

**Roundel**  
**“The little eyes that never knew Light”**  
**Song**  
**for Soprano and Orchestra**  
Music by  
**EDWARD ELGAR**  
(1897)

Words from the poem “A Baby’s Death” by  
**Algernon Charles Swinburne**

Arranged for small orchestra by John Morrison

**CONDUCTOR’S SCORE**

Available in the following keys:  
**HIGH ( D )** (original) range C# to G  
**MEDIUM ( C )** range B to F

**"Roundel: The little eyes that never knew Light"** is a song with piano accompaniment written by the English composer Edward Elgar in 1897. The words are from the fourth roundel of a poem *A Baby's Death* written by A. C. Swinburne and originally published in the book *A Century of Roundels*.

Its first performance was at a Worcester Musical Union meeting of 26 April 1897, sung by Miss Gertrude Walker, accompanied by the composer.

Gertrude Walker was the daughter of the Thomas Walker, rector of St. Peter's Church in the Worcestershire village of Abbots Morton. She played the organ there and trained the choir, and had already known Elgar for many years.

The song was never published, but is now due to be published in the Elgar Society Edition.

From the original manuscript in the key of D  
April 2007  
Revised August 2008  
John Morrison, 23 Ferrymoor, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 7SD

## A Baby's Death, by A. C. Swinburne

A little soul scarce fledged for earth  
Takes wing with heaven again for goal  
Even while we hailed as fresh from birth  
A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,  
Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth  
What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,  
And all things held in time's control  
Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not worth  
A little soul.

The little feet that never trod  
Earth, never strayed in field or street,  
What hand leads upward back to God  
The little feet?

A rose in June's most honied heat,  
When life makes keen the kindling sod,  
Was not so soft and warm and sweet.

Their pilgrimage's period  
A few swift moons have seen complete  
Since mother's hands first clasped and shod  
The little feet.

The little hands that never sought  
Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,  
What gift has death, God's servant, brought  
The little hands?

We ask: but love's self silent stands,  
Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought  
To search where death's dim heaven expands.

Ere this, perchance, though love know nought,  
Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands,  
Where hands of guiding angels caught  
The little hands.

*The little eyes that never knew  
Light other than of dawning skies,  
What new life now lights up anew  
The little eyes?*

*Who knows but on their sleep may rise  
Such light as never heaven let through  
To lighten earth from Paradise?*

*No storm, we know, may change the blue  
Soft heaven that haply death describes  
No tears, like these in ours, bedew  
The little eyes.*

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,  
So strait the wide world's range,  
He would not stay to wonder why  
Was life so strange?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange  
Beside that house on high  
Whence Time that bore him failed to estrange?

That here at once his soul put by  
All gifts of time and change,  
And left us heavier hearts to sigh  
'Was life so strange?'

Angel by name love called him, seeing so fair  
The sweet small frame;  
Meet to be called, if ever man's child were,  
Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own  
heart he came,  
And might not bear  
The cloud that covers earth's wan face with  
shame.

His little light of life was all too rare  
And soft a flame:  
Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed him  
there  
Angel by name.

The song that smiled upon his birthday here  
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled  
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless  
tear  
The song that smiled.

His name crowned once the mightiest ever  
styled  
Sovereign of arts, and angel: fate and fear  
Knew then their master, and were reconciled.

But we saw born beneath some tenderer sphere  
Michael, an angel and a little child,  
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his bier  
The song that smiled.

- \* The poetic form is a *roundel*: a variation of the French *rondeau*, devised by A. C. Swinburne. It is an eleven-line poem where the first part is repeated as a refrain in the fourth and eleventh lines.

# Roundel

"The little eyes that never knew Light"  
from the poem "A Baby's Death" by A. C. Swinburne

### Edward Elgar (1897)

arranged for small orchestra by John Morrison (2008)

**Moderato.** (♩ = 112) **rall.**

Flauto

Oboe

Clarinetti I & II in B $\flat$

Fagotti I & II

Corni I & II in F

**Moderato.** (♩ = 112) **rall.**

Violini I

Violini II

Viola

Soprano

Violoncello

Contrabasso

*a tempo*

Fl.

Ob.

*a tempo*

Cl.

*mf*

Fg.

*a tempo*

*mf*

Cor.

*a tempo*

*a tempo*

*pp*

*a tempo*

*pp*

*a tempo*

*p*

*mf*

*a tempo*

*p*

*cresc. mf*

The lit - tle eyes that ne - ver knew Light oth - er than of

*a tempo*

*p*

*a tempo*

Detailed description: This is a page from a musical score for a piece titled 'Roundel'. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features a woodwind section with Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fg.), and Cor Anglais (Cor.). The woodwinds enter in measure 7 with various melodic lines, some marked *mf*. The string section (piano) provides a rhythmic accompaniment with sixteenth-note patterns in the right hand and quarter-note patterns in the left hand, marked *pp* and *a tempo*. A vocal soloist enters in measure 7 with the lyrics 'The lit - tle eyes that ne - ver knew Light oth - er than of'. The vocal line is marked *p* and *a tempo*, with a crescendo leading to *mf* in the final measure. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p*, *mf*, and *cresc.* throughout.

14

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

*cresc.*

*f*

*dim.*

*p*

*cresc.*

*f*

*dim.*

*p*

*cresc.*

*f*

*dim.*

*cresc.*

*f*

*dim.*

dawn - ing skies What new life now lights up a - new the

*p*

*cresc.*

*f*

*dim.*

*p cresc.*

*f*

*dim.*

rit.

20

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

*p* *pp subito*

*p* *pp subito*

*p* *pp subito*

*p* *pp subito*

*p*

rit.

*rit. p colla parte* *pp subito*

*p colla parte* *p* *pp subito*

*rit. p colla parte* *p* *pp subito*

*rit. espress.* *pp cresc.*

lit - tle lit - tle eyes? What new life now

*rit. p colla parte* *pp subito*

*rit. p colla parte* *pp subito*

The musical score is for a piece titled 'Roundel'. It features a woodwind section (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, and Cor Anglais) and a string section (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). A vocal soloist enters at measure 20. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo), and *pp subito* (pianissimo subito). Performance instructions include *rit.* (ritardando), *colla parte* (colla parte), *espress.* (espressivo), and *cresc.* (crescendo). The vocal line includes the lyrics: 'lit - tle lit - tle eyes? What new life now'.

26

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

rit. a tempo

*pp*

rit. a tempo

*pp*

rit. a tempo

*pp*

lights up a - new the lit - tle eyes?

*p* rit. colla parte *pp* a tempo

*p* rit. colla parte *pp* a tempo

rit.

32

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

1.

2.

1.

2.

rit.

pizz.

pizz.

div. <sup>o</sup>

rit.

pp

pp rit. mezza voce

Who knows but on their sleep may rise

pizz.

p

pizz.

p



accel. rit. a tempo

38

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

accel. rit. a tempo

arco

div.

accel. rit. a tempo

pizz.

div.

accel. rit. a tempo

Such light as ne ver heav'n let thro' to light - en earth from

arco

accel. rit. a tempo

pizz.

arco

pp

44

Fl. *rit.* *a tempo*

Ob. *cresc. rit.* *mf* *a tempo*

Cl. *pp* *cresc. rit.*

Fg. *pp* *cresc. rit.*

Cor. 1. *pp* *cresc. rit.* *rit.* *a tempo*

*p* *a tempo* *f*

*arco* *p* *a tempo* *f*

*arco* *p* *a tempo* *f*

*cresc.* *rit.* *mf* *a tempo* *f*

Pa - ra - dise No storm, we know, may

*arco* *p* *a tempo* *f* *pizz.*

*p* *cresc.* *f*

50

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

change\_the blue soft heav'n\_ that hap\_\_ - ly death des - cries No

*cresc.*

*arco*

*cresc.*

56 *accel.*

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

*f accel.*

*f accel.*

*f accel.*

*f accel.*

*f accel.*

*f accel.*

*cresc.*

*accel.*

tears, no tears\_\_ like those\_\_ in ours be - dew the lit - tle

*f accel.*

*f accel.*

stringendo

62

Fl. *sf*

Ob. *sf*

Cl. *sf* 1. *f* stringendo cresc.

Fg. *sf* 1. *f* stringendo cresc.

Cor. *sf* a 2.

stringendo

*sf* *f* stringendo cresc.

*sf* *f* stringendo cresc.

div. *sf* *f* stringendo cresc.

eyes. *sempre f* con passione No storm, we know, may change the

*sf* *f* stringendo cresc.

*sf* *f* stringendo cresc.

68

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

pizz.

rit.

espress.

ppp

dim.

p

blue soft heav'n that hap - ly death des - cries No

pizz.

rit.

espress.

pizz.

p

74

Fl. *p* *lento* *rit.* *a tempo* Solo

Ob.

Cl. 2. *pp* *lento* *rit.* *pp*

Fg. *lento* *rit.* *pp*

Cor. *pp*

*lento* *rit.* *a tempo*

div. pizz. *pp* arco *p a tempo*

div. arco *pp* *p a tempo*

*ppp* *lento* *cresc.* *rit.* *a tempo*

tears, no tears\_ like those in ours be - dew the lit - tle eyes. \_\_\_\_\_ No

*pp* *lento* *pp* *a tempo*

*pp* *lento*

rit.

82

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fg.

Cor.

*p*

*a 2.*

*p*

*div.*

*p*

*1 Solo*

*colla parte*

*pp rit.*

*ad lib.*

*rit.*

*pp*

tears, \_\_\_\_\_ no tears, like ours be - dew the lit \_\_\_\_\_

*div.*

*p*

*arco*

*p*

*unis.*

*pp rit.*



15.

[illegible]