

Hon. Treasurer;  
Miss A. Todd,  
9, Woodstock Road,  
Alperton, Middlesex.

DELIUS SOCIETY - NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1963

The evening members had at the Holborn Central Library on Friday, 29th November, was generally agreed to have been most enjoyable. We were particularly glad to welcome members who were unable to attend in July, and Mr. Kitching made a special journey from Derby. We were also glad to have with us Mrs. Rachel Dugmore from Nottingham. Had it not been for the fact that we were required to leave at 10 p.m., I think it might easily have turned into an all-night session!

In the second half, we heard the tape from the Jacksonville festival, kindly lent by Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel.

A few members have enquired if we could have these meetings on a Saturday in the afternoon. Unfortunately Holborn Library is not available at weekends, so we shall have to look for another venue for a Saturday meeting. We would welcome other members' views on this.

---

FIRST OF ALL, THOUGH, WE HAVE THE LIVE RECITAL AT LEIGHTON HOUSE, 12, HOLLAND PARK ROAD, W. 14 ON SATURDAY, 4TH JANUARY, AT 7 P.M. and the programme will definitely consist of the first and third violin sonatas, and ten songs. We are most grateful to those members who have already reserved their seats, but we are disappointed that the London members in particular are being so dilatory. We do hope that this only indicates a reluctance to put pen to paper and not lack of support for the Society's first venture in this field! All honour then to Dr. Carley for having written from Sweden, where he is temporarily resident, to make his Leighton House bookings for the 4th January.

May we again ask you to assist our administrative arrangements by making, where possible, a written application for seats (for which there is no charge) to the Secretary, Miss Estelle Palmley, 45, Redhill Drive, Edgware, Middlesex, if possible before the Committee meets again on the 18th December.

WE ARE HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THAT MR. ERIC FENBY, OUR PRESIDENT, HAS WRITTEN TO SAY THAT HE WILL BE ATTENDING, AND WILL BE TRAVELLING FROM SCARBOROUGH TO BE PRESENT ON THIS OCCASION.

---

Mr. Fenby also had the following comments to make about various items in the October newsletter, which he has given me permission to reproduce here:-

"(1) String Quartet: Last year the Galliard Press commissioned me to make an arrangement for string orchestra of 'Late Swallows'. The first performance will be given by our Vice-President, Sir John Barbirolli in Houston, Texas, on 6th November. The first English performance will be at Leeds on 28th March, to be followed shortly afterwards by several performances in various cities.

/(2)

"(2) Box of Delius' music at the Royal Academy of Music. This box contains copies of all Delius' published music. Full scores choral, operatic and orchestral, songs, chamber music, piano transcriptions, all of which formerly belonged to him and which he left to me. I have now presented them to the Royal Academy of Music to mark the centenary of Delius' birth in the hope that future generations of students may not be denied access to the study and delight of Delius' music.

"(3) Mr. Staveley's mention of my old friend Philip Oylar brings happy memories of his unfailing kindness to me at Grez. I recall too how furious Delius was when I read him the offending passage in 'A musical pilgrimage in Yorkshire' and how he spurred me to reprove the author in the Yorkshire Post, much to Beecham's delight. That was in 1929.

"(4) Souvenir Programmes for Centenary Festival. There are about 400 copies still unsold, chiefly owing to cancellations of bookings due to the smallpox scare shortly before the Festival. The problem is what to do with them? Would the Delius Society care to accept them to give away to interested people or sell at say 1/- a copy for Society funds? I should be glad to have your views. We have the means to have them sent in bulk to one distribution point, maybe at the forthcoming meetings of the Society, but have not the clerical facilities to have them posted to individual members.

" I shall definitely be at Leighton House and much regret not being able to attend any of your previous meetings owing to illness".

Mr. Fenby's reference to Philip Oylar leads us on to a particularly lovely passage from his book "Sons of the generous Earth", submitted by Mr. Staveley:

"While I was sitting in the garden one evening with DELIUS, the declining rays of the sun were falling upon a border in such a way that the flowers seemed to have become more ethereal than real, all appearing to be translucent. I remarked to him that I wished that he could see them at the moment. I upbraided myself for the tactless remark as soon as it was out of my mouth.

"I had no need to do so, for he replied that he had no regret that he could no longer see them, for he might be disappointed if he could. They might, he said, be less beautiful than they were in the sight of his imagination. I treasure that evening and that reply as my most pleasant memory of him. Flowers made translucent by the rays of the setting sun. Blindness made translucent by the light of imagination.

"Thank God for both".

Mr. Aickman also writes (reference October newsletter)

"I have not read the book by Philip Oylar, but can only say if, as stated, he was not fond of music, he appears to have been fond of musicians, because he was the man who was responsible for Rutland Boughton initiating his series of festivals at Glastonbury."

/ Mr. Fenby's

Mr. Fenby's reference to the first performance of 'Late Swallows' in Texas prompted our secretary to obtain from the Information Officer at the American Embassy the "Houston Chronicle" for the day after the concert, which had this to say about the performance:

"Sir John gave special attention and devotion to an orchestral transcription of a composition of Delius, now titled 'Late Swallows'. There is a touching wistfulness and nostalgia about this music scored for the string choir only. Played here in this transcription for the first time anywhere, it was a world premiere and Sir John gave it delicate shadings and a meaningful first performance.

The "Houston Chronicle" also referred to the fact that Sir Malcolm Sargent "wearing his traditional white carnation" was in the audience.

---

We have recently heard from two of our overseas members, Professor Randel of Florida, and Mr. Himmer in Australia.

Professor Randel gave us some interesting facts about the recording of the extracts from the Jacksonville festival, which were read to our audience on the 29th November, and enquires if we would be interested in more American members. We are replying to Professor Randel that the Society would welcome this further strengthening of Anglo-American-Delian ties!

Mr. Himmer writes as follows, in a letter dated 3rd Nov.

"It has been my intention for some months to write and let you know about some of the works of Delius which have been performed in Melbourne. In March this year we had a visit from the Polish National Radio Orchestra and I thought it was particularly interesting to find that they included in their programme on 27th March "Walk to the Paradise Garden". The conductor was Jan Krenz and the performance was a sympathetic and beautiful one.

"There is in Melbourne a Chamber Music Society called Soiree Musicales which was founded some 14 years ago by Mischa Kogan, a violinist in the Victorian Symphony Orchestra. It is a flourishing organisation and meets on a Sunday evening once a month. On 5th May last Mischa Kogan and Jascha Spivakovsky gave a very successful performance of the Delius Sonata No. 2 for viola and piano which was very warmly applauded.

"Last month saw the inaugural performances of the Victorian String Orchestra which has been formed by Maurice Clare (who will be known to members) who is now the Concert Master of the Victorian Symphony Orchestra. They gave three wonderfully successful concerts and at one of them played Fenby's transcriptions of "Two Aquarelles".

"On the 23rd of this month, Thomas Matthews, who will also be known to members, is performing "Sea Drift", which is a great thrill. He has a truly representative British composers' programme - Elgar's "Froissart" Overture and the first performance in Australia of Britten's "Spring Symphony".

/ "So you see

"So you see Delius is not altogether neglected in this part of the world. Quite apart from these 'live' performances, the Australian Broadcasting Commission includes recordings of the works of Delius in its programmes. I think I would be safe in saying that never a week goes by that one cannot find something of his to listen to".

---

Mr. Kenneth Gray of 40, Oxbgangs Road, Edinburgh, 10, wrote to us on the 17th November to tell us about some records which were available at that date, and which may still be available. He writes:-

"As a new member of the Delius Society I should like to help our members by offering information about gramophone recordings which might not otherwise become known. There is at the moment a new set of the "Mass of Life" being offered for sale by the Gramophone Shop, 901, Dumbarton Road, Glasgow, W.1. This was originally for me but I managed to get a copy elsewhere first so that anyone mentioning my name would get it."

---

In November Mrs. Swanston wrote to say that at her request Lady Barbirolli had recently played Delius' Serenade from "Hassan" at a concert by the Stroud Musical Society. Afterwards, Lady Barbirolli told Mrs. Swanston that she hadn't played the work before, but enjoyed playing it. Also Mrs. Swanston was told by a young pupil of Janet Craxton that it is the first work that oboe players are given to play while training at Cheltenham.

Mrs. Swanston also pointed out that some Delius was played at the Birmingham Proms this year.

---

Mr. Dawney read a paper on Delius to the Davenant Society of Lincoln College, Oxford, on 30th October. Apparently the Society is named after Sir William Davenant, author of the first English opera "The Siege of Rhodes" (1656), who was a member of Lincoln College. The Society also claims to be the oldest in the University.

---

Mr. Tall (who hopes to put on a Delius concert at Oxford sometime), is disappointed at the number of Delius records which have been, or are likely to be, deleted. It is a regrettable fact that members must obviously buy their copies of Delius records as soon as they are issued. I wonder how long "Songs of Sunset" will remain in the catalogue, as I understand it is not selling very well?

As far as scores are concerned, Mr. Tall writes to say that "In a Summer Garden" and "Song of the High Hills" are due to be reprinted, under the auspices of the Delius Trust, which is good news.

Mr. White, who has been doing some splendid research, has unearthed the following information about various Delius works:

	<u>Full score</u>	<u>Vocal Score</u>	<u>Miniature score</u>
<u>Paris</u>	Out of print		-
In a Summer Garden	Universal - one octave score for hire		-
An Arabesque	Boosey & Hawkes - one full score for hire.	B. & H. one vocal score for hire	-
A Song of the High Hills	Leuckhart £4		Out of print
Idyll	Boosey & Hawkes no score	B. & H. two vocal scores for hire	-
Fennimore & Gerda	Boosey & Hawkes only score sold to BBC	B. & H. several vocal scores for hire	-
Songs of Sunset	Leuckhart £4	Out of print	-

### New Members

We welcome to the Society three new members:-

118. The Rev. W. H. Oldaker,  
Fir Tree Farm,  
Golford Road,  
Cranbrook, Kent.
119. Mr. & Mrs. D. Marblacy Jones,  
Little Viners,  
Shilton, Oxon.

After conducting performances of "The Cuckoo", "Brigg Fair" and the piano concerto, Mr. Marblacy Jones received a valedictory letter from Frederick Delius (a copy of which is now in Delius archives).

### How to get there on the 4th January.

Leighton House, 12, Holland Park Road, London, W. 14, is OFF KENSINGTON HIGH STREET, and not, as might reasonably be supposed, in Holland Park.

Members from out of London might like to note the following buses:

- No. 73 from Euston, Kings Cross, and Marble Arch.
- No. 9 from Liverpool Street Station, Charing Cross and Hyde Park Corner.

No. 27 from Paddington.

Other buses coming from other parts of London are Nos. 207a, 49 and 28.

Buses which might be partially helpful are Nos. 46 from Waterloo and 52 from Victoria, but it is necessary to get off at "John Barkers" in Kensington High Street and change on to one of the above mentioned buses going along Kensington High Street in the direction of the ODEON CINEMA - a huge and very good landmark near Earls Court Road.

Or, by underground, the most convenient station would be Kensington High Street on the Inner Circle line.

The actual turning in Kensington High Street leading to Holland Park Road is called Melbury Road, and Leighton House is well sign-posted from there.

---

Now I don't know what else we can do to persuade members to come along on the 4th January - unless we issue green trading stamps!

---

Finally, as a Christmas bonus! we attach a long but interesting article which appeared in the American "Opera News" a year ago, about the operas of Delius, and which was brought to our notice by Mr. Leaney.

As this will be the last newsletter of 1963, I cannot let it pass without wishing all members, on behalf of the Committee and myself, the compliments of the season.

Most journals at this time of the year feel it is incumbent on them to humiliate their readers by a Christmas-holiday quiz. However, we are sure that members will not have any difficulty in answering the following question.

'To what line in what opera might a famous conductor have replied "Is it a Marcella?"

DAVID SIMMONS  
Chairman.

P.S. We have now had another cutting, with reference to 'Late Swallows', from the Houston Post, through the courtesy of the Halle Concerts Society, which says:

"The orchestra played exquisitely throughout the program, whose other novelty was Frederick Delius' "Late Swallows" played for the first time in its form. This is the slow movement from a string quartette, transcribed for string orchestra by Eric Fenby, who was the composer's amanuensis. It is a deep and utterly beautiful reverie."

"Opera News" December 29, 1962

ENGLISH NATURALIST

by Denis Vaughan.

Frederick Delius is one of the most original composers of this century. Little of his music could be said to follow in the footsteps of any other composer or school of writing, nor has anyone else succeeded in following his path. The usual price of originality is to make firm friends or vociferous enemies of one's listeners and, strangely enough, to forego the crown of "greatness".

Though known as an English composer - he was born in Bradford in 1862 - Delius spent much of his life away from England. His father was anxious for him to go into the wool trade, and through forcing the issue drove Frederick out of the country. At first he went as representative of the family firm to Sweden and Norway; having enjoyed himself too much there, he was sent to St.-Etienne in France. To keep his nose to the office grindstone, his father gave him a very small allowance, but Frederick gambled all the money in Monte Carlo, won and spent the proceeds on concerts and operas in the South of France.

Delius had studied piano and violin in England, continuing with the latter in France. He did not finally realize that music was his life, however, until he arrived in America. His father had sent him to look after an orange plantation at Solano Grove in Florida, where he met organist Thomas F. Ward, who became a close friend and a considerable influence in his musical development. While Ward taught him counterpoint and fugue, he tried his hand at writing some songs and piano pieces. He then went on to Danville, Virginia, teaching music at the Roanoke Female College and even playing the Mendelssohn Concerto at a concert. To his surprise he found he could make money as a musician, and this gave him the courage to defy his father's business plans and go instead to study at the Leipzig Conservatory.

From there he proceeded to Paris, where Grieg encouraged him. The adventurous side of his nature brought him to embark on strange projects, such as extracting gold in Montparnasse. Reacting to city life (and love?) he gradually withdrew to the quiet but refreshing air of Grez-sur-Loing, which became his home for many years, with only one brief trip back to the U.S., a period in England during the First World War and occasional trips to Norway.

He met the painter Jelka Rosen in 1896 and, having lived in her house for almost five years at Grez, married her in the summer of 1903. He came to rely more and more on her companionship, particularly in his last years, when he was paralyzed and blind. He died in 1934, and Jelka died shortly afterwards, practically simultaneously with his reburial in a country churchyard at Limpsfield in Surrey.

Having worked for a number of years with Sir Thomas Beecham, the present writer admits to a tendency to hear Delius as Beecham heard him. Some may think it a sign of weakness if the life of a composer's music depends on certain interpreters. History makes it clear, however, that a place had been established for Delius before Sir Thomas became his champion, and that his music exists in its own right. Anyone can perform Delius well who has at least three requisites: a distinguished style, a sense of poetry

/ and a love of nature

and a love of nature. It is probably because these three qualities were strong in Beecham's makeup that he felt so drawn to Delius. When walking in the country, Beecham would often stop, sniff the air and listen; perhaps the mysterious whisper of the wind in pine trees or the warm crackling of dried twigs would stir his memories of similar walks with the composer. He described how Delius would stop for upwards of ten minutes drinking in such moods, which would come out six months later transformed into music.

Not even his best interpreters could always catch the particular magic that lifted his music onto another plane. Sir Thomas, for example, had to abandon the recording of the Songs of Sunset when, despite excellent soloists, chorus and orchestra, the atmosphere remained material, and the reverential hush that had hung over the recording of A Mass of Life could not be recreated. In New York during the last war, the same conductor tried Delius with the Philharmonic but found the players too tense to treat the wafting phrases without overstraining. So he reverted to an old trick: cracking limericks every twenty minutes "to soften the orchestra up". After continuing the dose for some weeks, he tried again but even then could not obtain the floating, lazy, almost vacant wash of sound that forms the background to many Delian pastoral melodies.

While working on his book about Delius, Sir Thomas asked me to look through some manuscripts stacked in a corner cupboard of his country house. Unidentifiable! So he had me spread all the sheets across the floor until order was obtained - what might be called the footwork of editing. At last, title pages were found and the score of Florida, an early piece, materialized. Since Beecham had convinced a recording company to tape the work without a hearing, only at the recording session was life pumped back into the pages that had lain dormant for so long. The whole work being in manuscript, I was constantly occupied with running to the various instruments to clear up which of the sour notes might be intentional dissonances and which copying errors. We were playing the work virtually by ear, the conductor coloring each phrase with his own sense of nuance, and slowly the bare manuscript pages became filled up with various signs. Sir Thomas seldom touched the actual notes, limiting his many improvements to balance, phrasing, nuance and accents.

When every section of Florida was on tape, though a number of dubious phrases remained to be cleared up, Sir Thomas called a halt and said, "Now let's listen to it in cold blood, as music!" This is difficult in a recording studio, where one tends to listen for technical points, but it is the vital test, and happily most of what we heard in that moment is what is now found on the recording. It is delightful and apparently very popular, though perhaps it does not catch that extra magic of atmosphere found in the recordings of A Mass of Life and Paris.

One must not expect to find in Irmelin, since it is a very early opera, the harmonic subtleties that Delius was to discover later. The story is a simple fairy tale of a princess who dreams of an ideal lover, and of a swineherd, Nils, who is haunted by the vision of a silver stream leading to his heart's desire. After various adventures Nils meets Irmelin and rescues her from a forced marriage. It has to be love at first sight, since by this time there is only one act left for arms, fortunes and fates to become indissolubly linked.

/ The composer's next

The composer's next opera, The Magic Fountain, offers wide scope to scenic designers. Solano, captain of a becalmed Spanish ship (his name the same as that of the Delius orange grove), dreams about finding the Fountain of Youth. When he prays for wind, the answering storm wrecks his ship. Watawa, an Indian princess, rescues Solano from the beach and falls in love with him. Against a lush swamp background they embrace, and the fountain is revealed. Watawa tries to keep him away, telling him that the water means death. When he invites her to drink with him if she loves him, she rushes to drink before him and dies in his arms; in frantic grief he also goes to drink. The music shows a considerable advance over Irmelin, with passages of high mystery, charm and throbbing romance.

Delius next turned to Koanga (1897), based on a libretto by Charles Francis Keary, after George Washington Cable's novel "The Grandissimes". Nature having a smaller part in the story, he seems to have treated it with less sincerity, though in the last two acts one finds action and dramatic tension. It is very interesting to see that Delius' operas are grouped together in the earlier part of his output, still carrying on from the theatrical impetus he received in Leipzig. After Paris: the Song of a Great City in 1899, with its whirling sound and bright trumpetings, came his most important opera, A Village Romeo and Juliet, first performed in Berlin in 1907. Beecham's book relates how the original project for a fairly humble production was discarded once all the people of the theater heard the music and realized that it must have a magnificent setting.

The story centers around Sali and Vreli, son and daughter of two rich farmers. The farmers quarrel over rights to some land they have been ploughing, which in fact belongs to an odd personage called the Dark Fiddler. When Vreli's father tries to take her away from Sali, the youth fells him with a blow that puts him out of his mind. Later, Sali and Vreli enter a fairground happily, only to realize they are being watched suspiciously by the crowd. They decide to go to another dancing place, the Paradise Garden. There follows "The Walk to the Paradise Garden", one of Delius' most beautiful orchestral interludes. The Dark Fiddler plays while they dance, but Sali and Vreli hear bargemen singing in the distance, climb into a boat, push out into the river and pull out the plug from the bottom of the boat, which slowly sinks. The work finishes with an orchestral picture of the waters closing.

The score is very moving, but like everything in Delius it must be carried through with sentiment, taste and beautiful sound. Delius next turned to three of his most important nonoperatic vocal works. Appalachia (1902), for chorus and orchestra, presents a set of variations on a theme curiously like that of the Rigoletto quartet, while Sea Drift, written the following year, sets Walt Whitman's anguished "Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking". After A Mass of Life in 1905, Delius wrote another opera, Margot-la-Rouge, to compete for a prize offered by the publisher Ricordi. It did not deserve the prize and did not get it, probably because of its slow pace, a trait seldom suitable in a one-act opera.

His last stage piece, Fennimore and Gerda (1910), was based on Jens Peter Jacobsen's novel "Niels Lyhne". It is a strangely shaped work, having two unequal and practically disconnected parts.

The first is "Fennimore", which, though Delius' style is heard on every page, seems to lack action; moreover, it calls for a female lead whose acting capacities are greater than her vocal powers. The second is "Gerda", in Beecham's opinion a feeble anti-climax after the powerful, semitragic denouement of "Fennimore". Delius maintained he had eliminated from it all that was unessential to the development of both drama and music. The following comments appeared in Frankfurt after its first performance, in 1919.

"The object appears to be to produce a number of scenes of deeply contrasting passions and to create from their sequence an unoperatic but dramatic atmosphere. Delius is not allured by outward appearances; he is excited by spiritual contacts between human beings and those intangibilities that shape human destinies. He exercises an almost ascetic sparseness in his treatment of word as well as sound. A single word, a single note or a short flourish suffices, and he is always right."

All his life Delius kept in touch with the voice by writing a continuous flow of varied songs, but after "Fennimore" he turned away from opera to give more time to the orchestra and solo instruments. His later choral works never assumed the proportions of A Mass of Life, and for orchestra too he tended to adopt smaller forms.

This article is written to celebrate the birth of Delius 100 years ago, but I hope it might also mark the birth of curiosity in more than one reader to listen to nature with Delius' ears. With the growth of interest in opera in America, the rich supply of voices, there is reason to believe that public knowledge of his operas will increase; and any artist who applies himself to the task of making them work, musically and dramatically, will be richer for the experience.

U.S.A.

---

Denis Vaughan, the author, is an Australian conductor resident in Rome. Formerly assistant to Sir Thomas Beecham, he knows the Delius scores from both the podium and the pit, having played double bass in the 1953 Irmelin at Oxford.