

Hon. Treasurer,
Miss A. Todd,
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DELIUS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER
AUGUST, 1963

I must apologise for the printing of the June newsletter. The stencil was typed on an electric typewriter, and there appears to have been a power cut every time the 'i' key was depressed. However, although this meant that in parts the newsletter conjured up schooldays grappling with Latin unseens, it is hoped that every member managed to understand it all. This time the stencil should be typed on an ordinary typewriter, and we hope that the result is more legible.

The recital of tapes at the Holborn Library on 24th July was attended by over thirty members, and was voted a great success. So much so, that it is planned to hold another in October or November. Mrs. Emanuel, whom we were very glad to welcome with Mr. Emanuel, one of the trustees of the Delius Trust, has very kindly offered to loan a tape she brought back from the Jacksonville festival this January of the opera "Koanga", and we hope that this will form the main item, with an introductory talk by Mr. Emanuel about their visit to this year's Jacksonville festival.

Several members, who arrived after 7.30 p.m., have also asked if it would be possible to hear the first item again, which was a talk by Robert Nichols of a visit to Delius at Grez in the early 1930s. More details will be given in the next newsletter.

WE ARE ALSO PLANNING TO HOLD A 'LIVE' RECITAL OF SOME CHAMBER WORKS AND SONGS. A provisional booking has been made for the Arts Council recital room, 4, St. James's Square, London, S. W. 1., for SATURDAY, 4TH JANUARY, 1964, at 7.30 p.m. The Committee feels that, by choosing a Saturday, members who live outside London will be able to attend, weather permitting. The artists, it is hoped, will be Wilfred Brown, tenor; Gordon Stewart, piano; and Sheila Nelson, violin. The works suggested are the first violin sonata, the legende for violin and piano, and a selection of songs.

In the next newsletter we hope to confirm this booking, and to send members a form on which they can indicate whether or not they will be able to attend. The recital room at the Arts Council holds about 150 people, and the Committee feels that, if critics, as we intend, are invited along, it will impress them, if not overwhelm them, to find every seat taken. Friends of members will be welcome, especially if they become members as a result, assuming that there is room. If the demand is sufficient, of course, there is no reason why the Festival Hall should not be hired, although Mr. Bean will probably want at least two years' notice, and that for the new recital room being built!

Members will be delighted to learn that a fellow-member, Mr. A. J. Noakes, wrote to Sir Malcolm Sargent suggesting that he might consider "Songs of Farewell" for recording and received the following very hopeful reply -

"I was so happy to receive your letter, and will talk to the gramophone company and see what can be done. I agree with your proposal that the Songs of Farewell should be issued as a record."

We understand that the Delius Trust are also making arrangements to have this work recorded by Sir Malcolm Sargent, so that the chances that it will be issued would seem to be very good indeed.

Whilst on the subjects of recordings, one of our members, Mr. A. R. Itter, of 99, Green Lane, Burnham, Bucks., is responsible for the issue of recordings under the Lyrita label. Apparently, Lyrita are hoping to record a Delius L.P. next year, and Mr. Itter would be interested to hear from members as to which works they would like recorded, preferably of the instrumental variety, as orchestral works are expensive things to record. Perhaps if the recital next January is a success, it could be recorded, at least for members to buy a copy.

We regret that we were unable to inform members of an event that took place in Bradford last month, as the Committee was only advised of it a few days before it occurred. As a permanent memorial to Delius, the Bradford Civic Society has had erected in Horton Park, Bradford, a memorial stone with an engraved plaque, and with the consent of the Bradford City Council, an avenue of poplar trees has been planted, and will be named the Delius Memorial Avenue.

The stone was unveiled on 31st July by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, and guests adjourned afterwards to Croft House, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Tempest. If any member was by any chance present, we should be glad to have further particulars about the event, as well as any available cuttings from local newspapers.

Further to a suggestion made at the inaugural meeting of the Society, it is now proposed to assemble a small library of articles on Delius which have appeared in periodicals, etc., These will be available on loan to Society members. Further details will be given in the next newsletter, with an address to which any member can send cuttings from articles considered to be of interest to other members. The Committee are already receiving interesting cuttings from members, and these will all be incorporated into this project.

We are very sorry to learn that Mr. J. F. Bowman is contemplating a move from Rickmansworth to Edinburgh in the near future where - as he himself says - he will form 50% of the present membership of the Delius Society for Scotland!

Mr. Bowman has from the start given us the utmost support and encouragement, and we shall miss his presence at the Annual General Meetings and other functions.

/ One of our

One of our members, Mr. Gillespy, favours the idea of L.P. issues of Beecham's older 78s, and writes:-

"some have already been done of course, but 'Eventyr' and 'Paris' would be welcome; the L.P. recordings of these works were somehow disappointing.

"I would still like to see some new works though. I remember enjoying very much 'In the Mountains' which was played at the 1946 Delius Festival as well as a magnificent 'Mass of Life'; the watering-down of that final climax in the recording almost ruins the whole thing for me.

"'Songs of Farewell', 'In the Mountains', and a reissue, suitably 'redoctored' of the 'Mass of Life' would be my choices for 1964 and I thoroughly support the idea of suites from operas - 'Fennimore' and 'Koanga' as a start (on the understanding that the 'Village Romeo and Juliet' is already in hand).

"Beecham changed his Delius interpretations quite a bit in later years; one has only to compare his two recordings of 'Appalachia' and the Final Scene from 'Hassan'."

Mr. Noakes writes as follows:-

"I was interested in Dr. Gibson's comments on composers influenced by Delius, especially Berg and Bax. A passage in a flowing 6/8 (I think) rhythm very near the end of Berg's Violin Concerto always reminds me of similar music in the Delius Concerto. In spite of the differences of idiom, Berg and Delius certainly have something in common in the spirit of their music - perhaps in sharing an intense chromaticism.

"I have sometimes wondered whether the almost total disappearance of Bax's music may be due to his turning to the writing of symphonies, which never quite seem to maintain their interest. It is only early tone poems, like "Tintagel" and "Garden of Fand" in which the Delius influence is most apparent, which are occasionally heard. Is it perhaps significant that not only was Delius an essentially "unsymphonic" composer, but also that none of Delius' own contemporaries and influences (Wagner, Grieg, Debussy, Ravel) were symphonists either."

New Member

We welcome another member from the U.S.A., Mr. M.B. Tarshish, introduced by Mr. R. O. Wright, who tells us that Mr. Tarshish knew Percy Grainger well. Mr. Wright says

"until the death of Percy Grainger in 1962 he [Mr. Tarshish] often saw both Grainger and his wife. He knew them both well and living in White Plains was often invited round to their apartment. Needless to say this produced many memories of Delius!"

Members will therefore wish to add to their lists:-

"110. Manuel B. Tarshish, Esq.,
Fulton Park Apartment, C-8,
White Plains, New York, U.S.A. "

/ It seems that

It seems that no issue would be complete without a contribution from our founder-member, Dr. Roland Gibson, and we welcome his latest article entitled:-

DELIUS, SUNSET AND AUTUMN

In "Songs of Sunset", Sir Thomas Beecham's recording of which has been recently released, the word "sunset" is used in a general sense, meaning also autumn, evening, the fading of youth, and so on. Generally, in Delius' nostalgic nature-music, even if the titles are about spring and summer, it is always autumn, as Philip Heseltine implied in his book; and when Delius does label a piece "autumn", as in "North Country Sketches", it seems to be late windy autumn rather than mellow Indian-summer. Delius' "Mass of Life" has sometimes been described as a real life-affirmation, in contrast with other masses; however, it would seem that, in as much as it is conscious affirmation, Delius' mass is a real mass of death, compared with other masses. The religious man's next-world is always made up of components of this world, death having meaning only through life, not as with Delius, largely the other way round, an experience of beauty of a summer evening being heightened by the sense of transitoriness.

The poignancy of Delius' musical expression of this experience is particularly bound up with his subtle chromatic harmony, often an otherwise folk-song-like melody being given significance through very sophisticated harmony. This is one aspect of a heightening of pleasure through guilt, of a sense of loss in recognition of change, diatonic unity contrasting with chromatic multiplicity.

It is on account of this preoccupation with change, with the passing of time, expressed so characteristically in "Songs of Sunset", that so many critics have written of Delius' "narrow emotional range". However, one could say that Delius' emotional range was wide in the sense that transitoriness is common to all emotions. For a member of a primitive tribe, who has relatively little conception of the measurement of time, there is such a thing as eternal love, eternal because it is momentary, but he does not know that, not being "aware" of change, of the passing of time, in the way in which a member of a modern industrial society is.

Delius, born in the industrial North of England, was one who had moved a considerable way along the analytic road, but the process was not complete. His conflict was expressed, for example, in the contrast of his folk-song-like melodies and chromatic harmony, which remained "just within the boundaries of tonality" (Philip Heseltine), thus stopping short of carrying the long romantic process of increasingly complex harmony over into atonality. He did not break away completely from the old musical forms and there was a tendency in later life to revert to the sonata or concerto. Another expression of this inner struggle is the contrast of the refinement of works like "In a Summer Garden" or "Summer Night on the River" with the patches of vulgarity shown in the piano concerto, "Hassan", or parts of the First Dance Rhapsody, for instance. Yet another facet of this unresolved conflict was the way in which Delius used to attack other people's religious positions, apparently not realising that the very fact that he bothered to argue so much meant that he was still involved. The real atheist does not make a point of constantly attacking God or of labelling himself "atheist"; he is just not interested, being out of it all.

/ More than

More than one critic has spoken of a longing for eternity in Delius' music. Wilfrid Mellers has written of Delius' "longing for Eden", while others have referred to Delius as an adult dreaming in childhood's garden. "He hated the bourgeois institutionalism of Victorian Bradford" says Burnett James, and early in life he left England for Florida, the mountains of Norway, and so on.

In his reaction against the preconceived, externally applied, formal framework, into which classical musical form had degenerated from something which originally had evolved freely, Delius wrote music which has been regarded by many critics as formally weak, just as they assert that Delius' emotional range was narrow. However, Deryck Cooke, using the technique of functional analysis, has recently shown that, contrary to appearances, Delius' music is highly organised (Delius' "sense of flow"), an expression of Delius' hatred of formalism but also of his readiness to argue, an expression of his own advanced analytical attitude, in spite of his saying that music is a purely emotional matter. His preoccupation with the world of nature is to a large extent emotional only in the sense of consciousness of one's reactions. The nostalgic person always has his other side, awareness of his situation. Consider, for example, the remark made by Delius, who had been so concerned with the erotic, to Eric Fenby to the effect that love was merely ephemeral, comparing it with fireworks, or again, consider the transition from the Fennimore affair to the Gerda courtship in the realistic opera "Fennimore and Gerda". Sir Thomas Beecham, in his book on Delius, almost gives one the impression that Delius married Jelka Rosen for the garden at the back of the house at Grez, having noticed that it would be a convenient place in which to work. Beecham certainly suggests that Delius' marriage was a calculated move after his earlier amorous life. For all his turning his back on his father's hard-headedness, and, although his main inspiration was nature, he was no primitive but a sophisticated fastidious person who was very sensitive to the ethos of his time, to his father's background of which he was part; acutely aware in spring of impending autumn, of "the sorrow that lies at the heart of all mortal joys", to quote Cecil Gray; he was attracted by the poetic aspect of Nietzsche, who was so intensely conscious of his changing social background, of the decay of the old values. Delius' music had "the sunset glow of the end of an era" (Burnett James). He has been described as a typical late romantic, but the other aspect of this was that it was no accident that one whose music was so highly organised, though not in the classical sense, was a person of unusual integrity who went his own way, a "mature character" as Beecham described him, a highly gifted musician who remained true to himself, to the extent of his reaction against form merely for its own sake - against the rigid insufficiently formal.

More New Members

Please sharpen up your pencils again to make a note of the following names and addresses: -

111. R. B. Kitching, Esq.,
Mwanza,
8, Park Lane,
Allestree, Nr. Derby

112. Dr. David A. Strong,
Whitehill,
Berkhamsted, Herts.

113. Derek Cchse,
Box 497,
Rustenburg,
TVL, South Africa.

This is holiday-time, and soon your Chairman and Committee will be "Over the Hills and Far Away"; so best wishes to members, old and new, for the rest of the summer season.

However, we shall be back in a few weeks' time, and it is hoped that your next newsletter will be in October.

DAVID SIMMONS
Chairman.