

DELIUS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER NO. 4 - JULY 1964

President: Eric Fenby, O.B.E.

Chairman: David Simmons

Hon. Secretary:
Miss Estelle Palmley,
45, Redhill Drive,
Edgware, Middlesex.

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

I have numbered this newsletter for convenience sake, as Mr. Harvey has written to say that this will help in identifying if any newsletters have gone astray. According to my calculations, this should be the fourth to be issued this year.

Presidents to meet in London in September

Members who were present at the Annual General Meeting will remember that our Chairman referred to the expected visit to this country of the President of the Delius Association of Florida (Mr. Hugh Alderman) "in August" and that it was hoped to arrange a function at that time at which he could meet our President and members of the Delius Society.

We are now expecting that this visit will take place between the 10th and 14th September, and our plans for a Delius concert at this time, under the auspices of the Delius Trust, are now under way.

We regret that owing to circumstances beyond our control we have not been able to give our members longer notice of this forthcoming event, but further details will be circulated as soon as possible.

Our Secretary has already been in touch with some members by telephone about this concert and members may find it convenient to contact her with any queries at Colindale 4842.

Other future events

It is now confirmed that the eminent conductor, Stanford Robinson, is to lecture to us on TUESDAY EVENING, 29TH SEPTEMBER, at 7.30 p.m. at the Holborn Library, 32, Theobalds Road, London, W. C. 1. (We understand from Mr. Robinson's secretary that he will be in Glasgow round about this time, but is making a special journey to London for our lecture, returning to Glasgow on the following day).

We know that members have already noted this date as a "must" (including Mr. Wright of Dudley), so we look forward to a good attendance of members - and their friends.

We have also booked the evening of Friday, 27th November, at the Holborn Library, and will give details of our programme later.

The Proms

Members will have noted with regret that there is no work of Bax or Ireland in this year's Proms, and that Delius is represented by one work only, on Friday, 11th September.

/ Our Chairman

Our Chairman wrote to Mr. Glock, pointing out the undesirability of our composer becoming too identified with this one work, "Sea Drift", and asking that the younger generation in particular should be given the unique opportunity of the Proms to hear more of the Delius repertoire, and has received the following reply from the Assistant Head of Music Programmes:-

"Mr. Glock has passed to me your letter about Delius. We will try in the coming year not to give the impression that "Sea Drift" is the only Delius work that can be maintained in the repertoire. We will remember "The First Cuckoo", "Song before Sunrise", and "Summer Night on the River". It happens, as you must have known, that our orchestra is frequently directed by foreign conductors and very few of them are in sympathy with his music. (Indeed there are not many conductors of any nationality who can handle Delius' miniatures with the delicacy and understanding of a Beecham). Nevertheless we are planning to broadcast next summer a performance of the "Mass of Life". Anyhow we will take to heart your reminder."

Our member, Mr. Greenshields, will recall a letter he received from Mr. Glock himself last year, on the subject of Delius and the Proms.

Our Chairman intends to pursue the matter further.

Recent broadcasts

These have been far fewer than in the earlier months of the year. On June 1st we heard the Rudolf Kempe broadcast of "Sea Drift", and in a review in the Financial Times on Tuesday, 2nd June, Ronald Crichton said "This was an intimate performance with a degree of balance between singers and orchestra rarely achieved in the concert hall. Whitman's words were given full value both by the excellent soloist, John Noble, and by the BBC Chorus."

On 7th June, Stanford Robinson included the Intermezzo (Koanga) in the Sunday Symphony Concert.

Writing to us in March, after his anniversary programme, Mr. Robinson said:

"My arrangement of the Intermezzo from 'Koanga' seems now to be quite accepted as good Delius, and I am going to try to get Boosey & Hawkes to publish it in order that it can be available for other conductors and other orchestras. At present it is only in the BBC Music Library. I hope too to get it recorded one day."

Those members who are especially interested in scores might find it worth enquiring from Boosey & Hawkes whether this score is in fact yet available.

On Tuesday, June 23rd, Vilem Tausky conducted "Summer Evening" in the Lunchtime Prom broadcast from the Guildhall, London, and there was a performance of Delius's Sonata No. 2 on Friday, July 3rd, in the Home Service (Brigid Ranger, violin, Ian Lake, piano).

At a few minutes before 11 p.m. on Sunday, July 19th, there was a recording of "La Calinda" conducted by George Weldon, with the Philharmonia Orchestra. This was announced as "part of a recording of a George Weldon concert".

In an all too rare contribution to our newsletter our Chairman writes about a broadcast of English Songs in the Third Programme on May 7th, sung and introduced by Peter Pears, which he describes as "delightful".

"Peter Pears, accompanied by Viola Tunnard, began with Delius at 50 (I think his description was "high maturity"), and sang the very authentic Herrick's "To Daffodils", and Fiona MacLeod's "Hy-Brasil". In these, as indeed in the whole of the programme, the tenor's wonderful feeling for words underlined the contribution of English composers to our literary heritage.

"Then Moeran, whose early "Merry Month of May" reminded us that his own orchestral Nocturne was dedicated to Delius.

"Warlock (Heseltine) was an inevitable inclusion, but before we heard his works we were reminded of that other potent and still undervalued enigma, namely van Dieren, in two settings of Beddoes and Shakespeare. There followed "O Mistress Mine" - the perverse in Warlock renaming it "Sweet and Twenty", and we were reminded of Delius's influence and of Heseltine's propagandism. Warlock's darker side was also remembered in 3 Saudades.

"A 1920 setting of Cyril Scott reminded us that this still living composer found links with Delius whom he has praised as a 'poet of atmosphere'. A Goossens setting of Wyatt dating from 1920 reminded us of a perhaps 'symbolic' figure whose diffused talents were too eclectic to endure - and any uninitiated here would deem the composer as Delius.

"The powerful personality of Percy Grainger provided an ideal close for the programme. Pears' commentary reminded us that his links with Delius if not in personality derived from a mutual feeling for the fragile miniature talents of Grieg. I might add that although my admiration for Grieg's output is not as fervent as that of both Grainger and Delius, I do feel that if it were not for Grieg's emergence on to the international musical scene at just about the right time, recognition for Delius would have been even more delayed.

"Pears in his collaboration with Britten has helped the quality and quantity of this English composer's output, and it is easy to feel that he is ultimately a one-composer performer. But from an early record (a Decca cheap label) of the two Warlock carols I was impressed with the musicianship and fastidiousness of one of the soloists - a very young Peter Pears!

"And it was this aspect of Pears' art that I recalled in listening to this broadcast described by the tenor himself as 'songs by Delius and those composers who may be regarded as influenced by him.' "

Mention of E. M. Forster's book reminds us that Mr. Aprahamian has drawn our notice to a chapter in Cedric Glover's novel "The Mysterious Barricades", which he tells us depicts an imaginary performance of "Fennimore & Gerda" at Sadlers Wells. We have not yet been able to obtain a copy for ourselves, but further details of this book are - published by Times Press, Douglas (Isle of Man) 18s.

Unusual performances

Martin Cooper writes in the Telegraph on Saturday, 18th July:-

"How important is the "siting" of a work, the physical setting of its performance and the musical context in which it is heard" and continues "The discretion is very much the same as that needed for the arrangement of seats at a dinner table. It would be tactless, for instance, to put.....Debussy next to Delius".

A quick glance at a 1953 programme confirms that Sir Thomas Beecham at least put Debussy and Delius next door but one, and without diplomatic incident so far as we are aware! And no doubt members can recall other instances.

In this context our Secretary writes:-

"It would seem that nothing could be more fitting than a performance of 'Summer Night on the River' which - owing to a feat on the part of the Royal Engineers I am not technically competent to describe - took place on July 13th, on the River Avon itself, the audience being seated on the banks of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre gardens.

"This was sympathetically interpreted by Constantin Silvestri conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. But the spirit of Grez would not be invoked in this Stratford Festival atmosphere.

It was however largely thanks to our member, Mr. Aickman, that there was this all too rare opportunity to hear a live performance of this work. Though appealing, 'Summer Night on the River' has always struck me as something of an 'odd man out' in the Delius repertoire, and I think of it as 'abstract art' rather than 'impressionism', although I know my colleague, Mr. Barnard, does not agree with me in this, asserting that this is the most impressionistic of all Delius works! But I particularly like a description from the programme notes on this occasion:-

'The orchestral colours are rich and the music is full of passing thoughts which seem to get swallowed up in the failing evening light' "

Another unusual performance took place at the Holy Trinity Church in Hull, in June, and we are indebted to Mr. N. S. Staveley for this news. The complete programme (which was in fact given three separate performances in an ecclesiastical setting) was

Weelkes P.	Alleluia, I heard a voice
Delius	Two songs to be sung of a summer night on the water
Dandrieu	Offertoire 'O filii et filiae'
Delius	On Craig Dhu
Bach	Prelude and Fugue in D
Byrd	Mass for 5 voices
Edmundson	Apostolic Symphony - Toccata

The Delius items were most favourably reviewed by Anthony Hedges in the Yorkshire Post, and Mr. Steveley writes:

"The performance was without a doubt of a very high standard and there did not seem to be any difficulty in accepting both the disregard of chronological sequence in the programme or the presentation of Delius's music in church. It sounded exactly right and it would be wrong of me to add anything further to the newspaper report."

My holiday in Scandinavia produced two items for the newsletter. On my first morning in Stockholm, I switched on the radio in the hotel bedroom, and was astonished to hear the Pougnet recording of the Violin Concerto. I couldn't understand the announcement at the end, but assume it was a record programme. So Delius is occasionally played in Sweden.

On the boat from Helsinki to Leningrad, I met two delightful Americans. One, ~~Anne~~ Anne Hall, teaches the piano at the Juilliard School of Music in New York, and the other, William Strickland, is a free lance orchestral conductor. We were discussing English music, and I asked them what they thought of Delius. They both enthusiastically replied that they loved his music, and Mr. Strickland said that he occasionally conducted it. I have promised to send them copies of newsletters - in which they both expressed interest - and I hope that in due course they will consider becoming members of the Society.

Needless to say, the Russians appeared never to have heard of Delius. But then, not all musical chords are equal in their eyes. Some are definitely more equal than others. Perhaps, in this context, we should ask the BBC to follow the "One Hundred Best Tunes" radio programme on Sunday evenings with one entitled the "One Hundred Favourite Chords of Delius". It would certainly be fun compiling such a programme.

New members

We welcome to the Delius Society the following new members:-

Mr. & Mrs. E. E. Rowe,
Hillcrest Cottage,
Shottle Gate,
Derbyshire.

(Mr. & Mrs. Rowe were introduced to us by Mr. Kitching, and are members of his Midlands group).

Mrs. Freda Drage,
8, Boundary Road,
Upminster, Essex.

(Mrs. Drage was introduced to us by our member, Mr. G. L. Gray).

Victor Bellerby, Esq.,
105, Beattie House,
Dolphin Square,
London, S. W. 1.

(Mr. Bellerby was introduced to us by our member, Mr. Aprahamian).

One of our members, Mr. Stafford, tells us that he was able to contact our only Australian member, Mr. Himmer, during a visit to that Continent last February, and writes:-

/ "As you know,

"As you know, I intended making contact with Mr. Himmer during my visit to Australia last February. I telephoned him and had a long and interesting conversation during the course of which I conveyed the greetings of the members of the Society, which pleased him very much. The place where he lives, Cowes, Phillip Island, is some 80 miles from Melbourne and my schedule did not permit me to visit him."

A V.R. & J.

Members may have seen the letter in this month's "Gramophone" from one of our members, Mr. Walker, saying that it is not EMI's intention to reissue the Beecham 78s of "A Village Romeo and Juliet" on to LPs.

Although this news will be disappointing to some members, I for one could bear it if this means there is still a glimmer of hope for getting a new recording of this beautiful work!

But for those who adhere to the 78s, how much would you feel it absolutely essential to preserve, should it prove feasible to transfer only a selection from the historic Beecham recording on to LPs? Your Committee were discussing this most interesting hypothesis one evening recently, and it was suggested that this very study might indeed be made the subject of one of our meetings, possibly on the 27th November.

Our Vice-Chairman, Dr. Gibson, has started us off by suggesting the following:-

- (1) The introduction and the two farmers' music, leading up to the departure in Act I of the Dark Fiddler.
- (2) The orchestral preludes to the other acts.
- (3) The Fair Music
- (4) The Walk to the Paradise Garden
- (5) Concluding scene.

Fennimore & Gerda

Dr. Gibson has also suggested that we should urge the Delius Trust to record, if not the whole opera, at least the following excerpts, conducted by Stanford Robinson:-

- (1) The whole of Act I of Fennimore
- (2) The whole of the Gerda act
- (3) One or two very short orchestral pictorial passages out of the middle acts.

What are the members' views please?

Charles Barnard
(Newsletter Editor)