

"THE MEDITATION OF OLD TIMES RESUMED"

When the possibility of travelling to Grez with Mr. & Mrs. Fenby and the Committee was first put to me I had not thought it possible for me to go. Only a few weeks later, however, Rodney Meadows' car drew up at my house, he alighted with Mr. & Mrs. Fenby and we had a hurried cup of tea before starting on the drive to the car ferry at Dover.

From then onwards I was constantly occupied with absorbing impressions, this being my first visit to the mainland of Europe. I was able to do this in tranquility, as Rodney is the most unflappable of drivers and our evening crossing of the Channel was as calm as we could have wished. The lights of Dover disappeared into the dusk; those of Dunkerque rose before us and we disembarked in the glare of fluorescent lamps which threw into relief the gaunt shadows of the shipping and the harbour cranes. After a short night's rest we left on the long drive to Grez. A fresh morning soon deteriorated into drizzling, and then driving rain, and the miles dropped behind us with little feeling of progression, so monotonous and uniform were the roads and fields as they passed. The villages also, with every door tightly shut and the houses drab and un-cared for, surprised me by being totally deserted as if the land had been laid waste by a plague and not a single survivor left behind. Our road led through Amiens and we stopped, in the rain, to look at the Cathedral. It would be difficult to imagine a more dramatic sight. The exterior of this lofty edifice was covered with multitudes of grimy angels, saints and devils so that the black stone danced with the stonemason's vision. It was impossible not to be awestruck.

Dusk was again falling as we approached Moncourt, after a very wet drive through the Forest of Fontainebleau. Grez, seen in the distance, seemed to have been translated into a travesty of its former self, and it was decided to leave its exploration until the following day. When we eventually drove into the gravel court-yard of our Inn we were delighted to find that it was the one referred to on pages 64 to 66 of Mr. Fenby's book. The old place has a most attractive air, with its brightly painted shutters and its dining room looking out on to the Loing canal, an impression strengthened by the charming way in which our young waitress chanted the menu to us. Potato soup has never tasted so good. Later that evening Estelle Palmley, Ann Todd and Charles Barnard, were to be collected from Paris, as they had travelled over by air and rail. Rodney and I travelled to the capitol along the new motor way and the journey in both directions passed without incident, except for an unfortunate wrong turning on the way back which, if followed, would have taken us nearer to Ravel's house than to the home of Delius. We arrived at our hotel in the early hours and went quietly to bed while the house slept. Perhaps the spirits of Heseltine, Granger and Bax were abroad, but nothing disturbed our slumber.

Mercifully, the following day was dry, and we walked the short distance into Grez. The centre span of the ancient bridge over the Loing had been destroyed in the last war and was now repaired in a way which did nothing to restore its former beauty. The village was well kept and pleasant, but everywhere Mr. Fenby saw the passing of the old artistic community of friends, and of the original character and atmosphere there was no trace. Arrangements were made with Madame D'Aubigne, the present owner of the Delius House, for us to see the house and garden that afternoon, and we therefore returned to Grez after a clandestine picnic lunch of cheese and wine held in Mr. & Mrs. Fenby's room, while the rain hissed into the canal outside.

The afternoon was again fine and we went at once to the house. The exterior facing onto the street was little changed, but as we passed through the porch and out into the garden the scene was very different from the one that Delius had known. The photograph facing page 81 in Sir Thomas Beecham's biography shows the back of the house and the garden as it can now be seen. The caption to the photograph is misleading: Delius's music room is emphatically not on the right of the picture. It was originally in this position, on the first floor, but has now been removed and the wall reconstructed further back. A railed balcony is all that remains of much of the floor space occupied

by the music room. Eric Fenby's 'small but lofty bedroom' (Delius as I knew Him, page 13) has disappeared completely. Within the house, much of the layout of rooms and corridors had been changed, as was natural, and indeed necessary perhaps, if such powerful ghosts were to be exorcised, so that the needs of a different family might be met.

But it was principally the garden that disappointed. It was well kept and had a paved courtyard, beyond which was an 'english' lawn and flower beds and then broad banks of grass under the trees down to the river. All this was pleasant enough, but it was a garden packed with incident and barbaric splendour of colour that inspired 'In a Summer Garden' and was the pride and joy of Mrs. Delius. We went down to the river and were amazed to find Delius' boat, just as it was and still river-worthy. On the roof of the boat house was a fish-trap which had been bought by Eric Fenby whilst he was with the Deliuses and had evidently been left there as no-one knew of its purpose (to catch trout, so Mr. Fenby informs us, although Sir Malcolm Sargeant - now, sadly, no longer with us - had refused to believe in the existence of such a gadget).

Much of the afternoon, and that of the following day, was spent sitting in the garden, listening to Rodney's large collection of Delius tapes. Although so much of the original atmosphere had departed it was not difficult to see how ideal the place was for Delius' work. Time stood still: the sounds there were of water lapping, or the movement of boughs lifted by the wind. A short row up river, was 'the end of the world', le bout du monde (at which point the river Loing apparently disappears into the bowels of the earth).

The following morning was spent visiting Montigny, a charming place, beautifully situated on the Loing, but with evident signs of wealthy patronage. Although it was continually fascinating to be treading thus in the footsteps of Delius and of his delightful and eccentric friends, it is for other reasons that I shall most vividly remember my visit to Grez.

It is unnecessary for me to say how pleasurable it always is to be in the company of the members of our Committee. The presence of Mr. & Mrs. Fenby made the expedition perfect for us moreover, not only by their unfailing good humour and consideration, but also by the way in which they were ready to share the experience with us, an experience which must have been very challenging - Eric Fenby had never returned to Grez after Delius' death, nor had his wife ever been there. Best of all, perhaps, were the evenings when, after the dinner had been cleared away, we sat around the table, finishing the wine and listening to Mr. Fenby's stories of those extraordinary people, musicians and artists, for whose work we owe a debt that it is beyond our power to repay.

J.K.W.

THE DELIUS SCORES.

It may be remembered that in Newsletter No. 16 I quoted some remarks taken from members' answers to the Questionnaire. At about that time I wrote to the Delius Trust on the subject of the Delius scores and I give the text of this letter below. I hope I have not misrepresented members' views and I should welcome correspondence on this subject. It is a vital aspect of the struggle to obtain greater recognition of the music and more frequent performances and low standards and inaccurate printing are simply not acceptable.

"I am a member of the Committee of the Delius Society and I have been asked to give special attention to matters concerning the publication of Delius' music. I am writing, therefore, in an attempt to present the views of our members, as far as I am aware of them, and it is hoped by our Committee that these views will be of some assistance to the Trust in its' work.

REQUIEM

2. Special mention must be made of our pleasure at the publication of the score of the Requiem, so long unobtainable, and in particular we are most grateful for the generous gift of free copies of this excellent score. I believe that many members have written to the Trust expressing thanks and I should like to add my own personal

gratitude to theirs. (I wonder if at some stage the Trust could consider issuing a vocal score, in addition to the choral and orchestral scores?)

PARIS 3. Equally welcome was the new score of Paris and it is satisfying to know that this fine work will be available to students and conductors in Mr. Fenby's authoritative revision.

IN A SUMMER GARDEN 4. Although very much appreciated since both were
AND SONG OF THE previously out of print, the scores of In a Summer Garden
HIGH HILLS and Song of the High Hills caused some disappointment. They had been reprinted in a very small size and although In a Summer Garden was readable, several pages of Song of the High Hills were quite impossible to decipher. No doubt the publishers decided the format to be adopted without reference to the Trust, and we would hope that if the scores are reprinted a much larger size will be used (the size used for Paris would be admirable).

A MASS OF LIFE, 5. A point that causes general concern among members is
A VILLAGE ROMEO, that no score of any sort of A Mass of Life can be bought
AND JULIET, AND at present. Similarly A Village Romeo and Juliet can only
FENNIMORE AND be obtained in old copies of the vocal score taken over
GERDA. from the original publishers by Messrs. Beesey and Hawkes.

Since these two works represent Delius' finest large-scale achievements, new and revised scores are seriously needed. Very few members have had an opportunity to study the orchestration of these works and in view of the excellent performances of A Mass of Life sponsored by the Trust in recent years, the appearance of full, vocal and miniature scores of the great composition would help to spread the Trust's pioneer work. Interest in Fennimore and Gerda has recently been reviving and here, also, opportunities might lead to fruitful results if scores were available. The publishers informed me that the only full score had been bought by the B.B.C.

SONGS OF SUNSET 6. Among vocal scores, Songs of Sunset and An Arabesque
AND AN ARABESQUE. are unobtainable but in demand by members both in vocal and (equally unobtainable) miniature form. The recent performances in Liverpool will, one hopes, lead to an increase in interest in these two masterpieces.

7. A point particularly appreciated by members is that the miniature scores recently issued have been released at extremely reasonable prices. Messrs. Beesey and Hawkes' other issues are often expensive; the vocal score of Hassan - quite a modest volume - costs 40/- and we hope that scores produced under the direction of the Trust will continue the fine standard set by the Requiem and Paris and at similarly attractive costs to the purchases.

8. However, I should like to emphasise in conclusion that we are all very conscious of the great debt of gratitude we owe to the Trust for its' work in the cause of Delius over the years since this great composer's death."

As far as I am aware, there is nothing to add, to date. The Delius Trust have acknowledged my letter, but I have heard nothing further.

In my original remarks in Newsletter No. 16, I was guilty of somewhat over-stating the case and I was most grateful to receive a letter from our member, Robert Threlfall, which presents the situation with admirable clarity:-

"I am writing because I think there's a little to be added to the current Newsletter.

Firstly, the miniature scores of Appalachia and Sea Drift were reprinted by Boosey well before the Beecham Edition was engraved. The original publisher (Harmonie-Verlag) used lithographed originals, not engraved plates, for full scores of these works (as also for the Piano Concerto, Mass of Life, and Village Romeo and Juliet). After they were transferred to Universal-Edition, the latter publisher engraved and issued miniatures of these two works; and Boosey, when they took them over, reissued these likewise. The full scores were engraved (for the first time) for the Beecham Edition, but the miniatures had of course already been issued from engraved plates by then. Something the same happened with "Paris", of which Leuckart's full and miniature scores were both from the same lithographed original. Not until 1965 was this work first engraved by Kalmus for their reprint. This is the tragedy of the non-issue of Mass of Life

in the Beecham Edition: there never was a miniature of this, nor any engraved score; only Harmonie-Verlag's original 2-volume lithograph.

However, the Beecham Edition has gone a little farther than you say, I think. As well as the volumes of the "Complete Edition" as you state, viz. Appalachia, Sea Drift (Vocal Score also) and Piano Concerto, there is the Florida Suite (miniature as well!) and Brigg Fair - the last for reasons of copyright being issued in America only. Besides the "Walk to the Paradise Garden" which you mention, and which is quite exceptionally not only edited but rescored (reduced) by T.B., there are the Intermezzo and Serenade from Hassan and (I believe, though the score doesn't say so!) the Intermezzo from Fennimore and Gerda. Finally there is the Irmelin Concert Suite (Scenes from Act II). All these are published by Boosey. Incidentally, their miniature HPS 86 is said in the catalogue to be "arr.T.B.". This is not wholly correct, since the first and last items therein - La Calinda and the Irmelin Prelude - are in fact arranged or edited by Eric Fenby.

In addition to these works, the early Marche Caprice and Summer Evening (but not, alas! the Sleigh Ride) were published in full and miniature scores by Joseph Williams. Also, Over the Hills and Far Away is published in full score by Schirmer. All these are Beecham Editions. Shortly before his death, his programme carried a Delius Trust panel which mentioned Mass of Life, North Country Sketches and Eventyr as forthcoming; as far as I know, the latter two never appeared, and of course the first one is the most serious lack of all.

Having said all this, I must now say a little more! I yield to none in my admiration of Beecham's performances, which were unique in their way. Yet just as even a recording can only capture one performance, whereas in fact no two are alike (a fact not always sufficiently realised by gramophone audience as against performers) even the most accurately-marked score cannot be more than the giant's robe without the giant. Mahler's scores can be read as differently as by Walter and by Klemperer, for example. Even the question of misprints has, I think, been overstated. Delius is not the only one to suffer from misprints; look at the Strawinsky 1919 Firebird; for example. And Beecham sometimes suffers likewise; as when, in his edition of Appalachia, the cymbal crash becomes a triangle note! Beecham doesn't distinguish his marks from the original, either; although basically all he does is to add or alter "hairpins" and dynamics, and perhaps bowings also. But whatever one says, an unedited score can be a challenge too, as in Bach or Mozart (T.B. published some edited Mozart ...). Kempe I believe used clean scores when he started playing Delius."

'AN ARABESQUE' AND 'SONGS OF SUNSET'

(Liverpool, March 14th 1967)

Having walked away with the first performance in England of the 'Requiem' since its unfortunate premiere, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic put us still further in their debt by presenting performances of these two Delius masterpieces. London audiences are still waiting for a chance to hear this music again - a sign, it seems to me, of the stagnation of musical life in London, where, although surrounded by plenty, one may easily die of musical malnutrition.

Mr. Philip Suffolk wrote to me about this concert, which took place at the Philharmonic Hall. The soloists were Thomas Hemsley, Baritone and Janet Baker, mezzo-soprano; the choir was the Liverpool Pharmonic. Mr. Suffolk says:-

"It is certainly very unusual to have two of Delius' choral works performed in one concert as was done in Liverpool on March 14th.

Delius' Arabesque is a strange work which needs a lot of sympathy from conductor and soloist. In this case Thomas Hemsley produced a most inspired performance which was very moving. It was good to hear Jacobsen's words in English and to have an idea of what

they were all about, instead of Danish as on Beecham's recording.

Janet Baker was at her best in 'Songs of Sunset', a most beautiful and intimate work which revealed itself more to me in this performance than it had done on previous hearings. The singing of the Philharmonic Choir was very strong possibly a little too much so, tending to drown Hemsley in parts of An Arabesque. Groves handled the orchestra very sensitively making one wish for an orchestral work to give a full impression of his powers as a conductor of Delius.

To sum up, a most rewarding experience, nobly performed. The audience was pretty well capacity, if a little cold in their applause."

Another member present was Mr. R.O. Wright, whose report supplements Mr. Suffolk's remarks. We should take Mr. Wright's criticism of our support of this event to heart; most of us could do more to support concerts and recordings:-

"Apart from myself and my friend Philip Suffolk of Halesowen near Birmingham, to our knowledge only two other members of the Delius Society were present at this important event, Mr. Ian Walker of Wreken College, Wellington, Shropshire and Mr. A.G. Lovgreen - the only member of the Society resident in Liverpool. In 1965 when Charles Groves conducted the second English performance of Delius' totally neglected "Requiem" a dozen or so Delians from the Delius Society made their way from all over the country to Liverpool. I personally considered this event, March 14th, 1967, as important musically and was bitterly disappointed to observe the poor support given by members of the Delius Society to the enterprise of Mr. Groves.

The Liverpool Philharmonic Society commands a strong local following; as far as we could tell the Philharmonic Hall was packed to capacity. In 1965 the large audience received the "Requiem" enthusiastically - obviously the dramatic beauty of the work as well as its sheer novelty and neglect, caught and sustained their imagination. On that occasion it was also obvious that Mr. Groves revealed himself as a first-rate Delius conductor, marshalling the elusive ebb and flow of Delius' music with absolute authority and conviction. This conviction was again evident on Tuesday evening. Probably "An Arabesque" is Delius' most neglected major choral work "after the "Requiem". It is also one of his most difficult pieces to come to terms with. How many Delians agree with myself that Beecham made a grave error (as far as English listeners are concerned) in recording the work in Danish and choosing a poor-toned baritone whose inaccurate pitching makes the work, at times, rather a trial to listen to? There was no such difficulty apparent on Tuesday evening. Thomas Hemsley sang his baritone solo with ease and lyrical fervour. The Philharmonic Choir realised Delius' choral writing with astonishing assurance. Their assured poise and admirable clear diction revealed a hitherto unsuspected transparent radiancy about the choral writing. Mr. Groves interpretation was an illuminating experience.

"Songs of Sunset" has not been heard in public since the 1962 Centenary Celebrations. At Bradford Kempe conducted in what I personally recall as being one of the most convincing of his Delius interpretations. Since 1962 the Beecham recording has appeared (and since been deleted). I was interested to observe that Mr. Groves kept his choir seated - in complete accordance with Delius' own expressed intentions with regard to the work. This above everything else preserved the subtle intimacy of the work; "Songs of Sunset" is one of Delius' loveliest works - music of haunting sensuous beauty concerned with the transience of human love. Thomas Hemsley, Janet Baker, the Choir and Orchestra under Mr. Groves inspired advocacy gave a performance of rapt intensity. As the final cadence dissolved into that silence from which the music first emerged - a cadence of great delicacy and beauty, I was left with a feeling of utter desolation. Surely this work is among the most emotionally moving composed this century?

Two things emerged from this concert, (1) That Mr. Groves has proved himself an ardent, enthusiastic Delian and more than deserves

all the support we can give him. (2) It is high time that the Delius Trust recognised both his ability and service to Delius' art by inviting Mr. Groves, his Choir and Orchestra to record the "Requiem"; "An Arabesque" and "Songs of Sunset".

I understand that a recording of the last two works by these performers is to be issued, eventually.

MIDLAND BRANCH REPORT.

The third meeting of the season was held on the 18th April and consisted of a talk on Beecham by Peter Thorp. After an extract from Beecham's recording of Scheherazade, we had a brief outline of Beecham's colourful career well stocked with "Beecham stories". Extracts of performances of the works of composers specially associated with Beecham were included, and then we adjourned for what amounted to a feast; the result of this was that difficulty was experienced in getting members to stir themselves for Part II of the talk - Beecham and Delius. This was particularly interesting as a recording of Sir Thomas talking was played, together with comparisons of Beecham's interpretations with those of other conductors (including Mr. Felix Slatkin who did not compare favourably). We must persuade Peter to give us another talk at an early date - this was most enjoyable.

The final meeting was held on the 7th June and was the Musical Evening. Mr. & Mrs. Bates entertained us and the programme was -

Capriol Suite (Warlock) Piano Duet by Jerry Rowe and Dick Kitching.
Sonata for Bassoon and piano (Hindemith) - Brian Dunn (Bassoon) and
Shirley Clover (Piano)
Cello Sonata (Delius) - Harold Bates (Cello) and Dick Kitching (Piano)

Interval.

Waltz (Rachmaninov) Piano Duet (as above)
Lucy Long arranged for Bassoon and Piano (as above)
Schumann and Elgar Cello Solos (as above)

THE QUESTIONNAIRE - CONCLUDED.

Remaining answers asked us to encourage or arrange more performances of Delius' music, such as:-

1. A revival of "A Village Romeo and Juliet" by Sadlers Wells
(here I would refer you to the Secretary's notes for May 1967)
2. A stage or concert production of 'Fennimore and Gerda', or a repeat of B.B.C. production (in the Secretary's notes, you will find news of the projected Yorkshire Opera Company production).
3. Arrange more recitals - preferably of songs; (it is suggested that recitals are preferable to talks)
4. Play all Delius' recorded music at Holborn. To this I would say: only if something can be done about the quality of reproduction!

Other suggestions are that we should arrange talks by conductors of Delius: Sir John Barbirolli, Charles Groves, for example, and that we should have a recital of works by members of the Society, several of whom compose.

There are several suggestions for social outings. Spring and Summer rambles (not as energetic as those undertaken by Delius) a Christmas Party, Socials, or Sunday 'At Homes'. A Lapel Badge is suggested by one member ('small and fairly inconspicuous ... just noticeable enough to unite Delians at concerts').

Miscellaneous ideas include joint meetings with the John Ireland Society, a correspondence column in the Newsletter - a good idea, although I would refuse to edit an 'agony column' - and finally the suppression of the James Gunn portrait! This request is understandable, but I think it would be fair

to say that the portrait was not intended to be sensational. Public reaction is unpredictable, and if the effect of the portrait has been to cheapen and sentimentalise what would now be called Delius' image then the damage has been done and we must do what we can to correct the impression. Much should be done by the new B.B.C. film and apart from this we must persuade everyone we can to read Mr. Fenby's book - I can think of no better corrective. Perhaps other members will agree with my view that the very fine sketches done by James Gunn are of greater value than the final portrait.

Footnote.

Mr. E.W. Clarke asks whether there is any possibility of obtaining a reprint from 'High Fidelity' of an article 'Beecham's Delius' mentioned by Trevor Harvey in the September 1962 'Gramophone' review of 'The Gods Go A-Begging'. If any member can assist Mr. Clarke, will they write to him at 'Sea Drift', 124 Queens Crescent, Stubbington, Fareham, Hants.

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