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DELIUS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER NO. 8 - OCTOBER 1964.

Chairman - David Simmons

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Alperton, Middx.

Although three months have elapsed since our last newsletter, the Society has been very active, and the two circulars sent out in August and October will, we hope, have served to keep all our members in touch with events.

On 12th September, ninety-one members and friends gathered at the Arts Council to meet Mr. Hugh Alderman, President of the Delius Association of Florida. Our President, Mr. Fenby, welcomed our guest of honour and referred to the valuable work done by the Delius Association in putting on a Delius Festival in Florida each year for the last four years. Mr. Fenby said that Jacksonville would always be especially associated with our composer for his meeting there with Thomas F. Ward, whom Delius has described as the only teacher he ever had. Our President closed his short address by thanking Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel of the Delius Trust for making the afternoon's events possible.

In reply Mr. Alderman expressed the good wishes of the Delius Association of Florida to the members of the Delius Society, and thanked Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel for their hospitality.

The Amici Quartet, leader Lionel Bentley, then gave a very moving performance of the Delius String Quartet, and after a very lively interval for refreshments, and in response to many requests, played a reprise of "Late Swallows".

Mr. Alderman then rose to express his pleasure at the music we had heard and for the opportunity of meeting so many fellow-Delians.

We were especially delighted to see at the Arts Council Mrs. Fenby, wife of our President; Mr. & Mrs. Rose and family (children and grandchildren of Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel); Mr. Norman Millar of the Delius Trust; Mrs. Derek Hudson, god-daughter of Delius and daughter of his friend, Norman O'Neill; Mr. Frank Merrick, the distinguished pianist; Mr. Gordon Stewart, one of our artistes at Leighton House, and Mrs. Stewart; Mr. Joseph Vandernoot, who recently conducted Delius' "Over the Hills and Far Away"; Mr. Anthony Payne, music critic; and a prospective member of the Delius Society - Miss Emma Simmons, the very young daughter of our Chairman!

It is of course always a pleasure to see our members who regularly support us, including many from out of London, and we also met for the first time Mr. & Mrs. Kidney, Mr. Dannatt, and a very new member, Miss Morrison. We hope they will feel encouraged to come to some of our Holborn meetings in the future.

With the reluctance of "late swallows", we left our surroundings and this lovely music, and migrated to Soho by foot, car and taxi, for dinner at Bertorelli's, at which Mr. Hugh Alderman was again our guest of honour, and where we were joined by the members of the Amici Quartet, this time as our guests.

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As was to be expected, when 48 people are gathered together in a space normally reserved for 40, introductions became almost superfluous, and all too soon coffee was served and the meal was at an end.

Our President, Mr. Fenby, then rose to say that he could not let this occasion pass without thanking the Committee for all their work in preparation for this day, and would especially like to thank Miss Todd and Miss Palmley.

Mr. Emanuel then also thanked all concerned with the arrangements, especially Miss Palmley, and Mrs. Emanuel proposed a vote of thanks to our Chairman, Mr. David Simmons.

The proceedings ended with Mr. Emanuel recounting Sir Thomas Beecham's dictum to musicians to the effect that as long as they started together and finished roughly at the same time, it didn't really matter much what happened in between! Mr. Emanuel however hastened to add that this could not possibly apply to the delightful music we had heard that afternoon from the Amici Quartet.

We are very pleased that Mr. A. J. Noakes, who is a keen supporter of the Society, was able to be with us for the whole evening, prior to his departure from England on a journey which will take him eventually to San Francisco. He will be away for about a year, and we wish him "bon voyage", and hope he will meet other Delians on his travels.

We were very pleased to receive the following letter from Mr. Alderman dated 9th October:-

"Dear Miss Palmley,

Since my return to the States, I have scarcely had a minute to call my own! My desk was swamped with work and I have had many newspaper commitments with the opening of the musical season in Jacksonville. I only regret that I have been so delayed in saying a hearty "thank you" to the Delius Society for the honor accorded me when I was recently in London by the conversazione including the performance by the Amici Quartet of the Delius String Quartet, the sherry hour and the dinner which followed.

I appreciated not only the honor but the opportunity to get to know fellow-Delians in England.

The playing of the Amici Quartet was superb. I only hope that the Trustees will make an effort to have this work recorded, for it is very beautiful and lovers of the music of Delius should have an opportunity to hear this composition.

As President of the American counter-part of your organization, I know the work which must have fallen upon you in connection with arrangements made for September 12th, so to you also a personal word of thanks for the very smooth manner in which everything was handled.

With kindest regards, I am,

Most cordially,
Sgd. Hugh Alderman
President"

/ Mrs. Emanuel

Mrs. Emanuel has also kindly written us as follows:-

"Dear Miss Palmley,

Owing to the fact that Mr. Emanuel and I were away for two weeks immediately after the delightful Concert at the Arts Council, and have since had a loss in the family, I have not been able to write and thank you, and all your fellow members of the Committee, for the very happy and successful arrangements made for us all on the 12th September. We were delighted to be hosts to all that large gathering of Delius lovers, and so glad that everyone had such a happy evening.

We do hope we shall be able to attend the Royal Philharmonic Society's Concert at the Albert Hall on the 3rd November, and look forward to seeing you all in the Prince Consort Room as arranged.

With renewed thanks for all your hard work, and all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd. Miriam Emanuel".

Hardly had the last notes of the string quartet been played at the Arts Council, than we found ourselves plunged - and delightfully so - into the final preparations for the lecture by Stanford Robinson on the 29th September.

This was attended by about sixty members and friends, amongst whom we were particularly pleased to see 8 music students from the Royal Academy and Royal College, for if we can help to persuade present day music students that the works of Delius are well worth performing, we need have no fear for performances of his music at least up to the year 2000! We were also able to meet for the first time our members, Mr. G. L. Gray and Dr. Kelyneck.

Our Chairman opened the proceedings by declaring that Mr. Robinson in fact hardly needed any introduction to an audience of Delians, and recalled that his first acquaintance with the music of Delius was through broadcasts by Stanford Robinson some years ago.

Mr. Robinson then referred in glowing terms to Sir Thomas Beecham, whom he described as his hero, and mentor. Some music almost played itself, but Delius was a real challenge to conductors, since the music as written by the composer himself was often very far from helpful. While other conductors had their own ideas about playing Delius, and had started with fresh scores, Mr. Robinson said he for one was quite content to play Delius according to Sir Thomas Beecham's markings. (From an anecdote which Mr. Robinson related later on, it became fairly clear that there has been a close understanding between the two conductors, and that some of the Beecham "characteristic" markings on the score sprang from suggestions made to him by Mr. Robinson).

Mr. Robinson said Sir Thomas could never be very far from his lips or his thoughts in speaking of Delius and expressed what we must all feel - his ever growing sense of loss now that Sir Thomas is no longer with us to make every concert a special occasion.

Mr. Robinson then told us that he proposed to talk about two operas "from the conductor's point of view" - "Koanga" and "F. & G."

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There was a subtle difference between the music which Delius wrote for the "coloured" voices in "Koanga" in contrast to the "white". Mr. Robinson himself had always been thankful that he had insisted on "coloured" voices for the leading roles when he broadcast "Koanga" some years ago, because of a quality which could not be imitated. 'You could not imagine', said Mr. Robinson, 'a "white" cast singing "Porgy & Bess" for instance!'

Mr. Robinson then proceeded to relate the touching story of Koanga and Palmyre, with musical illustrations, which he sometimes conducted from the score.

After an interval for refreshments, Mr. Robinson then proceeded to "Fennimore & Gerda", explaining that here for the first time in a Delius opera was a story of mature love - no longer the young, idyllic love portrayed in earlier operas, and in recounting the story pointed to one and a half pages in his score which must, Mr. Robinson said, be the shortest love duet in any opera!

Mr. Robinson made special mention of a passage in the score where Delius had not been able to forget that only the year before he had written "Brigg Fair"! - and illustrated the expense involved in mounting an opera of this kind by referring to the inclusion of a character called a doctor in a scene of revelry who did not have to sing one line! Mr. Robinson said of course he could always have been assumed to have been "called away on a case"!

As Mr. Robinson pointed out, Delius wrote this opera at a time when the style, influenced by Strauss, was changing, and there was also a move away from lavish productions. Mr. Robinson speculated on what Delius might have achieved had he received more encouragement in this field.

This brief resume of Mr. Robinson's lecture can hardly do justice to his humorous asides, authoritative delivery, and obvious affection for what he himself described as "this wayward, appealing music."

Mr. Fenby then rose to thank Mr. Robinson for an evening which, as he said, we had long looked forward to. The mantle of Sir Thomas Beecham had fallen on Mr. Robinson, and so long as he was with us we need have no fear that that mantle would be put away in the cupboard. He felt that the extract which Mr. Robinson had played from "Fennimore & Gerda" and likened to "Brigg Fair" could not have been played more persuasively, even by Beecham himself.

Mr. Robinson, recalling Mr. Fenby's services to Delius, said he was moved that Mr. Fenby should have thought so highly of his own interpretation of this music. He hoped that perhaps the BBC might be inspired to repeat these two operas in their broadcasting plans for the future.

With some reluctance - and the clock now pointing to twenty minutes over our allotted time - this most memorable event in our calendar came to an end.

/ We would

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our very good friend, Miss Ley, for help with the refreshments at both meetings in September, and also Mrs. Noakes for supplying some delicious cakes for the Holborn meeting.

We were delighted that Mrs. Robinson (Miss Lorely Dyer) was able to be present, and she has since sent us the following message:-

"What a lovely surprise! Many thanks for the beautiful flowers. Please convey my thanks to the Delius Society."

Following this lecture, we were very interested to hear from one of our members, Mr. Aickman, as follows:-

"I have long been of the opinion that "Koanga" is the best of Delius's operas and suggested to Glyndebourne that it be produced there during the centenary year, of course without result. It would further seem a good moment in history for the reason that there are now several distinguished coloured singers in world operatic circulation.

I did hear in the studio Stanford Robinson's "Fennimore & Gerda." The whole work makes vastly more effect, of course, than the extracts, but it simply seems to me, as it has to many others, that the Fennimore part is good, and the Gerda part rather insipid, as well as totally out of accord with Fennimore. It is also, by the way, totally out of accord with the general impression made by the original novel, a very remarkable work. I believe, therefore, that the opera as a whole is virtually unrepresentable. I should very much have liked to see it presented in the wonderful former opera house of Frankfurt, all the same."

Lest members should think that it has been all "salad days" for the Society, the correspondence with the BBC about Delius and the Proms has continued. This was initiated by our Chairman, but was then taken over by our Committee member, Mr. Rodney Meadows, whose blood pressure was found to be slightly lower!

In this connection our Secretary writes:-

"Although we must all be somewhat alarmed that Delius is only just managing to retain a toe-hold in the Proms and the concert hall generally, I think we should give the BBC some credit for placing the one Delius item in the Proms this year in the context of such an interesting concert.

The prospect of hearing a new work by Richard Bennett (which in my humble opinion turned out to be fairly excruciating!), the much-loved Enigma variations, and the Hymn of Jesus, must have attracted an audience which might not otherwise be familiar with the Delius work. From my very excellent seat in G stalls I was able to observe the young promenaders, and it seemed to me that "Sea Drift" was making a definite impact on them."

New Members

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

/ Mr. R. Breezw

Mr. R. Breeze,
The Spotted Cow,
Lower Bourne,
Farnham, Surrey.

who became a member as a result of
our advertisement in The Gramophone.

Mr. Stanley Ashwell,
31, South Street,
Barming,
Nr. Maidstone, Kent.

who was introduced to us by Mr. John
Palmley.

Mr. J. Russell Williams,
Cedarlow, Frieth,
Nr. Henley on Thames, Oxon.

who was introduced to us by our member,
Mrs. Rachel Dugmore.

Mr. Lionel Bentley,
37, Chandos Road,
London, N. W. 2.

leader of the Amici quartet.

Mr. Vernon Elliott,
3, Maxted Park,
Harrow, Middx.

who was introduced to the Society by
our Chairman.

Miss Marilyn Morrison,
Mail Service 2721/5,
Bank of New South Wales,
Sackville Street,
London, W. 1.

who is from Australia, and delighted
the Committee by writing to say that
the main purpose of her visit to
England was, she thought, Delius!

We close with a report from a member of our **Midland Branch**,
Mr. Jerry Rowe:-

"A second meeting of the Midland Branch of the Society was held at the home of Mr. & Mrs. R. Taylor at Darley Abbey on June 17th. A quorum of fifteen being admitted to the satisfaction of the chairman, the meeting was allowed to proceed, subject to minor disturbance from some slightly unruly equipment (the property of the Chairman!)

We heard first an exciting performance of Ravel's "La Valse" (Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Paray). In content this is little more than pastiche, an appreciation of Strauss, but Ravel's marvellous orchestral writing is always a lesson to the ear. This recording also gave us Faure's Pavane for good measure.

Malcolm Arnold's 2nd Symphony (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by the composer) was made easier for us by Mr. Kitching's clear and careful summary. The composer's style allowed some of us our mid-session doze but held the attention as much by the reasoned construction of the work as by the usual flamboyant outbursts.

The interval was necessarily protracted to enable all to do justice to the delightful refreshments provided by our hosts, and for our several visitors to be suitably met and welcomed. Afterwards the great Beecham rendering of "Appalachia" held us all enthralled. Rehearing the work for some of us provided clarification of rather cloudy remembrances (and for one at least - who shall be nameless - a differential diagnosis of the theme from that of a certain Dvorak movement)."

I look forward to meeting members again in November.

Charles Barnard
Newsletter Editor