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MUSIC, LIFE, AND CHANGING
TIMES: SELECTED
CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN
BRITISH COMPOSERS ELIZABETH
MACONCHY AND GRACE
WILLIAMS, 1927–77



Jenny Doctor and Sophie Fuller

Music, Life, and Changing Times Selected Correspondence Between British Composers Elizabeth Maconchy and Grace Williams, 1927–77

Sophie Fuller, Jenny Doctor

Letters 24–34 (June 1933–March 1934)

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I.3 Letters 24–34 (June 1933–March 1934)

This ten-month period was a prolific time for both women, despite the recurrence of Maconchy's TB, which led to her spending more time in Brighton. They both continued to be involved in the Macnaghten–Lemare concerts as well as having works performed by ensembles such as the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, entering competitions, and hearing works broadcast on the BBC.

That summer, Maconchy's *Quintet for oboe and strings* (1932) became her first work to be issued as a recording. She spent much of this time on her oratorio *Deborah*,¹ working closely with her husband, Billy, and on her ballet *Little Red Shoes* (1935). Williams was working hard as a teacher, as well as continuing to compose music such as her *Concert Overture for orchestra* (1933–4) and vocal works for Welsh tenor Gwynn Parry Jones.

Maconchy held a private concert party at Chart Corner on 1 July 1933, at which the Macnaghten Quartet and Sylvia Spencer (oboe) performed her prize-winning Quintet for oboe and strings (1932), as well as Purcell's Fantasias and Haydn's String Quartet op. 76 no. 4. Two weeks earlier, on 17 June, the same players had played the quintet at a Society of Women Musicians concert at 74 Grosvenor Street, London, alongside recent works by other society members. At this time, Maconchy embarked on her First String Quartet (1933).

Meanwhile, Maconchy had lent Williams her score of Janáček's Jenůfa, an opera she had seen in Prague but which was not yet known in Britain, remaining unstaged until 1957. Similarly, Musorgsky's Khovanshchina was relatively unknown, having been produced in London in 1919, but not restaged until 1959.

24) 15 June 1933

Chart Corner
June 15th

Dearest Grace

Here is your party-invitation; – it has got delayed for two or three days, waiting for a letter to be written with it! – There is to be a place for you in

1 A manuscript of this work survives in the Maconchy Archive at St Hilda's College, Oxford.

someone's car (Sylvia or Mary (the 'cellist's) – or someone's –).² Anne will probably do the arranging of transport later – so will you communicate with her about it, later. She is in bed with a septic throat & temperature – but I heard this morning that she is better – but they may not be able to play at the S.W.M's on Saturday. (I shan't come up if they can't) Presumably you don't want to hear the other S.W.M's efforts (if they are anything like last year!) – so perhaps you'd ring her up to find out if it's all right – I'm going to, on Friday. If all is well – will you meet us at 74 Grosvenor Street at 4? (tea is at 4) the concert is at 4.30.

I'm so glad you're enjoying Jenufa, & agree with me in thinking it a wonderful opera. On the actual stage, it seemed to be really dramatic (& terribly moving) without being typically 'operatic' at all. I'd give anything to see it again; I wish I could hear Khovan – – – however you spell it – too.

I hear my records are out as Lucie (B's sister) has got them.³ I haven't been sent any, yet, so must order them. They are not in the early June catalogues – so will be in the mid-June ones, I suppose.

The weather is glorious here again – Maureen & the dress maker have been here since I last saw you – so I've only done a little work. The latter has made me (I think) a very nice dress for 'the' party. Sheila comes to-day to fetch Maureen away, & then I really must work hard again. I've finished the 1st movement of the 4tet & would like you to see it. I will send it to you, when I've made a decent copy – if you don't mind. I've had a good deal of trouble with the end – and I'm not sure I haven't got too much almost exact repetition in the recapitulation section: & yet in a way I feel it needs it. I want to know what you think. I don't approve of always dressing one's themes up in a new disguise when they appear again, do you? In this movement I think they would lose their character if one did. . . (I think personally people do it too much, at present.)

I have washed my hair, & am drying it in the sun – but unless I move, I shall get sunstroke (not having such a good head as you!)

I hope you are writing again – & your idle fit passed??

Very much love from Betty.

25) [After 1 July] 1933

51 Warwick Rd, S.W. 5

Dearest Betty

Once more lots & lots of thanks for the lovely party. I think it was about the nicest I've been to – everyone said the same. – Anne's Quartet has improved! LOADS, hasn't it? I thought they played your first mvt. terribly well & all of it was good. The records of the last 2 mvts. impressed me frightfully – I felt I'd

2 Mary Goodchild, cellist of the Macnaghten Quartet.

3 Maconchy's Quintet for oboe and strings was issued by HMV (B4448–9), performed by the Griller String Quartet and Helen Gaskell (oboe).

really got hold of them thoroughly at last – I’ll get the records as soon as I get home at the end of the week & work away at them. V. nice prospect!

– We had a thrilling drive home – the air was so warm – but we all felt hungry again & almost turned back in order to creep like sleuths into your larder & steal all that was left over (I bet there wasn’t much –) Betty you are a marvel to be able to produce those heavenly asparagus sandwiches – & those dear little round brown ones – Even Dorrie (!!) Gow forgot all about her special diet & just stuffed. (And when I said ‘I’m going inside in search of another meringue’, she said ‘Let me come too’.)

Have a lovely time in Ireland.

Best love from Grace

I loved your blue frock. And Sheila’s and Maureen’s (I just devoured those reds.)

P.S. I’ll look after Jenufa v. carefully. Thanks so much for letting me have it for the holidays.

Both Maconchy and Williams received premières at the first Macnaghten–Lemare concert of the season, given on 6 November 1933: the Macnaghten Quartet played Maconchy’s String Quartet no. 1, while John Francis (flute) and the composer (piano) played Williams’s Sonatina for flute and piano (1933). At the second concert in the series, on 11 December 1933, Maconchy’s Two Motets for double chorus (1931), settings of John Donne, was first performed, conducted by Iris Lemare.

26) [Before 17 October] 1933

Chart Corner, Seal Chart, Kent. Seal 106
Wednesday.

My dearest Grace

It is ages since I have heard anything of you. Did you have a good holiday? – you must be back in London by now. Did you write much during the holidays, or just bask? (it was a particularly good opportunity to do the latter, wasn’t it?)

We had a long holiday in Ireland – the only pity being that when we went to Connemara for a week it rained every day except one, though the drought went on everywhere else. But it was lovely all the same. It was grand getting back here too – it is a nice little house to come back to. And then when we’d been back just a fortnight, & without the slightest warning I again got a (very slight) haemorrhage. There appears to have been no reason for it, and I’d no temperature, & there’s nothing to be heard in my lung. However, it was very slight indeed – that was only just over a week ago – & yesterday I was in the garden most of the day, & shall be again to-day. I’m going to London next week to be X-rayed (– the doctor thinks it’s a minute blood-vessel which gives way – & doesn’t affect my ‘general health’) But it’s a curse, of course – though I feel perfectly well. I’d looked forward to a really good winter of hard work and coming up to London often – but I suppose I shall have to modify my programme

a bit! – Iris’s choir is starting to rehearse my motets on the 17th, & it’s a bit of a problem getting the parts done as I’d only done two when this happened! However I think it can be managed.

Anne’s 4tet have apparently worked very hard at my 4tet – I haven’t heard it yet. They are altogether going to play it eight times before Xmas! – the chief times being the Ballet Club, the Grotian Hall (at a series of concerts that Arthur Bliss is somehow mixed up with) & the Oxford Univ. Music Club.⁴ – (The others are lunch time concerts etc.) I’m being anxious to hear it soon, of course.

Nothing else has happened about prospective performances since I saw you – except that I heard from Harriet Cohen that she ‘liked my Concerto very much indeed’ & would like to play it – which was a great surprise. I don’t know if anything will come of it. We are trying the Hallé Orchestra.

Have you anything exciting in view? Do write & tell me your news – & will you come down here when I’m a bit more active? (which will be very shortly) I must stop and get up.

Very much love from

Betty

Forgive a dull letter.

Maconchy’s illness prevented her from copying the parts for her Two Motets herself. When a copyist let her down, Williams and other friends stepped in.

27) [Before 17 October] 1933

Chart Corner
Sunday.

Dearest Grace.

I am so sorry about what has happened about the parts of my wretched motets. Iris was here on Friday (Anne’s 4tet came down to me to hear a rehearsal of my 4tet) & tells me that the FOOL who was to have done the 2nd choir parts has been completely useless – said when we saw the thing last Monday that he’d be able to do them quite easily – then took four days to do ONE and left a note to say he couldn’t do any more!!! (– But presumably Iris told you all this –) & then apparently she just shipped them on to you – my dear, I do hope you’re not having an awful and hectic week-end – and I hope to goodness you aren’t trying to get them all done – because I know what a long time they take – and that it would be impossible and exhaust you. I feel furious about it all – chiefly with myself for getting ill (I had it all mapped out to get them done in nice time –) and partly with Iris for not arranging something more satisfactory, when she really had time

4 Early performances of the quartet included: 7 November, at a Grotian Hall Chamber Concert (at Steinway’s concert hall in Wigmore Street, London), and 14 November, at the Holywell Music Room, Oxford.

to – & then with this idiot of a man – and lastly because it has fallen on you. One bright spot is that they will be well done – (which they mightn't have been by Iris' man!) & mind you make out a good adequate bill for them. (I wonder if they will be able to sing that first one?)

I went to London on Thursday to a specialist, who also X-rays, & he gave what was really a very good report of me – the X-ray photograph shows virtually nothing – & they can hear virtually nothing – & apparently it is really nothing to worry about having had this go – ; but I have to go on with this same old 'regime' of existence – being allowed an occasional visit to London.

– Billy is waiting to go to the post – Let me know which day you can come down, won't you? soon –

I was very pleased with the 4tet on Friday: – I want you to hear it & tell me what you think of it. They have got hold of it very well, I think.

Very best love from

Betty

I haven't said what an angel I think you are about the parts – but you know what I think about it –

28) 17 October 1933 – postcard

17 October 1933

Dearest Grace – You are MARVELLOUS – I don't know how to say thank you to you – and Dolly – and 'Eleanor' (who I know – but I don't know the rest of her name –)⁵ and B. Britten. I feel very ashamed at my dirty work being done for me – but it is simply grand that they're done, and, miraculously in time.

I hope to see you soon, when the flute sonata is off your chest – but of course these parts must have kept it back – as well as terribly overworking you. 100000000 thanks, and all love from Betty.

The Macnaghten–Lemare concert on 11 December 1933, included, in addition to Maconchy's difficult motets, first performances of Litanie, another John Donne setting for double chorus, by John Sykes, an RCM student, and Britten's Two Part-Songs for mixed choir, 'I loved a lass' and 'Lift-boy', as well as three movements from his string quartet Alla Quartetto Serioso: 'Go play, boy, play'. Maconchy continued to work on her ballet Little Red Shoes⁶ and had started a new project, an oratorio, Deborah, for soprano (Deborah), baritone (Narrator), bass (Barak), double chorus, and orchestra. As well as teaching at Southlands Training College, since September 1932, Williams had been music mistress at Camden School for Girls in north London.

5 Eleanor Bevan Ramsbotham, Dorothy Gow's partner.

6 See Letter 14.

29) [After 11] December 1933

Chart Corner
Friday.

Dearest Grace.

It was nice getting your letter. I'm awfully glad you heard the rehearsal of the motets though I wish you had been there and I could have seen you on Monday – (I should like to hear you conduct five hundred school children, it must be very inspiring) Apparently the performance was better than the rehearsal – but I was disappointed. When I'd heard them about 3 weeks ago at a rehearsal – they didn't know them properly – but the effect, in a smallish room, with them all singing fortissimo all the time (so as to be sure of sticking to their notes!) was exciting, and on Monday it wasn't – just rather flat. After the rehearsal I hadn't expected more than a performance that would show what they were all about – and when the element of excitement was lacking I didn't think she could tell very clearly what it was all about! However –

The physical and mental strain involved in waiting for the next ♭A, ♮A or ♭B in the sopranos ought to cure me of writing a part like that again! – but I like lots of high notes – or at least a high texture – in choral writing – it seems to me one can get a sort of suspended-in-mid air feeling – (less 'of the earth' than choral writing in the middle & low registers –) hard to explain, – but do you feel it, too?

Cuthbert Bates (the Tudor Singers conductor)⁷ was there, and was most enthusiastic and said on the spot that he would do the motets with the Tudor Singers (who I believe are really good – have you heard them?) – so I do hope he will – and won't be put off by the difficulties he will find in the score! I think he'll stick to it. It would be lovely to hear them sung as I imagine them; – Iris's poor choir did work so hard – and she hardest of all –. I think it was very courageous of them to tackle them, and of Iris to go on and make something of them out of the chaos there was for ages, apparently! But indeed the standard of choral singing is abysmal, as you say. – I would love you do [*sic*] them with your students – (I bet they're very good, under your coaching –) [. . .].

Arthur Bliss was at the concert, and was most pleasant – (I thought him just a bit too much! –) I said I really wanted a big choir for the motets and he murmured 'O yes, we must see about that, for certain –', but I doubt if it meant much!

I also talked to Britten for the first time and liked him – I didn't like his appearance, but then I did like him when talking to him.

– Rather funny, he said something about what did I think of the performance (implying that he thought it awful –) and there was one of the most hardworking and worthy of the soprano's [*sic*], looking very pathetic just beside us! – so I had to be kind – he must have thought me a bit odd, & very easily satisfied – !

7 In 1923, the amateur choral conductor Cuthbert Bates had founded the Tudor Singers.

Has Uncle Ralph gone back to Dorking yet? – I must write to him

I wish I could see you – there’s such a lot I want to talk about, and I’ve embarked on my Oratorio, and badly want to show you what I’ve done – (only the 1st chorus,, actually) and the Little Red Shoes ballet, of which I’ve only done about a third. I do go slowly – What are you doing, and going to do? You must have had a most hectic term, and I hope will have a good holiday. (I’m glad the money’s rolling in now!)

[. . .]

I am very well – the cold weather suits me, I think. (it has been cold here) I got one awful fit of depression this autumn, – nothing seemed any good at all for ever more – ; but I got over it, as one does.

I believe the reason the choir sang the Sykes so badly was that they’d given all the time to my things – which makes me feel rather bad. – I enjoyed the last movement of Britten’s 4tet, but thought the first two not good. I also enjoyed the lift-boy a lot – really witty –, I think.

Much best love from Betty.

Maconchy continued work on the oratorio, Deborah, over Christmas and also began revising her Gerard Manley Hopkins setting, The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo (1930–31) for chorus and chamber orchestra. She awaited news about whether her First String Quartet was to be selected for the ISCM Festival in 1934.

30) 8 January 1934

Chart Corner, Seal Chart, Kent. Seal 106
January 8th ’34.

Dearest Grace.

I do so want your criticism and advice about this – which is my Oratorio – or Cantata – as far as I’ve got with it.

I was much excited while I was doing it (till a few days ago –) and thought it splendid as I suppose one usually does while writing something! – now I feel very despondent about it, & fear it is very bad. [. . .]⁸ Is it worth doing this, if the first chorus, which I send, is an example of what it will be like?

– All this, and I haven’t said thank you for the darling little handkerchief you sent me. It was very nice of you, and thank you so much. Did you have a good Christmas? We had a very good one, with Maureen, and now I’m getting a certain amount of work done. I’ve raked out my setting of Hopkin[s]’s ‘Golden Echo & Leaden Echo’ did you ever see it? (I did most of it just three years ago) I had done it for small chorus and strings – which was quite wrong. I am now re-scoring it for small chorus & chamber orchestra, and giving far more help to the voices.

8 Detailed description of the oratorio’s structure follows.

I had given them very difficult things without any support – and I don't think I realised that – for instances – sops & altos don't sort of hit a chord like this –



with the clarity & precision one essentially wants. But with a little help

and support from wind – I think they more or less can get the right effect, don't you? – This Hopkins thing is certainly very hard – & goes high, too, but doesn't stay high in such a cruel way as the Motets. I want to send it to the B.B.C. next month which is the right sending-in time, I believe, – as no-one has seen it except Anthony Bernard¹⁰ – who expressed a desire to 'live with' the score two years ago – & is still doing so! I can't get it back – so am re-scoring it from my rough copy.

I am longing and dreading to hear about the fate of my quartet from the I.S.C.M. I thought I should have heard by now – as the Internat. Jury should have finished sitting last week, I think. Very unsettling!

You didn't say why you came back to London. But I do hope you will be able to come for a day before we go off on the 24th, – as you said you would. – A superb day to-day, and I'm writing in the hut, which it has been too horrid to do much lately. – I hope you've had some decent weather for your holiday, and been able to be by the sea a bit. I think you belong to the sea.

All best love from your loving

Betty.

With time during the Christmas holidays, Williams tried to work on her Concert Overture for orchestra (1933–4), to enter for the second Daily Telegraph competition, which focused this time on new concert overtures, but also began thinking about works for tenor; leading to 'Oh! weep for those that wept' (1934) to join the already written 'Oh! snatch'd away in beauty's bloom' (1933), both settings of Byron for tenor and orchestra.

31) [After 9] January 1934

51, Warwick Road, S.W.5


Dearest Betty,

Many thanks for the score, which I got just before leaving home yesterday [. . .].

I read it through several times in the train & each time I wasn't quite satisfied with the first part – as far as 'They break in pieces' – but all the rest I found thrilling. [. . .] it all gets going marvellously at 'They break in pieces' – & 'Adder's poison' is magnificent – & the return to the first theme seems to have more bite in it – e.g. 'Wicked triumph'!

9 Ex. PI.3.1. Elizabeth Maconchy, *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo* (1930–31, rev. 1933–34), excerpt.

10 Conductor Anthony Barnard.

– And then the rest of it just made me say ‘Now here, here is the real Betty once more’ – that ¹¹ figure is marvellous & the gorgeous part when Deborah hits top G (‘and I – ’) – that’s the finest bit for me so of course you must go on & finish the work at once.

Think a lot more about the opening – I shall, too, & perhaps I’ll be able to suggest something more – not that you’ll need any stupid suggestions from me. I think that if you just read it through a lot & hear it exactly as you’ve written it, you’ll feel instinctively that certain parts need just one or two extra touches to make the whole thing bigger. It is big as it stands but not quite arresting enough.

So endeth the school-marm. Betty I don’t know why you want my opinions, really, because as soon as I’ve given them I feel they’re thoroughly footling & I’m a sort of impostor. However – –

I’ll do my best to come down before you go to Brighton, but I’m a bit desperate now about my Overture. I couldn’t do a thing at the beginning of the holidays & thought I was done for forever – & then on the last day of the year I got the old feeling of wanting to write having something on the tip of my tongue – but I still couldn’t write a note – it was an awful day & New Year’s Eve at that. Then I tried to will myself to get going & even made a sort of new year’s resolution to that effect! And wonder of wonders I did get going as soon as I awoke on New Year’s day! & I’ve been at it ever since, but I’m so slow at scoring; I felt thoroughly rusty at first –

I’ve done only 3 mins. worth – & it must be ‘not less than 7’ (– which I think is long for an overture don’t you? i.e. if it’s a light one – & mine is v. light.).

I’ll let you know later how it goes – Then I’ve just met Parry Jones & he’s going to broadcast some songs of mine when I’ve written them (I’ve only got one for him at present) & scored them.¹² I think I hate his voice – & yet, I don’t know – he sings the Tristan Seaman song beautifully & the Beethoven ‘Adelaide’¹³ & he gets all the best tenor jobs in England so –

best love from

Grace

P.S. Do you want the score back soon?

P.P.S. Please let me have the part of the motets at the end of the month. My seniors are on school practice until then.

Williams began to teach Maconchy’s Two Motets to her student choir, while she continued to work on her Concert Overture. Maconchy’s Comedy Overture (1932–3) was first performed and broadcast on 7 March 1934 by Dan Godfrey conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, which was well known for

11 Ex. Pl.3.2. Elizabeth Maconchy, *Deborah* (1933–4), oratorio, excerpt.

12 Gwynn Parry Jones was a leading Welsh tenor, who was known for undertaking new works by living composers.

13 The Young Sailor singing at the beginning of Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde*, and Beethoven’s *Adelaide*, Op. 46, for voice and piano.

performing new works by British composers. News finally arrived about the 1934 ISCM Festival: Britten's *Phantasy, Op. 2*, for oboe and string trio was selected but Maconchy's *First String Quartet* was not.

32) 15 February 1934

6 Arundel Terrace, Brighton
Feb. 15th '34.

Dearest Grace

It is grand of you to have embarked on the motets. – (I thought of you doing them last night) I should much like to hear them, if I might, later on. (I've never heard, by the way, if the Tudor Singers are rehearsing them – but I suppose they are – if you see any of them, do ask them – –)¹⁴ I frightfully want to hear your Overture, can you bring your rough copy when you come down? I feel sure that it's very good! And have mentally allotted £100 to you – I hope the Jury will have enough sense to!

I haven't been able to do any writing for ages, as I'm doing the parts of my Overture for Dan Godfrey – they are nearly done, now: he wants them in a few days time, and the concert isn't till March 7th, so perhaps he will give it several rehearsals. I'm going to have rather a sweat finishing the score of my 'Leaden Echo & Golden Echo' (I think I told you I'd raked it out, and am rescoring it.) as I want to send it to the B.B.C. before the end of this month,¹⁵ and I still have a lot to do, as I have had to stop it completely for these parts. It has been lovely here most of the time, so far, – a lot of sunny days when it's almost as hot as summer. It's been very nice having Anne here – she is a lot better, I think – she looked perfectly ghastly when she came here, but looks more normal now.

Yes, Britten is frightfully lucky isn't he? I was disappointed about my quartet – but it can't be helped. – The Festival has got reduced to only 2½ concerts of contemporary music – all the rest is Italian propaganda – concerts of modern Italian music, old Italian music, Italian opera etc – which is rather sickening.

Dorothy Wadham¹⁶ wrote to me about a fortnight ago asking me [to] send a chamber work for a 'possible performance in Denmark' – so I've sent the 4tet – I don't know what it's for – they want some English works to select from, I believe, for a State festival or something.

Anne's quartet is broadcasting the quartet on March 20th which is good¹⁷ – the Overture at Bournemouth will be broadcast too – they always do those Wednesday concerts.

14 See Letter 29. The Tudor Singers performed Maconchy's Two Motets on 17 June 1934, at St Margaret's, Westminster.

15 Maconchy submitted the score to the BBC on 27 February 1934. See BBC WAC RCONT1, Maconchy, Composer file 1, 27 February 1934.

16 ISCM secretary.

17 Broadcast at 4.30 pm, 20 March 1934, on the BBC National Programme.

We listened to Job¹⁸ last night – I thought it was a very dull performance – frightfully unrhymical [*sic*] – also uninspired. Did you hear it?

[. . .]

Well – I must stop & go for my daily walk

All best love from

Betty

In addition to growing attention from London-based BBC programmes, Maconchy began to be noticed by Irish radio stations, including the BBC Belfast Station, under director Godfrey Brown.

33) 19 March 1934

6 Arundel Terrace, Brighton
March 19th '34.

Dearest Grace

I've been meaning to write for some time – about the Overture for one thing – and to thank you for writing about it. The performance was definitely bad – the orchestra (as you had gathered on the wireless) really is very bad now – I believe it used to be better – and Dan Godfrey was in the middle of having a dispute with them, and everything was at sixes & sevens, and everyone on the worst possible terms with each other. He just found fault & railed at them, and didn't attempt to get the best out of them. He was in an incredibly 'rattled' state all the time – and just kept saying 'I'm totally out of sympathy with your work – I don't like it' – and then 'what can one do with this damned orchestra', 'I've no time, no time --' – so I just had to make the best of a bad job, and by disregarding his continuous obligato of remarks such as the above, managed to tell him most of the things I wanted to and in the end it went a lot better than I thought it would! [. . .] I absolutely agree that the end is not right – damn it! I know you thought last year that it wasn't right – and I had an uncomfortable feeling about it, but couldn't make up my mind. But I know now that I must do something to it – the devil of it is that I don't know what – I shall have to laboriously work myself back into the 'spirit' of the wretched thing, and find some way.

I'm far from sure that it is a good work, but I should like to hear it again, played properly, before deciding. I'm not sure that it isn't scrappy in effect – perhaps because all the things in it only go on for such a short time.

It is very sad that you can't come down – but you must be fearfully busy, and the reason is grand. It is splendid about Parry Jones¹⁹ – he is very important. What songs are you scoring for him – & what date is it to be? I expect he will sing them often. You must make him do a lot of your songs. [. . .]

18 Vaughan Williams's *Job: A Masque for Dancing*, broadcast on 14 February 1934 from a BBC Symphony Concert in Queen's Hall, London, conducted by Adrian Boult.

19 See Letter 31.

Four years to-day since the Land in Prague.²⁰ I often think how good it was of you to come, and what a difference it made. I wish I wasn't so old! You'll listen to the Land on Easter Sunday won't you?²¹ I now hear it's at 4.30 with the L.S.O. (& Boult) not 9.0 – (as I'd thought it would be, as it is Boult.) Will you be able to listen to my quartet tomorrow? (4.30 on the National)

I had a pleasant surprise on Saturday – a letter from the B.B.C. music director in Belfast, saying that they are 'contemplating giving a short programme of my works' – and that they have a 'full orchestra, so can do works of almost any dimensions' – which sounds hopeful, – but I wonder how good they are? Also if the man who wrote (Godfrey Brown) who seems to be their conductor, is any good. Sometimes I think what a good thing it would be to conduct oneself. I immensely enjoyed writing him a list of my works!!²² [. . .]

Have you ever thought of sending anything to Tovey?²³ I've written to ask him if I may send him something.

I suppose you're too busy with scoring & your exam. papers etc to be writing much? I've hardly done any here – as first I had the Overture parts to do, then the score of my 'Leaden Echo & Golden Echo' to finish, & then a few details to be done to the Land parts. But now I'm working a bit, & writing a first chorus for the Oratorio, instead of that other one.²⁴ I want you to hear this one when we can meet.

The B.B.C. have sent me £3.3.0 for the hire of the Land – which doesn't seem excessive. Perhaps I'll be able to get something for Belfast, if it comes off.

I must stop. We have been having tremendous gales here, with perfectly lovely waves on the cliffs But I'm beginning to get tired of the wind.

All my best love from Betty.

34) [After 20] March 1934

51, Warwick Rd, S.W.5.

Dearest Betty,

I was quite bowled over by the quartet on Tuesday. The last three mvts are magnificent, especially the slow mvt.

I feel you've got a much broader grasp in these mvts than in the first. The theme of the 1st is of course very arresting but somehow I think there are just a few

20 It was in fact the Piano Concerto that was performed rather than *The Land*. See Letter 5.


21 On 1 April 1934, *The Land* was broadcast from a studio concert on the London Regional programme, by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Adrian Boult.

22 Maconchy sent scores for the Piano Concerto, *The Land*, and Comedy Overture, but Brown 'found there was nothing Irish about your work' and only her Suite for chamber orchestra was aired from Belfast, on 11 July 1934. See BBC WAC EM1, 21–2 September 1934.

23 Donald Francis Tovey was a noted musical commentator and director of the Reid Symphony Orchestra Concerts in Edinburgh.

24 Maconchy's oratorio *Deborah* (1933–4).

42 *Part I. Letters 1–49 (1927–Summer 1939)*

things (2 or 3 bars near the opening – rhythm something like ) & some of the pizz. chords that don't seem quite up to standard – but I think I'm going to like the slow mvt. more & more – you must lend me the score when you can possibly spare it.

I was sorry to hear of Dan G's rudeness. But honestly the performance didn't sound 'definitely bad' over the wireless.

Here is your oratorio. So sorry I've kept it so long – I'm eager to see your new chorus. I must come down to the cottage next term.

In a desperate rush – going to Vienna on Saturday – until about April 23rd or 24th.

Best of luck for the Land – I'll try & listen in Vienna.

Love from Grace

May we keep the motets over the holidays? Do hope so.