

DELIUS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER NO. 6 - DECEMBER 1964

Chairman: David Simmons

Hon. Secretary
Miss Estelle Palmley
45, Redhill Drive,
Edgware, Middx.

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

Owing to a sudden dearth of material of suitable length for this issue, our newsletter editor has asked me (as his "ace reporter"!) to take over the editorship for this month.

I must start with an apology and ask readers to correct a typographical error in the October newsletter, which was numbered '6' and should read '5'.

In our last newsletter of 1964, it is more than a little gratifying to look back on a year of activity, which opened with our concert at Leighton House on January 4th and closed with a sherry party, at which our host was Committee member, Mr. Rodney Meadows, during the interval and after the concert at St. Pancras Town Hall on 27th November. To our delight, Mr. Fenby joined us for this informal gathering.

The most recent highlight in our Delius year was of course the performance of "A Mass of Life" at the Albert Hall on 3rd November, to which the press reacted favourably in almost every instance. In his usual sympathetic and balanced review of a Delius work, Ronald Crichton in the "Financial Times" referred to the very excellent programme notes by Deryck Cooke.

To turn to the more parochial aspects of this event, I should like to record our thanks to our Chairman and Mr. John White of the Committee for the excellent arrangements which enabled members to attend a rehearsal (and in some cases two rehearsals) of the "Mass" and to meet in the Prince Consort room in the interval, and also for their joint authorship of our complimentary full-page advertisement in the programme.

The rehearsals and performance of the "Mass" drew members to London whom we should not in the usual course of events hope to see, notably Mr. L. Gilhespy (from Switzerland), Mrs. A. Sykes, Dr. & Mrs. D. Strong, Mr. P. Chamberlain and Miss Chamberlain, Mr. Robert Wright, Mr. Lyndon Jenkins, Mr. Kitching, ~~Mr. R. Buckley and Mr. J. East.~~

I do not think we can be accused of over-optimism, after reading Desmond Shawe-Taylor's article in the "Sunday Times" for November 8th on the "re-emergence of a major Delius work", if we begin to see signs and portents of - in Mr. Shawe-Taylor's words - "a change in the climate" for Delius' music.

Ideally, this should be followed up quickly with another "smash hit" before the favourable atmosphere engendered by the performance of the "Mass" begins to evaporate. Some of the problems that have to be overcome may be gathered from the following letter from Sir Malcolm Sargent to Mr. John White dated 2nd November, which Sir Malcolm has kindly given us permission to reproduce here:-

/ "You were

"You were very kind to write me such a charming letter - I apologise for not having answered it before but I have just returned from South Africa.

"As you know Delius is a great love of mine and I so wish we could make his music more popular with every conductor, but there are snags. They are always difficult to perform and need a lot of editing - I have spent hours over the 'Mass of Life' and do hope that the concert will be almost worthy of this great work.

"Again my thanks to you for your encouraging letter."

Earlier this year I wrote to Mr. Constantin Silvestri, Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, on the subject of more performances, and received the following reply from the Concerts Manager, Mr. David Blenkinsop:-

"M. Silvestri has asked me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 26th August, and to thank you for your kind comments.

"M. Silvestri has not programmed any Delius works for this coming season but I feel sure that following the success of his recent Delius performances he will certainly consider so doing in future."

In an enquiry about our Society, Mr. John Charles, Concerts Manager of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society, wrote:-

"I have now for some time tried to persuade the Society to perform "Appalachia" or the "Mass of Life" without very much success, but I do know that Charles Groves (Musical Director) is sympathetic to Delius' music and does intend sometime to perform one or other of these items."

As a postscript to the "Mass", I received a letter from our member, Mr. N. S. Staveley, regretting that he was unable to attend the performance on the 3rd November, in which he says:-

"Why choralists are frightened of German I don't know. They will sing with abandon in Latin and French but eschew a language which is nearer to their own. I blame this on contraltos, who are generally perverse!"

I too must admit that I am not often happy about contraltos, but those of us who were present at the "Mass" on the 3rd November will not soon forget Miss Marjorie Thomas' lovely singing of "O Zarathustra! Far beyond good and evil we discover our island."

Other events in November

The Delius Society was represented by its Committee and some members at the concert of the Peter Warlock Society on 4th November, to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the composer's birth.

I would go far to hear Wilfred Brown's superb diction and lovely tone, and once again he did not disappoint. His accompanist, Gordon Stewart, demonstrated his skill in "Yarmouth Fair", which pianists acknowledge to be of "fiendish difficulty". A section of the London Orpheus Choir (among whom we recognised with pleasure another member of the Delius Society, Miss Phyllis Dabbs) sang six unaccompanied part songs.

We warmly congratulate the Peter Warlock Society on a very good turn-out for this event.

On November 27th the Society was reasonably well represented at the St. Pancras Town Hall to hear the performance of "In a Summer Garden" (to my mind, Delius' masterpiece), by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Vernon Elliott.

Full marks to Vernon Elliott, if I may, for never allowing the flowers to wilt and the summer to fade. This was a colourful garden, if not often, as I imagine it, sufficiently "recollected in tranquility".

A first performance of Adrien Cruft's "Prospero's Island" achieved the rare distinction these days of being both "modern" and melodious, and the playing of the R.P.O. was throughout the evening of the high standard we all remember of this body.

Programme notes by David Simmons, who also arranged a complimentary quarter-page advertisement for the Society.

On the following evening, November 28th, the Fulham Municipal Orchestra gave a concert at the Fulham Town Hall, conducted by Joseph Vandernoot.

Here another surprise awaited me. Again a first performance of a modern work, this time "Nocturne" by John Wright, which was actually pleasing to listen to! (DO MY EARS DECEIVE ME, OR IS MUSIC ON THE WAY BACK?).

The soloist in the Mendelssohn violin concerto was the young Brazilian, Wilhelm Martin. He is a pupil of the Royal Academy of Music, and I see from the programme notes -

"~~has been~~ chosen by the Principal, Sir Thomas Armstrong, to represent the Academy in a recital programme to be given at the Amsterdam Conservatoire on 30th December this year."

In the Intermezzo from "Fennimore & Gerda", a very creditable performance was given by the soloists Eleanor Shortland (flute) and Kristjan Stephensen (oboe), particularly the latter, of whom perhaps we shall hear more.

On Sunday, 29th November, Bernard Herrmann, conducting the New Philharmonia Orchestra, included the "Walk to the Paradise Garden" in his programme at the Albert Hall.

At the climax of this work, Beecham in his lovely rendering foretells the lovers' irrevocable decision. Mr. Herrmann in his poetic interpretation underlined the dream rather than the drama.

Mr. Herrmann is conductor in chief of the Columbia Broadcasting System, and in his own words "has conducted every major work of Delius except the 'Requiem'."

I see from the programme notes that Mr. Herrmann has composed a full length opera "Wuthering Heights". Philip Heseltine records in his book that this was a subject which appealed to Delius for "musical treatment", but continues "The task of arranging a series of 'pictures' from Emily Bronte's great novel in the form of a libretto would seem to be almost impossible".

Future events.

Thanks to the good offices of our member, Mrs. Rachel Dugmore, Mr. John Boulton Smith will lecture to us on FRIDAY, 29TH JANUARY, at 7.30 p.m. at the Holborn Library, on the subject of "Frederick Delius and Edvard Munch: forty years of friendship."

This will be an illustrated lecture with colour slides of Munch paintings - and Delius records.

Refreshments as usual.

The significance of the date will not be lost on Delians, so we hope to celebrate with an especially good attendance on that day.

Especially for the benefit of new members, the address is, Holborn Library, 32 Theobalds Road, London, W. C. 1.

On Saturday afternoon, 30TH JANUARY, at 2.30 p.m., Sir Malcolm Sargent will record "North Country Sketches", which will be broadcast on that same evening, and Mr. J. Douglas Todd of the BBC has kindly invited us to the Maida Vale studio as before. The other major work is Shostakovich's 11th symphony.

Will members wishing to be included in my application for tickets please let me know by return if possible, and not later than the 4th January.

Members seem to be divided over Mr. Aickman's views on "Fanny and Gerda" (see October newsletter). Although the libretto is criticised, it is interesting to read the following passage in Heseltine's book:-

"The libretto is derived from Jens Peter Jacobsen's "Niels Lyhne" (for some reason or other the only English translation of the book is called "Siren Voices"), a novel of comparatively modern life, and in many passages Jacobsen's actual dialogue has been retained verbatim in the translation set to music".

On the practical possibilities of performance, Heseltine writes:-

/ "The Gerda

"The Gerda episode occupies but one-fifth of the whole work; but that fifth is just long enough to make a programme containing "Fennimore and Gerda" as well as another opera too long, while "Fennimore and Gerda" alone does not constitute what the Germans call an abendfüllendes Werk. This fact alone has undoubtedly hindered the performance of the work at several German opera-houses which would otherwise have been glad to take it into their repertory".

However, I myself and many members, I know, would be very reluctant to sacrifice the "Gerda" episode so that "Fennimore" could share a "double bill".

I also was present at the studio on the occasion to which Mr. Aiekman refers, and in view of what has been described as the "static nature" of the opera, perhaps the answer lies mainly in concert performances, rather than total neglect?

Recent broadcasts

Here, these have been so few over a period of five months as almost to cancel out our earlier optimism.

On Sunday, August 9th, "Brigg Fair" was broadcast in the request programme of gramophone records. (If I recall correctly it was asked for by a Mr. J. Hyde of Chester - not a member of our Society).

On Tuesday, August 18th, Peter Mountain, with his pianist wife, Angela Dale, gave a performance of "Legende". Peter Mountain has been the leader of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra since 1955 and plays on "a particularly fine Petrus Guanerius violin".

There was a slight increase in performance during the week August 22nd to 28th. On August 26th, Elizabeth Harwood included two songs "To Daffodils" and "Spring" in "Music at Night". On Thursday afternoon, August 27th, the Two Aquarelles were played by the Douglas Cameron String Quartet. On Friday afternoon, August 28th, Stanford Robinson gave the most lovely performance I have ever heard of "Summer Night on the River", conducting the BBC Northern Orchestra.

On Tuesday, October 20th, Norman Del Mar conducted the Delius Rhapsody No. 2 in "Music to Remember".

On Tuesday, November 24th, Vilem Tausky included the "Florida Suite" in Concert Hour, and Sir Thomas Beecham's recording of this work was played on Wednesday afternoon, September 9th, in a programme "Great Conductors". "Sea Drift", conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent, was broadcast from the "Proms" on September 11th.

Sir John Barbirolli included "The Walk to the Paradise Garden" in a concert by past and present students of the Royal Manchester College of Music. This was given last April in the Free Trade Hall and broadcast on the evening of September 23rd.

Crossword addicts may have noted that Delius turned up in the Daily Telegraph recently in the guise of "Duel is arranged for a man of noted composure (6)!"

New Members

/ We welcome

We welcome the following new members:-

Mrs. David Strong,
Whitehill,
Berkhamsted, Herts.

who was introduced to us by her husband, Dr. David Strong, who is an early member of the Society

Mr. John Gordon,
3, Sycamore Close,
Loddon, Norwich

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

Miss Carol K. Crinnell,
70, Main Street,
Stapenhill,
Burton-upon-Trent.

who was introduced to us by Mr. Kitching, chairman of our Midlands group.

and as a result of our advertisement in the "Mass of Life" programme:-

The Rev. Stephen C. Thompson,
St. Barnabas Vicarage,
7, Oakfields Road,
London, N. W. 11.

Miss Patricia Kirke,
64, Gloucester Court,
Kew Gardens,
Surrey.

Mr. Basil Moss,
2, Stanley House,
103, Marylebone High Street,
London, W. 1.

Mr. W. Ronald White, B. Mus.
Kirsten,
South Close, Horsell,
Woking, Surrey.

Mr. T. David Hutcheson,
c/o, Miss E. M. Flounders,
38, Lilybank Gardens,
Glasgow, W. 2.

I apologise that in our October issue, our member, Mr. D. O. Tall of Oxford was not "credited" with Miss Morrison's membership, as it was an advert. which Mr. Tall placed in a music shop window in Oxford which brought our Society to Miss Morrison's attention.

For this initiative - and for conducting a first performance of a Delius work at Wadham on May 16th - I hereby nominate Mr. Tall as **MEMBER OF THE YEAR!**

For those who have not stayed the course and have read the end of this newsletter before page 4, a note of our next meeting at the Holborn Library on 29th January at 7.30 p.m. Also please apply as soon as possible for your BBC tickets for the recording of "North Country Sketches" on Saturday afternoon, 30th January, at 2.30 p.m.

Your Chairman and Committee send warm greetings for the season and wish you all you wish yourselves - more recordings and performances of Delius and at least a portion of the BBC's extended music programme time!

Sincerely,
"Estelle Palmley"