

DELIUS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER No. 13 - JUNE 1966

Newsletter Editor:
J. K. White,
19, Maple Avenue,
Maidstone, Kent.

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

In this short newsletter, I am confining myself mainly to two sections - "Forthcoming Events" and "Books", and as the first reason for sending out this newsletter almost on the heels of the May issue is to give members a 'Delius Diary', I propose to start with:-

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, 14th July, at 8 p.m.

A performance of "APPALACHIA" at the Cheltenham Town Hall, as part of the 22nd Annual Cheltenham Festival, when the soloist will be Colin Wheatley, with BBC Chorus, the combined BBC Northern Orchestra and BBC Midland Light Orchestra, conducted by George Hurst.

The Delius work is given as the final item in a programme which includes the Husitska Overture (Dvorak); the first performance of Passacaglia (Norman Kay); and the first performance outside Czechoslovakia of Piano Concerto (Petr Eben), with John Ogden as soloist.

Prices of seats are - Hall 22/6d., 16/-, 11/-, 8/-, and 5/6d. Balcony 11/-, 8/-, 5/6d. and 4/-d. Gallery 8/- and 5/6d. The Box Office at the Town Hall is open daily (except Sundays) 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Tel. 23650). "Applications received by post accompanied by remittance will be allotted best available seats, and cheques should be made payable to Cheltenham Arts Festival Limited, and addressed to Festival Office, Town Hall, Cheltenham".

This information was kindly sent to us by Mrs. Grace Swanston, who tells me that she has been "trying to get Delius to Cheltenham for years". Mr. Ian Walker and Mr. John East also drew our attention to this event, Mr. East recommending seats "front of the Balcony at 11/-", if still available.

Thursday, 8th September, at 7.30 p.m.

As advised in our May newsletter, there is to be a performance of the "MASS OF LIFE" in the Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall. We trust that our members who have been corresponding for some time with the BBC on the subject of Delius and the Proms (apart from the various letters sent by members of the Committee - Charles Barnard in particular) will feel that this is a satisfactory outcome to their representations.

At the last performance in March we were delighted to see so many members, especially from outside London (Mr. Wright from Dudley, Miss Macdonald from Bradford, Mr. Roberts from Oxford, Mr. Douglas from Dublin). We hope to see them again - and many more members, and friends.

Our Secretary is arranging for interval refreshments to be served to members at the Hall, and in this is grateful to be receiving every cooperation from Mr. Hopper, Manager & Secretary, who writes that, although he cannot guarantee the Henry Cole room, he will "positively find us somewhere" to gather. Would members therefore please advise our Secretary if it is their intention to be present at the Hall on this occasion? Also, number of friends they wish to invite for refreshments? A form is attached for this purpose.

Although most members will by now have seen the Proms Prospectus, it will perhaps do no harm to repeat here that tickets can be booked by post from...

/ 20th June

20th June to 9th July (envelopes addressed to Royal Albert Hall, S. W. 7. and marked 'Proms' on top left-hand corner, accompanied by remittances made payable to the Royal Albert Hall). Booking continues by post, telephone or personal application from Monday, 11th July (telephone bookings accepted from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. only, at Kensington 8212).

Prices are:-

Stalls	15s.	Second Tier	11s.
Loggia	15s.	Balcony...	11s. & 8s.
		Promenade (at doors only)	5s.

It is of historical interest to note that this is the first Prom performance of the Mass, and to recall that Neville Cardus, music critic of The Guardian, gave as one of his musical predictions for the year that this work would appear as "a new and glorious sun"! The artists are Heather Harper (soprano), Yvonne Minton (contralto), Ronald Dowd (tenor), John Cameron (baritone), with BBC Chorus, BBC Choral Society, Alexandra Choir, Harrow Choral Society, and Royal Choral Society.

Thursday, 29th September, at 7.30 p.m.

This will be the first of our meetings at the Holborn Library, 32 Theobalds Road, London, W. C. 1., following the summer break. Programme has still to be arranged, and will if possible be advised to members well in advance.

Wednesday, 30th November, at 7.30 p.m.

As some members will know, our President, Mr. Eric Fenby, celebrated his 60th birthday on April 22nd this year. To mark this event, a concert will be given at the Arts Council, 4, St. James's Square, London, S. W. 1., sponsored by the Delius Society, on the 30th November, to which members and friends are cordially invited. Further details will be circulated later.

Thursday, 1st December

On the day following the concert at the Arts Council, there will be a performance of the Requiem, and the Cello Concerto (Jacqueline du Pre) at the Royal Albert Hall. The programme will also include Verdi's Te Deum. Further details will be given in a later newsletter.

Friday, 6th January, 1967

Wednesday, 8th March, 1967

These two further dates have been booked at the Holborn Library. Programme to be arranged.

BOOK SECTION.

In case members would appreciate "guidance" in choosing books either to read during holidays, or suitable as presents, the following three are offered for your attention (the third perhaps too weighty and expensive!). The first book on the list is, in any case, required reading for every member, and I intend having a clause to this effect inserted in the Constitution!

"Delius as I knew him" by Eric Fenby

As mentioned in our last newsletter, this book is to be republished on 22nd July. As I understand our Secretary has circulated a copy of a "trade" leaflet to each member, I will not, as I intended, quote from that here. Had I been asked for my contribution to the leaflet, it would have been "without doubt the most important book in existence on Delius and a unique human document".

/ Publishers:

Publishers: Icon Books Ltd., 9 Down Street, London, W.1. Prices: paper-back 9/6d. Hardcover 35/-.

No doubt members, when contacting their local bookshop to order copies, will take the opportunity to ask whether the book is to be displayed with suitable prominence, and to suggest it's great interest to libraries, schools and universities in the area.

"The Attempted Rescue" by Robert Aickman

In his autobiography, published by Gollancz (32s.6d.) which has received general critical acclaim, Mr. Robert Aickman (a member of our Society) has written with reference to Delius:

"Delius offers deep, mystical feeling without implications of conventional religion. He offers some of the most beautiful music it is possible to imagine, much more of it than is generally supposed, as he was fluent and versatile. He is, properly, no English miniaturist but a great composer on the international scale. Chopin's best works really are miniatures, but few deny that he is a world composer. Delius's links with other English music are, in fact, slender, and much exaggerated. As a man, he was only in part an Englishman. His idiom and feeling are quite unusually his own. He dissolves or soars above all barriers and opens up a prospect as boundless and as limitless as the universe or the soul. The poet Robert Nichols put it well: 'Delius tells us that life is beautiful and brief and bitter and surrounded by mystery, that the beauty of the mystery is unfathomable and that we should do well to accept the mystery, first, because if we don't, we shall lose some of the beauty, and, second, because it is becoming to human dignity to face with quiet resolution the inevitable conditions of any human happiness whatever.' "

"The English Renaissance" by Frank Howes

This book has recently been published by Secker & Warburg (price 3 guineas). The author, Frank Howes, was chief music critic of the Times from 1943-60. Our Chairman, in reviewing the book, says:-

"Pages 205 to 214 are devoted exclusively to Delius, and there are at least 21 other references to Delius throughout. In terms of space, Delius receives more prominence than Benjamin Britten, is equalled by Elgar, and exceeded only by Vaughan Williams."

"Musical Opinion" for May

We congratulate our member, Mr. John Ripplin, on getting into print in last month's edition of "Musical Opinion", on the subject of Delius's Requiem. This has been described elsewhere as "in some sense a pendant to his (Delius's) 'Mass of Life'." Mr. Ripplin also sees a connection but says "The two works have little in common musically or formally".

Mr. Ripplin surmises that the work was probably written in 1915-16: "The autograph score, on loan to the British Museum, has the date 1914 written in the composer's own hand, but it is more likely that this date was inserted later at a time when this score was being used as a basis for the printed one." Mr. Ripplin makes the point that "Had Delius been moved to write the work by the slaughter of the war - as the dedication might suggest - the year 1914 did not really give him much time in which to do it."

DELIUS COMES TO GILLINGHAM

We have recently heard from one of our members, Dr. W. L. Reed, as follows:-

/ "Now

"Now that my course on Delius and Schumann at Gillingham is finished, you may be interested to know that we studied 25 works of our composer, nearly all of which were quite unknown to my students. The whole course was quite a revelation to them. One of them, having presented me with his essay near the end of the course, and having come to the conclusion that Delius, though a fine and original composer, was not quite for him, added a postscript after hearing *EVENTYR* that evening, that he was prepared to change his views completely! The whole series of evenings was of course a most enjoyable experience for me - and to most of them!"

.....AND TO PETERBOROUGH

In one week in May, Delius was mentioned twice by Peterborough of the Daily Telegraph. On 16th May, under the heading "A Composer Overlooked", Peterborough wrote:-

"Next Friday's performance of 'The Walk to the Paradise Garden' by the London Junior and Senior Orchestra is the only mention of Delius in two months at the Festival Hall. I hope our newer conductors will not overlook his delicate music. It will never take the public by storm but it deserves to be played. To keep his place in the repertoire Delius has always needed staunch admirers. The most devoted was Beecham, but Mengelberg gave first performances in 1914 at Queen's Hall nearly a year before Beecham conducted this week's work.

"Boult, Albert Coates, Eugene Goossens, Basil Cameron and Barbirolli are among other conductors fond of Delius after the 1914-18 war."

On 21st May, under the heading "Musical Melodrama", Peterborough wrote:-

"My note on Delius the other day has brought me a reminder of a curious story in the late Sir Henry Wood's 'My Life of Music', first published by Gollancz in 1938, six years before the conductor's death. In 1918 he invited Delius to his Hampstead home to discuss production of an orchestral work, "Once upon a Time", which the composer had just completed in France. He arrived looking 'tired and tragic' and Mme. Delius insisted that he should rest.

"No, no", said Delius. He then proceeded to unbutton his waistcoat, shirt and top trouser buttons and to my astonishment pulled out sheet after sheet of manuscript.

"The explanation of his melodramatic behaviour was that the war was still on and Delius was afraid his work might be confiscated. A rumour was then current that a spy in America had been sending information to Germany by a code concealed in scores."

These references to "Eventyr" remind us that this work is a great favourite of the conductor, Rudolf Kempe, whose comparative inactivity Delius-wise since the Bradford Festival has, we know, been a source of great disappointment to many members.

We must be very grateful to Peterborough for this much needed publicity. But as one would expect, from his character and early environment, there is much in Delius's music that is blunt and robust, and to which the adjective "delicate" would hardly apply.

It is true that Delius's more vigorous passages - certain parts of "Paris" and the final climax in "Brigg Fair", for example - have often been dismissed as poor, uncharacteristic (which they are not) and even vulgar, by those who commit the cardinal error of erecting their own image of an artist and then abuse him for not conforming to it. (I am reminded here that Revel once observed "Can they not understand that I may be superficial by nature?").

I hope to circulate another newsletter in August.

J. K. White
Newsletter Editor