

DELIUS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER NO. 10 - NOVEMBER 1965

Newsletter Editor:
Charles Barnard,
16, Priory Close,
Woking, Surrey.

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

It is now over three years since the Society was formed and, as another year draws to a close, the Committee sends its very best wishes to all members for a Happy 1966. Coupled with this wish is the hope that the next year will bring many contented hours of listening to Delius. Certainly, looking back over 1965, as far as British members are concerned, the B.B.C. must have played more Delius than ever before, mainly on the Music Programme. This does not mean that we are now arm-in-arm with the B.B.C. Far from it! Later in the newsletter, I am including recent correspondence with the Corporation on this matter. But I feel that we are now well known within the B.B.C. and hope that they are considering the maxim "If you can't fight 'em, join 'em", towards the Society.

Within the Committee, it is only fair to say that two or three members are still worried as to whether we are doing enough for members. They argue that we should try to arrange more recitals, for example, feeling that many members, especially those living far from London, are not getting value for money from their subscription. Speaking personally, since this is a voluntary society, I think that the membership list, now standing at 161, indicates that we are managing to satisfy most members. It would be most interesting to know what the majority of members feel, and I am considering drawing up a questionnaire to send out with the next newsletter. Although it is a bind filling in these, the Committee would welcome all your views, and this seems the easiest way rather than asking for individual letters. It is also much easier for compilation. The results should make interesting reading for a newsletter during 1966, and might indeed form a basis for one. I would stress, though, that the whole thing would be quite voluntary, and we would have no intention of plaguing you with reminders that you have not yet filled in your questionnaire. But I'm sure it would be of inestimable help for the Committee to decide where we should channel our efforts during the next year or two.

Members are still, apparently, taking the golden road to Grez-sur-Loing, as the (attached) welcome article from Roger Buckley indicates.

Our Secretary has kindly sent me a note on the talk given by Alec Robertson on the B.B.C. during the summer:

"On Sunday, 8th August, Alec Robertson in his programme "Talking about Music" included a short talk on Delius' "Summer Night on the River", from which he illustrated themes at the piano and on record. He confessed that of Delius' two short pieces for orchestra, this was his favourite, though he dearly loved both.

"Mr. Robertson related the story leading up to their composition: how Percy Grainger had told Delius that England was full of fine amateur orchestras which would be only too pleased to play his music, but which did not have the resources to perform his major works. Alec Robertson said he could not help wondering what happened to these amateur orchestras? Did they ever exist? Anyway, the suggestion bore fruit in the two small pieces for orchestra, "Summer Night on the River", and "On hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring".

"Mr. Robertson said that whenever he played this music he was reminded of Monet's "The Seine by Moonlight". He was not surprised that in his pain-wracked years, Delius could hardly bear to listen to any music but his own, for "Nothing could rob him of his recollections preserved in his lovely music".

"This talk preceded a broadcast of "Summer Night on the River" on Friday, August 13th, in "Midday Prom", with the BBC Northern Orchestra, conducted by Bryden Thomson."

/ I wonder if

I wonder if any members stayed up late on Saturday, 28th August, to listen to a performance of the first Violin Sonata? I certainly did, and after hearing the work announced at the beginning of the programme, settled down to wait for it some fifteen minutes later. I was, therefore, astonished and disgusted, when the time came, to hear the announcer say that, at the last moment, they were substituting a work by Bernard Stevens in place of the Delius.

Such extraordinary conduct justified a letter of complaint, which I sent off straightaway. The reply suggests that the left hand of the B.B.C. hardly knows what the right is doing!

"Dear Mr. Barnard,

Thank you for your letter of 28th August about the substitution of a work by Bernard Stevens for the Delius sonata advertised for "Music at Night" on that evening.

We are sorry that the various announcements made should have led to so much disappointment but the fault was not entirely ours. It appears that after the Radio Times had gone to press on the basis of the arrangement originally made with the artists they asked to be allowed to substitute the Bernard Stevens work. This request was made at the last minute and the producer recorded the introductory announcement with the actual performance. It appears that you may not have heard this but only the introduction of the whole programme which was given by the continuity announcer from the studio. Unfortunately the producer overlooked the fact that those responsible for general programme publicity and trailing of programmes had not been notified of the change of programme content which was why the earlier announcements referred to the Delius sonata.

The producer is indeed sorry for the confusion which caused such disappointment but you will be glad to know that he has arranged for the Delius sonata to be played in "Music at Night" on Saturday, October 30th by Erich Gruenberg (violin) and Eric Harrison (piano)."

For those of you who did not hear it, I am glad to say that the performance on 30th October did materialise, and proved to be most enjoyable.

During the summer, my colleague John White took up his cudgels against the B.B.C. concerning the general lack of English music at this year's Proms. I would like to quote this correspondence in full, as it highlights a subject which is being aired much more frequently, namely, the neglect of certain contemporaries of Delius, such as Bax, Ireland and Moeran.

Members may feel that this is not the place to air grievances about Delius' contemporaries. But I cannot agree, and am using my prerogative as Editor to air these grievances. I am doing this not to obtain "publicity" for these other composers - whom I freely admit I greatly admire - but because I believe that we are advancing the cause of Delius, and the more frequent playing of his music, by supporting this cause. If we allow the critics to condemn the contemporaries of Delius, and they succeed, it will not be long before they launch a full scale attack on Delius himself.

Of course I deplore the emotion which creeps into these attacks, because they seem to degenerate into nastiness, which always leaves an unpleasant taste. To give an example. Members may have seen a letter to the Gramophone in October from one of our members, Mr. Brushwood. I think, to be fair, that I had better quote the letter in full. Mr. Brushwood writes:

"The critics have fallen over themselves in praise of the recent issues of modern works sponsored by the British Council and the Gulbenkian Foundation, but I wonder how much of their joy is shared by the vast majority of music lovers. Is it really serving the cause of music to lavish time, money and effort on such aural atrocities as Messiaen's Chronochromie or the barren tinklings of Maxwell Davies?

/ "The worst of it

"The worst of it is that whilst the record companies dally with the fashionable freaks of the avant-garde, we remain starved of much of the really great music of the twentieth century, notably the symphonies of Bax and Rubbra, the major choral works of Vaughan Williams, not to mention the many fine orchestral works of Ireland, Moeran and Goossens, who might not exist for all the attention they receive from the major companies.

"It seems the more ugly and incomprehensible a composer's style is the better chance he stands of being accorded the favours of sponsorship. I suppose it is too much to hope that future issues will display more concern with quality and less with novelty".

London, E.8.

A. J. Brushwood.

This really set the cat amongst the pigeons, and the November Gramophone was bristling with rage! Another of our members, Mr. Walker, wrote: (and I see from our list of members that Mr. Brushwood and he appear next to one another!)

"Mr. Brushwood's letter in your October issue does his cause positive harm. It is too abrupt and intolerant.

"I find Messiaen's Chronochromie one of the most exciting twentieth century works. Yet at the same time I am anxious to hear more music by the British composers he mentions, especially Moeran, a very underrated figure. But Mr. Brushwood's abuse of one group and inflated praise of the other will achieve nothing for either of us."

Wellington, Shropshire.

I. J. B. Walker

His tone was positively cherubic compared with a Mr. Wood of Romford (who is incidentally not a member of the Society). He wrote:

"Might I make a token reply to your correspondent of last month, A. J. Brushwood?"

"This self-satisfied wallower in the sentimental decadence of Messrs. Bax, Rubbra and Vaughan Williams, has the effrontery to criticise the all too reluctant and unimaginative issues of contemporary music by EMI. They have spared no pains to record only 'accepted' contemporary works and yet Mr. Brushwood can describe his inability to listen as shortcomings in the composers! Surely if there has been any recent example of a major waste of money, talent and resources, it is a second recording of the impossible "Dream of Gerontius"."

Romford, Essex.

Jeffrey Wood.

Before lovers of the "Dream of Gerontius" rise in fury and march on Romford, I will return to the beginning of this section and quote the correspondence between John White and the E.B.C.

"Dear Mr. Glock,

As in previous years, I have studied the Promenade Concerts Prospectus with the greatest interest. Keen anticipation rapidly gave way to exasperation and disappointment, however. I have been delighted to see these concerts, which were in great danger of becoming hidebound and restricted in outlook, broadened in their scope to include music which had been ignored for far too long for no good reason, and there seemed every hope that we should return, eventually, to the catholicism that was so notable a feature of Sir Henry Wood's repertoire.

These hopes have not been justified in the event. We can now hear at the 'Proms' some of the music that had previously been lacking, although too much emphasis is laid on the 'rediscovery' of Mahler and Schoenberg, for example, by the present generation and on the importance of the BBC's part in this. It would be untrue to suggest that musicians in England, prior to the last war, were unaware of the work of their great contemporaries and Sir Henry was introducing Schoenberg at the 'Proms' before many of us were born.

Now that

Now that past omissions are being rectified, however, the sense of purpose and initiative which enlivened the series given in recent years seems to have petered out. Frankly, the 'Proms' are getting rather dull. One would expect English music to have a fairly prominent position, and to some extent this is true, but it is here, rather than elsewhere, that the planning lacks adventure.

I am not speaking of the new works, but of what might be called the established repertory of English music. The concerts must, of course, be based on a foundation of accepted works of distinction, but there are so many to choose from. It is good to see Elgar back in strength, but could not the 'Enigma Variations' be given a rest in exchange for something less familiar? Holst's 'Planets' should really be left out now and again; why can we not have the 'Choral Fantasia' and 'Egdon Heath' instead? I notice that the 'Hymn of Jesus' is to be revived, presumably because it was well liked last year; but it is this kind of over-anxious sensitivity to audience reaction - so natural in the world of concert promotion - that is unnecessary and undesirable in the planning of the 'Proms'. Tippett is being given more of his due this season but why always the 'Concerto for Double String Orchestra'.

This last piece, it seems to me, is played to death, and I should much prefer to hear, for a change, other string pieces which to my mind have equal merit - for example, Bliss's 'Music for Strings' or Ireland's 'Concertino Pastorale'.

This last point brings me to a matter which causes me considerable concern. Why is this most receptive of audiences deprived of the music of such composers as Ireland, Moeran, Bax and Warlock? Is it because the music is bad? And, if so, who says so? Why not play a Bax symphony and see if there is a storm of protest; I venture to think the audience might even enjoy it. The unkindest cut of all, as usual, is reserved for Delius. Again, - for the third year in succession - only one work is being played, and this time it is placed immediately before the 'Sea Songs' in the last concert. Would you do such a thing with the Webern Symphony, I wonder, and if not, why not?

Next year, I should like to see the inclusion of Delius' 'A Mass of Life', Bax's Sixth Symphony and Warlock's 'The Curlew'. There would be no difficulty in finding the artists to perform these splendid and shamefully neglected works, but who would have the courage to include them?

Yours sincerely, J.K.J.White"

2nd September, 1965.

Dear Mr. White,

Before going away last week Mr. Glock passed to me the letter that you had written to him on 20th July - a long and interesting letter about the Proms.

I am sorry that you find the programmes are becoming "rather dull". This if I understand your letter rightly, is because they do not include the works of Ireland, Moeran, Bax and Warlock, nor much of Delius. We certainly take note that you suggest Bliss's "Music for Strings" (a fine work indeed) as a welcome change from Tippett's "Concerto for Double String Orchestra".

I do not think that there would be a "storm of protest" if next year's season contained a Bax Symphony. The Prom audiences do not seem to protest against any work. If they do not want to hear it they simply stay away. Last season the Royal Philharmonic Society (I am a member of its programme committee) mounted a performance of Delius's "Mass of Life". The very small audience that came to hear it would have saddened you. You make the point that the BBC should not be prompted by "over-anxious sensitivity to audience reaction". Well, I am afraid that such sensitivity is not unnecessary - and is not our serious consideration of your letter an instance of it?

Well, we will certainly think about Moeran, Ireland and Bax.

Yours sincerely, Eric Warr
Assistant Head of Music Programmes (Sound)"

/ I trust

I trust that members will not consider that I have dwelt on this topic for too long. It is certainly a subject which could be discussed at length, but perhaps at one of our Holborn meetings next year we could confine ourselves to a short debate on the topic, and invite Mr. Brushwood, Mr. Walker, Mr. White and any other interested members, to put forward their views.

We welcome the following new members, who have joined the Society since the list given in the last newsletter.

Mr. Peter W. Moss,
7, Carlton Close,
Woodley, Reading, Berks

As result of advert. in The Gramophone.

Ernest Mallet, Esq.,
30, Sydney Street,
South Kensington, S. W. 3.

John Rippin, Esq.,
77, Palmerston Road,
Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

Introduced by our member, Mr. L. G. Friend

Arthur C. Rankin, Esq.,
Rowley Hill Lodge,
Saffron Walden, Essex.

Introduced by our member, Mr. C. Crafton
Harris.

Mr. B. Carnell,
17, Crunden Road,
South Croydon, Surrey.

J. E. Blackwell, Esq.,
114, Stanley Road,
Carshalton, Surrey.

Enrolled at Holborn meeting 22nd September,
(probably as result of advert. in The
Gramophone).

Mrs. P. M. Justin,
26 Mead Crescent,
Sutton, Surrey.

S. F. S. Lloyd, Esq.,
119 Old Bedford Road,
Luton.

Originally contacted the Society in 1962 or
1963.

Dr. W. L. Reed,
260 Friern Road,
London, S. E. 22.

Introduced by our member, Mr. Malcolm Walker.

When joining the Society, Dr. Reed sent the following letter to our Secretary, and this seems a good point at which to include a letter, illustrating what members (old and new) are doing to "publicise Delius"! (In this way, we shall hope to gain more new members, and a greater public for listening to his exquisite music).

"Dear Miss Palmley,

Thank you for your kind letter of the 16th and for sending me all the most interesting newsletters about the Society and our great composer.

I first came into contact with Delius' music in 1926 when a very talented school friend violinist got me to try out the Second Violin Sonata with him. From that moment I was hooked for life! We performed the work at a school concert, much to the puzzlement of the majority of the members of the audience (after all it must have sounded rather 'modern' then), and I remember that at the rehearsals I used to play my part from memory.

/ Wherever I travel

Wherever I travel - and I travel extensively, having only now just completed a tour of Australia and New Zealand - I talk about Delius and get people to listen to his music. I am also featuring him in one of my adult education music classes in Kent this year.

I heard about the existence of the Society through Mr. Malcolm Walker recently. As regards my 'practice' to which you refer, I am in fact a Doctor of Music, not of Medicine!

I am sending my subscription on to Miss Todd, and am looking forward to meeting you and other members of the Society before long.

Sincerely yours, "William L. Reed".

Another of our members, Mr. Roy Budden, will be conducting a concert at the Working Men's College, London, N. W. 1. on Saturday, 4th December, at 7.30 p.m. and will include in his programme Delius' "La Calinda".

In the October issue of "Records and Recording" under the heading "Pick of the Month - Last Month's Best Sellers", the Delius Cello Concerto (Songs of Farewell, A Song before Sunrise), was rated as follows by the under-mentioned Stores:-

Rimington Van Wyok - 1st; Henry Stave & Co. - 4th; Army & Navy Stores - 3rd; Hampstead High Fidelity - not listed - and perhaps not stocked!

And now a brief report from our Secretary about the most outstanding Delius event of 1965 - the performance of the Requiem at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on November 9th.

"This was attended by 13 members and friends, with 2 casualties, owing to fog and illness; a creditable number in my view in all the circumstances. I was particularly glad to see two members there - one of long standing, Mr. J. R. Shaw, whom we have not previously had an opportunity of meeting, and a new member, Miss Macdonald; also to hear from Mr. Shaw afterwards that he now had more of a sense of "belonging" to the Society, and from Miss Macdonald that she would do all she could to keep the name "Delius" before the powers-that-be in Bradford. (It is a sad commentary on Bradford that Miss Macdonald is our only member, so far, from that city!) I personally was most delighted to have as companion on the journey our member, Mrs. W. Noakes, and to meet in Liverpool Mr. Aickman, Mr. Buckley, Dr. Carley, Mr. Ian Walker, and Mr. Wright.

"Mr. John Charles, the Concert Manager, was throughout extremely courteous and helpful to me on the 'administrative' side, and arranged for members of the Society to be served with coffee and biscuits in the interval, without charge to us or the Society, even going to the trouble to ~~make~~ with his own hands - and write out - an enormous sign 'Reserved for members of the Delius Society only' and set it up on a special table, which was an additional advertisement to that inserted in the Requiem programme.

"Members will have seen press reactions, which we are still studying, and I would particularly like to thank Mr. Staveley for sending me cuttings from the Yorkshire Post.

"I know we are all extremely grateful to the Delius Trust for the opportunity of hearing this work - in such favourable surroundings - many of us, for the first time."

Looking to the future, we hear that on Monday, 10th January, there is to be a broadcast of Sir Thomas Beecham's recording of "Mass of Life", and we attach some information about our plans for a meeting on Saturday, 29th January.

Charles Barnard
Newsletter Editor

"Et ici la maison d'un compositeur celebre...." by Roger Buckley

When I left Grez-sur-Loing in 1964 I had already determined to return as soon as possible. Accordingly, when my visit to France this year was contemplated, a short stay at Grez was worked in. After an exhausting drive from Calais we came at last to Grez, finding it as we remembered it so well, basking in the late afternoon sun. We were a little disappointed to see that the camping site was heavily populated until we recalled that the holiday "peak" was still in full swing. We did not see a single English car; nearly all the campers were French. Surprisingly, in spite of the activity on the other side of the river, the village was almost deserted, and we were able to wander through the quiet streets undisturbed. Later we walked along the Loing and stopped to eat a makeshift meal on the riverbank. The sun was on the point of setting, and the scene reminded us forcibly of certain moments in the music of Delius. Both my companion and I were extremely travel-weary and found sleep almost overtaking us as we sat. A brisk walk took us back to the now silent village.

The next morning was bright and warm. The early sun was so attractive that we wandered about laden with photographic equipment, trying however vainly to capture the elusive mood which was subtly pervading the whole scene. This soon proved to be an impossible task, so we contented ourselves with aimless sitting on the bridge, watching the few fishermen at work and the small boats gliding hither and thither.

A little later we found ourselves knocking at the side door of Delius's house, and being received most warmly by a charming lady guest of Madame d'Aubigné. We were told that the mistress of the house was not at home, but we were nevertheless invited to enter. We walked down the garden towards the river; I remember a distinct sense of surprise at the extent of the garden. We walked round the deeply recessed pond, full of noisy ducks, and then into the orchard which is of no mean size. At length we reached the river which appeared from the garden as a stage overhung by a proscenium arch of branches. A rickety little landing stage took one far enough into the river to enable the bridge to be seen away on the left. We looked for, but missed, Delius's screen of bamboos. Our hostess now led us back to the house, which she showed us in some detail. It was clear that quite extensive modifications have taken place. I understand that the house is in fact divided into two parts; Professor and Madame d'Aubigné live in one part and their son and his family live in the other. We were especially interested in Mrs. Delius's studio - known as 'l'atelier'. The actual room in which she painted is beautifully light and airy, and the heavy door is thickly plastered with daubs of oil paint; evidently she used it as a palette! The bedrooms at the back of the main body of the house have French windows which open on to a broad stone balcony, from which a little flight of stone steps leads down to the garden. This we thought a most charming idea.

Once more wishing to preserve something of what we had seen, we requested to be allowed to film parts of the garden. This favour was granted, and a blissful half-hour was spent wandering where we chose. At length we walked up to the house and gradually became aware of a familiar sound which was so natural as to seem indistinguishably part of the whole scene. We listened carefully and then to our joy recognised 'A Song of Summer'. Our hostess was obviously delighted at our pleasure, although she confided to us that she was herself unable to appreciate Delius. After a little more talk we listened to 'The Walk to the Paradise Garden' and then, most unwillingly, felt that the time had come for our departure. We thanked our gracious hostess and left; as we walked away the strains of Delius's operatic Intermezzo merged once more with the substance of what was truly for us his 'Paradise Garden'.

Returning to the street was incredibly like stepping into another world: it was only when we noticed the noise and bustle of the village that we realised how silent the garden had been. Our programme now dictated moving on to our final destination, and so, reluctantly, we left Grez.

/ On the return journey

On the return journey we took the opportunity of stopping in Montfort L'Amaury, where Ravel lived for the last fifteen years of his life. This is an unspoilt little town near the beautiful forest of Rambouillet. We were surprised to discover that Ravel's house, a most peculiar looking building, is kept as a permanent museum by the governess of Marcel Proust. We were welcomed by her and shown very thoroughly the house and the minute Chinese garden. Each room is impeccably decorated, in many cases by Ravel's own hand, and all his possessions are exactly where he left them. One has the impression that the composer is out but will return soon. This feeling of intrusion is heightened by the reverence with which the elderly lady speaks of Ravel. For her he clearly permeates the house, and in a sense this is understandable. The black and white carpets, the dark wallpapers, the beautiful mechanical ornaments and the lovely porcelain, are clear manifestations of the Ravellian character. One positively feels his love of precision and delicacy. The vast collection of manicure instruments in his bedroom only heightens this impression. We left, dazed by the dedication and care with which every item has been preserved unchanged. What a vivid contrast to the home of Delius - this thought was uppermost in our minds. And how clearly this contrast is mirrored in the music of the two men.

SATURDAY, 29TH JANUARY, 1966

On Saturday, 29th January, there is to be a meeting - with an interval for tea - at our usual place, Holborn Library, 32 Theobalds Road, London, W. C. 1. - from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. (please make a careful note of the starting time). Our programme will include an address by David Simmons on the subject of "Delius and Nietzsche".

This will be followed by a dinner at Bertorelli's, 19, Charlotte Street, London, W. 1. at 7.30 p.m. and the four course meal costing 25/- per head, plus 10% service charge, will consist of -

Smoked Scotch Salmon	Mushroom Soup
Grilled Steak	Cassata
Coffee	

It is important to know as much in advance as possible the numbers to expect for dinner, and our Treasurer will therefore be glad if interested members will complete and return the undermentioned form to her as soon as convenient, and in any case not later than 22nd January.

Miss Ann Todd,
9, Woodstock Road,
Alperton, Middlesex.

Please reserveplaces for me for dinner at Bertorelli's, on Saturday, 29th January, 1966, at 7.30 p.m. and for which I enclose remittance (made out to the Delius Society) of

Name

Address

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