

20. Spring

Op. 20, No. 6 (1884)

Clara Kathleen Rogers
(1844-1931)
arr. William Melton

Rogers, Clara Kathleen

(born Cheltenham, England, January 14, 1844; died Boston, USA, March 8, 1931)

Born to the singer Eliza *née* Lindley (whose father was the cellist Robert Lindley) and the opera composer John Barnett, Clara's introduction to music was furnished by her parents. She entered the Leipzig Conservatory at the tender age of 12, and encountered a distinguished faculty: Ignaz Moscheles and Louis Plaidy (piano), Robert Papperitz (organ), Ernst Friedrich Eduard Richter (theory), Ferdinand David (violin) and Julius Rietz (harmony) and Hermann Goetz (voice). Though women were barred from studying composition, Rogers began writing a string quartet, aided by her amiable classmate Arthur Sullivan. Studies in Leipzig done, she polished her skills with lessons from Hans von Bülow (piano) in Berlin and Antonio Sangiovanni (voice) in Milan.

Rogers debuted at the Turin opera in 1863 under the stage name Clara Doria, and enjoyed successes in Genoa, Florence, Naples, and London. She found her way to America eight years later, settling in Boston, marrying local lawyer Henry M. Rogers, and retiring from the stage in 1878. Henceforth she taught voice, first privately, but ultimately as Professor of Voice at the New England Conservatory. Her home was intellectually active as she hosted luminaries from different fields including Amy Beach, Oliver Wendall Holmes Jr., and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Clara Rogers' published works included several tomes on singing and two volumes of autobiography that feature candid observations about musical life in Europe and America (Cosima von Bülow was described bluntly as "looking exactly like her father, Franz Liszt – in petticoats.")

An archive consisting of 6 ½ linear feet of Rogers' letters and works is currently housed at Harvard Library, and the Library of Congress also holds many of her publications. The latter include a string quartet, sonatas for violin and cello, and about a hundred songs. One early song effort was "Spring," the last of Six Songs, Op. 20 published by Arthur P. Schmidt of Boston in 1884 (Plate No. 591). The piece displays the "solid craftsmanship" and "development towards an expressive chromatic language" observed by scholar Pamela Fox. The poet of "Spring" is unnamed, but its text describes the annual stirrings of flora and fauna that build from *piano dolce* to *forte grandioso gioioso* in the triumphant final phrases: "Then, when heart, and flow'r and wing Leap and Laugh, Then comes the Spring." As William T. Upton wrote, "There was no one who so unerringly caught the mood of the text as Clara Kathleen Rogers. There is a spontaneity about her songs whose equal is far to seek in the songs of her day, and her skill in interpreting the various moods seems always equal to her needs."

Text by William Melton