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28/6/99

Dear Eva,

Here are some notes on my "Heroic Elegy", as you requested. I do not have an orchestral score, here, but I have compiled them from a 2-piano version of the work, which I devised many years ago.

During my studies at the Royal College of Music, 1933 held a great sadness for me. Originally from Adelaide and also a student of William Silver, Lady Christine Buckland had become a wonderful friend, taking me to many concerts in the lovely old Queen's Hall. One day I received two tickets from her, suggesting that I ask a friend to accompany me, because her husband, Sir Reginald, had been killed in a car accident. I quote from my autobiography, ("Complete Accord") - "To think that only a few weeks ago he had taken me to the Wallace Collection and he was so careful that I should cross the roads in safety".

I put down the first bars of the Elegy in a bus on my way home from the College. Death had never affected me so much, and to this day I can hardly bare to hear the violin solo in D, (the love theme, perhaps?), carried further by the whole body of strings.

After the dramatic opening passages, a high 6-note solo phrase is to recur frequently at various levels, usually followed by a low, sustained answer like a dialogue between Heaven (the departed soul) and Earth (the mourning widow). The more brass-laden passages refer to Sir Reginald's career as a Major-General during world War I, (hence the term "Heroic").

Quite early in the work, though un-traditionally in triple time, there is obviously the effect of a funeral march over a low "basso ostinato" figure, in D flat major (mournful with the minor 6th), awaiting the entry of a forlorn theme on solo woodwind. The coda, also over a "basso ostinato", recalls the original melody from bar 7, and an occasional tolling bell surely suggests a churchyard resting place for the departed.

The first performance of the Elegy took place on 30/10/40, Dr. Edgar Bainton conducting the Sydney Conservatorium Orchestra. It has also been played by the Queensland and Sydney S.O., and was the opening work in Canberra's Conference, "Music and Musicians in Australian Culture" (25.9.93)

*Miriam Hyde*