# *The Delius Society Journal*

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(The Editor's Collection)

Frontispiece: *Summer* (?)
Jelka Delius c. 1900-1905
(The property of the Delius Society)

Back cover: *Late Swallows*
Philip Travers, 2007
(See page 116)

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# CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

The extraordinarily hostile weather of the AGM Weekend failed to dampen the enthusiasm of those who attended and, despite severe travel disruption, only three were unable to reach Cheltenham: a clear illustration of the fearless determination of members of The Delius Society!

At the AGM it was recorded that three members of the Committee were standing down: Ann Dixon (Secretary), Tony Summers (Publicity Officer) and James Baker (Programme Secretary). From the floor of the meeting, Tony Lindsey expressed his appreciation of the contributions of Ann and James, sentiments that were warmly approved by all. Tony was present, and so we were able to thank him directly and present him with a token of our gratitude. The meeting went on to elect Lesley Buckley, Paul Chennell and Martin Clark to the Committee – while the remaining members were re-elected for another year. Lesley was elected as Honorary Secretary, but Paul's and Martin's roles were left, as is normal procedure, to be determined at the next meeting of the new Committee. Paul was subsequently appointed Newsletter Editor in succession to Michael Green, and Martin is our new Publicity Officer. We welcome them and hope that they will enjoy the work of the Committee.

This year the BBC Proms listed just one work by Delius. On Thursday 26 July, in a three-quarters full Albert Hall, our Vice President Sir Andrew Davis conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra (of which he is Conductor Laureate) in a programme that began with the orchestral tone poem *A Song of Summer*. The promenaders (so often described as the most appreciative audience in the world) gave the piece their full attention and were rewarded by a beautifully-shaped, eloquent performance. Tippett's *Triple Concerto* followed, evoking memories of Sally Groves's enthusiasm for the piece when she spoke to the London Branch of the Society in April 2006. After the interval Sir Andrew conducted a deeply-felt performance of Vaughan Williams's *Fifth Symphony*.

It is seldom that the name of Delius makes the front page of a major national daily newspaper. However, that is what happened in the *Daily Telegraph* on Tuesday 5 June. A series entitled 'Free Classic British Composers CD Collection' celebrated the 150th anniversary of Elgar's birth. Seven CDs recorded by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra were available free to readers of the paper and the Delius offering was conducted by Barry Wordworth. The 52-minute disc, which is not commercially available, includes *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, *Brigg Fair*, *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, *A Song before Sunrise* and *Over the Hills and Far Away*.

Ken Russell, whose television film on the Fenby years commanded almost universal admiration and respect, has just published an account of the lives and loves of Elgar and Delius. It is not for the faint-hearted, nor will it greatly amuse even those who enjoy a humorous literary romp. The book also appears to contain more than its fair share of factual errors.

Liz Calder, co-founder of Bloomsbury plc and one of the most influential women in publishing today, was Michael Berkeley's guest on the Radio 3 programme *Private Passions* on 27th May. Most of her selections were of music by Brazilian composers but she also chose some Shostakovitch and, interestingly, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*. Strange bedfellows for a piece so often described as representing the epitome of Englishness in music (despite its Norwegian theme and the composer's preference for life well away from his native land). It is good to be reminded that the appeal of the music of Delius extends far beyond our own circle to surface in sometimes quite unexpected places.

*Roger Buckley*

E M Forster and Paul von Klenau
(See article Music Patrons at Palsgaard)

# EDITORIAL

We Delians are frequently bemoaning the fact that little of Delius's music other than the perennial *First Cuckoo* and *The Walk* is ever played, although we are lucky in that every year includes a Spring, which is the excuse for all and sundry – even the BBC – to programme at least the first of those two works. 2007 is, however, proving to be quite a good year for us in performance terms, if not from the publicity point of view. We have done extremely well on the performance side through the efforts of our President, Lionel Carley, and Sir Andrew Davis. First, the Cheltenham Festival, whose 'theme' this year was American music, was planning to include the *American Rhapsody* in the final concert, but the President (with a little help from the Editor) persuaded Martyn Brabbins, the Artistic Director, to do *Appalachia* instead. Secondly - although it seems unlikely that he had a private long-term weather forecast - Sir Andrew did the best thing almost anyone could to improve this year's so-called Summer, by (as the Chairman also reports) persuading the BBC to let him include *A Song of Summer* in his Prom on 28 July. Grateful thanks are therefore due to them and to Martyn Brabbins. The performance of *Appalachia* is reviewed later in these pages.

One of the most exciting (and comforting) aspects of being the Editor of this revered publication is the fact that there is a small group of Members (and, of course, some non-Members) who have an amazing wealth of knowledge about FD, the people he knew, the places he loved, his music, and the texts he set – and that they are repeatedly willing to adopt a Rodin-esque pose, and then put pen to paper or fingers to the keyboard. I therefore make no apology for the fact that they are regular contributors – one could say that, as none of them will see 45 again, we had better make use of their talents while they are still with us! If, however, the DSJ is to enjoy the same standing in 10-15 years time, we must have some successors to them, but, with a few honourable exceptions, my calls have not so far been heeded……I therefore again positively beseech Members who have not done so before to send me 'stuff' (as Balfour Gardiner used to say) for possible publication.

Having decided that this issue would centre around Delius and Denmark, I began to think that I had made a big mistake, in that I would get insufficient material to make it interesting. To my delight, however – and as will be seen from the Contents page – I have had little difficulty in extracting another group of extremely interesting articles, not only from those acknowledged experts but also from Professor John Bergsagel, as well as another piece from the indefatigable Paul Guinery. I should say that there is a huge problem in

referring to the titles of songs: do all the words (except, example, "and" and "to") for have capital letters, or only the important ones, or even only the first; it is virtually impossible to get this absolutely right, because there are different rules for Danish and German. Where, however, I have been able to do so I have followed what Robert Threlfall does in his *Catalogue of the Compositions of Frederick Delius* – and I hope that I may be forgiven for any obvious mistakes, or for not being consistent.

A number of members may know that Robert Threlfall and Bob Montgomery have written an important new book together, *Music & Copyright: The Case of Delius and his Publishers* – and a flyer for it is included with this issue. Unfortunately, for some unexplained reason, the review copy did not reach me in time to get the full review I had planned, but I have included a 'holding the fort' one below. Apologies to the authors – and, needless to say, a full one will appear in DSJ 143.

The picture on the back cover of this issue is a new painting of the Deliuses' house by Philip Travers. Members may buy prints of it, and the ordering details are given on page 116.

In the light of the opening paragraph above, it is sad to have to say that the Events section this time is noticeably shorter than usual – there seem to be fewer Delius performances programmed in the near future than for several years. Bearing in mind that the 150th anniversary of FD's birth falls in 2012, it would therefore be marvellous if a large number of Members were to contact their local music societies, festivals, and 'pro-am' orchestras and their conductors, and try to persuade them to mark the event. The Committee is planning to make similar overtures to all the major orchestras and choirs, the BBC and Classic FM.

*Martin Lee-Browne*



The Newsletter has a new editor. Mike Green has handed over to Paul Chennell, a new member of the Committee, whose addresses are 19 Moriarty Close, Holloway, London N7 0EF and paulchennell@msn.com. The copy date for the winter issue of the Newsletter is 1 December 2007, and for the next issue of the Journal it is 1 March 2008.

## THE DELIUS PRIZE

Friday 23rd November 2007 at 7 pm –
David Josefowitz Recital Hall, Royal Academy of Music, London
Adjudicator: Piers Lane

The finalists, selected at a preliminary round the week before, will perform their chosen programmes. The adjudicator will then announce his decision and present the prizes. A concluding reception will be open to all.

The Royal Academy administrators have decided that, as in previous years, admission will be by ticket. To reserve tickets (maximum two per member), please call the RAM Box Office on 020 7873 7300. A number have been set aside for members of the Society, so please mention The Delius Society. Tickets can be picked up at the reception desk on the night, or mailed if you prefer to write (enclosing a stamped self-addressed envelope) to the Box Office Administrator, Royal Academy of Music, Marylebone Road, London NWI 5HT.

Berta Morena and Herman Sandby
(See article Music Patrons at Palsgaard)

# OBITUARY

## ALICE JONES

Members who attended the AGM in July were saddened to hear of the death of Alice Jones earlier that month. She was not only an avid music lover, but also an accomplished musician in her own right. She played the viola and piano (often accompanying friends) and had a fine singing voice – tutored by Sir Henry Wood.

During the Second World War, Alice was an ARP Warden (when her duties included putting out incendiary bombs) before joining ENSA in the company led by Arthur Askey.

She met her husband, Gilbert, when she acted as his amenuensis, necessitated because of his failing eyesight, for his FRCO examinations. As a result, she learned Braille and transcribed many musical pieces (probably including some Delius) which are now in the Royal National Institute for the Blind's Library. In the mid-eighties, Alice co-founded the South-West Branch of The Delius Society, based in Bristol, and through her efforts many prominent speakers were invited to entertain the members. She was also active in the Elgar and Sherlock Holmes Societies.

Sadly, Alice endured poor health over the last ten years, including muscular degeneration which meant that she was unable to read or write for two years. She died peacefully in Frenchay Hospital, Bristol, on 7 July 2007 – and her funeral took place in Birmingham, where she spent most of her life.

*Kate Packer*

[Note: ARP was the abbreviation for Air Raid Precaution, and ENSA that for the Entertainments National Service Association, the official body (operating under the auspices of NAAFI, the Naval, Army and Air Force Institute) for providing entertainment for HM Forces and munition workers.]

# THE SOCIETY'S 2007 WEEKEND & AGM

Cheltenham Music Festival, 21 & 22 July

Charles Barnard & Brian Radford

What a contrast! Last year we met in Bradford in the blazing sun, and this year we were surrounded by floods. So much so that it took our Chairman and his wife eleven hours to drive from Cambridge, and three of our members were unable to reach Cheltenham as rail services were suspended.

For those of us fortunate enough to reach the Queen's Hotel we assembled for tea. The hotel is a beautiful Regency building — an excellent choice. In such elegant surroundings I expected, at least, delicate cucumber sandwiches, but we were served lukewarm tea (the second cup was hotter!) and rather indifferent cakes. But the usual happy Delius atmosphere was immediately apparent. A convivial weekend was under way.

Next, to the Town Hall for the evening concert. Amidst the splendours of the richly baroque surroundings, after attending a liquid reception for the more distinguished members of the audience given by the Festival organisers, we settled down to enjoy *Appalachia*. In my opinion, the somewhat confined space of the hall meant that we were deafened by the sound in loud passages by the Brno Orchestra's brass. But it was an enjoyable concert – reported fully in the Concerts section below - with more welcome liquid refreshments during the interval.

We then sat down to a feast of succulent sustenance in the Regency Room, back at the hotel. This concluded a most delightful start to our weekend. The following morning we assembled for breakfast in the conservatory at the hotel. I was foolish enough to order the full English breakfast, which resulted in indigestion for the rest of the morning! But it is something that this country can still do better than anyone else, and of which we – the English, not the Delians - can be proud.

The AGM was at ten-thirty, and it was conducted by our Chairman with his usual skill. We were a small number, maybe about thirty, but that made for a happy family atmosphere, which continued for the rest of the day. Drinks were followed by an excellent lunch and we were delighted to welcome as our guests Sir Peter Marychurch, a Vice-President of the Cheltenham Music Festival, David Lloyd-Jones, the Chairman of the Delius Trust, and Martyn Brabbins, the Musical Director of the Festival, all of whom spoke eloquently. David Lloyd-Jones related a story concerning Sir Thomas Beecham which,

believe it or not, none of us had heard before, and which we can add to our fund of witticisms about him.

And so we all departed around four p.m., well content with the weekend's proceedings. Few other music societies, if any, continue to delight after forty-five years of existence. We are indeed fortunate to belong to such a thriving organization, enjoying not only the music of Delius but delight in each other's company. Long may that continue.

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The speakers at the lunch were all interesting. Sir Peter gave us an amusing snapshot of the history of the Festival from its inception in 1945 with a Council budget of £218, to the present day, when the budget is around £2m. He ended with a new Beecham story, vouchsafed to him by an orchestral player whom he knew and who was present at the time:

After a concert Beecham was walking down the street with this player, and remarking "I need some money", they entered the Provincial Bank where B strode up to the counter and said "I need some money.""Do you have an account with us?" asked the counter clerk. "No, I do not" replied 'B', "Then I'm

Lunch after the AGM – the Chairman speaks.
Photo by Brian Radford

sorry, but it won't be possible." was the reply. "What kind of a bank is this?" said B, and asked to see someone more senior. B then repeated his request, only to be refused again. "Then I must speak to the Manager himself." said B. On being shown in to the Manager's office, B was asked who he was. "I'm Sir Thomas Beecham" he replied, and the manager, having heard the famous name, realised his predicament. "Of course that will be fine. How much do you want?" Beecham drew himself up to his full height and replied "How much have you got?"

Martyn Brabbins, the Festival's Artistic Director, who was retiring from that post after this years' festival, spoke about his work for the Festival and its programming – and finally David Lloyd-Jones, the Chairman of the Delius Trust, gave an interesting account of the Trust, its make-up, work, and the financial limitations relating to the making of grants for performance of works of Delius and others. He explained the work of the Trustees and the Trust's Advisors - particularly mentioning Robert Threlfall and Lionel Carley, and their roles in the Trust's output. He also spoke briefly about the published collected edition; the problems of performing works not edited by Beecham; and those where the scores called for large forces and sometimes unusual instruments. The case in point was *Appalachia,* heard at the previous evening's concert in a new edition by John Longstaff – its first performance.

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## APPALACHIA

21 July 2007 at Cheltenham Town Hall
Brno Symphony Orchestra, Sarah Connolly, Cheltenham Bach Choir, conducted by Petr Altrichter

We have become accustomed, on both the concert platform and CDs, to orchestras whose conductors make them play with jewel-like or aggressive precision, silky strings, blazing brass, more often than not sounding exactly the same as most other orchestras, and particularly without their own individual or national characteristics, or the ability to sound French when playing Debussy or Russian in Tchaikovsky. It was therefore a refreshing change to hear the Brno Symphony Orchestra from the Czech Republic on the last night of the Cheltenham Festival, with a very warm and natural sound – although even they do not have the 'tangy' woodwind, or horns using vibrato, of the Eastern

European orchestras of 'the old days' – and, simply because few people would have heard of them, in no way could they be described as an 'inferior' band. The programme was *Appalachia,* Elgar's *Sea Pictures* and Dvořák's *New World Symphony* – and great credit is due to Petr Altrichter for having taught his orchestra to play the first two works, which are worlds away from their normal repertoire, so well – particularly as it seems likely that they will only rarely, if ever, perform them again.

*Appalachia* was very well done indeed. The opening was a magically evocative sound-picture of a huge river on a sultry, misty morning; the first appearance proper of the theme of the variations appropriately robust; the atmosphere and characteristics of the individual variations brought out – not an easy thing, as there is no great variation in the sound between many of them, and the constant repetition of the theme tends to make the main part of the work somewhat four-square – and the dying-away end was beautifully phrased. The chorus, trained by Stephen Jackson, and the brief baritone solo were excellent, too.

Sarah Connolly is now truly established as an extremely intelligent, musical and versatile singer and actress – marvellous as Dido, Lucretia and Octavian, and in many Handel operas, Mahler, Ravel and Elgar. She gave a moving performance of the early (1899) *Sea Pictures,* intimate, loving and heroic in all the right places, and really understanding the Elgarian idiom – with an extremely sensitive accompaniment from Altrichter and the orchestra.

In the Dvo□ák, of course, we had really authentic music-making. By definition, most Czech music must be in the bones of most Czech musicians, and that was certainly the case here – although they must have played it tens, if not hundreds of times, it came over really fresh and *con amore*.

ML-B

□

# DELIUS AND DENMARK

## THE SONGS OF DELIUS

Philip Heseltine's note for the 1929 Delius Festival programme

It is a singular circumstance that, while the orchestral and choral works of Delius have been familiar to discerning music-lovers for many years, the majority of his songs are still completely unknown to singers and their audiences. This is the more surprising as *Sea Drift,* which Sir Thomas Beecham has described as 'the finest *arioso recitativo* ever written', is the very apotheosis of the musical lyric, and one might have supposed that the appreciation that has been aroused by the wonderful treatment of the voice in this work would have led to some curiosity about the composer's achievements in the smaller lyrical forms. One of the especial objects of the present Festival is to bring the songs of Delius - the most immediately accessible of all his works - to the knowledge of the musical public and into the repertoire of all who sing or play.

It is significant that the earliest composition of Delius was a song - a setting of one of Hans Andersen's poems, that his earliest publications were songs, and that his originality was revealed far more quickly in his songs than in any other form of composition……..But it was in some of the Danish songs of 1897 - *Irmelin, Let springtime come then, In the Seraglio garden* and *Silken shoes* - that the true Delius is fully revealed for the first time.

The later songs of Delius are not melodies for the voice with a pianoforte accompaniment, but true duets for voice and piano in which both performers are equally important: indeed, the melodic line is often unintelligible if it is viewed without relation to its attendant harmonies - so inextricably is the voice part interwoven with the harmonic tissue. Of the songs written since 1900, all are of the highest interest and many of supreme beauty: *Black Roses, Autumn, I-Brasîl* are among the world's great songs.

Nietzsche considered that the music of a song is not in its essence engendered by the poem to which it is set; he maintained that the true musician will only set such poetry as expresses, symbolically, the music that is in him. Delius has always been moved, in the selection of his texts, by the *underlying emotion* of a poem as a whole, rather than by any narrative, dramatic or verbal felicities it may possess. He views with horror the 'word-for-word'

school of song-writers, and the principle of Hugo Wolf who, as his English biographer tells us, "set his face sternly against the suspicion of mere music-making in the song, against writing a single bar the justification of which could not be found in the words".

For Delius, as for Schubert and all the great composers of the past, music in song is all-sufficing, and the words of a poem are but the frame-work upon which the musician may weave a pattern that shall enshrine its dominant emotion.

Delius, Jelka and Philip Heseltine (left) on their way to one of the 1929 Festival concerts

# DELIUS AND DENMARK

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO DELIUS'S DANISH WORKS

Martin Lee-Browne

"All this is as nothing to Denmark and Norway" Delius wrote in a letter to Jelka when he was walking in the Black Forest with Norman O'Neill in 1909. He first went to Norway in 1881, and to Denmark in (it seems) 1891. In Norway, apart from his friendship with Grieg, he got to know a considerable amount of the country, and about its people and its culture, but he travelled far less in Denmark. Roughly the same number of his works were inspired by each country or were settings of their poetry. The Norwegian works are *Folkeraadet* (Gunnar Heiberg); *Paa Vidderne* (Ibsen); the *Five Songs from the Norwegian*, the *Seven Songs from the Norwegian* and a number of other songs (often to words by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson); and finally *Eventyr*. That was written in 1917, but otherwise the last songs date from 1891. The Danish works, on the other hand, however, were composed between 1885 and 1902, except for the 1912 revision of *Lebenstanz*. Delius's last visits to both Norway (for health reasons) and Denmark (when he and Jelka went to see their old friends Einar and Elisabeth Schou at Palsgaard) were in 1915 – and neither country specifically featured in his music again.

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***Sakuntala*** (for Tenor and Orchestra - 1889 – words: Holger Drachmann.) (RT III/2[1])

Although Delius had written the spoken melodrama *Paa Vidderne*, a setting of Ibsen's nine-part narrative poem, in 1888, *Sakuntala* (pronounced "Sha-koon-ta-lah") was Delius's first work for singing voice and orchestra, and one of the very earliest of the genre. Robert Threlfall has pointed out that "The composition (probably) and publication of Mahler's first orchestral songs post-date these early efforts of Delius's [i.e. *Paa Vidderne, Sakuntala* and the song cycle *Maud* of 1891]; and Richard Strauss's first songs with orchestra, whether original or arranged, date from 1896/7…".[2] (Strauss's melodrama *Enoch Arden*, for speaker and piano, was not written until 1897).

Deriving from Indian myth and history, the story, as told by the Sanskrit playwright Kalidasa in a play on which the poem is based, is of a Brahmin girl, Sakuntala, and Dusyant, a king. He is proud and selfish, and has several wives who have failed to bear him any children. At his first meeting with Sakuntala, they fall headlong in love and marry, and she becomes pregnant. Dusyant is, though, tricked by his other wives into returning home, leaving her alone. Shortly before giving birth, full of misery and apprehension, she decides to go to his court. Unfortunately, she had lost her wedding ring while bathing in a river, and so when she arrives Dusyant does not recognise her. She is scorned by everyone at court as a voyeur desperate to marry the king, and is forced to leave. Her luck turns, however, for the ring is found by a fisherman inside one of his catches; he returns it to her, and so she is able to convince Dusyant who she is, and they live happily ever after.

Drachmann saw Kalidasa's play in Munich, and not only found in it so many vivid similarities between the story and his failed first marriage, but (somewhat like Dusyant) was so smitten by the actress playing Sakuntala that he wrote the poem then and there, whilst still in the theatre. It does not, of course, tell the story, but reflects Drachmann's sad and hopeless longing for the actress – the second of the four 11-line verses finishes: "Behold, how I trembling gaze and sigh/ Sakuntala/ Sakuntala!", and each of the others ends with the repeated name.

There is no evidence of a public performance in Delius's lifetime of *Sakuntala,* but the vocal score was published by the Delius Trust in 1993, and the full score is in Volume 15b of the Collected Edition. The work was recorded in 2000 by Bo Holten as part of his CD "Frederick Delius: Danish Masterworks" (details of which are given in footnote 7 to Lyndon Jenkins's article below). There is an interesting article on Drachmann and his wife, "Wilhelmina: the Muse of Sakuntala" by Hattie Andersen in DSJ 127 (Spring 2000).

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***Seven Danish Songs*** (RT III/4):

These songs – the titles of which are given in Paul Guinery's article below –have both orchestral and piano accompaniments, and it is probable that the latter came first. In the autograph score dated 1897 they are all orchestral, but it seems as though the piano ones date from 1894 onwards. Although Delius presumably first conceived them originally as a set, they did not appear as such: numbers 1, 2 and 4 were published by Harmonie Verlag of Berlin in 1906, numbers 3, 5 and 6 by Stainer & Bell in 1973, and number 7 by Tischner &

Jagenberg of Cologne in 1915. Although all Delius's 'Danish' songs "were first composed in their original language"[3], they were never in fact published with their Danish words until 1998.[4] For these seven, Delius made all the English translations, six of the seven German translations were by Jelka, and that of *Løft de klingre Glaspokaler* by Jacobsen's own translator.

The first performances of numbers 6, 7, 2, 3 & 5 (in that order) were given in Delius's celebrated concert at the St James's Hall on 30 May 1899, by the French soprano Christianne Andray, with Alfred Hertz conducting. Numbers 1 and 4 received their premières at a concert of the Société National de Musique in Paris on 16 March 1901, with Christianne Andray again, and Vincent D'Indy conducting. Debussy was there, and wrote a scathing few words in the Parisian literary and artistic magazine *La Revue Blanche*[5]: "……very sweet songs, very pale, music to lull convalescent ladies to sleep in the rich quarters."

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***Lebenstanz (Life's Dance – Ronde de la vie)*** (RT VI/15)

This tone poem, inspired by Helge Rode's play *Danzen gaar (The Dance goes on)*, began life in 1899 as *La Ronde se déroule*, and was first performed at the 1899 concert. Delius quoted some lines from the play at the head of his manuscript score, which give a good impression of what it was about:

> The dance of life. My picture shall be called the dance of life! There will be two people who are dancing in flowing clothes on a clear night through an avenue of black cypresses and red rose bushes. The earth's glorious blood will gleam and blaze in the roses, Claire. He holds her tightly against himself. He is deeply serious and happy. There will be something festal about it. He will hold her to himself so firmly that she is half sunk into him. She will be frightened —frightened — and yet something will awaken inside her. Strength is streaming into her from him. And before them is the abyss.

Many years later, Delius said "I wanted to depict the turbulence, the joy, energy, great striving of youth – all to end at last in the inevitable death." He did not, however, think that the development section was convincing, and he therefore re-wrote and expanded the work, and re-named it *Lebenstanz.* That version was first given by Julius Buths at Düsseldorf on 21 January 1904, but Delius was still not happy, and a third version (the one finally published) was premièred by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra on 15 November 1912 under its dedicatee Oskar Fried. Delius told the publishers (Tischer & Jagenberg) that he thought it his best orchestral work – although back in 1893 he had

produced *Over the Hills & Far Away*

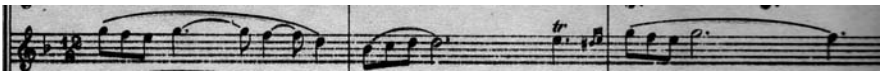
In 1912, Balfour Gardiner, who was planning to do *Lebenstanz* in one of his famous series of concerts the following year, asked Philip Heseltine to make a piano transcription for him. Heseltine had not enjoyed the piece when he went to the first London performance in 1908 – before he began work, he wrote to Delius: "I must admit, however, that when I first heard 'A dance of life'….I came away with no impression of it whatsoever! – which, I think, shews that one's tastes – anyway when young – develop considerably with the advance of years."[6] - and then, a month later, to his great friend and mentor Colin Taylor"I have done about a quarter of it, but my progress with it is far from rapid, as it is frightfully complex: I am not surprised that B.G. wants a piano version, if he has to read such a score!". Having finished it, he told Colin Taylor:"It was most awfully interesting to transcribe, although it was rather hard to make musical Bovril (for I cannot call it a"piano score"with any justice!) out of sixty pages of tremendously full scoring".[7]

There is unfortunately not enough space in this issue of the Journal to include the full musical analysis which I would have liked, but these notes may help as a guide:

Delius uses a huge orchestra – triple woodwind plus piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet and contrabassoon, four horns (although my copy of the full score, which belonged to Balfour Gardiner, is marked by him – no doubt for his performance at Queen's Hall in February 1913 – "6 horns") and a glockenspiel in the percussion section. The work begins explosively in an almost forceful introduction, *Allegro con brio, con vigore* in Ab, and thereafter – because the same tune keeps recurring throughout – it is almost a set of connected variations, with a short concluding coda. The introduction dies down, however, from *fortissimo* to *pppp* in just 12 bars, for the first appearance of 'the tanz', in slightly 'skewed' D minor, played by the horns:

(Although it begins here on the upbeat at the end of the bar – the anacrucis – in the middle of the piece the first note is moved to the first beat of the bar, so that it is always accented, and that adds to the slightly 'lumpen' feel of the

theme generally. Large sections of the whole 'tanz' could in fact be described as rather aggressive – with a sort of "despite everything, we have got to enjoy ourselves…" feel. After a swinging variant of the theme (Cue 5-2), and just as one may be beginning to tire of the persistent 6/8 rhythm, Delius reduces the tempo and the volume, and we are into a dream-world. The texture thins right down, and chromatic *lento* solos for the leader and the principal cello (Cue 8-1) lead into a gorgeous new theme on the violas, based on the triplet motive that recurs over and over in much of Delius's music:



The music gets more passionate, with pulsing horns, but dies away to the return of the 'tanz' (Cue 12-5), which is passed around, *pp,* in the wind and brass (curiously anticipating bits of the 'Gadshill' section of Elgar's *Falstaff*, which was not written until 1912, the same year as Delius's revision of this piece); then scurried woodwind arabesques accompany the theme, and the intensity increases, with *ff* skirmishes from the horns (Cue 16+1) and a 'dum-di-dum-di-dum' rhythm pumped out *fff* by them and the brass (Cue 16+6). It's not angry music, but it's not cheerful either. Again, everything quietens down – indeed, the whole piece alternates quite rapidly between loud-and-quickish and slow-and-quiet sections – and for a beautiful moment the 1st oboe and divided 1st violins have the viola theme *molto tranquillo* (Cue 19-3); that in turn dies away into a grotesquely jolly, harmonised, version of the 'tanz' on the four bassoons (Cue 20), who are quickly joined by the bass clarinet before the full orchestra continues the idea, with skirling upward scales in the upper wind instruments. Then, for a few bars (Cue 24-2), the 'tanz' loses it's rhythm and is played in dotted quavers (i.e.single notes) by the cor anglais, clarinets and 3rd bassoon, leading to what, although it's still in 6/8, sounds like a waltz – and it is very closely related (much more so than a first cousin, indeed almost a twin) to the waltz variation (Number 9) in *Appalachia*. At last the music has become cheerful, and we are then back onto familiar ground with the return of the 'tanz' in the full orchestra (Cue 27+2) – with (although this is not to suggest that Delius was guilty of plagiarism!) a few bars that seem to have come straight out of *Till Eulenspiegel* (written 11 years before the second version of *Lebenstanz*). Ecstatic high horns *à la* Bax (Cue 32+5) lead the dance to near-dilirium and an *fff* climax – which subsides even more quickly than the introduction did to a dying series of drum-rolls with *tremolo* strings, and a final eight bars of hushed, muted strings.

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**Individual Danish Songs**:

*To brune Øjne (Two Brown Eyes)* (Hans Christian Andersen – 1885) (RTV/3)
*Lyse Naetter* (Drachmann – 1891) (RTV/13)
*Pagen højt paa Taarnet sad (The Page sat in the Lofty Tower)* (Jacobsen – 1895) (RTV/17)
*Vil lo jo før saa længe (In Bliss we walked with Laughter)* (Drachmann – 1895/98) (RTV/20)
*Far, hvor flyver Svanerne hen?(Autumn)* (Ludvig Holstein – 1900) (RTV/21)
*The Violet (Das Veilchen)* (Holstein – 1900) (RTV/21)
*Jeg hører I Natten (I hear in the Night)* (Drachmann – 1901) (RTV/23)
*Sommer I Gurrre* (Drachmann – 1902) (RTV/24)

*[The first four of those songs are included in Paul Guinery's article below under the heading 'Miscellaneous Early Songs', and the remainder as 'Miscellaneous Later Works'.]*

Written over a period of seven years, these songs (apart from the first, which was never published until it was included in Vol. 18 of the *Collected Works*) were published individually, and were never conceived by Delius as a set. The first, third, fourth, fifth and seventh were, however, made into one by Bo Holten when he orchestrated them in 1988/89. He conducted the premières of four of his settings with Henriette Bonde-Hansen and the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra on 18 June 1998, in the marvellously named Margselisborghallen of the Tivoli Gardens in Aarhus; all five are included on the CD referred to in Note 7 to Lyndon Jenkins's article below.

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***An Arabesque*** (for Baritone, Chorus and Orchestra - 1911 – words J P Jacobsen) (RT 11/7)

This work received its first performance in (of all surprising places, dare one say) Newport, South Wales on 28 May 1920. The soloist was by Percy Heming, with the Welsh Musical Festival Choral Society and the LSO, conducted by Arthur E Sims. Delius had in fact written to Ernest Newman on 12 November 1913, saying that he was off to Vienna in 10 days time for the première, but four days later he told Grainger that it would be on the 26 November - and then in four separate letters to him in 1916 and 1919 he said that it had never been performed at all, as the Vienna performance had been cancelled.

Any attempt by me to give a full and interesting description of the work (as opposed to the musical analysis by Paul Guinery which follows on the next page) would pale beside that in Christopher Palmer's *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan* (p. 71-ff) – and I warmly recommend readers to it.

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**Delius's other 'Danish' work**:

*Fennimore & Gerda* (*Two episodes from the life or Niels Lyhne in eleven pictures after the novel by J P Jacobsen*) (1909-1910 – RT/8)

*[Note: Unfortunately, lack of space forbids the inclusion of any articles about this opera]*

1 Robert Threlfall: *A Catalogue of the Compositions of Frederick Delius* (Delius Trust 1997) in which every work is given a reference number beside its title. *:* As usual, I acknowledge my great debt to Robert Threlfall and this indispensable work.
2 *Ibid.* p 74.
3 Letter: Delius to Ernest Newman, 19 August 1929 (No 533 in Lionel Carley's *Delius: A Life in Letters*, Vol 2).
4 In Supplemental Volume 5 to the Collected Edition.
5 No. 24.188, 21 April 1901, p.551. See Lonel Carley's *Delius: The Paris Years*, p.74.
6 Letter 27 September 1912 (No 257 in Barry Smith's *The Collected Letters of Peter Warlock* – The Boydell Press 2005).
7 28 October 1912 (Ibid. No 265).

## RECORDINGS

In view of the fact that relatively few recordings have been made of the majority of the works and songs covered in these articles, no comparative reviews are included in this issue.

# DELIUS AND DENMARK

## THE DANISH SONGS

Paul Guinery

In the references below, I've given, in order: the English title, including variants; the first line or title of the Danish poem; the author of the poem; the date of composition, if known; the date of Delius's orchestration, if made; a reference to the relevant volume(s) of the Collected Edition (15a & 15b include the orchestrated songs; 18a,18b & 19 comprise the voice and piano versions; "supplement" refers to UE edition 17428 "Four Posthumous Songs").

There are many different ways in which these songs have been collected over the years and because several different publishers were involved, the situation can be confusing, to say the least. The collective title "Seven Danish Songs" is a convenient way of referring to the group of stylistically related songs all composed during the 1890s and all subsequently orchestrated by Delius in 1897. Delius himself referred to them at this time as "The Danish Songs" and obviously thought of them as a group though they were never published as a complete set during his lifetime. Five of them were performed at the 1899 concert in St James' Hall, the exceptions being *Silken Shoes* and *In the Seraglio Garden*. The collection "Five Songs From The Danish", published during Delius's lifetime in 1906 by Harmonie (and subsequently by UE and B&H), contained the following songs in versions for voice and piano: *The Violet, In the Seraglio Garden, Silken Shoes, Autumn, Irmelin.* An identically entitled collection published posthumously by Galliard/Stainer & Bell (1973) contained a completely different set of songs, never grouped in that way by the composer; they are: *The Page sat in the Lofty Tower, Dreamy Nights, Summer Nights, Through long, long years, Wine Roses.* The set of "Five Danish Songs" on Bo Holten's Danacord CD "Danish Masterworks" is again a different grouping from that of the 1906 and 1973 publications, and features Bo Holten's own orchestrations of Danish songs Delius didn't orchestrate himself (though note that the 1st version of *Lyse Nætter* isn't included).

I haven't attempted to point out minor differences between the piano and orchestral versions of the songs: these are covered in Robert Threlfall's and Lyndon Jenkins's articles below, those further interested should refer to Robert Threlfall's authoritative Editorial Report on the Collected Edition.

One Drachmann lyric was set twice, to completely different music: in 1891 as *Dreamy Nights* and later in the 1890s as *Summer Nights* (sometimes known as *On the Sea Shore*). Note also that *Wine Roses* and *Red Roses* (an alternative title for *Through long, long years*) are quite different pieces, as is *Black Roses* which is in fact a Swedish song.

For consistency, and no other reason, where I've quoted lines from the text they're in the English versions (usually FD's own translations). Delius set many of these songs in the original Danish but he was insistent that there was "no public" for them in that language; in order to stand any chance of selling them, he published versions in English and/or German (the latter often made by Jelka) and he sometimes altered note values of the original vocal lines to "fit". Bo Holten's recording referred to above does offer Danish language versions – a persuasive case, I feel, for reviving the original linguistic underlay.

## Miscellaneous Early Songs

Two Brown Eyes / To brune Øjne / Andersen/ 1885 / not orch. / 18a

Sakuntala / Sakuntala / Drachmann / 1889 / original orchestral accompaniment) / 15b & vocal score

Dreamy Nights / Lyse Nætter / Drachmann / 1891 / not orch. / 18a
*(See also 2nd version* Summer Nights *below)*

The Page sat in the Lofty Tower / Pagen højt paa Taarnet ad / Jacobsen / early 1890s / not orch. / 18a
In Bliss we walked with Laughter / Vi lo jo før saa længe / Drachmann / 1895? / not orch. / supplement (UE, 1981)

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## *Seven Danish Songs*

Silken Shoes / Silkesko over gylden Læst / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15b, 18b

Irmelin [Rose] / Irmelin Rose / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15b, 18b

Summer Nights [On The Sea Shore] / Lyse Nætter / Drachmann / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15a, 18a
*(See also 1st version* Dreamy Nights *above)*

In the Seraglio Garden / I Seraillets Have / Jacobsen / 1894 / orch. 1897 / 15b, 18b

Wine Roses / Løft de klingre Glaspokaler / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15a, 18a

Through long, long Years [Red Roses] / Det bødes der for / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15a,

Let Springtime come, then / Lad Vaaren komme / Jacobsen / 18902 / orch. 1897 / 15a, 19

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**Miscellaneous Later Works**

Autumn [Whither?] / Far, hvor flyver Svanerne hen? / Holstein / 1900 / not orch. / 18b

The Violet / Viol / Holstein / 1900 / orch. 1908 / 15b, 18b

I hear in the night / Jeg hører i Natten / Drachmann / 1901 / not orch. / supplement (UE, 1981)

Summer Landscape / Sommer i Gurre / Drachmann / 1902 / orch. 1903 / 15a, 19

An Arabesque / En Arabeske/ Jacobsen / 1911 / original orchestral accompaniment / 12a

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# NOTES ON INDIVIDUAL WORKS

## Early Songs

### Zwei braune Augen [Two brown Eyes] / To brune Øjne / Andersen 1885 / not orch. / 18a

One of Delius's very earliest compositions, penned in America. Andersen's deceptively simple four-line verse of 1831, which Delius set in a German translation by W.Henzen, speaks movingly of two beloved brown eyes as symbols of "my home and my world". There's a folk-song lilt to the music, Grieg-like in mood and harmony. But already an independent musical spirit is abroad: after modulating into E minor/major for some dozen bars, the young composer pulls off a musical trick in the very last phrase, unexpectedly turning back into the home key of G as if to separate out the message of the last line: "I shall never forget [those eyes], through all eternity."

### Sakuntala / Sakuntala / Drachmann /1889 / (original orchestral accompaniment) / 15b & vocal score

Conceived from the first with orchestral, rather than piano, accompaniment – and as such a pioneering example of the orchestral song . Later suppressed by Delius and not published until 1987, though Beecham rated it as "important" and "notable for the simplicity and breadth of the melodic line". Drachmann's poem (1876), set by Delius in a German translation by Edmund Lobedanz, refers to the Sanskrit myth of the maiden Sakuntala, destined to marry King Dusyant (see the exhaustive notes on this complex legend in the vocal score published by The Delius Trust). The setting, with its recurring, plaintive refrain of "Sakuntala, Sakuntala!", is in 'ballad' style and ideally suits a heroic tenor voice, Delius showing all the gifts for word-painting that would shortly emerge in his first opera, *Irmelin*. The orchestra's 'forest murmurs' in the first verse are tellingly done (*tremolando* strings and shimmering upper woodwind); whilst a reference to the "ice-capped peaks" of the Himalayas (subtly drawn 'icy' touches on the harp) pre-figures later musical expeditions into high hills.

### Dreamy Nights / Lyse Nætter / Drachmann / 1891 / not orch. / 18a

*(See also 2nd version* Summer Nights *below)*

From now on, coinciding with his first recorded visit to Denmark and presumably reflecting a more confident acquaintance with the language, Delius begins to set his chosen texts in the original, though, as mentioned, these versions were never intended for publication. This is the first of two

completely different settings of the same Drachmann poem, bearing separate English titles; in fact the Danish word "lyse" literally means neither "dreamy" nor "summer" but "light" or "bright", the "lyse nætter" being a specific Danish term for the season when true darkness is replaced by a luminous twilight, neither night nor day. Here it reflects the dichotomy of Drachmann's bitter-sweet (*vemodig glad*) memories. This first setting has a serene, rocking accompaniment with suitably diatonic harmonies; but the "vision of childhood" towards the end, lurching into a different metre, is weakly and awkwardly set. Delius' own English translation is also clumsy – it was surely a mistake to ape the rhyming couplets of the original as in the phrase "the sunset glow, the surface warmly laves" (to rhyme with waves!)

**The Page sat in the lofty Tower / Pagen højt paa Taarnet sad / Jacobsen / early 1890s / not orch. / 18a**

This is a most striking song: the Grieg-like "ballad" style of the opening, describing the page (the Artist?) in his lofty (ivory?) tower struggling to express his erotic frustration in words, belies the sudden surge of passion in the *più vivo* section as the conventional texture breaks its bounds to suggest the horn-calls with which he finally communicates to his beloved across the mountains. The song rises to a *fortissimo* climax as the power of music triumphs over mere words. And all this in barely a minute and a half!

**In Bliss we walked with laughter / Vi lo jo før saa længe / Drachmann / 1895? / not orch. / supplement (UE, 1981)**

This was engraved in 1920 but never actually published until Universal Edition brought it out over sixty years later. The first two of Drachmann's three verses are set (identically) in an untypically hymn-like tread, as if to emphasise the moral lesson the poem teaches: that the sunlight joys of youthful love inevitably lead to the tearful sorrows of maturity. In amongst the severity of F minor are some deliciously spicy harmonic twists i.e. between bars 15 and 23 (correspondingly, bars 35 and 44). Set originally by Delius in Danish, Jelka made a German translation though the song was also saddled with a truly appalling English version by one Addie Funk.

***Seven Danish Songs***

**Silken Shoes / Silkesko over gylden Læst / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15b, 18b**

An ecstatic love-song (*andante con elevazione* in the orchestral score) with the

image of something precious conjured up by the striking opening line "Silken shoes upon golden lasts!" Leipzig and Paris have now freed up Delius's vocal lines to the extent that they now dart all over the stave, often in wide-ranging, angular intervals (see example 2 below). This is a wonderfully rhapsodic outpouring and there are some masterly touches in the orchestration: the soaring strings at references to "sky" and "snow" (bars 12 and 13); the warm, burnished sound of horns and bassoons in bars 15 and 16 ("my heaven is filled with earthly bliss"); the richly scored climax in bars 17 and 18 ("flames flare out of the snow"). The texture is infused with the characteristic Delian figuration of an upwardly rising triplet followed by two longer note-values (e.g. 1st flute in bar 1,and especially 1st oboe and 1st flute in the final two bars). The orchestration is relatively rich but at the same time restrained: the four horns are only used together for three and a half bars out of twenty-two; the single trumpet plays only nine notes in all: this almost *pointilliste* technique is typical of the orchestrations in all of these seven songs.

**Irmelin [Rose] / Irmelin Rose / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15b, 18b**

A 'ballad' style song with four verses, the second and third being identical settings, each verse rounded off with the same musical 'tag'. It's based on a similar legend to Delius's opera *Irmelin* of 1890-92 concerning the beautiful heroine with the icy heart – a theme that reverberates in Delius's later setting of Jacobsen's *An Arabeske*. If the song came first it must have suggested a more extended operatic treatment. There is certainly shared music: the "Irmelin" theme recurs in the song in three different versions at the words "Irmelin rose; Irmelin sun; Irmelin, loveliest of all!" Here is the version for the 2nd and 3rd verses, familiar from the Prelude to the opera:

*EXAMPLE 1: piano and vocal score, bars 25 – 28*

This motif has a different 'feel' from the mood of the rest of the song, perfectly summarising the princess in her "world apart." As an example of the 'angularity' of Delius's vocal lines compared to his earlier songs, bars 33 to 35 show this well:

*EXAMPLE 2: full score, bars 33 – 35 (vocal line only)*

**Summer Nights [On the Sea Shore] / Lyse Nætter / Drachmann 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15a, 18a**

*(See also 1st version* Dreamy Nights *above)*

This is one of the five songs that were performed with orchestra at Delius's 1899 concert, making a huge impression and provoking such comments as: "distinguished by an originality, depth of sentiment and poetic conception that place them amongst the finest of modern times…" It makes for a fascinating comparison with the 1885 setting though it's altogether more complex. In fact it's a magical setting, very quiet throughout, with some of Delius's characteristic mature harmony. The song gains immeasurably from its orchestration (it was singled out in 1899 as "a perfect gem") which is for muted strings and four horns, the latter so sparingly used as a group that the 2nd and 4th play only one note apiece and in just one bar. Delius's own English translation is a much happier conception than his previous one, though his use of the diminutive "leaflet" to translate the ordinary Danish word for "leaf" (*blad*) is somewhat unfortunate!

**In the Seraglio Garden / I Seraillets Have / Jacobsen / 1894 / orch. 1897 / 15b, 18b**

The original manuscript setting ofthe Danish text is the only one of these songs to have a specific date – 1894. A superb piece of oriental mood painting which is delicately brought out in the orchestration with its discreet touches of glockenspiel and harp, and little pentatonic flurries on flute and clarinet – and Delius resists the tempation to overdo it. There's a lovely downward falling harmonic progression in bars 8 to 10 at the words "the pine trees are swaying so silently in drowsy air"; and in bars 11 to 15 (and subsequently) Delius includes a memorable little figure in the 1st violins which four years later he quoted in the 3rd movement of *A Mass of Life*, where the female voices sing wordlessly of "night's still, silent waters".

**Wine Roses / Løft de klingre Glaspokaler / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15a, 18a**

Not to be confused with *Red Roses* (see below). Delius begins this as a raucous drinking song, with tinkling triangle and cymbals, seemingly extolling the virtues of Burgundy; but the poem soon makes a link with the image of red "wine" roses, a recurrent one in Jacobsen as a symbol of Love. The mood changes in the seventh bar to that of resignation as Delius's characteristic upward triplet figure appears in the woodwind. But the wild roses along the "great highway of Life" have withered like a dying strain of music: "where is our glowing summer night's dream?" (*hvor er vor lyse sommernatsdrøm?* – we're in the twilight zone of *lyse nætter* again). Here the music sighs with heartbreaking beauty. At the end, a reprise of the opening mood bursts in unexpectedly but cannot be sustained and fades in despair.

**Through long, long years [Red Roses] / Det bødes der for / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 /15a, 18a**

Jacobsen's original poem had four verses but Delius set only the first, a melancholy song of lengthy atonement "for what was a trifling pleasure". Again, there is the image of red roses: from Love only "sorrows grow and hot tears flow." Musically, the setting is hushed and restrained, the strings carrying the harmonic movement, with a telling climax at the word "weeping".

**Let Springtime come / Lad Vaaren komme / Jacobsen / 1890s / orch. 1897 / 15a, 19**

The swaying rhythms in flutes, timpani, 1st violins, cellos and basses aptly invoke the annual burgeoning of nature described in the verses but there is no springtime in the poet's heart – as a dark, five-bar interlude, *più lento*, unequivocally tells us. A third section mirrors the first, but more succinctly as the poet resigns himself to awaiting "my own spring. When? When?"

**Later Works**

**Autumn [Whither?] / Far, hvor flyver Svanerne hen? / Holstein / 1900 / not orch. / 18b**

One of the finest of all the Danish songs, with its quintessentially Delian philosophy implying Man's transitory stay on earth and banishment to oblivion. There are three verses to the song (a fourth in the original poem was not used by Delius). The first two are set to the same music: the child asking its father, firstly, the destination of the swans; secondly, the clouds. There is

some rather awkward writing for the pianist in bars 5 to 7 and 20 to 22, and it's odd that Delius never attempted an orchestration of this song (Beecham did, though) as a logical pairing with *The Violet*. The third verse, more chordal, is very fine harmonically with a poignant outburst at the words "sobbing plaintively" as the child questions Man's destination: "no one knows whereto!" is the inevitable answer.

**The Violet / Viol / Holstein / 1900 / orch. 1908 / 15b, 18b**

This is another gem with some wonderful harmonic progressions: the way the music slips into D flat at the beginning of the third bar, for example, followed by some equally ravishing modulations to reach E major at bar nine. The song is over all too quickly: two musically identical verses of just seventeen bars, but in a world of their own. The orchestration is sparing, with single flute and oboe, pairs of clarinets and bassoons and minimal use of the four horns (the 2nd clarinet and 4th horn play one note in each verse, the 2nd bassoon just two!)

**I hear in the night / Jeg hører i Natten / Drachmann / 1901 / not orch. / supplement (UE, 1981)**

This is an extraordinary song, hardly known at all. Delius considered publishing it in 1910 but nothing came of it. The text has all the quality of a nightmare: a sleeper is awakened by a despairing cry from a dark and ominous forest and calls out, "Who's there?" only to be answered by the echo of his own voice. Unable to regain sleep, he lies awake torturing himself: "Who am I? Where am I bound?" The piano part, imitating the rustling forest, is extremely difficult to bring off: 44 consecutive bars of very fast and very quiet semiquaver chords, alternating between left and right hands – it cries out to be orchestrated (Bo Holten has done just that on his "Danish Masterworks" CD and made an imaginative job of it.) The harmonic language is stark and somewhat uncharacteristic for Delius.

**Summer Landscape / Sommer I Gurre / Drachmann / 1902 / orch. 1903 / 15a, 19**

This song treads more familiar territory: an exquisite nature poem with a ravishing orchestration (including parts for cor anglais, timpani and harp) to evoke fields seen through the twilight haze of summer and dusky woodlands trembling in a faint breeze. Delius works all his customary instrumental magic, delicately and with minimal but telling technique, the string textures in particular unfolding with memorable beauty in the passage beginning

"on every leaflet, sweet memories dwell". The best is reserved for last: the final dozen or so bars swell poignantly at the words "a poem is born in the dark'ning sea of trees" before the strings alone die away gradually to *pppp*. A minor masterpiece.

**An Arabesque / En Arabeske / Jacobsen / 1911 / original orchestral accompaniment / 12a**

This wonderful work, still very much underrated and hardly ever performed, is not exactly to be categorised as a 'song': it's a weighty setting of a complex text for solo baritone, mixed chorus and orchestra, lasting some twelve or thirteen minutes. The orchestration calls for an especially large wood-wind section: 3 flutes (the 3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, cor anglais, bass oboe, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons and sarrusophone. There's full brass, including four horns; harp and celesta are also called for; and the string section is thickened by being scored as divided throughout.

Beecham loved this work, making a pioneering recording it (in Danish) with Einar Nørby in 1955, and describing it as "in the composer's ripest style [and], in point of sheer opulence of sound, unsurpassed by anything else he ever wrote" – a high qualification indeed. Fenby rated it as "superb" and put it amongst the very best of Delius.

Beecham also claimed that the work must be performed in Danish, as any attempt to render it in translation makes a nonsense of its highly elusive meaning – though Delius in fact set it in a German translation by Jelka, with Philip Heseltine later adding an English version. Beecham was probably right: it's a difficult text to get to grips with, remarkably 'modern' for 1868, and clothed in dense imagery and symbolism. At its heart lies another Irmelin figure: the seductive but treacherous ice-maiden, a moral schizophrenic described as being "like the jasmin's sweet-scented snow" with "the red blood of poppies in her veins", a creature with "sighing in her laughter" and "gladness in her pain". This *femme fatale* seemingly drinks allegiance to her lovers but her pledge is drained from "the dazzling chalice of a poisoned lily" and those who desire her are doomed.

The work is freely rhapsodic rather than obeying the dictates of a formal structure – with the exception I mention below, there is not much obviously recapitulated material, as there is in *Sea Drift*, for example. The very opening where the strings brood chromatically in a slow-flowing quaver movement, is topped by 'arabesque' figurations in the woodwind, and suggests the "gloomy forests" mentioned in the first line of the text, with its enigmatic question "Knowest thou Pan?" the god of woods and fields, flocks and herds. But the

answer is surprising: "Yes, I have known him, but not in gloomy forests – only as the god of [pagan] Love" (Pan's other manifestation.) The music swirls away out of the forest, into a "sunbathed meadow" where a flowering herb grows, the deceptively alluring symbol of the beloved, and the chorus adds its sound to the gradually thickening texture: sometimes wordlessly, sometimes echoing the soloist and sometimes taking over the text itself – all in all, it's treated with the utmost flexibility in relationship to the soloist.

Repeated hearings reveal that the score does have musical mottos binding it together: a descending figuration in the fifth bar of the opening page, played in octaves by divided 1st violins, recurs seven bars after figure 5, now shared with the 2nd violins, at which point it really begins to lodge itself in the mind. Its melodic shape is then taken up and slightly modified by the chorus five bars after figure 6; it has a further development in the violins from two bars before figure 9 onwards; emerges in a breathtaking version, marked "very slow" five bars before figure 11; and is finally heard is its most evolved version, marrying its components together, three bars after figure 13. I quote it there in the celesta part (doubled by harp) as this also shows its harmonisation:

*EXAMPLE 3: An Arabeske, fig. 13 + 3: celesta part only*

The final pages of the score are worth an essay in themselves: the poem here talks of a barren, bleak landscape in the grip of a symbolic winter from which Love is banished, dominated by the potent image of a lonely thorn-bush, its leaves scattered by the "black winds", slowly shedding it blood-red berries onto the cold, snow-whitened ground. Delius rises to the occasion in a way that no words can do justice to. There's a similarity with the musical language of the chilliest parts of the *North Country Sketches*. As the soloist eloquently describes the scene, the upper strings sustain icy chords whilst violas, cellos and double basses evoke the berries hypnotically dropping, *pizzicato*, to the ground and the chorus "like a sigh" breathes again the line "Knowest thou Pan?", a question imbued with the utmost poignancy. One of the most unforgettable codas in all Delius and a fitting apotheosis to his wonderful Danish vocal works.

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# DELIUS AND DENMARK

## DELIUS'S SONGS IN HIS OWN ORCHESTRATIONS

Robert Threlfall

May I return to a subject first mentioned as long ago as in DSJ No 39 (Spring 1973)?

The "song-with-piano-accompaniment" has been such a successful formula for a couple of centuries or so that it is often overlooked that voice-with-orchestral-backing, descended from the operatic scena and aria, has a longer history. True, in Elizabethan days, when Dowland, Campion and others produced their matchless volumes of songs wherein poet, composer and performer were one, a true Golden Age existed. The more familiar art-song style, associated in most minds with the miracle of Schubert, had an almost unique prototype in Mozart's *Das Veilchen* (no – the words are quite different from Delius's!). Indeed, this marriage of human voice with melody and poem to the endlessly flexible piano accompaniment of capable and sympathetic hands is responsible for a stream of music in this form – from Schumann to Richard Strauss and beyond.

So successful was the model that, despite the subtleties of the modern orchestra, it continued to remain largely unchallenged. Skilled orchestrators scored other composers' piano songs (and sometimes their own): Berlioz's *Nuits d'Eté* realistically call for three different voices to present his six later-scored lyrics; of Wagner's *Wesendonck-Lieder* only the last one was scored by the composer; Lizst's magical instrumentation of Schubert's *Der Doppelganger* was only published in 2002; many of Strauss's own orchestrations were made for his wife – a concert singer – although in his case a number, including the justly famous *Four Last Songs,* were composed directly into their orchestral dress. With Mahler perhaps the summit is reached: most of his orchestral songs also appeared with piano accompaniment. Various discrepancies between the versions were originally considered to show their history, and some later publishers and others expunged those differences, thinking that the piano versions were rehearsal scores of the orchestral ones. Recent scholarship has rightly rejected that assumption, and restored the two parallel editions as of equal validity.

It is at this point that the music of Delius comes into the picture. Though he

was never considered a path-breaker, the fact remains that his first songs with orchestral backing – *Sakuntala* of 1889 and the five settings from Tennyson's *Maud* of 1891 - certainly precede the publication, if not the composition, of Mahler's earliest works in this form, and are almost certainly the first 'modern' orchestral songs. In fact, when I prepared the piano scores of both works for study and rehearsal purposes, which have been published in fairly recent years, the purely orchestral nature of Delius's accompaniments demanded a more pianistic, and less literal, interpretation if any realistic effect was to be achieved.

Delius next orchestrated the piano accompaniments to his *Seven Danish Songs* – five for his 1899 concert in London, the other two for a Paris concert a couple of years later. In 1908 he scored three other songs – *Das Veilchen* and two of the seven Norwegian songs – at the request of Olga Wood, who sang them shortly before her death the following year. Meanwhile, *Summer Landscape* of 1902 had been given an orchestral setting in 1903. *Cynara* is somewhat of an odd-man-out: it was originally intended as part of a cycle of Dowson settings, and the baritone solo then had choral as well as orchestral backing. (The former was eliminated in Fenby's version, introduced at the 1929 Festival.) Lastly comes *A Late Lark*, again a piece conceived with orchestral accompaniment from the very start. (Incidentally, two piano scores exist for this work, the first, made for Heddle Nash by Philip Heseltine, was followed by Fenby's, which was the one duly published.)

The orchestrations of these Danish songs, in particular, often reveal a basic warmth of string texture to which isolated woodwind notes, often of unexpected timbre, add colour. I remember discussing this feature many years ago with Philip Jones, who made the very apposite comment that such doublings translated the way in which a sensitive (piano) accompaniment might stress certain notes in the harmony.

Other pages in this number of the DSJ cover other aspects of Delius's songs orchestrated by hands other than his own. Here, then, may be the place to recall that, when he listened to a broadcast of Heseltine's orchestral setting of the Verlaine songs (which he had made for Beecham in 1915) given at a Promenade Concert by Kate Winter in 1929, Jelka stated that "Fred really thinks them better with piano".

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# DELIUS AND DENMARK

## THE DANISH SONGS AND THE ORCHESTRA

Lyndon Jenkins

Song arrangements and orchestrations have fascinated me all my life, perhaps unconsciously from the moment when I first tuned in to the old BBC Sunday morning programme 'Music Magazine' introduced by Gerald Moore's piano transcription of Schubert's 'To Music'. And when, later on, I became aware that there often existed more than one orchestration of a particular piece of music, my enthusiasm grew as I set out to explore and define the differences. Schubert has remained a happy hunting-ground, and I still enjoy equally two orchestrations of *The Erl King* while marvelling how at one point Berlioz can insinuate a completely new counter-melody of his own into his. In more recent times I have come to admire transcriptions of the piano part of Brahms's *Four Serious Songs* by the conductors Malcolm Sargent and Erich Leinsdorf that differ in almost every respect but are still equally valid.

Delius's songs and song-cycles have long attracted my interest. For years before I was able to hear even one of his songs with orchestral accompaniment I sought out those by Schumann and others (some of the arrangements admittedly of the kind we used to call the 'tea-shop' variety), but it was really those of Richard Strauss that caused me to wonder how Delius's would sound if similarly treated. Writing about orchestrations of Delius's songs once, a *Times* critic thought them less successful

> because so much gain is won at the expense of something else … the piano is the perfect medium of accompaniment, since the minutest shades lie under the player's fingers in a way that no orchestral conductor can hope to attain … the orchestra sacrifices in subtlety more than it gains in delicacy of colour …

Despite that, I have come almost always to prefer the songs clothed in orchestral dress. The Delian purist may object, but for me Robert Sondheimer's[1] orchestral version of *Heimkehr* or Philip Heseltine's[2] of *I-Brasîl* add a considerable dimension to the feeling I have for those lovely songs.

Where Delius's songs with orchestra are concerned, the most fruitful ground for comparison is to be found in his Norwegian set of 1888-9, where

in some cases more than one orchestration exists in addition to the composer's own: not so the Danish Songs, because few other scores exist besides Delius's. I hope, nevertheless, that the few there are will be judged enough to justify this short article as well as making it worth reading. I propose to exclude *An Arabeske* which, though set to a Danish text, really lies outside this area, and only to mention in passing that remarkable recent discovery, *Sakuntala*, which, too, lacks an alternative version.

Olga Wood

No, my concern here is with the arrangements and orchestrations by other hands of the Danish songs that Delius composed variously to the words of the Jens Peter Jacobsen, Ludvig Holstein, Hans Christian Andersen and Holger Drachmann. The largest single corpus of work is to be found in the group of seven songs known collectively as *Seven Songs from the Danish* dating from 1897, but discussion of this particular set will not detain us long, because Delius's orchestral scores of all seven songs are extant, and the only three to have been attended to by others have never, to the best of anyone's knowledge, ever been heard. Two of them, *Irmelin Rose* and *In the Seraglio Garden* are by Robert Sondheimer and one, *Let Springtime come, then* by Norman Del Mar[3]. They were all made for use at Sir Thomas Beecham's 1946 Delius Festival, but in the event only *In the Seraglio Garden* was performed, and that in Delius's orchestration. The three non-Delius scores are sometimes attributed to Beecham, no doubt because he commissioned them, but the manuscripts are not in his hand.

Dora Labbette

From 1900 date two further songs, *The Violet* and *Autumn,* linked through both being settings of Ludvig Holstein. Here a comparison can be made because there is another version of *The Violet* besides Delius's (which was requested from him and sung in 1908 by Sir Henry Wood's contralto wife Olga). The other,

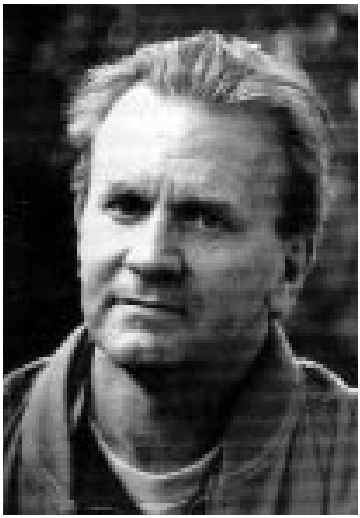
Beecham's, was first heard at a concert in 1929 at which that lovely soprano Dora Labbette sang it under his baton. The first significant difference is that the music appears in the key of A major, whereas in the published piano scores it is in G major.[4]

Secondly, Beecham scored it merely for strings, whereas Delius added flute, oboe, clarinets, bassoons and four horns to his instrumentation. These give greater colour, and at the words 'and even had I but to stoop' the oboe has a charming counterpoint which in the alternative score can only be carried by the strings; in the last four bars, however, Beecham's violins are able to make more of the rising and falling phrase than Delius's clarinet can. I must say that the all-string tapestry creates a rather chaste background that for me complements the tiny song's sentiments perfectly. The Beecham score, which Robert Threlfall kindly arranged for me to examine, is actually in the hand of Henry Gibson, his musical secretary at the time, although it was undoubtedly supervised and certainly approved by the conductor, whose performance markings are all over it.

Beecham's orchestration of the beginning of *To Daffodils*

The second song, *Autumn* (occasionally also known as *Whither*[5]), Delius never orchestrated. Beecham, however, did – this time the manuscript is in his hand – and here a comparison can be made with the much more recent version by Bo Holten. Beecham's score has flutes, oboe, cor anglais, clarinets,

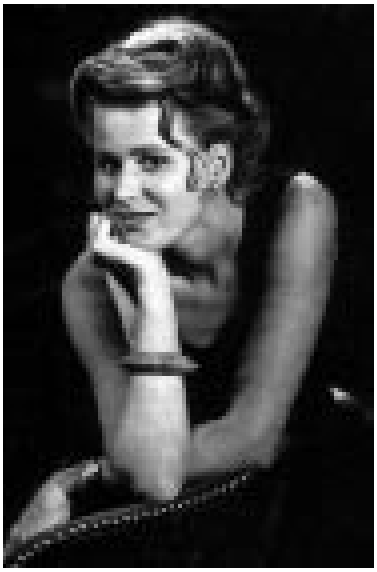
bassoons, four horns, three trombones, tuba, harp and strings; Mr Holten adds an extra woodwind instrument all round as well as two trumpets. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, an aural examination of the recordings of these two versions reveals much more activity in the Holten score: the difference is immediately noticeable in the opening bars, where Beecham's *pianissimo* muted violins are inert by comparison; then he reserves the high-lying *arabesques* to the woodwind, whereas Holten shares them freely with the strings. Beecham's trombones are never invited to play louder than *pianissimo* (at one point he asks for *pppp*!), while Holten uses his to create an imaginative dramatic effect in the closing bars. In short Beecham employs his strings mostly to provide harmonic support over which the woodwind can make telling points (e.g at 'Sobbing plaintively'); in Holten's score the sound everywhere is fuller, everybody has a contribution to make and the main features of the accompaniment are underlined more strongly.


Bo Holten

The same may perhaps be said of Bo Holten's scores for *The Page sat in the lofty Tower, In bliss we walked with laughter*[6]*, Two brown Eyes* and *I hear in the night.* Here he has the field to himself, as there are no other versions – and it goes without saying that in this respect he has made an important contribution to the Delius catalogue. His touch is very sure, and he is especially imaginative in the two more forthright songs (Nos.1 and 4) where the composer that he is himself comes through strongly. I hope he will take it as the compliment it is intended to be when I say that in my imagination he comes very close to how I feel Delius might have orchestrated these songs.

When it comes to recordings the choice is simple. The American soprano Carole Farley made a brave though not strongly idiomatic attempt at the complete cycle and added *The Violet* and *Summer Landscape* (this last an isolated, rather atmospheric song that Delius composed to words by Holger Drachmann in 1902 and orchestrated the following year). That disc is nominally still available, and so is Beecham's Delius compilation that carried his versions of *The Violet* and *Autumn,* both sung in English by Elsie Suddaby and recorded in 1949 (Dutton CDLX 7028). An earlier version of both songs by him with Dora Labbette, dating from 1938 and using the same scores, is also

obtainable (Somm-Beecham 8), as is Eric Fenby's miscellaneous selection of songs with orchestra that included *Wine Roses* sung by Sarah Walker and *Let Springtime come* sung by Felicity Lott (Unicorn-Kanchana UKCD2075). But these last two hardly meet the needs of anyone wanting to explore these songs at all thoroughly, so it is doubly fortunate that Bo Holten's admirable CD made in 2000 rescues the situation most satisfactorily. It carries not only the *Seven Songs from the Danish* plus *The Violet* and *Summer Landscape,* all in Delius's orchestrations, but also his own version of *Autumn* together with those of the four songs listed above that have never previously been orchestrated. Everywhere the estimable Henriette Bonde-Hansen, beautiful of voice and phrasing, proves a well-nigh perfect singer, and the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra plays extremely sensitively for Bo Holten[7]. For my own taste *The Violet* is a soprano song, and here I would have preferred Miss Bonde-Hansen to the baritone Johan Reuter who makes a rather heavy thing of it; he is more successful in *Summer Landscape,* and rather impressive in *Sakuntala,* which is another strong incentive for acquiring this Danish disc[8].



Henriette Bonde-Hanson

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[1] Robert Sondheimer (1881-1956) was a German musicologist. Beecham, who was generally disparaging of musicologists ("They are a breed that has sprung up recently"), made an exception in his case, describing him as 'one of the few genuine musical scholars left in the world'. Sondheimer's orchestral version of *Heimkehr* (The Homeward Way), a fine piece of work, was heard at the 1946 Delius Festival when it was sung by Marjorie Thomas, who subsequently recorded it with Beecham (Dutton CDLX 7028).

[2] Philip Heseltine, the composer Peter Warlock (1894-1930), also made orchestral accompaniments for the three songs *Il pleure dans mon Coeur, Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit* and *La lune blanche* in which Delius set words by Paul Verlaine (1844-96).

[3] Norman Del Mar (1919-1994) played second horn to Dennis Brain when Beecham founded the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in 1946. He soon graduated to being one of the conductor's lieutenants, and was encouraged by Beecham in his ambition to become a conductor. In addition to *Let Springtime come* he orchestrated *Black Roses,*

*The Nightingale has a Lyre of Gold* and *To Daffodils* and these latter three were heard at the 1946 Delius Festival.

[4] *The Violet* was originally composed in the key of A major, but at some point prior to publication it was transposed down to G major. Delius's orchestral score (also in G major) would have well suited the mezzo-soprano Olga Wood when she sang it in 1908, whereas the lyric soprano voice of Dora Labbette benefitted from the pitch being a tone higher.

[5] The original Danish words of the first line of *Autumn* ('Far, hvor flyver Svanerne hen?') were translated by Delius as 'Father, whither fly the swans?' As the first word must be counted as misleading as well as unsuitable, recourse was evidently had to the second for an alternative title.

[6] It is strange at this remove to see in the Danacord CD booklet the English translation of *In bliss we walked with laughter* still attributed to the quaintly-named 'Addie Funk'. This name, possibly an invention of his publishers, also appeared as 'translator' in an album of five Delius songs put out by Universal Edition. Delius was incensed when he learned of it, because he had actually done the translations himself: "How on earth has this happened?" he wrote irately to Universal, demanding a correction. But it just shows that once a thing is in print it can reappear anywhere and at any time – even 70 years later.

[7] The disc also contains *An Arabesque, Lebenstanz,* the Intermezzo from *Fennimore and Gerda,* and *Sakuntala.* (Danacord DACOCD536, reviewed in DSJ128).

[8] Those who were present at the talk to the Society by the singer Thomas Hemsley (on 18 March 2004, reported in DSJ136) may recall him saying that for all his devotion to the composer he had never found a Delius song that he felt truly suited the baritone voice. (*Sakuntala* was not in circulation when Mr Hemsley was active.)

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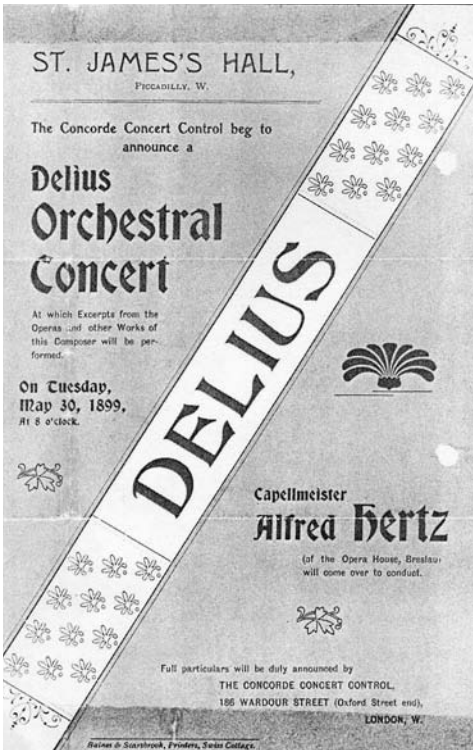
The northernmost tip of the Jutland peninsular, above Skagen. Drachmann's grave is nearby. (Photograph: Roger Buckley)

# AN ENGLISH COMPOSER AND DANISH AUTHORS IN THE YEAR 1899*

John Bergsagel

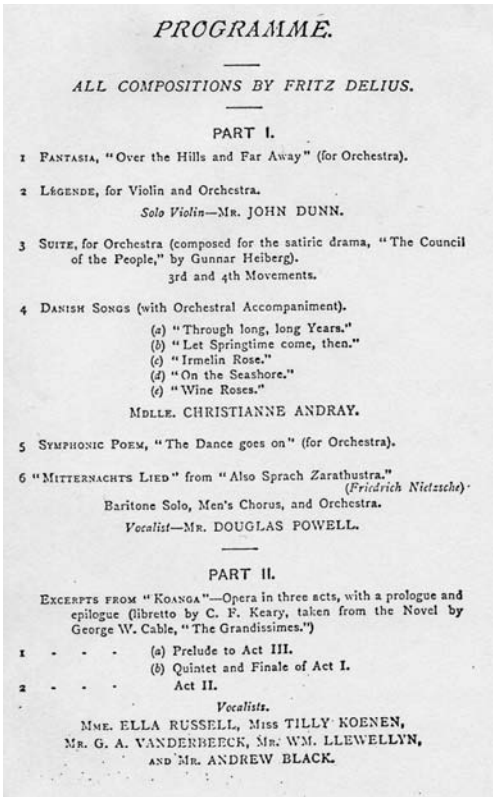
*[John Bergsagel is Professor (Emeritus) of Musicology at the University of Copenhagen. He was educated at Cornell University (USA), The Royal College of Music and Oxford University, and he has taught at Oxford and Manchester. He is also a member of The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Literature.]*

With the help of an inheritance from an uncle in Paris, Frederick Delius brought himself to the attention of the musical public in his native land with a concert of his own compositions given in London on 30 May 1899. He was then 37 years old but still little-known in England, since for 15 years he had been travelling and living abroad in such various places as Florida, Leipzig and Paris, where he had settled in 1888.




Just how unknown he was amongst his own countrymen is apparent in the review of the concert that appeared the following day in the *Manchester Courier,* which begins: "A concert was given at St. James's Hall, this evening, which proved to be of quite exceptional interest. It was organised by Mr. Fritz Delius (a native of Yorkshire, but of Scandinavian parentage, and trained abroad), the concert consisting entirely of his compositions." In fact, Delius (whose name was indeed originally Fritz) came of a prosperous

(wool-manufacturing) German immigrant family in Yorkshire and one may well wonder why the English reviewer should choose to share credit for the interesting new composer with the Scandinavian countries. The explanation is presumably that he has supposed Delius to be a Scandinavian name because of the considerable amount of music inspired by Scandinavia on the concert programme: a suite of incidental music to the play *Folkeraadet* [The People's Parliament] by the Norwegian playwright Gunnar Heiberg, five of the *Syv danske sange* [*Seven Danish Songs*] to poems by Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847-1885) and Holger Drachmann (1846-1908), and a symphonic poem *Dansen gaar* [*La Ronde se Deroule* or *The Dance goes on*] after the play by the same name by the Danish author Helge Rode (1870-1937). In view of Delius's attachment to the cultural life of both Norway and Denmark, of which the reviewer can scarcely have had knowledge as yet, one might be tempted today to exchange the national affiliations as they were ascribed to him in 1899 and regard Delius as a self-appointed Scandinavian composer of English descent.



PROGRAMME.

ALL COMPOSITIONS BY FRITZ DELIUS.

PART I.

1 FANTASIA, "Over the Hills and Far Away" (for Orchestra).

2 LÉGENDE, for Violin and Orchestra.
*Solo Violin*—MR. JOHN DUNN.

3 SUITE, for Orchestra (composed for the satiric drama, "The Council of the People," by Gunnar Heiberg).
3rd and 4th Movements.

4 DANISH SONGS (with Orchestral Accompaniment).
(*a*) "Through long, long Years."
(*b*) "Let Springtime come, then."
(*c*) "Irmelin Rose."
(*d*) "On the Seashore."
(*e*) "Wine Roses."
MDLLE. CHRISTIANNE ANDRAY.

5 SYMPHONIC POEM, "The Dance goes on" (for Orchestra).

6 "MITTERNACHTS LIED" from "Also Sprach Zarathustra." (*Friedrich Nietzsche*)
Baritone Solo, Men's Chorus, and Orchestra.
*Vocalist*—MR. DOUGLAS POWELL.

PART II.

EXCERPTS FROM "KOANGA"—Opera in three acts, with a prologue and epilogue (libretto by C. F. Keary, taken from the Novel by George W. Cable, "The Grandissimes.")

1 - - - - (*a*) Prelude to Act III.
(*b*) Quintet and Finale of Act I.
2 - - - - Act II.

*Vocalists.*
MME. ELLA RUSSELL, MISS TILLY KOENEN,
MR. G. A. VANDERBEECK, MR. WM. LLEWELLYN,
AND MR. ANDREW BLACK.

It was in 1881 that the 19-year-old Delius first became acquainted with the countries of Scandinavia when his father sent him on a business trip to Sweden in an attempt to involve him in the family's extensive manufacturing and trading interests and lead his thoughts away from becoming a musician. The return trip took him through Norway and had fateful consequences, for it was then that he discovered, as he later declared, that"the Country [Norway] agrees with me like no other".[1] The visit was repeated and when in 1886 he finally obtained his reluctant father's permission to study music at the conservatory in Leipzig, it was to fellow-students from Norway, Christian Sinding, Johan

Halvorsen and Arve Arvesen, all later leading figures in Norwegian musical life, that he attached himself. Edvard Grieg, himself a former student of the conservatory, also visited Leipzig at this time and a close friendship grew up between Delius and Grieg that lasted until Grieg's death in 1907. It was Grieg who interceded on Delius's behalf when his father was persuaded to allow him a period in which to try to make his living as a composer after leaving the conservatory in 1888. He began to read Scandinavian literature, which was undergoing an exciting development (described by the influential Danish critic Georg Brandes as "the modern breakthrough")[2] and some of his first attempts at composition were songs to texts by Scandinavian poets: Hans Christian Andersen's "To brune øjne" (in German translation as "Zwei braune Augen") and several by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Henrik Ibsen.

In 1897 Delius met the Norwegian author Gunnar Heiberg and wrote incidental music to his satirical play *The People's Parliament*, which was performed in Christiania the same year. This music gave Delius one of those "succès de scandale" that are so advantageous to a young composer's career – as he wrote to his wife, "[Ibsen] was delighted and congratulated me most heartily".[3] It was his maltreatment of the Norwegian national anthem, "Ja, vi elsker", that antagonized the public and led to student demonstrations that culminated in a "student, Tønnesen from Flekkefjord" discharging a pistol (admittedly with blank cartridges) at the conductor in the theatre. Naturally the controversial part of this theatre music was included in the concert in London two years later.

However, long before Delius was subjected to this dramatic demonstration of Norwegian national feeling, Bjørnson and Ibsen had been replaced by Drachmann and Jacobsen as his preferred poets and from the 1890s it is Danish literature that assumes a central position as the source of inspiration for Delius's activity as a composer. One cannot help but wonder how he came into contact with Danish literature – and in what language he learned to know it. It has often been claimed that Delius, who was so enthusiastic about Norway, quickly mastered the Norwegian language, but it is striking that nearly all his extensive correspondence with Scandinavian friends was carried out in German, exceptionally in English, but never in Norwegian/Danish. In 1929 the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch, who had been his friend for more than 40 years, wrote to him, in German, "I wrote you a letter a month ago, but then I discovered that I had written in Norwegian, so I didn't send it."[4] On the other hand, Delius's wife Jelka, who was born in Belgrade but came from the old Holstein Ballhorn-Rosen family, was very good at Norwegian, for which she was praised by Nina Grieg, who corresponded with Jelka in Norwegian

but wrote German to Frederick. The question then must be whether the composer was able to receive inspiration from the works of the Scandinavian authors he so admired in their original languages, or if it was through the many translations that spread the reputation of modern Scandinavian literature throughout the length and breadth of Europe, especially in Germany, from the 1870s that he got to know them? Despite the fact that he was born in England, he grew up in a German-speaking home, so Georg Brandes' writings in German, as well as the German translations of Norwegian and Danish literature by Lobedanz, Strodtmann, Emma Klingenfeld, Robert Arnold and others, were presumably more directly approachable than the originals, at least in the early years.

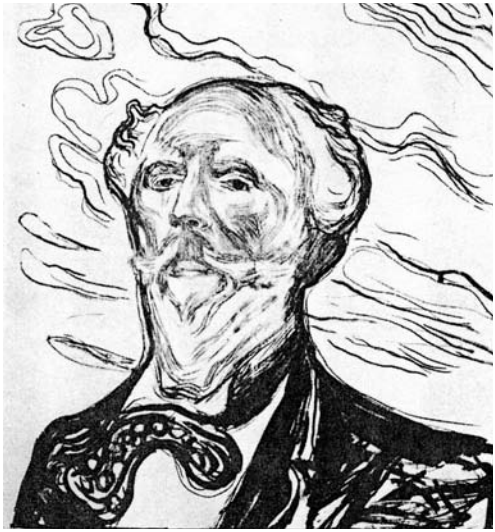
As far as his songs are concerned, his statement, made in a letter to the music critic Ernest Newman in 1929, that "All my Danish songs and also the Norwegian ones were first composed in their original language",[5] ought to settle the matter. However we are perhaps entitled to suspect a lapse of memory of having occurred in 1929 – at least with regard to the Norwegian songs from 1888 – when we remember that in 1889 he had written to Grieg: "I am just reading Peer Gynt for the fifth time, this time however in Norwegian with the help of a dictionary".[6] In the letter to Ernest Newman (cited above) Delius writes furthermore: "You know how difficult it is to translate to music. This is the reason why in composing "Fennimore and Gerda" [after the novel *Niels Lyhne*] and the "Arabesk" [both works by Jacobsen] – to avoid a language like Danish, which has no public – I composed to german [sic] words." The fact is that none of Delius's 'Danish' works were published with their original texts and it would appear that it was never his intention that they should be performed in Danish – "which has no public". It is therefore difficult to see why he should make it a point of honour to claim that they were composed to words that would never be heard. His amanuensis, Eric Fenby, observed:

> I often gathered from his remarks, whilst listening to music with him, that he regarded voices in the nature of a necessary encumbrance. There were certain works in which one could not very well do without them, yet they were a nuisance all the same.[7]

In Delius's setting of Jacobsen's *Lad vaaren komme* – one of the *Seven Danish Songs* from 1897, which was performed at the concert in 1899 as "Let springtime come, then", it is also obvious that the evocation of spring lies in the accompaniment rather than in the voice part, which carries the text. This is also the case, in my opinion, in *An Arabeske*, a setting for baritone, chorus

and orchestra of Jacobsen's "Pan-arabesque", an absolute masterpiece that in 1911 was to be his last composition to a Scandinavian text. The profound impression created by the work is due to the way in which the composer has succeeded in giving musical expression to the symbolism and the aura of mystery embodied in Jacobsen's remarkable poem. Those who are able to read Danish may well wonder how Delius could approve the often second-rate translations of Jacobsen's fine Danish texts. Delius's tireless champion, the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham, was critical of the poor quality of the English translations, which he thought were even worse than the German, and he proposed performances of the opera *Fennimore and Gerda* and *An Arabeske* in Danish with Danish singers in which Jacobsen's splendid texts (even though they couldn't be understood by most of the audience) would more nearly justify Delius's beautiful music (and *vice versa*). As is well known, he actually did achieve a successful recording of *An Arabeske* in Danish in 1955 with Ejnar Nørby as soloist, but the idea was Beecham's, not Delius's, for, as Delius himself said, these works were composed to German translations, not to Jacobsen's Danish, and "it is difficult to translate to music."

Drachmann, whose *Sakuntala* Delius had set to music as early as 1889, was one of the first Danish authors to attract Delius's attention, and Jacobsen was unquestionably the Danish author who meant most to him, but there were also others. As regards the question as to how Delius came into contact with Danish literature, it is well known that he moved in artistic circles in Paris in the 1890s, where, among others, he met Scandinavian writers. The one who achieved the greatest fame was probably the Swedish author August Strindberg (1849-1912), but Danish literature too was noticed. During his stay in Paris from October 1892 to January 1894, Sophus Claussen (1865-1931) sent what he called "naïve letters" from a certain "Antonius" home to the Copenhagen newspaper *Politiken*. In one of these, which was a review of Bjørnson's *En*



Holger Drachmann
(Edvard Munch – 1901)

*fallit* [*A Bankrupt*], Claussen wrote that "In fact, it is not only Norway whose literature is in fashion in Paris; in the course of a single month I have found half a score translations of Danish authors in various periodicals. It is an absolute sunshine of fame…".[8] Among the Danish authors in Paris at that time was Herman Bang (1857-1912), to whom the collection *Antonius i Paris* (1896) was originally dedicated and in which he is described as "the Danish writer and French theatrical director". Two letters (in German) have survived which show that he was at least on close enough terms with Frederick Delius to borrow money from him. Thus, though I am not aware of a direct connection between Delius and Claussen, it seems to me unlikely that they should not have known each other through a common acquaintance with Bang. A kind of circumstantial evidence is perhaps to be found in a novel by Charles Keary entitled *The Journalist*, published in 1898. Keary was an English author who wrote the libretto for Delius's opera *Koanga*, an excerpt of which was performed in the 1899 concert; like Delius, Keary lived in France and shared his interest in Norway. The book gives the impression of the author having transferred his experience of the Parisian environment, as we find it described by Claussen in *Antonius i Paris*, to London, where "the journalist's" periodical *Albany* corresponds to Claussen's Parisian *La Plume*. When *The Journalist* first appeared Delius claimed that "[Keary] has taken an awful lot of sayings out of my mouth"[9], but it is interesting to note that the figure in the book in which Delius has seen himself imitated is in fact a Dane with the name Sophus Jonsen, a Symbolist poet and playwright who is also a recognized painter with a bohemian life style, all of which characteristics fit Sophus Claussen precisely. Furthermore, Jonsen has come to London for the production **o**f a play – "on a bourgeois subject" – at the Independent Theatre, which in the book is given

Jens Peter Jacobsen
(Ernst Josephson – 1879)

the French name "Théâtre Libre", where we are told that other Scandinavian authors, such as Ibsen and a certain "Akselstjern" (an obvious reference to Strindberg) have had their plays performed. In actual fact, several of these productions in 1893-94 were directed by Bang and it is worth noting that in the very year in which *The Journalist* was published (1898) Claussen's own play "on a bourgeois subject", *Arbejdersken* [*The Factory Girl*], was produced in Copenhagen, directed by Bang. Another character in Keary's novel, a violinist with the name Hauch, is undoubtedly based on Delius's Norwegian friend Halfdan Jebe (1868-1937)**;** this strengthens the impression that *The Journalist* incorporates references to real people, and suggests strongly that Delius and Claussen belonged to the same circle of acquaintances.

But if the nature of the connection between Delius, Bang and Claussen is somewhat unclear, it can be stated with certainty that Rode was the Danish author with whom he enjoyed the longest friendship.[10] Rode met Delius as early as 1889 or 1890, perhaps through Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's daughter, who studied singing in Paris in those years and whom we know to have been in contact with Delius. Rode grew up in Norway, where his mother moved in 1879 with her second husband, the Norwegian politician Erik Vullum**;** during his youth he was a frequent visitor in the home of the Bjørnson family. Delius and Rode corresponded until at least 1922, which is the date of the last letter from Delius to Rode amongst the Rode papers in the Royal Library

The writer Sophus Claussen reading to Helge Rode (left) and the artist J F Willumsen
(J F Williumsen – 1915)

in Copenhagen, but contact may well have continued longer. Claussen was also a friend of Rode's, but the closest common friend of Delius and Rode was unquestionably the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863-1944). In Munch's last letter to Delius, written on 10 January 1934 but not sent (perhaps because it is written in Norwegian?), he included news of Rode.[11]

Edvard Munch – Self Portrait (1895)

At some time in 1898 Delius had apparently written to Rode about the possibility of collaborating on a theatrical project of some sort. We do not have Delius's letter, but we do have Rode's answer dated 14 September 1898. At the age of 17 or 18 Rode had spent a year or two in England, with the result that his correspondence with Delius was carried on in English, written in an orthography all his own. Rode didn't think that there was room for music in his latest play, *Dansen gaar*: "The question had no real Actuality as 'Dansen gaar' and Dramas of the Kind shall and must have no Music", he wrote.[12] Five months – and apparently several letters – later he has begun to see the matter in a different light**;** having learned that Delius has already written the symphonic poem *La Ronde se Déroule*, inspired by *Dansen gaar*, which would be played at the concert in London, he writes: "I am glad that your work satisfies you. It will be a Pleasure to me, when it, as I mean to understand, is played in London."[13]

Though he repeatedly spoke with enthusiasm of Rode's writings as potential subjects for his music, this work, which Delius describes as both "impressionistic" and "symbolic", seems to be the only concrete artistic result of a friendship that lasted for more than 40 years. It is possible that their planned collaboration was intended to include their mutual friend Edvard Munch, whose painting *Livets dans* [*The Dance of Life*] dates from this same time, about 1899-1900. The three friends had been together in Norway in the

*Livets Dans*
(Edvard Munch 1899-1900)

1890s, according to a letter from Munch to Delius in 1929 in which he recalls a discussion they had had "over 30 years ago".[14] That there had been talk of a collaboration between at least Delius and Munch can be seen from a letter from Munch to Delius in June 1899 – i.e. while Delius was working with Rode on *Dansen gaar* – in which he wrote: "If only we could realize that plan with engravings and music – and JP Jakobsen [*sic*]".[15] What the plan was is not known, but that Delius worked with the idea of combining his music with both words and pictures leads one's thoughts forward to the ideas of a new form of opera that he had begun to develop and which were realized in his last opera *Fennimore and Gerda*, based on Jacobsen's novel *Niels Lyhne*, "in 11 pictures" instead of in acts and scenes.

For artists like Munch and Delius, Jacobsen's colourful picture-language was a rich source of inspiration that pointed in the direction of Art Nouveau and Expressionism. How seriously Symbolism was regarded in artistic circles in Denmark can be seen in the second issue (December 1893) of the periodical *Taarnet* [*The Tower*], which is devoted to this subject. Here Johannes Jørgensen ascribes to Symbolism a belief in the reality of the soul, which is contrary to the godlessness of Naturalism. The artist, he says, understands

> the true nature of existence. He feels the relationship of his soul to the soul of nature and senses behind the apparent indifference of things a secret world in which his spirit belongs by right of birth. – The true artist is therefore necessarily a Symbolist. His soul recognizes behind the transitory things of this world that eternity from which his soul has come… Reality becomes for him only the symbol of a higher world.[16]

There is a strong religious element in this conception of Symbolism. The poems in Verlaine's *Sagesse,* which Jørgensen discusses in his essay on Verlaine, show Verlaine's return to the faith, and Jørgensen's own spiritual search resulted in his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1896. Rode and Ludvig Holstein (1864-1943), whose poems Delius also set to music, developed religious philosophies of the soul's immortality that came to expression in their writings. In various publications in the 1920s Rode is directly concerned with religious problems, as Munch reported to Delius in a letter in 1929: "Do you know that Helge Rode has become quite religious and writes books on religious subjects?"[17] Even before he wrote his Danish songs, Delius had in 1895 set two of Verlaine's poems – one from *Sagesse* – but there is nothing to suggest that he at any time shared the religious experiences of Verlaine and the Danish Symbolists.

All the same, there remains the problem of the ending of *Fennimore and Gerda*: the opera ends happily with the marriage of Niels Lyhne and Gerda, whereas Jacobsen's novel *Niels Lyhne* ends with the atheistic title-figure's "bitter death", alone and without hope. Like Jacobsen, Delius was an atheist and one must suppose that it was this central theme in the book that had led Delius to work with it. Ultimately, however, all signs of Niels's "difficult death" were eliminated, just as Delius himself, when the end came, insisted to everyone's surprise on being brought back to England after his death to be buried in an English village churchyard. But that is another story.

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* *This article is a translation of a paper originally given in Danish before the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters in 1999 to mark the 100th anniversary of the first concert of Delius's music in London, a concert in which his associations with Denmark played a prominent part. The subject is treated more fully in the author's essay "Delius and Danish Literature" in Frederick Delius: Music, Art and Literature, ed. Lionel Carley (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1998), pp 290-310.*

[1] Lionel Carley: *Delius: A Life in Letters,* vols 1 & 2 (London, Scolar Press, 1983, 1988 – hereafter *DLL 1 or 2*); this reference *DLL 2*, p 154.

[2] Georg Brandes: *Det moderne Gjennembruds Mænd* [Men of the Modern Breakthrough] (Copenhagen, 1883).

[3] *DLL1*, p 122.

[4] *DLL2*, p 345. This archness seems curious in view of the fact that Munch had written to Delius before in Norwegian, *e.g.* the letter referred to in note 15 below.

[5] *DLL2*, p 352-3.

[6] *DLL1*, p 41. This point was made by Robert Threlfall in *A Catalogue of the Compositions of Frederick Delius: Sources and References* (London, The Delius Trust, 1977; supplement 1986) p 93.

[7] Eric Fenby: *Delius as I Knew Him* (London, Quality Press, 1936), p 203.

[8] "*En fallit* at the Théâtre Libre", *Politiken*, 14 Nov. 1893.

[9] *DLL1*, Appendix VIII, pp 416-19.

[10] It is perhaps of interest to mention that, while preparing the essay on "Delius and Danish Literature" (*op.cit*) in 1997, which anticipated the present lecture, it was my privilege and pleasure to discuss the long friendship between Delius and Rode with the latter's son, the distinguished actor Ebbe Rode (1910-98)..

[11] *DLL2*, p 438.

[12] *DLL1*, pp 130-2.

[13] Unpublished letter of 28 February, 1899 in the Delius Trust Archive, referred to in *DLL1*, p 132n. In my essay *Delius and Danish Literature* (*op.cit.*) I mistakenly assigned it to the Rode papers in The Royal Library, Copenhagen, in which another letter of 29 June 1899 describes Delius's continued efforts to write incidental music for Rode's play. I wish to take this opportunity to correct this regrettable error.

[14] See note 4 above.

[15] *DLL1*, p 159.

[16] See Jansen, F.J. Billeskov, "Symbolisme og Nyrealism (1890-1920)" in *Dansk Litteratur Historie* III (Copenhagen 1971), 368. Here and elsewhere I am responsible for the translations into English.

[17] *DLL2*, p 346.

# DELIUS AND DENMARK

## INFLUENTIAL DANISH POETS

Michael Green

Frederick Delius was, of course, a true cosmopolitan, and this is very evident in his choice of texts for the sixty or so songs he composed, selected from German, French, English, Norwegian and Danish poets. Arguably, the Danish influence is the greatest, as represented in his fifteen or so Danish songs along with a number of other works, including a choral/orchestral composition, an opera and a symphonic poem, all inspired by five Danish poets.

Delius first visited Denmark, briefly, in 1891 when he spent an evening with Helge Rode [1870-1937], and they met again in 1897. His two longest visits, accompanied by Jelka, took place in 1909 and 1915 but these did not appear to provide an opportunity to meet any of the other four poets. Clearly, a meeting with Hans Christian Andersen [1805-1875] or Jens Peter Jacobsen [1847-1885] would not have been possible because they were already deceased. On the other hand Delius *might* have met Holger Drachmann [1846-1908] or Ludwig Holstein [1864-1943] but there is no evidence that such meetings actually took place. All the poets were very interesting people:

**Hans Christian Andersen**

Delius's first Danish setting was of a short poem by Hans Christian Andersen called *Two Brown Eyes* [1885], actually pre-dating his first visit to Denmark. (This song is one of the *Five Danish Songs* orchestrated by Bo Holten). In the English-speaking world, Andersen's reputation rests securely on his fairy tales - although he did not like to be stereotyped as an author of children's literature and, indeed, many of his stories such as *The Ugly Duckling* are not 'innocent' but are capable of conveying darker thoughts.

Andersen was born in Odense, Denmark in 1805 and showed great intelligence and imagination as a young boy. He made himself a toy theatre and sat at home making clothes for his puppets and reading all the plays he could get his hands on – particularly those of Ludwig Holberg and William Shakespeare. His passion for literature led him to memorise whole plays of Shakespeare and recite them using his wooden dolls as actors. He also loved the art of banter, and assisted in the formation of a society of like-

minded banterers among his friends. His father died when he was eleven and Andersen had to start earning a living. He worked as an apprentice for both a weaver and a tailor, and later in a cigarette factory, where he was much taunted by his colleagues. At the age of fourteen he moved to Copenhagen seeking employment in the theatre. He had a pleasant soprano voice and succeeded in being admitted to the Royal Danish Theatre, but when his voice broke his career stopped short. A colleague having referred to him as 'a poet', the youngster took this seriously and began to focus on writing.

Andersen appears to have been an odd boy and proved to be a backward (perhaps learning-disabled), dyslexic and unwilling pupil at grammar-school. He 'lived in' with the schoolmaster and was abused in order to "build his character". He was always the odd one out, unattractive and was apparently discouraged from writing even though he had published his first story, *The Ghost at Palnatoke's Grave* in 1822, before arriving at the school. The feeling of being different, usually resulting in pain, is a recurring theme in his writing and is attributed to his early life in poverty, his homeliness and his lack of a romantic and sexual life – indeed his sexuality is somewhat controversial and has been much discussed. He died, in a house lent to him by a banker friend, near Copenhagen, in 1875 - and shortly before his death he consulted a composer about the music for his funeral, saying "most of the people who will walk after me will be children, so make the beat keep time with the little steps". By the time of his death he was an internationally renowned and treasured artist.

Andersen's legacy includes far more than the publication, in regular instalments throughout his life, of his well-known fairy tales (which, incidentally, initially sold poorly). His first novel, *The Improvisatore,* was published early in 1835 and was an instant success. Volumes of poems and further novels followed, and from 1851 he published a series of long travelogues, of which the best is *A Poet's Bazaar*, a long account of his travels in the orient (and especially Turkey. Andersen first visited England in 1847 and was overwhelmed to meet Charles Dickens at a party. Ten years later he came back to England again and stayed with Dickens for five weeks, apparently ignoring blatent hints for him to leave! It has been suggested that the character of Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield* (published soon after) might have been modelled on Andersen! Andersen continued publishing fairy tales until 1872 and, in the English-speaking world, remains best known for stories such as *The Little Mermaid, The Little Match Girl, The Emperor's New Clothes* and many more.

**Holger Drachmann**

Delius turned to Drachmann's poetry for *Summer Nights* (from *Seven Danish Songs* [1897]), *In Bliss we walked with Laughter* [1895/8] and *I Hear in the Night* [1901] (from *Five Danish Songs,* orchestrated by Bo Holten), *Summer Landscape* [late 1890s] and *Sakuntala* [1889].

Born in 1846 and raised in Copenhagen, Holger Drachmann, though best known as a poet, was, in fact, a qualified marine artist who practiced his painting talents chiefly in Skagen, where he lived from 1871 for almost forty years until his death in 1908. He was a colourful and temperamental personality but was known and loved by all – the fishermen, the artists and the town citizens alike. His father was a doctor in the navy, and Drachmann's interest in marine painting was no doubt founded when, as a boy, he accompanied his father on official journeys (his mother having died when he was young).

From an early age, Drachmann seems to have had doubts as to whether he wanted to be a poet or a painter but after gaining his General Certificate in 1865 he was accepted at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, where he qualified as a marine painter. His paintings of the sea and beautiful sailing ships in storms were an immediate success. Poetry, however, was still a fascination and from 1872 when he found that he could also make his living

Drachmann's grave
(Courtesy of Stewart Winstanley)

from writing, his painting work gradually faded into the background.

From 1865 to 1874 Drachmann stayed regularly on the island of Bornholm, where he met his first wife, Vilhelmine. In 1879 he was married for the second time, to Emmy, with whom he had three children. In 1903 he settled in Skagen with his third wife, Soffi. During his final years, Drachmann worked with renewed vigour on his painting. As before, it was ships, the beach and the sea that fascinated him, but his paintings now had a more liberated and expressive style. Drachmann died in 1908 in Copenhagen and is buried in the sand dunes at Grenen near Skagen.

In about 1870 Drachmann came under the influence of the critic and biographer, Georg Brandes and the literary movements of realism and naturalism which he fostered. He began to take a greater interest in literature, and at various periods travelled extensively in England, Scotland, France, Spain and Italy, sending letters about his journeys to the Danish newspapers. His first volume of poems, *Digte,* appeared in 1872 and, though still uncertain as to whether his future lay in the pen or the pencil, he joined the group of radical writers who followed Brandes; allegiance to Brandes's ideals fluctuated, and around 1878 Drachmann set himself up at the head of a sort of nationalist or popular-Conservative movement in Denmark. A second volume of lyrics, *Muffled Melodies* [1875], had shown that he was indeed a poet with a real vocation, and he began to produce books in prose and verse with great rapidity - his travels and marine interests ensuring that the 'sea' was a constant influence on his work. Critics have sometimes compared his poetry to that of Swinburne. Notable successes were his fine translation, or paraphrase, of Byron's *Don Juan* [1882], the romantic play *Once upon a time*, and his tragedy of *Wayland the Smith* [1894] – and he became the most popular playwright in Denmark.

Although much of his work is now forgotten, Drachmann is one of the most popular Danish poets of modern times. His personal appearance almost overshadowed his literary merits, for he played the role of the 'typical bohemian' poet with a turbulent private life - the women in which often caused great scandal, but were the fuel of his inspiration. For much of his life his contemporaries regarded him, as he did himself, as the national Danish poet *par excellence*.

**Jens Peter Jacobsen**

Jacobsen was the Danish poet who appeared to be the greatest influence over Delius as represented by the six songs *Silken Shoes, Irmelin Rose, In the Seraglio Garden, Wine Roses, Red Roses (Through long, long years)* and *Let Springtime come*

(*Seven Danish Songs* [1897]*), The Page sat in the Lofty Tower (Five Danish Songs orch. Bo Holten* [early to mid 1890s]*),* the opera *Fennimore and Gerda* [1908 onwards] and *An Arabeske* for baritone, chorus and orchestra [1911].

The Danish 'imaginative' writer Jens Peter Jacobsen was born at Thisted in Jutland in 1847. He was the eldest of the five children of a prosperous merchant. In 1868 he became a student at the University of Copenhagen and showed a remarkable aptitude for science, particularly botany. Although he was already secretly writing verses in 1870 he adopted botany as a profession and was sent by a scientific body in Copenhagen to report on the flora of the islands of Anholt and Laeso. About this time the discoveries of Charles Darwin began to fascinate him and, finding them little understood in Denmark, he translated into Danish Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man.* In 1872 he contracted (and eventually died of) pulmonary disease and this illness, which cut him off from scientific investigation, drove him into literature.

Like Holger Drachmann, he fell under the influence of Georg Brandes, who was struck by his powers of expression, and in the spring of 1873 Jacobsen began his great historical romance *Marie Grubbe,* which can be considered the first Danish treatment of a woman as a sexual creature. His method of composition was painful and elaborate and this work was not ready for publication until 1876. In 1879 he was too ill to write at all but the following year there was some improvement in his condition and he finished his second novel, *Niels Lyhne.* A volume of six short stories written over a number of years, published in England as *Mogens and Other Tales,* followed in 1882 after which he wrote no more.

Jacobsen's poetry is more influenced by late romanticism than by his prose. Many of his poems are wistful, dreamy and melancholic, but also naturalistic. Most important is the great obscure poem *Arabesque to a Hand-drawing by Michel Angelo* [1875] the idea of which seems to be that art is going to replace immortality as the meaning of life. Jacobsen's poems significantly inspired the Danish symbolist poetry of the 1890s. His novels and poems are known to have influenced Thomas Mann as well as D H Lawrence, and his musical influence extended beyond Delius to Arnold Schoenberg, whose *Gurre-Lieder* poems are collected in his book *En Kaktus springer ud* (difficult to translate, but roughly "A cactus blooms"); the some book also includes the "Pan-arabesque" (not the Michael Angelo-arabesque*) Ein Arabesk.*

**Other Danish influences**

Although Delius set two poems by Ludwig Holstein: *Autumn* (from Five Danish Songs [1900]) and *The Violet* (from Two Danish Songs [1900]), very

little seems to be known about him, or whether Delius ever met him. His poetry has been described as being lyrical, of rustic simplicity, with a distant, idyllic, quality which seems to belong to an earlier age. Holstein lived into the middle of the twentieth century, and his poetry celebrates the natural world and man's place in it, above all celebrating the Danish flora and the seasons.

Delius met Helge Rode in 1891 through their mutual friend Edvard Munch – who made portraits of both of them, and he intended to set some of Rode's poems to music. Delius admired Rode enormously and although the songs never materialized, Rode's play *The Dance goes on* was the inspiration for a large-scale symphonic poem. His first idea had been to compose some incidental music for the play, but the author had not been enthusiastic; Delius therefore set to work on an orchestral piece, the first version of which was completed in 1899, only a year after publication of the play, and was titled *La Ronde se déroule.* The work was revised heavily in 1901 and after further revisions published as *Life's Dance (Lebenstanz)* in 1912. Rode was one of the Danish poets who helped to revive lyric poetry in the 1890s, and one can gain an impression of the imagery in his work from the lines from Rode's play with which Delius prefaced the first version of the work:

> The Dance of Life. My picture shall be called the dance of life! There will be two people who are dancing in flowing clothes on a clear night through an avenue of black cypresses and red rose bushes. The earth's glorious blood will gleam and blaze in the roses, Claire. He holds her tightly against himself. He is deeply serious and happy. There will be something festal about it. He will hold her to himself so firmly that she is half sunk into him. She will be frightened – frightened – and yet something will awaken inside her. Strength is streaming into her from him. And before them is the abyss.

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## PHILIP HESLELTINE ON *AN ARABESQUE*

### Article in Radio Times for 11 October 1929

*Arabesk [sic],* which will be heard for the first time this evening, though it was composed as long ago as 1911, is a setting of a strange symbolical lyric by Jens Peter Jacobsen, the botanist-poet who translated Darwin's works into Danish and is accounted the greatest master of modern Danish prose. The poem deals with the darker side of the god Pan, who here represents the obsession of sensual passion which leads to madness and death. 'In a sunbathed meadow grows a wondrous herb: Only in deepest stillness, under the beams of the burning sun, its blossom unfolds itself for a fleeting moment. It gleams like the frenzied eye of one enchanted, like the glow of the dead bride's blushes.' This flower suggests to the poet the fatal fascination of the love which blasts and destroys. 'From the poisonous lily's dazzling chalice drank she to me, to one, too, that hath perished, and to him who now at her feet is kneeling'. The wondrous herb may also be regarded as a symbol of the brilliant all-too-fleeting Northern summer, for the poem ends with a vision of a bleak winter landscape, the wind-scattered dead leaves over the snow, and, like a sigh from out of the earth itself, the voices murmur tonelessly: 'Know'st thou Pan?'

### Programme note for 1929 Delius Festival (Concert on 18 October)

*Arabesk* [sic] is a strange, half-symbolic poem, dealing with the darker aspect of the god Pan, who here represents the obsession of sensual passion which leads to madness and death. It is at once a lover's rhapsody of long-lost love, and a paean in praise of the brilliant, all-too-fleeting northern summer. In each case the passionate moment is exalted, and a short spell of bliss breeds dissolution and decay. The poem ends with a vision of a bleak winter landscape; the wind scatters the dead leaves over the snow, and, like a sigh from out of the earth itself, the voices murmur tonelessly: 'Know'st thou Pan?' As *Eventyr* is Delius's only excursion into the land of faery, so *Arabesk* is his sole experiment with the psychologically macabre. It is very different, in style and idiom, from any of his other works. His harmony, so mellifluous and melting as a rule, has here an acrid tang to it; there is a snake-like sinuousness of line in the erotic middle section of the poem, and the icy chill of the dreary winter's day is conveyed in the music with uncanny fidelity at the close.

# DELIUS AND DENMARK

## THE HIDDEN MEANINGS OF *AN ARABESQUE*

John White

Of all Delius's compositions, *An Arabesque* provides the greatest challenge to interpreter and listener alike. This difficulty is not helped by the infrequency of performance, for the piece does not fit easily into conventional programme planning, not only because of the large forces employed, but also because when placed with another work requiring similar resources, the impact of both would be reduced. This would still be true if the other work was by Delius! *An Arabesque* is so individual, in words and in music, that its surrounding compositions must be chosen with great sensitivity, and this for a piece lasting less than fifteen minutes!

The texts chosen by Delius are usually clear in their meaning. Even in the more extravagant flights of Nietzsche, as in the first number of *A Mass of Life,* the writing is perfectly comprehensible. Jacobsen's poem, however, is quite another matter. Its meaning is obscure and it can be interpreted in several different ways. Nevertheless, it must be studied if we are fully to understand the music, which follows its implications with infinite subtlety and resource. This article is therefore devoted to a consideration of the poetry, taken stanza by stanza, and concentrates on the background to the text and on possible explanations of its meaning for Delius, on a personal as well as an artistic level.

The first stanza of the poem, in Philip Heseltine's translation, is as follows:

> Hast thou in gloomy forests wandered?
> Knowst thou Pan?
> I too have known him,
> Not in gloomy forests,
> When all the silence spake;
> No, no, him have I never known,
> Only the Pan of Love have I endured,
> Then was hushed all that speaketh.

We are at once accosted by the poet, just as the luckless wedding guest was buttonholed by the Ancient Mariner in Coleridge's famous poem, with the promise of a story both fantastic and visionary. As will be seen, the whole poem makes constant use of antitheses as a method of emphasis, and in order to heighten its enigmatic nature. In the opening lines the poet opposes the Pan of the Forests with the Pan of Love: with the former,'All the silence spake', whereas with the latter,'(was) hushed all that speaketh'.

In Greek mythology Pan was indeed associated with forests. The fir-tree was sacred to him. He was a fertility deity, the patron of beekeepers, fishermen, hunters and shepherds, and through his connection with flocks and herds, it was believed that he could make cattle stampede and humans also: hence the word 'panic'. He haunted the high hills and avoided humanity. It must be his spirit that stalks through the pages of *The Song of the High Hills.*

The first line in Jelka's translation reads: 'Hast thou driven wild in dark forests?' - which suggests terror. Anyone who has walked in a pine forest will have experienced the extraordinary depth of the silence which seems to be intensified by the almost inaudible murmur of the wind in the topmost branches. In such an environment it does, indeed, seem that the silence is speaking: a sensation which sends a shiver down one's spine. It is as if there was an all-pervading, powerful presence, there, at the very edge of perception.

Jacobsen's poem, however, suggests that Pan has a dual nature. The 'Pan of Love' may be meant to represent the god of physical passion or even the underlying spirit of nature or 'life-force'. It is this essence which the poet has experienced, or 'felt' in the literal translation: a much more appropriate word than 'endured', but then Heseltine had to fit the text to the music. In the presence of this deity, every voice is silent in reverential awe.

At once we are drawn into the narration proper. The whole of the second stanza is devoted to a description of a strange plant (it should be mentioned that Jacobsen was a botanist):

> In a sunbathed meadow grows a wondrous herb;
> Only in deepest stillness
> Under the beams of the burning sun
> Its blossom unfolds itself
> For a fleeting moment.
> It gleams like the frenzied eye
> Of one enchanted,
> Like the glow of a dead bride's blushes.

It is this flow'r I have gazed on
As a lover.

The descriptions of heat: 'sunbathed meadow', 'under the beams of the burning sun' are in sharp antithesis to the extreme cold expressed later in the poem and especially at the end. The symbols of heat and cold, representing Life and Death, are fundamental to the interpretation of the poem. The line 'only in deepest stillness' refers back to the last line of the previous stanza. Evidently, only under the influence of Pan, and therefore in complete quiet, can this plant produce its flower. And this flower only blossoms 'For a fleeting moment'. Jacobsen's poem comes from a collection of poems and short stories called *A Flowering Cactus.* To quote Christopher Palmer, 'This is a rather odd conceit involving a group of young people who gather to await the long-expected flowering of their host's cactus plant. Each contributes a poem or short story to beguile the time...[1]

In the next two lines, 'the frenzied eye / Of one enchanted' is the eye of the poet himself, so that, in a sense, the poet and the flower are one: the flower is the psychological projection of the poet's mind. And then there is another heat/cold antithesis at 'like the glow of a dead bride's blushes', the first line to raise questions as to the veracity of the translation. Jelka's literal translation has 'like a corpse's red cheeks'; so was Philip Heseltine indulging in poetic licence with his striking, and rather beautiful image? In a letter to Philip, dated 28 September 1929[2], Jelka mentions reading the *Norske Folkeeventyr* stories collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe to Delius in the original Norwegian. She talks about the supernatural element in the stories and then says: 'The dead girl in the coffin would surely be in Grimms' Fairy Tales', and goes on to mention Snow White, but she must surely have had in mind the story, 'The Glass Coffin' from which the following is a brief extract:

> To what a pitch was his wonder raised when he perceived in (the other glass chest) a beautiful Maiden lying fast asleep and enveloped from head to foot with her own yellow hair! Her eyes were fast closed, but the fresh colour of her cheeks, and the motion of a riband to and fro, which swayed with her breath, left no doubts as to her being alive.

Jelka wrote similarly to Sir Thomas Beecham a little earlier: 'In German and Scandinavian Fairy tales, the dead girl, beautiful with her red cheeks, lies in a glass coffin - so this image is familiar.' It could also be said to be apposite, in drawing a parallel between the flower that would die after a fleeting moment

and the dead bride.

However, the image can create confusion with the stanzas that follow. By using the symbolism of the opening flower, the poet is describing an inner experience which he has sought as a lover; an experience which will give his life its ultimate meaning and fulfilment.

Shou1d the next stanza be of eight or sixteen lines? Christopher Palmer[3] has two verses of eight lines to match the following one beginning: 'From the poisonous lilies dazzling chalice' - a very sensible layout that involves a full stop after 'dewladen grass'. The score seems to follow this division and there is a full stop at this point in the text printed in the music. However, Jelka's German translation, her literal English translation and the Heseltine one all have a semi-colon at 'grass' and have an unbroken stanza of sixteen lines. And in this they are supported by the Danish original:

She was like the Jasmin's sweet-scented snow,
Red blood of poppies circled in her veins,
Her death-cold hands and white as marble
In her lap reposed
Like water-lilies in deepest lake.
And her words they fell as softly
As petals of appleblossom
On the dewladen grass.

It is less confusing to accept Christopher Palmer's division for our purpose. Who is this mysterious 'she' to whom we are now introduced? Flower similes abound: 'The Jasmin's sweet-scented snow', 'Red blood of poppies', 'Hands like waterlilies'; her words 'fell as softly/As petals of appleblossom.' Once again we have the antithesis of heat ('red blood of poppies') and cold ('death-cold hands and white as marble'). Is she the personification of the flower in the previous stanza? Subsequent lines suggest she may not be, but that both are instrumental in the poet's ultimate fate. Perhaps she is the poet's own Anima?

The duality which has persisted throughout the poem is again emphasised in what follows:

But there were hours,
When they rose upleaping cold and clear
As the jet of a silvery fountain.
Sighing was in her laughter,

Gladness was in her pain;
By her were all things vanquished -
And naught e'er dared gainsay her
But the spell of her own two eyes.

The soft speech, as gentle as appleblossom on the grass, is contrasted with something more piercing: the cold and clear jet of a silvery fountain. The falling of the appleblossom is opposed to the rising of the jet of the fountain. Further antitheses follow: sighing and laughter, gladness and pain. Nothing could resist her. She is the eternal temptress and consequently a symbol, but one of extraordinary power. Only her eyes do not obey her because she is herself enchanted and under the spell of the god.

Jacobsen's poem is now reaching its consummation:

From the poisonous lilies' dazzling chalice
Drank she to me,
To him too that hath perished
And to him who now at her feet is kneeling,
With us all she drank.
And her glance then obeyed her
From the bowl of troth to eternal plighting
From the poisonous lilies' dazzling chalice.

It appears that the 'wondrous herb' was a lily (not a water lily; this herb grew in a meadow) and here we have another puzzle. The chalice of the lily flower is the goblet from which she and her lover drank to eternal fidelity. The lily as a symbol of purity seems a little out of place here unless it is taken in the sense of total devotion; but, since it is poisonous, as a symbol of death it is most appropriate in view of what follows. As she drank from the poisoned cup she became at one with the god and 'her glance then obeyed her'. She was also at one with her lovers as they drank and were consumed in that fateful vision.

Like Klingsor's magic garden at the end of the second act of *Parsifal,* the vision has disappeared and left behind a barren, desolate landscape:

All now is past!
On the bleak heath snow-bestrewn
In the bare brown wood
Stands a lonely thornbush,
The black winds they scatter its leaves

One after another,
One after another,
Shedding its blood-reddened berries
In the cold white snow,
Its glowing red berries
In the cold white snow
Knowst thou Pan?

Can the 'bleak heath' be the 'sunbathed meadow' now covered in snow? We have now returned to the depths of winter and the surrounding trees are naked of foliage. The thornbush, which in spring would be covered in blossom, is now dying, the wind stealing its few remaining leaves, whilst its red berries drop on to the enveloping snow. This is the antithesis of Life and Death in its most violent expression; the thornbush a symbol of pain and suffering, the blood of life dripping into nothingness. Thus the poem reaches its stark conclusion with the grim, half-whispered mockery of the final line which Jacobsen had concluded with an exclamation mark, not a question mark.

It was necessary to deal with English translations of the poem in trying to come to grips with its meaning, but its full flavour and significance can only exist in the original Danish and so must remain closed to most of us. Delius, however, had a very open-minded attitude to language and, in writing to Ernest Newman in 1929 said: 'You know how difficult it is to translate to music. This is the reason why, in composing *Fennimore and Gerda* and the *Arabesk* — to avoid a language like Danish, which has no public — I composed to German words. German is so very similar to Danish that much of the original wording of J.P Jacobsen could be retained'[4].

In a letter to Sir Thomas Beecham in August 1929, Jelka expresses similar sentiments, as indeed one would expect, as she prepared the German translation. 'Do you remember how we discussed the poem in 1914 at Grove Hill House?' (The small house near Watford of which Sir Thomas had taken a lease, and which he offered to the Deliuses when they escaped from France after the outbreak of the First World War.) She continues: 'At that time you made certain alterations in Heseltine's translation. I send you today a copy into which you wrote the amended words. These were put into the orchestral score later on **...** only the poem printed on the title page is wrong. Fred composed the poem to the German words translated from the Danish by myself. The German lends itself extremely well, and almost always the same words can be found.'[5]

According to Sir Thomas Beecham, Jelka, 'although born in Belgrade, was

a member of an old Schleswig-Holstein family, well-known and distinguished in diplomatic and legal circles.'[6] Evidently, both she and Delius were satisfied with the German words to both *Fennimore and Gerda* and *An Arabesque,* and would have been well aware of any serious discrepancies between the translations and the original Danish. The English texts to both works were by Philip Heseltine and it is reasonable to suppose that he had Jelka's guidance: translation merely from the German would lead to an inaccurate and distorted view of the poem. With *Fennimore and Gerda* the case is different as the conversations between the characters are mostly prosaic, a fact bemoaned by Sir Thomas; but then they would still be prosaic in Danish.

In view of the foregoing, it is strange to find Sir Thomas saying, of *An Arabesque,* 'As in the case of *Fennimore,* it is almost impossible to give this work in any language but that of its native Danish, as both the English and German versions make sheer nonsense of its meaning.'[7] If the 'English and German versions' are so useless, is the poor English audience likely to be more enlightened when listening to it in Danish? Christopher Palmer adds to the confusion by stating: 'Delius, of course, set *Arabesque* in the original Danish' and says of the original recording, sung in Danish under the direction of Sir Thomas Beecham, that it had 'an edge and presence utterly lacking in the English recording.[8]

Dr. Roger Buckley, in his review of Dr. Fenby's recording of the work, says of the Heseltine translation that it is 'flawed and much further from the original poem than is his wife's German text which Delius had in mind at the time of composition. A glance at the score confirms that the shape and pulse of the setting match the German text: consequently the emphasis is frequently wrong in the English version. Furthermore, the English sounds are not the sounds that Delius intended.'[9]

A sensible solution would be to perform this piece in German and have an English translation in the programme or in the booklet enclosed with the compact disc. Against this we have two recorded performances (Beecham's and Bo Holten's) in Danish and two in English (Groves's and Fenby's)! The problem of the much maligned English translation now remains to be considered and this can only be clarified by being able to compare the various versions; Jelka's word-for-word literal translation from Danish into English; her German translation; and Philip Heseltine's English version as amended by Sir Thomas. From these it is clear that the English is not a travesty of the original, although the literal translation does help in clarifying one or two passages. It was, perhaps, a temptation for Sir Thomas to blame the translation for the obscurity of the poem and to suggest that if the Danish was

used, all the 'sheer nonsense' would disappear. Jacobsen, however, is unlike any other poet that Delius set, and the power of this poem lies in its mystery and its suggestiveness. Like music, it is at once obscure and precise and not a word in it is wasted. Obscurity is a price one often has to pay for fine poetry. A story is told of Robert Browning, who, when asked by a lady to explain the meaning of a certain passage, said: 'Madam, when I wrote that, only God and I knew what it meant: now, only God knows'!

Jacobsen was born in 1847, in Thisted, a small town in Northwest Jutland. He was interested in the natural sciences and translated Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1872 and *The Descent of Man* in 1875. These scientific studies and his own thinking led to a religious crisis after which he abandoned his previous Christian faith and became a confirmed atheist for the rest of his life. At first undecided between science and literature, he eventually chose the latter. On a journey to Italy, he contracted tuberculosis and the remaining twelve years of his life were spent in a 'determined but hopeless struggle against his grave illness'[10]. He died in 1885.

No doubt it was this protracted illness that caused his later writing to be coloured by melancholy and disillusionment: that, and his stoical atheism. Delius must have been acquainted with Jacobsen's poetry early in his stylistic development - six songs are dated 1897 - but there is virtually nothing further until *Fennimore and Gerda* (1909-10) and eventually *An Arabesque* (1911-15). It is not difficult to see why Jacobsen should have appealed to Delius. Even in the prose of *Niels Lyhne,* a part of which provided the basis for the libretto of *Fennimore and Gerda,* there are long passages of descriptive writing of great lyrical intensity and elsewhere the most sensitive understanding of the complicated psychological states of the main characters. Delius was also a committed atheist, but evidently could not accept the expression of utter futility at the end of Jacobsen's novel: it is all the more remarkable that in the case of *An Arabesque* he *was* able to accept it.

This strange composition is thus without parallel in Delius's output. Other works, however tragic the context, convey a fee1ing that whatever the sufferings, life is worthwhile. To these must be added the ecstatic endings to *A Mass of Life,* the *Requiem* and *Songs of Farewell,* all of which convey a very different state of mind from that expressed at the end of *An Arabesque.* In her 1929 letter to Beecham, already mentioned, Jelka said:

> This is one of the finest Scandinavian poems and to me it does not seem obscure. Think of the endless Scandinavian winter and the marvellous all too short summer. It is a lover's rhapsodic recital of his love. First he describes the

> so typically Northern summer-feeling – Pan – the sensual love, destructive, unreasonable, under the spell of a short moment of bliss only. Second section. The flower coming into bloom in its almost unnatural colour and beauty symbolises the exhaltation [sic] of that one moment. Third section. Then he describes the girl he loved, how she seemed so calm, deep, pure, but how a wonderful spell, an almost withering, poisonous fascination emanated from her and how she drank to eternal faithfulness with all her lovers: with himself, with the one who is dead already and with the one who is at her feet now; how she wielded her power over them, so that they gladly drank to her out of the poisonous lilies [sic] dazzling chalice (their undoing). This is also typical of the Scandinavian woman. Last Section. Then all is past. Winter storm — the red berries last vestige of the mad summertime drop one by one into the snow.[11]

The remark concerning Scandinavian women seems rather uncharitable, but she may have had some of Frederick's dalliances in mind! Philip Heseline must have had Jelka's prompting in the programme note he wrote for the 1929 Festival when he described the poem as 'a strange symbolic lyric [which] deals with the darker side of the god Pan, who here represents the obsession of sensual passion which leads to madness and death. [The wondrous herb] suggests to the poet the fatal fascination of the love which blasts and destroys. [It] may also be regarded as a symbol of the all-too-fleeting Northern summer, for the poem ends with a vision of a bleak winter Landscape, the wind-scattered dead leaves over the snow and, like a sigh from out of the earth itself, the voices murmur tonelessly: "Knowst thou Pan?"[12]

Here, then, are two possible interpretations of the poem: that it deals with a passionate affair and that it symbolises the brevity of the Scandinavian summer With a poem as enigmatic as this, everyone can have a personal view, but both *Songs of Sunset* and *Idyll* are concerned with passionate affairs, and neither has the mysterious atmosphere of *An Arabesque* but is rooted in 'human, all-too human' emotions. Both Jelka's glosses on the poem are probably true to some extent, and as Christopher Palmer so perceptively says: 'That Delius was able to respond so keenly to the peculiar mood and theme of the poem is perhaps not so surprising when we realise that by the time he came to compose the music (1911-15) the malady he had acquired in the throes of passion, after lying dormant for many years, was now beginning to stir and betray its presence in the form of physical symptoms. *An Arabesque* is therefore in the fullest sense a personal, autobiographical document wherein is fulfilled the quasi-prophecy of Jacobsen's *Wine Roses* which Delius had set in 1897:

Through long long years we must atone
For what seemed a trifling pleasure.

– the tragic irony of which would have completely escaped Delius at the time though doubtless by then he had already contracted the disease!'[13]

However much these interpretations may have their relevance, it must be emphasised that the 'she' of the poem has nothing to do with the 'femme fatale' of romantic literature, or indeed with any actual woman. Her significance is far more fundamental, and much more than a brief brief passionate encounter lies behind Jacobsen's poem. Delius's music is one vast hymn to the Nature he worshipped throughout his life, not in the strict Pantheist sense of seeing God in all natural things, but rather as Thomas Hardy saw the natural world - as being awesome, hard and unrelenting but wonderfully beautiful in its savagery. And Delius was faithful to his implacable mistress. He endured stoically a winter of sterility, blindness and paralysis but his love of Nature never left him and at the very end he could say that he had had a wonderful life.

Every creative artist is a slave to his or her creative gift: it is a net from which it is not possible to escape. And they have to implore the muse not to desert them, because without creativity their lives are meaningless. The dead whiteness of a blank sheet of paper is their most terrifying prospect; it must become covered with writing or with dots on lines, and with these frail symbols, brought to life. It will be remembered that *Fennimore and Gerda* is about two failed artists: a painter and a poet, and Delius would hardly have decided to make use of such a story without being concerned with its implications. It is also about the search for inspiration and renewal, the seasons changing in accordance with the development of the story and ending in Spring, just as did the *Requiem* and *North Country Sketches.*

In a famous passage in *Delius as I Knew Him,* Eric Fenby is lectured on love and marriage. Delius said: 'Love is a madness. Passionate affairs are like fireworks, flaring up only to fizzle out'.[14] *An Arabesque* is not about anything so transitory, but about a lifelong obsession. As Sir Arnold Bax remarked: 'The truly-inspired artist doesn't possess a gift, but is possessed by it, as by a demon.' Delius's 'demon' was his love of Nature - or, as he would say, of Life - and of his art. To him the two were an indivisible essence before which everything else was of little account. He could even say to Eric Fenby: 'If you ever do have to marry, marry a girl who is more in love with your art than with you', a remark which suggests that it was only his art which he felt

was loveable, not himself. And from this it may be deduced that, despite his steely exterior, Delius was a far more vulnerable character than is generally supposed.

The drinking of the poisoned chalice led in the end to a wintry death-in-life in which his mind was full of music but his blind and paralysed body incapable of realising it on paper. Until, that is, a young man arrived one day from yorkshire to help him enjoy a second spring. How much more fortunate was he than the bewitched poet of *an arabesque,* for whom there was no such final harvest.

[1] Christopher Palmer: *Delius, Portrait of a Cosmopolitan* (Duckworth 1976) p71.
[2] Lionel Carley: *Delius: A Life in Letters* 1909-1934 (Scolar Press 1988) pp355-6.
[3] Palmer: *Op cit*., p72.
[4] Carley: *Op.cit*., pp352-3.
[5] Letter in The Delius Trust's archive.
[6] Sir Thomas Beecham: *Frederick Delius* (Hutchinson 1959) p77.
[7] Beecham: *Op.cit*., pp167-8.
[8] Palmer: *Op.cit*., p71.
[9] Delius Society Journal No 95, p9.
[10] Introduction to *Niels Lyhne,* trans. Hanna Astrup Larsen (Twayne Publishers, New York and The American Scandanavian Foundation 1967).
[11] Letter in footnote 5.
[12] Delius Society Journal No 94, p50.
[13] Palmer: *Op. Cit.,* pp73-4.
[14] Eric Fenby: Delius as I Knew Him (Icon Books 1966) p185.

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*[Note: This is a shortened version of an article that first appeared in DSJ 119 & 120]*

# A TRANSLATION OF *AN ARABESQUE* DIRECT FROM THE DANISH

Jeremy Lee-Browne

As a postscript to John White's article, the following is a literal translation of Jacobsen's original poem:

| **Ein Arabeske** | **An Arabesk** |
|---|---|
| Har du faret vild i dunkle Skove? | Have you gone astray in dark forests? |
| Kjender du Pan? | Do you know Pan? |
| Jeg har følt ham, | I have felt him, |
| Ikke i de dunkle Skove, | (Not in the dark forests, |
| Medens alt Tiende talte, | While all the silence spoke, |
| Nej, den Pan har jeg aldrig kjendt, | No, this Pan have I never known,) |
| Men Kjærlighedens Pan har jeg følt, | But my all-loving Pan I have felt, |
| Da tav alt Talende. | When all that speaks was silent. |
| | |
| I solvarme Egne | In sun-warm meadows |
| Vokser en sælsom Urt, | Grows a marvellous herb, |
| Kun i dybeste Tavshed | Only in deepest silence |
| Under tusinde Solstraalers Brand, | Under a thousand sunbeams' fire |
| Aabner den sin Blomst | Does it open its bloom |
| I et flygtigt Secund. | For a fleeting second. |
| Den ser ud som en gal Mands Øje, | It gleams out like a madman's eye, |
| Som et Ligs røde Kinder. | Like a corpse's red cheeks. |
| Den har jeg set | This have I seen |
| I min Kjærlighed. | In my eternal love. |
| | |
| Hun var som Jasminens sødtduftende Sne, | She was like jasmine's sweet-scented snow, |
| Valmueblod randt i hendes Aarer, | Poppy-blood ran in her veins, |
| De kolde, marmorhvide Hænder | Her cold, marble-white hands |
| Hvilede i hendes Skjød | Rested in her lap |

Som Vandlilier i den dybe Sø.
Hendes Ord faldt blødt
Som Æbleblomstens Blade
Paa det dugvaade Græs;
Men der var Timer,
Hvor de snoede sig kolde og klare
Som Vandets stigende Straale.
Der var Suk i hendes Latter,
Jubel i hendes Graad;
For hende maatte Alt bøje sig,
Kun Tvende turde trodse hende,
Hendes egne Øjne.

Like waterlilies on the deep lake.
Her words fell soft
As apple-blossom petals
On the dew-wet grass;
But there were times
When they twisted round, cold and clear
Like water streaming out.
There was a sighing in her laughter,
Rejoicing in her tears;
Before her must all things bow,
Just twain dare defy her,
Her own eyes.

Af den giftige Lilies
Blændende Kalk
Drak hun mig til;
Ham der er død,
Og ham der nu knæler ved hendes Fod.
Med os Alle drak hun
— Og da var Blikket hende lydigt —
Løftets Bæger om usvigelig Troskab
Af den giftige Lilies
Blændende Kalk.

From the poisonous [arum] lily's
Dazzling calyx
Drank she to me,
To him who is dead,
And to him who now kneels at her foot.
With us all she drank
And then obedient was her gaze --
From the promise-goblet of eternal troth
From the poisonous lily's
Dazzling chalice.

Alt er forbi!
Paa den snedækte Slette
I den brune Skov
Vokser en enlig Tjørn,
Vindene eje dens Løv.
Et for et,
Et for et,
Drypper den de blodrøde Bær
Ned i den hvide Sne;
De glødende Bær
I den kolde Sne.

All is past!
On the snow-decked plain
In the brown forest
Grows a solitary thorn,
Winds scatter its leaves.
One by one,
One by one,
Drop the blood-red berries
Down into the white snow;
The glowing berries
In the cold snow.

Kjender du Pan!

You do know Pan!

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# MUSICAL PATRONS AT PALSGAARD

Lionel Carley

In 1908 manufacturer Einar Viggo Schou returned to Denmark after a highly successful business career in London, and purchased a large estate in Jutland. On a part of the estate he set up a factory and research laboratories in the field of food emulsifiers, a business that has developed into the present-day Palsgaard Industri A/S, with branches around the world. His new home was a beautiful old manor house on the estate, Palsgaard Slot (Palsgaard Castle), built on the site of a medieval fortification not far from the sea-shore. The seller was Norwegian minister and diplomat Count Frederik Wedel Jarlsberg, a key figure in the negotiations that had brought Prince Carl of Denmark to Norway in 1905 as King Haakon VII. Some of those negotiations took place at Palsgaard. Wedel Jarlsberg had been Legation Secretary in London in the late 1880s, and he had no doubt developed his interest in landscape gardening on the English model while serving there, for it was during his ten years' ownership of Palsgaard that he brought over British gardeners to lay out the grounds of his Danish estate. Einar Schou and his wife Elisabeth were the first, then, to reap the benefits of their predecessor's eye for natural order and beauty.

Einar Schou
(From the Author's collection)

Elisabeth Schou continued Wedel Jarlsberg's work and Palsgaard as it is today is largely

a result of her development and refinement of the grounds of the estate. She posssessed, though, many other gifts and accomplishments, not least in the area of music and literature. She was, for example, a trained singer, having studied – before her marriage in 1899 – with Jean de Reszke and then with Vilhelm Herold. She was also a talented translator, with many Danish publications to her credit during a later phase of her life, largely from the English but also from the German and French. It proved fitting that her significant part in Danish musical life was commemorated in a festival held in Aarhus and at Palsgaard itself in June 1998.

In London Einar Schou had been chairman of Den Danske Forening (The Danish Association) and he and his wife had entertained at their Ealing home many visiting Danes of distinction, among them the critic Georg Brandes, literary historian Vilhelm Andersen and poet and dramatist Holger Drachmann. At Palsgaard the traffic would be reversed, with some of the friends entertained in England coming over to stay and, more often than not, falling in love with the quiet charm and beauty of their Jutland environment. Some were of course simply personal friends with no claim to wider fame, but others were major personalities – leading figures in their own fields: Delius, the singer and composer Frederic Austin, the cellist Herbert Withers, novelist E M Forster, philosopher W J H Sprott, and politician Stephen King-Hall. But it was, of course, not only England that would provide Palsgaard with its guests. The roll-call in music alone was still longer and even more wide ranging: cellist Herman Sandby, Wagnerian singer Berta Morena, pianist Johanne Stockmarr, singer Ellen Gulbransson, violinist Emil Telmanyi, singer Vilhelm Herold, pianist Ignaz Friedmann and the conductor and composer Paul von Klenau were, among others, all visitors to Palsgaard during the thirty golden years that were abruptly to be ended by the outbreak of war in 1939. It might be said that Palsgaard could fairly be described as a smaller-scale Fuglsang, that great house and legendary home of Viggo and Bodil Neergard on the island of Lolland in southern Denmark, where Edvard Grieg and Carl Nielsen had rather earlier been among the distinguished guests and where music-making under these benign hosts has become a feature of Danish cultural history. Fuglsang comes to life in two books by Bodil Neergaard: *Spredte Træk af mit Liv* (1941) and *Minder fra Fuglsang* (1944). The story of Palsgaard in the Schous' time remains to be written, however, although the estate's somewhat earlier history is traced in Johan Bønnelycke Jørgensen's *Palsgaard i prinsens og baronens tid 1877-1908* (1979).

While in London Elisabeth Schou took the opportunity to follow the capital's musical life as closely as she could during the eight years or so that

she spent there. But with her husband's household to run and with two young children to bring up, her time would have been limited. The life of a professional singer, perhaps once dreamed of, was not in the event to be hers. But at least her considerable interest in music brought her into contact in London with English musicians. The individual reputations of Delius and Austin were now rapidly growing in their homeland, and Elisabeth Schou became acquainted with them only a year or two, it seems, before she and her husband finally left England to move into their new home at Palsgaard.

Elisabeth Schou
(From the Author's collection)

Austin has a special tie to Palsgaard through his delightful suite *Palsgaard: Danish Sketches*, the manuscript of which he presented to his friends the Schous. Based on Danish folk songs, it had several performances in England, and after the first, given in London on 11 December 1916, his friend Arnold Bax wrote to him:

> I want to send you a line to tell you how very much I enjoyed your most delightful "Palsgaard" on Monday night. I went on purpose to hear it, and it was well worth it. The orchestration I thought most picturesque, and – if I may say so – the best thing you have done in that respect, and the music itself has a peculiarly fresh atmosphere and sounds as though it was written with love. The little march tune was in my head the whole of the next day – a by no means unwelcome guest. My heartiest congratulations…

As a singer Austin gave the first British performances of *Sea Drift*, and in the opera house he excelled in Wagner, his acting coming to be as highly prized as his singing. His compositions are gradually becoming better known to us today, even if they remain relatively unfamiliar when compared with those of Delius.

A Norwegian speaker, Delius had first become attracted to Danish poetry

in the early 1890s, and the ground-breaking cycle of *Seven Danish Songs with Orchestra* had been completed by 1897. Six of the songs are to poems by J P Jacobsen; the seventh – a highly original and haunting piece – is Drachmann's 'Lyse Nætter'. Other songs to poems by Jacobsen, Drachmann and Ludvig Holstein were to follow. Among Delius's Danish friends was the novelist and dramatist Helge Rode. Taking his inspiration from Rode's play *Dansen Gaar*, Delius composed at the turn of the century a Straussian symphonic poem, *Life's Dance*, which can justly be considered to be on the same level as the masterly *Paris*, an almost contemporary work. It is a virile, muscular piece of some originality. Later Danish-inspired works were the opera *Fennimore and Gerda*, after Jacobsen's novel *Niels Lyhne*, and finally *An Arabesque*, set to another Jacobsen poem.

There is no evidence that Percy Grainger ever came to Palsgaard, but he certainly knew this region of Jutland. In fact he was a great friend of Denmark and one of the great loves of his life was Karen Holten, a distant cousin of present-day composer, conductor and member of the Society, Bo Holten. Herman Sandby was his closest friend, and the great Danish folk song collector Evald Tang Kristensen was yet another hero of his. Grainger collected folk songs in Jutland with Tang Kristensen, certainly doing so in the Vejle locality (not so very far from Palsgaard) in the 1920s. His work includes a number of settings of Danish traditional songs, the best known being the *Suite on Danish Folksongs*, the last movement of which is his 'Jutish Medley'.

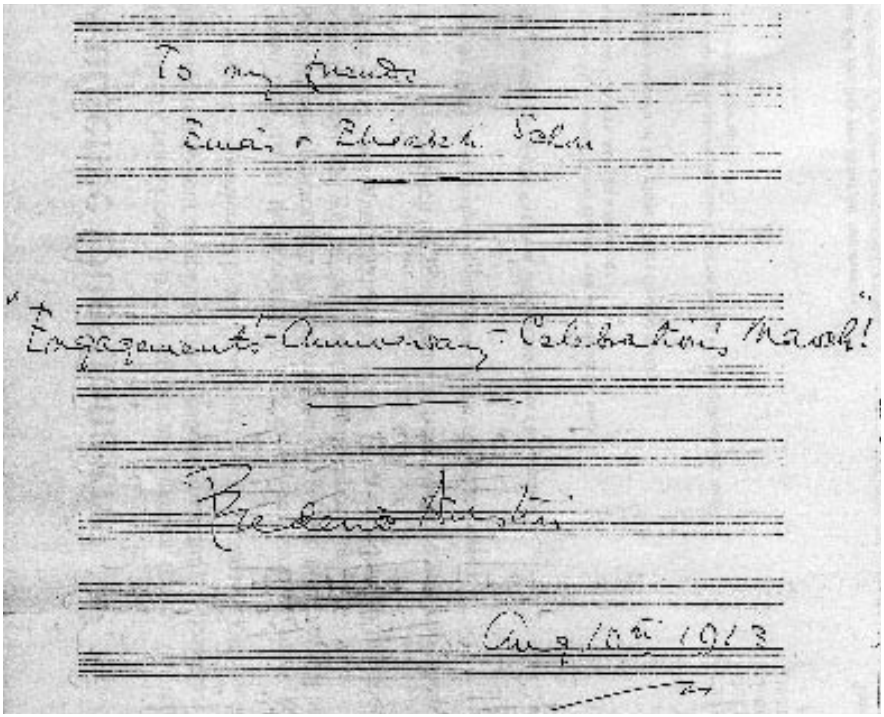
The final link in this particular musical chain is a Danish conductor and composer who merits re-establishment in the canon of musical history. Paul von Klenau was long known to Delius by the time he appears to have visited Palsgaard for the first time in 1920. This was the year in which he founded, together with Elisabeth Schou and others, the Danish Philharmonic Society. Elisabeth, ever receptive to contemporary music, helped him to entertain Arnold Schönberg in Copenhagen in 1923 when, under the auspices of the Society, Schönberg conducted a concert of his own music. Klenau himself conducted many of Delius's large-scale works in various European cities in the inter-war years, including *A Mass of Life* in London and Vienna and *Appalachia* in Copenhagen. One of his visits to London must presumably have inspired his extraordinary, even mystical tone poem *Bank Holiday – Souvenir of Hampstead Heath* for voice (or voices) and orchestra dating from 1922.

Circumstances happily came together in 1998 with the result that a three-day festival celebrated the connection of these composers – Delius, Austin, Grainger and von Klenau – with this particular corner of Jutland peninsular – and there were concerts in Aarhus, Jutland's capital city, and at Palsgaard

itself. It proved to be a fitting musical memorial to Einar and Elisabeth Schou - notable friends and admirers of Delius and his music, and musical patrons of substance and generosity.

*[This article was originally published (in Danish translation) in Danish Radio's* P2 Magazine *in 1998. The above text has been revised and edited by the author for this edition of the* Delius Society Journal*]*

Elisabeth Schou
(Collection: The Schou Foundation)




Frederic Austin's 'thank-you' to the Schous after one of his visits to Palsgaard
(The Editor's collection)

The Editor's wife Diana at the piano in Palsgaard Slot played on by Delius
(Photo: Brian Radford – The Editor's collection)

# DELIUS AND DENMARK

## A CURIOUS CATALOGUE ENTRY

Those Members who were intrigued by an entry for *The Song of the High Hills* in a Japanese catalogue, reproduced in DSJ 138, might enjoy the following, which is taken from the same source.

**7 Danish Songs (seven Denmark song)**
RT 03/04
Compose 1897
first performance Mar 16 and 1901, Christianne Andray cond. Vincent d'Indy and Paris memo

1. Lyse Naetter (night of song 'summer') (Holger Drachmann) RT VI/1 3
2. Thro' long long years (Jens Peter Jacobsen)
3. Wine Roses (Jens Peter Jacobsen)
4. Let Springtime Come (Jens Peter Jacobsen)
5. Irmelin Rose (Jens Peter acobsen)
6. In the Seraglio Garden (I Seraillets Have) (Jens Peter Jacobsen)

*7.* Silken Shoes (Silkesko over gylden Laest!) (Jens Peter Jacobsen) There is no statement in Inoue Kazuo compilation work 'classic music work name dictionary' Sanseido Co., Ltd. publication.
3.4. As for English translation composer himself. From first it was written as orchestral music accompaniment edition.
1. As for composition 1891. As for the inside *5* tunes of the attaching tune of Jacobsen of 6 tunes to 1896 December composition. As for completion and orchestra edition arrangement of all tune 1897. 1898 revision.
The inside 2 tunes (6 and *7)* is premiered with direction of the dandy. at the Sociëté Nationale de Musique. Morald took charge the meaning language so. (dobiyutsushi] which inquires about this performance (Claude Debussy) "La Revue blanche" ('the white criticism' magazine) commenting with the April 1st number, it has been said, ", that quite being sweet, is dense, is the song the quite tinted transparency ([buranshiyu]), as the music which invites the convalescend people who live in high-class residential town easily in sleep having Pulling long, often there is a sound which crawls on chord. You saw at in upper, month of lake and were stuffed and will be satiated, flower like of the ~ lotus, or and The small size which was covered the passage in the cloud even

the balloon you say lightly?" (Jurg Stenzl and ed. Furthermore Art Nouveau and Jugendstil und Musik, 1980, the flat island, also the flat tail meaning music ~. friend corporation 1993, p.[3] 09), according to the same meaning book, 6. In the Seraglio Garden (I Seraillets Have) (Jens Peter Jacobsen) (you are disgusted 'with the garden of the harem', the (ya], normally) 7. Silken Shoes (Silkesko over gylden Laest!) (Jens Peter Jacobsen) '~ distinctiveness ~' with the meaning name which is said is attached. By the way, 'the road to the paradise (The Walk to the paradise Garden)' main theme (the person who starts with three connected signs) entirely (moteihu] appears in the piano section of this tune.

1914 June 8th, with all-Delius Concert which B Chain directs, with Duke's Hall and Royal Academy of Music you replay. As for the German singing/stating Agnes Nicholls.

Part of the manuscript of *Black Roses*
(The Delius Trust)

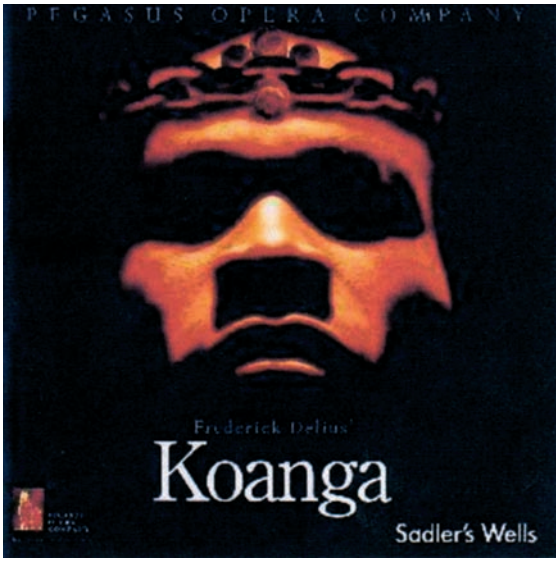
Fünf Lieder
für eine Singstimme
von
Five Songs
for one Voice
by
FREDERICK DELIUS
1 DAS VEILCHEN THE VIOLET
2 IM GARTEN DES SERAILS IN THE GARDEN OF THE SERAGLIO
3 SEIDENSCHUHE SILKEN SHOES
4 HERBST. AUTUMN.
5 ERMELIN. ERMELIN
Preis compl. M. 3._ nett.
Price compl. 3/_ net
VERLAG HARMONIE BERLIN

## Pegasus Opera's performances of *Koanga* at Sadlers Wells 11-14 April 2007

**Stephen Lloyd**

Anniversaries of births and deaths are often convenient occasions for reassessing or reviving composers' works, but one would not have expected the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade to be a reason for presenting the third-ever staged production in London of Delius's *Koanga*. Yet in April this was the enterprising undertaking of the Pegasus Opera Company at Sadler's Wells Theatre, the venue for the opera's last London production thirty-five years ago.[1] The Pegasus Opera Company, a medium-sized multi-racial company that tours Great Britain, was formed in 1992 following the highly successful Glyndebourne and Covent Garden productions of *Porgy and Bess* and its aim is to provide opportunities for ethnic minority singers. *Koanga* was an excellent choice.

There were four performances, including a matinée, and one was struck more by the differences, some quite effective, others less so. Under Helena Kaut-Howson's direction, for the Prologue and Epilogue, gone was the plantation house with its verandah. Instead we were propelled forward in time to some museum with exhibits of the slave trade. The planters' daughters became a group of schoolgirls looking round the museum, and Uncle Joe an attendant who is roused from his chair and his newspaper to tell a story of slavery. The singers' diction was not very clear so much of the revisions made by playwright Olwen Wymark to the libretto in these two scenes was lost on the audience; sufficient to say that in the Epilogue



some suitable statement was made about slavery.

It was good to have once again black artists taking the principal roles. Alison Buchanan was a dignified Palmyra (if not a young enough bride), while Leonard Rowe was an effective and reasonably powerful Koanga. If some of the other soloists lacked the necessary vocal strength, the chorus was outstanding so that one longed to hear it in a performance of *Appalachia*.

Some of the acting was a little stilted, the slave masters' whip-cracking becoming more of a mannerism than a necessity. A curious and perhaps questionable addition was a quartet of semi-naked dancers, two male and two female, who entered slow motion almost as interlocked voodoo spirits with Koanga and accompanied him whenever he was on stage. Their most useful function was to solve the director's problem in Act III by distributing, under cover of stage darkness, simple items of clothing to transform effectively those sleeping after the voodoo gathering into sleeping plantation workers. Their weakest contribution was the symbolic representation of the flight of Koanga's spear, which they in turns carried off stage to strike Simon Perez in the wings. In fact the deaths were dramatically the weakest moments in this production.

An orchestra of 40 could not do full justice to Delius's score (the programme did not inform us whose reduction it was) and yet in the small theatre even the reduced orchestra seemed at times to overpower the singers, but Martin André and the Aurelian Ensemble conveyed the work's essential lyricism. The staging lacked the intimacy and involvement that one remembers from the 1994 Leeds Youth Opera production and one was left with a feeling of a scaled-down drama, although the tension was well maintained in the difficult third act. It was a production worth seeing and the Company deserves praise for a bold venture. After all, none of Delius's six operas is likely to fill a theatre, even one as small as that in Rosebery Avenue.

As an aside: the opening chords to *Koanga* are surely the most awkward start to any Delius work. No wonder that when Stanford Robinson came to make his very effective twelve-minute selection that he entitled *Intermezzo* he omitted the first seven bars.

© Stephen Lloyd 2007

## Newspaper & Magazine Reviews

*Koanga was reviewed in some 15 newspapers, magazines and websites – and it is obviously impractical (as well as probably unnecessary) to reproduce them all. Apart from one or two 'rave' reviews by people who obviously knew little about Delius, but nevertheless greatly enjoyed the show, the reactions to the production were broadly speaking unanimous. These are four of the better ones – all reproduced here with the kind permission of the authors and the publishers. Others may be seen on Bill Thompson's website* http://thompsonian.info/koanga-pegasus-2007-reviews.html

### Opera - June 2007, Volume 58 No 6

This was the *first* London stage revival of Delius's opera since 1972, when Sadler's Wells was also the venue (Leeds Youth Opera performed it in Yorkshire in July 1994). On this latest occasion *Koanga* was mounted as part of the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the passing of the historic Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Delius composed the work between 1895 and 1897, to a libretto by himself and the professional numismatist and minor writer Charles Francis Keary (1848-1917), based on an episode in the 1880 novel *The Grandissimes* by George Washington Cable, which is still in print. The text itself has been much revised, firstly by Je]ka Delius, who made the German translation for the opera's stage premiere (Elberfeld, 1904) and then back-translated it for the first UK staging (Covent Garden, 1935, under

Beecham). Beecham himself and Edward Agate made further revisions at that time. So did Douglas Craig, who directed the 1972 revival, and Andrew Page. For Pegasus, the playwright Olwen Wymark added her sixpenn'orth. But judging by the amount of text that could be heard at Sadler's Wells (not really enough, though it never is), *Koanga's* problems concern not only the libretto but more importantly the music,which is much harder to revise.

Though his third completed opera (*Irmelin* and *The Magic Fountain* preceded it), *Koanga* was Delius's first work to reach the stage, and his inexperience shows. There's far too great a preponderance of slow music, much of it sounding like badly remembered Wagner. One of the few lively sections - the dance 'La Calinda', which forms part of the Act 2 wedding celebrations for Koanga and Palmyra - he took from his 1887 *Florida Suite***.** (Deservedly, it became a Beecham lollipop.) Elsewhere, there's not a strong enough sense of musical character. The more recitative-like sections are particularly limp.

But Pegasus made a decent go of it. The African prince Koanga, brought to a Louisiana plantation where his refusal to accept his subjugation is the mainspring of the plot, was powerfully conveyed by the Canadian baritone Leonard Rowe, and Palmyra - mixed-race daughter of the planter Martinez, who is about to be married off to Koanga when she is abducted by the slaves' overseer, Perez - was given dignity by Alison Buchanan, whose essentially lyric soprano rose to the role's appreciable vocal challenges. The Armenian-Iranian bass Aris Nadirian made a forceful Martinez, and the tenor Adrian Dwyer was properly vicious as Perez.

The set was designed simply but effectively by Kenny Miller, with two underground chambers opening up impressively for the slaves to make their first entrance, and his costumes delineated character and status skilfully. Helena KautHowson's production made a fair job of enunciating the plot and characters, though the regular presence of four dancers proved extraneous. The Pegasus chorus gave their music—some of the most striking in the score—plenty of vocal presence, while in the pit the Aurelian Ensemble made a fair shot at Delius's often heavy scoring, and the conductor Martin André brought some dynamism to proceedings. But in the final analysis, however interesting the subject, the score itself is a long way from being viable.

© George Hall and *Opera* 2007

## The Sunday Telegraph, 22 April 2007

Delius's *Koanga* certainly fulfils Pegasus Opera Company's brief as far as 'empowering those who feel pushed towards the periphery of the opera world' (to quote Pegasus's founder Lloyd Newton) is concerned, but however honourably their new production strives for cultural and ethnic inclusion — this new production at Sadler's Wells, the first in London for 35 years, is one of the events marking the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery — there's no disguising this early (1897) work's flaws.

As a young man, Delius ran an orange plantation in Florida, and the heady music of the black workers was the major source of inspiration for this romantic tale of conflicted love and religion set among the slaves on an estate in 18th-century Louisiana. There is also another powerful source of enslavement at work here — namely Delius's to Wagner. The debt is there for all to hear, imperfectly assimilated but with enough of Delius's own voice making its presence felt. It's an uneasy flux; a lot of the music is like a long, slow, soft landing, and for all its abundance of melodic line there's not much in the way of memorable melody. The slaves' choruses often seem on the brink of turning into a sort of *0l' Man River* generic, and there *is* a sadly homogenised tribute to *Tristan und Isolde* that kicks off the heroine Palmyra's lament over the dying Koanga. Things hot up in the Act III voodoo sacrifice and there is a gaudy climax of hope and optimism, but the work as a whole doesn't really flow. The director Helena Kaut-Howson, keen to assert *Koanga's* slavery agenda, has made some changes in a work already much tinkered with over the years. The prologue and epilogue are given contemporary relevance

with a gaggle of really annoying schoolgirls doing their slavery module in a museum of slavery — it made sense in this context despite the fact that hardly a word of the specially adapted libretto could be heard. Another more lurid bit of directorial hijacking — a quartet of dancers emoting their socks off in an everyone getting -a-go, empowering sort of way — was plain ghastly.

The two leads were strongly cast and did an impressive job in bringing *Koanga* to life. Alison Buchanan gave depth and involvement to the role of Palmyra, the mixed-race slave girl who falls in love with Koanga. As the voodoo prince from a far-off land, Leonard Rose had presence and authority to spare, and managed the role's terrifyingly high baritone range without too much strain. In the smaller roles, Aris Nadirian and Adrian Dwyer were suitably whip-cracking and sadistic as the estate owner and his overseer. The chorus of rather robust-looking slaves made a powerful and haunting contribution, although some of their choreographed movement veered alarmingly close to Black and White Minstrels. With so many people to move around, it is hardly surprising that the staging was functional and rather static, and was functional and rather static, and Delius's music needs a fatter, lusher sound than the Aurelian Ensemble could provide, but under their conductor Martin André, it got the general feel of the score's steamy romance

© Peter Reed and *The Sunday Telegraph* 2007

## The Stage, 19 April 2007

Frederick Delius's *Koanga* revisits Sadler's Wells after more than 30 years, billed now as the first African-American opera, a piece fit to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. With his first-hand experience of life on a Florida plantation, Delius's intentions are good, even if his scenario - a stereotypical tale of the noble savage and his thwarted love for a mulatto girl – may be beyond saving.

The new production by Pegasus Opera does not obsess over issues of racial and cultural conflict beyond reworking the opera's original Uncle Tom-ish framing device as a school trip to a museum of slavery. The staging relies on a single set strewn with geometric shapes on which the protagonists assume conventional, front-facing operatic poses. It is the introduction of a choreographic element in the form of four omnipresent dancers, a crowd-pleasing response to intransigent material, that does not really come off.

Plainly affected by the resonant, dignifying songs of his own workforce, a variant of Delius's static, post-Wagnerian idiom takes centre stage, the

best music coming when the action is over. There are some memorable choral tableaux en route and the orchestral playing, though variable, can be sensitive too. Leonard Rowe is effective in the title role, ably supported by Alison Buchanan's mature sounding heroine. Mezzo Yvonne Fontana makes something of the underwritten role of Clotilda. The acoustic prevents much of the text coming across so why no surtitles?

Early performances of the opera were given in blackface: in this sense at least things have moved on.

© David Gutman and *The Stage* 2007

## Opera Now – Issue 95

The dubious relevance of anniversaries was stretched to its limits in the enterprising Pegasus Opera's presentation of Delius's *Koanga* as their contribution to the celebrations of the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. It was, however, not without a nice irony in that Koanga's genesis was partly due to Delius's businessman father who, unwilling to finance his son's career as a composer, despatched him to manage an orange grove in Florida in 1884, thus exposing him to African-American songs, dances and rhythms as supplied by his emancipated and paid workers. *Koanga* was premiered at Elberfeld in 1904, but had no performance in England until Beecham conducted it at Covent Garden in 1935, a year after Delius's death. This production is the first since the 1972 Sadler's Wells version.

Koanga has been held back largely because of the flawed libretto, frequently and always unsatisfactorily revised, and only made acceptable in

the 1972 Sadlers Wells version by Douglas Craig and Andrew Page. It also suffered from what now seems a distinctly non-PC and, frankly, dramatically rather naff, Prologue and Epilogue which have been brilliantly revised by the playwright Olwen Wymark, so that the opera now begins with a *tableau vivant* in a contemporary slavery museum before fading into Act I and the real thing of a Southern cotton plantation. The tragic love story of the ordinary slave girl Palmyra and the newly arrived and enslaved African prince Koanga is played out against an austere, but atmospherically appropriate, plantation forest background by Kenny Miller. The director Helena Kaut-Howson gives a clear and powerful exposition of a music drama of power, lust, miscogenation, hideous cruelty and a doomed slave revolt, with an omnipresent quartet of Voodoo dancers who heighten rather than impede the narrative but, in the end, cannot protect Palmyra and Koanga.

The score is a constant delight - and not just the celebrated dance sequence *La Calinda* — and it's good to hear banjo solos in an opera, as it is to have a chorus of slaves that does not sing 'Va, pensiero'. Both orchestra and chorus performed with tremendous enthusiasm under conductor Martin André, and the five principals all acquitted themselves well in a performance that was a perfect example of Pegasus Opera's aim to model multi-racial 'Harmony and Diversity.'

The plantation owner Martinez was sung by the lranian/Armenian Aris Nadirian, his sadistic overseer by the Australian Adrian Dyer, Martinez's wife Clotilda by the Canadian Yvonne Fontana. Inevitably, and rightly, the stage was dominated by Alison Buchanan, strong of voice and presence, and a prima donna in the making. Leonard Rowe was the imposing, compellingly regal Koanga. Both seemed familiar to me, and I realise I'd heard them as Bess and Porgy at New York City Opera a few years ago, Congratulations and good luck to Pegasus and all who work for it.

© Tom Rosenthal & *Opera Now* 2007

[1] May 1972, with Eugene Holmes, Claudia Lindsay, Jean Allister, Raymond Herinx, Camden Festival Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra, cond. Charles Groves. The performance of 19 May was broadcast by the BBC and was for a while available on Intaglio INCD7442. The same forces - but with the professional John Alldis Choir – recorded the opera for EMI in September 1973; CD release 5-85142-2.

## JEAN ALLISTER AND RAIMUND HERINCX TALK TO THE EDITOR

*Jean Allister and Raimund Herincx very kindly agreed to talk to the Editor about their involvement with* Koanga *in the 1970s.*

Ed: So, Jean was in the performances of *Koanga* at Sadlers Wells in 1972, and you both sang in the recording for EMI the following year – with that great Delian, Charles Groves. How did you come to be involved in that?

JA: Well, I suppose that I was well-established as a singer then – I was at The Royal Academy in the mid-1950s – and had got to know a large number of people in the musical world. In particular, I had worked with Charlie Groves on many occasions, as I had with Douglas Craig, who produced the stage performances – and presumably they thought I had the right voice and acting ability to play Clotilda!

RH: Yes, Dougie was marvellous to work with - he was artistic, he thoroughly understood the techniques of singing, and was (in the best sense) a real 'engineer in sound'. I was therefore very disappointed that, although I had actually been asked to take part in the performances, it did not prove possible.

Ed: How was the recording done – in long or short 'takes'?

JA: That always entirely depends on the conductor and the producer, because they both have to be completely satisfied with what will finish up on the record. So you start singing and playing, and go on until something doesn't go right – someone gets behind the beat, a horn fluffs a note or some detail in the orchestra can't be heard; you correct that, and on you go again. So, basically, we did a scene at a time.

RH: Furthermore, when you are recording a piece that sometimes needs the full orchestra and sometimes a reduced one – say, without the brass – the orchestral requirements dictate what is done when; you don't want the brass playing at the start of the morning, and then enjoying the rest of it off. Having them hanging about with nothing to do is both annoying for them and a waste of money! Therefore you hop about from scene to scene.

JA: In all, it took about five days – and we were in that marvellous place for recording, the old Kingsway Hall. The producer there was Christopher Bishop – who was always a joy to work with.

RH: The one problem with the Kingsway Hall was that the Underground

ran directly underneath it. In soft passages, the rumble of the trains was quite audible, and recording had to stop until all was quiet again. I remember that at one point during the *Koanga* sessions I saw the recording lights change from green to red, and (as one has to) everyone immediately stopped playing and singing – but Charlie (who, on account of the curious arrangement of the studio, had his back to the lights, and also hadn't heard the train) caused some amusement by saying quite audibly "E flat!", as if he couldn't think why we had.

Ed: It's quite well known that Delius had problems with the libretto - which was originally written for him by Charles Keary (who later began the one for *A Village Romeo*). I've done a little homework, and looked up the reviews of the Sadlers Wells production – and one paper (*The Financial Times*) said that "All commentators are agreed that Keary's libretto was lamentable." Part of the problem was that Keary was unfamiliar with American literature and negro speech. His version, only ever used for the première at Elberfeldt in 1904, was revised for the first English performance, given by Beecham in 1935, and that was the one used for the Sadlers Wells performances. For the recording, however, you had a new one, by Dougie Craig and Andrew Page – do you remember whether it 'sang' better than the Keary?

RH: Although, not having taken part at Sadlers Wells, I had never sung the 'old version', I certainly liked the Craig/Page one - it was good because, as I have already mentioned, Dougie really understood about singing, and so the words properly matched the flow and pulse of the music.

Ed: What about the other singers? The principals were American - the baritone Eugene Holmes (as Koanga) and Claudia Lindsey (as Palmyra). Do you agree with Andrew Porter of the *Financial Times*, who said that "there was little personality in her singing" and that he projected "little feeling of character or personality", or with "JC" in *The Stage and Television Today* – "Miss Lindsey's utter involvement and fine voice communicated great excitement, and Mr Holmes has magnificent presence with voice to match"?

RH: Oh, definitely the latter! Charlie Groves also liked the limpidity of her voice, and he appreciated Holmes's singing because it was like John Cameron's. Holmes was a lyric rather than a dramatic baritone, and, although he was quietly spoken and reserved, he certainly had great presence – such a nice man! The tenor Keith Erwen (Simon Perez) thought that Holmes lacked the benefit of a European training, and compared him badly with Simon Estes (the Voodoo priest and Uncle Joe) - but my view was that Holmes's American training was very apposite (one of my favourite words!) to the Southern-American role of Koanga. Estes was another lovely person, with a great sense

of humour – I vividly remember him, at some point during the recording, saying to Charlie "Would you like me to dress up as the priest?"
Ed: I don't want to make you blush, Jean – but it's clear that you were one of the stars of the show! Peter Stadlen, the eminent chief music critic of the *Daily Telegraph* said "…the excellent negro singers contributed much to the success of the production, which included……Jean Allister's outstanding Clotilda." In *The Times*, Alan Blyth thought that there was "Some good singing from Jean Allister as the wife of the planter", and Wilfred Mellers, for the *New Statesman,* was of the opinion that "The Negro principals looked and sounded fine……[and the others] performed well – particularly Jean Allister."
RH: I couldn't agree more – she, too, was absolutely apposite for her part!

To the Editor of The Times:

Sir,
The assessment of greatness of composers must inevitably be subjective and I would be prepared to grant that Elgar is not the greatest British composer, provided that Delius were granted that accolade, not Vaughan Williams (letters, March 19 and 20).

Perhaps there is something in the heredity of music-loving Britons that generally makes them admire what have been pejoratively described as the "cow-pat" group, such as Arnold, Rubbra, Finzi, Alwyn, Bax, Delius, Maxwell-Davies, the two Georges (Butterworth and Lloyd), and Walton.
Clearly, Elgar is widely acknowledged as the outstanding British composer with his quintessentially British musical style (displaying patriotism and, at times, some welcome jingoism).

Clive Mackie
Netherfield, East Sussex
22 March 2007

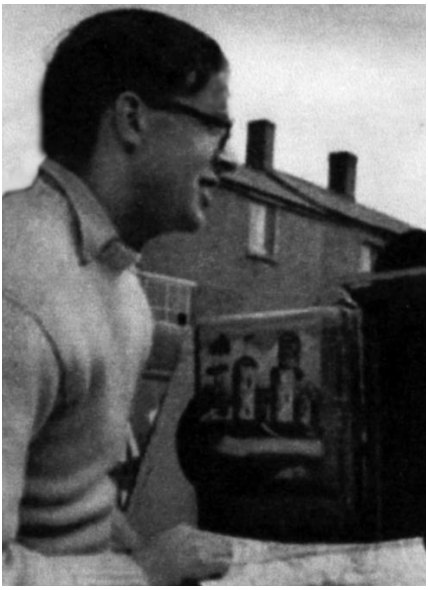
# THE SOCIETY'S NUDE

**Martin Lee-Browne**

If speculation is one of the elements of musicology, the painting by Jelka of a nude girl in the garden of the Delius's house at Grez-sur-Loing, which is the frontispiece to this issue, gives rise to a lot of it.

Whilst my inclination to resort to sensationalism for the purpose of increasing the circulation of the Journal strongly tempts me to refer to it as *The Nude*. For the reason mentioned below, however, I shall call it *Summer* – which I actually think is a much nicer name….

It was a bequest to the Delius Society by Robert Aickman. Born in 1914, he was a literary agent and an author - and, more importantly, one of the founders, and a most distinguished member, of the Delius Society. In an obituary in *The Times*, Rodney Meadows wrote "Whilst tales from the occult were his genre, his autobiography *The Attempted Rescue* is among the most delightfully composed of any age." He was also the founder and first Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association (which made itself responsible for the restoration of major parts of the canal networks in this country). He died in 1981, and left the picture to the Society in his Will.[1]



Robert Aickman

What else, however, do we know about the picture – when it was painted, its appearance, the identity of the girl, and its original provenance? The answer is very little, for nothing at all seems to have been written about it. This article is therefore just (to use Percy Grainger's word) a 'ramble' around those queries.

Whilst it is not difficult to guess that the picture was probably painted at around the turn of the 20th century, to be more accurate seems to be an impossibility. In a letter to her friend the painter and sculptor Auguste Rodin dated 21 February 1901[2], Jelka told him that:

> My work thrills me, in spite of the fact that it is still not at all good. Perhaps I love my picture as mothers love their crippled children. I am painting my garden in full bloom. An extraordinary abundance of red flowers in the shade and at the tops of the trees a yellow setting sun. In the sunshine there are beings who are mad with joy and with life and in the shade the eternally unfulfilled woman – fallen there – fanatical – driven to despair – I have studied and worked on this for two years and I am putting my whole being into it. But how insipid is reality beside what I wish to express.

and on 15 July the same year she wrote:

> I have changed the girl in my big picture as you suggested – and she is much better, a lot more passionate, except for the head which will not come right.

Then there is a letter from Jelka to Rodin of 12 March 1903[3], in which she tells him that:

> Young Munk, a very, very interesting Norwegian painter, is here too. He is showing at the Indépendants. I send you a card for the Vernissage [varnishing day, or private view] if this should interest you. As for me, I have plucked up courage and sent my big picture, that erotic garden you saw. I believe I have done as well as I can in [sic] it; but I have my misgivings. If it is badly lit it will have an atrocious effect. I should like you to see it, while trembling at the idea.

Les Indépendants was one of a number of Paris-based informal groups of artists, founded, mainly by Seurat and Signac, in 1884. Like the others, it held an annual Salon [exhibition], and the catalogue for the one in early March 1903 lists five works by Jelka – *Un Jardin, Etude, Printemps, Esquisse* and *Etude en pastel* – but the picture patently wasn't the last of those. Lionel Carley suggests that (although there is much more girl than garden in it) it might possibly be the first one [4] – but, without wanting to set our President on a collision course with, one of my distinguished predecessors, Stephen Lloyd has a vague recollection of either Rodney Meadows or Evelin Gerhardi calling it *Summer* at the during the presentation referred to above, or possibly subsequently. The first and third of those letters both talk about a painting of a garden, not a girl in a garden – but as they were written almost two years apart, it seems very unlikely that they both refer to the same one. We do not, of course, know how many pictures of girls Jelka painted, but (if only to judge from the incidents mentioned in her memoir of Delius quoted below) there

were probably quite a lot of them. Another point is that Jelka said that the picture was "big" - but as the present one measures 3'3" by 2', it is perhaps only 'biggish', not 'big' - and that the girl was "passionate" - but the one in *Summer* does not strike one as being particularly so. It is just possible, therefore, that *Summer* is the one mentioned in the July 1901 letter, but sadly we are not really any further forward in trying to put either its real name or date on it.

What, though, about it as a painting? Some years ago, Lionel Carley wrote an essay on Jelka's correspondence with Rodin[5], in one paragraph of which he said:

> The self-questioning, together with her hesitation to believe in her own ability, is evident in Jelka's letters to Rodin, and this extreme sensibility of hers may well have been what prevented her undoubted talent as a painter from ever blossoming into genius. In an obscurely-phrased letter written by the engraver and portraitist Ouvré[6] to the Deliuses in October 1907 the writer implied that Jelka's pale harmonies were her main weakness as a painter, and that a "timidity" which was in evidence when she used models served her art less well than the boldness discernible in her landscapes. She was clearly more at ease when she had a totally natural setting.

and *Summer* seems to bear that out. The photograph is appreciably more distinct in both its outlines and the colouring than the actual painting - and could actually be said to be the much more attractive of the two! The paint is very thin indeed on the canvas, and it is possible that Jelka got no further than just 'sketching-in' the basic colours and shapes. An artist and art historian friend of the writer, who has seen the painting, believes, however, that it <u>was</u> finished - but that it would have originally looked much more vivid, quite possibly even more so than in the photograph. The primer which Jelka used on the raw canvas was lead, which, although white initially, very gradually discolours the paint on top of it, and can also be responsible for fading. For someone who had studied painting properly – at the Académie Colarossi in Paris – one might imagine that she knew about that sort of thing; so why may she have spent so much time on a painting that would very likely deteriorate? The writer's friend did not think that it could be the painting that Jelka told Rodin she had worked on for two years.

We are on slightly firmer ground about the identity of the girl. She was very probably Marcelle, one of the beautiful young models, "unlike most of those at the Académie!"[7], who came to Grez in the summer for several years to pose for Jelka – and she was also painted by Jelka's great friend Ida Gerhardi. Not all Members may know the 'curé story' related in Jelka's memoir of Delius[8]:

> When Fred came to see me at Grez, we rowed on the river, then running extremely high. We managed to get thro' under the old stone bridge of Grez with great difficulty and struggled on until we got to the landing place of an old deserted but lovely garden belonging to the Marquis de Carzeaux, with an old rambling, but very cosy looking, house at the top, facing the street. I had had permission for several summers to go and paint in this glorious garden. I used to take my nude models there and work undisturbed, except when the 'Curé', who lived next door in the Presbytère, mounted on a little terrace high upon the ancient church (attributed to Charlemagne). Sometimes he had some other priests to lunch and they would all go up there and enjoy our goings on, especially the sight of my lovely model Marcelle……

The house in question was, of course, Rue Wilson 94, which Jelka and her mother bought from the Marquis in 1897 - but, although Marcelle was modelling for Jelka then, we do not know whether she was still doing so in 1901-1903, when Jelka was writing to Rodin – so she is not beyond all reasonable doubt the girl in the painting.

The early provenance of the picture is the final mystery. Where was it between Jelka's death and whenever Robert Aickman acquired it – and how did he do so? It is just possible that it was one of the dozen or so of Jelka's paintings which Balfour Gardiner removed from the house after her death, sent to an auction in Paris, bought himself, and then gave to six friends of Fred and Jelka whom he thought should have been, but were not, remembered in their Wills[9]. The whereabouts of most, if not all, those paintings is, however, known – and there is no evidence that it was one of them, or that Aickman was related to any of those friends, from whom he could have later got it. When the Society was formed in 1962, Aikman was in middle-age, and must have had a great interest in the Deliuses for a long time – so perhaps the answer is that Gardiner did not consider the painting to be 'special', so that it was simply removed in the clearance of the house, found its way into a gallery or sale-room, and passed through perhaps several hands before Aickman acquired it. It has been suggested that Beecham had it, but if so it is surprising that he did not keep it.

After Aikman's death - during the dinner held at the Bloomsbury Centre Hotel in London following the 1981 Annual General Meeting - the picture was handed over to Eric Fenby, to keep on behalf of the Society. The photographs on pages 17 and 18 of DSJ 74 (January 1982) show the presentation, and after dinner Evelin Gerhardi talked, very appropriately, about her aunt, the painter and Jelka's great friend Ida Gerhardi.[10]

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[1] Incidentally, Aickman also left the Society a legacy of £100, which was used to fund the cover and other illustrations for a number of issues of the Journal. One hopes that he would have approved of the quality and quantity of the ones used today – largely due to Paul Brooks in Oxford who puts all the Editor's bits and pieces together in a respectable form.

[2] In Lionel Carley: *Delius: A Life in Letters* (Scolar Press 1983) Vol 1 p.185-186.

[3] *Ibid.* p.212.

[4] *Ibid.* note 5 on p.213.

[5] Achille Ouvré, whose painting of Delius was the frontispiece of DSJ 141.

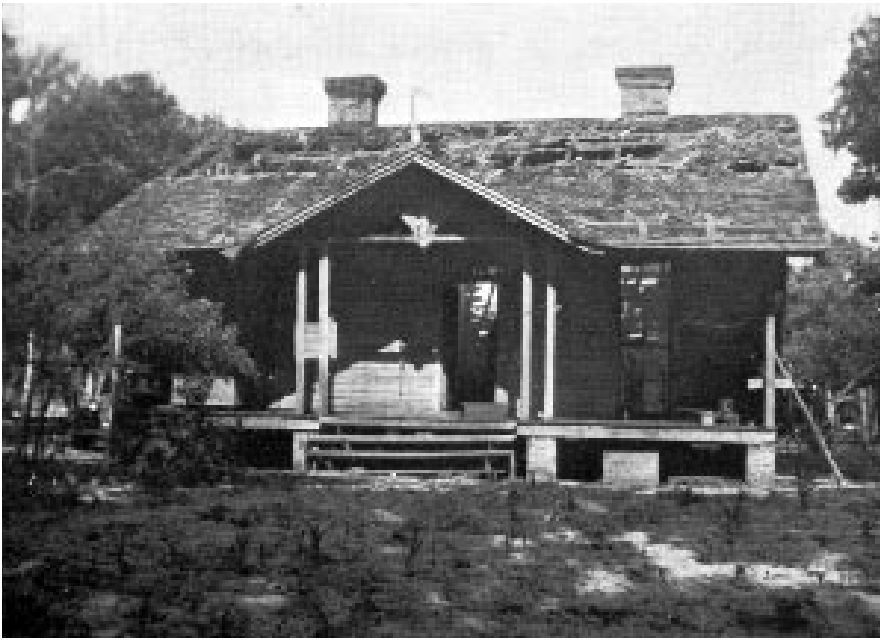
[6] *DSJ 74*, p.17.

[7] Carley*: Ibid, p.411*

[8] See Stephen Lloyd: *H Balfour Gardiner* ( CUP, 1984) p.193. The one used for the cover of DSJ 138 was definitely one of them.

[9] See DSJ No 74 (January 1982).

*[With grateful thanks to Lionel Carley, Brian Radford and Stephen Lloyd for much of the information on which this article is based.]*



Delius's cottage at Solano Grove in 1939 after its 're-discovery'
by Mrs Henry L Richmond
(Photo: Ronald Moore)

# SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS ON *APPALACHIA*

## ERNEST NEWMAN'S REVIEW

of the first English performance of *Appalachia,* in
*The Birmingham Post*, Monday 25 November 1907

*The Editor is embarrassed to discover that, when he put the previous Journal (No 141) together, he failed – for the probably unconvincing reason that he was simply not aware of it – to include the marvellous review by Ernest Newman of the first English performance of* Appalachia. *Having very kindly, and in the most civilised manner, put the Editor straight, Robert Threlfall has provided this introduction to it:*

It was Sibelius, I believe, who remarked that no-one had yet erected a statue to a music critic – although many of us might well agree with Julian Lloyd-Webber's suggestion that a statue of Felix Aprahamian should find a place on Muswell Hill. Of all 20th-century music critics in England, surely the most highly respected was Ernest Newman. He was known above all for his Wagner studies, but it is right to recall the wide range of his enthusiasms, which included Berlioz, Sibelius and Hugo Wolf; he was also a lone voice for Mahler during the first half of the century. We should also not forget the devotion to the art of Delius which he shared with Beecham from their first experience of the music. The tribute he paid in a beautiful valedictory essay written on Delius's death will be familiar to many readers from its appropriate reprint by Christopher Redwood in his *A Delius Companion*; his review of the first English *Sea Drift* was included in the recent DSJ (No 139) devoted to that work.

It is to his first review of any Delius work that attention should be drawn. The influence of that first English performance of *Appalachia*, which was given in Queen's Hall on 22 November 1907 was memorably recalled by Beecham – and its effect on Newman was hardly less powerful. Although he was unwell at the time, Newman had travelled from Birmingham to London for the concert, despite a high temperature, and wrote the following review for the *Birmingham Post.* On the 26th he sent Delius a copy of his review, which had appeared the day before; he deplored its quality "for a sick man isn't much good" and its length "for space was limited" – although it took a whole column, none the less. When writing to thank him on the 27th, Delius said that it was the best thing he had read for years, and that only Newman among the writers knew what he was talking about. In a parallel letter to Granville Bantock, Delius wrote that Newman was the only one who understood "what

I am driving at, and if I had been called upon to explain my work in *Appalachia*, should have said something very similar". What an amazing tribute from composer to critic, especially when one recalls that this must have been Newman's first hearing of any mature Delius work (though he had evidently studied the score); it surely deserves preservation in every Delius lover's anthology. It must therefore stand here, as a supplement to the last issue of the DSJ, for its importance and interest can hardly be over-emphasised.

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## FREDERICK DELIUS

### A NEW ENGLISH COMPOSER

If Mr Frederick Delius would only have the cynical wisdom to die while he is still young, as Schubert and Hugo Wolf did, he would be recognised by Englishmen as a composer of the first rank. As he prefers to keep on living, he must be content to attain fame more slowly among his sluggish fellow-countrymen. Few of them, indeed, have in all probability heard his name until the last week or two, and even those, it is safe to say, have no idea of the greatness of the man. In spite of his foreign-looking name, Mr Delius is an Englishman, having been born in Bradford, Yorkshire in 1863. His father desired him to follow a business career, bought him an orange plantation in Florida, and sent him out there in 1884 to develop it. Young Delius, in his own words, merely sat down on the plantation and realised his complete helplessness to run it. Music was calling him too urgently for him to disregard the summons; so in 1886 he entered as a student at the Leipzig Conservatoire, leaving the oranges to manage themselves. He remained at Leipzig two-and-a-half years. From there, he went to Paris, and at last settled down in his present home near Fontainbleau. In 1897 he gave a concert of his own compositions in London, which only had a mediocre success. London can go into hysterics, as it has done in the last fortnight, over a new prima donna singing faded and intellectually destitute stuff like "Traviata" and "Lucia di Lammermoor", but open its ears very slowly to a new composer of genius. In Germany, however, Mr Delius soon made a reputation; two operas of his have been given there, besides several orchestral and choral works. In England, beyond a song or two, not a note of his was heard until a month or so ago, when his pianoforte concerto – an early work, by the way – was played at Queen's Hall. On Friday last, a more important work, "Appalachia", was

given for the first time in the same hall. His "Sea Drift" has been put down by Mr Wood for the Sheffield Festival of next October – the only new English work in the whole scheme – but arrangements are being made for an earlier performance of it in February, when Mr Delius's tone-poem "Paris" will also be given. His music only needs to be as well known here as it is in Germany to be appreciated as it is there. In Germany he is already enough of a celebrity for a biography of him to be published; it is only in his native country that he is unknown. If our Festival Committees realised the significance of this new voice in English music, a festival without Mr Delius would be as unthinkable as one without Elgar.

"Appalachia" on Friday night made a great impression on a large section of the audience, the composer being enthusiastically recalled three or four times. The critics, too, were friendly next day, though it is asking too much of poor human nature to rave over the brains of a man of genius as they did over the larynx of Tetrazzini. "Appalachia", it should be said, it the old native Indian name for America. The work is cast in the form of a set of variations for orchestra on an old slave-melody; at the end there is a short baritone solo of a few words only, followed by a chorus. The object of the composer has been to paint the melancholy of the vast forests that lie about the Mississippi, and the corresponding melancholy, flecked now and again with humour or gaiety of the negroes. The theme itself is a beautiful one; its opening notes, by the way, bear a superficial resemblance to the tenor solo with which the great quartet in "Rigoletto" begins. The work commences with a prelude based mainly on a negro "cow-call", and a short melodic figure that is curiously harmonised. (The phrase that is cited as a third "motive or call" by the writer of the excellent analytical note in Friday's programme is merely a variant of the closing bars of the main theme.) The orchestral variations are fourteen in number, while the short choral epilogue may be looked upon as a fifteenth. The theme itself would be judged by most musicians as *à* [sic] *priori* ill-fitted to provide material for variations; of the four phrase-groups into which it falls, the first three are composed of precisely the same notes, so that apparently there is not much material to pass through the metamorphoses of variation-form. One can understand, then, the objection of two of the ablest London critics – that the melody is not big enough to support the weight of the variations, and that the theme is always in evidence – though the objections seem to me to be rest on a misunderstanding of the work. Mr Delius's aim has not been to write a set of variations for their own sake, each independent of the others – pure exercise in musical inventiveness, like the "Enigma" variations of Elgar and the "St Anthony" variations of Brahms. He could easily have done

this had he wished to, for the sheer musicianship of the work is of the most masterly kind. What he wanted to do, however, was to keep always before us, so to speak, the negro and the Mississippi forests, only exhibiting them to us in the variety of their moods. So far, then, from the persistent reminders of the main theme being a defect, they are of the essence of the work. One only needs to remember – what my London friends seem to have forgotten – that the theme never recurs twice with the same atmosphere enfolding it; the psychological and pictorial changes of the music are even more important than the thematic changes. And no one seems to have known the work well enough to be able to recognise the many technical excellences of the writing. One gift that Mr Delius has that only the big men have – that of casting a long work in one mould, of weaving the tissue of it in one continuous fabric. Perhaps the best example he has given us of this quality is "Sea Drift", which is one of the most remarkable works of our time; here, in spite of all the changeful moods of the music, the total impression is one of extraordinary unity – the secret lying mostly in the nature of the harmonic writing. There is a similar unity in "Appalchia", also partly harmonic in its essence, such as the curious addition of the sixth to many of the common chords throughout the work – an effect ultimately traceable to the melodic line of the last phrase of the main theme and the use in the final bars of a scale with a whole-tone instead of a half-tone fourth, that had already been forced on our attention as early as the second variation. And anyone who will take the trouble to study the score will see just how full the work is of rich invention of just the type that the variation form demands – how easily all kinds of rhythmic and harmonic changes are rung upon the theme, and how naturally one variation follows upon another, instead of shutting itself up in its own frame in the usual way. To me, at any rate, the dominant impression given by the work, over and above all its beauties of detail, is its oneness, its air of pressing on steadily and unbrokenly from the first bar to the least. Of its orchestration there is no need to speak; everyone agrees that it is very beautiful, marvellously sure, and decidedly original. The only objection to the work I would permit myself, after a long study of it, is that one or two of the harmonic complexities in which Mr Delius indulges hardly justify themselves, though one's opinion on this point may possibly change in time. There can be no question that in Mr Delius we have a composer of unquestionable ability, with a style and outlook entirely of his own, and a technique of the utmost freedom and finish.

The orchestral part of the work was excellently rendered by the New Symphony Orchestra – 120 strong – under Mr Fritz Cassirer. The new orchestra has been founded by Mr Thomas Beecham. It is mostly composed of

younger men who, with hardly one exception, are English. The material of it is excellent, the wind being equal, perhaps superior, to that of any other orchestra in England. With a little more experience, the band will be quite the equal of the two other leading London Orchestras. Mr Beecham, who is to be heartily thanked for having done such a service to the cause of music in England, in bringing the main body of the band down [sic – Ed.] to Birmingham on the 27th for the first concert of the City Choral Society. Mr Fritz Cassirer, who conducted, is a young Berliner who made his first appearance in England on this occasion. He is a brilliant conductor, with a temperament of his own and a perfect knowledge of the most complex scores. This quality was particularly shown in the performance he gave of Strauss's "Heldenleben" and the strange dance from "Salome", the latter for the first time in England. It is not pleasant music, just as the snake is not a pleasant reptile; but it is terribly fascinating, as the snake is fascinating. At a later concert Mr Cassirer will give the magnificent final scene from "Salome". This is perhaps all we are likely to hear of the opera in England so long as the present absurd censorship continues. How long will it be, one wonders, before Englishmen, who are always taking platitudes – in which the pathetically believe – about their freedom, realise that in a hundred ways they are the most tyranny-ridden of all the civilised races?

The chorus employed in Mr Delius's work was that of the Sunday League. They sang very badly and with next to no understanding of their music. Their work was the only blot on the performance.
EN

## *"STARTLED AND ELECTRIFIED"*

### Robert Matthew-Walker

*Appalachia* was the first music by Delius that Thomas Beecham (as he then was) ever heard, and was the spark that lit his subsequent devotion to the composer's art. The occasion was the work's British premiere in London in 1907, conducted by Fritz Cassirer, three years after the world premiere in Elberfeld in 1904. We can know nothing of Cassirer's performance today, but what cannot be denied is that the performance struck home forcibly. Beecham recalled the occasion: "Like every other musician under thirty years of age who was present I was startled and electrified."

*Appalachia* is a set of continuous symphonic variations. The 'symphonic' nature of the work was understood from the beginning: the publicity material for the first performance, in Germany, described the work as *Appalachia: Sinfonie mit Chor* and the press notices of the premiere all referred to *Appalachia* as a 'symphony'. But in the first – and every subsequent – printing, no 'symphonic' reference was made, no doubt because of Delius's life-long aversion to 'academic' structures, and, in any event, he himself never called the work a symphony. In addition – and unlike Elgar's *Enigma* variations of 1899 – *Appalachia* is structurally about as academic as you can get. Delius places his theme, fourteen unnumbered variations and an epilogue within a larger, over-riding structure which is, as analysis reveals, genuinely symphonic, and which – in terms of tonality and several other things as well – *essentially* derives from Beethoven. I am well aware that in mentioning what I believe to be the demonstrable derivation of the tonal structure of *Appalachia* – i.e. Beethoven's music – that I am incurring the posthumous wrath of the composer, albeit from a safe vantage-point.

The strength of Delius's creative character was such that he could embrace the Beethovenian dynamic of keys a third apart, while *at the same time* belonging to the evolution in the early decades of the 20th century of the virtual wholesale rejection (not necessarily deliberate, but a rejection nonetheless) of traditional harmony and tonal relationships. The Romantic norm of keys a third apart was taken by the earlier Romantic masters from Beethoven's realisation of the creative dynamic set free by the juxtaposition in his work of tonalities, or keys, a third apart, and coincidentally, through such juxtaposition, they created an additional redefinition of major and minor modes. This juxtaposition fuels much of Beethoven's work from the *Eroica* Symphony onwards.

This basis of keys a third apart informs almost all music of the Romantic movement, and which, stretched almost to breaking-point through the fixed major-minor convention, ultimately led to a collapse of classical tonality in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The three great and original masters of what might be termed 'high-Romanticism' were Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner; what lies at the heart of their music is a strong tonal basis – even if, in their individual cases, their expansion of tonality through the growth of chromaticism and a greater tonal freedom in the relationship of certain keys to the tonic tended to obfuscate this fact. This is more pronounced in the music of Liszt, and, later, Wagner, in both of whose cases we see a greater emphasis being placed on the relationship of the subdominant to the tonic.

Delius, for all his individual strength of character, could not avoid what

was going on around him, and indeed in many respects enthusiastically embraced it, and in *Appalachia* his essential understanding of the necessity for a secure tonal basis for a large-scale integrated work derived from those earlier Beethovenian principles. Paul Guinery's excellent analysis in *DSJ 141* (Spring 2007) shows this principle at work. For example, the Introduction which Paul identifies gravitates from E flat to C (a third apart), in readiness for the statement of the theme in C major. But this introduction is far more than a structural nicety – it is well-nigh one hundred bars in length. The Variations themselves gravitate from F to A minor and A flat, another sequence of keys a third apart – with F being the subdominant of the – temporary – tonic of C. At this juncture, we do not know that the pull of the C tonic is merely temporary, but within the fourteen variations set within the larger structure, C feels like the 'home' key, most of the time, because it is the key in which the theme is stated before the variations begin. When they end, *Appalachia* is not over, by a long chalk. In the Epilogue, Paul shows that the A flat gravitates finally to F (the keys a third apart here demonstrating a final Beethovenian tonal symphonism), so that Delius manages wonderfully to build much of his structure on Beethovenian principles *at the same time* as creating a work which in its macrotonal structure rises (almost in Romantic terms) from E flat to F.

For the larger part of *Appalachia* the variations are based on a recently-evolved sociological folk-type tune, not reflecting the composer's own ethnicity, which – after proceeding for the majority of its playing-time – gradually introduce human voices, at first wordless and then – startlingly, 'up-front', as it were – falling into the vernacular before reaching an extraordinarily convincing and well-nigh definitive conclusion in which both orchestra and voices are blended into one – *and* which, over its *circa* 35-minutes' duration, posits the evolving tonality of a rise in pitch (from E flat major to F major). Quite apart from all of these factors is the over-riding originality of Delius's musical language – previously unheard-of in what one might term, for want of a better phrase, 'art music'. The music of no other composer 'speaks' as Delius's does. Put like that, the reasons for Beecham being "startled and electrified" become more evident. Heard from every angle, *Appalachia* is an utterly original creation: Beecham could have travelled the world, hearing every piece of music written up to that time, but he would not have heard anything like *Appalachia*.

One may cite Mahler's Second, Third and Fourth Symphonies – or going further back in history, Liszt's *Faust Symphony,* Berlioz's *Symphonie funebre et triomphale,* Mendelssohn's Second or Beethoven's Ninth – as works which introduce voices long after the orchestra has begun, as precursors of

*Appalachia*, and – superficially, at least – one would be right, but what sets *Appalachia* apart are other factors. The first is that it is a much shorter work than its predecessors, the second is that it is in one continuous movement (although longer in playing-time than any movement in those preceding symphonies), the third is that it contains a set of variations, and – perhaps most astonishingly – the theme on which the work is based is revealed twice, near the beginning of the piece and towards the very end, as though the composer was peeling layer upon later from the kernel of a truth which, once grasped, additionally places *Appalachia* on an altogether different level to anything which preceded it. This truth is many-faceted: it is essentially human, because it is sung, and also because the words can relate to us (if we, as listeners, let them); it is an international work both of the then present and timeless in its emotional sense of feeling. If America as a concept meant anything before World War I (which conflict caused the country to become a major international power) it was surely still growing in the early 20th century as a land of Liberty which embraced all cultures.

Of those symphonic works we have cited, only Beethoven's Ninth can be said to share the same all-embracing vision of humanity, but even that is stretching the point: *Appalachia* remains an astonishing feat of creative imaginative genius, and, as such, will forever pose problems in interpretative insight to conductors who wish to perform it. Perhaps those are the main reasons why there have been so few recordings of a work which stands completely alone in music history. At the time, no wonder Beecham was "startled and electrified".

It follows, therefore, for those of us familiar both with Delius's language and with *Appalachia* as a work of art, that we should not look for performances which primarily startle and electrify us – for in order to grasp that which Beecham was driving at, we have first to be drawn into the unique qualities of the composition itself. This means that, without going into great musicological detail, we have to understand the features of the work – as a musical structure, hanging together as a unity – and which, because of that unity, demonstrates its inherent symphonic qualities.

By 'symphonic' I do not mean that which can be applied to *structures* such as the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven or later masters (i.e., containing 'first subject', 'second subject' and so on), but which exhibits characteristics that each of the great symphonies (by those composers as well as later masters) possesses. In addition to Delius's tonal mastery (which I have alluded to above) such characteristics include, for example, the fact that during the composition every element of music is brought to bear on

the living organism which is the work itself. These elements may include (but are not necessarily comprehensive or exclusive of) melody, harmony, rhythm, colour, counterpoint and orchestration. Hans Keller went further (and, characteristically, expressed his view more succinctly) in describing 'symphonic' as being 'the large-scale integration of contrasts'.

A detailed study of *Appalachia* reveals Delius's total mastery of such integration and the use, throughout the work of each of those elements mentioned in the penultimate sentence of the preceding paragraph. But Delius goes further – is actually *more* startling and electrifying – in also employing *voices* in a wide variety of manner: i.e., vocalise; wordless; in the vernacular; solo; *a capella*; from simple two-part harmony to nine-part chromatic choral writing. In the extraordinary sense of aural perspective the score has, such as vivid foregrounds, surprising and/or colourful; a sense of distance; or temporal backgrounds receding from our vision: in short, the challenges Delius posed himself in this work, and – by analysis, as we observe – the solutions he found to them, place him unquestionably in the category of those composers possessing original genius. In other words, he knew what he was doing, and why.

Yet over and above every one of these factors, singly or in combination, floats the expressive nature of the work itself – each one of these elements, integrated on a large-scale, is put to *expressive* purpose; none is calculated for 'effect' or used to show us what Delius could do in writing 'academic' music. For a work such as *Appalachia* to make an emotional impact, it is the composer's *expression of feeling* towards which each of these factors leads. In terms of musical Impressionism, *Appalachia* may also be likened to the personification of the passage of time during a single day on "the mighty river", and the impact of Man upon Nature (a theme to which Delius was to return in *A Song of the High Hills*). On various levels, therefore, *Appalachia* is an extraordinarily unique composition; but however we approach it, we should not lose sight of the fact that, at heart, we are dealing with organic music – a living organism in time – and not some kind of superficial pictorial travelogue. In these terms, and with a fine performance to inspire us, we can be as 'startled and electrified' today as Beecham was, almost exactly one hundred years ago.

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# THE O'NEILLS AND *APPALACHIA*

**Katherine Jessel – Norman O'Neill's grand-daughter – wrote to the Editor:**

In this centenary year of the British première of *Appalachia* let us not forget the part Norman and Adine O'Neill played in supporting Delius and his music. It was in 1907 that Delius first met the O'Neills, and Norman wrote the programme notes for the legendary performance of *Appalachia* at the Queen's Hall in November that year.

On his second visit to England in that year Delius had had supper with Norman and Adine at their home at No 4 Pembroke Villas - across the road from their old friend Balfour Gardiner's house at No 7. They discussed not only the programme notes for *Appalachia* - but also the English licensing laws and other anti-British subjects! The friendship was sufficiently flourishing for Norman to visit Delius at the end of the year, and in the following spring both he and Adine were again at Grez.

Felix Aprahamian, speaking to the Delius Society after my talk on Norman and Adine in 1991, confirmed that Beecham had told him in 1935 that the O'Neills had known Delius before he had. But who then could have introduced them? Might it have been Gardiner, at that supper party of the 15th April 1907, when (as Delius wrote to Jelka on the following day) "a few musicians were present" and *Appalachia* was played "thro"?

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Detail from a sketch of Jacksonville in 1884
(Collection: Don Gillespie)

# NELSON RIDDLE'S ORCHESTRATION OF DELIUS'S THREE PRELUDES FOR PIANO

**David J. Eccott**

Whilst reading DSJ 140, I became intrigued over a brief contribution by Roy Fredericks in which he said that in the programmes for the 1960 Hollywood Bowl series of concerts he had come across "Three Preludes by Frederick Delius arranged for orchestra by Nelson Riddle". He assumed that "Three Preludes" referred to the *Three Piano Preludes* but commented that he had never heard of them being arranged for orchestra. I was certainly not aware that Delius's Preludes had been orchestrated, and was also surprised to learn that the orchestrator was none other than Riddle, a renowned composer of film music and arranger for such artists as Frank Sinatra.

I decided to conduct my own research into the matter and, following a preliminary search on the Internet, I was eventually led to The Nelson Riddle Memorial Library at the University of Arizona School of Music, USA. It transpired that the library contains a large collection of Riddle's scores, personal and professional items, photographs and newspaper clippings. The collection was established largely through the University of Arizona Foundation by the Naomi Riddle estate and A. Edward Ezor in 1998. Although it is described as 'merely a sampling of Riddle's total known output of around 5000 pieces', which include both arrangements and original compositions, it is actually quite extensive. I was eager to see if the orchestration of the Delius Piano Preludes was listed in the inventory, and I eventually came across the following entry.

| Box | Folder | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | 8 | **Prelude I, 1960**<br>S in box 138 (oversize); NR file # 262; composer: Frederick Delius; aka *Three Preludes (For Piano)*; Premiered July 26, 1960, at the Hollywood Bowl. Adapted from the *Three Preludes for piano* by Frederick Delius. |
| 9 | 9 | **Prelude II, 1960**<br>S in box 138 (oversize); NR file # 263; composer: Frederick Delius; aka *Three Preludes (For Piano)*; Premiered July 26, 1960, at the Hollywood Bowl. Adapted from the *Three Preludes for piano* by Frederick Delius. |
| 9 | 10 | **Prelude III, 1960**<br>S in box 138 (oversize); NR file # 264; composer: Frederick Delius; aka *Three Preludes (For Piano)*; Premiered July 26, 1960, at the Hollywood Bowl. Adapted from the *Three Preludes for piano* by Frederick Delius. |

Following this I contacted Keith Pawlak, Adjunct Instructor and Music Curator at the UA School of Music. He was very familiar with Riddle's arrangements of the Preludes and informed me that, by a fortuitous coincidence, they were shortly to be performed by the Arizona Symphony Orchestra under their conductor Thomas Cockrell. Riddle had originally arranged the Preludes for a 1960 Hollywood Bowl concert, and the concert at the UA School of Music on 5 April 2007 was to be, it was thought, only their second live performance. In the event, Cockrell and the Orchestra gave an extremely sensitive and professional performance of the work which can be heard, along with a thoughtful and sometimes humorous introduction by Thomas Cockrell, by visiting the following link: <http://web.cfa.arizona.edu/keithp/DeliusPreludes.mp3>

Nelson Smock Riddle Jr. was born in Oradell, NJ on 1 June 1921. During his senior year in high school he took lessons with Bill Finegan, arranger for the Glen Miller Orchestra. He also began working as a trombonist, eventually joining the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. After his enlistment finished he moved to New York where he worked as an arranger. In 1947 he became musical director for the NBC West Coast Orchestra, and in 1951 he began ghostwriting for artists at Capitol Records. Riddle became primary arranger for Frank Sinatra and not only served as musical director for television shows but also scored dozens of motion pictures including *High Society, Guys and Dolls,* and *Paint Your Wagon*.

Considering this, one wonders how Riddle, whose tailor-made arrangements and musical direction were essential to the success of many great singers such as Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, and many others of the popular genre of the time, came to orchestrate the Piano Preludes of Delius. However, as Keith Pawlak has pointed out, Riddle's classical inspirations were quite diverse and whilst the musical atmosphere of post-war Los Angeles, suffused with such figures as Gershwin, Stravinsky and Schoenberg, was highly influential to him, the work of the French Impressionists was an important contributing factor to his creative palate. Also, apart from the many arrangements of popular music, there are a number of original compositions of a more serious nature. Chamber pieces include an *Etude for Viola and Piano*, a *Nocturne for Viola and Guitar*, a *Cello Sonata*, and *Five Pieces for Bass Trombone*. There are also larger works for orchestra such as *Sinfonia Breve*, *Chaconne for Orchestra*, *Theme and Variations*, and the seven-movement *Santa Monica Suite*. It would be interesting to learn whether the music of Delius was in any way influential in these compositions, especially considering that, in his introduction, Keith Pawlak remarked that Riddle's orchestration of Delius's Piano Preludes demonstrates his affinity

for their lush, complex harmonies. I was, therefore, anxious to study Riddle's arrangements and to discover how he tackled the problem of translating the delicate pianistic figurations of these pieces into orchestral textures. After negotiation, photocopies of the scores were eventually sent to me in England.

Despite the minuscule nature of the original Preludes, Riddle scores for a surprisingly large orchestra. His arrangement calls for two flutes (both doubling alto flutes in the Third Prelude), two oboes (1st doubling cor anglais), three clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, percussion, timpani, harp, celeste, and strings. However, trumpets and timpani play only in the Second, 2nd bassoon plays only in the Third, and 1st trombone and fourth horn are *tacet* in the Second. The percussion consists of cymbals and tubular bells in the 1st, triangle in the Second, and vibraphone and bells (glockenspiel) in the Third.

We can gain an insight into Riddle's methods of arranging Delius's piano score for orchestra by simply looking at the opening bars of the First Prelude as shown in example 1A, and then comparing them with Riddle's orchestration as shown in Example 1B.

Example 1A

Example 1B

The arpeggio figures, which run through practically the entire movement, are firstly given to lower strings, horns and harp. Throughout the remaining bars the harp is largely responsible for maintaining the arpeggio passage-work, sometimes being doubled by the lower strings and other times by clarinets. In typical Delian fashion the solo oboe takes over the melody in bars 5 & 6, to be replaced by violins and flutes in bar 7, and violins and oboe in bar 10. Flutes, oboes, bass clarinet and horns begin the chordal progression in bar 12 and are soon joined by trumpets and trombones. The scoring becomes thinner in bar 15, and in bar 16 the cor anglais makes its brief and only appearance for two bars when it is entrusted with the melody line which is then taken up by oboe, joined by the flute in the following bar. The octave passages that appear in the treble stave of the piano score in measures 23 & 24 are given to violins, flutes and oboes. The texture again thickens during the passage preceding the *Maestoso*, and in bar 25 a tutti finally arrives that includes cymbals and timpani. The *Tranquillo* at bar 28 delicately alternates between strings, woodwind and horns, or harp and horns. Strings and harp briskly begin the *Vivo* in bar 32, and there is a colourful piece of orchestration for the three bell-like notes in the final two bars where the flute and harp are joined by tubular bells struck with a soft mallet.

In the Second Prelude, the rapid semiquavers in the treble stave of the piano score are rendered by the flutes (alternating between 1st & 2nd players) reinforced by harp and celeste, whilst the melody that begins in the second bar is played by cellos, bassoon and bas clarinet in unison. Riddle employs a clever tactic here. He takes the individual notes of the semiquaver passage, (initially B, F#, A, E) and uses them to form a chord that is held by a bowed tremolo on *divisi* 1st & 2nd violins, strengthened by a trill on the triangle. Such a device not only produces the effect that the sustaining pedal of the piano would achieve, but it also adds extra tonal colouring:

Example 2A

In bar 5 the melody progresses to violas and clarinet while cellos, bassoon and bass clarinet hold the bass semibreves. In bar 13, where the music swings from 3/4 into 4/4, the melody line is given to 1st & 2nd violins in octaves. By studying bar 13 of Delius's original piano score (Example 2B) and then comparing it with Riddle's orchestration of the same bar (example 2C) it can be seen how Riddle employs a device to enrich the texture for the purposes of his orchestral score. He writes an E major chord for the horns, (the notes of which are implied by the triplet arpeggios in the bass) and doubles it an octave above in the woodwind.

Example 2B

Example 2C

The instrumentation continues in the same fashion until oboes, clarinet, violins and violas articulate the rising triplet figure in bar 18 that leads back into the 3/4 at bar 19, where the scoring of the opening passage is repeated. As it descends, the semiquaver motif is passed from flutes to clarinets before

coming to rest on the final chord played by lower strings, harp, clarinets and 1st horn.

A similar device to that used in the opening of the First Prelude is employed at the beginning of the Third Prelude. Here, as shown in Example 3, the semiquavers are played by alto flutes, violas and harp, but they are supported by bell-notes on muted horns, which again duplicates the effect of a sustaining pedal.

Example 3

The solo oboe enters with the melody beginning in the third bar and is joined by 2nd flute in bar 13. Vibraphone and 1st flute take up the melody in bar 17. At the change of time from 2/4 to 3/4 violins, flutes, oboes and glockenspiel play the melody in octaves, whilst the arpeggio movement is maintained in the clarinets, violas and cellos, supported by chordal work on horns and trombones. The sustained chords of the final bars are held by strings and horns with bass clarinet and, finally, flute, harp and celeste supplying the solo triplet figures.

I would like to thank Keith Pawlak and the The Nelson Riddle Memorial Library for their help and assistance.

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# DELIUS AND THE PROMS

**Paul Chennell**

*The Proms: A New History*: Edited by Jenny Doctor and David Wright, Consultant Editor Nicholas Kenyon (Thames & Hudson, 2007; ISBN 978-0-500-51352-1) £24.95.

Reading this enjoyable and attractive history of The Proms set me thinking once again about the reception of Delius's music in England. Lyndon Jenkins has recently given us a definitive study of Beecham's championship of Delius and his music – and, at the time he began it, The Proms were an important outlet for Delius's music from early in the 20th century onwards. There is a tendency to think that Beecham gave most of the first English performances of Delius's music, but in fact Sir Henry Wood did a huge amount for the composer – particularly in The Proms.

Between 1907 and 1933, Wood gave two first British performance of works by Delius:

*Piano Concerto (published version)* – Queen's Hall, Promenade Concert, 22 October 1907
*Sea Drift* – Sheffield Festival, 7 October 1908

and six first performances anywhere of Delius scores:

*Eventyr* – Queen's Hall, 11 January 1919
*Double Concerto* – Queen's Hall, 21 February 1920
*A Song before Sunrise* – Queen's Hall, Promenade Concert, 17 September 1923
*Dance Rhapsody No.2* – Queen's Hall, Promenade Concert, 20 October 1923
*A Song of Summer* – Queen's Hall Promenade Concert, 17 September 1931
*Idyll* – Queen's Hall, Promenade Concert, 3 October 1933

We must therefore acknowledge his importance in introducing English audiences to Delius's music, particularly at Promenade concerts. Clearly Delius was not always confident that Wood would fully succeed. Lionel Carley tells us in *Delius: A Life in Letters* (Vol 2 p.384) that when Delius heard Wood was to give *A Song of Summer*, he sent Eric Fenby a written 'SOS', as he was afraid that Wood would use the wrong tempi - as he had in a performance of

the *Dance Rhapsody No2*. Fenby was asked to go to London for the rehearsal and Delius wrote to Wood to explain that Fenby would know exactly how the piece should be performed. This strategy worked and, as Jelka explained in a letter, Delius was pleased with the performance on 17th September.

Delius was only one of many composers for whom Henry Wood gave first performances. This book describes the story of The Proms from a series of popular orchestral concerts to its present status as a major international music festival. The eight chapters examine variously the development of the orchestra, and the attraction of an audience for these promenade concerts. The promenade concert format was well known to Victorian Londoners, but Newman's ambition to educate the public musical taste was something new. We are given a rich history of social and economic factors which influenced the development of the idea in the hands of Wood, Newman and then the BBC from 1927 onwards, which makes for an enjoyable read.

As The Proms concerts developed, the music included changed with critical tastes over the years. The direction of William Glock from 1959 to 1973 is explained perhaps too sympathetically by the authors. Glock undoubtedly expanded and developed the Proms in terms of repertory in the 1960s – but, unlike Henry Wood, he allowed his personal tastes and prejudices to direct the selection of some composers and exclude others.

Delius was one of the new composers introduced to Proms audiences between 1902 and 1915, when Sir Edgar Speyer began to finance the concerts. The first composition by Delius given at The Proms was, as mentioned above, *The Piano Concerto*. This was a progressive time when new developments in terms of repertoire helped with the growth of the concerts and their popularity. In this way Delius played his part in developing The Proms.

In the last twenty years when, each May, I have opened the new Proms prospectus, I have invariably been depressed at the lack of early 20th century English music in general, and Delius in particular. However, The Proms have always had something for every music lover. From their earliest days, when Robert Newman and Henry Wood began to transform public taste away from popular ballads and solo instrumental selections towards serious music, the introduction of new music was important. The five first performances of Delius's music at The Proms were some of the most prestigious British new music given in the first forty years of the Proms history. It is sad that those who now run the Proms do not give as much attention to our British musical heritage as they might.

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# ART PRINT OFFER

**Late Swallows – A new painting of the house and garden of Delius**

Eric Fenby called *Late Swallows* a "beautiful soliloquy"- Delius was inspired to write his charming and evocative piece after watching the gliding and swooping of the swallows that visited his garden at Grez-sur-Loing at the end of each summer. His wife Jelka said "When we are away from home, Fred missed the swallows the most".

This painting by artist Philip Travers – reproduced on the back cover of this issue – is based on a photograph taken by Stewart Winstanley on a stunningly beautiful late summer's day, and from a point mid-way between house and river, looking over the "pool of enchantment"*. Philip Travers has magically captured the warmth, light and sylvan shades of that 'Summer Garden', not to mention those avian acrobats, in a way that a photograph never could.

The artist is a professional who exhibits in galleries in the West of England, where he has lived for many years. His original paintings usually sell for between £400 - £600 and his prints for between £40 - £80. To learn more about him and his works visit www.philiptravers.co.uk.

You can now own an unframed full colour print on fine quality art paper of this wonderful painting (overall print size approximately 17" deep x 20" wide, and image size 15" deep x 17.1/2" wide). As a special concession to members of The Delius Society this print is now offered for £21(UK delivery), and $44 or £23 (Rest of World delivery), inclusive of post and packing in a strong cardboard tube. A percentage of the cost will be donated by the artist to the Society.

UK and US cheques only should be made payable to 'The Delius Society'. Overseas (but not USA) members who wish to pay via a personal internet 'Paypal' (not credit card) account can do so, but please add £2UK or $5US to cover 'Paypal' charges.

Please apply for your art print in writing and send your cheque payable to 'The Delius Society' to Stewart Winstanley, address on page 2 of this Journal.

* See Philip Oylers's description on page 26 of DSJ 140. The actual flower garden was, of course, created by Jelka, and Delius acknowledged that in his dedication of *In a Summer Garden.*

# DELIUS SOCIETY MEETINGS

## LONDON BRANCH MEETING

New Cavendish Club on 20 February 2007

### Delian Threads in a Horn Player's Life

*A talk by Julian Baker*

To the Editor's embarrassment, the tape of this talk has 'disappeared', so the report of it is entirely from memory – and sincere apologies are therefore due to Julian Baker for its brevity. He was the principal horn in the Hallé and the BBC Symphony Orchestras, and then the co-principal at the Royal Opera House. From the moment he started talking, it was obvious that (so far) he has enjoyed life to the full, and, indeed, that it has been one long laugh – that was clear from the fact that there was one virtually every minute of this exhilarating evening. Other than by printing the whole talk out in full, it would be impossible to give a worthwhile resumé - and the only snippets that come to mind are that the first horn he ever owned belonged to Granville Bantock, and his story of Sir Arthur Bliss conducting his *Things to Come* music at Bournemouth, when at the end of the rehearsal he said, in his very aristocratic voice "Right, chaps! Jolly good rehearsal, and there are only two things you need to get the show on the road tonight – a good A from the oboe and a clean pair of shoes". Jokes and wry comments about music, and particularly the people in the profession, flowed in a never-ending stream – but, of course, life being what it is, by the time most of the members who were lucky enough to be present got home they could almost certainly only remember half a dozen of them at the most. A Branch Meeting not to be forgotten!

Ed.

## MIDLANDS BRANCH

Weston Underwood on 11 March 2007

### Holst and the Dance

*A talk by Michael Green*

It might be thought surprising that we elected to have a talk on Holst and the

Dance when Michael had given a talk on Delius and the Dance in London, but that talk had already been fully reproduced in the Journal before our meeting and Michael fortunately had the Holst talk up his sleeve.

Many years ago I had the audacity to give the Branch a talk on Holst, and I was therefore familiar with many (but not all) of the works which Michael talked about – but to the majority of the audience the talk was a revelation, introducing them to many works which they had never heard before such as Holst's ballet music (*Suite de Ballet, Japanese Suite, The Golden Goose and Morning of the Year*). While the *Hymn of Jesus* was familiar to many (particularly to me as I consider it to be his masterpiece), the *First Choral Symphony* was not, nor were the Humbert Wolff songs, the *Toccata* for piano (one of his few piano pieces), the *Fugal Concerto* or the *Suite No. 2* for wind band.

The talk was, as we might have expected, most professionally presented, and I cannot really do justice to it in a Delius Society Journal. However, it raises the question why do we hear so little of Holst's wonderful music (other than *The Planets*) in the concert hall? I suppose it is because concert promoters feel that if nobody knows the music they will not turn up to listen to it. This is a Catch 22 situation in that, if nobody hears the music they will not know it. Thank God for Lyrita who issued many first rate recordings of Holst's music which are now being re-issued on CD.

We are most grateful to Michael for his talk and would hope that he will give it elsewhere. I know we are a Delius Society, but I like to think we can occasionally support another British composer. Thanks are also due to our hosts, Gwen and Graham Parsons who provided a splendid tea after the talk.

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## WEST OF ENGLAND BRANCH

The Mill, Ash Priors, Taunton on 17 March 2007

### The music of Delius, his friends and acquaintances

*A talk by Ron Prentice*

Since we in the West have lost some of our most stalwart members, Ron once again made the wise decision to boost our numbers by inviting members of the local National Trust Music Group. In the event, the Delians were outnumbered by about two to one, but Ron's living room was comfortably full and all was set for an enjoyable afternoon.

The presentation began seductively with Delius's beautiful *To be sung of a summer night on the water* – the first part only, as Ron stopped the CD before the 'Have you seen the muffin man?' tune. His method was then to present each of the selected friends or acquaintances by reading a short extract from *Delius – A Life in Letters* and playing one of their short compositions. He craftily avoided the necessity of forging artificial 'links' by the bold but beautifully simple expedient of presenting them in alphabetical order. I must admit that, after the first twenty minutes and we were still on the Bs, I did begin to wonder whether we were here for the whole weekend; but I needn't have worried – there were just a lot of Bs - Bantock, Bartock, Brian (Havergal)…

Ron's featured composers ranged from… well, I might as well list the lot: Granville Bantock, Béla Bartók, Havergal Brian, Edward Elgar, Gabriel Fauré, Eric Fenby, Balfour Gardiner, Percy Grainger, Edvard Grieg, Norman O'Neill, C.W. Orr, Maurice Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Christian Sinding and Peter Warlock. The music included some of my favourites (Faure's *Après un Rêve* and Warlock's *Serenade*), some fairly well-known pieces (*Molly on the Shore, Shepherd Fennel's Dance, Rustle of Spring*) and others less familiar (music from O'Neill's *The Bluebird*, Elgar's song *The Shower*). And for a bit of jolly fun, it was good to get another airing of Fenby's *Rossini on Ilkley Moor* (baht 'at!).

Judging from the letters that Ron quoted, Delius's friends were very appreciative of his music (and so they should have been!). What's more, they were not shy of expressing themselves in the kind of extravagant phrases that we might find slightly embarrassing in these days of post-modern irony. Granville Bantock, congratulating Delius on a concert performance of his work, said that he responded to the music "with every fibre of [his] being", while Havergal Brian said of *Appalachia* that "its sincerity makes me weep". Two of the letters quoted were *from* Delius – one to Eric Fenby (the first of the 141 that he would go on to write) and another to Peter Warlock, in which he described the latter's *Serenade* as the "very delicate composition of a fine harmonist". Ron apologised to the company for not being able to do a Yorkshire accent and proceeded to read the first of these extracts – in a Yorkshire accent (well, it convinced me).

But just to show that correspondence between composers doesn't consist entirely of them complimenting each other on their work, let me end this report with this short extract, quoted by Ron, from a letter by Florent Schmitt: "By the way", he enquires casually of Delius, "did you go back to see the female wrestlers again?" I expect he did, don't you?

© *Tony Watts 2007*

## LONDON BRANCH

New Cavendish Club, London on 29 March 2007

### Dr Louis Boyd Neel OBE (1905-1981)

*A talk by Dr David Green*

David introduced his talk by explaining that three years ago he had been elected to the presidency of an august medical history society based at the Royal College of Physicians. It being a requirement of the incoming President to give a presidential address on a medical history topic, David was attracted by the opportunity to bring his musical interests into the talk at the same time as maintaining a medical theme. He had first encountered the name Boyd Neel on a 78rpm recording in his uncle's collection as a child, and the name had cropped up from time to time over the years. However, he now recalled that at some point a friend had mentioned that Boyd Neel was not only a reputed conductor but also a doctor, so David had his topic. Happily, the presidential address in 2005 coincided with the 100th anniversary of the conductor's birth, making his talk even more relevant.

Embarking on his researches, David found that Neel's anniversary year appeared to have passed virtually unnoticed in the UK. However, recalling that Neel had spent his last years in Canada, David contacted a cousin of Neel's in Toronto who, through a contact at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, obtained a remarkable 13-14 hour series of archives on Boyd Neel, which had been recorded shortly before his death and included extensive interviews with the conductor. David subsequently obtained a licence permitting him to use this material, and his talk took the form of a very professional powerpoint presentation with numerous entertaining clips of Neel.

The Neels came from Scandinavia via Normandy and the Channel Isles (hence the unusual spelling of the name), and his mother Ruby Neel went to the Royal College of Music at the early age of 16 to study piano. Neel was born in Blackheath in 1905 and went to Ewell School near Ashford, where the headmaster was musical and the boy was noted for his piano playing and singing. Leaving school, he became a naval cadet at Dartmouth, all the time developing an increasing interest in music. The war being over, in order to achieve a reduction in its strength, the Navy was offering £300 a man as an incentive to leave – and Neel took advantage of this, hungrily absorbing the music of the time, including Stravinsky and *Les Noces*. One foggy day in London, he was commandeered to be a page turner for the great man at the English premiere of his *Duo Concertante* in the Queen's Hall – from all accounts

an unforgettable experience, as the great composer was not in a good mood, and his score was in his personal shorthand and very difficult to follow! Neel also encountered the Mussorgsky/Ravel *Pictures at an Exhibition,* and there were regular visits by Diaghilev and his dance company, and the conducting of Toscanini. However, the young man now needed a profession, and through family connections he was accepted at Gonville and Caius to study medicine – with which he managed to combine visits to Bayreuth (where he met Cosima Wagner), to Canada and to Munich, where he was bowled over by hearing Mozart conducted by Strauss.

In due course Neel became a GP, with a practice at the Elephant and Castle and a partner who, conveniently, was also musical. He met the Swann family and became a great friend of their son Donald, who was to become famous in his collaboration with Michael Flanders. He also conducted a number of amateur orchestras and choirs, but the turning point in his career came when, in the early 1930s, he was persuaded to form his own orchestra. Conscious that the orchestral repertoire was well catered for by a number of established orchestras, he decided to gather together a small number of string players to concentrate on a neglected repertoire. Although advised that he was completely mad, because such a thing did not exist, he persevered - believing that there was a vast quantity of baroque music (and much Handel in particular) that was not being performed by the larger orchestras because it only required half their players and was therefore considered impractical. He rehearsed his players every Sunday for a year before they were ready to give their first concert, at The Aeolean Hall on 2 June 1933. Such was their early success that the orchestra was invited to give its first BBC broadcast later the same year, and in March 1934 they performed at Glyndebourne for the first of two seasons. Also in 1934 Neel signed a contract with Decca and, astonishingly, of the first one hundred items recorded, only three had been recorded previously.

Regarding Delius, Neel recorded only the *Two Aquarelles* but considered Delius to be a great composer, and we know that he had heard *A Village Romeo and Juliet* at the RCM and *A Mass of Life*, and was at the 1929 Delius Festival.

In 1937 the orchestra was invited to present a programme of English music at the Salzburg Festival - taking a prominent soloist with them and, at very short notice, a brand new English work. This had seemed an impossible challenge until Benjamin Britten was approached and produced his *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* in ten days! Both Bridge and Britten were present at the run-through but not the performance, though Peter Pears was able to report that the concert - which had also included Boughton's *Oboe Concerto*

(Leon Goosens), a Purcell *Chaconne* and the Bax *Oboe Quartet* - had received a tremendous ovation and ecstatic reviews. This was the first time a foreign orchestra had performed at the Festival. David told the story of how the event had been a near disaster because Neel discovered just before the concert that he had left his dress trousers in London. Fortunately one of the players from the rear of the orchestra lent him his trousers and saved the day!

The Boyd Neel Orchestra made many premiere recordings, including Holst's *St Paul's Suite,* Britten's *Bridge Variations* and *Simple Symphony,* and Vaughan Williams's *Concerto Accademico* and *Tallis Fantasia*.

During the Second World War, Neel became a doctor again, working at an artificial limb centre. He conducted the D'Oyly Carte Opera at Sadlers Wells for two seasons, and then in 1946/7 took his orchestra to Australia and New Zealand on the first round the world flight by any orchestra. The 'feared' critic Neville Cardus, who was then living in Australia, praised their performances. In the 50s there was a tour to USA and Canada, and in 1953 Neel was invited to be Dean of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. In 1954 the orchestra was renamed Philomusica. Neel settled in Toronto, where he had a fine reputation, and there he founded the Hart House Chamber Orchestra, which was invited to perform at Aldburgh. He died in 1981.

David concluded his fascinating programme by playing the last part of a wonderful recording made in 1945 of Neel conducting Elgar's *In the South* Overture – which, for some unaccountable reason, was not issued until 1995.

In thanking David for his illuminating talk and highly professional powerpoint presentation, Stephen Lloyd commented on Boyd Neel's remarkable rise to fame from a very unpromising background. This was David's first talk to the Society but certainly not, we hope, his last. He was warmly applauded by a very appreciative audience.

© *Michael Green 2007*

## MIDLANDS BRANCH

Ecclesbourne School, Duffield, Derbyshire on 28 April 2007

### A Recital by Bobby Chen (piano)

*Three Preludes* and *Toccata*

Following an earlier recital in Derbyshire, the Malaysian-born pianist Bobby Chen - who studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and then at the Royal Academy of Music, where he won many awards - was invited by Richard Kitching to give a performance for the Midlands Branch in June 2004. For that occasion, he learned Delius's *Three Preludes* and the *Toccata* from *Five Piano Pieces.*

As a result of that recital, he was invited to perform in the local "Music at Duffield" concert series, and again included the Delius pieces. We are delighted to say they are now a regular part of his performing repertoire, having recently been included in recitals in Milton Keynes, Darlington, Hornsea, Grimsby, Leatherhead and for the Chopin Society in London, plus 4 further concerts in the North of England last December. Bobby Chen is a good advocate for these late compositions, which in his hands certainly sound exceptionally pianistic for Delius. He played with great subtlety of tone and dynamics, and combined rubato with the necessary forward momentum. The *Toccata* came over as a powerful piece.

The Delius was followed by a selection of well-contrasted items from Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives* Op 22. Schubert's *Four lmpromptus* Op 90 were beautifully paced and every noted counted. We then heard the fourth performance of a new piece by Stephanie Cant, a 16-minute tone poem *Turning the Tide* in five sections. This proved to be an attractive and evocative musical portrait of nature and industry in the Durham coastal area. Chopin's *Nocturnes* op 15, with well-judged tempi, were followed by a fine performance of Liszt's *Ballade No. 2 in B minor*. As an encore, Bobby played Debussy's *Jardins sous La Pluie* quite delightfully, reminding us that he has a special affinity with the French impressionists. The whole programme was most enjoyable, demonstrating his excellent technique and musicality, with the ability to adapt to individual composing styles.

As members of the Delius Society we should continue to encourage young performers to programme his works; the Midlands Branch is making a good start on that by inviting one of the finalists for the 2005 Delius Prize to play for us.

© *Graham Parsons 2007*

## PHILADELPHIA BRANCH

Rock Hall Auditorium, Philadelphia on 29 April 2007

### Clarinet recital by Ricardo Morales & Davyd Booth

The Philadelphia Branch of The Delius Society in collaboration with the Composition Department of Temple University in Philadelphia closed its season with an essentially British program by Ricardo Morales, Principal Clarinet of the Philadelphia Orchestra accompanied by our Vice Chairman, Davyd Booth, also of The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Malcolm Arnold's *Sonatina, Op. 29* got things started in dazzling fashion, and right off established Mr. Morales' incisive style and smooth tone. The difficult rhythmic piano part was handles with aplomb by Mr. Booth. Next came what may have been a local premiere: Dunhill's *Phantasy Suite for clarinet and piano, Op. 91*. This piece was the only one for clarinet in the Delius Society's library, and as it turned out, Mr. Morales also had it, but had never played it before. The six contrasting movements charmed the audience. Before the intermission came the familiar *Five Bagatelles, Op. 23* by Gerald Finzi in a performance notable for beautiful tone and phrasing. Mr. Morales' pianissimo playing was ravishing and without loss of any tone.

Delius wrote no clarinet music, but Mr. Morales had arranged the *Serenade* from *Hassan* and played it with perfect tempo. He first took the tune in a lower register and on the repeat put it up an octave. Following the Delius came a stunning and rare performance of Stanford's *Clarinet Sonata, Op. 129* in what could have been another first locally. It was a virtuoso display on the part of both artists.

Concluding the evening was Weber's *Concertino in Eb, Op. 26* with a new cadenza Morales played for the first time. Davyd Booth in his verbal introduction pointed out that Weber appeared in London as conductor and had written *Oberon* for Covent Garden. And in fact Weber died in London and was buried there; his remains were taken back to Germany many years later.

We expect to keep our relationship with Temple by offering another program there in a coming season.

© *Bill Marsh 2007*

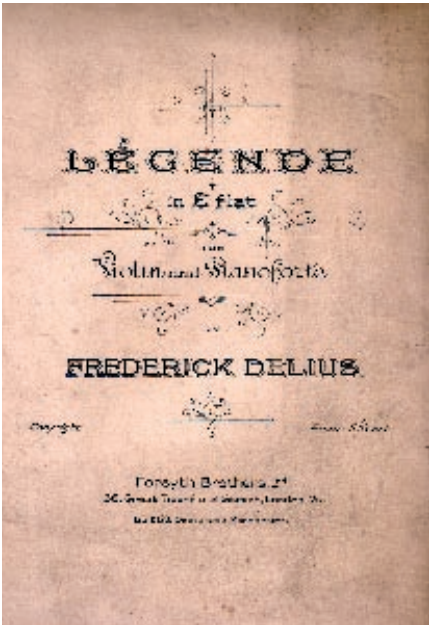
## MIDLANDS BRANCH

Weston Underwood on 20 May, 2007

### A Recital by Shula Oliver and Anya Fadina

About forty members and friends gathered at the home of the Branch Chairman, Richard Kitching, for this violin recital by Shulah Oliver - a finalist in the 2005 Delius Prize competition, who had completed her Masters Degree in Performance at the Royal Academy of Music in 2006. Her accompanist was Anya Fadina from Ykaterinburg, Russia, who made her public debut aged nine, and had later trained at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire under Professor Vladimir Shakin, before moving to Britain in 2001.

*Five Pieces for Violin & Piano* Op.84 by Malcolm Arnold, with its strong jazzy influences, opened the programme, and both players were clearly at home with these showpieces, originally written as encores for Yehudi Menhuhin. In Delius's *Legende* (dating from 1892, but with later revisions), with its interchange between the soloists, they brought out the lush harmonies reflecting Wagner, and the light airy texture at the end very reminiscent of Greig, and the performance was imaginatively shaped throughout.



Two pieces by the almost unknown English composer Eva Ruth Spalding (1882-1969) followed. She studied under Leopold Auer at the St. Petersburg Conservatioire before 1917, and her Sonata No. 2, written c. 1928, is not unlike Delius's Sonata No. 1, but with more chromatic development, all three movements running into one another without a break. The opening movement is based on a rocking melody, with a middle section cleverly written in three different time signatures at the same time, having a sustained theme, whilst the second movement begins with a sonorous melody introduced on the piano and ends in a beautiful lyrical melody. The final movement is very reminiscent of the Debussy Sonata, being light and fantasia-like in character.

After the interval came the *Poeme Elegiaque* of 1892-3 by Ysaye. It represented a turning point in his compositions, and is a piece full of great emotion, with the G-string tuned down to an F, giving the violin a very rich, dark sound. It was an enthralling and accurate account of this taxing piece, Shulah obviously feeling the work through her whole body, from the gentle nuances of the opening sweeping melody, through the funereal middle section to the difficult, final section with its full octave bowings ending in a sublime, ethereal final trill. The recital closed with Delius's *Violin Sonata No. 1* - started in 1905 but not completed until 1914. Shulah really attacked the opening section with its sweeping melody leading to a lively dance-like episode. Anya gave a fine supporting performance and clearly had the work under her hands as she responded to all the nuances and shadings required, particularly in the slow section as the violin emerges with its 'expressivo' tune. The 1914 closing section begins in march-like tread with dramatic jaunty dotted rhythms, well depicted as if reflecting events of that year, until the lightening of the mood as the Sonata ends triumphantly, captured so brilliantly by both players.

It had been fascinating to hear the two works by Spalding, and to learn that Shulah had originally purchased some second hand ex-library scores of her music at the Royal Academy, which led her on to researching the composer for her Masters Project – a fortunate occurrence for us, as Richard mentioned in his vote of thanks, which was endorsed by hearty applause. This superb recital was followed by excellent refreshments, provided by Joan and Brian Dunn, Margaret Trotman, and Shirley Clover from Nottingham, bringing a most pleasant afternoon to a satisfying close.

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# LETTERS

From Charles Wood
Bradford & District Chess Association

*The Delius Family and Chess*

I was just about to send a book to the Fattorini Family [Jewellers in Bradford & Harrogate – Ed.] about the connections of Antonio Fattorini (born in Italy in 1797, and who made both the FA and Rugby League Cups) with the Bradford Chess Club when a single line jumped out at me. The book is "The Bradford Chess Club 1853 to 1953" by Charles H Leach, the then Editor of the Bradford local rag, the Telegraph & Argus. He had been through the vast number of committee meeting minutes dating back the whole 100 years, before they were sent to the Bradford Central Library, where they still sit today. As Bradford boasted the most millionaires outside London during that period, virtually all of whom played at the Club, it is interesting to spot the name of Julius Delius [FD's father – Ed.] alongside other (should we say?) Hell Raisers. The book mentions that drinking and smoking were banned from day one (1853) due to their undesirable effects. It also mentions the fact that the members frequently discussed their professional problems in an attempt to get better perspectives on 'life'; no specific examples are given, but it seems unlikely that Frederick Delius in any way benefited from his father's conversations with Woodhouse, Yates [respectively the Mayor of Bradford and a World Chess Champion – Ed.], Fattorini and other well-known Bradford businessmen! The Bradford Chess Club minutes are still in Bradford Central Library and available to be viewed by booking the Historical Department. I hope that one day someone can check out the Delius angle and feed the information back to me, as I am a massive fan of most things Bradfordian and am slowly digging; if I find more on my travels I will surely pass this information on.

[Mr Wood's email address is renegade_hotspur@hotmail.com]

From Bonnie Brauer

*Where is Appalachia?*

I'm enjoying the latest Journal and I believe you inquired as to how Fred's music got its name. Jacksonville is right at the northeast corner of Florida, and the Appalachian Trail extends through Georgia. The name was probably in common use in the area, since Indians have the good sense not to delineate too stringently a geographical area.

Bill Bryson"s "A Walk in the Woods" is an hilarious and documented account of his walk down the entire Trail, approximately 2400 miles! On page 18 he describes the controversies surrounding the actual length of the Trail in his inimitable way - a great read.

From Peter Ratcliffe

*FD, American music and his conductors*

Delius, I notice, wrote (as quoted on p.24 of the last Journal, 141) that a great American composer would, he believed, be coloured. Well, I can only think of Scott Joplin (more a trailblazer than great in his own right) and Duke Ellington (the later undoubtedly great, but was FD really thinking of jazz?) However, only a cursory survey of American music, serious and otherwise, reveals a large number of Jewish composers (Copland, Bernstein, Glass, Reich, Gershwin, Berlin...) Could this be because, having been suppressed in Europe (where not many Jews flourished as composers - indeed, Mahler and Schoenberg converted to Christianity, the latter moving back to Judaism only late in his life), they found the freedom to express themselves in the US that blacks did not (and maybe feel they still do not) have. FD himself had to escape a constricting environment before his compositional bent could have free rein.

Following-up the article "Four Conductors" (also in the last issue), in the context of the report on Roger Buckley's talk on "The Delian Influence" and the reported interview with Gunther Schuller, you only have to listen to parts of *Parsifal*, especially towards the end, to see how FD must have fallen under its spell when he saw it in London when he was at school in Isleworth. He was far from being the only composer to show such an influence - Beecham was quite perspicacious in his flippant remark about Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* being like what Mendelssohn would have written if he had heard *Parsifal*. That

is not to mention the works of Mahler and Strauss. FD's sound world is very individual, but I think it is enough like what was "in the air" in Germany in the early 20th century that it is not such a surprise that is was taken seriously and gained a certain amount of acceptance there.

*FD and Kate Bush*

The new books shelf here at the British Council in Bratislava (where I use the computers) currently has on it Rob Jovanovic's "Kate Bush: The Biography" (Portrait, 2005). Remembering her song about Delius from some 20-odd years ago (astonishingly called "Delius"), I looked in the index for a mention, and sure enough it's on page 116. However, according to Mr Jovanovic (a music writer, the blurb on the book jacket suggests, more at home with likes of Kate Bush than Delius), Delius had a speech impediment, with no mention at all of his blindness (to be fair, I remember hearing the song, and you might infer from it that Delius's tone-deaf la-laing, which so disconcerted Eric Fenby at first, showed such a thing – mind, I only say 'might'!)

## From Tony Summers

### *America and Delius – a unique influence?*

Many European composers spent time in America. Dvořák is the most famous example: he spent several years there in late middle-age and 'American' influences are detectable in a few of his subsequent works, but the experience cannot be said to have significantly changed his musical style. Many other Europeans (eg. Rachmaninov, Bartók, Dóhnanyi, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Hindemith) fled to America late in life, usually as a result of war or persecution. Like Dvořák, these composers had, for the most part, already developed a mature style and the American experience had for the most part little or no effect on their music.

As far as I know, Britten and Delius were the only European composers who spent time in America in their youth, at a time when their sojourn might have had a significant effect on their music. Britten's stay produced a few American-inspired works but he was already forming a mature style when he went there and I do not believe America left a lasting musical imprint. Is Delius therefore unique in being the only European composer for whom America was a key and lasting influence in forming his compositional style?

# MISCELLANY

*Jelka's pictures*

In the Miscellany section of the last issue of the Journal (140), there was a paragraph about Jelka's painting *Norwegian Lake and Landscape.* Stewart Manville, the Curator of the Percy Grainger Library at White Plains, has written to the Editor say that "It is safe and sound in Percy's bedroom, where it is displayed with the LP sleeve and CD box reproductions" and that "Rolf Gardiner, Balfour's nephew, turned the painting over to Ella [Grainger's widow] sometime in the early 1930s, and I took it to a Delius Society meeting in London for general viewing – there must be a few of our Members who will recall that evening."

*Delius on eBay*

In May this year, a copy of the programme book for "A Musical Evening followed by a champagne supper to celebrate the Centenary of the Birth of Frederick Delius" as part of the 1962 Bradford Delius Festival, signed by the 18-yearold Jacqueline du Pré (who played the *Cello Sonata*), Heather Harper, and Ralph Holmes and Eric Fenby (who played the *3rd Violin Sonata*), sold on eBay for $545. Pictures can be found at http://thompsonian.info/delius-centenary1962.html

*Philadelphia Branch*

The indefatigable Philadelphia Branch of the Society has an excellent Newsletter - *The Delian*. Apart from news of Delius-related events and members of both that Branch and the English Branches, over half of each issue is devoted to a very extensive range of reviews by Bill Marsh and others of CDs and DVDs of English music . Should you wish to subscribe, please contact the Membership Secretary, 1540 Grovania Avenue, Abington, PA 19001, U.S.A. payable to The Delius Society. The membership dues are £18 for 3 issues per membership year ( July 1-June 30). The Philadelphia Branch's website <http://thompsonian.info/delphila.html> provides additional information

*Deliana for disposal and wanted*

Present and former Members of the Society:

Have the following for disposal:

A quantity of back numbers of the Journal, and Delius Society 78s:
An ex-library copy of Beecham's *Delius* (Hutchinson, 1959);

and want:

Lionel Carley's *Delius: The Paris Years* and Eric Fenby's *Delius* (Faber, Great Composers series, 1971). A copy of Clare Delius's *Frederick Delius: Memories of my Brother* (Nicholson & Watson, 1935), and would either purchase it or exchange it for Volume 2 of Lionel Carley's *Delius: A Life in Letters*;

The disposals would be in return for a modest donation to the Society's funds. Interested members should contact me on the number given on page 2 above.

*A possible visit to Grez in 2008*

A loose insert in this issue gives details (with a booking form) of a combined Warlock Society and Delius Society "jaunt" to Grez-sur-Loing from 4 to 6 July next year. Details are also available from Malcolm Rudland on 0207-589-9595 or mrudland@talk21.com

*Musicians' Window at Limpsfield*

A new stained-glass Musicians' Window, depicting St Cecilia, recently installed in Limpsfield Church – where Delius, Jelka, Beeecham, six members of the Harrison family and other well-known performers are buried – will be dedicated by the Bishop of Southwark on Thursday 22 November at 7.30. After the service there will be a recital by the cellist Ralph Walfisch. Members of the Society will, of course, be welcome. Further details can be obtained from the Parish Office on 91883-712512 (Tel. & fax) or info@parishoflimpsfield.org.uk.

# CONCERTS

## AMERICAN RHAPSODY

BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Charles Hazlewood,
Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 3 April 2007

It is a rare treat to find music by Delius programmed for performance in London, and by a BBC orchestra at that! So my expectations were high on a grey April evening when I crossed Hungerford Bridge to The Queen Elizabeth Hall. Were my expectations fulfilled?

The first of three works on the programme was Delius's *Appalachia, American Rhapsody for Orchestra* of 1896. This piece is something of a dry run for the more familiar orchestral and choral work we know as *Appalachia* composed in 1902. The *American Rhapsody* contains references to several well-known popular tunes such as *Dixie* and *Yankee Doodle.* In some ways it resembles some of the more approachable scores of Charles Ives, though Delius is not interested in confronting the listener with too many tunes at once. Nevertheless this is an attractive piece where a European composer weaves several popular tunes into a concert piece inspired by America.

I was happy with the performance of the BBC Concert Orchestra, which appeared to be familiar with the score under the skilled direction of Charles Hazlewood – and it would be good to hear him conduct more Delius. I did think, however, that the strings seemed rather subdued, and could have been a little more focused and lively. In contrast, the woodwind seemed on excellent form, both in the Delius and the Copland *Appalachian Spring* which followed. It was fascinating to hear this comparatively unknown score by Delius in contrast to the Copland piece, which is frequently performed. Copland also has a taste for music which speaks directly to the public. His style is deliberately straightforward and approachable.

It was also interesting to contrast the Delius piece with Dvořák's *9th Symphony* which finished the concert, because both Delius and Dvořák had a great deal of respect for the African American musicians of their day. Dvořák even suggested that the future of American music lay with the black population.

Of course, *the American Rhapsody* is a controversial piece. In *While Spring And Summer Sang,* Lyndon Jenkins tells us that in December 1986 when the Royal Philharmonic Society put on a performance of this work, he interviewed Eric Fenby for *The Independent*, and Fenby told him that Delius would have been "Absolutely livid if he had known what was happening all these years

later". Fenby indicated that it was one of Delius's "prentice works, containing early ideas and he was quite ruthless in dismissing them". My high hopes for this concert were met. It was good to hear this early work, even if Delius thought it was not good enough. We learn here something of how he develops as a composer. The simplicity of the early works need not detract from our admiration and respect for the mature Delius.

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## *VIOLIN SONATA NO 2*

A recital by the 2007 Delius Society Prizewinner, Liv-Marie Fletcher
Henleaze United Reform Church, Bristol, Sunday 10 June 2007

As those who were present when she won the Delius Society Prize in November 2006 will know, Liv-Marie Fletcher is a postgraduate violin student at the Royal Academy of Music whose performing career is gaining momentum at recitals and concerts across the UK, and at major international music festivals. As well as the Delius Prize, she has won the Bath Young Musician and Bristol Rotary Young Musician competitions, and was a semi-finalist in the Norwegian Musikklaerers Competition which she entered by virtue of her dual nationality (her mother being Norwegian). There was a distinctly international flavour to this recital, organised by the Great Western Branch of the Elgar Society. Jan was born in Russia, where he studied at the Gnesin School of Music in Moscow, later winning the Foundation Scholarship to the Royal College of Music.

The recital began with the work Liv-Marie prepared for her prize-winning performance, Delius's *Sonata No 2*, of which the pair gave a spirited but thoughtful account, especially in the *fortissimo* passages in the *con moto* opening movement. There was a warmth of tone, especially in the lower register of the violin playing, which showed how Liv-Marie has developed a true feeling for Delius, and reminded one of Eric Fenby's remarks to the young students of the Yehudi Menuhin School in the Yorkshire Television film, explaining how Delius's music must be played *with love* to be really effective. This was especially true of the slow movement, the performance returning to an energetic and powerful climax in the *molto vivace* finale.

The other work in the first half of the recital was the *Sonata No 3*, Opus 45,

by Delius's friend Edvard Grieg, which, as Elgar might have said, is full of good tunes, with a lively first movement, characteristic of Grieg in that occasionally one felt, despite its happier moments, there were trolls lurking somewhere close by. The second movement is more wistful, calling to mind comparisons with both Delius and Grainger. The third is most clearly infused by folk melody and rhythm, and again inevitably drew thoughts of the influence of Grieg on the younger Percy Grainger. The work was a personal favourite of Grieg's, and as was clear from their own evident enjoyment, is one of Liv-Marie's and Jan's too.

After a convivial interval, in which members of our respective Societies mingled over a glass of wine, we heard Mozart's *Sonata in B flat major, K378*, composed in 1779 when he was 23 years old. The atmosphere of the piece is bright and sunny, and both thematically and in mood reminiscent of the *A major Piano Concerto, K488*. Our young stars brought it off perfectly.

Finally, as we have been constantly reminded recently, 2007 marks the 150th anniversary of Elgar's birth (and it is to be hoped that we are to be treated to an equally enthusiastic outburst of Delius on the airwaves in 2012, Olympics permitting). It was natural, therefore, that the Elgarians should wish to include one of his works, and the *Sonata in E minor, Opus 82*, provided a fitting close to the evening. This dates from the period towards the end of Elgar's creative career, when inspiration, which appeared to have left him in the aftermath of international conflict and personal loss, returned in the form of three great chamber works and the Cello Concerto, with which the Sonata has some affinity, though lacking the sense of despair which characterises Elgar's last orchestral endeavour. It was an ambitious choice, but executed brilliantly.

Overall, the quality of the playing achieved a fine balance and a close rapport between the two performers, though at times, especially in the *pizzicato* passages in the Grieg, the piano was a little too emphatic. The venue was new to me, and worthy of future consideration for similar events, with a resonant acoustic which is well suited to chamber performances.

Meeting and chatting with Liv-Marie and Jan after the recital was delightful. Once again, it was evident how much the music of our composer appeals to young people. What a wonderful idea the Delius Prize was, both encouraging an interest in his work among a future generation of performers, and bringing fresh and enthusiastic interpretations before wider audiences. As is well known, the fostering of young musical talent was a cause dear to Delius's heart, and he would certainly have approved of our evening's entertainment.

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## *CYNARA*

15 July 2007 at Tanglewood. Lennox, Massachusetts
The Boston Symphony Orchestra & Thomas Hampson, cond Mark Elder

Our untiring American Member, Bill Thompson, sent the Editor a report of this concert, conducted by Mark Elder, one of the Society's Vice-Presidents, published in *The Boston Globe*, and he had hoped to be able to reproduce part of it here. Astonishingly, however, the paper required a 'standard' payment of $73 for the privilege, irrespective of limited length of the article and the Journal's small circulation. What follows, therefore, is a brief paraphrase:

At the Boston Symphony Orchestra's eight-weekend's summer season at Tanglewood, the programmes are a mix of the known and the unknown. The Orchestra performs three different ones each weekend, and a number of the works have already been played earlier in the year at its home, Symphony Hall (in Boston, not Birmingham!).

This was apparently the first-ever performance of *Cynara* in America – but evidently it did not excite the paper's critic, as he only devoted five out of some thirty lines to it. He thought that the Dowson setting very pleasant, hazy and luxurious, but "over-perfumed", and that the violin solos were very poignant. Hampson – who had sung Mahler's *Das Kaben Wunderhorn* in the first half of the concert – did, however, evidently empathise with the piece, and shaped his part beautifully. The concert began with Strauss's *Don Juan* (a "vivid rendition"), and ended with Sibelius's *Second Symphony* ("a rousing performance") – a characteristic Mark Elder programme of works from the late 19th and early 20th century.

## *Cynara*

I had been looking through a great pile of pencilled sketches of all manner of works that Delius had made before I was born and, coming upon a particularly faded manuscript, I racked my brain to place it in the list of his published works. I could not remember it at all, and yet, at the entry of the voice, there was a tiny figure in the wood-wind that instantly brought to mind *Songs of Sunset.*

I was on the point of dismissing it as nothing more than some rejected sketch, for Delius often turned back to his very early work and extracted a lovely bar here, and sometimes a fine passage there…… when it occurred to me it would be fun to play it over……..Gradually I got the hang of the thing as far as it went, for it was unfinished, but the supper-bell rang out from the porch before I could place the words. I did not know Dowson's poem at the time, and when I went down to supper I asked Delius if he remembered making a draft of a work for baritone and orchestra, in he had used [a] little four-note figure that haunts the pages of *Songs of Sunset:* which he- replied that he did not, but that if I would play it over to him that night he might be able to enlighten me……. Yes, he remembered it now. It was a sketch for a setting of Dowson's 'Cynara.' He had written it four years before, intending to include it as one of the numbers in *Songs of Sunset*, which he was then composing. But he found that, like old Joe Heseltine's cart, it did not quite fit into the picture, so he had left it unfinished and had never given it a thought since.

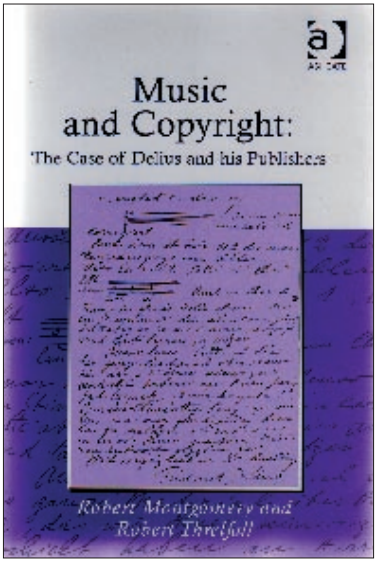
Before saying good night, I read through the poem to him, and several days later he was carried up to the music room and, as I, recollect only too well, began work on the score again with an excitement that puzzled me. The completed score was sent to Philip Heseltine (who knew of its existence in sketch form), who wrote to Delius saying that he was delighted with beautiful way in which the composer had been able to finish it. *Cynara* received its first performance at the Delius Festival four months later. It is not one of Delius's happiest inspirations, but there was a moment in the green-room at Queen's Hall when, suddenly coming in from the noise of the street, I heard the distant sounds of its quietly ascending introduction for divided strings as it was being rehearsed, and there seemed to be no fairer music in the world than this.

From Eric Fenby's *Delius as I knew him*

# BOOK REVIEW

## MUSIC AND COPYRIGHT:THE CASE OF DELIUS AND HIS PUBLISHERS

Robert Montgomery and Robert Threlfall (Ashgate, 2007; 410 pages; ISBN 978-0-7546-5846-7) £25 – but see accompanying flyer for Members' offer.




Apart from being a valuable addition to the corpus of books about Delius, except for the first 40 pages this (unusually for a work of considerable scholarship) is a really enjoyable read! Those 40 pages are an extremely erudite explanation of the law of copyright and how it affected Delius's earnings, and those of the Trust after his death. The major part of this substantial book, however, is a selection (in translation) of 341 of the letters between Delius and his publishers – Augner, Harmonie, Leuckart, Tischer & Jagenberg, Universal, Hawkes & Son, Boosey & Hawkes – the Performing Right Society and the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society Ltd, and between the publishers and the copyright societies themselves about Delius's works.

For the reason mentioned in the Editorial, this is a necessarily brief review – but without any doubt the most entertaining passages in the letters are the continuous flow of often acerbic complaints by Delius about the appalling quality of the proofs of the various works, the delay and other difficulties in actually publishing them (for example, Delius to Universal: "Your settlement astonishes me greatly & I firmly believe that this is a case of a string of errors; for I cannot believe that you would let me down in such a shabby and obvious manner."), and errors in accounting for royalties. The book is beautifully produced, and (although not for a moment disregarding Robert Montgomery's part in it) it is a brilliant addition to Robert Threlfall's amazing contribution to Delian scholarship – although who knows what might still be in store?!

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# CD REVIEWS

## DELIUS: SONGS

Yvonne Kenny (soprano), Piers Lane (piano)
Hyperion CDA67594

Of Delius's 62 songs with piano accompaniment, 25 are presented on this fine new recording. Whether you will warm to the selection will depend on whether you are a 'lumper' or a 'splitter'. All of the 'Seven Songs from the Norwegian' (1889-90) are here, but only three of the 'Five Songs from the Norwegian' (1888). Of the Seven Danish Songs (1896-7) there are three, but not grouped together; four of the five Verlaine settings (1895-1932) are included. Two of the Four Old English Lyrics (1915) are here, and one of the Three Shelley Songs (1891). The remaining five songs are a single Danish song, *Summer Landscape* (1902), *The Nightingale has a Lyre of Gold* (1910), *I-Brasil* (1913) plus two early German settings, *O schneller, mein Ross* (1888) and *Aus deinen Augen fliessen meine Lieder* (?1890-91) which, according to Stephen Lloyd's informative sleeve-note, are here recorded for the first time.

All but one of the Danish songs were composed in that language, while all but one of the Norwegian texts were set in German translation. When Delius, abreast of commercial realities, prepared his songs for publication in English and German, he took care to make the necessary adjustments to both the vocal line and the accompaniment. The original settings however, being the composer's first thoughts, possess a thrilling spontaneity that is partly lost in the published versions.

An opportunity clearly exists for a new recording project which would include all Delius's Scandinavian settings, sung in their originally conceived languages: that is, 14 in Danish, 12 in German ('from the Norwegian') (13 if the draft 1887 setting of Ibsen's *Wiegenlied* is included), two in Norwegian and one in Swedish.

The present recording includes 14 Scandinavian

songs, all of which are sung in English translation. The remaining 11 songs are sung in the languages in which they were written - English, French and German.

So much for background and statistics. Robert Threlfall, in his Editorial Report on the Collected Edition, quotes a remark attributed to Shostakovich: "In the long run, any words about music are less important than the music".[1] What is important about this recording is the music-making, which is of a very high order. Yvonne Kenny is in creamy voice and her diction is perfect; Piers Lane is ideally supportive and makes light work of Delius's sometimes awkward writing for the piano. In an illustration of 'the art that conceals art', the duo produces performances that are nearly all shapely and secure.

When faced with a feast of such richness it may seem inappropriate to complain about individual dishes; that, however, is a responsibility that the reviewer has to accept. Thus it may be remarked that of the four Verlaine settings, though all are beautifully sung, the second two remain elusive. *La lune blanche* lacks the last ounce of the gently rocking flow that it surely needs, while *Chanson d'automne* does not always evoke the melancholy frissons that are implicit in both words and music. One of the Seven Danish Songs, *Irmelin Rose*, is marked 'andante' (actually 'andante tranquillo' in the composer's manuscript) but Kenny and Lane establish a tempo of crotchet = 100 which is nearer 'allegretto', with the inevitable result that the melodic lines familiar from the opera are forced along with rather too much haste.

What of the two recording novelties? *O schneller, mein Ross* goes at a cracking pace and is simply terrific. Piers Lane must have enjoyed the substantial coda. The other, *Aus deinen Augen fliessen meine Lieder*, is a work surrounded by mystery. The text, attributed to Heinrich Heine, has yet to be found in that poet's output, while no original manuscript of the setting has been traced; what has come down to us is in the hand of a copyist. The song is Delius's only on the authority of Sir Thomas Beecham. Yet the ear confirms that this is indeed a Delian composition. Quite apart from melodic and harmonic considerations, the piece is imbued with an almost tangible sincerity, a quality that characterises so much of Delius's output. It is a truly lovely song which, following such advocacy, will be taken up by others.

Most of Delius's songs were written before he was 40. It is good, therefore, that his later work is represented here also: for example, by two of the *Four Old English Lyrics* that he wrote in 1915, while he and Jelka were temporarily exiled in England because of the German invasion of France. *The Nightingale has a Lyre of Gold* and *I-Brasîl,* to words by W. E. Henley and 'Fiona Macleod' respectively, are also included. In each case the performance is exemplary.

Placed last on the disc is a Drachmann song, the setting of which, in various languages, intrigued Delius for a number of years[2]: *Summer Nights*. With its recitative-like vocal line and almost static accompaniment it is one of the least typical of Delius's settings, yet nothing could be more characteristic than the harmonies and modulations. It is performed here in Delius's own English translation, with beautiful expression and control.

This last song must have inspired the choice of the CD's cover illustration, a detail from one of PS Krøyer's characteristic portrayals of the northern tip of Jutland *entitled Summer Evening at the South Beach, Skagen*, which dates from 1893.

We are greatly in the debt of Yvonne Kenny and Piers Lane, and of the recording company Hyperion. This is a peach of a disc.

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1 Robert Threlfall: Frederick Delius, Complete Works: Editorial Report. The Delius Trust 1990, p.9.

2 Rachel Lowe: A Reprint of the Catalogue of the Music Archive of the Delius Trust (1974). The Delius Trust 1986, pp123-7.

## CHORAL WORKS BY BO HOLTEN

*Wisdom and Folly* and other Choral Works
Danish National Girls Choir/Danish National Choir, cond. Bo Holten
CHANDOS 10320 (recorded 2003-2005).

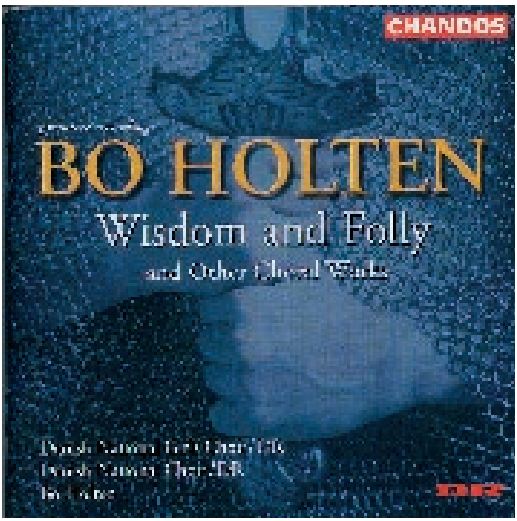
### *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

BBC Singers, cond. Bo Holten. DACAPO 8.224214 (recorded February 2002).

Bo Holten will be well known to *Journal* readers as a member of the Society and a champion of Delius, having made several recordings of his orchestral works. Some of us will also remember the fascinating talk he gave to the London Branch a few years ago in which he demonstrated his approach to the orchestration of some of Delius's songs, as well as his conducting of the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra at the Anglo-Danish Festival there in 1998. But in the wider musical world he is known mainly as a choral composer and conductor, and in this country he became well known as Guest Conductor of the BBC Singers. These two CDs clearly demonstrate the wide range of his

talents as a choral composer. His style is basically tonal, but with a subtle and controlled use of dissonance to function (as he himself puts it) "as the dynamo of music; as an element that creates form and drive."

*Wisdom and Folly* is a collection of seven *a capella* choral works whose texts range from the Old Testament to an ancient Danish folk ballad and include one setting in Icelandic! These pieces clearly show the huge range and imagination of Bo Holten's style, from the sumptuous, Gershwin-like *Song of Songs* to the ecstatic and exultant *Triumph to Exist*. There are many moments reminiscent of Delius, but interlaced with styles ranging from the contemporary to the 16th century. Particularly noteworthy is *First Snow*, in which the image of falling snow is beautifully yet simply captured by overlapping descending diatonic scales, and the highly charged and dissonant *Lamentations*. The most striking works on this CD are the *Tallis Variations* and *Ebbe Skammelsøn. Tallis Variations* uses nine solo strings to accompany the choir, and Holten skilfully manages to combine a quotation from Tallis's *Lamentations* with contemporary dissonance: the two styles are at first contrasted, then gradually move towards each other taking in on the way choral styles reminiscent of Ravel or Vaughan-Williams. The most remarkable work, however, is probably *Ebbe Skammelsøn*, a setting of a dark and violent ancient Danish folk ballad. The repetitive setting of the many verses of the ballad produce a hypnotic effect and inclusion of a solo trombone – bringing to mind the ancient Danish *lur* – further enhances the dramatic and primitive feel of this extraordinary piece.




Recorded sound on this CD is good but diction is not very clear, though this may be a property of the Danish language because the clarity is much better in *Ego flos campi*, the one setting in Latin (all others are in Danish or Icelandic). Bo Holten's choral writing is doubtless very difficult to sing and there are moments of insecurity, but the overall effect of these remarkable works is very compelling.

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* as its title implies, includes a setting of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* but also smaller biblical settings and a dramatic cantata (*Rain and Rush and Rosebush*) based on Hans Christian Andersen. Like those on the *Wisdom and Folly* CD, these works demonstrate Bo Holten's extraordinary talent for writing effective, highly original, yet approachable choral music. All works on this CD are sung in English and, for the most part, diction is good. Two pieces are included which also feature on *Wisdom and Folly* (*First Snow* and *Hermit Peak*) but neither is quite as effective here, partly because of slower tempi but mainly because they somehow sound better in Danish!

The two most substantial works on this CD are *Rain and Rush and Rosebush*, based on Andersen's *The Stone of the Wise*, and the Blake settings. The Andersen setting is for four soloists and eight-part choir, and is at times reminiscent of John Adams. Radiant, lyrical sounds illustrate life's important values, whilst dissonant interjections are used to depict the mean and petty side. There are amazing acrobatics from Catherine Bott, the soprano soloist, who has a coloratura part going up to top E! The settings of *Songs of Innocence and Experience* last over 27 minutes, and were commissioned for the BBC Singers. It is impossible to do justice to this remarkable work in a limited space. The complete range of Bo Holten's style is used to capture every nuance of the poems, and although the complexity of the choral writing sometimes renders the text inaudible, the overall effect is wonderful. My only reservation is in the rather obvious setting of *Spring* which fails to match the originality of the rest of the choral writing.

Bo Holten is a highly original and effective choral composer whose eclectic style, though undoubtedly modern, is quite approachable, and I recommend both CDs to anyone interested in contemporary choral music.

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# EVENTS 2007-2008

Friday 27 April 2007
University of Arizona, USA
Arizona Symphony Orchestra cond. Thomas Cockrell
Programme included *Three Preludes* and pieces by Gershwin, Cole Porter and others, all arranged for orchestra by Nelson Riddle
(see p.110)

Sunday 29 April 2007
Rock Hall, Temple University, Philadelphia
Riccardo Morales (clarinet) and Davyd Booth (piano)
Programme included *Serenade* from *Hassan* (arr. Morales), Arnold, Dunhill, Finzi and Stanford

Sunday 20 May 2007
Ravensdale, Weston Underwood,
Recital by Shula Oliver & Anya Aadina
*Legende, First Violin Sonata* & Eva Ruth Spalding – *Violin Sonata*

Sunday 17 June 2007
The Philharmonie, Berlin (and radio and TV!)
The Berlin Philharmonic cond. Sir Simon Rattle
Programme included *Brigg Fair*

Sunday 24 June 2007
Radio 3 – Ian Burnside's record programme included *In a Summer Garden*

Saturday 30 June, 2007
Holy Trinity Church, Clapham North Side, London W4
Ionian Singers cond. Timothy Salter
*Partsongs*, plus Elgar, Stanford & others

Sunday 1 July, 2007
Newbold Church, Binfield, Bracknell
Windsor & Maidenhead Symphony Orchestra cond. Leon Gee
*A Song of Summer*, plus Copland, Saint Saëns & Elgar

Sunday 15 July 2007
Koussevitsky Music Shed, Tanglewood, Lennox, Mass
Thomas Hampson, Boston Symphony Orchestra cond. Mark Elder
*Cynara*, plus Strauss, Mahler & Sibelius

Thursday 26 July 2007
Royal Albert Hall, London (Promenade Concert)
BBC Symphony Orchestra cond. Sir Andrew Davis
*A Song of Summer,* Tippett *Double Concerto* &
Vaughan Williams *Symphony No 5*

Thursday 27 September 2007 at 7.15
LONDON BRANCH
New Cavendish Club
*Delius's Musical Tastes* – a talk by Tony Summers

Saturday 13 October 2007
PHILADELPHIA BRANCH
561 Wartman Street, Philadelphia
Programme featured piano rolls of British music on Doug Tester's player piano, and informal organ performances by some of those attending.

Thursday 18 October 2007 at 7.15
New Cavendish Club
LONDON BRANCH
*A breath of fresh mountain air: The friendship of Delius and Grieg* – a talk by Roger Buckley

Saturday 17 November 2007 at 7.45
Great Hall, Ravensbourne School, Hayes Lane, Bromley, Kent
(0208-464-5869)
Bromley Symphony Orchestra, conductor: Adrian Brown,
solo cello: Alice McVeigh
*The Walk to the Paradise Garden,* Bloch – *Schelomo*, Elgar – Symphony No 2

Friday 23 November 2007 at 7
Royal Academy of Music, Marylebone Road, London
THE DELIUS PRIZE
(For details see the Editorial pages)

Friday 25 January 2008 at 7.30
PHILADELPHIA BRANCH
St Mark's Church, 1625 Locust Street, Philadelphia
Annual Delius Birthday Party event
St Mark's Choir & Diane Meredith Belcher (organ)
Works by Delius, Warlock and William Lloyd Webber

Thursday 26 February 2008
New Cavendish Club
LONDON BRANCH
A Celebration of Robert Threlfall's 90th birthday.

Saturday 12 April 2008 at 7.30
St Andrew's Church, Linton Road, Oxford
(Enquiries 01235-532179; tickets available at the door)
St Giles Orchestra, cond. Geoffrey Bushell
*Brigg Fair*, plus Elgar's *In the South* and Dvorak's *Cello Concerto*

*Correction*

The Editor regrets that on page 130 of DSJ 141 he inadvertently gave the impression that it was Don Gillespie who interviewed Gunther Schuller. It was in fact Joseph Horowitz, a well-known American writer on music, and the creator of numerous interdisciplinary music festivals in the United States. Apologies to them both.

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