

Ethel L. Voynich Papers

Guides to Special Collections in the Music Division of the Library of Congress



Music Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2010

Contact information: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/perform.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2010563503>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/eadmus.mu010020>

Processed by the Music Division of the Library of Congress

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Music Division, 2010
Revised 2023 December

Collection Summary

Title: Ethel L. Voynich Papers

Span Dates: 1828-1948

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1935-1948)

Call No.: ML31.V75

Creator: Voynich, E. L. (Ethel Lillian), 1864-1960

Extent: approximately 800 items

Extent: 14 containers

Extent: 6.0 linear feet

Language: Material principally in English

Location: Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2010563503>

Summary: Ethel Lillian Voynich (1864-1960) was a social activist, novelist, translator, and composer. Voynich's musical compositions, based principally on sacred or poetic texts, are represented by holograph manuscript scores, sketches, lyric sheets, printed music, and notes. The remaining materials consist of subject files on musicological topics, research materials, and a handful of programs.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Chomiński, Józef M.

Gurney, Ivor, 1890-1937.

Voynich, E. L. (Ethel Lillian), 1864-1960--Archives.

Voynich, E. L. (Ethel Lillian), 1864-1960--Manuscripts.

Voynich, E. L. (Ethel Lillian), 1864-1960.

Voynich, E. L. (Ethel Lillian), 1864-1960.

Voynich, E. L. (Ethel Lillian), 1864-1960. Musical works. Selections.

Subjects

Music--Manuscripts.

Form/Genre

Programs (Documents)

Scores.

Provenance

Gift, Anne M. Nill, 1961.

Custodial History

Ethel Voynich bequeathed her belongings to Anne M. Nill in 1943, seventeen years prior to her passing. Some sources suggest Anne was manager of Wilfred Voynich's bookstore in Soho Square, London, in the early 1900s. In 1914, Wilfred allegedly brought Anne, then a secretary, to New York to help with a new store that he had established. Ethel remained in England at the time, but later joined them in New York in 1920. Other sources claim that Anne, born in Buffalo, New York in 1894, was an American citizen who made her professional acquaintance with Wilfred Voynich in New York City circa 1921. Anne and Ethel developed a lasting friendship, with Anne providing editorial assistance for Ethel's later writings.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Processing History

The Ethel L. Voynich Papers were processed and the finding aid coded for EAD by Thomas P. Barrick in 2010.

Copyright Status

Materials from the Ethel L. Voynich Papers are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

Access and Restrictions

The Ethel L. Voynich Papers are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions to use or copying of materials may apply.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Ethel L. Voynich Papers, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Ethel Lillian Voynich (1864-1960) was a social activist, novelist, translator, and composer. Born May 11, 1864, in County Cork, Ireland, Ethel Lillian Boole was the youngest of the five daughters of George Boole (1815-1864) and Mary Everest Boole (1832-1916). George Boole was an eminent mathematician whose theories (Boolean Logic) were instrumental to the development of modern technologies, including digital recording and the Internet. Mary Boole was an eccentric mathematician, teacher, and writer whose books on teaching mathematics to children became milestones in education. Despite their strong intellectual background, George and Mary lived in acute poverty and sent Ethel to live with her uncle, Charles Boole, in Lancashire. The years of physical abuse from Charles that followed eventually became the basis for her 1901 novel, *Jack Raymond*.

At the age of eighteen, Ethel traveled to Berlin and enrolled in the Hochschule der Musik in an effort to pursue her childhood love of music. Her studies of piano and composition from 1882-1885, however, were overshadowed by her newfound interest in revolutionary literature and political activism. Inspired by the plight of Russian prisoners under Tzarist rule, Ethel moved to St. Petersburg in 1887, where she made ends meet teaching English and music, dedicating any remaining time to helping suffering prisoners and peasants. After two years of committed charitable, revolutionary activity, Ethel returned to London, where she made the acquaintance of Polish patriot, antiquarian, and bibliophile Wilfred Michael Voynich, then a Russian fugitive. The two lived together and worked on various revolutionary endeavors for many years, eventually marrying in 1902.

During this period, Ethel established herself as both a writer and a translator of Russian literature into English. Her first published translation, *Stories from Garshin*, was released in 1893, followed by *The humor of Russia* (1895), and *Nihilism as it is* (1895). Her most famous novel, *The Gadfly* (1897), was later made into a film in the Soviet Union with a score by Dmitiri Shostakovich. Ethel remained musically active as well, becoming a member of the Society of Woman Musicians, an organization founded by composer Marion Scott in 1911. Through Scott, she established a close relationship with composer and war poet Ivor Gurney, an inspirational force behind her literary and musical compositions. Following her immigration to New York City around 1920, Ethel began intensive studies in composition and orchestration. These contributed to her

creation of a variety of sacred vocal and instrumental works in the 1920s, including *Babylon*, *Jerusalem*, and *Epitaph in Ballad Form*.

In March 1930, husband Wilfred Voynich, by now an established New York bookseller, passed away from respiratory illness. Ethel moved in with his secretary and shop manager Anne M. Nill shortly thereafter, and the pair lived together for nearly thirteen years in Manhattan. Ethel continued to write, translate, and compose. Her last work, *Put Off Thy Shoes*, was published in 1945. The remainder of her life was spent reaping the rewards of her signature best-seller, *The Gadfly*, a work that had, unbeknownst to her at the time, single-handedly established Ethel's reputation as an American literary hero in the Soviet Union. Royalties from the novel and its derivative films enabled her to live a robust intellectual life until her death in 1960 at age ninety-six.

Scope and Content Note

The Ethel L. Voynich Papers span the period 1835 to 1948, with the majority of the materials dating from 1928-1948. Voynich's musical compositions, based principally on sacred or poetic texts, are represented by holograph manuscript scores, sketches, lyric sheets, and notes. Works are arranged alphabetically by title, with sources of texts identified if possible. The remaining materials consist of subject files on musicological topics and a handful of programs. Included is documentation of Voynich's studies with musicologist Josef Chominski, work done at the Pius X School of Liturgical Music in New York, research conducted at the New York Public Library, and her associations with notable Gloucester composer-poet Ivor Gurney.

Organization of the Ethel L. Voynich Papers

The Ethel L. Voynich Papers are organized in three series:

- [Music, 1916-1948](#)
- [Subject Files, 1937-1941](#)
- [Miscellany, 1835-1946](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-5, 7-12	<u>Music, 1916-1948</u>
BOX 6, 13-14	<u>Subject Files, 1937-1941</u>
BOX 6, 14	<u>Miscellany, 1835-1946</u>

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1-5, 7-12	Music, 1916-1948
BOX-FOLDER 12/1	Babylon (voices, chorus, orchestra) Manuscript full score
BOX-FOLDER 7/1	Babylon (voices, chorus, orchestra) Manuscript full score
BOX-FOLDER 11/1-2	Babylon (voices, chorus, orchestra) Two photocopies of manuscript full scores
BOX-FOLDER 11/3	Babylon (voices, chorus, orchestra) Photocopy of manuscript full score <i>Note:</i> Inscribed from Voynich to Tippen Davidson, 1956
BOX-FOLDER 7/2	Babylon (voices, chorus, orchestra) Manuscript short score
BOX-FOLDER 7/3	Babylon (voices, chorus, orchestra) Sketches and notes
BOX-FOLDER 1/1	Blue Bunny's Book (voice, piano) Manuscript piano-vocal score <i>Laid in:</i> Sketches and lyric sheets
BOX-FOLDER 1/2	Blue Bunny's Influenza Blues (voice, piano) Manuscript piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Bunny Dance (piano) Sketch
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Come Near (voice, piano) Two manuscript piano-vocal scores
BOX-FOLDER 1/5	The Crossroads (voices, band) Manuscript full score <i>Laid in:</i> Sketches and notes
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Cubby Lion's Childhood (voice, piano) Three manuscript piano-vocal scores <i>Laid in:</i> Sketches
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Desire in Spring (voice, piano) Music by Ivor Gurney; text by Francis Ledwidge Manuscript piano-vocal score in the hand of I. Gurney <i>Note:</i> Inscribed from Gurney to Voynich
BOX-FOLDER 1/8	Ego sum pastor bonus (voices) By Wacław Szamotulski Photocopy of copyist vocal score <i>Note:</i> Musical analysis in pencil
BOX-FOLDER 8/1	Epitaph in Ballad Form (voices, orchestra) Text by Francois Villon Three manuscript full scores <i>Laid in:</i> Sketches and lyric sheets

Music, 1916-1948

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 8/2	Epitaph in Ballad Form (voices, orchestra) Photocopy of manuscript full score
BOX-FOLDER 8/3	Epitaph in Ballad Form (voices, orchestra) Photocopy of manuscript full score <i>Note:</i> Inscribed from Voynich to Tippen Davidson, 1950
BOX-FOLDER 1/9	Five Elizabethan Songs. Sleep (voice, piano) By Ivor Gurney Printed piano-vocal score <i>Note:</i> Inscribed from Gurney to Voynich
BOX-FOLDER 1/10	Give Ear, O Ye Heavens (voices, 8 parts) see also I sing of a maiden Text from Deuteronomy 32:1,2 Manuscript vocal score <i>Laid in:</i> Sketches
BOX-FOLDER 2/1	The Golden Net (voices) see also Who is this? Text by William Blake Four manuscript vocal scores
BOX-FOLDER 2/2	The Golden Net (voices) Three photocopies of manuscript vocal scores <i>Laid in:</i> lyric sheets
BOX-FOLDER 8/4	I Sing of a Maiden (women's voices, 8 parts) see also Give ear, o ye heavens 15th century traditional Manuscript vocal score <i>Laid in:</i> Sketches
BOX-FOLDER 8/3	I Sing of a Maiden (women's voices, 16 parts) see also Give ear, o ye heavens Manuscript vocal score <i>Laid in:</i> Lyric sheet
BOX-FOLDER 2/3	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Traditional Manuscript full score
BOX-FOLDER 9/1	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Manuscript full score <i>Laid in:</i> Lyric sheets and notes
BOX-FOLDER 2/4	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Manuscript full score of first and second movements
BOX-FOLDER 9/2	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Manuscript full score of fifth movement <i>Note:</i> "Re-written 1923" on cover
BOX-FOLDER 9/3	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Photocopy of manuscript full score with annotations
BOX-FOLDER 9/4	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Photocopy of manuscript full score with annotations
BOX-FOLDER 9/5	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Photocopy of manuscript full score <i>Note:</i> Inscribed from Voynich to Tippen Davidson, 1946

Music, 1916-1948

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 2/5	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Manuscript short score
BOX-FOLDER 2/6	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Manuscript piano-vocal scores of miscellaneous movements
BOX-FOLDER 2/7, 3/1	Jerusalem (voices, chorus, orchestra) Sketches
BOX-FOLDER 2/8	Jerusalem (women's voices, orchestra) Manuscript short score <i>Note:</i> "Piano and vocal score" on title page
BOX-FOLDER 3/2	Lenten Is Come (women's voices, piano) Traditional Printed proof of piano-vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 9/6	Little Lamb (voice, piano) Music by Mary Wilkes; text by William Blake Photocopy of manuscript piano-vocal score <i>Laid in:</i> Notes
BOX-FOLDER 3/3	Little Suite (woodwinds, harp) Manuscript score and parts <i>Laid in:</i> Sketches
BOX-FOLDER 9/7	Little Suite (woodwinds, harp) Manuscript score <i>Laid in:</i> Notes
BOX-FOLDER 9/8	Little Suite (woodwinds, harp) Photocopy of manuscript score <i>Note:</i> Inscribed from Voynich to Tippen Davidson
BOX-FOLDER 3/4	Man Octapartite (voices, double chorus, strings) Irish traditional Sketches and lyric sheets
BOX-FOLDER 4/1	Mass in B minor By J.S. Bach Printed score with annotations <i>Note:</i> Bound, personalized copy
BOX-FOLDER 4/2	O Mortal Folk (chorus) Text by Stephen Hawkes Manuscript vocal score
BOX-FOLDER 4/3	O Mortal Folk (chorus) Manuscript vocal score <i>Laid in:</i> Lyric sheets
BOX-FOLDER 4/4	On Wenlock Edge (voice, strings, piano) Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams; text by Alfred Edward Houseman; transcribed by Ivor Gurney Manuscript vocal score in the hand of I. Gurney (unfinished)
BOX-FOLDER 4/5	Our Lady Sings (double chorus) Printed vocal score Text: Jerusalem, my happy home Annotations
BOX-FOLDER 4/6	Pinky's Declaration of Independence (song for the 4th of July) Manuscript lead sheet

Music, 1916-1948

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 4/7, 5/1	The Riders: Symphonic Cantata in 4 Movements Manuscript full scores
BOX-FOLDER 5/2	The Riders: Symphonic Cantata in 4 Movements Parts
BOX-FOLDER 5/3	Saltaire Tunes Manuscript lead sheets <i>Laid in:</i> Postcard and crayon drawing from 1937 September 4-8 visit to Saltaire, New York
BOX-FOLDER 5/4	So Shuts the Marigold (voices) Text by William Browne of Tavistock Three manuscript vocal scores
BOX-FOLDER 10/1	The Submerged City: Cantata for Solo Baritone, Mixed Choir, and Orchestra Text by Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov Manuscript full score and photocopy <i>Laid in:</i> Sketches and lyric sheet
BOX-FOLDER 10/2	The Submerged City: Cantata for Solo Baritone, Mixed Choir, and Orchestra Manuscript full score
BOX-FOLDER 10/3	The Submerged City: Cantata for Solo Baritone, Mixed Choir, and Orchestra Manuscript full score
BOX-FOLDER 10/4	The Submerged City: Cantata for Solo Baritone, Mixed Choir, and Orchestra Manuscript full score (incomplete)
BOX-FOLDER 10/5	The Submerged City: Cantata for Solo Baritone, Mixed Choir, and Orchestra Photocopy of manuscript full score <i>Note:</i> Inscribed from Voynich to Tippen Davidson, 1950
BOX-FOLDER 10/5	The Submerged City: Cantata for Solo Baritone, Mixed Choir, and Orchestra Manuscript short score
BOX-FOLDER 5/5	Tollite portas (Lift up your heads) (voices) Text by William Byrd Manuscript vocal score in English
BOX-FOLDER 5/5	Tollite portas (Lift up your heads) (voices) Manuscript vocal score in French
BOX-FOLDER 5/6	Unwelcome (voice, piano) Text by Mary Coleridge Two manuscript piano-vocal scores
BOX-FOLDER 5/7	Victimae paschali laudes (voices, organ) Manuscript score for voice and organ
BOX-FOLDER 5/8	Wilfred's Birthday Song Manuscript lead sheet
BOX-FOLDER 5/9	Who Is This? see also The golden net Manuscript vocal score <i>Laid in:</i> Lyric sheet
BOX-FOLDER 5/10	Unidentified Sketches
BOX 6, 13-14	Subject Files, 1937-1941
BOX-FOLDER 6/1	Chominski, Josef Michal, 1937-1941 E.L. Voynich's notes from studies with Chominski
BOX-FOLDER 13/1	Folk songs: Czeck

Subject Files, 1937-1941

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 13/2	Folk songs: Polish
BOX-FOLDER 13/3	Folk songs: Russian
BOX-FOLDER 13/4	Folk songs: Ukranian
BOX-FOLDER 13/5	Folk songs: other than Slavonic
BOX-FOLDER 13/6	Military music
BOX-FOLDER 6/2	Musical diagrams: relationships to intervals
BOX-FOLDER 14/1-2	Pius X School of Liturgical Music
BOX-FOLDER 14/3	Polyphony: evolution of
BOX-FOLDER 14/4	Polyphony: France, Netherlands, Germany, Spain
BOX-FOLDER 6/3	Primitive, exotic, ancient music
BOX-FOLDER 14/5	Theoretical studies, nature, primitive
BOX 6, 14	Miscellany, 1835-1946
BOX-FOLDER 14/6	Gurney, Ivor Clippings Programs
BOX-FOLDER 14/7	Miscellaneous programs, 1932-1946
BOX-FOLDER 6/4	Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, 1835 July 3 <i>Performers include: Maria Taglioni; Guilietta Grisi; and others</i>