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## Enter The Aunts: The 1990 George Eliot Reading by Gabriel Woolf

Gabriel Woolf

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## ENTER THE AUNTS

### The 1990 George Eliot Readings by Gabriel Woolf

King Edward VI Sixth Form College, Nuneaton  
Arts Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry

April 26th  
April 27th

I believe it was Henry James who wrote that any artistic performance requires 'the perfect presence of mind, unconfused, unhurried by emotion.' The quality of Gabriel Woolf's performance in ENTER THE AUNTS fulfilled the requirements of Henry James as well as the expectations of the audience, and the artistry touched the heights.

A mind had certainly been present in choosing the programme, which provided a perfect blend of George Eliot and The Others. The bickering aunts from The Mill on the Floss seem to be everyone's favourites. George Eliot no doubt drew on her memories of her own maternal aunts for these contentious characters who have their important place in her artistic scheme. The comic dialogue flows naturally and conveys some necessary matter to our understanding, and Gabriel's disputing voices add yet another dimension.

Oliver Wendell Holmes' Aunt Tabitha must have learned her manners in the same school as Aunt Glegg, and Saki's little boy in The Lumber Room would, no doubt, have grown into one of those detestable men of whom Aunt Tabitha disapproved. All the humour was skilfully drawn from these and other shorter pieces for our enjoyment. Gabriel Woolf moves with perfect ease from grave to gay and back again, and his varying voices range from old to young of either sex without faltering.

It is hard to choose a highlight from such an excellent programme. The encounter between Aunt Glegg and Bob Jakin is one of my favourites, but, if pressed, I think I must settle on In the Prison from Adam Bede.

The performer's concentration here was so intense that I found myself holding my breath in sympathy, with tears ready to start. It was a truly remarkable interpretation of a superbly written emotional scene, based, as we know, on the actual experience of one of George Eliot's real aunts.

This year we are celebrating Sixty Years of Fellowship, and in the last twenty or so Gabriel Woolf has been a shining light in our midst. We consider ourselves fortunate indeed to enjoy such fellowship, to have such an author to honour, and such a performer to undertake the dramatic interpretation of her work with such enthusiasm and brilliance.

*Kathleen Porter*

## THE PROGRAMME

Introduction to the Aunts

From *The Mill on the Floss* - George Eliot  
The gathering of the Aunts and their  
awful effect upon Maggie

Aunts in Verse - No. 1 Oliver W. Holmes

The Lumber Room Saki  
A Little Boy's Revenge upon his Aunt

From *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot  
After the crash; Maggie says what she thinks

Sixty Years of Fellowship

From *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot  
Religion of the Dodsons: the Pulletts and the  
Gleggs at Home

Aunts in Verse - Nos. 2, 3, 4 H. Belloc, H. Graham  
A. Housman

From *Adam Bede* - In the Prison George Eliot

From *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot  
Aunt Glegg meets her equal

Aunts in Verse - No. 5 V. Graham