

Gerald and Joy Finzi Collection

MS 1399

The collection contains typescript poems collected by the Finzis, including over 700 poems by Valentine Ackland arranged by Sylvia Townsend Warner, and work by Ursula Vaughan Williams and Averil Morley. Correspondence includes 21 letters from Edward, Lord Bridges, to Gerald Finzi 1950-1955, and around 170 letters and cards to Joy Finzi from Louis Bonnerot, Edmund Blunden, Valentine Ackland, Nigel Finzi and Helen Thomas. There is also a manuscript of Thomas Hardy's poem *We field women*, a manuscript of Edmund Blunden's poem *All on a summer's day: a march*, a collection of 45 letters from Robert Bridges to Sir Hubert Parry, 1894-1898, and a copy of the address given by Joy Finzi on the opening of the Library's Finzi Book Room in 1974.

The Collection covers the year's 1894-1974.

The physical extent of the collection is 7 boxes containing c. 1200 items.

Introduction

Gerald Finzi was born in London on 14 July 1901 and spent his early childhood in London. His father died when he was just seven and following the outbreak of the First World War Finzi moved with his mother to Harrogate, in Yorkshire.

There Finzi was able to study composition with the composer Ernest Farrar and from 1917 with Edward Bairstow at York Minster. But attracted by the beauty of the English Countryside, Finzi moved to Painswick, Gloucestershire, in 1922 where he was able to compose in tranquillity.

His first published work was 'By Footpath and Stile' (1921-22), a song-cycle for baritones and string quartet to texts by Thomas Hardy, whose work Finzi greatly admired.

But rural and musical isolation soon became oppressive and in 1926 he moved back to London and began to study with RO Morris, one of the outstanding British teachers of the inter-war years.

He also became acquainted with Ralph Vaughan Williams, whose influence he was always to acknowledge and who in 1928 conducted Finzi's Violin Concerto.

Other acquaintances in London included Holst, Bliss, Rubbra and Ferguson – who was also to become a life-long friend. In 1930 Finzi gained a teaching appointment at the Royal Academy of Music, but in 1933 gave up the post after he married artist Joy Black and moved back to the country, to Aldbourne, Wiltshire.

The same year saw a complete performance of the song-cycle 'A Young Man's Exhortation' (1926-29), his first noted success in London. Combined with another early success, 'Earth and Air and Rain' (1928-32), it established him as a masterly and sensitive setter of poetry.

His burgeoning career was soon thwarted by the outbreak of the Second World War, causing the cancellation of the song-cycle 'Dies Natalis' (1925-39) at the Three Choirs Festival. It was a performance that could have brought him to prominence sooner.

In 1939 the Finzis moved to Ashmansworth Farm, Hampshire. During the war years Gerald Finzi was drafted into the Ministry of War Transport and opened his house to a number of German and Czech refugees.

He founded the Newbury String Players, initially using local amateurs, reviving much neglected 18th Century string music as well as giving several premieres by his contemporaries.

With the return of peace Finzi began to receive a series of important commissions, namely, 'Lo, The Full, Final Sacrifice' (1946-47), a festival anthem; a larger scale ode 'For St Cecilia' (1946-47); a Clarinet Concerto (1948-49) for Frederick Thurston, which was perhaps his best known work; and his masterpiece 'Intimations of Immortality' (1938-50), for tenor, chorus and orchestra.

In 1951, however, Finzi learned that he was suffering from Hodgkin's Disease, a form of leukaemia, and was told he had between five and ten years to live. The discovery in no way lessened his activities, particularly those undertaken for other composers.

He had championed Ivor Gurney in the 1930s and those efforts continued. He also worked on the music of Hubert Parry and edited the overtures of William Boyce for Musica Britannica. An all-Finzi concert at the Royal Festival Hall in 1954 acknowledged his standing in Britain's musical life.

A commission from Sir John Barbirolli for the 1955 Cheltenham Festival brought forth the Cello Concerto (1951-52, 54-55), Finzi's most ambitious, purely instrumental work.

Finzi finally lost the fight against his illness and he died on September 27, 1956. His Cello Concerto was first broadcast the night before he died.

Joy Finzi was an artist, sculptor, poet, musician, and organizer.

Joy Finzi was born Joyce Black in Hampstead on March 3, 1907 to Ernest Black, a prosperous businessman, who was an 'East India Merchant', and Amy Whitehorn.

Joy was educated at Moira House in Eastbourne, where the family had settled after her father's retirement. Tall, fair, graceful and radiant, the young Joyce Black possessed the kind of beauty admired by the Pre-Raphaelite painters and abilities that ranged from music to tennis. She studied violin and, after her marriage, sculpture and pottery at the Central School of Art and Design.

Gerald Finzi met Joyce Black when he rented a cottage from her in the early 1930s and had to call on her for help because a problem with the flue caused the cottage to fill with smoke.

Gerald and Joy were married on September 16, 1933 at the Dorking Registry Office with Ralph and Adeline Vaughan Williams and Mags Black as the only witnesses. They lived in London but soon moved to Aldbourne, an attractive village in Wiltshire, where they bought Beech Knoll, a substantial early 19th century house with large grounds. Their first son, Christopher, was born in 1934; their second son, Nigel, in 1936. In 1939, the Finzis moved to Ashmansworth and their new home, Church Farm, designed by architect Peter Harland, who had also created a house for composer Arthur Bliss.

Gerald immediately recognized an unusually strong gift and encouraged her to draw more. She spent time drawing friends and country people in conversation with Gerald. Her pencil portraits, captured what was indeed hidden in the faces of a wide range of subjects including composers Gerald Finzi, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Howard Ferguson, writers Ursula Le Guin, Sylvia Townsend Warner, war poets Edmund Blunden and David Jones, conductor Sir Adrian Boult and people who led quiet, ordinary lives like "Smithy — Mrs. Smith — Country child — London char" and "Pu", Howard Ferguson's Irish Nanny from County Monaghan. In 1987, the Libanus Press published a collection of Joy Finzi's portraits in a book entitled *In That Place*. Her portrait of Vaughan Williams is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in London.

During World War II, the Finzis opened their home to German and Czech refugees and anyone who needed shelter.

Joy also became the administrative force behind the organization of the Newbury String Players, which had been founded by Gerald in 1940. Joy's job was to find the players. She also served as one of the second violinists. Later both Christopher and Nigel joined their father's amateur orchestra. Together Gerald and Joy encouraged young musicians like Julian Bream and composers like Kenneth Leighton by providing them with engagements and performances of their compositions.

For more than 30 years, Joy worked tirelessly, first with her husband Gerald Finzi and later alone, to ensure that Ivor Gurney's work, correspondence and the story

of his life be preserved for future generations. Starting in the 1930s, Joy, Gerald and their friend Howard Ferguson undertook the massive task of sorting and cataloging Gurney's poetry and music which was in the possession of his friend and guardian Marion Scott.

In addition to preserving Gurney's work, the Finzis also played important roles in the preservation and cataloguing of the music of Sir Hubert Parry.

After Finzi's death in 1956, Joy along with her sons and Howard Ferguson founded the Finzi Trust and under its auspices most of Gerald's music was recorded. Joy also encouraged artists in all fields and took a particular interest in the paintings of Benedict Rubbra, the son of composer Edmund Rubbra.

Joy eventually moved to her cottage Bushy Leaze in Leckhampstead.

In addition to her drawing, Joy wrote poetry and published two collections:

A Point of Departure (1967), with engravings by Richard Shirley Smith and

Twelve Months of the Year (1981), with engravings by Simon Brett.

In March 1991, Joy suffered a broken hip in a fall at her home and endured two operations since the first one to fix her hip was done incorrectly. She did not want her life prolonged unnaturally and returned to the home she had shared with Gerald to be cared for by her son, Christopher and his family.

Joy Finzi died on June 14, 1991 at the age of 84.

- MS 1399/1/1** Letter from William Empson to Sylvia Townsend Warner
10 Oct 1932
Material sent from Tokyo, includes one manuscript and two
typescript poems
- MS 1399/1/2** Letter from William Empson to Sylvia Townsend Warner
04 Jun 1932
Includes envelope
- MS 1399/1/3** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia
Townsend Warner
1934-1936
- MS 1399/1/4** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia
Townsend Warner
1937-1939

- MS 1399/1/5** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia Townsend Warner
1940-1943
Includes material dating from 1940 and material entitled, 'War in progress', 1940-1943
- MS 1399/1/6** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia Townsend Warner
1941-1945
- MS 1399/1/7** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia Townsend Warner
1946-1949
- MS 1399/1/8** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia Townsend Warner
1950-1959
- MS 1399/1/9** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia Townsend Warner
1960-1969
- MS 1399/2/1** Drafts of 'Invocation to music' and 'A song of darkness and light' by Robert Bridges
c.1898
- MS 1399/2/2** Letters from Robert Bridges to Sir Hubert Parry, relating to the 'Invocation to Music'
1894-1895

29 letters
- MS 1399/2/3** Letters from Robert Bridges to Sir Hubert Parry relating to 'A song of darkness and light'
1897-1898

16 letters
- MS 1399/2/4** Typescript copies of letters from Robert Bridges to Mr. and Mrs. Ponsonby
19 Apr 1921-27 Sep 1927

2 letters

- MS 1399/2/5** Letter from W. H. H. Court to Gerald Finzi, relating to a performance of 'Invocation to music' in the Corn Exchange, Newbury, on 18 April 1898
20 Nov 1950
- MS 1399/2/6** Letters from Edward, Lord Bridges, to Gerald Finzi
1950-1955

21 letters
- MS 1399/2/7** Typescript transcript drafts and letters by Edward, Lord Bridges undated
Material consists of letters from Robert Bridges to Hubert Parry 1894-1898; drafts of 'Invocation to music' and 'A song of darkness and light'
- MS 1399/2/8** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia Townsend Warner
1930-1932
- MS 1399/2/9** Typescript poems by Valentine Ackland, arranged by Sylvia Townsend Warner
1933
- MS 1399/3/1** Letters from Louis Bonnerot and David Jones to Joyce Finzi
1964-1974
Material consists of 14 letters from Louis Bonnerot, and 1 letter from David Jones

15 letters
- MS 1399/3/2** Letter and enclosed poem from John Masefield to Mrs Joyce Finzi
1963
- MS 1399/3/3** Letters and cards from Edmund Blunden to Mrs Joyce Finzi
1957-1967

68 items
- MS 1399/3/4** Letters from Valentine Ackland to Mrs Joyce Finzi
1960-1967

26 letters

- MS 1399/3/5** Letters from Valentine Ackland to Mrs Joyce Finzi
1966-1969

12 letters
- MS 1399/3/6** Letters from Sylvia Townsend Warner to Helen Thomas
1962-1966

30 letters
- MS 1399/3/7** Letters and photographs from Valentine Ackland to Helen
Thomas
1962-1964

26 letters, 3 photographs
- MS 1399/3/8** Letters from Nigel [?] to [?]
1962-1964
- MS 1399/4/1** Lines written by John Masefield for a concert given by the
Newbury String Players at Berkley Castle
30 Sep 1960
- MS 1399/4/2** Letters from John Masefield to Christopher Finzi
1960
- MS 1399/4/3** MS of the poem 'All on a summer's day: a march' by Edmund
Blunden
1951
- MS 1399/4/4** Manuscript letters of Helen Thomas with transcripts by her
daughter, Myfanwy Thomas
1971
Material includes letter from Myfanwy Thomas
- MS 1399/4/5** Letters from Helen Thomas to Joy Finzi
1960-1966
- MS 1399/4/6** Xerox copies of letters from Helen Thomas to Gwen and Vernon
Watkins, with transcripts by Myfanwy Thomas
1955-1967

- MS 1399/4/7** Manuscript summary of the plot of 'The humours of the court: a comedy in three acts' by Robert Bridges
undated
Published by George Bell and Sons and J & E Bumpus, c.1928
- MS 1399/4/8** Letter from Andrew Young to Mrs Joyce Finzi
14 Dec 1957
- MS 1399/5/1** Typescript poems by Averil Morley, wife of Frank Fraser Darling, with a biographical note and introduction by Leanoard Clark
c. 1959
- MS 1399/5/2** Typescript poems by Ursula Vaughan Williams
Undated
- MS 1399/5/3** Typescript poems by various authors, apparently collected by Gerald Finzi
Undated
- MS 1399/5/4** Typescript poems by various authors, apparently collected by Gerald Finzi
Undated
- MS 1399/5/5** Typescript copy of the address given by Mrs Joyce Finzi at the opening of the Finzi Book Room, University of Reading Library
11 Dec 1974