Mirrors
The Unpublished Songs – Two
For voice and piano

Frederick Septimus Kelly
Sydney, 1881 – France, 1916

Edited by
Richard Divall

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Australian F S Kelly’s brief life uniquely encompassed the highest levels in sport (he won gold for Britain as a rower at the 1908 Olympics) and music (as pianist, composer, conductor and patron). It ended with a hero’s death. Kelly was a Lieutenant-Commander in the Royal Naval Division’s Hood Battalion. He was twice at Gallipoli, where he was wounded, receiving the DSC for his bravery under fire. He was with the burial party when Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) was interred on the island of Skyros, the poet having died as the Royal Naval Division was making its way to the Dardanelles. Devastated by this loss, Kelly wrote his Elegy: in memoriam Rupert Brooke. He was killed during one of the last great battles of the Somme at Beucourt-sur-Ancre, on 13 November 1916 when he was shot in the head while taking a machinegun post.

Kelly was born in Sydney on 29 May 1881, into a wealthy Irish family. Thomas Hussey Kelly, father of F S Kelly, was a wool broker and company director and a mining promoter. From 1893 he studied at Eton where he developed a precocious talent in both rowing and piano. I quote here from Thérèse Radic’s book Race Against Time.

There his musical talent flourished under the tutelage of Dr Charles Harford Lloyd. He came to the notice of the French pianist and teacher Antoine Francois Marmontel, a friend and pupil of Chopin. By then Marmontel was nearly eighty and no longer teaching at the Paris Conservatoire where he had been on staff for fifty years. His legion of students there included Albeniz, Bizet, d’Indy, Dubois, Grau and Wieniawski. Marmontel offered to teach the boy for nothing if he would devote himself to music. Kelly was fourteen, and though he may have wished to leave Eton and follow his chosen profession, his parents decided against it. As some kind of substitute for this thwarting of ambition, a passion for rowing temporarily replaced his passion for music. Sep set about the business with characteristic determination and discipline. He rowed in the Eton Eight in 1897 and was Stroke for that crew when it won the Ladies’ Plate at Royal Henley Regatta in 1899. In 1898 he was awarded Balliol College’s Nettleship Scholarship for music. What were to remain the two loves of his life were already making opposing demands on his time and attention.

Kelly went to Oxford and in 1898 was awarded a Nettleship Scholarship at Balliol College. Here he participated in the successful Balliol rowing team, where he was also a member of the Leander Club. His solo sculling record of 1905 stood unbeaten until 1938. In 1908 he was a member of the British Gold Medal winning eight in the London Olympic Games.

From 1903 to 1908 Kelly was a student at Das Hoch’sche Konservatorium at Frankfurt-am-Main where he studied composition under Iwan Knorr – Percy Grainger’s teacher, and piano with Ernst Engesser. Kelly kept a daily diary where he commented on his musical colleagues and activities, as well as his wide circle of acquaintances. These diaries, up to 29 April 1915 together with Kelly’s life are thoroughly documented in
Thérèse Radic’s book *Race Against Time The Diaries of F.S. Kelly*. At the time of publication, the final volume of the diary, covering May 1915 until his death was missing. Recently a typescript of the last of these, with annotations by Arthur Asquith DSO, son of the British Prime Minister H H Asquith, was obtained by the National Library of Australia, and is currently being edited by Thérèse Radic. Arthur Asquith (1883-1939), also served in the Hood Battalion. In 2014 the NLA was able to buy one of the last original handwritten Kelly diaries from a British bookseller. It covers three months in early 1916. This, too, will be incorporated in the edited Kelly war diaries. A large collection of Kelly’s published works and manuscripts were also obtained by the National Library and some forty of Kelly’s works have been edited and published by The Marshall-Hall Trust. These are freely available on application to the Editor.

Ten of his songs were published in 1910 and 1913 by Schott and Co, but there are about seven further songs that have remained unpublished, and the songs in this series are some of them. Kelly was fond of setting the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Shakespeare and Wordsworth, and also of the American poet Logan Pearsall Smith (1865-1948). This brief but deeply moving song, *Mirrors* is set to a text by that poet.

Richard Divall
June 2014

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2 These include the 24 Monographs and 12 Studies for solo piano, the incomplete Sonata for piano, two works for organ and the Elegy for Rupert Brooke for solo violin, harp and strings. The violin sonata composed for Jelly d’Arányi will be published in this series.
Frederick Septimus Kelly 1881 – 1916
Photograph courtesy of the Leander Club, Oxford
Facsimile of the first version of the song Mirrors
National Library of Australia nla.ms-ms3095
CRITICAL NOTES

There are no editorial notes.

The Editor
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Mirrors

Logan Pearsall Smith 1865-1946

Frederick Septimus Kelly 1881-1916
Edited by Richard Divall

Voice

The mirrors on the wall, like cold and quiet spies, keep watch upon us

Piano

piu f

all with their unmoving eyes.

How we grow old and
c

change they witness as we pass; a transformation strange reflected in the glass.

But in those vaulty wells of blue and sombre light the truth half

rinf
veil-ed dwells, so slow the change and slight.

But if by ma-gic powers in youth we could be-hold the face that will be ours when we are grey and old, no

sight that e'erhath been, no ghost could more ap-pal, than our own fa-ces seen in mir-
- rors on the wall. No sight that e'er hath been, no ghost could more ap-pal than our own...