Elodie Désirée Lelong (1 April 1869–13 March 1926)

I received a fascinating email from Gordon Semple on 4 July 2025, which I quote with his permission.

"*Dear Dr Blood,*

I hope this will be of some interest, and I apologise if you are not the person to whom it should be sent.

The biographical notes on Elodie Dolmetsch at www.dolmetsch.com/Doltree.htm give her death as "unknown, but later than 4 Dec. 1926"; I believe she died in Paris on 13th March 1926.

The attached file is a transcription of an entry in the Paris death records, taken from a double-page image on ancestry.co.uk (subscription required). The Ancestry image is poor-quality JPEG, but the original document is typewritten and I believe that I have transcribed it exactly, including the spacing and the erratic capitalisation (Mars/avril, paris, Larousse/larousse). I have attached it as a dot-txt file rather than put it within the body of this email because the webmail that I use plays fast and loose with text spacing.

The register is for Paris 14, where she died (at rue Pierre Larousse). Her home (Villa Saint-Mandé) is in Paris 12, and a transcription of the original 14th March entry in Paris 14 was entered in the Paris 12 register on 6th April. An image of this transcription can be viewed without subscription at en.geneanet.org/archival-registers/view/193405/11?individu_filter=22079344 (and it is of better quality than Ancestry's photo of the original entry).

Regards

Gordon Semple

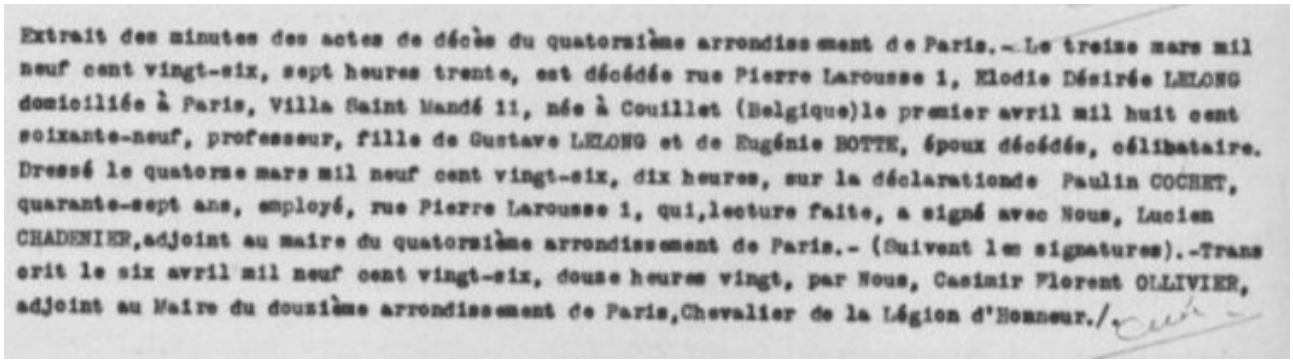
PS.
Curiously, Elodie died at exactly the address where her first husband, Edgard, died in December 1904 (and Paulin Cochet was an informant on both occasions -- and claimed to have aged only 17 years in the intervening 21). Like Elodie, Edgard lived elsewhere (rue de la Condamine, Paris 17), and, as with Elodie, the register entry of the 14eme arrondissment was copied to his home register. Just as well -- they are both hand-written and the first registrar's writing is awful. Without the transcript, I would have been struggling!"

The attached file reads:

"*Le treize Mars mil neuf cent vingt-six, sept heures trente, est décédée, rue Pierre Larousse 1, ****
Elodie Desirée LELONG, domiciliée à paris, Villa Saint-Mandé 11, née a Couillet (Belgique), le pre-
*mier avril mil huit cent soixante-neuf, Professeur, fille de Gustave LELONG, et de Eugenie HOTTE, ***

*epoux décédés. Celebataire. Dressé le quatorze Mars mil neuf cent vingt-six, dix heures, sur la ***
déclaration de Paulin COCHET, quarente-sept ans, employé, rue Pierre larousse 1, qui, lecture faite,
a signé avec Nous, Lucien CHADENTER- adjoint au maire du quatorzieme arrondissement de paris."

Fortunately, there is a more legible source for this information at https://en.geneanet.org/archival-registers/view/193405/11?individu_filter=22079344 which I have reproduced, transcribed and translated below:



Extrait des minutes des actes de décès du quatorzième arrondissement de Paris.- Le treize mars mil neuf cent vingt-six, sept heures trente, est décédée rue Pierre Larousse 1, Elodie Désirée LELONG domiciliée à Paris, Villa Saint Mandé 11, née à Couillet (Belgique)le premier avril mil huit cent soixante-neuf, professeur, fille de Gustave LELONG et de Eugénie BOTTE, époux décédée, célibataire. Dressé le quatorze mars mil neuf cent vingt-six, dix heures, sur la déclarationde Paulin COCHET, quarante-sept ans, employé, rue Pierre Larousse 1, qui,lecture faite, a signé avec Nous, Lucien CHADENIER,adjoint au maire du quatorzième arrondissement de Paris.- (Suivent les signatures).-Transcrit le six avril mil neuf cent vingt-six, douze heures vingt, par Nous, Casimir Florent OLLIVIER, adjoint au Maire du douzième arrondissement de Paris,Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur./.

"Extrait des minutes des actes de décèe de quatorzième arrondissement de Paris. - Le trieze mars mil neuf cent vingt-six, sept heures trente est décédé rue Pierre Larousse 1, Elodie Désirée LELONG domiciliée à Paris, Villa Saint Mandé 11, née à Couillet (Belgique) le premier avril mil huit cent soizante-neuf, professeur, fille de Gustav LELONG et de Eugénie BOTTE, époux décédé, célibataire. Dressé le quatorze mars mil neuf cent vingt-six, dix heures, sur le déclaration de Paulin COCHET, quarante-sept ans, employé, rue Pierre Larousse 1, qui, lecture faite, a signé avec Nous, Lucien CHADENIER, adjoint au maire de quatorzième arrondissement de Paris. - (Suivent les signatures). Transcrit le six avril mil neuf cent vingt-six, douze heurs vingt, par Nous, Casimir Florent OLLIVIER adjoint au Maire du douzième arrondissement de Paris, Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur."

[*Extract from the minutes of the death certificates of the fourteenth arrondissement of Paris. - On March 13, 1926, at 7:30 a.m., Elodie Désirée LELONG, residing in Paris, Villa Saint Mandé 11, died at rue Pierre Larousse 1, born in Couillet (Belgium) on April 1, 1879, professor, daughter of Gustav LELONG and Eugénie BOTTE, deceased husband, single. Drawn up on March 14, 1926, at 10:00 a.m., on the declaration of Paulin COCHET, forty-seven years old, employee, rue Pierre Larousse 1, who, having read the document, signed with Us, Lucien CHADENIER, deputy mayor of the fourteenth arrondissement of Paris. - (The signatures follow). Transcribed on April 6, 1926, 12:20 p.m., by Us, Casimir Florent OLLIVIER, deputy Mayor of the twelfth arrondissement of Paris, Knight of the Légion d'Honneur.*]

We can dispose of one detail quite easily. Although now based at rue Pierre Larousse 7, before 1962, Hôpitaux Hôpital Saint-Joseph, now Groupe Hospitalier Paris Saint Joseph, occupied rue Pierre Larousse 1. We can be sure, then, that Edgard (Elodie's first husband) and Elodie both died in this hospital which is why the declaration was provided by Paulin Cochet, a member of the hospital staff in both December 1904 and March 1926 (who, from other evidence, appears to have been born in 1875). Mabel Dolmetsch records that Edgard died of heart disease.

Genealogical sources in Belgium (https://www.openarchieven.nl) confirm that Elodie's parents were married in the province of Hainaut in Belgium on 28 September, 1862. The couple's names are Gustav Joseph Lelong and Eugénie Joseph Hotte, the parents of the groom are Charles Lelong and Marie Anne Philippine Montigny, while the parents of the bride are Jean Baptiste Hotte and Ursmarine Joseph Rapaille. This confirms that on Elodie's death certificate her mother's name should have been Hotte, not Botte.

The prevalence of Joseph as a second name for both sexes reflects a custom on both sides of Hainault's border with France to invoke the protection of saints, particularly Joseph and Mary (usually used in its French form, Marie).

Further research confirms that in 1862, when Gustav Joseph Lelong married Eugénie, he was a widower. He had married Elodie Martin on 12 October 1856. They had a daughter, Juliette Catherine Lelong, who died on 27 July 1857. Elodie (named as Alexandrine Martin and then only 24 years old) died on 15 April 1861. We have confirmation that Elodie and Alexandrine are one and the same in a registration of death for a second daughter, Léontine Françoise Lelong (1 year old), on 21 November 1861, where the parents are given as Gustav Joseph Lelong and Alexandrine Elodie Martin, the mother predeceasing her second daughter.

It would seem likely then that, following her birth on 1 April 1869, Gustav and Eugénie's daughter Elodie Désirée was named for Gustav's first wife. On 1 October 1887, eighteen-year-old convent-educated Elodie married one of Arnold Dolmetsch's younger brothers, Edgard (28 March 1864–9 December 1904), in Avesnes, in northern France. Mabel Dolmetsch describes Edgard as a clever craftsman and a 'cellist and, while good-looking, headstrong and possessed of an inflammable temperament. Edgard and Elodie separated after what Mabel calls a 'brief and unhappy union'.

In England, during the winter of 1893, Arnold Dolmetsch and his first wife Marie (née Morel) (1848–March 1916) had also separated and she and their daughter Hélène (14 April 1878–7 July 1924) had moved to Streatham, although Hélène continued to take part in Dolmetsch concerts where her skill on the viola da gamba was much remarked on. Over the following months, Dolmetsch was in search of somebody to manage his domestic arrangements. An aunt, Aline, agreed to step in but soon made it clear that she would not accept this as a permanent position. She sent to France for Elodie. Margaret Campbell, Dolmetsch's biographer, describes Elodie's arrival at Dover:

"[Arnold] Dolmetsch … was a little apprehensive when he met her … and found her laden with her entire worldly possessions, together with a fresh cheese and a bunch of dead fowls. But Elodie was an instant success: musically outstanding and a brilliant keyboard player."

In the series of London concerts given on January 15 and 29, 1895, at the Salle Erard, 18 Great Marlborough Street, and February 12 and 28, 1895, at the Small Queen's Hall, Langham Place, the keyboard players had included J. A. Fuller Maitland and Miss Ethel Davis.

A reviewer in the *Saturday Review* commented:

"Mr Maitland scurried through the selection from "The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book" at such a pace, and with so small a show of interest in even the technical structure of the pieces, so weak a sense of the subtleties of rhythm that count for so much in this old music, that its meaning and even the old-world quality were wholly lost; but, on the other hand, he played a Prelude, an "Almand" and a Courante from Purcell's book of "Lessons for the Harpsichord", delightfully and with artistic insight."

Shortly after Elodie had begun performing with the family (she debuted at the New Gallery on 3 March 1895), the *Saturday Review* (11 May 1895) reported:

"Mrs Elodie Dolmetsch played some harpsichord pieces by Couperin with daintiness of colour, piquancy of rhythm, and quite remarkable freedom from the nervous scrambling that ruined the playing of some of Mr Dolmetsch's previous harpsichordists - especially those of the male sex."

Mabel Dolmetsch commented:

"There was an extraordinary charm and fluent grace in her playing. Her light touch, acquired through frequent use of a small square piano in the convent where she was educated, enabled her rapidly to adjust herself to the more ancient keyboard instruments. She was able to master pieces of considerably difficulty in a few days and play them by heart. … The harpsichord glittered under Elodie's deft fingers."

Dolmetsch played his 'Green' harpsichord, made at the instigation of William Morris and completed in 1896, in performances of *Don Giovanni* at Covent Garden (July 1897) and Purcell's *King Arthur* in Birmingham (October 1897) where he was joined by Elodie who played on a second instrument.

What also made Elodie initially so useful was her relationship with his daughter, Hélène. Mabel Dolmetsch remembered how her visits to the Dolmetsch home for violin lessons gave her an intriguing glimpse of his household, including Hélène and Elodie, with 'their voluble French, interspersed with shrieks of laughter.' Hélène later took lessons on the cello from Carl Fuchs (1865–1951) at the Royal Academy of Music in Manchester. She completed her studies in the winter of 1903 as a "Laureate of the Royal Academy of Music", qualifying also as a cello teacher.

In her analysis of George Moore's novel *Evelyn Innes*, the core of an article entitled 'George Moore and the Dolmetsches', Sara Ruth Watson writes:

"it also seems to me that the character of Evelyn might very well be a composite of Elodie Dolmetsch (Arnold's second wife, who sang as well as played) and Hélène (his sixteen-year-old daughter, who became a fine gamba player.)"

Evelyn Innes' father is clearly based on Arnold Dolmetsch who Moore had first met at Dolmetsch's home in Dulwich on the evening of 30 January 1894.

No longer afflicted with apprehension, Dolmetsch moved to finalise his divorce from Marie (the *decree nisi* was granted in Zurich on 20 December 1898) and was determined to marry Elodie. But, they could not overcome the prohibition in England against marriages

between in-laws. They had to travel to Zurich where no such restriction existed, and it was there that they were married on 11 September 1899.

Dolmetsch accompanied by his wife, Elodie, and his pupil Mabel Johnston gave their American debut in New York on 6 January 1903. The *New York Times* of 4 January reported:

"The first of Sam Franko's orchestral concerts of old-music will be given at Daly's Theatre on Tuesday afternoon at 3.30 p.m. It will have a special interest as being the American debut of Mr Arnold Dolmetsch, Mrs Elodie Dolmetsch, and Miss Mabel Johnston of London. Mr Dolmetsch has made a speciality of the obsolete instruments, the lute, viol da gamba, viola d'amore, and harpsichord, and these will be heard in the concerts."

The concerts were widely reviewed. The music critic Richard Aldrich wrote:

"The harpsichord sounded first, to ears attuned to the resonance of the modern pianoforte, like a far-away tinkling. But it soon took its place in the right perspective and compelled admiration and a liking for beauty and qualities of tone all its own. Mrs Elodie Dolmetsch played on an old English instrument by Kirkman, a maker famous in his day …."

There were private events too, in particular a private soirée at the home of one of Mrs Jacob Astor's grand-daughters, described by Larry Palmer in his book *Harpsichord in America: A Twentieth-Century Revival*:

"The musicians duly settled in the corner appointed to them and commenced their programme with a couple of ensemble pieces. Then, as Elodie began to play the opening notes of a Scarlatti sonata, the sound was completely swallowed up by a burst of melody from a Hungarian string quartet installed in the opposite corner. The rest of the evening's entertainment resulted in a series of strange musical contrasts, with considerable misunderstanding as to whom should play and for how long: a procedure unaided by the fact that is was conducted almost entirely in Hungarian."

The Dolmetsches sailed to England on 7 February 1903, a prelude to a growing incompatibility between husband and wife. Elodie moved out of the family home, eventually acquiring Eton Cottage, Eton Wick, and busied herself with playing and teaching. After the *decree nisi* (19 September 1903, Zurich, Switzerland) the family property was divided according to Swiss law: Elodie acquired the double-manual Kirkman harpsichord, other musical instruments and some books. She sent out notices "[begging] to announce that she has ceased to play the Virginals etc. … and to sing the old songs at the so-called "Arnold Dolmetsch Concerts", and that she will have, therefore, no connection with them." In addition, she advertised a concert she was planning to give at Caxton Hall on an 1800 Broadwood grand piano.

The bitterness will have been compounded by Dolmetsch's marriage on 23 September 1903 to his former pupil, Mabel Johnston.

In 1904, Elodie accompanied a 92-strong variety troupe that travelled to Brazil, led by the serpentine dancer Loïe Fuller (15 January 1862–1 January 1928). In May she gave the first performance on a harpsichord in modern times in Rio de Janeiro on her beloved Kirkman at the Theatro Lyrico, formerly the Theatro D. Pedro II. This predated by almost thirty

years the next formal performance in Brazil on historical instruments. The tour was a financial failure, as so many of Loïe Fuller's projects tended to be, and Elodie returned to France.

Margaret Campbell notes that in 1912, during Dolmetsch's period in France working at Gaveau, he appeared in a number of stage performances with Loïe Fuller and her troupe of young dancers in Paris and on tour in the provinces. Mabel Dolmetsch remarked that Fuller had previously visited the Dolmetsches while they were in Cambridge, MA.

In her 2009 PhD thesis, "*Musiciennes*: Women Musicians in France during the Interwar Years, 1919-1939", Laura Ann Hamer observes:

"It should be noted ... that the early music revival in France … had been gaining ground throughout the nineteenth century and [had] taken on a special impetus and nationalist significance in the wake of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71)."

In her article *Creating Madame Landowska* [from Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture 10 (2006) pp1-27 pub. University of Nebraska], Annegret Fauser, now Cary C. Boshamer Distinguished Professor Emerita of Music at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, surveyed the female harpsichordists active in *fin de siecle* Paris when Landowska was launching her career, in a milieu that "offered career opportunities that were scarce in other cities such a Vienna, Berlin, and London [and that, with the support of] a cosmopolitan and financially well-heeled audience, dozens of concert series, hundreds of salons and concert societies, many schools and conservatoires … [provided] spaces within which a young, ambitious musician could carve out a place for herself."

Female harpsichordists performing in Paris at this time include Pauline Auclert, Marguerite Delcourt, Elodie Lelong, Regina Patorni-Casadesus and Juliette Toutin. Another noted harpsichordist, from a decade later, would be the Swiss-born Marguerite Roesgen-Champion who graduated from Geneva Conservatory in 1913 but performed throughout Europe. In 1926, Roesgen-Champion settled in Paris and dedicated herself to composition.

When Polish-born pianist Wanda Landowska (1879–1959) began to perform on the harpsichord (in 1904), an article written by Robert Brussel, published in *Musica* (3) in April 1904, commented:

"Dans un recent concert donne dans la salle Erard, Mme Wanda Landowska, la remarquable interprete de Bach, a execute diverses pieces de son maitre prefere sur le clavecin. Elle a trouve aupres du public l'accueil le plus enthousiaste. Mme Elodie Lelong, qui possede une superbe collection de vieux instruments et de manuscrits musicaus des XVIIe et XVIIIe siecles et a qui nous devons plusieurs indications precieuses, a passionne le monde musical par l'audition de clavecin qu'elle vient de donner au Figaro."

[*In a recent concert in the Salle Erard, Mme Wanda Landowska, the remarkable Bach interpreter, performed various pieces by her favourite master on the harpsichord. She received a most enthusiastic welcome from the audience. Mme Elodie Lelong, who owns a superb collection of old instruments and musical manuscripts from the 17th and 18th centuries and to whom we owe several valuable insights, captivated the musical world with the harpsichord performance she recently gave to Le Figaro.*]

Of her later life we have little information beyond the place and date of her death. In her book, *Personal Recollections,* Mabel Dolmetsch recounts a rumour that Elodie formed a close relationship with a mysterious baroness and migrated to Austria.

A more comprehensive examination of musical activity in France between 1904 and 1926 might uncover more about her work as a performer and teacher during the last twenty years of her life.

As for the fate of Elodie's collection of musical manuscripts, in a catalogue of rare editions (Catalogue 42) offered for sale in 2007 by the London-based bookseller Otto Haas, one item caught my eye.

94. PARADIES, Pietro Domenico (1707–1791). [12] Sonate di Gravicembalo [G, Bb, E, c, F,A, g, e, a, D, F, C] dedicate A Sua Altezza Reale La Principessa Augusta. London, For the Author by John Johnson [1754]. 3 ff. (title, dedication, printer's privilege), 47 pp. large folio, engraved; in a once splendid, but now rubbed and bumped half leather binding with parchment edges and red, gold stamped title label; music in very good condition in spite of some old fingerings in pencil. Splendid engraved ex libris and stamp *Bibliothèque Elodie Lelong*. **£ 800**