning and afternoon working at the last movement of my G major Violin Sonata and had the satisfaction of finishing it at tea time. It has been rather a race against time as I was anxious to get it packed up and sent off with my gear. I am not displeased with the violin sonata. I am still serving my apprenticeship in sonata form but in lyric form I feel I have every now and then said something good and original, such as my Monographs in E-flat major (no. 19), B minor (no. 22) and C minor (no. 24). I had no time to put in phrasing nor expression marks and the indications of tempo are of the scantiest.
I am filled with forebodings as to our safety if we really are carrying out an evacuation. A really bad spell of weather might mean a disaster. As I write the wind is increasing.

The Island of Serenity

After their evacuation from Gallipoli, Kelly and the Royal Naval Division were moved to the island of Tenedos (in Turkish, Bozcaada) seven nautical miles from the Turkish mainland, where he spent a fairly blissful and peaceful month playing on a rented piano, including reading through his Violin Sonata in G major for the first time from the music, which left him feeling well satisfied with its form.

Saturday 5 February 1916. Hood Battalion, Paraskevi camp, Tenedos

It was a wet day and I played for about an hour or more in the morning in the headquarters bell tent a number of pieces, including my Monographs Nos. 13 and 24.

Sunday 6 February 1916. Hood Battalion, Paraskevi Camp, Tenedos

Our camp promises to be very comfortable. The huts are well sheltered in a little valley which leads in a few hundred yards down to a beach where we can bathe when the weather becomes warmer. In addition to our Officers’ messes we have a room which will do for a wardroom in which we are placing the piano. There are trees dotted about the fountain, and buildings and the sound of the running water and the shade should make it very delightful when the weather becomes hot. There was a wedding going on in Tenedos and a very pretty effect was made by a number of the guests joining hands and moving round in a circle. I played among other things Beethoven’s Sonata in A-flat major, op. 26, Chopin’s Barcarolle, and my Monographs Nos. 13 to 18 and Waltz Pageant after dinner.

Saturday 19 February 1916. Hood Battalion, Paraskevi Camp, Tenedos

I found my first opportunity for using the booklets of folk songs which I had printed a year ago. Heald and I collected 15 men from B company at 3.15pm and we sang though Green Grow the Rushes, Oh! three times.

Sep’s life had always been guided by a deep faith. Born into a family of wealthy Irish-Australian Anglicans, he had struggled with whether being rich would make it impossible for him be a true Christian, and eagerly read and discussed the latest theosophical works. During the war, Sep had encouraged his men to sing English folk songs, and the Hood Battalion adopted Green Grow the Rushes, Oh! as their anthem, which they sang with great gusto. It is a Christmas Carol full of veiled references to God and angels. It is a telling choice by soldiers, who knew what was coming, and the odds of their survival.

Kelly in the Somme

Given two months leave in London, Kelly took full advantage of the time to present his recent compositions at such distinguished places as 10 Downing Street and to all the leading musicians still left in London. Then in May 1916, the RND was moved to France and stationed in the Souchez sector where Kelly was put to work improving the Hood Battalion band, famously performing Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture so that the climax coincided with a dawn artillery barrage. In October the RND was moved over to the Somme for the big push, the final battle of Beaumont-Hamel.

Monday 16 October 1916. Hood Battalion, Ancre sector, The Somme, France

We are posted half-way between Hamel and St. Pierre Divion. Across the river is Thiepval and the high ground on
which both sides send a great many shells. There is about three hundred and fifty yards of low-lying wooded ground between me and the rising ground on the further side of the Ancre where the river has two channels, supplying the water for numerous pretty pools.

The German line is about three hundred and fifty yards in front of us.

Wednesday 18 October 1916. Hood Battalion, Ancre sector, north-east of Hamel

There was a Company Commanders’ meeting at 10 a.m. at which information about the German lines in front of us, culled from the experience of some Officers who had managed to survive the last advance, was imparted to us. I spent an hour and a half after dinner reading the notes as to enemy dispositions, dugouts, machine gun positions, etc. on our front and flanks and looking at the map references. It was not reassuring reading.

Thursday 26 October 1916. Hood Battalion, Mesnil

I set out again with some men at 10.30 a.m. to try to see Beaucourt and the line of our forthcoming push. We walked up the hollow behind Thiepval Wood until we got on to the high ground north of it. From here we walked over the shell holes till we got into the front line and were rewarded with an excellent view of our objective. The land up there is an indescribable scene of desolation. For acres and acres (as far as one could see) there was no sign of vegetable life just a sea of lacerated earth, with here and there the traces of a former trench system. The presence of these former communication trenches was confirmed by the corpses – some of them horribly mangled and with glazed eyes, others trodden almost out of sight into the mud.

Though I was quite callous – as everyone appears to be at the front – I was haunted by the sense of terrible tragedy – the triumph of death and destruction over life. Why is it that such a terrible scene does not touch the depths within me the way a great poet would do? It seems Art goes deeper than reality.

There were no trenches to speak of – just tracks from shell hole to shell hole. The ground was newly won and no one knew the way about the featureless wilderness, though I guess we must have been near the famous Schwaben Redoubt. I cut my finger badly on a jagged piece of shell, but luckily found some iodine in my pocket.

As we returning they were shelling Mesnil and as we came down the river two big shells pitched in the water and made lovely fountains. The river marshes are beautiful in spite of the desolation, and are filled with moor hens.

Lt Commander Bernard Freyberg wrote:

Kelly and his fellow officers are situated in a small cellar of a bombed-out house – indeed the whole town of Mesnil has been reduced to rubble by shell fire and in this basement, only a few feet square, they cook, eat and sleep – the staircase serving the dual role of chimney and entrance. Mesnil is in the middle of our artillery line so guns of all calibres stand wheel to wheel around us. Each morning in the lead up to X-day starts with a hurricane bombardment at dawn, so there is no need for reveille. When the bombardment opens up, all those who aren’t already about, creep from their holes in the ground and stand in the misty darkness watching the fury of the scene all around them. The guns deafen us, chucking their shrieking projectiles just clear of our heads. We all stand with our watches in our hands, counting the time it takes the German gunners to answer our bombardment – that will be the exact amount of time we will have to cross no man’s land.

Kelly’s diary on 25 October 1916 records:

We live amongst the ruins of Mesnil in great discomfort, though the cellar in which we sleep is safe and dry and not so uncomfortable as the remains of the ground floor room, which is open to the rain, where we sit and eat.

In the following days Kelly wrote out the harp part for his Elegy for Rupert Brooke, taking to heart Leonard Borwick’s suggestion that it might ‘sweeten the solemnity without detracting from the elegiac character’ of the work. He also composed his last completed work, a slow Lament, which would have been the theme for a planned set of orchestral variations. The manuscript, which contains only the introduction and theme, written in short score for piano, with some details of orchestration, is marked as being completed ‘October 28th 1916 in Mesnil, near Thiepval’.

The score is in his perfect handwriting, containing not a single correction or error, not a single blemish, neither from dirt nor soot. It seems impossibly clean and new.

The Death of Kelly

Lt J.H. Bentham, Kelly’s number 2, wrote on 12 November 1916, the day
Flowers of the Great War

before the attack on Beaumont-Hamel:

Kelly made a speech and we all exchanged cheques for 5 pounds as a joke. The idea being that those who survived cashed the cheques of those who were killed. Needless to say no cheques were cashed but were instead passed on to the next of kin as the last document signed by the deceased. Kelly seemed insistent that he would not survive.

Bernard Freyberg wrote about the last fifteen minutes before they left their trenches on 13 November 1916:

On the extreme right I stopped to talk to Kelly who was in command of B company. We had been daily companions for the last two years and he, Asquith, Edgerton and I were the sole survivors of the Battalion who left Avonmouth for Gallipoli in February 1915. I wanted to take both his hands and wish him ‘God speed’ but it somehow seemed too theatrical, so instead we talked awkwardly and synchronised our watches.

Our task in the battle was to capture the front line system, and as we advanced we passed the burning entrances of dugouts. These dugouts were elaborate, two-story affairs with electric lights and in one case a lift. It was in rushing a strong point at the entrance to one of these that Kelly was killed.

Owing to our heavy casualties, it was never known really how it all happened, but it appears that someone on Kelly’s left had missed a dugout entrance from which the enemy was starting to shoot.

The situation was critical. Unless the strong point was captured at once enemy machine guns would pop up everywhere. Hesitation would have endangered the success of the whole attack on our front.

Kelly, being an experienced soldier, knew this quite well, as he must have known the risk he was taking, when with the few men he had hastily gathered, he rushed the machine gun. A few men reached the position, but Kelly, with most of them, was killed at the moment of victory.

Of the 25 officers and 535 other ranks, 4 officers and 250 men answered roll call at the captured objective. Freyberg, wounded four times, won the Victoria Cross. Kelly’s surviving men, as a sign of respect, carried him back through No Man’s Land so he could be properly buried, and his body find safe rest. Sep’s grave is in Martinsart’s British Cemetery. His men are buried nearby in Hamel, where they fell.

Patrick Shaw Stewart, a rare Latin Club survivor, who would be killed in 1917, wrote to Freyberg saying:

I can’t tell you how sad I am about Sep. I got very attached to him at Gallipoli as I know you did. I admired him enormously for the way he militarised himself, quite against his nature, and the way he stuck to the Battalion. Do you remember how quaint we thought he was at first and how absolutely we all came round to him. How the men would try to make him laugh by singing, ‘Has Anyone Here Seen Kelly’.

Freyberg wrote back:

God how we miss Kelly – I remember him more vividly each day – he was a rare and beloved creature – I hope he misses us a little.

Epilogue

On the occasion of the centenary of F.S. Kelly’s death, the time has come for Australia, the country of his birth, to claim its son. We must come to realise just how immense his loss was to our culture. Our small population did not have composers to spare. Like so many countries, we paid an impossible price in the First World War. It is well past time for us to grieve for Kelly, to love him and miss him, finally, a little. All we have left is the chance to get to know him through his music, as Kelly foresaw when he quoted Callimachus in the foreword to his Elegy for Rupert Brooke:

‘Still your works live on, and Death, the universal snatcher, cannot lay his hand on them.’

“Still your works live on, and Death, the universal snatcher, cannot lay his hand on them.”
Flowers of the Great War

Frederick Septimus Kelly
Orchestral Works

CD1

1. **Elegy - In memoriam Rupert Brooke**
   - German Symphony*  
   - Allegro con brio  
   - Waltz  
   - Intermezzo  
   - Introduction and Fugue  
   - Scherzo*  
   - The Somme Lament (arr. Latham for orchestra)*  

CD2

1. **A Coin for the Ferryman** (originally Monograph 16, arr. Latham for brass & percussion)*  
   - Two Preludes*  
   - Christmas Prelude (arr. Latham for strings)  
   - Prelude No 2 (arr. Latham for clarinet and strings)  
   - Serenade for flute, harp, horn and strings  
   - Prelude  
   - Idyl  
   - Minuet  
   - Air and Variations  
   - Jig  

   - Douglas Mackie flute, Marshall McGuire harp, Geoff Lierse horn

2. **Songs of Love and Loss***  
   - It is Not Dawn Until You Awake (arr. Latham for voice and orch.)  

   - Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano

3. **Music, When Soft Voices Die, No. 4, Six Songs Op. 6 (arr. Latham for voice and orch.)**  
   - Andrew Goodwin tenor

   - Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano

5. **Crossing the Bar (arr. Latham for mezzo, tenor and orchestra)**  
   - Christina Wilson mezzo-soprano, Andrew Goodwin tenor

   - Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra / Benjamin Northey conductor
   - (Johannes Fritzsch conductor CD1 Track 1)

   - *First Recording

   - Recorded Feb. 6, 7 and 8, 2018 and Feb. 4, 5 and 6, 2019, in the Federation Concert Hall, Hobart, Tasmania
   - Veronika Vincze – recording engineer, editing
   - Toby Frost – recording engineer, Christopher Latham – producer

   - CD1 T rack 1

Ep Kelly, born in Sydney, Australia, in 1881, the son of a wealthy Irish businessman, was a very German kind of musician, trained by Germans both as a pianist and composer and also published by a German publisher, Schott. At the time of his death in November, 1916, while fighting the Germans in the Somme, he was also composing German-inspired art music in the basement of a bombed out house in the hamlet of Mesnil. On those last two pages, he was following on directly in the Germanic lineage of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Wagner. Essentially he had been a musical wunderkind: such a precocious talent that he had rapidly exhausted the available piano teachers in Sydney and was sent to boarding school with his brothers at Eton, where he would realise that very British ideal of excelling in both sport and the arts. He would start his rowing career alongside his advanced music training. His composition studies were with Dr Charles Harford Lloyd, a very prominent church musician in England, while his piano teacher at Eton was Gustav Morsch, an unusually well-rounded German musician. Sep’s brother, Bertie, recalled that he retained a warm friendship with them both, to the end of his life. Being only an assistant music-master, Morsch was never as well-known as Dr Lloyd, but he could play piano, violin and flute proficiently, was a passable cellist and organist, and was also an accomplished composer. A keen Wagnerian who had played viola under Wagner himself at Bayreuth, Morsch found himself out of sympathy with the British temperament, and his inability to fit into British musical society was exacerbated by the approach of the war. He almost certainly advised Kelly to study in Frankfurt because that was where Clara Schumann, wife of Robert, dearest love and finest performer of Johannes Brahms’s music, had taught until 1892.

After graduating from Eton, Kelly studied at Oxford, where he was tutored by Donald Francis Tovey, an expert on the music of Brahms and Schumann and a Joachim devotee. England at the time was Brahms mad. Joachim was an enormously popular and revered performer who gave many of the first performances of Brahms and Schumann in England, including with...
Clara Schumann. They would inspire a generation of English composers to go to study in Frankfurt, including a group called the ‘Frankfurt Gang’, consisting of Roger Quilter, Balfour Gardiner, Cyril Scott and Norman O’Neill, and two Australians, Percy Grainger and Frederick Septimus Kelly. Grainger would reject composing what he felt were classical pastiches of the old masters and developed instead a personal style, derived from folk and Nordic music, revering Grieg. Sep however would become an expert in German art music, on his way to discovering his own voice.

Kelly would spend five years (1903–1908) at Dr Hoch’s Conservatorium in Frankfurt, studying piano with Ernst Engesser and composition with Iwan Knorr. The director at the time, Bernhard Scholtz, had signed the Brahms-Joachim manifesto (1860) against the New Germans (Liszt and Wagner), and in 1883, teachers associated with Liszt resigned and founded the Raff Conservatorium instead. Therefore Frankfurt was seen generally as the bastion of conservatism in German music. Whether in fact it was good for Kelly to be trained in such a rigid and dogmatic hot house is doubtful. His own brother, Bertie, felt that it constrained Sep had never conducted before; Bassermann assisted him in the first movement, but soon left Kelly to his own devices. Kelly would later enjoy a very short career as a conductor, mainly replacing it with the current Waltz instead. The Scherzo has been recorded here instead as a stand-alone work. It has a particularly luminous trio.

We know from the diaries that on January 11, 1908, Kelly listened to an hour’s rehearsal by Professor Fritz Bassermann of his work, only to be suddenly told to conduct it himself. Sep had never conducted before; Bassermann assisted him in the first movement, but soon left Kelly to his own devices. Kelly would later enjoy a very short career as a conductor, mainly directing Jelly d’Arányi in her concerto performances. On March 28, 1908, he attended another rehearsal and on May 27 he ran through both the Brahms concerto and his own Suite, writing: ‘my Suite was played through afterwards and it sounds very well, especially the introduction to the fugue… The fugue would sound excellent if played well, but in addition to its being very difficult for the strings, the fact of (being) written in manuscript makes progress slower than it otherwise would be’. Bassermann kept taking the fugue too slow and he and Kelly would clash on May 29 when Bassermann took it at almost half of Kelly’s intended tempo.

At the concert itself on May 31, 1908, at the Frankfurt Conservatory, Kelly wrote: ‘I sat by myself while my suite was being played and was much gratified by its going twice as well as it ever did in the rehearsals… It had a much greater success than I anticipated and I had to bow twice afterwards.’

On his return to London, on November 22, 1908, he would play Dr Charles Harford Lloyd ‘bits of my symphony in G minor and the waltz out of my orchestral suite’. The Suite was also performed in Oxford, conducted by Hugh Allen, minus the Intermezzo, on January 29, 1913.

The work demonstrates Kelly’s absorption of the orchestral language of the German masters. What it lacks in originality it makes up for in technical fluency.

The first movement is exuberant, reminiscent of Brahms at his sunniest. Given it is his first foray into orchestration, it might be a little thicker and rounder than some of his later orchestrations, which are notable for their clarity, but it has a very pleasing bucolic quality and seems surprisingly confident.

The Waltz that follows echoes Mahler. It veers between two moods, the first a graceful minor waltz and a darker outburst of passion, which he then offsets with a sunny trio, as if all worries had left, before a return to the atmospheric waltz material.

The Intermezzo is perhaps the loveliest movement, blessed with a gorgeous tune that weaves through the work as an endlessly shifting thread of contrasting light and dark

‘German’ Symphony (originally titled Orchestral Suite in E-flat major)

Kelly would submerge himself completely into this intense technical training, writing such piano works as his Allegro de Concert, Op. 3 (dedicated to Percy Grainger) from 1907, his wonderful Cycle of Lyrics, Op. 4 for piano from 1908 (which he premiered in Sydney in 1911) his Waltz-pageant, Op. 2 (1905, rev. 1911) and his monumental Theme, Variations and Fugue, Op. 5 for two pianos (1907–11) which was dedicated to both of his teachers, Knorr and Engesser. His first attempt at a Symphony would be his Orchestral Suite in E-flat major, which he began work on in 1906. Concurrently he would work on a Symphony in G minor, which has not been found.

The Suite would be premiered in the first half of his 1908 “graduation” recital, the second half of which consisted of the Brahms 2nd Piano Concerto with Kelly as soloist. The Brahms 2nd Concerto is not scored for trombones, and it seems that Kelly decided to reduce the instrumentation of his Suite to match the Brahms in the interests of practicality, and discarded the original second movement, the Scherzo, whose first draft included parts for 3 trombones, replacing it with the current Waltz instead. The Scherzo has been recorded here instead as a stand-alone work. It has a particularly luminous trio.

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At the concert itself on May 31, 1908, at the Frankfurt Conservatory, Kelly wrote: ‘I sat by myself while my suite was being played and was much gratified by its going twice as well as it ever did in the rehearsals… It had a much greater success than I anticipated and I had to bow twice afterwards.’
instrumental colours. Even for Kelly, a gifted composer of songs and melodies, it is one of his most lovely tunes. A contrasting middle section lightens the texture before a cello solo brings us back to the opening melody which repeats. A lovely coda rounds off the work, which features particularly beautiful writing for strings that prefigures much of the writing in his famous 1915 work, the *Elegy for Rupert Brooke*.

The Fourth Movement is an astounding Fugue that is as brilliant as any of Mozart’s. It begins with a grand introduction, and then in sparkling form brings in voice after voice piling on counterpoint as if it were mere child’s play. It is breathtakingly perfect and wonderfully extravagant. If his time in Frankfurt had inhibited his piano playing and made him a more serious musician overall, in this movement one hears something of the happy, virtuoso child who had not yet lived through loss. It is truly joyful music rejoicing in the possibilities of sound and line. The first movement’s main theme recurs towards the end of the fugue, constituting a satisfying formal link that binds the overall work together.

One is left with the sense that one is witnessing the emergence of a natural symphonist. This musical path would be cruelly cut off at Kelly’s death at the age of 35. Indeed he had two other symphonies largely finished in his head. We know from his diaries that around that time he was composing his *Symphony in G minor*, which is mentioned over a number of pieces he had not had time to set on paper before leaving for the front. All of these pieces were left in mid-air – a bullet to his brain. Kelly felt drawn to him. On April 21, when Brooke was taken ill with a rapidly developing sepsis, Kelly wrote: *The pneumococcus germ has poisoned his blood through a bad lip and his face is all swollen up. I looked into his cabin before breakfast, when I found him very dazed, but I had no idea he was dangerously ill. The doctors made me realise, however, that it was far more than likely that he will not live and I felt very much depressed. I have had a foreboding that he is one of those, like Keats, Shelley and Schubert, who (are not able) to deliver their full message.*

Brooke’s friend, the composer W. Denis Browne, was with him when he died on April 23, 1915. Browne wrote: *I sat with Rupert. At 4 o’clock he became weaker, and at 4.46 he died, with the sun shining all round his cabin, and the cool sea-breeze blowing through the door and the shaded windows. No one could have wished for a quieter or a calmer end than in that lovely bay, shielded by the mountains and fragrant with sage and thyme.*

With the Gallipoli landing imminent, plans were immediately made to bury him on the island of Skyros, where Achilles had lived and Theseus was killed. Kelly recorded:

‘The events of today made a deep impression on me. Rupert Brooke died on board the French Hospital ship at 4.45 p.m. and in view of the ship’s orders to sail at 5 a.m. the following morning, arrangements were at once made to bury him on the island he loved so well....

Charles Lister had gone with W. Denis Browne and a working party to dig a grave in the olive grove which had served as a rendezvous for the 2nd Naval Brigade in the Divisional Field Day last Tuesday when Rupert began to sicken. It was about a mile from the shore to the grove, over very difficult stony ground and the petty officers who bore the coffin were obliged to go very slowly. We reached the grove at 10.45 p.m. where in the light of a clouded half-moon the burial service was read by the Chaplain of the 1st Naval Brigade and a firing party under command of Sub-Lieut P.H. Shaw Stewart accorded the body military honours.

Arthur ‘Ock’ Asquith, the British prime minister’s third son (who would lose his leg but be one of the few members of the Latin Club to survive the war) later described the scene to his sister Violet: ‘the moon thinly veiled: a man carrying a plain wooden cross and a lantern leading the way: some other lanterns glimmering: the scent of wild thyme’.

Kelly wrote: ‘It was a most moving experience. The small olive grove in the narrow valley and the scent of the wild sage gave a strong classic tone which was so in harmony with the poet we were burying that to some of us the Christian ceremony seemed out of keeping. When all the others had gone back to the boats Lieutenant Commander Freyberg – Rupert’s Company
Commander, Ock Asquith, Charles Lister, Denis Browne and I covered the grave with stones and as many pieces of marble as we could find... The body lies looking down the valley towards the harbour and from behind, an olive tree bends itself over the grave, as though sheltering it from the sun and rain. No more fitting resting place for a poet could be found than this small grove, and it seems as though the gods had jealously snatched him away to enrich this scented island.

For the whole day I was oppressed with the sense of loss but when the Officers and men had gone and when at last the five of us, his friends, had covered his grave with stones and took a last look in silence - then the sense of tragedy gave place to a sense of passionless beauty, engendered both by the poet and the place. On getting back to the ship I copied out the contents of his notebook before going to bed as a precaution lest the original should be lost in being sent to England.'

Kelly began work on the Elegy immediately, writing on May 21, 1915, while stationed near Cape Helles, at the Southern tip of the Gallipoli peninsula:

...There is a very active body of snipers somewhere up by the firing line who have a line on (our headquarters) and the whole of the afternoon bullets have been whistling continuously over my dug-out. I have ever since the day of Rupert Brooke's death been composing an elegy for string orchestra, the ideas of which are coloured by the surroundings of his grave and circumstances of his death. Today I felt my way right through to the end of it, though of course, much of it has still to take on definite shape. The modal character of the music seems to be suggested by the Greek surroundings as well as Rupert's character, some passagework by the rustling of the olive tree which bends over his grave. It should work out to some nine minutes in performance.

Lightly wounded in the heel, Kelly was sent to Alexandria to recuperate. There, he wrote:

Wednesday, June 16th, 1915. Hotel Majestic, Alexandria.

In the afternoon I played for an hour on a fairly good Bechstein Grand in a music shop called Hugo Hackh, where I had the conversation with the German lady on June 10th. She refused to make any charge. I played ... my new 'Elegy for Strings in Memoriam of Rupert Brooke'. It is practically complete except for the writing down. I had never played it before and was pleased with it.

Sunday, June 27th, 1915. Same Place.

I worked at my 'Elegy for String Orchestra in Memoriam of Rupert Brooke', all the morning and finished it by lunch time. I have still to put in the phrasing and expression marks.

Tuesday, June 29th, 1915. Majestic Hotel, Alexandria.

I worked at my 'Elegy for String Orchestra' in the morning and from 2.45 till 4.45 p.m., by which time I had finished filling in the phrasing and marks of expression. It seems to me to be an advance on my previous work as far as individuality of formed matter is concerned. It is so entirely bound up with Rupert Brooke and the circumstances of his burial that in a sense I feel myself the chronicler of its ideas rather than the composer. As we slowly made our way behind the coffin to the olive grove the opening phrase constantly recurred in my mind. The work is a true portrayal of my feelings on that night – the passionless simplicity of the surroundings with occasionally a note of personal anguish.

After he returned to London from Gallipoli, Kelly played the Elegy at 10 Downing St on March 7, 1916, and then later for the Gallipoli commander, General Sir Ian Hamilton. He also played it for his friend, the great pianist, Leonard Borwick, who suggested to consider adding a harp part. Seven months later, on October 28, 1916, the same day Kelly finished the Somme Lament, he also wrote to Borwick enclosing a manuscript fragment, the harp part for the Elegy, written out from memory, saying: 'The necessity of sweetening the Strings (i.e. by the addition of a Harp) has been giving me no peace, and I have at last found a spare hour or two in which to write out a part'.

Borwick, the most insightful critic of Kelly's work, found the Elegy moving and symbolic: 'The spirit is Greek that breathes from this remarkable work ... from the lofty and controlled expression throughout, and the skilfully conveyed suggestion of some rhythmic and ceremonial accompaniment for (our) eye of imagination to grasp. The music moves at a high level of inspiration, and reflects for us faithfully, I think, the composer's state of feeling at this crisis of his life. Suffering indeed under a tragic sense of loss, his mind was yet steeled, as it were, in the afterglow of his friendship and communion with the poet; and the solemn beauty and almost mythical appropriateness of the ceremony of the poet's laying-to-earth haunted him ... like some beautiful vision or dream.'

The harp fragment would affect Borwick even more than the Elegy; he wrote: 'The letter gives some account of the conditions under which he [Kelly] was living; but it is not the discomfort of the trenches that bears most hardly upon him, nor the stress and turmoil of life in the ruined village with high explosive and gas shells dropping all around. What “gave him no peace” was an impulse from within (him) towards the ideal - an overmastering concern that his utterance might not lack one last perfecting touch or fine shade of expression. The incident seems to me to set in a golden light one aspect of his character that I wished particularly to detach and emphasise, namely Loyalty. Loyalty - whether to his friend or his art - to principle, cause, or country - was the chief cornerstone of his character. For those who are left there remains but to cherish with answering loyalty and an abiding affection his memory and example.'

The Somme Lament

Kelly's final work, The Somme Lament, was completed on October 28, 1916, in Mesnil, France, next to Thiepval and Pozieres, a little over two weeks
before his death on November 13 in the final battle of the Somme campaign. Originally intended as the theme for a planned set of orchestral variations, he wrote this bleak chorale out in piano score with minimal orchestration instructions and with a tempo marking of Lento e lamentoso. He later added an introduction, which appears at the end of the two-page manuscript. In his letter to Edward Speyer on September 24, 1916, three months before his death, he writes: “I am somewhat busy ... I have lots of musical ... compositions waiting to be written – but there is no time to get them down on paper.”

Kelly and his fellow officers of the Royal Naval Division all knew that soon they would be going over the top in the last big push before winter set in. The battle of Beaumont-Hamel would be the final attempt to take the most heavily defended section of the German lines, a stronghold that had held out for five months ever since the first days of the Somme campaign. On October 18, Kelly wrote of “a Company Commanders’ meeting at 10 a.m. at which information about the German lines in front of us, culled from the experience of some Officers who had managed to survive the last advance, was imparted to us. I spent an hour and a half after dinner reading the notes as to enemy dispositions, dugouts, machine gun positions, etc. on our front and flanks and looking at the map references. It was not reassuring reading.”

Kelly described the scene in his diary on October 25, 1916; “We live amongst the ruins of Mesnil in great discomfort, though the cellar in which we sleep is safe and dry and not so uncomfortable as the remains of the ground floor room, which is open to the rain, where we sit and eat.” With full knowledge that most of the officers would be killed or wounded in the attack, Kelly took advantage in the lead-up to get his musical affairs in order.

On the same day he sent the harp part for the Elegy for Rupert Brooke, to Leonard Borwick, he finished writing down his final work, which is marked as being completed on ‘October 28th 1916 in Mesnil, near Thiepval’. The score is in his perfect handwriting, containing not a single correction or error, not a single blemish, neither from dirt nor soot. It seems impossibly clean and new.

Kelly was killed somewhere near the German third trench line. He had grabbed a few men to storm a machine gun post, and in the process was shot through the head and killed instantly. Of the 25 officers and 535 other ranks who began the attack, 4 officers and 250 men answered roll call at the captured objective. Freyberg, wounded four times, won the Victoria Cross. Kelly’s surviving men, as a sign of respect, carried him back through No Man’s Land so he could be properly buried, and his body find safe rest. His grave is in Martinsart’s British Cemetery. His men are buried nearby in Hamel, nearer to where they fell.

In this surprisingly muted and deeply sombre piece Kelly is writing his own funeral march. It mixes a palpable air of stark despair with a restrained nobility. The writing is notable for a highly chromatic passage just before the coda, where through a cycle of 5ths and various suspensions, increasingly chromatic chords are piled up until finally it all resolves into a simple restatement of the theme. The work is typical of Kelly, being both profound and understated at the same time. In it, he accepts that his “race against time” will be lost; all that remains is to face his inevitable end with dignity.

CD 2

A Coin for the Ferryman (originally Monograph 16 in D minor)
arr. Latham for brass and percussion

The year 1913 was the golden summer of Edwardian England. Kelly was increasingly busy with the Classical Concert Society, which would bring Ravel out from France that year for a rare program of his works in London. Kelly was attending a vast number of concerts, maintaining a very active social life, but was also absorbed in writing his major works for solo piano, his enormous set of 12 Studies and his delightful collection of 24 Monographs.

By May 10 Kelly was able to play over most of his 24 Monographs from memory for the pianist, singer and conductor, Georg Henschel. In July 1913 Kelly played the Monographs for his fellow Frankfurt student, composer Balfour Gardiner, at his home in Bisham, near Henley. He also made time to make a fair copy of his 12 Studies. The D minor Monograph was only finally written down on September 7, and probably completed the next day.

The D minor Monograph is no. 16 in the set, and is a most unexpected portent of doom. Morbid, heraldic, archaic and noble, it seems to describe a voyage across the river Styx, glowing darkly, like gold, in the reflection of the Ferryman’s fiery torchlight. It is an eerily prescient funeral call for a generation of men, who at the moment of its writing, were obliviously at play, in that last golden summer of pleasure.

The Two Organ Preludes
arr. Latham (No. 1 for strings, No. 2 for clarinet and strings)

Kelly wrote his two Preludes for organ after he joined up to the Royal Naval Division at the outbreak of the Great War – the first during training, and the second on the way to Gallipoli. There is something about both Preludes that utterly belies their origins in war. They are simply perfect gems.

Organ Prelude No. 1 on Good King Wenceslas

Sunday 20 December 1914 Greenlaw (England)

It was a lovely bright frosty day. The battalion parson came over from Duns to take the service at 10am. We had it in the church at the back of the Town Hall. I had to play organ – an organ with two manuals, pedals and about 12 stops – I went to the church at 930am to feel my way about it. I improvised before the service on the
manuscripts without pedals and after the service I made up a voluntary on Good King Wenceslas, which weakened in the middle because I had a cramp and could not go on using the pedals.

Sunday 27 December 1914 Greenlaw

We had service in church at the top of the square at 10am where Pinkie read the service. I improvised at the beginning of the service and at the end played Handel’s Pastoral Symphony from the Messiah from a miniature score. After the service I spent nearly an hour at the piano playing through my Choral Prelude on Good King Wenceslas to fix details of counterpoint.

On New year’s Day, 1915, Kelly and his sister Maisie were at Bisham Abbey, which was being used as a hospital for the war wounded, including many Belgians. Maisie and Sep sang and played the National songs and anthems of all present, various classical works, and then Kelly’s Aghadoe and his Xmas Prelude on Good King Wenceslas. The following day he drove over to Eton to see his Eton composition teacher Dr Charles Lloyd at Slough: ‘I played him my Xmas Prelude on “Good King Wenceslas” and later in the day at 6.15 p.m. I took it up to Sir Walter Parrat and played it to him ... He seemed genuinely to like it so I inscribed my name on the Prelude and left the copy with him.’

Organ Prelude No. 2

Weds 24 March, 1915, SS Grantully Castle, Aegean Sea

The strong NE breeze was blowing ... as we left the bay the view of the ships with the snow clad heights of Samothrace in the background made a lovely picture. I spent an hour or two continuing an Organ Prelude I had begun writing down at Duns Castle and nearly finished it before going to bed.

A few days later they were in Port Said, Egypt, to train in the desert for the fighting at Gallipoli. Kelly found a piano in the saloon where they were staying and played through both of his Organ preludes, plus a setting of the Song of David, and some of his solo piano works. He even finished off a Polka for his niece Patricia which he sent off in the mail.

Kelly would survive Gallipoli but not France. After the war in 1919 there was a memorial concert for him given in Wigmore Hall. Leonard Borwick played his own piano arrangement of Kelly’s 2nd Organ Prelude and a number of his solo piano works. Of Kelly’s music, he made particular note in the program that: ‘certain of the ‘Monographs’ (a late Opus) and the two Organ Preludes may be termed masterpieces in the small genre.’

After the concert Borwick would reply to Edward Speyer’s note of condolence: ‘It is all true what you say about dear Sep. He was like the needle to the hole in his pursuit of what he felt to be the true goal in conduct and life as well as art, and there were very tender impulses too, that were stirring before the War, and which I think ripened much under the influence of Rupert Brooke. Something is withdrawn from me which I do feel very sadly about at the moments when I realise it all fully.’

Serenade
Prelude
Idyl
Minuet
Air and Variations
Jig

F.S. Kelly’s Serenade for flute, harp, horn and strings, op. 7, is a yet another fortuitous child of the time spent sailing back and forth between England and Australia. Kelly had boarded the SS Orontes on 5 January 1911 and after a week there was an unintentionally funny amateur after-dinner concert which was only saved by the performance of the flute virtuoso, John Lemmoné. Kelly immediately had made plans to write the Serenade for him, and listened to him practicing so he could judge the level of difficulty he could risk in the solo part.

Donald Westlake’s Dearest John: the Story of John Lemmoné records that en route to Australia, Kelly had found Lemmoné, Nellie Melba’s manager, practicing flute in his cabin. Of Kelly, Lemmoné wrote: ‘He was at once intensely interested and asked many technical questions. He impressed me with being very musically intelligent. Several weeks later my visitor informed me that he was composing a work for me, a flute solo, with harp, horn and string orchestra accompaniment. ... It was practically completed before we reached Sydney. He called it a Serenade, consisting of five movements. The first - ‘Prelude’ - was written in the Indian Ocean; the second - ‘Idyll’ - off the coast of West Australia; the third - ‘Minuet’ - in the Great Australian Bight; the fourth - ‘Air and Variations’ - off the coast of Victoria; and the fifth - ‘Jig’ - off the coast of New South Wales. The work is of transcendent beauty and undoubtedly a classic. Later, in Sydney, I had the rare pleasure of playing this composition conducted by the composer, ... F.S. Kelly, a brilliant Australian pianist, perfectly modest about his fine musicianship and a composer who would probably have made a great reputation, but alas! was killed in action in France.’

Kelly later recorded that: ‘I feel quite satisfied in having completed the work within 19 days from the first notion of it, as I am not accustomed to being able to work quickly. It is not very original, perhaps, but covers new ground as far as I am concerned.’

Kelly programmed the premiere of the Serenade for his fourth recital in Sydney on July 21, 1912, in which he appeared as conductor and composer. The program consisted of the Mendelssohn Octet in E-flat major op. 20 (with his brother Bertie and the composer Alfred Hill playing the viola parts), followed by the Grieg Holberg Suite op. 40, Kelly’s Flute Serenade with Lemmoné as soloist, and ending with Mozart’s Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. He described the concert in his diary saying ‘... Lemmoné’s playing was delightful – he has the most pleasing sense of phrasing. The hall was about 2/3 full and they were quite an appreciative audience.’

The SMH review found Kelly’s conducting ‘firm and purposeful’ and
paid most of its attention to the Serenade. Lemmoné, it said, ‘found himself furnished with a singularly graceful part, felicitously dominating the strings, which were scored in a scholarly way. All the movements were charming, the fourth movements especially so where the flute and harp were together, and again where the theme fell to the horn supported by the strings, whilst the silver embroidery of the flute completed the captivating effect of the whole. The slowly flowing variations for flute also won the listeners, and the Jig closed the work with mirthful buoyancy.’

On May 15, 1912, Kelly appeared at the Queen’s Hall, with the Queen’s Hall Orchestra under Sir Henry Wood playing the Schumann Piano Concerto op. 54, Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4 and the British premiere of his Serenade in E minor with the Dutch flautist Albert Fransella as the soloist. On May 17, 1912, he would drop off the clean draft of the Serenade to his publisher, Schott, to be typeset. He would make slight revisions in 1914, adding a few bars to the flute serenade, and between April 7 and 12 he would create a piano reduction so that soloists could rehearse it with piano.

It would next be performed at a memorial concert for Kelly “on May 2nd, 1919, at the Wigmore Hall, ... given by the Small Queen’s Hall Orchestra under Frank Bridge ... The Serenade for flute (with accompaniment of Harp, Horn and String Orchestra) was played by Louis Fleury; and the Elegy for String Orchestra and Harp (In Memoriam Rupert Brooke) was repeated at the end of the concert by request.” A similar memorial program was also given at Balliol, where “Tovey played the Studies and Monographs, Kelly’s sister Maisie sang three of his songs, and Robert Murchie played the Flute Serenade.” (T. Radic, A Race Against Time (2004), p. 41)

On Saturday, February 19, 1921, Kelly’s Serenade and Elegy were given in the third concert in the revived Reid Concerts season at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, with Tovey conducting and Fleury again the soloist in the Serenade.

Tovey’s program notes read: ‘with [Kelly] there was a time for everything. His duty towards music did not distract him from his duty towards life, nor did life distract him from music. He would abandon nothing until he had mastered it; and so we have in this Serenade an essay in the tiniest of classical forms, each of them different and each of them devoted to expressing its own normal nature clearly and completely... a composition of great distinction and subtlety.’

Songs of Love and Loss
1. It is Not Dawn Until You Awake (arr. Latham)
2. Shall I Compare Thee to A Summer’s Day, op. 1 no. 1 in E-flat major
3. Music, When Soft Voices Die, No. 4 from Six Songs, op. 6
4. Aghadoe in C minor, op. 1 no. 2 (arr. F.S. Kelly for mezzo-soprano and orchestra, 1914)
5. Crossing the Bar (arr. Latham) for mezzo-soprano, tenor and orchestra

Kelly’s life is recorded in every detail in his diaries save the worlds of love and loss. On those subjects he is terribly silent. Only his songs contain hints, and from those we can only guess at his inner life.

Art songs now are so rarely heard that I wished to bring these intimate windows into Sep’s soul to life by orchestrating them, joining four songs with Aghadoe, which Kelly himself orchestrated in 1914.

It is Not Dawn Until You Awake

Kelly shows his most tender self in his songs, and there is no song which reveals more than his love song, It is Not Dawn Until You Awake, a setting of the remarkable words of his schoolfriend R.T. Warner. It was written four terms into Kelly’s studies at Oxford, over a weekend at the Hunter’s Inn at Heddon’s Mouth in North Devon, a popular get-away spot for couples. We do not know the subject of the song.

Shall I compare thee to a Summer’s day?

The first version of this song appears in a manuscript book containing Kelly’s early songs from Eton and the beginning of his Oxford studies. While undated, it follows It is Not Dawn which was written on April 6, 1901. Kelly references it in a letter on July 22, 1901, to Balfour Gardiner: “I have also set one of Shakespeare’s sonnets ‘Shall I compare thee to a Summer’s day?’ etc but it is fearfully influenced by your friend Grainger’s ‘Away in the Land of the Japanese’ (later published as ‘At Twilight’ for tenor and unaccompanied chorus). In thinking that tune over I have been very much struck with the freedom of his harmony, and the easy way in which his melody flows ... Ever yours, F.S. Kelly.

Music, When Soft Voices Die

In April of 1909, Kelly began writing a number of songs, alongside working on his Studies and Monographs for solo piano. March, The Cherry Tree, Mirrors, Fulfillment, Harvest Eve, as well as a setting of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem, Music When Soft Voices Die, all come from this period. We know that he liked it enough to play it for Sir Walter Parratt in October 1910 while visiting Eton, and would select it to be in his collection of Six Songs, which was published by Schott as Kelly’s op. 6. The set consists of March, The Sages’ Dance (both from 1910, to words by Logan Pearsall-Smith), When the lamp is shattered (1910–13, to words by Percy Bysshe Shelley) and Music When Soft Voices Die (1910, Percy Bysshe Shelley), The Cherry Tree (1913, words by Logan Pearsall-Smith), and The Daffodils (1910, words by William Wordsworth).

Aghadoe

Kelly suffered the last of a trifecta of death blows with the loss of his mother, Mary Anne Kelly, in 1902. The following year he wrote Aghadoe for voice and piano (1903) using for words a ballad by the Irish poet and playwright, John Todhunter. While more than forty years older than Kelly, the poet died just a fortnight before him in October,
1916. This song is one of the clear proofs that besides being the product of a very English sensibility, Kelly also had a powerful connection to Ireland. Kelly was proud of the song and would often get his sister Maisie to sing it in public: on October 15, 1910, after Sep had rehearsed a Brahms Sonata with Pablo Casals, Maise sang Aghadoe for him. Kelly took delight in noting that it ‘seemed to appeal to Casals a good deal’. He was revising the song for publication while at St Albans on January 26, 1912, and delivered the final versions of both ‘Aghadoe’ and ‘Shall I compare thee’ to Schott for publication on August 23, having signed with them as a composer a fortnight before. The two songs would become his Opus 1.

In early 1914, Kelly agreed to orchestrate Aghadoe for the great contralto, Clara Butt, for an orchestral concert at Queen’s Hall the following year. On Valentine’s Day, he was awake from 4 till 6.30 am and wrote: ‘I mentally scored nearly the whole of Aghadoe’. He would finish the work between April 12 and 14, 1914, marking the score completed on April 23, 1914.

Kelly first met Leonard Borwick on June 25, 1909. Kelly had showed him five Japanese prints which he had just bought at the Fine Arts Society, four by Hokusai and one by Utamaro, and discovered that Borwick was something of a connoisseur. They played a lot of music together including Sep’s Bisham Waltzes which Borwick liked. They also played chess together in the garden and Kelly found himself warming to him. They discussed music and their favourite composers, and after dinner Maisie sang, among other things, Sep’s Aghadoe. He took a photograph of Cleg and Maisie at the piano ‘for which we had to stand and sit for 45 seconds. He is a delightful man and musician and I only hope we shall be lucky enough to get to see him again.’ They would become intimate friends.

Muriel Foster would sing Aghadoe with Borwick at Kelly’s memorial concert at Wigmore Hall on May 2, 1919.

Crossing the Bar

On August 20, 1899, Kelly’s beloved eldest brother Carleton died at the family house ‘Glenyarrah’ in Sydney after a long battle with consumption (tuberculosis). He was twenty-seven, and the third child in the family to die prematurely. Their father would die two years later in 1901, their mother Mary in 1902.

Kelly wrote another mini-requiem for Carleton, a setting of Tennyson’s masterwork ‘Crossing the Bar’, marked as having been completed at Glenyarrah, on November 14, 1889. The poem uses the image of crossing the sandbar as a metaphor for crossing the river Styx. Despite Kelly’s youth, both of these songs have a profound sensibility, and speak to his early intimacy with death and loss.
1. Allegro de Concert Op. 3 for solo piano 7'17
Timothy Young Stuart and Sons 108-key extended range piano

2-11. Bisham Waltzes
Waltz 1 Spring-like 2'30
Waltz 2 Non troppo presto 1'28
Waltz 3 Poco presto e piacevole 0'37
Waltz 4 Tranquillo 2'23
Waltz 5 Allegretto pastorale 1'30
Waltz 6 Moderato, non troppo lento, ma largamente 0'38
Waltz 7 Tranquillo e largamente 2'18
Waltz 8 Con moto 1'04
Waltz 9 Ballabile (Dance-like) 2'42
Waltz 10 Spring-like 1'41

12-24. Theme, Variations and Fugue op. 5 for two pianos
Theme 1'40
Variation 1 1'03
Variation 2 0'51
Variation 3 1'35
Variation 4 1'29
Variation 5 1'05
Variation 6 1'54
Variation 7 1'30
Variation 8 2'02
Variation 9 0'43
Variation 10 0'47
Variation 11 2'02
Fugue 5'02

25-40. Waltz Pageant op. 2a for piano duet
Waltz 1 Brillante 1'26
Waltz 2 Moderato 2'30
Waltz 3 Vivace 0'31
Waltz 4 Cantabile 1'51
Waltz 5 Allegretto teneramente 1'38
Waltz 6 Presto ma non troppo 1'20
Waltz 7 Energeo 0'51
Waltz 8 Risoluto 1'18
Waltz 9 Allegretto, un poco andante 0'55
Waltz 10 Tempo giusto 1'27
Waltz 11 Vivace 0'36
Waltz 12 Un poco moderato 2'26
Waltz 13 Con brio 0'37
Waltz 14 Allegro commodo 1'12
Waltz 15 Allegretto 1'51
Waltz 16 Sostenuto, ma non troppo lento 2'51
Timothy Young Stuart and Sons 108-key extended range piano
Laurence Matheson Stuart and Sons 108-key extended range piano

41-44 From 12 Studies
Study No. 1 in F major 3'04
Study No. 6 in D major 4'16
Study No. 8 in E-flat major 4'37
Study No. 10 in E major 2'54
Laurence Matheson Stuart and Sons 108-key extended range piano

45-50 From 24 Monographs
Monograph No. 16 in D minor 2'22
Monograph No. 9 in A-flat major 1'43
Monograph No. 11 in D-flat major 0'52
Monograph No. 15 in F major 1'16
Monograph No. 17 in Bb major 1'40
Monograph No. 20 in G minor 1'08
Timothy Young Stuart and Sons 108-key extended range piano

Recorded on Stuart and Sons 108-key extended range pianos at Beleura House on the Mornington Peninsula by Ross A’hern, June 1-3, 2017
Produced by Christopher Latham,
Pianos serviced by Wayne Stuart

An Australian Icon

This digital free release explores the pianism of an Australian icon, the composer-pianist F.S. Kelly, using the world’s most advanced instruments - like him, Australian-born.

Over the last 30 years Wayne Stuart has established himself as Australia’s piano-building Einstein. His creative reconception of the technology of the piano has extended the range and the resonance of the concert grand, adding to it soft lower bass notes which underpin the melodies with a deep billowing quality, and diamond-cut higher notes which ring on as pure as a glockenspiel.

A perfect complement to these instruments is the musical athleticism of Timothy Young and Laurence Matheson, who use freedom of movement and openness to new ideas to expand out into the wider regions of Wayne Stuart’s instruments, and to explore the range of Kelly’s imagination, shown supreme in these collections of Waltzes and Variations. In over fifty movements composed for two pianos, for piano four hands and for solo piano, Kelly never repeats himself. Each one is a tiny world, with a feeling and gesture all of its own, here realised to the full by the combined arts of Stuart, Young and Matheson.

Allegro de Concert
Kelly’s Allegro de Concert is a curiously rare beast in his catalogue, unusually experimental in both form and harmony. The initial oddly simple minor key waltz undergoes kaleidoscopic harmonic alterations, creating a wildly virtuosic piece that shows off the range of Kelly’s musical imagination. It feels like an homage to Chopin, whose works Kelly always included in his concerts.

Kelly records having started work on it in 1907 and showed it to his composition professor Ivan Knorr on Monday, March 23, 1908: ‘At 3pm I went to Knorr with my ... Allegro de
Kelly mentions it next when, on his return to London on November 21, he finally got to meet the great pianist Leonard Borwick at a party at Edward Speyer’s house, Ridgehurst. Speyer had already been sufficiently impressed by Kelly to have invited him to serve with him and Tovey on the committee of the new Classical Concert Society.

Sep wanted to show Borwick his Impromptu-Cycle (later published as his op. 4, A Cycle of Lyrics), and sought the good offices of their hostess to gain a hearing from the pianist. Sep plucked up the courage to also show him his Allegro de Concert, which he played ‘very badly from the music’. Borwick responded with his insights, and thus began a long professional and personal relationship, in which Borwick became Kelly’s trusted musical confidant, in many ways functioning like a kindly editor.

Kelly notes that Borwick “wondered whether it hung together formally and finally said he was rather worried about its ambiguous character – part of it being dignified and part of it waltz-like. Most of what he said I felt to be true except that I do feel it holds together as a whole and that the ideas are formally well balanced.” On New Year’s Eve of 1911 Kelly reports that he talked with Borwick for an hour and then “played him my Allegro de Concert op. 3 which he thinks improved by my revision’.

In the 1912 Classical Concert Society concert series Kelly began to show himself as a composer in London, playing his Allegro de Concert in the third concert, the Waltz Pageant in the fifth, the Flute Serenade for small orchestra in the sixth, and his Study in E major in the ninth. He met Percy Grainger and his mother Rose on April 4, 1912, offering him the dedication of his Allegro de Concert which Percy accepted. Schott then published the work in 1913, as Kelly’s op. 3, noting the composition dates as 1907-1911.

**Bisham Waltzes**

Named for the home near Henley that he shared with his sister, the title “Bisham Waltzes” begins to appear in Kelly’s diaries from September, 1904. It refers to products of a musical correspondence between Kelly and the young pianist, composer and future musicologist Donald Tovey. The two had agreed to exchange ‘canons (to be solved by the recipient)’, and waltzes for pianoforte duet, each composer contributing one alternately, until eventually each of them had written a set, and then dedicated it to the other. Both composers admired each other’s creations and thereby inspired each other to new heights. Kelly wrote to Tovey from Frankfurt: ‘Knorr is delighted with the lot, and says my contributions have quite set his doubts at rest as to my imagination’. Tovey felt Kelly had arrived as a composer, telling his patron Miss Weisse: ‘I feel as if it would be purely ridiculous ever to give Kelly advice again.’

As part of the Flowers of War’s cultural recovery work, we sought to recreate the Bisham Waltzes as a suite. Once we had assembled all the manuscripts, however, we found that Kelly had taken the best of the Bisham Waltzes, and published them as part of his Waltz Pageant (16 Waltzes, written between 1905-1911). Another waltz had been altered and used as a variation in his Theme, Variations and Fugue, op. 5 for two pianos, also written in Germany. That left us with only six waltzes, including the D minor Waltz which Leonard Borwick had suggested taking out of the Waltz Pageant because it distorted the overall shape. It worked well here, though. We added another stand-alone 6/8 two piano fragment in D major (which became Waltz 4) and then for the eighth Waltz used a beautiful stand-alone miniature he wrote in Frankfurt, titled Con Moto, originally for cor anglais and piano. Lacking an opener or a closer, we wrapped the work in four hand arrangements of the remarkable Piano Quartet which the twenty-three-year-old Kelly wrote in November 18, 1904, at his student lodgings in Frankfurt, scored for the unusual line-up of piano, horn, violin and viola.

While not Kelly’s original conception, this newly assembled collection was undertaken as a labour of love to give a home and a performance context for three beautiful fragments, as well as rescuing these other lovely waltzes from the rubbish bin of musical history. The ideas, all from the same period, written in his student days in Germany, weave beautifully together.

The complete order of Waltzes used in this edition prepared by Christopher Latham and Benjamin Drury is below (the original numbers are marked on the manuscripts).

1. Bisham Waltz No. 1 in B-flat (aka Piano Quartet)
2. Bisham Waltz No. 2 in D minor – *Non troppo presto* (transposed to G minor for fluency)
3. Bisham Waltz No. 3 (previously No. 6) in G major - *Poco presto non piacevole*
4. Bisham Waltz No. 4 (previously 6/8 fragment in 3/4)
5. Bisham Waltz No. 5 (old No. 12) in D major - *Pastorale*
6. Bisham Waltz No. 6 (old No. 14 in F minor) - *Moderato, non troppo lento ma largamente* - (transposed to B minor for fluency)
7. Bisham Waltz No. 7 (old No. 8) in B major - *Tranquillo e largamente*
8. Bisham Waltz No. 8 (previously *Con Moto for cor anglais and piano*)
9. Bisham Waltz No. 9 (old No. 16 aka 7a) in B-flat major - *Ballabile* (segues into)
10. Bisham Waltz No. 10 (repeat of No. 1) in B-flat (aka Piano Quartet) with no repeats the 2nd time

**Theme, Variations and Fugue, op. 5 for two pianos (1907–11)**

Kelly’s composition teacher in Frankfurt, Iwan Knorr, said of Kelly that he ‘never saw anyone grasp the technique of contrapuntal writing so quickly’. A formal conservative who prioritized the development of compositional
technique, Knorr still managed to teach such varied composers as Ernest Bloch, Roger Quilter, Hans Pfitzner, and Cyril Scott. Percy Grainger had found him too overbearing, but Kelly and Knorr got on well, and the two enjoyed warm relations that would last all the way through Kelly’s short life.

Kelly would prove his teacher’s initial analysis correct in two works he wrote for Knorr: the fugal finale of the German Symphony (originally the Suite in E-flat major) and the fugue of the Theme, Variations and Fugue, op. 5, for two pianos. On Friday, October 4, 1907, Kelly writes, in the first volume of his diaries: ‘At 3pm I had a lesson with Knorr, to whom I played my Variations for Two Pianos. The material he thoroughly approved of but criticised the … two-piano writing. I was a little crestfallen at his taking no particular notice of the variation in double counterpoint at the 12th which had cost me so much labour to write.’

On Friday, November 29, Kelly continues: ‘…from 3–4pm I had a lesson with Knorr in which he approved of variations 8, 9, 10, 11, which he had not had time to look at in my last lesson, but in playing through the whole work he wondered whether variations 10 and 11, both being very loud in character, would not be too much and suggested either leaving out variation 11, or else not repeating it.’

Back in England for Christmas, Kelly records at home at the Grange in Bisham, on December 20, 1907, that: ‘…from 12.15pm I lunched with Sir Walter Parratt…. After lunch I played through my two-piano Variations as well as I could on a very stiff upright Steinway … he seemed to like them.’ Parratt also praised his Bisham Waltzes, urging him to publish them.

On the morning of New Year’s Eve, as a way to avoid going shooting, he read through his two-piano Variations and Fugue with his sister Maisie, ‘who read them fairly well’. (Kelly loved animals and could not abide seeing any cruelty being done to them. He would famously collect cats while serving in France.)

Back in Frankfurt, in February, 1908, Kelly’s piano teacher Ernst Engesser went over his Variations and Fugue. Kelly writes: ‘At 8.45am Franzen and I played through my Variations and Fugue (the latter twice) in the [Main Hall], leaving out the 11th variation, which Engesser declared to be a satisfactory way out of the difficulty, so for the present it can remain at that until I can find some way of making a more complete arrangement.’

On Tuesday, March 3, Kelly performed his Theme, Variations and Fugue at the Conservatorium: ‘My Variations went fairly well on the whole though Franzen made one or two slips from nervousness and the Fugue was a little hurried for the same reason. They were greeted with a good deal of applause and Frau von der Marwitz, who was there, hurried out to tell me how she liked them as well as to say how much clearer my playing had become.’

On his return to England on Sunday May 3, following the end of his studies in Frankfurt, Kelly met D.F. Tovey in the Musical Club at Balliol: ‘…we played my two-piano Variations … D.F.T. read them wonderfully well at sight and suggested a slow and simple variation between variation 11 and the Fugue to obviate the overpowering effect of variations 10 and 11 on the climax of the Fugue … which he said … was “great fun” .’

On June 16, 1908, Sep drove down to pick up his old composition teacher at Eton, Dr Charles Lloyd. Kelly played his Impromptu Cycle (later titled A Cycle of Lyrics), and ended the day playing through his Two Piano Variations ‘which [Lloyd] liked’. Percy Grainger also liked them, so much so that he and Sep played through them twice.

On the way back to England following his 1911 professional debut in Sydney, Kelly evidenced yet again his remarkable facility for mental composition. He writes on August 30, 1911, at Hide’s Hotel, Cairns: ‘After dinner, I took a walk along the beach as far as where it is cut short by mangroves (about two miles) and did some work at my Variations for Two Pianos, which I want to get in order for publication.’

Back in London, on Sunday, November 19, 1911, at the Speyer’s house, Ridgehurst, Kelly notes: ‘It was a rainy day and practically none of the house party ventured outside. After breakfast D.F.Tovey and I played through my two-piano Variations in their new form, with variation 10 taking the place of variation 4, and with the new variation in B-flat as variation 10. He thought the new arrangement more satisfactory.’ Sir Walter Parratt had also suggested last December adding a quiet variation before the Fugue, and here Kelly displays for the first time the dazzling musical jewel box which is Variation 10. This extremely brilliant writing breaks through like a shaft of light, helping to balance the dark, dense textures that will follow.

Kelly performed the work one last time in London with Johanne Stockmarr, on Thursday, March 26 at the Aeolian Hall, along with six of his songs and works by Mozart, Debussy and Saint-Saëns. A fairly modern program for the time, it would be his last public piano recital before the war took him.

**Waltz Pageant**

The Waltz Pageant is perfectly named, made up of wildly exuberant three-beat cycles which spin, one into another, like beautiful dancers. Chandeliers and fine graces abound. It is fluid and heartfelt, each chapter another delight.

We have seen above that the conception of a suite of waltzes emerged from a postal compositional collaboration between Kelly and his mentor D.F. Tovey while Kelly was studying in Frankfurt. Following his return to England in mid-1908, Kelly rehearsed them with Tovey in 1909, playing some of them in public by 1910, and had finalised the overall order of the suite by 1912. He would make two versions, one for pianoforte duet, op. 2, consisting of sixteen waltzes, and the other version, op. 2b, for solo pianist, containing nine waltzes. Kelly premiered the solo piano version of the Waltz Pageant in the 1912 Classical
Concert Society series on June 3, 1912 at Aeolian Hall. He also included it in his recital for the Oxford University Musical Club on June 18, 1912.

He delivered the final copy of the *Waltz Pageant* to his publisher, Schott, on December 19, 1912, but lodged another version on January 9, 1913, having dropped the second *Waltz in D minor* after Leonard Borwick had convinced him that it distorted the overall proportions. He began playing the suite in public, for example at Edwards Speyer’s house Ridgehurst, on Sunday January 12, 1913. He describes having played there: ‘Grainger’s Clog Dance ‘Handel in the Strand’ and ‘My Robin is to the Greenwood Gone’ - the last of which seems to me very lovely. After tea I played my 11 Studies to Mrs Speyer, Freddie Speyer and Mrs Bridge and also my *Waltz Pageant* …’

During the Great War, he played the *Waltz Pageant* again during training camp on Sunday September 27, 1914, while stationed in Walmer, and again on Thursday, March 4, 1915, on the troopship, SS *Grantully Castle*. He usually played the piano from memory and did not have the music with him. His diary records: ‘I was on watch from 4.00 to 8.00am and took the opportunity of writing down the bass part of my *Waltz Pageant* to play with Denis Browne. I finished seven waltzes before breakfast and had completed 11 by tea time. We tried them through after tea – Denis Browne reading them fairly well at sight. He seemed to think them nice and fresh. We tried them through twice.’

After the evacuation from Gallipoli, Kelly and the Royal Naval Division were moved to the island of Tenedos, seven nautical miles from the Turkish mainland, where he spent a fairly blissful and peaceful month playing on a rented piano. After dinner on February 6, 1916, he played his monographs Nos. 13-18 and the ‘*Waltz Pageant*’, repeating it again the next day. That may have been the last time this work was played before the present recording was made.

The first task in creating the present recording was to create a corrected edition, which the English-French violist, Paul Mayes, myself, a French-Australian, and the Belgian cellist, Wouter Vercruysse, did in Lille, France. Wouter’s Septimus Trio, consisting of the cellist Wouter, the Polish violinist Kaja Nowak, and the Flemish violist Diede Verpoest, then recorded the work in the Beeldenstorm Arts Centre, in a predominantly Islamic neighbourhood in Brussels. This Flemish Arts Centre,
run by Nik Honinckx, hosted us and graciously allowed us to record the piece there for free.

My thanks to Carol Jones, Kelly’s great-niece, whose generosity made the recording possible.

**String Trio**

The irony of F.S. Kelly’s catalogue is that his most substantial work is scored for a combination that hardly exists today - the string trio. The string quartet is generally considered the most demanding idiom to write for, because it only contains four lines, making the texture incredibly transparent. Given that most chords require three or four tones to be sounded to create a sonorous texture to support the melody, the technical demands on the composer to create beautiful lines that also make a satisfactorily rich backdrop for the leading voice are extreme. If it is difficult to score satisfactorily for four parts, then writing for three is even more demanding both for the composer and for the players. The compositional challenges of the string trio are clearly demonstrated by the scarcity of masterworks in the genre.

The String Trio exudes the freshness of youth, but also the angst. The key of B minor gives a hint of what will come. Traditionally the key of fate, Bach of youth, but also the angst. The key masterworks in the genre, demonstrated by the scarcity of challenges of the string trio are clearly more demanding both for the composer parts, then writing for three is even for the leading voice are extreme. If it is also make a satisfactorily rich backdrop a sonorous texture to support the texture incredibly transparent.

Kelly began the work in October of 1909, at The Grange, the house in Bisham he shared with his sister Maisie. He took the work on a number of occasions to Donald Francis Tovey with whom he was still studying composition, and one of the three surviving manuscripts is covered with Tovey’s suggestions and comments. Kelly would acknowledge that Tovey’s insistent criticisms helped him to take the work to a higher level, but ultimately his frustration with Tovey’s pedantic interventions brought to an end their relationship of student and mentor. After this Kelly would trust only the great English pianist Leonard Borwick, the close friend who was also his roommate in London for a long period, to give him feedback on his works.

By late April, 1910, Kelly was still trying to finish the first movement of his B minor Trio, noting in his diary that it was taking ‘an incredibly long time’ to resolve. In his struggles with the work, Kelly turned to autosuggestion to get around his mental blockages, making ‘suggestions to myself before going to sleep each night in order to bring on a musical frame of mind in the hopes that ideas will occur (easily) to me’. He writes on May 8, 1910, of having experienced inspiration in the Sistine Chapel for some of the material in the work.

A first version of the work was completed at The Grange on October 4, 1910. On January 5, 1911, Kelly boarded the Orontes, bound for Australia, and, during the long sea passage, heavily revised the work in the light of Tovey’s comments. Arriving in Sydney he notes in his diary entry for Friday, February 10, 1911, that he is doing a ‘good deal of work at the first movement of my B Minor String Trio’. He describes working on it during his visit to the Hydro Majestic Hotel in Medlow Bath in the Blue Mountains on March 6, 1911, and finally finishes it in his family home of Glenyarrah, in Double Bay, Sydney on May 31, 1911. It was premiered by Henri Staell (leader of his own string quartet and concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony at the time), Kelly’s brother Bertie (Mr T.H. Kelly), viola, and Bryce Carter, cello.

Thereafter Kelly polished the work for a further four years. Finally content with it, he engaged the English Quartet (which included the composer Frank Bridge on viola) to perform it at a summer concert at his house in Bisham on June 17, 1914. Less than a fortnight later the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand led to the outbreak of the Great War.

The work gained some popularity around this time, also being performed by the famous cellist Pablo Casals (who often performed with Kelly in recitals), as well as by the violist Lionel Tertis, and the violinist Jelly d’Arányi, who was in love with Kelly. Jelly and Kelly would perform together extensively in March and April of 1916 while he was back in London on leave after having served at Gallipoli. Before he left for France in May, he would give her the corrected string trio parts from which this edition was made. The parts were lovingly preserved in her music collection in Florence, along with the Gallipoli Violin sonata manuscript, which he beautifully crafted for her in his Gallipoli dugout with bullets whistling over his head.
Flowers of the Great War

Twelve Studies
1. Study No. 1 in F major 3:23
2. Study No. 2 in B-flat minor 0:45
3. Study No. 3 in F-sharp minor 2:49
4. Study No. 4 in E-flat minor 3:01
5. Study No. 5 in B minor 4:07
6. Study No. 6 in D major 3:19
7. Study No. 7 in G minor 1:47
8. Study No. 8 in E-flat major 4:25
9. Study No. 9 in G-sharp minor / B major 2:33
10. Study No. 10 in E major 2:42
11. Study No. 11 in C minor 4:26
12. Study No. 12 in D minor 5:02
13. Study No. 12A in A major 2:26

24 Monographs
14. Monograph No. 1 in C major 1:44
15. Monograph No. 2 in E minor 1:35
16. Monograph No. 3 in B major 0:43
17. Monograph No. 4 in G-sharp minor / B major 1:34
18. Monograph No. 5 in E major 1:56
19. Monograph No. 6 in A minor 1:47
20. Monograph No. 7 in A major 2:04
21. Monograph No. 8 in C-sharp minor 0:38
22. Monograph No. 9 in A-flat major 1:39
23. Monograph No. 10 in F minor 0:51
24. Monograph No. 11 in D-flat major 1:14
25. Monograph No. 12 in F-sharp minor 1:36
26. Monograph No. 13 in G-flat major 1:13
27. Monograph No. 14 in B-flat minor 0:45
28. Monograph No. 15 in F major 1:09
29. Monograph No. 16 in D minor 2:52
30. Monograph No. 17 in B-flat major 1:23
31. Monograph No. 18 in E-flat minor 1:31
32. Monograph No. 19 in E-flat major 1:07
33. Monograph No. 20 in G minor 0:43
34. Monograph No. 21 in D major 1:06
35. Monograph No. 22 in B minor 5:25
36. Monograph No. 23 in G major 1:33
37. Monograph No. 24 in C minor 2:22

Alex Wilson piano
Toccata Classics

Kelly’s piano works
Kelly’s best piano works are his Cycle of Lyrics (premiered in 1911 in Sydney as part of his debut recital series), his Waltz Pageant (from his time in Oxford) and the Allegro de Concert (written during his studies in Frankfurt). However his major pianistic achievements were the 12 Studies and 24 Monographs which he finally notated in 1913.

The year 1913 was the golden summer of Edwardian England. Kelly was increasingly busy with the Classical Concert Society, bringing out Ravel that year for a rare early presentation of his compositions in London. As part of his role of assessing and securing artists and repertoire for their programs, Kelly was attending a great number of concerts, hearing all the leading pianists and artists of his generation, along with presenting his own concert programs. Despite a very active social life, he somehow also found time to finalise his enormous set of 12 Studies and his delightful collection of 24 Monographs, designed to be played in four sets of six (though pianists are free to make their own sets).

The model for both sets must be the Chopin Etudes and Preludes respectively, though Scriabin seems to be another important source of inspiration. The incubation period for these works stretched back over a number of years, making the exact dating of the works complicated.

The 12 Studies
The earliest draft we have of any study is of an Etude in A-flat, dated Dec 28, 1897, written at Eton when Kelly was 16 years old. Ten years later we find a far more ambitious Study in A major, composed towards the end of his studies in Frankfurt, and completed on January 23, 1907. It would be further revised on August 20, 1912, and was for a time the intended finale of the set, until later replaced by the current No. 12 in D minor. (The original finale is recorded here as Study 12a, in the interests of the recording being as complete as possible.) Following his gold medal winning race in the London Olympics, which prompted his retirement from competitive rowing, Kelly writes on Christmas Eve of 1908; ‘I further perfected my little F minor Etude on which I had been working yesterday, but wonder whether it will be playable when complete’. That study seems to have disappeared (there is no F minor Study in the final set) but we do have an early draft of Study No. 11 in C minor, which is dated a month later, January 23-26, 1909.

Kelly next describes how on February 19, 1909, Ferdinand Speyer, who had also been a Nettleship Music Scholar at Balliol, ‘came to dinner and we played Beethoven’s Kreutzer sonata afterwards. I showed him (my song) ‘Aghadoe’ which he particularly liked and my Etudes in C minor, F-sharp minor and in F’ (destined to become Studies nos. 11, 3 and 1). There is further mention of
working on the C minor Study (No. 11) on June 10, 1909, and on July 26 he played this ‘chop-stick’ Etude in C minor to Percy Grainger, later noting that Percy ‘seemed to like it’. In October that year, Kelly noted down ideas for a group of studies which he had ‘improvised’, which are contained in Kelly’s manuscripts in the National Library of Australia. A slightly later manuscript copy of the Study No. 8 in E-flat major is marked with the date of December 12, 1909.

In early 1910, he invited his fellow Frankfurt composer and colleague, Balfour Gardiner, to tea, and to hear his latest works including the Study in E-flat minor (eventually Study No. 4), dated on the manuscript as having been finished on January 16, 1910. To Kelly’s relief, Gardiner liked them ‘a good deal better than he usually likes my compositions’. The composition process continued on a holiday trip to Egypt in December, 1910, and on the sea-voyage back to Australia in the following January. Kelly performed the Studies in E-flat major (No. 8) and in C minor (No. 11) in his first recital at St James Hall in Sydney on July 4, 1911. He would make a two-page sketch of Study No. 2 in B-flat minor on July 27, and a two-page clean copy on July 29, in the Wentworth Hotel where he was staying in Sydney (his family had insisted that he move to a hotel due to his incessant practicing). He continued to compose both Studies and Monographs on his return sea journey to England, noting in his diary on August 25, 1911, that he travelled down the Brisbane River on the S.S. Wodonga, and walked the deck composing, as they passed by Moreton Island, while being rocked by a light ocean swell. On August 26, at Gladstone, he took the time to explore the bush and town, where he had ‘a dozen ideas for composition.’ From Cairns he took a berth on the S.S. Mataram, sleeping on deck because of the heat, and continuing to compose during the voyage. On September 12 he visited Thursday Island, where he ‘did some composition during my walk round the island.’

The following day, his ship had entered the Gulf of Carpentaria on its way to Darwin. He then sailed on to Java, composing a number of studies en route between September 15 and 20, 1911. On October 28 he disembarked at Genoa, where he wrote: ‘the voyage from Java was fairly satisfactory on the whole – certainly from a musical point of view, as I was constantly composing.

Kelly gave the first performances in London of his Studies in E-flat (No. 8) and C minor (No. 11) in a recital at the Aeolian Hall on February 27, 1912. He also performed his Study in E major (No. 10) later in that year’s Classical Concert Society concerts series. Later in the summer of 1912 Kelly would finalise a number of the Studies at his house, The Grange, in Bisham. By the end of August, 1912, Kelly notes in his diary that he had completed work on his collection of twelve studies.

On Sunday January 12, 1913, at Edward Speyer’s house, Ridgehurst, in Hertfordshire, he records that he played 11 of his Studies and his Waltz Pageant. On March 16 of that year, he premiered his Study in G sharp minor (No. 9) which he repeated again on May 7 in a recital in which he felt: ‘I was in my best form and had a considerable success with the second group in which I had to repeat my

Leonard Borwick, by Jane Adams

study ... I played my Caprice op. 4 no. 4 as an encore at the end of the concert. I did not suffer at all from nervousness.’ The Daily Telegraph noted of his ‘Study’ that it ‘proved to be a brilliant but not over-elaborated composition chiefly composed of arpeggios that wander from one key to another. The piece was encored.’

Kelly made ‘a fair copy’ of his 12 Studies in July, 1913, and sent them to Borwick for comment on August 1. Borwick liked No. 11 in C minor and No. 12 in D minor, but thought the one in


During the war he recorded playing his studies on several occasions. On April 26, 1915 on the troopship SS Grantully Castle, while waiting to land at Gallipoli, he played his Studies in E-flat minor (No. 4) and B minor (No. 5), fully expecting to be in action the following day.

Later he was slightly wounded in the foot in the 3rd Battle of Krythia. Sent to recuperate in Alexandria, Egypt, on June 16, 1915, he played, on a fairly good Bechstein Grand in a music shop called Hugo Hackh, his D minor study (No. 12) and his new 'Elegy for Strings in Memoriam of Rupert Brooke'.

On New Year’s Eve, 1915, while in the Hood Battalion’s rest camp, north of Sedd el Bahr at Gallipoli, he writes ‘every sign seems to point to an evacuation ... I am still serving my apprenticeship in sonata form but in lyric form I feel I have every now and then said something good and original, for example my monographs in E-flat major, B minor, C minor and my studies in F major (No. 1) and D minor (No. 12)’.

He returned to London after the Gallipoli campaign, and before his departure for the Western front, he finalised both the Studies and the Monographs and also his String Trio. He was clearly conscious he might not return.

While in London he was invited to perform in a house concert hosted by Violet Bonham Carter, on March 16, 1916, along with the string players Jelly d’Arányi, her sister Adila Fachiri and Adila’s husband, Alexander Fachiri, an international lawyer and fine amateur cellist. After a program of chamber music Kelly ‘ended the programme by playing four studies in F major (No. 1), B minor (No. 5) and D minor (No. 12)’. (He does not note the key of the fourth study.)

Finally on Wednesday, April 26, 1916, while at home at The Grange in Bisham, he writes; ‘on seeing my music to pack up I came across the manuscript of my studies which I had left with Schott to get copied. The copy was worthless as it was so inaccurate but I had decided not to make a fuss about it when Schott told me it was an old Belgian who was in want of work. On looking at the manuscript, however, I found the copyist had treated it as though it were pupil’s work – had made pencil marks freely and in some places had made alterations in the text. I accordingly hurried off to Schott and vented my anger on Mr Volkert, who at last prevailed on me to let him make the copyist rub out his marks and after restoring the text to what it was, make his copy of it conform. I really felt very angry. Perhaps the most outrageous interference was the correction of one of my cadences in the E major study. Mr Volkert told me the old man had written a harmony book as though that made it any better!’ The corrections were completed by May 4, 1916. By the end of June Kelly was in France.

One of the last performances of Kelly’s studies was at the Kelly Memorial in 1919, in Balliol Hall, when D.F. Tovey played selections from his Studies and Monographs. Given Borwick’s early death in 1925, which meant that the works had lost their dedicatee and most likely champion, that was probably the last time the works were performed until now.

In 2005 Richard Divall and Bruce Steele produced a typeset edition of the 12 Studies as part of the Marshall Hall Trust’s publications, though surprisingly no performances seem to have occurred until the Studies were finally recorded. With this recording one of Kelly’s most ambitious creative endeavours can finally be assessed. As a set, they are uncompromisingly massive in scale and ambition, and by nature of their virtuosity tend towards harmonic density, though many display great tenderness and beauty, and a clarity of sonic colour that produces a sensation of light, almost Nordic in its clarity.
The Monographs

Kelly would write his other important set of piano works, his 24 Monographs, parallel to his Studies. Like their model, Chopin’s 24 Preludes, op. 28, the Monographs cover all 24 major and minor keys, with an emphasis on brevity and heightened contrasts between movements, both in mood and texture. While individually each movement is a work in its own right, each set also exists as a larger single work in 24 chapters, with Kelly’s set being designed as four brackets of six works each; (nos 1-6, 7-12, 13-18 and 19-24). Overall Kelly’s Monographs display enormous stylistic variety, a prolific imagination and a bowerbird-like eye for colour.

In October of 1909, Tovey had played some of Alexander Scriabin’s 24 Preludes op. 11 through for Kelly, which Sep found to be very Chopinesque, but also ‘undoubtedly the work of a man who understands the piano to an exceptional degree and in addition has a (clear personal) style’. Inspired by his discovery of the Preludes, Kelly drove straight to Augener’s in London to buy both manuscript paper and also the music for Scriabin’s 24 Preludes op. 11, his Sonata No.3 in F sharp minor op. 23, the Allegro de Concert in B-flat minor op. 18, and his Preludes op. 15, 16, and 17. Scriabin’s piano works were to become regular fixture in Kelly’s recitals thereafter, and he was probably the first pianist to play Scriabin’s works in Sydney, when he included them in his 1911 recitals. The influence of Scriabin can be clearly heard in the 22nd Monograph amongst others, and Scriabin’s 24 Preludes (also covering every major and minor key) were clearly another model for Kelly’s work.

Just as with the Studies, most of the Monographs were composed over a long period between 1909 and 1913, though in the first mentions in his diary he describes them as ‘Impromptus’ or ‘Preludes’. On September 3, 1911, on his way back to London from his concerts in Sydney, he took a slight detour through tropical Herberton in Queensland. He describes a whole day’s expedition on a horse-drawn sulky into the tropical rain forest which gave him ‘an idea for an impromptu or prelude in F-sharp minor after we started, and [I] worked at it as well as some other ideas, throughout the drive.’ He would continue working on them on September 4 and 5 in nearby Kuranda, all the while struggling to find an overall title for the works.

Backtracking to Cairns, he boarded the S.S. Mataram, where he continued to compose impromptus. On September 12, 1911, while visiting Thursday Island, he writes that he got another idea for an impromptu. His expeditions in Indonesia proved richly stimulating and included a visit to Borobudur, the world’s largest Buddhist temple complex, located in Central Java. Later on September 27, he got up at 4 a.m. to climb to the Papandayan crater at about 7,000 feet. Describing it as being similar to volcanoes he had visited in Japan, he noted that: ‘on the way up to Papandajan I also composed a complete Impromptu in E-flat minor.’

Back in England, 1912 was largely taken up with Kelly’s London debuts both as a recitalist and soloist with the London Symphony Orchestra. He performed his Cycle of Lyrics numerous times but overall the critical reception to his performances was mixed.

In 1913, the title ‘Monographs’ first appears in the diaries. By May 10, 1913, Kelly was able to play over most of his 24 Monographs from memory for the pianist, singer and conductor, Georg Henschel. On May 11 he notes in his diary that he was setting down ideas for both his sets of Monographs and Studies. By May 22, he was already able to play through the Monographs.

Kelly invited Balfour Gardiner to stay over a weekend at Kelly’s weekend place in Bisham in July 1913. Tennis and rowing were capped with Kelly playing his Monographs through for Gardiner. Spurred on by the positive reception, by August 1, 1913, he was making a clean copy of the Monographs, completing the set on October 2. He wrote: ‘they are a more original piece of work as a whole than most of my compositions, and I feel quite satisfied with them at present.’

On November 6, 1913, Jelly and Adila d’Arányi came to Kelly’s flat in London to rehearse their upcoming concert program. Jelly went first, playing Schumann’s Violin Sonata in A minor with Sep. Kelly then played them eight of his Monographs. All of this was in anticipation of a concert they were to give in Haslemere two days later.

On November 22, 1913, Kelly played at Eton as soloist in Schumann’s Piano Concerto in a program conducted by Dr Charles Harford Lloyd. Kelly took advantage of the occasion to play a few of his Monographs after dinner, and the next morning played the rest of the set for his old teacher. He dedicated them to Dr Lloyd, acknowledging his good fortune to have had him as a high school composition teacher.

By early 1914 the Monographs were sufficiently developed for Kelly to include them in concert at the Aeolean Hall, London, on Thursday, March 19. The Times reviewed them as follows: ‘he played for the first time a set of 24 “Monographs” of his own composition, a formidable-looking series of pieces in all the keys... They were not as formidable as they looked in the programme, for each takes only about one minute to play ... They are very varied; some, like the first in C major and the last, in C minor, have a boldness of design which was unexpected; others, like the Allegretto in A-flat, the Pastorale in F, and the Allegretto dolente in B minor, have great delicacy and charm; while others again explore problems of technique with considerable enterprise. The playing of them, too, was delightful, for with his own music Mr Kelly is freed from the sense of duty and the reference to precedents which sometimes encumber his playing of the classics.’ At supper at the Imperial after the recital, Leonard Borwick gave Kelly his criticisms of the concert, nearly all of which Kelly agreed
with: Borwick particularly liked the Monographs and put gold stars against No. 12 in F sharp minor, No. 2. in E minor, No. 20 in G minor, No. 15 in F major and No. 22 in B minor.

In April of 1914, Kelly played the Monographs for the Australian pianist Jessie Middleton, and also for his former Frankfurt teachers, Iwan Knorr and Ernst Engesser, who were positive in their feedback.

On September 14, 1914, Kelly was informed he had been accepted as an officer into the Churchill’s Royal Naval Division.

Kelly’s wartime diaries record further work on his Monographs. On February 11, 1915, at Pimpernel Camp in Blandford, he notes: ‘I had a fairly slack day and managed to get in a rest from 3 to 4.30 pm. I revised my D minor, B-flat major, E-flat minor, E-flat major and G minor Monographs before dinner and before going to bed’. Then on February 13, 1915, he records that he ‘finished revising my 24 Monographs before dinner’.

On April 18, 1915, he records that, while alone one evening on board ship off the island of Skyros, he played his Monograph No. 22 in B minor. Indeed for most of the voyage to Gallipoli his fellow officers would have heard him playing the piano during his free time in the stateroom of the troopship, often playing four hands duets with W. Denis Browne.

On New Year’s Eve, 1915, in the lead-up to the evacuation after almost 8 months on the Gallipoli peninsula, he notes that ‘in lyric form I feel I have every now and then said something good and original, for example my Monographs, in No. 19 in E-flat major, No. 22 in B minor and No. 24 in C minor.’

On February 5, 1916, on the island of Tenedos, to which the Hood Battalion had been evacuated, he writes: ‘I played for about an hour or more in the morning in the headquarters bell tent a number of pieces, including my Monographs Nos. 13 in G-flat major and 24 in C minor.’ The following day he notes he played his Monographs Nos. 13–18 and his Waltz Pageant after dinner. Finally on February 26, 1916, aboard the HM Troopship Olympic off Mudros, he played his Monographs Nos. 13–18 again, and with them his Elegy on Rupert Brooke.

As with his 12 Studies he sent a corrected version of the 24 Monographs to his publisher, Schott, on May 4, 1916, just before he re-joined his regiment in France, where he would be killed on November 13, 1916, in the battle of Beaumont-Hamel. The original manuscript has not surfaced and we are left only with the same Belgian copyist’s version which Kelly had described as having contained many mistakes, though his irritation due to the copyist’s meddling with his original manuscripts may have caused him to exaggerate somewhat.

Some of the Monographs were heard after Kelly’s death in a memorial concert for Kelly given in Wigmore Hall in 1919. Leonard Borwick played his own arrangement of the 2nd Organ Prelude (written on the way to Gallipoli), the Idyll and Caprice from the Cycle of Lyrics (1907-8), and five of the Monographs. Tovey played some of them at another Kelly Memorial, in Balliol Hall later that year. That would be the end of any mention of them until Richard Divall and Bruce Steele typeset the works in July 2002, which led to recordings of various individual movements in Great War centenary projects between 2014 and 2018. Alex Wilson’s recording for Toccata Classics is the first complete presentation of all 24 Monographs.

Richard Divall notes in the end of his preface to the Monologues: ‘These 24 remarkable little pieces will do more to enhance Kelly’s reputation than any other works. They certainly call in question the view, expressed in Grove, that he rarely rose “above the limitations of Edwardian complacency”’. The truth is probably simply that before the war the vast majority of his works were only known by a few in his inner circle, and after the Great War, with Kelly dead, Borwick following soon after, and with cultural aesthetics changing so quickly, there had been no interest in reviving the works until now.

Judging Kelly

The question before us is this: just what kind of genius was F.S. ‘Sep’ Kelly? – for a genius he undoubtedly was. Pianist, rower, composer – those three roles competed for space and light in his life. Considered the great amateur sculler of that period, he was already a famous rower before he won gold in the Eights at the 1908 London Olympics.

Yet around the same time he was playing recitals with Pablo Casals, and often played in performances with Jelly d’Arányi, the great Hungarian virtuoso violinist – they even briefly made a piano trio together. Jelly was in love with Kelly, and often played his works. He loved her playing and liked to conduct her in concerto performances. But the London critics persisted in seeing him as a rower who played the piano on the side, even though the reverse was clearly the truth.

One of the last reviews of Kelly the pianist was in The Times, which stated: ‘... he is such a good pianist, that we wish he were better. He plays like a scholar; as if he liked the clear, metallic ring of word or phrase, and would continue to like it for many years. But the true literary sense is of slow growth, and only emerges when the effervescences have had time to subside and all heady matter has been refined away.’ It is hard to know what Kelly would have made of such comments, and exactly what kind of pianist the critics were hoping for, but it seemed clear that Kelly’s destiny would not allow for a solo career, and he shifted his focus to his other musical love: that of composition.

Kelly’s oeuvre clearly sits perfectly in the Schumann-Brahms lineage, and his specific genius is not of innovation, but of fluency in the established forms of the classical canon. These he infused with deep feeling, given his unusually early experiences of grief, losing his favourite brother at 18, his
beloved father at 20 and his mother the following year. It is his capacity for embedding feeling in his works that distinguishes him as a composer – that and his prodigious musical imagination. That emotional intimacy, which works so well in his miniatures, would work against him in public, where his piano playing was often criticised for being too reserved and understated. Even Borwick finally admitted to Kelly that his playing sometimes failed to achieve a sense of climax. This one cannot say about his music.

The gods of the Schumann-Brahms School (whom Grainger largely rejected for Grieg, the world of folk songs and the path less travelled) were Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn. Kelly’s musical world was also populated by composers such as Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, Liszt, Wagner, and the English Romantics led by Elgar. In the piano world, Kelly adored Chopin, Rachmaninov, Scriabin, Ravel and Debussy, all of whose influences can be sensed at times. More than anything else, the aesthetic that defines Kelly’s piano writing is that of a profound sensibility, encasing his fine feelings in jewel-like miniatures.

It is my wish that through this recording pianists in Britain, Australia and elsewhere will be able to evaluate this body of work, and that as a result, the best of these pieces will have a chance to enter the repertoire. In Australia, in particular, where we have precious few romantic works, I believe these pieces will make clear that there was indeed a body of music written by Australians other than Percy Grainger, before the advent of the post-WW2 wave spearheaded by Peter Sculthorpe, Malcolm Williamson and Richard Meale. Having spent almost a decade coming to terms with Kelly’s catalogue, I know it is time for the reclamation of his works, and for a deeper appreciation of the exquisite sensibility which is embodied in them. The argument for Kelly’s genius has been won by the quantity and quality of his works which we have now recorded. It is now just a matter of time until his music, beyond simply the Elegy for Rupert Brooke, is heard and recognised by serious musicians and music lovers.

Christopher Latham
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Artist in Residence, Australian War Memorial

All these articles draw heavily on the work of Therese Radic, whose biography of F.S. Kelly, jointly written with Olympic rowing gold medallist Martin Cross, will be published shortly. It also acknowledges the great debt we all have to Richard Divall whose pioneering work, paid for by the Marshall Hall Trust and other philanthropists, paved the way for all the subsequent cultural recovery work on F.S. Kelly’s compositions.