

Hon. Sec. Mrs. B. Ruffle,  
Doughty Cottage,  
Haverfield Gardens,  
Kew, Richmond, Surrey.

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THE DELIUS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER - JUNE 1963

Encouraged by the response at the Annual General Meeting, one of the members of your committee has been making enquiries for a possible venue in London for members to meet and hear recorded tapes.

Holborn Public Library have an excellent library hall in their new premises at 32 Theobalds Road, W.C.1., where it is possible to hire the hall with catering facilities, together with a tape recorder, for five guineas.

Accordingly, a booking has been made for Thursday, 24th July, at 7.30., and a programme drawn up of tapes taken from B. B. C. programmes as follows: (i) A talk by Robert Nichols - a friend of Delius - about a visit to Grez in the early thirties, (ii) Songs of Farewell, with the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra under Sargent, (iii) Legende, for violin and piano (iv) A selection of part songs for unaccompanied chorus, and of songs for tenor and piano.

Having paid a deposit of 35/-, we now discover that there is a nigger in the woodpile in the shape of the Performing Rights Society, who must be advised of any forthcoming public performances of music. This will be done by the Holborn Library, and no trouble should arise. However, the B.B.C. insist that all tapes taken from broadcasts can only be used for research purposes.

We therefore propose inviting a psychiatrist along to this meeting to determine what it is makes certain persons so keen on Delius, whilst others cannot bear to listen to one note of his music. Seriously, though, the trials are far more numerous than one would expect in arranging a meeting like this, and any member who is willing to arrange these meetings in future will find the present writer only too willing to hand it all over.

Members are therefore cordially invited to attend on 24th July, and to cover the cost of hiring the hall, we are suggesting a charge of 5/- for non-members, and 3/6d for members, with light refreshments available. We hope that this can be the first of many enjoyable meetings, where we can get to know one another, and the music of Delius, better. Whether we hold any further meetings will depend to a large extent on the number who attend, and, although July is a holiday month, we hope that at least twenty will come along, and bring as many friends as possible.

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About a fortnight ago a special edition of "Look", the television nature programme, showed a number of outstanding shots of animals. The musical background was well chosen. It included a lot of Sibelius, but one shot of ducks was accompanied by "Summer Night on the River". This was a particularly happy choice, and, although it is reflective music, it made a good accompaniment. It also sounded well interspersed with Sibelius. These two composers make an ideal juxtaposition, and the present writer remembers with much pleasure a concert Beecham gave at the Festival Hall in 1957, at which he played Dance Rhapsody No.1. and Appalachia, followed after the interval by Sibelius Symphony No.2.

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Although this newsletter has been appearing monthly since April, the cost of producing it this frequently is making the society funds look rather slender, so that the next two newsletters are planned for August and October. In the meantime one of our members has most generously and anonymously donated five pounds, to be used as members think fit. It has been added to the general funds, but if other members feel as generous and would like to offer donations towards any particular idea they have in mind, the treasurer will be most happy to accept them on behalf of the society. Perhaps we could build our own premises somewhere! It would certainly be a help for Committee meetings, which seem to be held in various parts of London.

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Members will be disgusted to learn that only one Delius work is being performed at this year's Promenade Concerts, namely Brigg Fair. The director of music at the B.B.C., William Glock, has admitted that he dislikes the music of Delius, but if any member would care to write either to him, or his deputy, Gerald Abraham (who does like Delius) at the B.B.C, perhaps there will be more works performed in 1964, especially if by then one of our members has managed to get himself the job of Director of Music at the B.B.C!

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The letter in the May edition of the Gramophone about the society has introduced several new members, as will be seen from the list at the end of this newsletter. We are especially glad to welcome members from overseas, and one correspondent from South Africa, a Mr. Derek Ockse (I hope I have read the name correctly) has written to say that last year he played the violin concerto with the South African Broadcasting Company's Symphony Orchestra. He goes on to say that, as far as he knows, it has not been played in South Africa for many decades, but then I doubt if it has been played more than ten times in this country during the past decade.

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Members have sent me several letters with news for inclusion in the newsletter, for which I am most grateful. Mr. Noakes, a member of the Royal Choral Society, has sent the following letter to Sir Malcolm Sargent, and I am sure all members will be fully in agreement with its content.

" Dear Sir Malcolm,

We, as members of the Royal Choral Society who also belong to the Delius Society, would like to express the hope that you might make a recording of "Songs of Farewell", your performance of which was one of the outstanding experiences of the Centenary Year, and of course a complete novelty to most listeners.

This request stems from the fact that, at the recent Annual General Meeting of the Delius Society, Felix Aprahamian, answering members' questions on behalf of the Delius Trust, explained that the Trust was not in a position to sponsor recordings, but rather to subsidise those proposed by the gramophone companies or the recording artists.

In view of your close association with this work since its first performance, we hope that you will give the suggestion your favourable consideration."

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Deryck Cooke has also sent the following letter to Mrs. Swanston:

" Dear Mrs. Swanston,

I must say that I feel very honoured to be asked to write a handbook on Delius by Dr. Gibson, but I am afraid that, as things stand, it is quite impossible. I have already been asked to write a full-length book on Delius by a literary agent, and I have had to turn it down through lack of time.

In fact, I did always want to write a book on Delius, but the opportunity did not offer itself, and then I got interested in Mahler and the problems raised in "The Language of Music". Since then, I have contracted with O.U.P. to write for them, and I am working on some 40,000 words for the New Oxford History of Music (1890-1918 - in which I am giving Delius his full due!) and a book on Wagner. So at the moment, I just cannot write anything else, owing to lack of time and my contract with O.U.P. (the B.B.C. Handbook on Mahler was a special case, as I had already promised the B.B.C. to do it before I signed the O.U.P. contract.)

However, I don't intend to let Delius drop, if I can help it. As well as the two articles in "The Musical Times" (which I actually offered to Andrew Porter, and was surprised to find him accepting), I have written three articles for "Musical Opinion" summing up critical reactions to the Delius Centenary Festival at Bradford, and showing, I think fairly conclusively, that from all that was said, a pretty positive evaluation of Delius's music emerged, in spite of a few adverse opinions.

It is indeed a great pity that one cannot do everything one wants to, but I am hoping that, after the Wagner book (which may not be before 1964), I may be able to turn to Delius after all."

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We are grateful to Dr. Gibson for the following notes on Delius:-

"During the Delius Festival Year, a number of critics, Deryck Cooke for example, compared Delius in various ways with his contemporaries, in particular Debussy, who shared Delius' reaction against the preconceived, externally applied formal framework approach in musical composition; also some critics remarked on the influence of Wagner, Grieg and Strauss on Delius. Delius in turn had his influence of course. Andrew Porter has pointed out the widespread use of a debased Delius idiom in film music. When an excerpt from Beecham's recording (L.P.) of "Mass of Life" was played at a London Symphony Orchestra Club recital, a certain young lady, who did not know Delius, exclaimed "Sounds like background music to a film". Others have remarked on Delius' "Jazz harmony". On the other hand Alban Berg, for example, studied Delius' music to some extent; there seems, to the present writer, to be a slight connection in style between the brooding music of Act I of "Fennimore and Gerda" and certain passages in Berg's suite from "Lulu".

Delius' influence on Peter Warlock is clear. Incidentally, the record of his "Serenade to Delius" is available again. Grove's Dictionary refers to it as having a delightfully Delian flavour". Grove's Dictionary also says of Charles Orr, the composer and friend of Delius, who is one of our members, - "As a song-writer Orr must undoubtedly be counted among the most gifted of the present generation... Implicit in Orr's music are Three very definite influences; an early passion for German Lieder,...., his friendship with Delius, and a thorough and profound admiration for A.E. Housman's poetry. The first two are betrayed in certain stylistic features of his music,....."

One could discuss the possible influence of Delius on Bax.

Besides the question of connections of Delius' work with that of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors, is that of the more clearly marked connections between Delius' own works.

For example does not "Autumn", of the "North Country Sketches", remind us strongly in one part of the Dark Fiddler in Act I of the "Village Romeo and Juliet"? Again, of the works written about the period of World-War-One, one notices the occurrences of certain very similar little syncopated tunes, for example in the "Dance" of "North Country Sketches" and in the middle of the violin concerto. There is quite a resemblance between this tune in the violin concerto and one which occurs in "A Song of Summer", which, although written about 1930, was based on material sketched somewhere about the first-World-War period.

In a letter to Mrs. Grace Swanston, on the subject of Kempe as a conductor of Delius, Deryck Cooke points out that "the words 'Sea-Drift' were generally applied by Whitman to a good deal of his poetry with the sea, some of which is extremely bold, virile and optimistic and that it means things washed up by the sea or possibly thoughts and feelings about the sea".

Further remarks by Deryck Cooke, writing in the "Listener" recently:

"... but Kempe was less successful with another outlying work, Delius' "Sea-Drift" - a romantic choral masterpiece which needs not discovering but rescuing from the tendency of fashion to push its composer into oblivion. Kempe has gallantly succeeded Beecham as Delius' champion, but while his insistence on approaching the music entirely afresh is completely understandable, one wishes that he would take to heart Beecham's general injunction to all Delius conductors to 'keep a tight control over the motion of the melodic line, otherwise there may be created an unpleasant sense of lassitude and shapelessness.' Kempe feels this necessity far less than our own Stanford Robinson, and his unincisive conducting did result in lassitude and shapelessness; even so John Shirely - Quirk partly saved the day with a most sensitive and eloquent delivery of the solo baritone part."

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The following performances have been noted recently:

"Sea-Drift" was performed at the Albert Hall by Thomas Hemsley and the L.P.O. under N. Del Mar on May 14th.

On Saturday May 4th Lois Hainsworth, soprano, included some Delius in her recital at Wigmore Hall.

On April 22nd, the B.B.C. Northern Orchestra, conducted by Reginald Stead, broadcast a performance of "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring".

On April 25th, the B.B.C. Concert Orchestra, conducted by Vilem Tausky, broadcast a performance of "The Walk to the Paradise Garden", in "Luncht me Prom".

On May 26th, the Air and Dance was played on the 8.20.a.m. Sunday morning programme, 'Melody an Strings'.

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Miss Estelle Palmby, whom we are very glad to welcome back on to the committee after an absence of several months, has sent us the following:

I HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL TO THEE  
IN MY FASHION

( 'Cynara' for Baritone and Orchestra )

With the dearth of Delius music on the concert platform at present, it seems to me that one alternative is to follow what our fellow-Delians are doing in the musical world.

So on June 6th I attended a concert at Wigmore Hall. The baritone, Donald Francke, really showed to greater advantage in the second half of the programme, particularly in the Schubert songs which enabled him to display the very pleasing "upper register" of his voice.

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However, it was to hear the songs of C.W. Orr, presented by John Chaffer, two members of our Society, which drew me to the Wigmore Hall on a very warm June evening. Like Arthur Somervell and George Butterworth, Mr. Orr drew his inspiration from the poems of A.E. Housman, so it was really a shame that the words could not be heard, and I found myself concentrating on Mr. Orr's very lyrical piano accompaniments. Fortunately these conveyed exactly the mood of the Housman poems.

The next evening, in a tropical storm, I went to the St. Pancras Town Hall for an evening of Gilbert & Sullivan. Now I have always had an in-built resistance to these two gentlemen, but about one-third of the way through "Trial by Jury" there was an exhortation on stage to "Cheer up, cheer up, we love you". From then on my spirits rose and continued to soar throughout the evening!

Here again, the main attraction for me was to see Mr. Roy Budden, the conductor of the orchestra, and a member of the Delius Society, in action.

Mr. Roy Budden proved to be an energetic and authoritative conductor of the orchestra which he himself founded in 1949, with the intriguing - rather Delian - title of "The Capriol Orchestra".

It is indeed seldom that two succeeding evenings of such diverse character prove to be so rewarding.

Now does any member of the Delius Society play first trumpet in a hot-jazz combination? Just send me the particulars!

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One of our members, Mr. Lavender, has written as follows:

"It was noted some time ago in one of our newsletters that some new correspondence concerning Delius had come to light. Perhaps the formation of our Society offers a good opportunity to gather some sort of collection of letters to or from Delius and his outstanding contemporaries. This would take some time to assemble and it would probably be too expensive to issue in book form, but such a collection would surely be of the greatest interest to our members, and could perhaps be issued over a period of time as stenciled copies."

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This month has seen the much welcome release of the Songs of Sunset. We are grateful to Mr. Lyndon Jenkins for the following review. Unfortunately, it now seems that EMI will not be recording 'A Village Romeo and Juliet', as was originally planned, but we hope to discuss the subject of gramophone records more fully in the August newsletter.

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The newly-issued recording of "Songs of Sunset" seems to me to suffer from two main defects. The first is the choice of Miss Maureen Forrester's particular kind of vocal quality for the soprano line. Delius wrote the work for a soprano and, while many passages lie uncomfortably low for a true soprano, it would seem to me perfectly possible for a mezzo-soprano to encompass all the difficulties. This is suggested by Sir Thomas Beechan in his book on Delius, where he writes of the work 'the female solo part is to be competently rendered only by a high mezzo-soprano that can cope with the rich middle register of the music. Such a voice is rare to find these days and that of the average soprano is wanting in the voluptuous quality needful for the reproduction of the right kind of sound'. Would Sir Thomas really have described Miss Forrester's voice as voluptuous?

But a far more serious defect is the recording of the Orchestra, which is indeed disappointing. Repeated listenings with the aid of a score reveal many passages of the utmost importance which are nearly inaudible. Clarinets, bassoons and horns suffer particularly badly, and it is in most places quite impossible to distinguish between cor anglais and bass oboe. Of the strings, only the first violin and cellos and basses can be picked up readily. Some examples are mentioned in the following notes I have made on the individual movements:-

1. The choral singing is very good indeed, and the balance with the orchestral strings quite realistic. Woodwind are rather backward, especially at "golden corn" (No.3.)
2. One of the work's less successful movements, but I do not think it really is so congested as it sounds here. Several important orchestral passages are lost, especially in the horns, whose unison passage at "red mouth to mouth entwined" (3 bars before cell) for instance, though no doubt played fortissimo as marked, hardly sounds it.
3. The third section has, again, splendid choral singing and is beautifully done. One or two examples of orchestral backwardness, though they may not actually detract, are to be found at the words "are we not better..." (3 bars before 17) where the unison horn and second violins hardly relate to the same phrase played two bars later by the first violins; and during the violin solo, where the woodwind chords are unclear.
4. The lovely solo "Exceeding sorrow" is something of a disappointment. Firstly it is, for my taste, a little too brisk. Delius' marking 'not too slow' gives one a wide choice, but its conjunction with 'con tristezza' suggests, to me, a slower tempo than we have here; also the time-signature is 4/4, pointing to a measure of four beats to the bar. Surely if Delius wanted two beats to the bar (Sir Thomas undoubtedly beats it thus) he would have written the same time-signature as for the next song. A vocalist's tendency not to hit the note directly is always rather disturbing in Delius, and here it imparts a rather uncomfortable feeling to the whole thing. I don't know if Miss Forrester is American, but her pronunciation of "cast" sounds distinctly foreign to me. The strings are rather backward, but the playing is exquisite. A pity that the cor anglais is barely audible in its three playings of the phrase repeated by the solo cello in the concluding bars.

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5. In "By the sad waters of separation", John Cameron's absolute security of intonation makes the 'unnecessarily vocal angularities' (Beecham) sound quite natural and I think this movement is eminently successful. The singer's fine artistic sense comes through repeatedly (only one example is "Hardly can I remember your face") and the glorious passage beginning "No man knows....." with a fine bass sound is thrilling indeed, despite underpowered strings.

6. 'Freshly' is the marking of this choral number and delightfully it sounds, too, at this ideal pace. In the solo interjections, Miss Forrester's high F sharp on "flowers of the soul" is rather affecting, but the orchestral playing in the last six bars is not of the customary Beecham standard.

7. In each of the first four bars, the pizzicato notes of first and second violins on the fifth and sixth beats are barely audible; this spoils the effect of delicate woodwind tracery supported by a light serenade-like pizzicato bass. Towards the end of this song, at the words "the evening came and left me sorrowful" (No.45) the violas really come into their own.

8. The concluding number, "They are not long" is again, for my taste, a little fast. Delius marks it 'Quietly' which is not much help, but it should be noted that Beecham does not alter speed at all at 'somewhat more animated' (the second verse) where I feel his tempo is correct. The **louder** passages are very congested and the orchestra, which is very fully and independently scored at these points, comes off very badly indeed. I do not think the last dozen or so bars would have been passed by Sir Thomas, either. Altogether a rather disappointing conclusion to the cycle.

The foregoing are the views and opinions of one who is fairly well acquainted with the work, having prepared it for public performances. I remain convinced that it is a great work, and I am also convinced that the performance on the new record is a great one which, unfortunately, we are not easily able to appreciate. I would be interested to have the views of other members on this record, and would be happy to enter into correspondence with anyone who cares to write to me direct. Perhaps, at a later date, a number of views could be summarised and included in the 'Newsletter'.

For members who would like to write to Mr. Jenkins, his address is:

37, Hazel Road,  
Swansea,  
Glamorgan.

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Here is the following list of new members, together with corrections to addresses of other members.

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| 91. | Cyril Crafton Harris, Esq.,<br>18 Cumberland Road,<br>Kew, Surrey.     | 61   | J.N. Guffogg, Esq.,<br>Treyarnon,<br>Newbury Park,<br>Ledbury, Herefordshire.        |
| 102 | Brian R. Judge,<br>4 Old Constables,<br>Oppingham, Rutland.            | 103. | Ruth M.K. How,<br>53-Addison Gardens,<br>W.14.                                       |
| 104 | D.W. Farr, Esq.,<br>12 Hatfield Road,<br>Rayleigh, Essex.              | 105  | William Rañdel, Esq.,<br>Florida State University,<br>Tallahassee,<br>Florida, U.S.A |
| 106 | Ivor R. Russell,<br>Netherwood,<br>Michaels Field<br>Mumbles, Swansea. | 107  | G.N. Freestone, Esq.,<br>Dunedin,<br>121 Lennard Road,<br>Beckenham, Kent.           |
| 108 | Mrs. P. Emanuel,<br>44 Mount Street,<br>Park Lane, W.1.                | 109  | A.R. Itter Esq.,<br>99 Green Lane,<br>Burnham, Bucks.                                |

DAVID SIMMONS  
CHAIRMAN