
Autumn 1987, Number 94

PHILIP HESELTINE ON DELIUS



*The Delius Society
Journal*

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Philip Heseltine, *Frederick Delius* (Bodley Head, 1923)
Peter Warlock (Philip Heseltine), *Frederick Delius* (reprint of above with additions, annotations and comments by Hubert Foss, (Bodley Head, 1952)
Cecil Gray, *Peter Warlock: a memoir of Philip Heseltine* (Cape, 1934)
Fred Tomlinson, *Warlock and Delius* (script of talk to the Delius Society, January 29 1976) (Thames, 1976)
A Peter Warlock Handbook Volume 1 (Triad Press, 1974)
A Peter Warlock Handbook Volume 2 (Triad Press, 1976)
Warlock and van Dieren (Thames, 1978)
Warlock and Blunt (Thames, 1981)



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday 27 October at 7 p.m. Mary Ward House, 5 Tavistock Place, London
Delius Society meeting: 'The missing years'. Dr Fenby will talk about the years in his life immediately following the death of Delius.

Wednesday 2 December at 7 p.m. BMIC, 10 Stratford Place, London
Delius Society meeting: 'Some aspects of music in Norway since Grieg and Delius'. John Michael East will trace elements of Norwegian music which throw a different light on Delius and Grieg.

1988

Tuesday 26 January at 7 p.m. BMIC, 10 Stratford Place, London
Joint meeting with Percy Grainger Society: Barry Peter Ould introduces the TV film '*Lincolnshire Treasure Hunt*'.

Thursday 25 February at 7 p.m. BMIC, 10 Stratford Place, London
Delius Society meeting: Dr Lionel Carley will introduce Volume 2 of '*Delius: a life in letters*'.

PLEASE NOTE: The Annual General Meeting and Dinner next year will form part of a Society weekend at Wolfson College, Cambridge, Saturday 2 July and Sunday 3 July.

Further details of Delius Society events can be obtained from Programme Secretary, Brian Radford, 21 Cobthorne Drive, Allestree, Derby 0332 552019 (home) or 0332 42442 ext. 3563 (work).

CONTENTS

THE PUBLISHED WRITINGS OF PHILIP HESELTINE ON DELIUS

Foreword by Dr Eric Fenby	2
English Music Masterpiece [February 9 1915]	2
Some notes on Delius and his Music [March 1915]	3
Philharmonic Concert [April 14 1915]	10
New Violin Sonata [May 1 1915]	10
British Music Festival [May 12 1915]	11
Two Concerts [June 17 1915]	11
Delius's new Opera [April 1920]	12
Contingencies [May 1920]	17
Letters to the Editor [October 1920]	20
Music in England: ii Frederick Delius [March 1922]	21
Frederick Delius [May 1923]	23
Music [July 14 1923]	25
Hassan [September 29 1923]	26, 28
Frederick Delius [1924]	30
The Works of Delius [July 1 1927]	31
The Yorkshire Genius of Friday's Concert [February 1 1929]	33
Delius: Composer and Interpreter of Nature [October 4 1929]	35
1929 Delius Festival:	
Introduction to Delius [October 12 1929]	38
Programme notes	41
The Songs of Delius [October 16 1929]	45
Programme notes	47
Music from tonight's Delius Concert [October 11/18 1929]	48
Programme notes	51
Nietzsche and Delius [November 1 1929]	55
<i>A Mass of Life</i>	58
Delius: a concise biography	62
A select bibliography	inside cover
Forthcoming Events	inside cover

Additional copies of this issue £3.50 (non-members £4.00), inclusive of postage

THE PUBLISHED WRITINGS OF PHILIP HESELTINE ON DELIUS

FOREWORD

by Dr Eric Fenby, OBE

I wonder how many of our members have ever read anything by Philip Heseltine other than his elegant exploratory book on Delius? It would seem that our esteemed editor had similar doubts, for in a timely tribute he has assembled the rest of all Philip's published writings on Delius for our delectation in these pages.

When I first met Philip at Grez, as described in my '*Delius as I knew him*', I was impressed by his conversation delivered in beautifully turned sentences and a distinguished voice. It was not until the 1929 Delius Festival in London, however, when after the concerts we repaired to Philip's favourite hostelry behind Queen's Hall, usually in the company of Constant Lambert, Cecil Gray, Ralph Hill, Jack Moeran and Robert Donat — all good talkers — and heard their matchless discussions on the arts with insights flavoured with Rabelaisian quips, that I got the full measure of Philip's mind. Remarkable sessions such as these must surely have influenced his writings.

I was all set for a lasting friendship with Philip but, tragically, it was not to be. Within months he was dead.



ENGLISH MUSIC MASTERPIECE

[*Daily Mail* February 9 1915]

The feature of the London Symphony Orchestra's concert in Queen's Hall last night was the performance of Frederick Delius's Piano Concerto. The neglect of this magnificent work is inexplicable, in view of the tremendous applause with which it is always greeted. One performance a year is not enough; and yesterday's revival of the work was solely due to Mr Thomas Beecham - not to any of our British pianists, who are too busy with old concertos we have heard over and over again to attend to the work of their compatriot. They will continue to be so until the public wakes to the fact that in Frederick Delius they have the greatest composer England has produced for two centuries.

Mr Moiseivitch's rendering of the piano part last night was as good as taking trouble could make it; the great technical difficulties of the work were all overcome in a masterly manner. The concert concluded with a performance of the last great symphony that has been given to the world - that of Cesar Franck. Here Mr Beecham surpassed himself, and secured the most superb orchestral playing that has been heard in London for many a long day.

P.H.

SOME NOTES ON DELIUS AND HIS MUSIC

by Philip Heseltine

[*The Musical Times* March 1915]

Delius's position in the musical world of today is one of curious isolation; he has ever held aloof from the great public, and it is scarcely surprising that he is regarded with a certain bewilderment, as a mysterious, enigmatic, albeit - as many are certainly beginning to realise - a very arresting figure. The details of his life are shrouded in a certain amount of obscurity, which the programme-annotators, with their inevitable catalogue of the places where he has resided, and nothing more, have not conspicuously helped to clear away. The somewhat elusive problem of his nationality has given needless trouble to many, and recently the superstition that he is really a German was made use of in a particularly disgraceful manner by intriguing parties, in order to defer a certain public recognition of his genius that has long been overdue. From the purely musical point of view, however, nationality is not a factor that counts for anything in the case of Delius. Indeed, he himself never vaunts his English origin, preferring to be considered a pure cosmopolitan, 'a good European' as Nietzsche would have called him. Nevertheless, vagueness of nationality is a source of real mystification to many; and, from the point of view of the public, there are many other puzzling things about the composer in question. He is fifty years old, says the public, yet he holds no official position in the musical life of the country; he does not teach in any of the academies, he is not even an honorary professor or doctor of music. He never gives concerts or makes propaganda for his music; he never conducts an orchestra, or plays an instrument in public (even Berlioz played the tambourine!).

A composer who cares for none of these things is indeed a strange phenomenon. The explanation, however, is not very far to seek, and incidentally it strikes the key-note of Delius's personality and of his whole art. Delius is one of those very rare persons who, possessing a remarkable individuality, are permitted by the circumstances of their lives to develop it and to exploit it to the fullest extent, unfettered by any external considerations. And further, he is one of the still smaller number who have taken the fullest advantage of this concession of fate, and have lived long enough to nurse their genius to complete maturity. He is emphatically not one of those who believe the artist to be the 'servant of the public'. Preposterous and degrading as such a conception of art undoubtedly is, one is bound to face the sad truth that in music, as in other arts, there are few who have not, for one reason or another, produced work which a servile attitude towards the grosser public can alone explain. In fact, Delius is the almost unique example of a composer who did not rush into print at an early age with an unworthy work, and who has never degraded his name by attaching it to a 'pot boiler'. His first printed work was a set of five delightful, if slightly Grieg-like, little songs which Augener published in 1890. These were followed three years later by the far more individual Shelley Songs and the Seven Songs from the Norwegian - amongst them being *Abendstimmung*, one of the most perfect lyrics

in existence. After this date, nothing was published till, fifteen years later, some of the large choral works began to appear, from the firm of Harmonie, Berlin.

One of the most striking features of Delius's music - even in the early and more or less immature works - is the almost complete absence of any other composer's influence. Even in the Shelley Songs and the *Legend* for violin and orchestra there are foreshadowings of the intensely personal style of the later works, whilst in the second music drama, *The Magic Fountain*, we find the composer experimenting with motifs and progressions that are actually the germs from which many passages in the most mature compositions have sprung. This work is remarkable in that the libretto - written in rhymed verse by the composer himself - shows markedly the influence of *Tristan*, whereas the music is conceived on wholly non-Wagnerian lines. The drama is saturated with the romantic spirit, dealing as it does with the quest of the fountain of eternal youth, and the inevitable bungling on the part of the hero at the last moment, which leads to death and disaster and a second *Liebestod*.

The work was accepted for performance by Edouard Lassen, at Weimar, in 1894. A pianoforte score was made by Florent Schmitt, and much of the material was prepared; but the composer became dissatisfied with the work at the last moment, and withdrew it. The next work of importance was *Koanga*, the picturesque and entirely original negro opera, founded on G W Cable's novel '*The Grandissimes*', but the high-water mark of the early period was undoubtedly reached in the Pianoforte Concerto, which dates from 1897. This is the most romantic - in the best sense of that much-abused word - of all the composer's works. It records no introspective subtleties, and reveals little of the reflective aloofness of the later works; it is just the direct and passionate expression of one who looks out on life as upon a wondrous spring morning, with all its presage of growth and strength and joy. There is no hint of tragedy, no trace of the possibility of failure. It is a song of triumph for something accomplished, for the fulfilment of a desire, the realisation of a dream. Its mood is one that Schumann was constantly striving after, but which the gloom of ill-health, combined with that vein of typically German seriousness of which he could never rid himself, prevented him from wholly attaining. It is one of those works in which one feels the artist's tremendous sense of power, at the first realisation of his maturity: it could only have been written by one who has mastered life and made it his servant.

The two orchestral poems, *Life's Dance* and *Paris*, mark a period of transition in the composer's style and orchestral colour-scheme. There is a curious similarity in the design and conception of the two works. They are both full of an amazing vitality and exuberance, and the texture of both is more diffuse and complex than that of any of the later works. Through *Life's Dance* there runs a sinister undercurrent of impending fatality; there is a feverish restlessness in the music which rises, at moments, to a white-heat of intensity. Indeed, there is one passage of penetration and subtlety that even Delius himself has never excelled. It occurs when the headlong course of the dance is suddenly interrupted by an absolutely uncanny phrase for woodwind and muted brass, which is twice re-echoed before the music dies away into silence; immediately following it is the most passionate utterance in the whole work. Its significance in the context is clear enough to

anyone. It is one of the most vital moments in the whole of music, suggesting as it does one of those flashes of insight which leave one overawed and dazed - changed in the twinkling of an eye. It is as though the shadow of another world passed over one.

Paris is termed by the composer 'A Night-Piece'. The opening pages depict the awakening of the city at nightfall, and the close reflects the mood of those who return home from scenes of revelry in the pale morning twilight, to be lulled to sleep by the sounds of the awakening streets. This is the rough, subjective programme which determines its form; but the work must not be regarded as literal programme music. Distinctions between subjective and objective are prone to be a little confusing when applied to music, seeing that all music - even the most admittedly pictorial and reproductive, is in the strict sense, necessarily subjective. But apart from the little call of the goatherd's pan-pipes, there is no portrayal of external things in this record of Paris; realism has no part in this work. The more superficial, materialistic aspect of *la vie Parisienne* has been adequately treated by Offenbach and Charpentier. For Delius, Paris is not merely a city of France, whose collective life is something to be studied objectively, from a place apart, much as the entomologist studies an ant's nest; it is rather a corner of his soul. All the riotous gaiety and all the wonder and passion of these Parisian nights have been felt by the composer even more intensely than by the throng that surrounds him. In him alone are all these impressions stamped vividly and definitely enough to become articulate. The artist who would interpret the atmosphere, the spirit of any place or people, must necessarily attune himself to such a pitch of sensitiveness to his surroundings that these become an integral part of himself no less than he a part of them. Thus it is not in mere externals that the artist seeks his inspiration, but rather within himself, where all these fleeting things are reflected, and their essential qualities transmuted by his genius into the material of lasting beauty.

In this work we have an image of the night-moods of the city, together with much that is of a more purely personal nature, which - clear as are its broad outlines - each listener will interpret in terms of himself, even as the composer has given voice to the moods of a multitude in terms of his own moods. This subjective symbolisation is indeed the most important element in the whole of Delius's music. It is even more pronounced in the succeeding work - the music-drama *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, based upon Gottfried Keller's story of that name. This is in many respects the most beautiful thing Delius has done; it shows an enormous advance in style upon all the previous works. Harmonically it is more concentrated, and a greater freedom and expressiveness is obtained by simpler and more direct means than heretofore. The significance of the work as a whole, however, was generally misunderstood when it was produced in London by Mr Beecham in 1910.

The outline of the story is very simple. The love of a boy and girl is marred by the quarrel of their respective fathers over a piece of land which separates their two properties, and which belongs by right to a bastard vagabond, the Black Fiddler, who cares nought for it. Fate dogs the footsteps of the two lovers in one way and another, till finally they resolve that life is impossible for them, and decide to end it together upon a note of ecstasy. It is an idyllic little story, with a

flavour of remoteness, of unreality about it. Regarded literally as a series of incidents, there is nothing in it. Hence the almost universal condemnation of the work by the London critics as 'undramatic'. There could be no more mistaken attitude towards this work than that which seeks to estimate its value by comparison with former standards of so-called 'opera'. Delius's aim was to produce an entirely new *kind* of music-drama: and in the task he set himself he has been entirely successful.

A Village Romeo and Juliet is a series of pictures (it is divided into 'pictures' and not 'acts' in the score) of delicate psychological studies of the life of the unhappy lovers. Each scene is a glimpse taken, as it were, directly from the continuity of their existence. There is no quickening of the action for dramatic purposes, no rearrangement of circumstances for the sake of a situation. It is only natural that the figures in the play should seem shadowy, and the whole action somewhat inconsistent and dream-like. It is not the figures that matter, but the emotions they portray to us: it is not *their* lives that are of the greatest significance, but *ours*. For in their little commonplace tragedy the whole gamut of the fundamental human emotions and passions is sounded. It may be that no two lovers have ever lived through the experiences of Sali and Vrenchen continuously; but there are very few who are not moved by some throbbing pang of intimate memory, at one point or another in the drama. The detail of the plot is unessential: the symbolism of the action is everything. What infinite suggestiveness there is in the mysterious figure of the Black Fiddler, who, bearing no-one any ill-will, is the passive cause of so much disaster which he himself is powerless to avert! What a depth of understanding and sympathy is displayed in the portrayal of the ill-starred couple's relations with the different types of their fellow-beings - with their parents, with the Fiddler's little band of vagabonds, and with the mixed crowd of strangers at the Fair, which typifies the harsh, unfeeling multitude of the outside world.

The final entr'acte, *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, is an epitome of the whole dramatic situation: but it is something far greater besides, something far more universal. In it, the quintessence of all the tragic beauty of mortality, all the pathos of chance and change and destiny seems to be concentrated and poured forth in music of overwhelming, almost intolerable poignancy. Delius is always at his greatest when he is dealing with retrospects, and epitomizing the past - as witness the *Songs of Sunset* and the close of *Sea Drift*. He has the reflective temperament which transfigures all its memories and creates of them works of far deeper and more universal emotional import than the circumstances which aroused them. From the point of view of musical psychology, this work is only equalled by the very finest of the Wagnerian operas. How long, one wonders, will its truly amazing qualities remain unrecognised?

The next dramatic work, *Margot La Rouge*, needs little comment, inasmuch as it has never been published or performed. A pianoforte score, by Ravel, has been lithographed but not given out. It is a swift one-act melodrama which deals with the attempted rescue of a girl from a Paris brothel by her former lover. This causes some trouble, as might be expected, and the curtain descends upon a pile of corpses. There could be no accusing this work of being 'undramatic'! It is, however, of little importance compared with the succession of large choral works

which followed it.

Appalachia and *Sea Drift*, which dates from 1902-3, are both fairly familiar in this country. The former is the outcome of Delius's sojourn in Florida, and takes the form of a set of variations upon an old nigger folk-song, which, curiously enough, bears a marked resemblance to the theme of the quartet in the last act of *Rigoletto*. It was sung to the composer by one of the negroes on his orange plantation; there were only two of them, but both appear to have been remarkably gifted. The one in question possessed, in addition to his extensive repertoire of folk-songs, the gift of second sight, developed to a very high pitch, while the other could accomplish the astounding feat of whistling in thirds!

Appalachia is the first example of the peculiar style of musical landscape painting that is so entirely Delius's own. It is a little difficult to say precisely what that quality is, in his tone-painting, that enables him to suggest with such extraordinary vividness the feeling and the atmosphere of the landscape he is portraying, together with the emotions aroused by contemplation of the landscape. His methods make interesting comparison with the modern emotional landscape *painting* - in the literal sense of the word, for in both cases the results aimed at are broadly the same, though they are approached by different paths. Thus the painter has to reproduce upon the canvas a semblance of the external features of the landscape in such a way that those who regard it sympathetically will instinctively feel the emotion and atmosphere of which those external features are but symbols. The musician, on the other hand, has to do without the graphic definiteness which gives the painter a basis to start upon; his music must suggest at once the inner and the outer aspects of the picture. The extreme difficulty of achieving this will be at once apparent. Composers of nearly every period have attempted it, but few have met with any success. Either their music has been too personal and subjective to justify any one title being affixed to it rather than any other, or else, as Debussy has so often done, they provide a tone-picture which is astonishingly vivid and suggestive, but emotionally barren. Delius has a searching eye which penetrates into the very soul of things, and which nothing, however subtle or however deep, can elude. Perhaps the explanation of his strange magic is to be found in a kind of animism; for there is nothing his nature-studies suggest so much as the fusion of the soul of things contemplated with perceptive and reflective human soul.

It is worthy of note that *Appalachia* was not written until many years after the composer had ceased to reside in Florida. The value of a long period of reminiscence, with all the inscrutable sub-conscious processes of mind it involves, cannot be too strongly insisted upon when one is dealing with the influence of external things upon creative work. *Sea Drift* and *Songs of Sunset* (a cycle of poems by Ernest Dowson) belong to a very different mood. They both sing of passion frustrated, and are instinct with all the strength and sorrowful beauty that resignation alone can bring. One would scarcely think it necessary to add that Whitman's poem - one of the loveliest he ever wrote - must not be interpreted quite literally, but for the fact that Delius has actually been praised by at least one misguided admirer for the amazing objectivity of mind which enables him to probe the mysteries of avian psychology and express the joys and sorrows of *two birds* with such exquisite delicacy!

The *Mass of Life* and the recently completed and still unpublished *Requiem*, although separated by an interval of ten years, may be taken together as the expression of the composer's more philosophical side. In them are summed up all his views upon the great problems of Life and Death. Delius's outlook is characteristically frank and fearless; he accepts with both hands all that Life has to offer, and is not afraid to look Death and annihilation calmly in the face. The *Mass of Life* is a triumphant yea-saying to Life in all its manifestations. The *Requiem* faces the prospect of eternal darkness with the quiet dignity and assurance that one finds in certain of the Old Testament writers, but seldom elsewhere. He who has drained Life's cup to the dregs, and has no wastage of days to regret, can afford to contemplate Death with equanimity. There is no negation, no hint of wastage about Delius; he is at least positive, if nothing else. Indeed, he might well adopt for his motto the superb lines of William Blake:

Abstinence sows sand all over
 The ruddy limbs and flaming hair,
 But desire gratified
 Plants fruits of life and beauty there.

As regards the general characteristics of Delius's work, he is pre-eminently a harmonist. That is to say, his harmonic effects are obtained vertically, and not, as in the case of Strauss and Schoenberg, and the later Sibelius, horizontally, by the interweaving of several contrapuntal threads. He does not, however, limit himself to any fixed scale or system, like Debussy and Scriabin; consequently he avoids monotony and mannerism alike, and gains considerably in freedom and range of expression. One cannot pin Delius down to a fixed harmonic scheme, although his harmonic idiom is quite unmistakably his own. The most one can say is that there is a certain harmonic aroma, as it were, which one can always recognise as emanating either from Delius himself or from one of his numerous English imitators - there is scarcely a single composer in this country who has escaped his influence. The richness of the texture of such works as *On hearing the first cuckoo in spring* has never been equalled by non-contrapuntal means. But there is no surfeit of richness; in fact, a very curious and interesting habit of Delius is the way in which, at a great climax, he suddenly thins out his harmony to the barest outline and obtains an effect of great massiveness by very full scoring of a mere harmonic skeleton. This is particularly noticeable towards the end of *Life's Dance*, the Pianoforte Concerto, *Brigg Fair*, and several other works.

When the principle of vertical harmonic writing is applied to the chorus, the effect is still more novel and remarkable. The finest examples of this are to be found in the wonderful part-song *On Craig Ddu*, and in the wordless *cappella* section in *The Song of the High Hills*, which is probably one of the most difficult pieces of choral writing in existence.

In his treatment of voices - solo or chorus - with orchestra the composer's chief aim is to blend the tone-colour of voices and instruments in such a manner as to secure the greatest possible unity of effect. In *The Song of the High Hills* this principle is undoubtedly carried to a stage far beyond anything hitherto attempted, and the first performance of the work, in May next*, should prove of the highest interest to all who are concerned with the development of choral technique.

The *Songs of Sunset* contain the most characteristic examples of Delius's writing for solo voices with orchestra. The voice is used simply as an orchestral instrument - with, of course, the same regard for its peculiarities and limitations as is accorded to other instruments. It is not given undue prominence, but is merely a contributory factor to the general atmosphere of the music. It is a significant fact that Delius is one of the few composers whose rough, preliminary sketches are always made in full score - that is to say, he thinks in terms of his medium and tone-colour. As Mr Ernest Newman has happily phrased it: 'The melody, harmony, and orchestration are one and indivisible. The ideas are not merely orchestrated; the orchestration, that is, is not merely the clothing of ideas, but part of their very tissue.'

It is rather difficult, therefore, to see exactly what Mr Clutsam means when he quotes a passage from *Appalachia*, in the *Musical Times*, in *pianoforte* score, with no indications of the very subtle and telling way in which it is orchestrated, and proceeds to point out that it 'reveals the fact that Delius has the weakest technical ability of any strong composer living'. In the first case, what constitutes technical ability these days? It certainly does not consist merely in the avoidance of consecutive fifths, and in correct behaviour in accordance with the laws laid down by theorists. If a composer succeeds in saying exactly what he wants to say, in the way he wants to say it, he has, one would presume, complete mastery over the technique of musical expression. And in the case of Delius, one never feels that his effect misses fire. One may totally and absolutely fail to understand him - like the gentleman whom *Paris* reminded of 'the gay city depicted by a Scotch elder'; but that is another matter altogether. The great fact that must be realised is that every really individual composer must necessarily create his own new technique for the expression of his own new ideas. Any one composer's technique judged by the standard of any other's, is equally 'wrong' - or, as one might more truthfully say, 'different'.

Delius is probably the most interesting composer born in this country since Henry Purcell. His position in the musical world today can only be determined by individual taste and opinion. He is not a composer whose works achieve an instantaneous success and widespread popularity; but this is the best possible sign for the future. His reputation is growing, slowly but surely, with that section of the musical public who estimate sincerity and intensity of feeling in music more highly than sensationalism, and the evanescent qualities of the 'popular' composer. There is an elusiveness about much of his music which perhaps renders it, for those unaccustomed to his idiom, more difficult to grasp at a first hearing than work of a far greater technical complexity. There can be no superficial view of Delius's music: either one feels it in the very depths of one's being, or not at all. This may be part of the reason why one so seldom hears a really first-rate performance of Delius's work, save under Mr Beecham, to whose untiring enthusiasm in the cause of his great compatriot we in this country owe an immense debt of gratitude. How Delius came to be entirely neglected here for eight years after his first epoch-making concert in 1899 is inexplicable. But there are many indications at the present day that he is coming to his own, in his native land, as he has already done in Germany. And I am sure that I am not alone in my sincere conviction that there is no composer in Europe today of greater significance than

Frederick Delius, nor any other whose work seems more likely to outlast that of his contemporaries.

[*The projected first performance would probably have been as part of a further series of Balfour Gardiner Choral and Orchestral Concerts that did not take place because of the continuation of war. Heseltine had already made a piano reduction of the score at Gardiner's request. The first performance eventually took place in February 1920 at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert, doubtless through Gardiner's influence.]

PHILHARMONIC CONCERT

[*Daily Mail* April 14 1915]

The Royal Philharmonic concert season ended with a brilliant performance at Queen's Hall last night. There has been a preponderance of modern and unfamiliar works in this season's programme, for which chief thanks are due to Mr Thomas Beecham.

The audience last night gave an indication of its change of taste by insisting upon the repetition of one of the wildest and most fantastic works of the ultramodern school of composers. This was a dance from Stravinsky's ballet *L'Oiseau de Feu*. Mr Beecham secured a performance full of brilliance and vitality. This was followed by the epilogue from Delius's early opera *Koanga*; its sheer loveliness contrasted admirably with the somewhat superficial effectiveness of the Stravinsky excerpt.

The programme also contained MacEwen's [sic] *Grey Galloway* and Debussy's setting of '*The Blessed Damozel*'. The orchestral playing was of the best, and Mr Beecham's conducting was, as usual, beyond praise.

P.H.

NEW VIOLIN SONATA

[*Daily Mail* May 1 1915]

The programme which Mrs Adela Maddison drew up for her concert yesterday afternoon included the first public performance in London of Frederick Delius's Sonata for violin and pianoforte, which, though sketched out in 1905, was only completed early this year. The composer is here dealing with subtle and complex emotions, and the music is shrouded for the most part in a rather austere mood of reflectiveness.

The performance, by Mr Arthur Catterall and Mr R J Forbes, if not as perfect in detail as could be desired, was at least authoritative, seeing that the two executants studied the work under the composer's own guidance, and are as yet the sole exponents of the sonata, which is still in MS.

Several of Mrs Maddison's tasteful and original songs were admirably sung to the composer's accompaniment by Miss Jean Waterston and Mr Frederic Austin.

P.H.

BRITISH MUSIC FESTIVAL

[*Daily Mail* May 12 1915]

The Festival of British Music, which is perhaps the most important and interesting musical event of the season, began last night with a concert of choral and orchestral works at the Queen's Hall. The programmes have been so drawn up as to be representative of all the best music by British composers that has been written or produced within the last decade. The directors of the scheme are Mr Emil Mlynarski and Mr Thomas Beecham, who share the greater part of the burden of conducting.

Last night the London Symphony Orchestra were joined by the London Choral Society, and the combined forces were led by Mr Beecham through Delius's extremely beautiful *Sea Drift* (Mr Herbert Heyner being a first-rate soloist), and by Mr. Arthur Fagge through Holbrooke's clever though top-heavy setting of 'The Bells' of Edgar Allan Poe. *Sea Drift* evoked great enthusiasm and the composer was called to the platform at the close.

The programme also included a *Humoresque* by Norman O'Neill, two folk-song choruses of Grainger, Bantock's *Fifine at the Fair*, and Dr Ethel Smyth's exquisite *Moods of the Sea*, which were most sympathetically sung by Mr Heyner.

P.H.



TWO CONCERTS

[*Daily Mail* June 17 1915]

The concert of the Oriana Madrigal Society at the Aeolian Hall afforded London music-lovers one of their all too rare opportunities of hearing first-rate choral singing. The choir is not large, but in mere volume it is fully adequate to cope with any *a cappella* music, and for the delicate and subtle effects demanded by modern choral writing its small numbers are distinctly in its favour.

Mr Kennedy Scott had arranged a varied and interesting programme, which contained, in addition to some old English madrigals and part-songs, Delius's beautiful and impressionistic *On Craig Ddu*, three choruses by Debussy, and two Psalms by Grieg. Mr Gervase Elwes displayed his sympathetic power of interpretation to the fullest advantage in a group of songs by Quilter and Vaughan Williams's cycle *On Wenlock Edge*, in which he was assisted by the Philharmonic String Quartet. Mr Kennedy Scott conducted throughout with fine rhythmic energy.

Miss May Harrison's violin recital (with Mr Hamilton Harty at the piano) was the occasion of the first really satisfactory rendering of Delius's new violin sonata that has been given in London. Many new beauties were revealed and many new depths sounded; the playing of both performers reached a very high level.

P.H.

DELIUS'S NEW OPERA

by Philip Heseltine

[*The Musical Times* April 1920]

Fennimore and Gerda, described on the title-page of the score as 'Two Episodes in the Life of Niels Lyhne, in Eleven Pictures, set to music by Frederick Delius', was produced for the first time on any stage at Frankfort on October 21, 1919.

All the resources of the famous opera house were lavished upon the production. There were nine full orchestral rehearsals, and performers and public alike seem to have been enthusiastic in praise of the work.

A month later the composer came to London to supervise the revival at Covent Garden of his earlier opera, *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. Arriving one week before the date fixed for the first performance, he found that no full rehearsals had yet taken place, and that such preparations as had been made for the production were in a state of chaos unilluminated by even the customary British assurance that 'everything would be all right on the night'. He was therefore obliged, in sheer self-defence, to forbid the performance: in consequence of which the public were given two additional opportunities of acquainting themselves with the master-works of Puccini.

These two episodes in the life of Frederick Delius throw an instructive light on the present condition of music in his native country. It is also significant that the gap in the repertory caused by the withdrawal of Delius's opera was filled by further performances of Puccini. For when *A Village Romeo and Juliet* was first produced here in 1910, it fell rather flat, owing to what the critics were pleased to call 'lack of dramatic interest'. Now supposing one of the later plays of Maeterlinck were presented to the patrons of the Lyceum Theatre, with every conceivable scenic appurtenance and 'effect', as a thrilling melodrama, they would no doubt pass a similar verdict, couched perhaps in not quite similar terms. So it is inevitable that if a work like *A Village Romeo and Juliet* is presented as a realistic drama (a minor detail of the 1910 production was a *real merry-go-round on the stage!*), critics previously unacquainted with the work cannot be blamed for judging it by the 'dramatic' standards established for them by Puccini.

They have of late years grown so accustomed to regard an opera as a play set to music that their sense of what is fit and proper to the form is apt to be very sadly perturbed when they are confronted with a work which is simply the overflowing of music onto the stage, the projection of emotions underlying music into visible as well as audible reality. Opera, it should be remembered, is a *musical* form. It is not a play with music, though many such are termed operas or, more accurately, music-dramas. Opera is simply programme music with the programme enacted upon an external stage instead of in the imagination merely: and the scope of its programme may range from the crudest form of melodrama to the subtlest interplay of conflicting emotions.

When a composer is said to be inspired by his subject, it is too often supposed that the subject itself suggested the work to him in the first instance, that he is adumbrating his subject as though it were a thing exterior to himself. In the same

way the music of an opera is thought to have been generated by its text. In some cases this may be true: but in the majority, the subject or programme of a musical composition is no more than a convenient framework upon which the composer may construct and elaborate a work whose emotional or psychic basis was already clearly defined in his mind before he approached his 'subject'. This explains the common phenomenon of a composer who ardently desires to write an opera but cannot find a suitable libretto.

A symphonic work based upon a tale or drama is not an 'illustration' of its subject, tacked onto the finished product like 'incidental' music, but a new presentation, in terms of another art, of the elements of which the original tale or drama was made. Thus the music and the drama are parallel expressions of the same matter. The one is not engendered by the other: their relationship is rather that of brother and sister. The old distinction between 'operatic' and 'symphonic' music was broken down as completely as the arbitrary differentiation of 'programme' music from 'abstract' or 'absolute' music, which, in a word, is simply *music*. Yet all music is necessarily programme music, whether the events that make up the programme are enacted in the visible world or in the innermost recesses of the soul. And even when descriptions of physical phenomena loom large in the programme, these exterior happenings can only assume a musical importance in so far as they symbolise or evoke their corresponding states of mind. Music, in short, may be described as a formula for evoking a particular state of mind or a complexity of such states in a particular relation. These relations which can be generalised and expressed by music could not be even stated in words without the invention of a kind of psychological algebra.

We cannot state an emotional crisis in words, but we can sometimes provide an example of how a particular individual will behave under the stress of such emotion, his words and actions expressing *particularly* a condition which music would necessarily *generalise*, however strong the individuality of its composer might be. Thus in an opera the plot or story may be just an example, a visible particularization of what the music is telling us in a broader and more universal sense. The music is not illustrative of that particular story: on the contrary, the story is one among many other possible illustrations of the emotional basis of the music which has, after all, its origin in the experience or imagination of the composer. And the listener, being an inverted composer, recognises its truth in correlation to his own experience or imagination. Each character in the story is merely a medium into which the composer projects part of himself and in which the appreciative spectator or listener recognises a part of himself also. All opera of this kind is either parable or pure symbolism.

In Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, although there is an ostensible story, it is impossible to regard the characters as the ordinary individuals of Gottfried Keller's novel. They have become symbolic types that move and have their being in a vision of human life, aloof and mysterious. In *Fennimore and Gerda* the characters are not in the least mysterious: they speak and act like ordinary human beings, and 'naturalness' is the key note of the dialogue. Yet the form of the work has been wholly prescribed by musical considerations, and the libretto - which has been written by the composer himself - is everywhere subordinate to the requirements of the music. Like *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, the work is divided,

not into acts and scenes but into 'pictures'. In neither opera is the story set forth with any of that narrative detail which has so often been the bane of the lyrical composer, but in both the imagination of the spectator is called into play as an active *dramatis persona*.

Fennimore and Gerda (which was composed between 1908 and 1910) is far more definite and compact in structure than *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, which dates from 1900-01. Not only are the individual scenes more closely knit in the later opera, but there are greater firmness and coherence in the design of the whole work. Every 'picture' is musically self-subsistent, generally built round an initial theme or rhythmic figure, and the logical development and flow of the music are never interrupted for the sake of thrusting the words into prominence. Nor do comparatively trivial marks in the dialogue, such as 'Have a cigar, old man,' call for or receive any musical commentary; they fall into their right and natural place in the dialogue by reason of the fact that they are never obtruded by the music. The whole work lasts only an hour and a half. After the second picture and after the ninth picture three years are supposed to elapse, the passage of time being marked by a short interval in the performance. After the fourth picture there is a full close but no interval. Except for these breaks the music is continuous throughout, the pictures being connected by orchestral interludes, mostly so short that the antiquated machinery of theatres like Covent Garden could never deal with the changes of scene in the time allotted. The longest picture (the 'Gerda' episode) occupies fourteen pages of the vocal score, the shortest four, there being eighty-one pages in all.

Without any prelude the curtain rises upon a room in the house of Consul Claudi. Fennimore, his daughter, is working at her embroidery while her cousin, Niels Lyhne, sits at her feet. They are talking about their childhood. Fennimore is impatient at the monotony of her home life and longs to go out into the world in search of new experiences. Niels on the other hand is a dreamer who is well content to remain where he is. 'Your garden window where you sit and sew' - he exclaims - 'I want no wider world than this. Out in the world one feels a longing for home, and perhaps one's real home is a kindred spirit whom one loves.' He is on the point of making a passionate declaration to Fennimore when they are interrupted by the appearance of their cousin Erik Regstrup, Niels's bosom friend, in whom Fennimore is obviously more interested than in the dreamy Niels. It begins to rain. Erik calls for a song, and Fennimore unlocks her heart with a romantic ballad:

Young Svanhild sat alone and sighed,
Of freedom and joy despairing.
'Over yonder's the land of my dreams,' she cried,
'And thither I would be faring.'...

The curtain descends and, after an entr'acte of twenty-nine bars, rises to reveal the lower end of the Claudi's garden which reaches down to the edge of the fjord. There is a little landing-stage overshadowed by the trees, and here Erik and Fennimore are discovered together in a boat. It is night, and the sound of singing is heard from over the water:

A long sustained melody without words for a tenor voice sung 'off'

Ex.1

The musical notation for Ex.1 consists of two staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It features a long, sustained melody with several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over the notes) and a fermata over the final note. The bottom staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, providing a harmonic accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern.

Hearing the approach of a second boat, Erik and Fennimore disappear into the garden. The other boat arrives, rowed by Niels and containing Consul Claudi, his wife and a friend. They disembark and make for the house, while Niels remains behind to moor the boat. Meanwhile Erik and Fennimore reappear and Niels quickly conceals himself in the shadow of the trees. A swift love scene ensues (twenty-eight bars in all), built upon two themes (Exx. 2 and 3):

Ex.2

The musical notation for Ex.2 shows a string quartet passage. It consists of two staves: a treble clef for the first violin and a bass clef for the second violin. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The first staff is marked 'Str.' and 'mf'. The second staff is marked 'mf'. The music features a complex, rhythmic pattern with many slurs and accents, characteristic of a string quartet texture.

Ex.3

The musical notation for Ex.3 is a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. It features a simple, rhythmic pattern with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, ending with a fermata.

which recur in modified forms throughout the 'Fennimore' episode. The lovers return to the house, and Niels is left alone in despair.

Three years pass. Erik and Fennimore, now married, are living in a house on the Mariagerfjord. Disappointment has come to both of them. Fennimore is disillusioned about her husband, who has taken to drink, Erik about his talent as a painter. He stares moodily at the sea. Fennimore reproaches him for not working any more at his art. He replies that he needs new impressions and new influences. Niels has been invited for a visit, and presently arrives. While Erik is helping the porter to carry his luggage, Fennimore implores Niels to do all he can to pull Erik out of the slough of despond into which he has fallen. 'Day after day he broods his time away, and when the day is done his horrible friends take him off and keep him drinking all night long.' Erik returns, followed by a maid bearing bottles and glasses. Fennimore leaves the two men to themselves, and there is some semblance of gaiety as they light their cigars and drink to each other's health. The curtain falls, and there is an entr'acte of four bars. The next picture shows the same scene, but late in the evening. The two friends have been talking over old times. Erik speaks of the gradual falling away of all his bright illusions and hopes. 'At times a sense of despair comes over me. I sit and work and nothing

comes of it - and time is gliding by with relentless haste. Whenever I paint a picture the time it has taken is mine for ever, although it's past and gone. But think of all the years I've lived and created nothing!' Niels advises him to travel, but this seems only to increase his anxiety. He regards travel as a last resort on which he is afraid to embark for fear of proving to himself once and for all that his career as an artist is at an end.

This is perhaps the most powerful and subtly wrought scene in the whole work. The next picture shows us Erik seated at his easel, morose and listless, unable to accomplish anything. Five of his boon companions, on their way to the fair at Aalborg, invite him to join them. At first he is unwilling. Then one of them - a broken-down schoolmaster - taunts him. 'I see you are much too busy with your immortal painting.' Wearily he consents to go with them. Fennimore begs him to stay at home, but it is useless. 'I must have companionship.' 'But you have Niels: a better friend you'll never find.' 'Niels! He no longer understands me.' Fennimore watches him go, then bursts into tears. Niels comes in, and she composes herself. She asks him what Erik was like as a boy. He speaks of his friend with loyalty and enthusiasm: 'He was all that a boy should be, brave and handsome, a lad of impulse, alert and active, always given to wild pranks and mad adventures.' 'How strange, then,' says Fennimore, 'that he should have wanted to become an artist!' Niels bids her think of him as he was when she first fell in love with him. She replies wearily that she has too often brooded over that time. With a sudden impulse she stretches out her hands to Niels and begs him to stand by her in trouble. 'You'll be my friend, Niels, always...?' The curtain is lowered for a few bars, and the next picture reveals the same room in the grey twilight of the following morning. Fennimore has been waiting up for Erik, who presently comes in, reeling drunk, and collapses on a sofa. A brief interlude, curiously akin to the slow middle section of *Brigg Fair*, ushers in the seventh picture: the birch forest in autumn. It is in this scene that Niels and Fennimore first admit the passion that has been slowly springing up between them, and against which each of them has silently struggled in vain. It is a scene of swift movement and a despairing kind of intensity, with something sinister and autumnal in the background all the while, to remind the lovers of the years that are gone and of the brevity and uncertainty of their stolen hours of happiness. The two concluding pictures of the 'Fennimore' episode take place in the depth of winter. The fjord is frozen and the ground is covered with snow. Niels is now living on the other side of the fjord. Erik has gone to Aalborg for the day with his friends, and Fennimore is impatiently awaiting a promised visit from Niels. There is a feeling of tense expectancy in the air. Suddenly the maid brings in a telegram. Erik is dead. He has met with an accident and they are bringing him home. Fennimore, in a frenzy of remorse, rushes out to meet Niels, curses him for betraying his friend and her, and bids him be gone for ever. Four dark figures approach, bearing the body of Erik, and Fennimore falls insensible in the snow. Three years pass. . . The next picture affords the greatest possible contrast to the three swift scenes preceding it. All is quiet and reposeful. We see Niels on his farm at Lönborggaard in harvest time. The labourers are singing in the fields. Niels reflects upon the past, and finds consolation in having devoted his future to the 'Earth, old and trusty mother of us all'. The happy song of the labourers rounds off this very brief picture.

The last scene of all portrays Niels Lyhne's very sentimental wooing of Gerda Skinnerup, and is enlivened by the merry banter of Gerda's three younger sisters. Those who are acquainted with Jacobsen's essentially tragic novel* will perhaps cavil at the suggestion conveyed by this ending of the opera that Niels 'lived happily ever after', for the novel concludes with a powerful and heartrending description of Niels's death in a military hospital after he has been wounded in action. But Delius's work, as has been emphasised above, is a purely musical conception, and is not designed in any way to illustrate or set forth in detail the life of Niels Lyhne.

The concentration and swiftness of the action and passionate directness and intensity of the music combine to create a satisfactory sense of unity and cohesion that is all too rare in modern opera. And although this work is already more than ten years old, it is undoubtedly one of the most successful experiments in a new direction that the operatic stage has yet seen.

* The original title is 'Niels Lyhne', but for some reason or other the English translation is called 'Siren Voices'.



CONTINGENCIES

by Prosdocius

[*The Sackbut* May 1920 Vol.1 No.1]

The spring has brought London no musical event of greater significance than the revival of Frederick Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet* at Covent Garden by Sir Thomas Beecham. This amazing work, though composed nearly twenty years ago, is still apparently beyond the understanding of most professional musicians and critics. The public, however, attended the three performances in good numbers and received the work with genuine enthusiasm. There is no doubt that after long years of patient waiting, Delius is coming into his own in this country; and it is interesting to observe the fact that his music, which is always considered obscure and difficult of apprehension by musicians with the technical eye that 'cannot see the work for the notes', seems to make a very direct and definite appeal to the plain music-lover. It is of no use approaching Delius with preconceived ideas: he will shatter them and while you are picking up the fragments that remain you will not notice the new and wonderful things he has to show you. In listening to Delius the receptive faculty is all-important: one must submit to him, for his appeal is a subtle one that will not ever take one by assault.

For the general public a new opera is always something of an adventure: they do not go to see a repetition of something they have often seen before: the element of novelty, so far from repelling them, is usually the chief attraction. The critic, on the other hand, with his fixed and immutable conception of what and what alone can constitute an opera, is not prepared to accept as such anything that

cannot be measured and assessed by the canons that are his accustomed tools. The brilliant discovery, collectively made by London's musical newspaper-men, that Delius's opera is not an opera at all, is almost as enlightening as the old proposition which proves that Homer's words were not written by Homer but by someone else of the same name. The average musical critic would seem to be more fitted for a detective's job than for his own, since so often it is enough for him to detect the presence or absence of some quite trivial technical factor in a work to justify a complete and final judgment on the work's spiritual value. When Cesar Franck's symphony was produced, the fact that an English horn figured in the score was sufficient proof for one critic that the symphony *could not be a symphony at all* - in spite of the fact that over a century before Haydn had written an indubitable symphony where *two* of these disgraceful instruments were shamelessly employed throughout. This is, of course, an extremely simple system of criticism: the only wonder is that the public have not long ago found out that it is an instrument that any child can handle - perhaps, indeed, nothing more than a rather futile toy. But, in the present state of musical criticism in this country, it is no doubt too much to expect that a critic shall be able to discover what a composer has aimed at in his work before deciding whether or not he has achieved his aim.

For Delius, as for Mozart, Weber, Wagner and every other great operatic composer, opera is *a musical form* as much as the symphony or the sonata. For Puccini and Mascagni and their followers it is something different, but we are not concerned with them at present. Music expresses in general terms what may be exemplified by particular instances, in words or actions: the music, so to speak, is a summary statement of a general proposition, the explanatory examples are like similes or metaphors which may refer to simple and commonplace events of everyday life or may equally be the creations of a soaring imagination. In all music, in the classical symphony as much as in the modern symphonic poem, there is an underlying programme: the programme may be concerned with the abstract interplay of emotions or it may be based upon definite facts and happenings in the world about us, but in either case it is a programme. The difference between a concert and an operatic performance lies solely in this: in the one case the programme of the music we hear is revealed to our feelings and imagination alone, in the other a particular visible exemplification of it is put before our eyes to assist our imagination - but the imagination, the *active* faculty of reception, must be no less alert in the latter case than in the former.

We have said that the programme may be of two kinds - roughly speaking, psychological or factual - but then, again, these two kinds are interrelated. The psychological programme can always be exemplified by facts and the programme of externals can be no more than a shadowing-forth of inner relations. We cannot always have pure allegory - a plain, straightforward story or 'plot', with a complicated, exact-parallel, 'inner' story running alongside of it with an ulterior moral or emotional significance. And the personification method of the mediaeval drama would somehow be unconvincing at the present day. We can feel with the protagonists in the crudest drama of love and hate and murder in the cinema, while if the matter were so far abstracted as to be played by personifications of the qualities or impulses involved (as in the morality plays of

the Middle Ages), we should be left cold. To effect a nice balance between these two extremes is the problem which confronts the operatic librettist and composer alike - those, that is to say, who realise that an opera must be something more than a good play set to appropriate music. The chief difficulty inherent in the problem is the necessity of avoiding *particular* detail which might tend to obscure or hinder the general development of the work, and yet at the same time to make the particular exemplification of the music shown on the stage a coherent and compact image of the initial conception. The problem is by no means finally solved in the *Village Romeo and Juliet*, but that does not obliterate the fact that Delius has made a very decisive step towards its solution. The relation between the music and the drama in this kind of opera is in many respects similar to the relation between the respective contributions of the individual poet and of traditional legend in Greek drama. The Greeks took the 'plot' of a play for granted: the story, in its bare outline, was always known beforehand, it was not necessary for the dramatist to expound it in every detail; a play was judged solely on the strength of the poet's treatment of a familiar subject. The parallel with modern opera is further shown by reference to the choruses in the Greek drama which nearly always universalise the thought or emotion which has been expressed in a particular embodiment in the preceding scene: and one of the greatest effects in Greek drama is that species of 'irony' which depends for its appreciation upon the fact that *the audience* as well as one of the parties on the stage is in possession of knowledge which is supposed to be as yet concealed from the other protagonist in the dialogue. Clearly, then, if the audience were not already acquainted with the 'plot' of the whole play, many scenes would have been wholly unintelligible. So also it is with opera in many cases. The drama or action can only sketch out in rough outline the general drift of the work: the intimate and subtle detail is left to be filled in by the music.

To praise the music of Delius's opera and cavil at the drama, as so many critics have done, is merely to expose the fact that the meaning of the music has not really been grasped at all. For, on the assumption that opera is simply perfect correlation between music and action, the *Village Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most flawless masterpieces that has ever been given to the world. There is never any disparity between the music and the action; if the drama of the work is 'undramatic' (in the Puccini scale of values), then so is the music. But this is an unessential adjective. All that really matters is whether the work as a whole is vitally expressive, whether it sheds new light on things that matter in the lives of all of us; and this, for all who have ears to hear, it does in abundant measure. The work has all the poignant beauty and pathos of a fairy story cut short and robbed of its happy ending: it is an elegy on the pitiful fate of trusting innocence at the hands of relentless chance. But even chance or destiny - symbolised to some extent throughout the work by the figure of the Black Fiddler - is subject to a higher law and fulfils its mission in this world not in obedience to the malicious caprice of its own tyrannical will, but to a compelling necessity. The executioner pities his victim and doubts the justice of his sentence, but is powerless to save him. For this reason it matters very little *why* the respective fathers of Sali and Vrenchen quarrel or *why* in the end the lovers find life impossible together and intolerable without each other. The inevitable fact remains, and the triviality or

apparent unreason of the causes of a tragedy only serve to intensify the pathos of the situation when it has arisen. The tragedy of the *Village Romeo and Juliet* is the tragedy of unreasonable children crying for an impossible moon; if reason could have purchased their lives it might have eclipsed their moon - who shall say that they sold their lives too cheaply?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[*The Sackbut* October 1920 Vol.1 No.6]

[In the September 1920 issue, in an article entitled 'At the Crossroads', Delius had written: 'I do not agree with the Editor when he writes of Ernest Newman's "sordid self-interest" in musical criticism, and implies . . . that the writings of Edwin Evans, the "prophet" of the *petits maitres*, are inspired by a loftier motive. Evans . . . is not an artist, nor has he ever exhibited the smallest claim to be regarded seriously as a musician . . . Musical criticism has become pretty well discredited in England through having been entrusted for years to men who are neither competent as musicians nor as journalists. . .']

Sir - I do not agree with Mr Delius's estimate of the critical worth of Mr Edwin Evans and, if I may say so, very much doubt whether it is based upon a thorough knowledge of his recent writings.

The proof of the pudding's in the eating, and the proof of the critic is in the lucidity and helpfulness of his criticisms. Personally I regard Mr Evans as the most enlightened musical critic on the London press.

The only qualification a critic needs is the ability to write intelligently and informatively about his subject. He need not by any means be a composer himself. Musical history abounds with examples of great composers who were thoroughly bad critics. Mr Delius says that Mr Evans is 'no musician'; granting that he is not a composer (as far as I am aware), 'musicianship' is a relative matter, more or less. If he is 'no musician' and yet can enlighten me about music (though I do not always see eye to eye with him in his judgments), how much *less* than nothing must be the musicianship of those responsible for the columns devoted to music in the majority of the London daily papers, where the musical paragraphs are neither readable as good journalism nor as 'musicianly' criticism!

Mr Evans has his 'fads', it is true - though I should prefer to call them his enthusiasms. At one time he 'boomed' Debussy: but nothing could have been more impartial and *critical* in the best sense of the word than the obituary notice of that composer which he contributed to the *English Review*. Perhaps in a few years his passion for Stravinsky may cool down in a like manner.

Yours etc.

A WHYTE WESTCOTT

MUSIC IN ENGLAND: ii FREDERICK DELIUS

[*Musikblätter des anbruch* March 1922 (trans. Evelin Gerhardi)]

Central European music lovers who wish to survey contemporary British music must, to a certain extent, deal with those influences which have, in recent years, been more prominent in Great Britain than on the Continent. In London – which is for the composer the centre of British musical life – although there is no permanent opera house, a greater variety of new compositions by a wide range of nationalities can be heard than in any other city in the world.

During the War and shortly before, the British public became familiar with many new works that were hitherto hardly known in Germany and Austria. In the past decade there has been a strong reaction to the conservative attitude of the British musical world. While formerly there had been much blind prejudice against so-called ‘modern’ music – a vague, negative term which includes anything that diverges even so slightly from the classical tradition – we have now reached the other extreme: by a large and ever growing body of musicians and public, a new work is guaranteed the most favourable reception if its composer belongs to one or the other of the well-known prevailing trends or cliques of the day. The public will no longer applaud blindly, kindly or complacently a work evidently influenced by Brahms or an earlier master – which, in itself, is quite acceptable. Yet unfortunately this is no proof of a greater demand for original works. For if a new composition shows the influence of Stravinsky or Ravel, the public (including our totally inadequate music critics of the daily papers) will greet the work with the greatest enthusiasm and praise its composer to the skies.

This predominance of schools, cliques and styles is unhealthy for art in our country. Constant classifying and comparing are of no use. A true work of art has absolute, not relative value. The great composer stands alone and isolated on the summit he has reached; he is independent of any school or clique and his pupils can do little more than offer a pale imitation of his works. The sight of a group of lesser composers who have joined together and founded a ‘society of mutual admiration’ only breeds the suspicion that none of them is able to stand on his own. In recent years French cliques have been particularly lively with their propagandist activities in Great Britain. The latter has granted foreign music such hospitality as France (with regard to music the most chauvinistic of all nations) has by no means reciprocated.

Foreign music lovers should not forget that we do not have, like Germany and Austria, a music tradition which provides a foundation to our musical life. Instead, we have probably more diverse cosmopolitan influences than any other country. In a certain respect it is advantageous to have new music from all over the world welcomed here. But the lack of a tradition implies also the lack of a sound foundation for criticism.

We will now give a short survey of the most important living British composers.

There is one name shining brightly above all the others: Frederick Delius, almost the only British composer who has hitherto succeeded in achieving world-

wide renown. Like our greatest living novelist Joseph Conrad, he is not British by descent but by elective affinity; yet in art the environment, feelings and similarities of character are more decisive factors than mere inheritance.

Delius is one of the very few composers who have learnt much from Wagner without being overwhelmed by him. Delius's early works are clearly Wagnerian, but there is more Delius in them than Wagner. His compositions of the past twenty years have an altogether personal style, no longer betraying any external influences. He has outgrown Wagner (in the manner already mentioned); his works are the musical peaks of the 19th century, the brilliant sunset of the great romantic epoch. He is primarily a harmonist and his richly coloured music is reminiscent of the beautiful dazzling hues of the evening sun in a tropical sky. He has never experimented with or sought new forms of musical expression for its own sake as so many modern impressionists have done. He has developed his own style and structure by following only his imagination. And yet his harmonic innovations surpass by far, in a purely technical sense, those of Debussy.

Regarding his outlook on life, Delius might be called pantheistic, a mystic whose inner vision is determined by an all-embracing sense of life as Nietzsche would have it. This feeling for the liveliness of all things, the pulse of Nature, is so profoundly embodied in his consciousness that to him everything seems animated – he is stirred by such an ardent feeling of admiration and beauty that existence as an individual seems to him almost unbearable. His music conveys pictures of overwhelming beauty in which the great endless peace – the ‘mystic peace amidst endless unrest’ – is strangely penetrated by the bitter pain of loss. It seems as if we see, for a moment, a paradise that we remember vaguely and from which we are now expelled by the angel with the flaming sword. Yet Delius's attitude is not one of negation and dissatisfaction with this life in order to expect a better one hereafter. On the contrary, he feels as if the abundance, the richness and the sublime beauty of this world and of this life become overwhelming, breaking all bounds and overflowing into the infinite. ‘All joy craves eternity’ – it is only the fetters forced upon us by time and everlasting change which make life tragic. From this viewpoint Delius corresponds with Nietzsche, but rather with Nietzsche the poet than with Nietzsche the philosopher, the latter having inspired him to his greatest work, the *Mass of Life*, probably the most outstanding work since Wagner. But neither here nor in his dramatic works does Delius try to illustrate an idea or problem which, by itself, is external to music. In the parts from ‘*Zarathustra*’ used as text for his *Mass of Life* and in the books he chose for his operas, Delius found a mentality and feelings resembling his own, and so created his music according to the words. But there is no exact difference between his dramatic music, his songs and his purely instrumental compositions. The characters in his operas are symbolic figures rather than living persons – for Delius is not directly interested in outward happenings but in the effect of these events on mankind and its reflection in his own soul.

FREDERICK DELIUS

[*The Music Bulletin* Introductions: V May 1923]

The apathy of musicians in general towards Frederick Delius is very certainly outweighed by the enthusiasm of an ever-increasing number of persons who take an intelligent interest in music. These sharply contrasted attitudes, between which there seems to be no connecting link of lukewarm tolerance, are doubtless to be accounted for by the fact that his music is the outcome of a profoundly religious nature, and is therefore completely at variance with what is called the modern spirit in music. Blake has been dead for nearly a century, yet, despite his passionate denunciations, we are still beset with the pretence of art that would destroy art, the pretence of religion that would destroy religion. It is more than three hundred years since Robert Jones made the discovery that 'there are none greater enemies to their own profession than musicians', but no subsequent epoch has failed to muster an ignoble army of professional mediocrities to uphold the banner of the pretence of art against its only true professor, the man of creative genius. In much the same way, it is considered paradoxical to describe as a religious composer one who instead of writing anthems and services, turns to Nature (and even Nietzsche) for his inspiration; and yet most irreligion is mere reaction against a pretence of religion that would destroy religion, a misconception of the very nature of religion, a confusion of ideas arising from too naïve a faith in the reality of time and space, which is of the same order as the credulity of the senses in regard to the sun's apparent motion round the earth.

But what has all this to do with Delius? A lot: for he is the great 'unconscious philosopher' of modern music, and a right understanding of the essential mysticism of his outlook on life is a most necessary introduction to the study of his works. In the materialistic religion of the nineteenth century, against which Delius in his early youth rightly rose in angry revolt (an attitude he has maintained ever since), there was much talk of *this world* and *another world*, just as one might talk of England and Tibet. Now Delius always plumped for England as against Tibet (though, of course, 'there are other places'); he would have no truck with the Grand Lama, and ordered his life according to the admirable maxim of Herman Melville: 'Feed all things with food convenient for them - that is, if the food be procurable. The food of thy soul is light and space; feed it then on light and space. But the food of thy body is champagne and oysters; feed it then on champagne and oysters; and so shall it merit a joyful resurrection, if there is any to be.' And what is this joyful resurrection if it is not the gradual becoming-aware (as Donne and Traherne and many other spiritual ancestor of Delius became aware) that 'into another world no man is gone, for that Heaven, which God created, and this world is all one world', and that 'you never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars, and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world'? And so it is this realisation that Man is not merely a part of Nature, but that all external things are only aspects of himself made manifest to his senses, which informs Delius's nature-music with so thrilling a sense of spiritual

adventure. It is evident that, so far from disparaging this world in expectation of another, Delius can never have enough of it; its loveliness, indeed, is so overwhelming that its very excess engenders a feeling of sadness at the imperfection with which even the greatest art can capture an image of it. Far away, upon the horizon, there is always an Hy-Brasil, beyond the sunset lie the Hesperides; there is no end to beauty and delight - 'for all joy craves eternity', as Delius sings in the last triumphant chorus in the *Mass of Life*, and the limitations of temporal existence breed in the soul a sense of spiritual exile. But Delius is never pessimistic; beneath his sadness there is always assurance of the unreality of all such limitations, and when he broods in the twilight, he seems to say with Zarathustra: 'Ah, my friends, it is the evening that questions me thus. Forgive me my sadness, forgive me that evening has fallen upon me.' His best work should be viewed as a whole, and it will be found that it composes harmoniously into a coherent picture of the spiritual life in its diverse aspects. In the *Village Romeo and Juliet* we have the drama of disillusion and despair, of renunciation of the world and its ways; in the *Mass of Life* an all-embracing acceptance and 'yea-saying' to life, a sense of unification and fulfilment; in *Sea Drift* and *Appalachia* and *Songs of Sunset* separation is the dominant note; the Violin Concerto, the song *Hy-Brasil* and much of the *Hassan* music give us golden visions of a far-off country; and in the *North Country Sketches* and the exquisite pieces *On hearing the first cuckoo in spring* and *Summer night on the river* are mirrored the moods evoked by the changing seasons of the year. The music lover hitherto unacquainted with Delius will get a very fair idea of the value of his output from these works, and, when he has assimilated them, his interest will probably be great enough to lead him on to discover for himself those others which deserve to be ranked in the same category.

It is impossible within the limits of a short article to give more than a very rough indication of the chief characteristics of Delius's music and of the influences they have contributed to the formation of his extremely individual style. Few living composers are so entirely *sui generis*. Even in the earlier works the passages which are reminiscent of Wagner and of Grieg are always overshadowed by the originality of the greater part of the piece. Because both are pre-eminently harmonists, Delius and Debussy have been said to resemble each other by those who make comparisons after superficial study, just as Mozart and Haydn are thought to sound exactly alike by people who are not well acquainted with the work of either. In the case of Delius and Debussy there is no question of either composer having influenced the other in any way, but an interesting comparison between their respective styles was made by a writer in a French paper as long ago as 1908: 'Ce que Wagner fut à Weber, M. Delius l'est à M. Debussy. Plus complet, plus organique, plus fort, il est tout aussi subtil et multi-nuancé. Comme lui, il paraît vêtu d'arc-en-ciel dilué; une continuelle pâmoison de délicats frottements d'accords nous chatouille délicieusement et, cependant, quelque chose de fort et de salubre règne dans l'ensemble, et l'architecture de l'oeuvre connaît une élévation à grandes lignes audacieuses et un plan large et aéré, mais ferme et défini. On sait d'où l'on part, par où l'on va, où l'on aboutit.' From the point of view of technique, Delius's chief strength lies in his wonderful harmonic resources; he is seldom contrapuntal, his harmony being as a rule a kind of higher-

dimensional view of his melodic outlines - though sometimes, as in the first of the *Dance Rhapsodies*, a given melody winds more or less contrapuntally in and out of a moving phalanx of harmonies. But he has no such harmonic system as Scriabin, for example, evolved, only to become himself entangled therein. Delius maintains that harmony is almost entirely intuitive, that a true harmonic sense cannot be intellectually acquired when the intuition is lacking; and the unanalysable magic of his music gives colour to this view. His harmony is always within the boundaries of tonality, never beyond them like that of Schoenberg or Bartók. The principle of modulation, though not discarded, is stretched to the last extremity of chromatic licence, along the lines indicated in the works of Gesualdo (whose madrigal *Moro lasso al mio duolo* it is extremely interesting to compare with Delius's part-song *On Craig Ddu*, written three hundred years later), Chopin, Wagner, Liszt, and Grieg; and it is the continual shifting of tonal centres that imparts to his music a peculiar elusiveness, so that many a phrase seems to have a hidden significance that lies just beyond what is actually uttered in sound. In the orchestra the harmonic tissue is split up into a number of interweaving strands of melody, and this gives the music a good deal of inner vitality which is necessarily lost when it is transferred to the pianoforte, an instrument for which, it must be admitted, Delius's harmonic methods are not particularly well suited. On the other hand piano scores of his work are almost indispensable if we are to appreciate to the fullest extent his wonderful instinct for the proper disposition of the notes that compound each chord, as well as the extraordinary variety and subtlety of his harmonic invention; for there is something that remains definite and constant in the mere disposition of the notes of a chord, as distinct from the differences of *timbre* the chord may acquire when it is sounded by different combinations of instruments - although, one must add as a matter of observed fact, Delius's orchestral works are not scored from compressed sketches but are sketched in full score, the actual stuff and its scoring being notated simultaneously. But to what purpose is all this talk about chords and scores? Let us beware of falling into the predicament of that critic whose 'Terrible trick of harmonic analysis Had given his whole understanding paralysis', and turn to this glorious music with minds seeking to understand its spirit with the reverence and gratitude that is due to one of the great masters of music.

PHILIP HESELTINE

MUSIC

[*The Westminster Gazette* July 14 1923]

The tercentenary celebration of the greatest of our Old Masters, the first hearing of a new work by the greatest of our living masters, the production of the work, by a composer hitherto unknown, which has been chosen to represent Young England at the International Chamber Music Festival to be held at Salzburg this summer, and a series of performances organised by the English Folk-Dance Society, at which we heard some of the loveliest of that ageless traditional music which has been one of the main sources of our composers' inspiration from the

sixteenth century down to the present day — such was London's musical fare during the first week in July.

On the 3rd, Frederick Delius's Cello Concerto, which had already been played with considerable success at Frankfort and Vienna, was introduced to an English audience by Miss Beatrice Harrison at her concert in Queen's Hall in aid of the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children. This is the master's latest work, composed two years ago, a few months before he fell victim to the illness which has so long incapacitated him and from which he is now happily recovering. In spite of some weak moments the work is full of the characteristic beauty of the composer's later style. The score has been published abroad and, perhaps on that account, is not so familiar to musicians as those of the Violin Concerto and the Double Concerto, which are in the hands of an English firm. At all events, the judgment of the critics who pronounced the work too long-drawn-out for its mood of serenity and sweetness untempered by any strength or vigour was clearly based upon the performance alone, which a perusal of the score would have shown to have been very inadequate. The whole of the first movement was made to sound invertebrate and flabby by the absurdly slow tempo at which it was taken, and the last section, which is headed *allegramente*, was dragged in such a way that the rhythm almost disappeared, and the exceedingly lovely last pages, which should sound serene, seemed merely soporific. Though Delius is primarily a harmonist, the peculiar glow and colour which he imparts to his orchestration is obtained by a very subtle individuation of the various instrumental voices by which the harmonic web is woven; so that when the orchestra is handled as a mere mass formation, as unfortunately it was on this occasion by Mr Eugène Goossens, much of the melodic significance of the work is lost, and, the thread of the argument disappearing from time to time, the music possibly seems to those unfamiliar with it to be formless and rambling. Let us hope that this important work will soon be heard again under more favourable conditions.

A more complete contrast to the music of Delius than the String Quartet of W.T. Walton, which was produced by the British Music Society on the 5th, can hardly be imagined. Delius works outwards, so to speak, from a harmonic centre; Walton, adopting an older principle, concentrates upon the rhythmic vitality of independent parts, their coalescence, at the imaginary vertical line drawn across the score at any point, being a matter of secondary importance. The work is very cunningly constructed, and demonstrates the fact that intellectuality and imaginative fire are by no means as incompatible as most contemporary music would lead us to suppose.

Too little space remains for proper notice of the William Byrd festival. . .

P.H.

HASSAN

[*The Weekly Westminster Gazette* September 29 1923]

By his happy choice of Frederick Delius as composer of the incidental music, Mr Basil Dean has made *Hassan* the most significant musical production the London stage has seen for many a day, opera not excluded. Had Flecker and Delius worked in collaboration there could hardly have been a closer spiritual affinity

between the drama and the music which accompanies it. Delius has always been haunted by dreams of a far country 'beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow', and he is never more authentically inspired than when he is singing of some Hesperides-garden, whether it be in Hy-Brasil or Samarkand, or in the island Zarathustra found beyond good and evil. This romantic element in his nature colours nearly all of the *Hassan* music, which, in spite of the limitations of form and of orchestral colour within which he has worked, is thoroughly characteristic of his mature style and an excellent initiation for those who hear Delius for the first time at His Majesty's Theatre.

Perhaps it is a little absurd to speak of limitations in connection with this music since, for all his architectural sense and mastery of the whole range of orchestral sound, some of Delius's most exquisite work has appeared in the form of short pieces for a very small orchestra - witness that perfect little poem *On hearing the first cuckoo in spring*. In *Hassan* there are several miniatures equally lovely; subtle and tender things of that magical simplicity that only a great master can achieve. Certain passages give us the very quintessence of Delius in a few bars - the little 'Street of Felicity' motif, for instance, the brief Prelude to the third act, with its beautiful use of voices singing without words as a part of the orchestra, and the entrancing Serenade which voices a passion far greater than that of the old confectioner for the fickle Yasmin.

It need hardly be said that Delius has seized upon the emotions of the drama which are universal and of no time and place - or equally of all times and all places - and given them free expression in his music unsullied by the coarse daubs of pseudo-Oriental local colour with which ninety-nine composers out of a hundred would have known no better than to bespatter them. When one thinks of the kind of music at least two very eminent British composers - both well known for their 'eastern effects' - would probably have turned out for this play, one's admiration for Mr Dean's perspicacity in selecting Delius is redoubled. There is, it is true, occasional though very sparing use of the interval of the augmented second, which is, to some ears, remotely suggestive of certain eastern scales, but it is no more characteristically eastern than our own ordinary minor scale in which it occupies so prominent a position. Indeed, if anyone will look at one or two passages in the first *Dance Rhapsody* where Delius has used it quite as extensively as in *Hassan*, he will see clearly that its association with Oriental music is purely arbitrary.

Technical difficulties abound in *Hassan*, especially in the music for unaccompanied chorus behind the scenes, music of a kind which when it was first presented to certain crack north-country choirs some twelve or thirteen years ago was thought unsingable. (The particular work in question was Delius's *On Craig Ddu*, which was one of the test-pieces at the Blackpool competition festival in 1910.) But the apparent ease with which these difficulties are surmounted at His Majesty's Theatre is an eloquent testimony to the executive progress our singers have made during the last decade. Mr Eugene Goossens conducted on the first night, but much of the credit for general excellence of the musical side of the production is due to Mr Percy Fletcher, the permanent conductor of the theatre.

The published piano score of *Hassan* is incomplete, several numbers having been recently added at the request of Mr Dean, to meet the necessities of his production. A new edition will, however, be ready very shortly.

HASSAN

MR. DELIUS'S MUSIC

by Philip Heseltine
Author of *'The Life of Delius'*

[*The Daily Telegraph* 29 September 1923]

'We want to hear the orchestra.' Clearly the author of this famous phrase will have to conspire with Mr Lorenz and other kindred spirits to devise some method of retaliation if those who go to the superb production at His Majesty's Theatre as much for the music as for the play are to be frustrated in their attempts to hear it (as the representative of *The Daily Telegraph* appears to have been on the first night) by the chatter of folk who are oblivious of the disrespect they are showing to one of the greatest living composers. There is no reason why music-lovers should have to wait until the music is played in the concert hall to hear it properly, for it belongs as essentially to the play as the music of an opera, and, beautiful as it will still sound in the concert hall, it is in the theatre alone that it can be heard to the best advantage. If the music were not a vital and integral part of the drama the management would not lavish their money on it; it is, therefore, as discourteous to drown a musical interlude with conversation as to disturb an actor's lines by audible comments.

But there is another strong reason why a definite campaign to secure silence should be inaugurated if the chatter continues. This production affords an opportunity for the genius of Frederick Delius to be discovered and appreciated by a far larger public than that which is in the regular habit of attending orchestral concerts. Many who make Delius's acquaintance in the theatre for the first time will want to renew it in the concert hall; and if the theory be correct that there is a large body of people who only like bad music because they so seldom hear good, appreciation of the *Hassan* music may well do a great deal to promote the cause of good music generally.

For the benefit of those whose experience has been as exasperating as that of *The Daily Telegraph's* representative, a few comments by one who has been privileged to study the score and hear the music in peace at the rehearsals may be welcome. The score is laid out for an orchestra of twenty-six players, with single woodwind and brass (there is an English horn as well as an oboe) and divided strings, with one player to each part. But although the means are so limited, the effect of the scoring is purely orchestral, and has little relation to the more contrapuntal 'chamber orchestra' style where the string parts are not doubled or divided.

All who are acquainted with the larger orchestral works of Delius (*In a Summer Garden* and the first *Dance Rhapsody* provide notable examples) will recall his felicitous use of solo wind instruments against a string background; in *Hassan* the solo element is, naturally, much in evidence, but, considering the limitations within which he has worked, the backgrounds are of quite astonishing richness

and variety. Indeed, one is hardly conscious of the smallness of the orchestra, and on the whole the *Hassan* music is entirely characteristic of Delius at his best, and an admirable introduction to his very individual style for those as yet unfamiliar with his work.

‘OLD FRIENDS’

The Delius enthusiast will, it is true, meet some old friends in the score, but that is pleasant in itself, apart from the fact that there is often an extraordinary appositeness in their appearances, though the composer himself disclaims any conscious use of quotation. But a similarity of mood and atmosphere may easily evoke similar musical ideas in different works, and there is a peculiar charm in these resemblances. In a way they are a kind of hallmark of sincerity, if any such things were needed. A striking instance occurs in the interlude played after the prison scene, where Rafi and Pervaneh choose death rather than separation, for at the climax the trumpet reminds us in unmistakable tones of the climax of that lovely entr’acte in *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, which precedes the decision of the unhappy lovers to seek in death a solution of their troubles, and a comparison between the motif associated with the Fountain of the Two Pigeons in the Street of Felicity and the themes of the slow movement of the Violin Sonata and the coda of the Cello Concerto will interest any student of the workings of the musical mind.

A word of explanation is due to the purchasers of the piano score of *Hassan*, which is published in the Universal Edition. This was prepared two years ago from the original full score. Since then the exigencies of production have necessitated certain alterations and additions. Thus the exquisite Serenade to Yasmin (which, incidentally, should attain more widespread popularity than anything Delius has ever written) is not sung with piano accompaniment, as originally intended, but is first played as a violin solo with a background of pizzicato strings and harp, while Hassan declaims his Ghazel, then sung, as an interlude, to the same accompaniment, and is finally played, in a richly scored version, when Hassan succumbs to the charms of the faithless Yasmin. The chorus for female voices and orchestra between the two dances in Act II has been considerably extended, the original prelude to Act V now precedes the Caliph’s deliverance from Rafi’s house, and the first orchestral interlude (based upon the ‘Street of Felicity’ motif), the last movement of the ballet in Act II, the unaccompanied chorus that follows the descent of the iron walls, the interlude after the prison scene (already referred to), and the introduction to the final chorus, with its wonderful opening phrase, ‘We take the golden road to Samarkand’, which recalls so appropriately that great cry towards the end of *Appalachia* (‘Oh, honey, I am going down the river in the morning’) do not appear at all in the published version. However, a new edition is in preparation, and this will contain all the music that is played at His Majesty’s Theatre.

All these additional numbers, it is interesting to note, have been composed and scored by dictation to Mrs Delius, the composer having been unable during his recent illness to hold a pen. But his musical imagination is, happily, as active as ever, and the vigour of the dances and the dreamy loveliness of the interludes are proof that creative activity of the highest order is by no means necessarily impaired by physical disabilities.

FREDERICK DELIUS

[A DICTIONARY OF MODERN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

General Editor: A Eaglefield Hull. Dent, 1924]

British composer; b. Bradford, Yorkshire, 29 Jan. 1863*. Son of Julius D. who became a naturalised British subject in 1850. He was educated at Bradford Grammar School and at International Coll., Spring Grove, Isleworth (1876-9). Parental opposition at first prevented him from devoting himself exclusively to music, but after a few years of business in the north of England - pleasantly relieved by occasional trips to Scandinavia - he persuaded his father to purchase an orange-grove in Florida. Here he had ample opportunity to develop in the most congenial surroundings. After six months of solitude, which he regards as the decisive period of his career, he was fortunate enough to encounter an admirable musician, Thomas F Ward, who came to live with him and proved a sympathetic friend as well as a valuable teacher. But Delius soon began to feel the need of a definitely musical environment and begged his father to allow him to go to Germany. His request was refused. In August 1885, he left the orange-grove and secured a post as music teacher in Danville, Virginia, with the object of becoming financially independent. He was very successful in this capacity and his abrupt and long-unexplained disappearance from Florida seemed to convince his parents of the futility of their attitude towards his ambition. In the following year he went to Leipzig where he learned nothing from the Conservatorium but a great deal from his association with Grieg, who was at that time living in the town. On leaving Leipzig in 1888, he settled in Paris, where, as he never allied himself to any clique or coterie of musicians, his work was - and still is - completely ignored. Publicity, however, meant little to him; he wrote much, but published nothing and had no work performed until he had attained maturity. In 1893, he withdrew at the last moment, on purely self-critical scruples, an opera which had been accepted for production at Weimar, and it was not until 1899 that he ventured to give a concert of his own works. This took place in London at the old St James's Hall, and attracted so much attention (as may be seen from the press notices) that it is astonishing to find that no further performance of any of his works took place in England during the next eight years. Germany was more active in her recognition of his genius. Hans Haym in Elberfeld, Julius Buths in Düsseldorf and Busoni, Oskar Fried and Fritz Cassirer in Berlin supported their belief in him by performing his orchestral works, and his reputation was still further enhanced by the production of *Appalachia* at the Lower Rhine Musical Festival in 1905, and *Sea Drift* at the Tonkünstlerfest of the united German musical societies in 1906. In England we have to thank Sir Thomas Beecham, more than any other conductor, for familiarising us with all his works.

Delius is one of the very few composers who have learnt much from Wagner without being overwhelmed by him. The early works of Delius are clearly Wagnerian, with touches here and there of Chopin and Grieg; but from the very first there was always more Delius than Wagner, or anyone else, and the traces of external influence gradually diminished until, by 1900, Delius's individuality completely asserted itself. He is the sunset of that period styled Romantic, of

which Wagner may be regarded as the high noon. Delius's art is retrospective, in the sense of being compact of 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. It is therefore the reverse of impressionistic. Nature is interpreted not as a series of external phenomena, but rather as an integral part of the soul itself. Neither in his orchestral works nor in his operas and other compositions constructed upon a poetic basis is there any programme other than a purely spiritual one. Taking his text as a starting-point, Delius extracts what is universal from the particular details of his subject and leaves one wondering at the way in which minute particulars seem to be contained and individually expressed in an all-embracing synthesis. His greatest work, *A Mass of Life (Zarathustra)* - inspired by Nietzsche the poet rather than Nietzsche the philosopher - is an epic of initiation, of the bringing to birth of God in Man: the most essentially religious work of our time, consequently one of the most neglected - a work which in its grandeur, its breadth of vision, and its wealth of beauty, is unsurpassed by the most monumental achievements in music. In his technique Delius relies mainly, but by no means exclusively, upon an almost kaleidoscopic interplay of harmonies. Though historians might compare him on the one hand with Gesualdo, on the other with some composer of the present day, his work bears no trace of any contemporary influence and its peculiarly individual qualities are elusive and unanalysable. The letter without reference to the spirit is a thing of naught. But his personal style is as clear and distinguished in a little unaccompanied chorus like *On Craig Ddu* as in the operas and the great works for chorus and orchestra. Delius lives at Grez-sur-Loing, Seine-et-Marne, France.

Operas: *Koanga* (1897); *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (1901; produced Berlin, 1907; London, Beecham Opera Co, 1910; revived 1919 [1920]); *Fennimore* (1910), Choral works; *Appalachia* (1902); *Sea Drift* (1903); *A Mass of Life* (1905; produced London, 1909); *Songs of Sunset* (1906); *Song of the High Hills* (1912), Orch. works: *Paris* (1899); *Brigg Fair* (1907); *In a Summer Garden* (1908); *Dance Rhapsody* (1908); *On hearing the first cuckoo in spring* (1912); *North Country Sketches* (1914); *Eventyr* (1917), Pf. Concerto (1906); Vn. Concerto (1916); Double Concerto for Vn. and Cello (1916); Cello Concerto (1921). Incidental music to James Elroy Flecker's play, *Hassan: or the Golden Journey to Samarkand* (1920; produced His Majesty's Theatre, London, 1923); many songs and a few part-songs. Publ. chiefly Univ. Ed., Vienna, and Augener, London. Consult book on D. by the writer, publ. by J Lane, 1923. - P.H.

[*This was the year generally accepted - even by the composer himself - for Delius's birth until Heseltine checked the date at Somerset House in 1929 and found him to be a year older than was supposed. Heseltine's study of Delius (1923) gave the incorrect date of birth.]

THE WORKS OF DELIUS

[*The Musical Times* July 1 1927]

Sir — It would be interesting to know the identity of 'those who are best acquainted with the works of Delius' in whose opinion, according to Mr Robert

H Hull, 'choral writing is not his happiest or most characteristic medium'. Your correspondent 'C', writing of the Philharmonic concert on April 11, says: 'Delius's *Sea Drift* will surely live, if anything he has written does'; and this view is shared by a large number of competent critics. Mr Cecil Gray, in his *Survey of Contemporary Music*, refers to

'... the magnificent series of choral and orchestral works — *Appalachia*, *Sea Drift*, the *Mass of Life*, the *Songs of Sunset* — in which rather than in the purely orchestral works, or even in the operas, Delius's greatest strength lies',

and he considers that

'... Delius stands unsurpassed by any composer since Beethoven in this medium. Wagner and Verdi may be better writers for the stage, Berlioz and Liszt may be greater symphonists, Mendelssohn and Brahms may have written more perfect concertos, and Schubert and Schumann finer songs, but there is nothing in the whole of the last century which can be placed above Delius's achievement in the larger choral forms',

— an opinion in which I heartily concur, though I am convinced that we shall never hear a perfect performance of *Appalachia*, *Sea Drift*, or the *Songs of Sunset* until someone has the courage to *reduce the numbers of the choir to thirty-five, or at most fifty, while keeping the orchestra up to full strength*. It is absurd to use as large a chorus for *Sea Drift* as for the *Te Deum* of Berlioz.

Professors of prosody may wrangle amongst themselves as to whether Delius is 'apt to mistake the accent'; musicians who are not disciples of Dr Strabismus (whom God preserve), of Utrecht, will console themselves with some wise words written on this subject many years ago by Mr Kennedy Scott:

'There is seldom perfect fusion of words and music for any length of time, even in the works of the great composers . . . Music is a finer means of expression than language; and it must be allowed to over-ride language.'

But Mr Delius has never 'mistaken the sense' or failed to reach the very heart of the poems on which these admirable works are based.

Mr Hull refers your readers to the gramophone records of certain works of Delius. The HMV discs of *Brigg Fair* and *On hearing the first cuckoo in spring** are very poor records of one of those 'extremely bad' performances from which Mr Hull has suffered, and are so much an 'obvious misinterpretation of the composer's intentions' that he himself has protested against their circulation. Sir Henry Wood's performance of the *Dance Rhapsody* (No 1) is in a different class altogether, but the recording is not first-rate, and some of the finest passages in the work have been cut out — quite needlessly, since an unusual amount of space on the two discs is left blank, and one side of the second is filled with a piece by Rameau.

Yours &c.

PHILIP HESELTINE

Eynsford, Kent

[* HMV D799/800 Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, Eugene Goossens]

A Modern Composer who does not belong to 'the wrong-note school'.

THE YORKSHIRE GENIUS OF FRIDAY'S CONCERT

[*Radio Times* February 1 1929]

This article on Frederick Delius, a concert of whose works Sir Thomas Beecham is to conduct on Friday evening next, is by 'Peter Warlock', one of our younger musicians, and author, under his real name of Philip Heseltine, of a standard book on the composer.

Although much of his output is still unfamiliar to the musical world, Delius must not be regarded as a 'modern' composer within the generally accepted meaning of that often ill-used word. Not only does he belong to an earlier generation than the 'modern' composers whose work has figured so largely in the BBC's recent programmes of contemporary music — Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartók, and the rest — but his whole outlook on music is radically different from theirs; indeed, one might with justice cite Delius as the very antithesis of the contemporary spirit in music. The sharp angular lines of melody logically interwoven one with another, the harsh dissonances that are the frequent result of this procedure, the absence of key feeling (which gives the listener an impression that the music is in no key, or else in two or three keys at once), the nervous intensity of rhythmic schemes, and the preoccupation with clearly-defined forms, which are such salient characteristics of contemporary music — these have no part in the music of Delius. He has never had any liking for so-called 'atonal' music, and for years he has referred, in conversation, to its composers as 'the wrong-note school'. Their music, he contends, is lacking in *feeling and emotion*. These terms — impossible to define adequately in their application to music — will bear several diverse interpretations, for there are many widely-different kinds of musical emotion; and if we accept the Oxford Dictionary's definition of emotion as 'any vehement or excited mental state', it is impossible to deny its presence in much contemporary music. But every sympathetic listener will be able to hear what Delius means by the words. Accustomed from childhood to improvise on the piano, even before he learned to read music, he has developed a rhapsodical and rather improvisatory style in which harmony — *i. e.*, successions of chords — is of greater importance than melodic outline and rhythmic vigour, and form is dictated rather by the wayward flow of the music than by any preconceived ideas of structure. His harmony is melting and mellifluous, always within the bounds of tonality. So far, indeed, is it from being dissonant in the modern sense of the word that some by no means revolutionary critics have found it to be of too consistent a sweetness. (This, however, is a point upon which opinions differ considerably.) For the most part, his music is dreamy and contemplative, full of wistful retrospection, even in its gayer moments: the true musical embodiment of what Wordsworth called 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'.

Born in England in 1863 [1862], Delius is younger than Sir Edward Elgar by five years, than Hugo Wolf by three, than Debussy by one, and one year older than Richard Strauss. His musical development, however, like that of Elgar, was slow, for whereas by 1898 Wolf had completed his whole life's work, Strauss had composed all his well-known symphonic poems except *Heldenleben*, Debussy his string quartet, *L'après-midi d'un faune* and the *Nocturnes*, Delius had not yet written any of the works by which he is known today. Intensely fastidious and self-critical, he has never — save for a few months in early youth — been compelled to use music as a means of livelihood, so he has been spared the painful necessity of writing 'pot-boilers'. He has withheld from performance every work that seemed to him unworthy of the best that was in him, and many compositions have been withdrawn for drastic revision after one performance, or laid aside altogether. For many years after he had achieved fame at the great musical festivals of Germany, it was his practice, on finishing a new work, to put it away for two years, after which it was taken out and critically inspected before the final decision was made whether or not it should be given to the world. How many a young and totally unknown composer, having had an opera accepted for performance at an important German musical centre, would withdraw his work on the eve of rehearsal, because of conscientious scruples about its defects? Yet this is what Delius did when his *Magic Fountain* was to be played at Weimar in 1894; and the opera has never been heard to this day, though some of the music was used in certain later works.

The earliest of his large-scale compositions to become well-known was the nocturne, *Paris: the song of a great city*, which dates from 1899. This extremely clever and effective 'night-piece' — a musical evocation of the spirit of Paris from dusk to dawn — has yet some affinity with the Straussian tone-poem; not that the music is in any way derived from the Straussian idiom, but the technique and construction reveal German influence. Between *Paris* and the opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, which was completed two years later, there is a wide gulf. In the opera Delius completely found himself, and every page reveals a wholly individual style to which he has consistently adhered in all his later compositions. The years 1902-14 not only saw the creation of most of Delius's best work, but also brought him recognition in Germany as one of the major composers of Europe. But after giving an apparently successful concert of his own works in London in 1899, he had to wait many years before any further notice was taken of him in England, and it is not going too far to say that we have chiefly Sir Thomas Beecham to thank for the introduction of Delius's music to British audiences.

Among the works of Delius that are still practically unknown are there large orchestral compositions: *North Country Sketches* — delicate Nature studies akin in feeling to the exquisite pieces for small orchestra, *On hearing the first cuckoo in spring* and *Summer night on the river*; the second *Dance Rhapsody*, which is a brilliant elaboration of the Mazurka form; and *Eventyr*, which is inspired by a collection of Norwegian fairy tales ('Huldreeventyr'), published by Peter Christian Asbjørnsen in 1845. The piece, dramatic and full of action though it is, is not intended to illustrate any particular tale, but rather to conjure up a vision of the legendary world in which man, beast, and hobgoblin converse together and share incredible adventures.

During the composition of the incidental music to Flecker's play *Hassan* (produced at His Majesty's Theatre in 1923), Delius was stricken with a form of paralysis which necessitated much of the work being taken down from dictation — a difficult and exhausting task, both for the composer and his devoted wife, who acted as his amanuensis. It is sad to relate that no cure has as yet been found for the malady, and that for the last five years Delius has suffered from the additional affliction of blindness. In this terrible plight it is a great source of comfort to him that, thanks to the development of broadcasting, he is not cut off from the world of music; and nothing would bring him greater pleasure than the knowledge that Sir Thomas Beecham's splendid efforts on his behalf are being appreciated, and that an ever-widening circle of listeners is beginning to know and love his work, and to demand its more frequent performance.

PETER WARLOCK

[In the broadcast at 9.35 p.m. on February 8 from Kingsway Hall, Sir Thomas Beecham conducted the Wireless Symphony Orchestra, with Dora Labbette, in *Paris, On hearing the first cuckoo in spring, Summer night on the river, Dance Rhapsody No 2, some songs, The Walk to the Paradise Garden, and Eventyr*. For an account of this broadcast and Delius's reactions, see Dr Fenby's '*Delius as I knew him*', p.56, and for Jelka Delius's account of an amusing incident while listening to the broadcast see *Journal* 75 p.19.]



DELIUS

**Composer and Interpreter of Nature:
Some Impressions by Philip Heseltine**

[*Radio Times* October 4 1929]

*A Delius Festival, of six concerts, is to be given in London during October.
Two of these concerts will be broadcast — the first on October 18.*

Some years ago I found myself sitting at a concert between Delius and a retired schoolmaster. The latter begged for an introduction, and as soon as this was effected launched out into a long and abstruse speech on some musical matter of purely theoretical interest, which eventually came to an end with a 'Well, Mr Delius, and what is your opinion of that?' uttered in a tone of almost truculent challenge. Delius's reply was characteristic of what Gerald Cumberland called his 'waspy wit' — disarming and disconcerting, perhaps, but without the faintest trace of malice: 'My dear fellow,' he said, 'I don't know what you are talking about; you might as well be talking Chinese.' These words sum up very pithily the attitude towards all questions of purely technical interest of the composer who may, with some justice, though perhaps some slight stretching of the word's connotation, be called the greatest *amateur* composer of musical history.

Technique, as such, has never had the slightest interest for Delius. Before he was five years old he was playing the piano by ear, and although he took lessons in violin playing, and also studied harmony and counterpoint in Leipzig for a couple of years, he has taught himself far more than anyone else has taught him. Indeed, it is a matter of very great interest for those who have been privileged to read through the unpublished works of his Leipzig days, and of the period immediately following them, to note the deliberate discarding of certain stereotyped academic tricks of the trade in favour of a method of expression which at first sight seems clumsy and less coherent, but which was destined to develop into the wholly personal technique by which all his mature compositions are distinguished.

Simplicity, directness, avoidance of anything remotely suggestive of the bombastic, the pretentious or the over-intellectualized — these are qualities that have always been conspicuous alike in his life and in his art. His lack of interest in the technical problems of music, except in so far as they concern himself, is paralleled by his complete indifference to the music of his contemporaries. For the whole period of the 'nineties, when Debussy was writing the works which made so profound an impression on the musical world some years later, Delius was living within a mile or so of him; but although they had many mutual friends, they were never acquainted with each other. It was not until 1902, when Delius had already written *Paris* and *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, that he first heard any of Debussy's music. In the spring of that year he attended the first performance of *Péleas and Mélisande*. 'I thought it very good,' he says. 'I noticed a certain similarity in our outlook. I had already thought vaguely of setting this or another drama of Maeterlinck to music, but I always found him a trifle anaemic as a playwright.'

A year earlier Debussy had published his first article as a musical critic in the *Revue Blanche*. This contained an account of a performance of Delius's Seven Danish Songs, with orchestra, at one of the concerts at the Société Nationale de Musique, conducted by Vincent d'Indy. The article has little value as criticism, and shows that Debussy did not reciprocate the other's sympathetic feeling towards his work.

Despite a certain superficial similarity in their harmonic methods, Debussy and Delius are far as the poles asunder in temperament and outlook, though an interesting comparison was made by a French critic after the performance of *A Mass of Life* in 1908¹. 'Delius,' he wrote, 'stands in the same relation to Debussy as Wagner does to Weber. His music is stronger and more organic, as well as being just as subtle and full of nuance'; and he goes on to praise the big lines and solid construction of the work.

During his Paris days, Delius was often regarded as a Scandinavian on account of his close friendship with such well-known figures as Grieg, Sinding, Björnson and Strindberg. In England he is still regarded in some quarters as a German. When he received the distinction early this year of being made a Companion of Honour by the King, several correspondents wrote to the *Musical Times* with what the editor described as 'quite unnecessary warmth', complaining that Delius was of mixed Dutch and German extraction. It is difficult to understand the motives of such people in wishing to disclaim so distinguished a figure for a country which has never been overburdened with great composers.

Delius's father came to England in the 'forties to join an elder brother in business in Manchester. He became a naturalised Englishman in 1850, and settled in Bradford. Frederick, who was his second son, was born in 1862, was educated at two English schools, and for the first eighteen years of his life only left England on two occasions — once at the age of six on a visit to Germany, when he remembers being referred to by his relations as 'der kleine Engländer' (the little Englishman), and again at the age of sixteen, when he took a summer trip up the Rhine. He still speaks English with a Yorkshire accent, of which there are distinct traces also in his German. The Yorkshire moors, where he spent his holidays as a boy, roused in him a great love of open, wind-swept spaces where he could wander and dream in solitude, and this has never left him. He is essentially an 'open-air' musician; the emotions engendered by the sights and sounds of Nature have generally moved him more profoundly than any objective contemplation of humanity. Even in his operas there is very little action or characterisation, and in his songs and choral works he has always aimed at the expression of generalised emotion rather than the thoughts or feelings of particular characters.

His outlook on poetry is diametrically opposed to that of most of the German *Lieder* composers. During a recent conversation on this topic Delius referred with amazement to the attitude of Hugo Wolf, who, as Ernest Newman relates in his biography of him, 'set his face sternly against the suspicion of mere music-making in the song, against writing a single bar the justification of which could not be found in the words.' To Delius, the setting to music of a poem line by line and word by word is an unthinkable operation. The wonderful unity of atmosphere which is apparent in his songs and choral works is achieved by concentrating upon the emotional core of the poem, leaving the verbal particularities to take care of themselves. Mr G E H Abraham, in an interesting article on Delius and his relation to literature², laid special emphasis on Delius's significant love of using voices as instruments, singing without words, and he summarised Delius's general attitude towards his texts very aptly by saying that 'when words have struck music out of him he wants to have done with them . . . As with actual words so with whole books: once they have given him the initial impulse to compose they carry Delius little farther. He cannot lean comfortably on them, far less (as minor composers are glad to do) allow them to carry him over his own bald patches. Sometimes they are even a little burdensome. Perhaps that acknowledgement is the highest tribute one may offer a musician.' At the same time nothing could be more absurd than to suppose, as certain critics have done, that Delius's unusual methods of setting words and highly original treatment of the human voice in relation to the orchestra or to the piano are the result of any lack of sensitiveness to the rhythmic beauty of words. No one who has made a careful study of the scores of such works as *Sea Drift* and *Songs of Sunset* could fail to be impressed by the extraordinary felicity with which words and music are matched. Delius, like the older song-writers and operatic composers, rather dissolves his text into pure music, than evolves music to 'interpret' its meaning.

For Delius, the purpose of music is not to illustrate or to interpret anything whatsoever, but simply and solely to express emotion. Nietzsche — a poet with whom Delius has always been very much in sympathy — went so far as to say that 'when a musician composes a song it is neither the imagery nor the feelings

expressed in the text which inspire him as a musician, but a musical inspiration from quite another sphere chooses this text as suitable for its own symbolic expression.' Inspiration is a difficult and much-abused word, but it will not be far from the lips of those who attend the forthcoming festival of the works of Delius, pure child of Nature and her most exquisite interpreter in music.

- [1 Presumably the performance of Part Two only, at the Munich Tonkünstlerfest on June 4. The first complete performance was given a year later, conducted by Beecham.
- 2 'Delius and his literary sources', Gerald Abraham (*Music & Letters*, April 1929), reprinted in his *Slavonic and Romantic Music* (Faber, 1968).]

1929 DELIUS FESTIVAL

[The programme notes for the six concerts were written by Philip Heseltine with Cecil Gray, Leslie Heward, Spike Hughes, and C W Orr (all unsigned), (see Tomlinson, *A Peter Warlock Handbook* Vol.2, p.86), and William McNaught. Apart from the notes for the fifth concert (a Royal Philharmonic Society concert) which were signed 'W McN', the authorship of some of the others is uncertain, but most of the following notes and essays are probably from Heseltine's hand. He also paraphrased the German texts of songs in the second and fourth concerts and revised the translation of the German text of *A Mass of Life*. In addition he supplied a concise year-by-year biography of Delius which was printed in the programmes for the third and fifth concerts and reproduced here. For reasons of space the texts have not been reprinted here. Full details of the concerts can be found in Sir Thomas Beecham's *Frederick Delius* pp.201-4 and in Alan Jefferson's *Delius* pp.164-6.]

INTRODUCTION TO DELIUS

[1929 Delius Festival programme - October 12]

The Delius Festival, which begins today, is perhaps the greatest gesture England has ever made in refutation of the charge that her composers go unhonoured and unsung in their own country. It is true that recognition of Delius has been long in coming, despite Sir Thomas Beecham's twenty years' campaign to secure it, and now, alas, paralysis and blindness have brought his active career to a premature conclusion. But the long-standing apathy of English musicians towards his work has now very certainly given way before the enthusiasm of an ever-increasing number of persons who take an intelligent interest in music. Thirty years ago musicians decried Delius because his technique seemed strange and revolutionary to them, and therefore reprehensible: today there are those who find it old-

fashioned. Each generation has missed the significance of his message in their preoccupation with the means by which it is conveyed. Taste in technique is subject to the changes and chances of fashion, but great art such as Delius's is of all time and none.

The first thing that must be realised about Delius's music is that it is the outcome of a profoundly religious nature, and is therefore completely at variance with what is glibly called the modern spirit in music. Blake has been dead for more than a century, yet, for all his passionate denunciations, we are ever beset with 'the pretence of art that would destroy art, the pretence of religion that would destroy religion'.

It is considered paradoxical to describe as a religious composer one who, instead of writing anthems and services, turns to Nature (and even Nietzsche) for his inspiration: and yet most irreligion is a mere reaction against a pretence of religion that would destroy religion, a misconception of the very nature of religion, a confusion of ideas which is of the same order as the credulity of the senses in regard to the sun's apparent motion round the earth.

Delius is the great 'unconscious philosopher' of modern music, and a right understanding of the essential mysticism of his outlook on life is a most necessary introduction to the study of his works. In the materialistic religion of the nineteenth century, against which Delius in his early youth rose in angry revolt (an attitude he has maintained ever since), there was much talk of *this world and another world*, just as one might talk of England and Tibet. Now Delius always plumped for England as against Tibet; he would have no truck with the Grand Lama, and ordered his life according to the admirable maxim of Herman Melville: 'Feed all things with food convenient for them - that is, if the food be procurable. The food of thy soul is light and space. But the food of thy body is champagne and oysters: feed it then on champagne and oysters; and so shall it merit a joyful resurrection, if there is any to be.' And what is this joyful resurrection if it is not the gradual becoming-aware (as Donne and Traherne and many other spiritual ancestor of Delius became aware) that 'into another world no man is gone, for that heaven, which God created, and this world is all one world', and that 'you never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars, and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world'? And so it is this realisation that Man is not merely a part of Nature, but that all external things are only aspects of himself made manifest to the senses, which informs Delius's nature-music with its rare quality of spiritual adventure. It is evident that, so far from disparaging this world in expectation of another, Delius can never have enough of it: its loveliness, indeed, is so overwhelming that its very excess engenders a feeling of sadness at the imperfection with which even the greatest art can capture an image of it. Far away, upon the horizon, there is always a Hy-Brasil, beyond the sunset lie the Hesperides: there is no end to beauty and delight - 'for all joy craves eternity', as Delius sings in that last triumphant chorus in the *Mass of Life*, and the limitations of temporal existence breed in the soul a sense of spiritual exile. But Delius is never pessimistic: beneath his sadness there is always assurance of the unreality of all such limitations, and when he broods in the twilight, he seems to say with Zarathustra: 'Ah, my friends, it is the evening that

questions me thus. Forgive me my sadness, forgive me that evening has fallen upon me.' His best work should be viewed as a whole, and it will be found that it composes harmoniously into a coherent picture of the spiritual life in its diverse aspects. In *A Village Romeo and Juliet* we have the drama of disillusion and despair, of renunciation of the world and its ways; in the *Mass of Life* an all-embracing acceptance and 'yea-saying' to life, a sense of unification and fulfilment; in *Sea Drift* and *Appalachia* and *Songs of Sunset* separation is the dominant note; the Violin Concerto, and the song *Hy-Brasil* give us golden visions of a far-off country; and in the *North Country Sketches* and those exquisite pieces, *On hearing the first cuckoo in spring* and *Summer night on the river*, are mirrored the moods evoked by changing seasons of the year.

From the point of view of technique, Delius's chief strength lies in his wonderful harmonic resources; he is seldom contrapuntal, his harmony being as a rule a kind of higher-dimensional view of his melodic outlines - though sometimes, as in *Brigg Fair* and the first of the Dance Rhapsodies, a given melody winds more or less contrapuntally in and out of a moving phalanx of harmonies. But he has no such harmonic system as Scriabin, for example, evolved, only to become entangled in it himself. He maintains that harmony is almost entirely intuitive, that a true harmonic sense cannot be intellectually acquired when the intuition is lacking; and the unanalysable magic of his music gives colour to this view. His harmony is always within the boundaries of tonality, never beyond them like that of Schoenberg or Bartók. The principle of modulation, though not discarded, is stretched to the extremity of chromatic licence, along the lines indicated in the works of Gesualdo (whose madrigal *Moro lasso al mio duolo* it is extremely interesting to compare with Delius's part-song *On Craig Ddu*, written three-hundred years later), Chopin, Wagner, Liszt, and Grieg; and it is the continual shifting of tonal centres that imparts to his music a peculiar elusiveness, so that many a phrase seems to have a hidden significance that lies just beyond what is actually uttered in sound. In the orchestra the harmonic tissue is split up into a number of inter-weaving strands of melody, and this gives the music a good deal of inner vitality which is necessarily lost when it is transferred to the pianoforte. On the other hand piano scores of his work are almost indispensable if we are to appreciate to the fullest extent his wonderful instinct for the proper disposition of the notes that compound each chord, as well as the extraordinary variety and subtlety of his harmonic invention; for there is something that remains definite and constant in the mere disposition of the notes of a chord, as distinct from the differences of *timbre* the chord may acquire when it is sounded by different combinations of instruments - although, one must add as a matter of historical fact, Delius's orchestral works were not scored from compressed sketches but sketched in full score, the actual stuff and its scoring being notated simultaneously.

But there has never lived a composer whom it is less profitable to discuss in terms of technique than Delius. For him technique has never had the smallest interest, save as the means of expressing himself in terms of music; and we cannot do better than approach this wonderful music from a similar angle, and open our hearts to its spirit with the reverence and gratitude that is due to one of the supremely great masters of music.

[1929 Delius Festival programme notes - October 12]

BRIGG FAIR: an English Rhapsody for Orchestra (1907)

'Long may you remain with us, to weave harmonies about the folk-songs of old England,' wrote John Bull a week or two ago in an open letter to Delius. As a matter of fact, the present work is the only one of Delius's compositions in which any material derived from English folk-song is to be found. *Brigg Fair* owes its origin to Percy Grainger, for the tune on which it is founded was taken down by him at Brigg in 1905, from the singing of Mr Joseph Taylor, of Saxby-All-Saints, North Lincolnshire. Mr Taylor, he recalls, though seventy-two years of age at the time, retained the looks of middle-age and a clear, ringing tenor voice. 'He was a courteous, genial, typical English countryman, and a perfect artist in the purest possible style of folk-song singing. Though his memory for words was not uncommonly good, his mind was a seemingly unlimited storehouse of melodies, which he swiftly recalled at the merest mention of their titles; and his versions were generally distinguished by the beauty of their melodic curves and the symmetry of their construction.' In the same year Grainger composed his Passacaglia for orchestra *Green Bushes*, in which a folk-dance tune is repeated over and over again by one instrument or another, with ever-varying harmonic developments. This composition, and the choral setting of *Brigg Fair* which Grainger made in 1906, greatly interested Delius who adopted something of the same type of cumulative variation form for his own orchestral treatment of the *Brigg Fair* tune a year later.

The practice of building long and elaborate works on the basis of a reiterated theme can be traced far back into the history of English music. In the sixteenth century a whole Mass was frequently composed around a secular folk-song - Taverner's *Western Wynde* Mass is a well-known example - and the variations of the early virginallists, such as Byrd, Bull and Farnaby, were constructed on similar lines.

Prefixed to Delius's score are the following verses [not reprinted here], of which only the first two were originally sung by Mr Taylor, the remainder having been added from other songs. They provide a kind of programme for the work, which may be roughly summarised as a tale of true love that for once ran smoothly: but their simple charm and happy open-air feeling have been transmuted by the composer into something far deeper than the mere tale itself. The emotions of the lovers and the emotions aroused by the quiet, sunny landscape have been fused together in a strangely touching unity: these country lovers seem ageless and changeless as the fields amid which, generation after generation, they have lived and worked and died.

A short introduction, of a pastoral character, with phrases for flutes and clarinets suggestive of bird-song, evokes the atmosphere of the English countryside on a fine summer morning. The time quickens when the lilting little folk-song is announced by the oboe and repeated several times by various wind instruments against a rich harmonic background in the strings. A climax is reached, and the muted strings give out a new theme that has all the passionate contentment of a happy love-song sung in the fields to the accompaniment of a soft murmuring wind. A return is then made to the folk-song, harmonic and

contrapuntal decorations becoming increasingly elaborate until we reach a permutation of the tune into slow quadruple time, given out by the brass. This variation recalls the solemn mood of the dream-wedding in *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, and the return, immediately afterwards, of the pastoral atmosphere of the introduction reminds one vividly of stepping out into the sunshine from the dim, cool aisle of a country church. A gay, dancing variation leads to a tumultuous climax: but when the pealing of the wedding-bells and the noise of merrymaking have died away, we take leave of the lovers and the landscape in a quiet peroration of melting tenderness.

Brigg Fair was performed for the first time at Basle in 1907 *, under Hermann Suter, and in a few years had made the round of all the principal orchestras of Germany. The first English performance was given at Liverpool by Granville Bantock in 1908.

[* Incorrect. Bantock's Liverpool performance was the work's world première.]

A LATE LARK: a poem by W E Henley, set for tenor voice and orchestra (1925)
(First performance) Tenor solo: Heddle Nash

Though written in part by dictation, this was the last composition that Delius was able to see complete in full score before his sight failed him. Not counting revisions of earlier work, it is actually his latest composition. The poem was written in 1876 and published some years later with the title: *I. M. Margaritae Sororis*.

A DANCE RHAPSODY (NO 2): for orchestra (1916)

This work is an extended mazurka, in triple time throughout save for one page at the end. The chief theme, of eight bars, is stated at the outset by a solo flute, the seventh and eighth bars being given to the first violins. It is developed sectionally: each bar or figure, at some point in the work, is given separate treatment, the seventh bar being particularly important by reason of two dynamic climaxes which are built out of it. A rhythmic chord sequence, interrupting the flow of the dance by a slight quickening of the tempo whenever it appears, and a short middle section, in which a four-bar theme, first announced by the oboe, is repeated in various keys, to the accompaniment of continuous downward arpeggios for harp and celesta, complete the thematic material. The last four pages are unexpectedly sombre in tone.

The Rhapsody is dedicated to Norman O'Neill, one of the first English musicians to appreciate the significance of Delius's music, and received its initial performance on the last night of the 1923 Season of Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts under Sir Henry Wood's direction.

SEA DRIFT: a poem by Walt Whitman, set for baritone voice, choir and orchestra
(1903) Baritone solo: Dennis Noble

'*Sea-Drift*' is the collective title of a section of Walt Whitman's '*Leaves of Grass*' which contains eleven poems dealing with the sea. Three of them are included in the text of Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony*, and among the more recent

unfinished manuscripts of Delius are sketches of choral settings of other sea-poems of Whitman *. The present work is a setting of some three-fifths of the first poem in Whitman's '*Sea-Drift*'. To facilitate understanding of this wonderful lyric, it is printed above in full [but not here]. The lines enclosed in square brackets have not been used by Delius. The italics are Whitman's and are used to differentiate the boy's own words from the thoughts aroused in him by the song of the bird. This distinction is not adhered to by Delius in his distribution of words between chorus and soloist, yet the latter remains a dramatic entity in the scheme, the human protagonist in whose soul the drama is enacted. In certain passages soloist and chorus sing different sections of the poem at the same time, notably in the lovely unaccompanied chorus 'O rising stars', when the solo voice rings through with its 'Shake out carols solitary here, the night's carols', and later when the chorus comments on the soloist's impassioned entreaties with its muttered parentheses - 'Do not be decoyed elsewhere, that is the whistle of the wind. . . . those are the shadows of leaves'.

The music grows naturally out of the poem, relying upon little but thematic recurrence or development. Its unity and formal balance have been achieved by the sustained intensity of sheer creative power and imaginative insight rather than by any deliberate structural plan; nevertheless, the work falls into certain well-defined sections. First, the orchestra brings to mind the lonely sea-scape. The long-drawn, falling theme in the upper strings, which the woodwind embroider, should be noted, together with the rising fifths in the bass which suggest the surge of the sea throughout the work. The chorus enters quietly with the description of the foreshore, and the soloist joins in at the words 'And every day the he-bird to and fro, near at hand'; the opening theme recurs again, sinking to a mysterious *pianissimo* ('cautiously peering, absorbing, translating'), which the chorus breaks in upon with the rapturous outburst 'Shine, shine, shine! Pour down your warmth, great sun'. A new melody is introduced at the words 'Singing all time', but is not developed, and after a short recitative ('Till of a sudden, may be killed'), the sea-music of the introduction is repeated as the boy describes the vigils 'at night under the full of the moon'. The chorus 'Blow, blow up winds along Paumanok's shore' introduces another new theme which is not heard again, and with the succeeding solo forms the transition to an extended section in which the rising fifth in the bass plays an important part. The hush and suspense that follows that great cry 'Surely you must know who is here, is here' are made audible in the succeeding chorus for voices alone: but when the orchestra enters again, the accents of music grow more and more mournful and despairing, until the heartbroken resignation of 'O past, O happy life' is resolved into the loneliness of the sea itself, and the low murmur of the waves 'No more, no more'.

Sea Drift was first heard at Essen in 1906, and was given two years later at the Sheffield festival under Wood, Frederic Austin being the soloist. This was probably the first performance of any of Delius's music in his native county, Yorkshire.

[* *Songs of Farewell*. See Robert Threlfall's *Catalogue* p.71 and *Supplementary Catalogue* p.41.]

IN A SUMMER GARDEN: Fantasy for orchestra (1908)

The dedication of the score of this work 'To my wife, Jelka Rosen', and the accompanying quotation from one of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnets:

All are my blooms, and all sweet blooms of love

To thee I gave while Spring and Summer sang

prepare us for music of a peculiarly intimate and personal nature. A footnote brings the scene before us: 'Roses, lilies and a thousand sweet-scented flowers. Bright butterflies flutter from petal to petal and golden-brown bees murmur in the warm, tremulous summer air. Beneath the shade of the old trees flows a tranquil river with white water-roses. In a boat, almost hidden, two people. A thrush sings. . .' It is the garden, running down to the riverside, at Grez-sur-Loing, near Fontainebleau, where Delius has lived for many years and where almost all his best work has been written. Yet the summer garden is only the setting for an emotional drama: there is no objective impressionism in music. This is one of the works cited by Cecil Gray in his fine essay on Delius in '*A Survey of Contemporary Music*' as being unmistakably English in feeling. 'Delius,' he continues, 'like Keats before him, has often been unthinkingly reproached for the almost excessive sweetness and over-ripeness of his music. . . It is as well to bear in mind that this very sweetness and sensuousness is perhaps the most noteworthy characteristic of English art. The purist who would condemn it in the music of Delius is at the same time condemning a great part of Shakespeare, particularly the early works - Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, Herrick, Campion, Dowland, Purcell even, and indeed, most of the greatest musicians England has ever produced. It is the very quintessence of the English spirit in art.'

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that, apart from a flowing tune in the middle section, with something of the same mood as the central love-song in *Brigg Fair*, there is not a single theme in the work; yet the effect of a continuous outpouring of melody is achieved by the subtle manner in which rhythmic and melodic fragments are merged together into broad effects of light and colour that suggest the vivid luminous canvases of the gracious and gifted lady who inspired the work.

A VILLAGE ROMEO AND JULIET: Three excerpts

(a) The Fair

(b) The Walk to the Paradise Garden

(c) Closing Scene

Soloists: Pauline Maunder and Hedde Nash

Delius's fourth opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* was composed in 1900-1 and performed for the first time in 1907 at the Komisches Oper, Berlin, under the direction of Fritz Cassirer. Sir Thomas Beecham produced it at his Covent Garden season in 1910, and again in 1920. Two years ago it was revived at Wiesbaden. The libretto is based on a tale from Gottfried Keller's '*People of Seldwyla*' (of which an excellent translation, by M D Hottinger, was published this year). The plot is simple and naive. Manz and Marti, two Swiss farmers, quarrel over a strip of wild land that separates their respective fields. The heir to the disputed property is the Dark Fiddler, but he is a vagabond who has no use for it and views with indifference the rival claimants' bitter feud. The childish

friendship of Manz's son Sali and Marti's daughter Vrenchen ripens into love, but long-drawn-out litigation ruins both families and the two young people are left penniless. They decide to spend one long care-free day together, at a local fair, but when they are seen together the village gossips jeer and make fun of them; so they walk to an old riverside inn called 'The Paradise Garden', where they hope to meet no one who knows them. The Dark Fiddler, however, is there, with his disreputable associates. He invites them to join his company and take to the roads; but they are too young and innocent for a vagabond life, and they decide to die in each other's arms.

The excerpts for today begin with an arrangement for orchestra alone of the music of the Fair scene (very slightly abridged). This leads without a break into the lovely entr'acte *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* which is an impassioned summary of the principal themes in the opera. It was composed some five years later than the opera itself, and is one of Delius's most perfectly organised orchestral works.

The closing scene begins with a chorus sung by the vagabonds in the distance. Their song is echoed by distant horns, and the curtain rises on 'The Paradise Garden'. On the right stands the old dilapidated inn, with a high verandah. The garden has run wild and everything shows traces of bygone beauty. In the background flows a river, and a barge full of hay is moored to the bank; beyond the valley one sees the snow-capped mountains. The Dark Fiddler and his crew are sitting outside the inn drinking. It is twilight in summer and the verandah is lighted by hanging lanterns.

In today's performance the Fiddler's sardonic narration to his companions of the family feud and its consequences, the entry of the ill-fated pair, and the quintet in which the vagabonds sing of the delights of a roving life will be omitted, and we pass on to the point where Sali and Vrenchen have been invited to throw in their lot with the jovial crew. [*Sali: What you say, Vrenchen? Shall we follow these good people to the mountains? . . .etc.*, libretto with stage directions to the end.] And to music hauntingly suggestive of deep waters, the story comes to its tragic conclusion.



THE SONGS OF DELIUS

[1929 Delius Festival programme - October 16]

It is a singular circumstance that, while the orchestral and choral works of Delius have been familiar to discerning music-lovers for many years, the majority of his songs are still completely unknown to singers and their audiences. This is the more surprising as *Sea Drift*, which Sir Thomas Beecham has described as 'the finest *arioso recitativo* ever written', is the very apotheosis of the musical lyric, and one might have supposed that the appreciation that has been aroused by the wonderful treatment of the voice in this work would have led to some curiosity about the composer's achievements in the smaller lyrical forms. One of the especial objects of the present Festival is to bring the songs of Delius - the most immediately accessible of all his works - to the knowledge of the musical public

and into the repertoire of all who sing or play.

It is significant that the earliest composition of Delius was a song - a setting of one of Hans Andersen's poems, that his earliest publications were songs, and that his originality was revealed far more quickly in his songs than in any other form of composition.

Nearly thirty years have passed since Augener published his first volume of *Five Songs from the Norwegian*, and, slight as they are and clearly influenced by Grieg (to whose wife they are dedicated), they strike an individual note which is not sounded in the unpublished orchestral works that belong to the same period in Delius's life. Two of these songs - *Sehnsucht* and *Beim Sonnenuntergang* - will be sung this evening, and a third - *Die Nachtigall* - figures in next Wednesday's programme [October 23].

Delius's first visit to Scandinavia in 1881 made a profound impression upon him, and he has retained ever since an intense love of the northern people and their literature. Early in his life, he learned to speak Norwegian and Danish fluently, and all his Scandinavian songs were composed to the original texts. But one of the peculiarities of Scandinavian poetry seems to be that while it can be very successfully rendered into German, an English translation almost invariably strips it of all its poetic quality, leaving only the bare skeleton of statement. For this reason the Norwegian and Danish songs in the present programme will mostly be sung in German; an English summary of the words is printed below each poem in the programme.

The *Seven Norwegian Songs* of 1889-90 show a very great advance on the earlier set; their structure is larger and more assured, and the style more personal. Two of the poems - *The Homeward Journey* and *Secret Love* - had already been set to music by Grieg, and comparison of the two versions shows that Delius, for all his love of the older composer, had already acquired a very independent outlook. The three strong and impassioned Shelley songs date from 1891, as well as a cycle of five songs from Tennyson's *Maud* which has not been published. Four years later the two Verlaine songs *Il pleure dans mon coeur* and *Le ciel est pardessus le toit* revealed a more delicate lyricism than any that had preceded them. But it was in some of the Danish songs of 1897 - *Irmelin*, *Let springtime come then*, *In the Seraglio garden* and *Silken shoes* - that the true Delius is fully revealed for the first time.

The later songs of Delius are not melodies for the voice with a pianoforte accompaniment, but true duets for voice and piano in which both performers are equally important: indeed, the melodic line is often unintelligible if it is viewed without relation to its attendant harmonies - so inextricably is the voice part interwoven with the harmonic tissue. Of the songs written since 1900, all are of the highest interest and many of supreme beauty: *Black roses*, *Autumn*, *I-Brasil*, are among the world's great songs.

Nietzsche considered that the music of a song is not in its essence engendered by the poem to which it is set; he maintained that the true musician will only set such poetry as expresses, symbolically, the music that is in him. Delius has always been moved, in the selection of his texts, by the *underlying emotion* of a poem as a whole, rather than by any narrative, dramatic or verbal felicities it may possess. He views with horror the 'word-for-word' school of song-writers, and the

principle of Hugo Wolf who, as his English biographer tells us, 'set his face sternly against the suspicion of mere music-making in the song, against writing a single bar, the justification of which could not be found in the words'.

For Delius, as for Schubert and all the great composers of the past, music in song is all-sufficing, and the words of a poem are but the frame-work upon which the musician may weave a pattern that shall enshrine its dominant emotion.



[1929 Delius Festival programme notes - October 16]

A SONG BEFORE SUNRISE: for small orchestra (1918)

Delius's only contribution to the repertoire of the small orchestra are the four pieces to be played this evening. *A Song before Sunrise* is scored for two flutes, oboe, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, and strings divided into ten parts. The score is headed with the word 'freshly', and the lilting music suggests a country walk in the keen air of the hour before dawn.

SONATA FOR VIOLONCELLO AND PIANOFORTE in one movement (1917) **Beatrice Harrison and Evelyn Howard-Jones**

All Delius's chamber music belongs to his latest period, that is to say from 1915 to 1925. The present sonata was written for Miss Beatrice Harrison, to whom it is dedicated.

SUMMER NIGHT ON THE RIVER: for small orchestra (1911)

The garden of Delius's house at Grez-sur-Loing runs down to a little shrubbery on the riverside where a boat is kept. This exquisite idyll, with its subtle suggestions of the sounds of small creatures, was composed at Grez, and the surroundings that inspired it have been admirably described by Robert Louis Stevenson in his '*Essays of Travel*'. Stevenson used to stay at Grez in the 'seventies, and the village has changed but little since that time. 'It lies out of the forest, a cluster of houses, with an old bridge and an old castle in ruin, and a quaint old church. The inn garden descends in terraces to the river, stableyard, kailyard, orchard and a space of lawn, fringed with rushes and embellished with a green arbour. On the opposite bank there is a reach of English-looking plain, set thickly with willows and poplars. And between the two lies the river, clear and deep, and full of reeds and floating lilies. Water-plants cluster about the starlings of the low long bridge, and stand half-way up upon the piers in green luxuriance. They catch the dipped oar with long antennae, and chequer the slimy bottom with the shadow of their leaves. And the river wanders hither and thither among the islets, and is smothered and broken up by the reeds, like an old building in the lithe, hardy arms of the climbing ivy.'

AIR AND DANCE: for String Orchestra (1915) (First Performance)

This short piece was composed for performance at a private concert given at the house of Lady Cunard in 1915. It has not been heard in public before. It is

dedicated to the National Institute for the Blind, as a tribute of admiration for their splendid work. The dance evolves from a thematic development of the air with a quickening of the tempo.

PIANOFORTE SOLI: *Three Preludes (1923); Dance (1919); Five Pieces (1923)*

Evlyn Howard-Jones

Apart from the Concerto, this group of pieces represents Delius's entire output of pianoforte music. The first of the *Preludes* is dedicated to Mr Howard-Jones, the second to Mrs Norman O'Neill. The *Dance* was composed for Mrs Gordon Woodhouse. The third of the *Five Pieces* dates as far back as 1891, the rest were written immediately after the *Preludes*. Number four is the accompaniment to a melody which, the composer directs, should be hummed, or played upon a muted violin. These pieces are dedicated to Mr Howard-Jones.

ON HEARING THE FIRST CUCKOO IN SPRING: for small orchestra (1912)

This piece, with its companion *Summer night on the river*, is dedicated to Balfour Gardiner, who gave some fine performances of Delius's music at his British composers' concerts in 1912 and 1913 and was one of the first English musicians to appreciate it at its true value. The first half of the theme on which the piece is constructed is taken from a Norwegian folk-song *I Ola dalom* (In Ola Valley), which Grieg had also made use of in a piano piece (op. 66). The traditional words associated with it are not concerned with the cuckoo in spring, but with the story of an old woman who rang the church-bells to scare away some trolls who had stolen her son away. Grieg must have had this tale in his mind when he wrote his gay, jangling setting of the tune. But Delius's work is charged with a quiet contemplative rapture that is tinged with sadness at the transience of spring with all its grave and tender beauty.



MUSIC FROM TONIGHT'S DELIUS CONCERT

Specially written by Philip Heseltine

[*Radio Times* October 11 1929 — Concert of October 18]

The Delius Festival, of which tonight's concert at Queen's Hall is the third in the series of six, is the biggest tribute ever paid to a living composer in this country. Sir Thomas Beecham has publicly acclaimed Delius not merely as a great British composer, but as one of the greatest composers of all time, and for more than twenty years has devoted himself to the task of making his music known to the public. The present Festival is the crowning achievement of Sir Thomas's activities in this direction which include two separate productions of the opera *A*

Village Romeo and Juliet, in 1910 and 1920, the first two performances in England (1909 and 1913) of the gigantic choral work, *A Mass of Life* (which is to be broadcast from Queen's Hall on November 1), two all-Delius concerts with chorus and orchestra in 1911 and 1914, and the special Delius concert which was broadcast last February, within a few days of the composer's sixty-seventh birthday.

Ballad for Orchestra: *Eventyr* ('Once upon a time')

Delius was born in Yorkshire and educated wholly in England. His father was of German origin, but had settled in England and become naturalised several years before the composer was born. For a short time Frederick worked in his father's business, on behalf of which he was sent, in 1881, to Scandinavia. This visit proved a very significant event, and resulted in a life-long attachment to the Scandinavian peoples, and their literature and legendary lore. The orchestral ballad, *Eventyr* or *Once upon a time*, which opens tonight's concert, was inspired by the fairy-tales of Asbjørnsen, a Norwegian writer, who went about the country, in the early years of the last century, collecting the traditional tales that had been handed down from generation to generation among the peasants. These tales deal mostly with supernatural beings — trolls, hobgoblins, water-sprites, and the like — and their relations with human beings. In Asbjørnsen's youth, many of the country folk believed implicitly in the reality of these creatures. At a wedding or a Christmas party a little dish of porridge and cream would be put out for them in a place apart, lest they should be offended, for when angry their vengeance was wont to take the most unpleasant forms, such as spiriting away the bride from a wedding and whirling her into a dance so fast and furious that she fell down unconscious or dead. A hunter's luck was thought to depend upon their good or ill-will, and the queer noises heard at night in the lonely woods were always attributed to some activity of these mysterious beings. *Eventyr* is not based on any particular story, but is an attempt to convey in music something of the atmosphere of Asbjørnsen's book, with its 'boggles and bugaboos, warlocks and wurricoes, ghaisties and ghoulies, long-leggity beasties, and things that go bump in the night'. It was composed in 1917.

Poem for Baritone Solo and Orchestra: *Cynara* (First performance).

Soloist: John Goss

Cynara was written some ten years earlier. Originally intended as one of the *Songs of Sunset*, it was eventually omitted from that work — which its inclusion would have made over-long — and never actually completed until the present year, when the original sketches, which had been mislaid, were found and copied, and the work was played over to the composer, who then dictated the closing bars to his secretary and made various alterations in the orchestration. For the last few years Delius has laboured under the double handicap of paralysis and total blindness; that he has been able to compose at all is due to the wonderful method of taking down music from his dictation which has been evolved by his wife and his secretary, Mr Eric Fenby, a talented young Yorkshire musician. *Cynara* is a poem by Ernest Dowson, that unhappy poet of the 'nineties who died in 1900, at the early age of thirty-three. It expresses the conflict between sacred and profane

love in the poet's life, and is indeed to some extent, autobiographical. Dowson conceived a tragic passion for the daughter of a restaurant-keeper who, when the poet had courted her for two years, married a waiter; but her image continued to haunt him, and she was undoubtedly in his mind when he wrote the refrain, 'I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, after my fashion'.

Concerto for Pianoforte and Orchestra. Soloist: Evlyn Howard-Jones

The Piano Concerto was composed in Florida in 1897, but was re-written ten years later when the three movements of the original version were condensed into one. It is based upon two principal themes, of which the first is announced by the orchestra in the opening bars. The form is, roughly, A-B-A, the last section being a recapitulation of the first.

**Poem for Baritone Solo, Chorus and Orchestra: *Arabesk* [sic]
(First performance)*. Soloist: John Goss**

Arabesk, which will be heard for the first time this evening*, though it was composed as long ago as 1911, is a setting of a strange symbolical lyric by Jens Peter Jacobsen, the botanist-poet who translated Darwin's works into Danish and is accounted the greatest master of modern Danish prose. The poem deals with the darker side of the god Pan, who here represents the obsession of sensual passion which leads to madness and death. 'In a sunbathed meadow grows a wondrous herb: Only in deepest stillness, under the beams of the burning sun, its blossom unfolds itself for a fleeting moment. It gleams like the frenzied eye of one enchanted, like the glow of the dead bride's blushes.' This flower suggests to the poet the fatal fascination of the love which blasts and destroys. 'From the poisonous lily's dazzling chalice drank she to me, to one, too, that hath perished, and to him who now at her feet is kneeling'. The wondrous herb may also be regarded as a symbol of the brilliant all-too-fleeting Northern summer, for the poem ends with a vision of a bleak winter landscape, the wind-scattered dead leaves over the snow, and, like a sigh from out of the earth itself, the voices murmur tonelessly: 'Know'st thou Pan?'

The baritone solo in this work and in *Cynara* will be sung by Mr John Goss, one of the most brilliant of the younger generation of British singers. Although this is the first time he has sung any of the larger works of Delius with orchestra, his sympathetic interpretations of this composer's songs are well known. There are few British composers who are not indebted to Mr Goss for one or more 'first performances', and such is his versatility that during the last eight years he has sung in public no fewer than 950 different songs, exclusive of excerpts from opera and oratorio.

Variations for Orchestra and Chorus: *Appalachia*

Appalachia is the old Indian name for North America, and Delius's work was inspired by his year's sojourn in Florida; it is an impression of the emotions aroused in him by the tropical surroundings of his orange grove on the St Johns River, near Jacksonville, and by the life and history of the negro race. The theme on which the variations are based is a song which Delius heard sung by a negro on

his plantation; it bears a striking resemblance to a melody from *Rigoletto*, which may possibly be its ultimate origin. The chorus is treated as a part of the orchestra in the earlier part of the work; no words are sung, the voices merely heightening the colour of the instrumentation. The choral epilogue is a song of parting, recalling the old days of slavery, when members of a family were sold to plantations in different parts of the country, and, often at a moment's notice, had to bid one another farewell.

[* The *Arabesque* had actually been previously performed by Percy Heming, Welsh Musical Festival Choral Society, London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Arthur E Sims, as part of the final concert of the Welsh Musical Festival at Newport on May 28 1920. The correct details were given in the 1929 Festival programme (see p. 53).]



[1929 Delius Festival programme notes — October 18]

EVENTYR (Once upon a time): Ballad for orchestra (1917)

Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, whose fairy tales inspired this sole excursion of Delius into the region of the supernatural, was the first writer to bring the language of the people into Norwegian literature. Before he was 20 years old he had begun collecting the traditional tales and legends with which the peasants and fisher-folk of the more primitive parts of Norway were wont to while away the long winter evenings, and, like the folk-song collectors of our own country half a century later, he was only just in time to save much of this legendary lore from extinction. His first book, written in collaboration with his friend Jørgen Moe, was published in 1842, a second collection, by Absjørnsen alone, following it in 1845. The tales are told in a simple, unembellished style and deal for the most part with trolls, hob-goblins, water-sprites, and the like — and their relations with human beings. In Asbjørnsen's youth, many of the country folk believed implicitly in the reality of these creatures. At a wedding or a Christmas party a little dish of porridge and cream would be put out for them in a place apart, lest they should be offended, for when angry their vengeance was wont to take the most unpleasant forms, such as spiriting away the bride from a wedding and whirling her into a dance so fast and furious that she fell down unconscious or dead. A hunter's luck was thought to depend upon their good or ill-will, and the queer noises at night in the lonely woods were always attributed to some activity of these mysterious beings.

Eventyr is not based on any particular story, but is an attempt to convey in music something of the atmosphere of Asbjørnsen's book, with its 'bogles and bugaboos, warlocks and wurricoes, ghaisties and ghoulies, long-leggity beasties, and things that go bump in the night'.

The piece opens with a mysterious theme in the bass which may be regarded as a kind of incantation evoking the fantastic hosts of the underworld. A more human note is sounded in the pleasant, easy-going melody for the strings that follows, and the rapid triplet figure that breaks in upon it from the woodwind portrays very vividly the uncomfortable incursion of other-worldly creatures into the lives of the simple, unsophisticated peasants. The pace quickens, and

with chromatically descending skirts from the woodwind the goblin horde is let loose.

The triplet figure is developed into a march-like theme which is accompanied by a vehement restatement of the 'incantation'. The revel grows faster and more furious, until a broad *maestoso* passage is reached, and we seem to see a vast procession of grisly creatures trooping away from the scene of their orgy in the pale light of the dawn. Then we are back in human company once more; the tail of the last belated bugaboo whisks round the corner, and the music comes to a quiet conclusion.

CYNARA: a poem by Ernest Dowson, set for baritone and orchestra (1907)
(First performance) Baritone solo: John Goss

Cynara was originally intended to form part of the *Songs of Sunset*, but it was eventually omitted from that work — which its inclusion would have made over-long — and never actually completed until the present year, when the original sketches, which had been mislaid, were found and copied, and the work was played over to the composer, who then dictated the closing bars to his secretary and made various alterations in the orchestration. For the last few years Delius has laboured under the double handicap of paralysis and total blindness: that he has been able to compose at all is due to the wonderful method of taking down music from his dictation which has been evolved by his wife, and his secretary, Mr Eric Fenby, a talented Yorkshire musician.

Cynara is perhaps the best-known lyric of Ernest Dowson, that unhappy poet of the 'nineties who died in 1900, at the early age of thirty-three. It expresses the conflict between sacred and profane love in the poet's life, and is indeed to some extent autobiographical. Dowson conceived a tragic passion for the daughter of a restaurant-keeper who, when the poet had courted her for two years, married a waiter; but her image continued to haunt him, and she was undoubtedly in his mind when he wrote the refrain, 'I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, after my fashion.'

Osbert Burdett, in his interesting study of '*The Beardsley Period*' (The Bodley Head, 1925), has made a penetrating analysis of the state of mind that engendered the lyric.

'It is a poem of ennui, and of reaction, of the inconstant flesh at issue with the constant soul, paradoxically combining the fine and the sordid as if content with nothing less than both extremes. The immediate mouth that inspired his recollection must be "bought" to contrast with the recollection of an unpurchasable emotion that the flesh was too weak to sustain; but the bargain is not decried, nor the sweetness of the purchased kiss unadmitted, because, where degrees exist, the strangest, the least commonly accepted, has to this temper a peculiar artistic appeal. The lower and higher motives, being equally real in Dowson's experience, demanded an equal place in his conscious and unprejudiced art.'

CONCERTO: for pianoforte and orchestra (1897) Evelyn Howard-Jones

This concerto was composed in Florida in 1897, and was performed for the first time in 1904 at Elberfeld by Julius Butts, under the direction of that devoted

Delius enthusiast, Hans Haym. It was re-written two years later, when the three movements of the original version were condensed into one, and was played by Theodor Szantó at a Queen's Hall Promenade Concert in 1907. In its present form it is one of Delius's strongest and most closely-knit works; there is hardly a bar that is not directly related to the initial thematic material. The form is roughly A-B-A; a first section, based on two contrasted subjects, is followed by a slow movement with a new theme (the germ of which, however, is to be found in the opening subject of the work), and this is succeeded by a recapitulation and coda in which no fresh material is used.

ARABESK: a poem by Jens Peter Jacobsen, set for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra (1911-12) (First performance in London) Baritone solo: John Goss

Jens Peter Jacobsen was born in 1847 and began his career as a botanist. His first literary works were translations into Danish of Charles Darwin's '*Origin of Species*' and '*Descent of Man*'. An illness, contracted while collecting plants in a morass, put an end to his scientific pursuits, and, encouraged by Georg Brandes, he turned to literature and between 1873 and 1876 wrote his historical romance '*Maria Grubbe*'. Four years later he completed his modern novel '*Niels Lynhe*', from which Delius has drawn the libretto of his opera *Fennimore and Gerda*. These two books and a volume of short stories (which has not yet been translated into English) complete an output of fiction which, slender though it is, has earned for Jacobsen the reputation of Denmark's greatest prose-writer. 'He has been compared with Flaubert, with De Quincey, with Pater,' wrote Edmund Gosse, 'but these parallelisms merely express a sense of the intense individuality of his style, and of his untiring pursuit of beauty in colour, form, and melody.' As a poet, Jacobsen has a few exquisite lyrics to his credit, of which several have been set to music by Delius — *Irmelin*, *Silken shoes*, *In the Seraglio garden*, *Let springtime come then*, *Autumn*, and *Black roses*.

Arabesk is a strange, half-symbolic poem, dealing with the darker aspect of the god Pan, who here represents the obsession of sensual passion which leads to madness and death. It is at once a lover's rhapsody of long-lost love, and a paean in praise of the brilliant, all-too-fleeting northern summer. In each case the passionate moment is exalted, and a short spell of bliss breeds dissolution and decay. The poem ends with a vision of a bleak winter landscape; the wind scatters the dead leaves over the snow, and, like a sigh from out of the earth itself, the voices murmur tonelessly: 'Know'st thou Pan?'

As *Eventyr* is Delius's only excursion into the land of faery, so *Arabesk* is his sole experiment with the psychologically macabre. It is very different, in style and idiom, from any of his other works. His harmony, so mellifluous and melting as a rule, has here an acrid tang to it; there is a snake-like sinuousness of line in the erotic middle section of the poem, and the icy chill of the dreary winter's day is conveyed in the music with uncanny fidelity at the close. The work was performed in 1920 by the Newport (Monmouthshire) Choral Society with the London Symphony Orchestra, but has not been heard since that date.

APPALACHIA: variations on an old negro song for orchestra and chorus (1902) Baritone solo: John Goss

This work, like *Koanga* and *The Magic Fountain*, was inspired by Delius's sojourn

in Florida. Sketched in 1896, and rewritten in 1902, it was first played by Dr Haym at Elberfeld in 1904. Its performance at the Lower Rhine Musical Festival, held at Düsseldorf in 1905, made musical Germany ring with the name of Delius. Later in the same year it won a striking success in Berlin under Oskar Fried, and Fritz Cassirer introduced the work to London in the winter of 1907. In a note prefixed to the score we read that 'Appalachia is the old Indian name for North America. The composition mirrors the moods of tropical nature in the great swamps bordering on the Mississippi river which is so intimately associated with the life of the old negro slave population. Longing melancholy, an intense love for Nature, childlike humour and an innate delight in dancing and singing are still the most characteristic qualities of this race'.

The work consists of a lengthy introduction, fifteen variations on an old negro song which Delius heard on his plantation, and a choral epilogue based on the thematic material of the introduction. In the variations the chorus is used, very sparingly, as an integral part of the orchestra; no words are sung, the voices merely intensifying the instrumental colour. The introduction is built out of three themes: (1) announced by the horns in the opening bars, (2) a plaintive three-bar theme, rising out of an initial triplet, and (3) blazed forth in canon by the brass. Towards the end of the introduction, anticipatory reference is made to the principal theme. This is finally stated in full by the English horn to the accompaniment of bassoons and bass clarinet. It bears a striking resemblance to a melody from the quartet in the last act of *Rigoletto*.

Variation 1 — A plain statement of the theme in the minor by a solo horn with string accompaniment.

Variation 2 — The theme is re-stated in the major by clarinet and bassoon with string accompaniment.

Variation 3 — Ushered in by a rhythmic transformation of the first bars of the theme on horns and trumpets, with a counter-subject in violins and oboes which is developed at some length. The variation ends with a plain statement of the last four bars of the theme in octaves by the strings, against a rich harmonic background of brass and woodwind.

Variation 4 — Based on a dancing tune in 6/8 time derived from the minor version of the theme. Much use is made of a decorative figure in semiquavers.

Variation 5 — Has a certain rhythmic affinity with Variation 1. The trumpet-call transformation of the first bars of the theme is much in evidence.

Variation 6 — An extended version of the theme is given out *giocosamente* by clarinet and cello, accompanied by a rapid figuration in triplets for the bassoons, light chords in the strings, and harp *glissandi*. This is developed by strings and woodwind, and taken up in turn by the trumpet, with elaborate embroideries from the strings. A new snatch of melody, first heard in the English horn and passed in turn to oboe and flute leads to a thunderous announcement of the main theme in its original form by the trombones, against the new melodic snatch in augmented time.

Variation 7 — *Lento molto tranquillo*. A solo horn leads off with a fragment of the principal theme which then disappears completely. The

strings have slow-moving, melancholy harmonies.

Variation 8 — *Misterioso*. The beginning of this variation is based on a scene from *The Magic Fountain* which takes place in a tropical forest.

Motifs (1) and (2) from the introduction are referred to, the principal theme is only hinted at, towards the end, by the bassoons and echoed *pianissimo* by the male voices of the chorus.

Variation 9 — *Andante con grazia*. A graceful, lilting variation in 6/8 time. No reference is made to the main theme, but the dancing tune of Variation 4 and the trumpet-call of Variation 5 are re-introduced. The male voices round off the last ten bars.

Variation 10 — *Lento, molto tranquillo*. The first few bars, for woodwind alone, are dominated by a mournful descending figure in quavers. A fragment of the main theme is heard from the trumpet, bassoon and bass clarinet. Then the music resolves into the major key and the main theme is stated in full by horns and cellos. Brief reference is made to the *Magic Fountain* theme, and the male voices again join in softly at the end.

Variation 11 — *Allegro con moto*. The trumpet-call is subjected to further development in this riotous variation. The mood changes abruptly, and the end is sombre.

Variation 12 — *Lento maestoso*. A funeral-march-like variant of the minor version of the theme.

Variation 13 — The main theme, slightly extended, is given to the voices alone.

Variation 14 — *Misterioso*. An *ostinato* figure for clarinet and viola is heard against a background of widely-spaced chords for strings and woodwind. An occasional fragment of the main theme appears in the minor. The voices have two soft chords at the end.

Variation 15 — A plain statement of the main theme in the minor by the woodwind alone. The choral epilogue is a song of parting, in the old days of slavery, when members of a family were sold to plantations in different parts of the country and separated for ever. The verse is doggerel, but the music transfigures and universalises it. That great cry: 'Oh, Honey, I am going down the river in the morning', has something of the same poignancy as the song of the boatmen in *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, and voices the tragedy of an eternal farewell. The work concludes quietly with the short plaintive theme from the introduction.

NIETZSCHE AND DELIUS

[1929 Delius Festival programme - November 1]

A Mass of Life, together with its less important pendant or sequel *Requiem* (written a considerable time later) occupies a place apart among the works of Delius. It is, as its title suggests, essentially religious, almost a didactic work, a musical confession of faith. The text upon which the music is based, consisting of various extracts taken from Friedrich Nietzsche's '*Thus spake Zarathustra*', has

not been chosen - as the same subject has been by Richard Strauss for example - simply on account of the magnificent opportunities it affords for picturesque music-making, but because the composer believes sincerely and profoundly in its philosophical and ethical implications. Consequently, although no doubt a purely musical pleasure can be derived from listening to the work without paying any attention to these implications, it can no more be completely understood apart from them than the art of Fra Angelico or Palestrina can be appreciated without some knowledge of the Roman Catholic Church, which they similarly embody and express. It has therefore been thought advisable to give here a short *résumé* and explanation of the ideas underlying the work, for the benefit of those listeners to whom Nietzsche, and his mouth-piece Zarathustra, are only names.

While the direct influence of the philosophical teaching of a Kant, Hegel, or Spinoza, on life as it is ordinarily lived, is and always has been so slight as to be virtually non-existent, it is quite otherwise with Nietzsche. No philosophy of modern times, it is safe to say, and perhaps none of ancient times, has exercised such a profound and dominating influence on society as that of Nietzsche. The explanation of this is primarily to be found in the fact that it was drawn direct from his own innermost experience. As he himself said. 'It makes the most material difference whether a thinker is personally related to his problems, having his fate, his need, his highest happiness therein: or impersonally, being only able to grasp them with the tentacles of cold, prying thinking. In the latter case nothing results therefrom - so much can be promised.'

In the former case, however, which is his own, the result is that, being based upon living experience, his teaching has reacted upon living experience. And, while it is true that today he may appear to be something of a 'back-number', the extent to which his ideas have become actualities, and his words deeds, is truly remarkable; we no longer read his books or discuss his ideas, perhaps, but we live them instead, albeit quite unconsciously. The present widespread antagonism or indifference to organised Christian religion, the reaction against democratic systems of government resulting in the establishment of dictatorships, the revolt against romanticism in art and against sentiment in general, the cult of the body, and the neglect of the soul - these are only a few of the more important and immediately perceptible manifestations of Nietzscheanism in the modern world. Even the Great War itself, it may be remembered, was by many people considered to be the outcome of the influence of his ideas on modern Germany, and as long as it lasted an enterprising Piccadilly bookseller exhibited a placard in his window bearing the inscription 'The Euro-Nietzschean War' as an inducement to the public to buy the books of the arch-fiend and enemy of the human race who was considered to be responsible for the world catastrophe.

This, however, was undoubtedly a complete misconception. As M Henri Lichtenberger, a Frenchman, observed in his book on Nietzsche written before the war, 'In Germany the diffusion of Nietzsche's doctrines and the foundation of a Nietzschean school are denounced as national dangers', and this is only what one would naturally expect in view of the never-ceasing flow of scorn and invective that he poured forth on his fellow-countrymen. Indeed, that the man who was perhaps the first in Europe to recognise and denounce the arrogant pretensions of militarist Germany, who preached so constantly and tirelessly the

doctrine of a united Europe, whose sympathies were always on the side of the Latin nations - that he should be accused of largely causing a war whose ultimate object was the imposition of a culture which he repeatedly declared to be non-existent upon the only nations to which he was willing to concede the possession of a culture, is surely one of the strangest and most perverse strokes of irony in all history. That this is so has now been clearly shown by the emergence from the ranks of the victorious Latin nations in the post-war period of a state which in every essential respect is the absolute embodiment of the Nietzschean ideal, namely Fascist Italy, in which the contemporary tendencies mentioned above find their most complete expression. To what extent, if any, Nietzsche is personally responsible for these tendencies elsewhere, and to what extent he was only a kind of spiritual barometer registering an impending change of intellectual climate or temperature is an open question, but here there can be no question whatever. Signor Mussolini, indeed, is quite frankly and avowedly a disciple of Nietzsche, and has repeatedly admitted - nay, proclaimed - his great indebtedness to the German thinker. Machiavelli, it is interesting to observe, modelled his imaginary 'Principe' or superman on the living example of Cesare Borgia: Mussolini has modelled himself on the imaginary superman or ideal ruler of Nietzsche - with what success it is perhaps as well not to enquire into too closely. The intention, at least, to hold the mirror up to Nietzsche is patent.

In a passage remarkable among many in his writings for its political prescience Nietzsche foreshadows the imminent end of democratic government and of that 'roaring cataract of nonsense known as Parliamentarianism, including the duty of everyone to read his newspaper at breakfast time', most probably as a result of 'such an increase of the Russian danger that Europe be at length forced to become dangerous herself, that Europe be at length forced to develop a will in the shape of a new governing caste'. Herein the very programme of the Fascist revolution is formulated, its advent and the way in which it was to come about forecast some forty years before the event.

The core of Nietzsche's philosophy is to be found in his postulate of the existence of two separate lines of life, the ascending and the descending, with their respective moral and ethical codes which he defines as 'master-morality' and 'slave-morality'. The latter he identifies with Christianity and its attendant virtues, charity, pity, humility, equality, love and peace, observation of the moral laws, according to which the good, the weak, the merciful, the poor, the sickly, are raised to the highest places; the former he identifies with the diametrically opposite values which, in a celebrated passage in his unfinished book '*The will to power*', he defines thus:

'All those passions and sentiments, pride, joy, health, the love of the sexes, hatred and war, veneration, refined taste and manners, a strong will, the cultivation of a powerful intellect, the Will to Power, thankfulness for the world and for life, everything that brightens and adorns and divinises life for eternity, the whole force of illuminating virtue.'

Such are the qualities that Nietzsche would have us put in place of the Christian virtues, and to affect this 'transvaluation of values', as he called it, is the purpose underlying all his writings, including '*Thus spake Zarathustra*', in which his ideas are clothed in language which is frequently of extraordinary and compelling

poetic beauty.

In the particular extracts which serve as the text for *A Mass of Life* these lyrical and poetic qualities naturally predominate, while the more dogmatic statements of Nietzsche's faith are largely excluded as being unsuited to musical treatment. They remain in the background, nevertheless, and an understanding of them may help to make clear much which would otherwise, both in the text and in the music, seem somewhat obscure.

Viewed broadly then, the work as it stands may be regarded as being essentially an ecstatic dithyramb in praise of life here on earth as opposed to that of a possible future state: a hymn of joyful acceptance and gratitude for all that it has to give, rather than of renunciation in the hope of achieving salvation: a paean in honour of Man and the human virtues of beauty, strength, nobility, plenitude, and power, rather than of God and the saintly virtues of humility, weakness, poverty, and resignation, which are the articles of conventional Christianity and morality. And if the music may seem at times to belie this programme or intention, and to breathe a spirit of tender melancholy and wistful resignation which are difficult to reconcile with the ideal expressed in Nietzsche's famous injunction 'Be hard, my brethren', it is only thereby all the more apt as an expression of the innermost essence of Nietzsche's personality and thought. He was indeed, as he admitted himself, a dual personality, one aspect of which was always in secret sympathy with the ideals that he ostensibly sets out to combat, and nowhere is this duality more apparent than in some of the lyrical invocations in '*Zarathustra*' which the composer has set to music.

A MASS OF LIFE

A great many of his admirers regard *A Mass of Life* as representing Delius at the height of his powers, and it is not easy to dissent from this judgment. To match it in the history of music we must go back to works like the Masses of Bach and Beethoven or the Requiem of Brahms, and there can be no question that it compares with these masterpieces for sheer sustained inspiration and masterly constructive ability. It was written immediately after *Sea Drift*, and occupied the composer during the years 1904-5. It received its first public performance in 1909 when it was given in London under the direction of Sir Thomas Beecham. Since then it has only had a few performances in England, and will probably be unfamiliar to the majority of listeners who are hearing it tonight.

The work is laid out on grand lines, requiring four solo singers, chorus and orchestra. The choral writing differs from that of the old masters in that there is comparatively little strictly contrapuntal writing for the voices, the richness of effect being obtained not so much by a weaving in and out of the various parts, as by vertical part-writing: the composer relying on harmonic rather than polyphonic devices to obtain his effects. That is not to say that there is no counterpoint, as it is generally understood - the masterly double fugue in the third section would alone disprove such a statement - but only that the choral writing is vertical rather than horizontal. But this method does not result in monotony as might be expected - the extraordinary variety of harmonic devices at the command of the composer prevents any such effect - and though the vocal writing often presents great technical difficulties, the result is absolutely satisfying to the ear.

The translation printed in this programme is not precisely the same as that which will be sung, certain passages having been altered in order to make their meaning clearer to the audience.

PART ONE

1. After one introductory bar the chorus enters with an exultant outburst. The music reflects the fervour of the words: a strong rhythmic figure accompanies the opening lines, and is followed by a new theme at the words 'Thou in me! Over me!' This leads to a tremendous climax; a broad and majestic subject is introduced and, with rich-sounding eight-part writing for the double chorus, produces a magnificent effect. After some pages of the greatest animation the themes are heard again and the chorus ends on a note of triumph and exaltation.

2. The second section opens with a short recitative for the baritone voice, at first of a solemn nature, but gradually, by means of slight orchestral hints, such as the suggestion of a 6/4 dance rhythm, becoming more light-hearted in character; it finally leads into the *aria* itself with a modulation from B flat major to B major. 'Lo! this crown of the Laughing One!' is accompanied by light, fluttering figures for the wind instruments; and throughout there is a suggestion of a fundamental dance rhythm.

Mention of wind ('Be like unto the wind') brings from the orchestra a quick stormy *crescendo* which leads up through a change of key to a short outburst of the dance rhythm for full orchestra, which gives point to 'The billows tremble and tumble, when they feel his foot stamping'. This sudden *forte* quickly dies down, however, and a repetition of the words 'Lo! this crown of the Laughing One!' brings a repetition also of the original fluttering accompaniment, while the dance rhythm is still heard quietly in the background until the final *crescendo*: 'All laughter I named sacred; ye higher men, learn to laugh!'

3. The altos murmur a gentle refrain and the solo tenor enters at the fourth bar over a continuous waving 12/8 figure in the orchestra. This subdued mood is continued for a short time and then becomes slightly more animated with the entrance of the solo soprano; the alto solo joins in shortly after and presently the chorus begins to establish a dance rhythm to a wordless refrain and the music gradually becomes more and more animated. There follows the first dance chorus, a superbly conceived double figure, the two subjects of which are announced by the sopranos of the divided chorus, and answered by the altos. Soon the whole chorus is employed singing an alluring and sensuous-sounding song of joy and delight. The three solo singers add their voices to the maze of sound and the music rises to a kind of delirium. It is an elemental riot of men and maidens in a wild frenzied pursuit, and it is all the more astonishing to find that Delius has succeeded in suggesting this marvellous Bacchantic rout by means of the most academic devices: all the resources of fugue writing are brought into the service of the composer, yet the effect is that of the utmost freedom of thought, a sure sign of the complete mastery of means that Delius has at his command.

There is now a gradual slackening of the pace and the voice of Zarathustra is heard. A graver mood ensues and we reach a slow and solemn section in which

there occurs a dialogue between Life and Zarathustra, to music of the utmost tenderness and beauty. The opening of the alto solo should be noticed, as it forms the basis of the musical accompaniment to the whole scene. The section ends in the serene manner in which it opened, and in striking contrast to the wild activity of the fugal chorus.

4. The fourth movement begins with a powerful exclamation from the baritone voice, and immediately the mood becomes one of restlessness, and contrasts strikingly with the delicate lyricism of the soprano solo which concluded the preceding section. The soloist's question, 'Sank I not 'neath deep, deep fountains?' is answered *pianissimo* by the chorus. The conclusion of the baritone's next phrase, 'Rather would I die here than tell my midnight-heart's deep thoughts' introduces in the bass a *motif* - it is hardly a theme - of four notes which is heard at frequent intervals throughout the remainder of the movement. Another little figure is heard at the words 'Spider, what weav'st thou?' - a creeping restless *motif* which is treated at length with the first, and together they build up a powerful climax with the re-entry of the chorus at 'Who will be Earth's master?' These two *motifs* are heard both separately and simultaneously until the final *diminuendo* where the basses alone sing softly: 'What saith the solemn midnight hour?'

5. This is a nocturnal scene and the music is for the most part of a quiet and subdued character. It is a kind of meditation in which Zarathustra speaks of the love-longings that have assailed him, the chorus supplying a background of the most grave and tender beauty. The music is tranquil in tone at the commencement, but becomes slightly more agitated after the entrance of Zarathustra, rising to a short climax as he speaks of the influence of the night awakening in him the longing for Love. After his cry 'Light am I: oh, would that I were Night', the music dies down to a *pianissimo*, and soon there is developed in the orchestra a theme hinted at in the beginning of the section. Here it accompanies Zarathustra's soliloquy commencing 'Now bursts from out of me my longing like a fountain'. At the close the chorus echoes softly Zarathustra's final words, 'The song of a lover', and the movement ends on a note of profound peace and content.

6. This movement, which in the original score begins the second part of the *Mass*, opens with an orchestral prelude which suggests the cold and freshness of the mountains. A distant horn-call is echoed and re-echoed as though from mountain top to mountain top, from valley to valley. This short prelude, which never rises above a *pianissimo*, is a masterpiece of harmonic richness, delicate scoring and colour.

The chorus breaks into this meditation almost roughly with a fervent, vigorous passage in A major: 'Arise now, arise!' which continues with the same force and vehemence and with all the piercing brilliance of the key, to the section for the three solo voices, soprano, alto and tenor: 'Gone is the lingering sorrow of my spring-tide'. Accompanied by the tenors and basses of the chorus, this passage introduces a lyrical interlude which forms a striking contrast with the preceding dramatic outburst of the chorus. The trio of solo voices is brought by a gradual

crescendo to a climax at ‘This is now our home!’ Another vigorous choral section and a short three-bar phrase for the solo voices, lead to a repetition of the opening passage and the movement is brought to a close by the final violent cry, ‘Wax ye hard!’

7. The whole of this section (which in the printed score is the fourth section of Part Two) is descriptive of the glowing heat and silence of a summer noon-day. After a quiet orchestral prelude the sopranos and tenors of the chorus whisper ‘Glowing Midday sleeps on the meadows’, the phrase being repeated by the altos and basses. The solo tenor sings of the solemn hour of silence undisturbed even by the shepherd’s flute, and finally Zarathustra speaks of the rapture of this perfect moment, the chorus interjecting softly echoes of his phrases. With the entrance of the solo soprano the tempo quickens slightly and a repeated rising figure in the orchestral accompaniment will be noticed. The mood of the opening is then resumed and a new theme (*Lento Molto* 6/4) becomes prominent, and accompanies Zarathustra’s monologue. Towards the close the chorus enters again on the words ‘Oh Bliss!’ and the movement ends with the repeated phrase ‘Now aged Midday sleeps’.

[Interval of fifteen minutes]

PART TWO

1. In its present form, the second part of *A Mass of Life* begins with a baritone solo (the second number of Part Two in the printed score). A quiet solemn opening is followed by a section marked *tranquillo*, set to the gentle, swaying 6/4 rhythm which is so characteristic of Delius. The orchestral accompaniment is particularly florid in this movement, and is notable for its rich harmonic texture and the subtleties of its instrumentation.

2. An extended orchestral prelude of a serious, reflective character, leads straight into the opening of the dance chorus. It is the musical illustration of the scene where Zarathustra discovers a band of young girls dancing by themselves in a meadow. The music is a kind of delicate impromptu, suggestive of laughter and happy innocence, and is in complete contrast to the more strenuous-sounding riot of tone that we heard in the first dance-song. The lilting rhythm of the beginning of the dance persists throughout, the time signature alternating between 12/8 and 9/8. At the close of the chorus, we are to imagine the girls scattering in alarm at the entrance of Zarathustra, who, however, begs them to continue; in the course of a passionate appeal he compares himself to a forest of deep foliage. Then the music which has been of a grave and earnest character, takes on a merry mood again, and we seem to catch echoes and snatches of the girls’ dance tunes that were sung.

At the close of his speech the girls resume their dance with even greater animation than before. Then there is a return to a graver mood: Zarathustra is left meditating in the cool of the evening and a feeling of melancholy steals over him. At the words ‘Is it not folly still to be living?’ a solemn phrase of four notes is heard in the orchestra, upon which much of the final section is built. Here it seems to strike a grave note of warning, recalling the ‘solemn midnight bell’ spoken of

earlier in the work. At the close of Zarathustra's words there occurs a short passage for the orchestra alone, into which Delius has compressed a world of tenderness and beauty.

3. A short declamatory passage begins this movement, and leads to a delicately written lyrical section in 6/4 time for the solo voice. The fifth bar of this passage introduces a short one-bar phrase which occurs frequently, and plays an important part at a later stage of this movement. A modulation from E to F brings in the chorus: 'Thou art gone, O time of youth'. With a further change of key, or rather a reversion to F major, the one-bar phrase is brought back. This little *motif* is employed to build up a powerful climax with the chorus: 'Joy is deeper still than grief of heart'.

4. This final section of the *Mass* was composed in 1898, some years before the rest of the work, and was performed, under the title of *Zarathustras Nachtslied*, at the Delius concert in London in 1899. The orchestral prelude consists of a thrice-repeated theme, founded on a rising scale passage; there follows Zarathustra's invocation to night. The opening theme is heard again, followed by the fateful-sounding figure of four notes, of which mention has been made previously. It becomes of great importance as Zarathustra speaks of the message that the 'ancient toller' has whispered in his ear, and appears all through the accompaniment, being treated as a kind of free *passacaglia*; that is to say, the figure is repeated constantly in one part or another, though in varying keys. With the entrance of the chorus it assumes even greater prominence and dominates the music for a while. The time changes to 3/2 and the mood becomes one of ecstatic fervour as the chorus repeat the closing phrase of the poem, 'Joy craves eternal, never-ending Day'. A tremendous climax is reached, the sopranos soaring to the high B, but at the last there is a *diminuendo*, and the work ends on a long-held chord for the semi-chorus, the orchestra giving out softly the four-note figure beneath the voices, and the music dies away in a mood of the utmost serenity.

DELIUS

A CONCISE BIOGRAPHY

1862*.—*January 29*: Frederick Delius born at Claremont, Horton Lane, Bradford. His father had settled in England some twenty years previously, and became a naturalized Englishman in 1850; he was a keen music-lover, and used to entertain at his house most of the musicians who came to give concerts in Bradford.

1869.—Begins taking violin lessons from Bauerkeller of the Hallé Orchestra. Can already play the pianoforte by ear.

1872.—"My first great musical impression was hearing a posthumous walse of Chopin which a friend of my father's played for me when I was ten years old. . . . I remember that after hearing it twice I could play the whole picce through from memory (not quite correctly, of course)."

1873-76—At Bradford Grammar School.

1876-79.—At the International College, Spring Grove, Isleworth.

* Not 1863, as given hitherto in all books of reference.

- 1879.—Enters his father's business, in the wool trade, at Bradford. *Autumn* : Sent to Chemnitz to complete his business education. Violin lessons from Hans Sitt. Visits to Dresden and Berlin, where a performance of "Die Meistersinger" makes a deep impression upon him.
- 1880.—Returns to Bradford. Visit to Scandinavia on behalf of the firm. Ostensible business trip to Saint-Etienne ends on the Riviera and is prolonged by good fortune at Monte Carlo.
- 1882.—Sent to work with another firm at Manchester.
- 1883.—Refuses to remain in business. Friction with the family. Permission to devote himself to music refused.
- 1884.—*March* : Leaves for Florida, where he lives on an orange-grove on the St. John's River, near Jacksonville. Is joined later by Thomas F. Ward, an organist, from whom he learns the rudiments of counterpoint. Is greatly impressed by negro music. Father refuses permission to study music at Leipzig.
- 1885.—Becomes a violin teacher at Danville (Virginia). Performs the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto there.
- 1886.—Parents relenting, he returns to Europe and enters Leipzig Conservatoire. Pupil of Hans Sitt, Reinecke, and Jadassohn; fellow student of Percy Pitt and Robin Legge. Revels in the Wagner performances of Mahler and Nikisch.
- 1887.—*Summer* : Walking tour in Norway. Returns to Leipzig and meets Grieg, with whom he forms a lifelong friendship.
- 1888.—*Spring* : Hires an orchestra for a barrel of beer and hears his first orchestral work, "Florida." Accompanies Grieg to London. Grieg assures Delius père of his son's great abilities, and persuades him not to interrupt his musical career. "Five Songs from the Norwegian" accepted for publication by Augener. Visits his uncle, Theodore Delius, in Paris, and remains in France, at Ville d'Avray.
- 1889-90.—Living at Croissy. "Seven Songs from the Norwegian" (Ibsen, Bjørnsen, and Vinje).
- 1891.—Settles in Paris (33 Rue Ducouëdic). Three Shelley songs. His first opera, "Irmelin," begun. Spends summer with Bjørnsen in Norway.
- 1892-93.—Association with Gauguin, Strindberg, Edvard Munch, and other writers and painters. Avoids musical society. "The Magic Fountain," his second opera, written. Orchestral work "Sur les cimes" performed at Monte Carlo.
- 1894.—"The Magic Fountain" accepted for performance at Weimar, but withdrawn at the last moment by the composer on self-critical grounds.
- 1895.—Meets Jelka Rosen in Paris. Orchestral fantasy "Over the hills and far away." Two Verlaine songs.
- 1897.—*January* : Revisits Florida, composes Pianoforte Concerto, and completes a third opera, "Koanga." Returns to Paris, and buys one of Gauguin's best pictures, "Nevermore," for 500 francs—the largest sum Gauguin had yet received for a canvas. Meets Knut Hamsun and Gunnar Heiberg. Commissioned to write incidental music for the latter's play "Folkeraadet." Marries Jelka Rosen and settles at Grez-sur-Loing (Seine-et-Marne) in the summer. Seven Danish songs. "Over the hills and far away" performed by Dr. Hans Haym, at Elberfeld. "Folkeraadet," produced at Kristiania, causes a riot. Meets Ibsen at Kristiania.
- 1898.—Composes "Zarathustra's Night-Song," afterwards incorporated in "A Mass of Life" as concluding number. Four Nietzsche songs.
- 1899.—*May 30* : Gives concert of his works, with chorus and orchestra, at St. James's Hall, London. Programme includes "Zarathustra's Night-Song" and excerpts from "Koanga." Composes "Paris: the Song of a Great City."
- 1900-01.—Composes his fourth opera, "A Village Romeo and Juliet."
- 1901.—"Paris" performed at Elberfeld. "Zarathustra's Night-Song" given at Basle Tonkünstlerfest.
- 1902.—"Appalachia" and a fifth opera, "Margot-la-Rouge."
- 1903.—"Sea-Drift" composed.
- 1904.—"Koanga" produced at Elberfeld, with Clarence Whitehill in the title-rôle.
- 1904-05.—"A Mass of Life" composed. "Appalachia" performed at Elberfeld (1904) and Düsseldorf (Nieder-Rheinisches Musikfest, 1905).
- 1906.—New entr'acte, "The Walk to the Paradise Garden," composed for "A Village Romeo and Juliet." Pianoforte Concerto revised. "Sea-Drift" produced at Essen (Tonkünstlerfest des Allgemeinen Deutschen Musikvereins).
- 1906-07.—"Songs of Sunset" and "Cynara" composed.
- 1907.—*February* : "A Village Romeo and Juliet" produced at the Komische Oper, Berlin. Pianoforte Concerto played by Theodore Szanto at a Promenade Concert: the first Delius work heard in London since the 1899 concert. "Appalachia" performed by Fritz Cassirer in London. First meeting with Beecham. Book on Delius and his work published in Germany. "Brigg Fair" composed.

- 1908.—First performance of "Brigg Fair" given by Beecham. "In a Summer Garden" composed and performed under the composer's direction at a Philharmonic Concert in London. Dance Rhapsody (No. 1) composed. Sixth opera, "Fennimore and Gerda," begun. "Sea-Drift" performed for the first time in England at the Sheffield Festival.
- 1909.—First complete performance of "A Mass of Life" given by Beecham in London. Delius conducts first performance of Dance Rhapsody (No. 1) at Hereford Festival.
- 1910.—"A Village Romeo and Juliet" produced at Covent Garden by Beecham. "Brigg Fair" performed at Zürich Tonkünstlerfest, and by thirty-six different orchestras in Germany alone in the same year.
- 1911.—*June*: Beecham's first all-Delius concert, with chorus and orchestra at Queen's Hall, London. First performance of "Songs of Sunset." "Fennimore and Gerda," completed.
- 1911-12.—"Arabesk," "Song of the High Hills," "On hearing the first cuckoo in spring," "Summer night on the river."
- 1913.—Second performance in England of "A Mass of Life" given by Beecham at Covent Garden. "The First Cuckoo" and "Summer Night" performed by Nikisch at the Gewandhaus, Leipzig.
- 1913-14.—"Requiem" composed.
- 1914.—*July*: Beecham's second all-Delius concert, with chorus and orchestra, at Duke's Hall, Royal Academy of Music, London. "North Country Sketches" completed. Production of "Fennimore and Gerda" prevented by outbreak of war. Delius comes to London. Spends winter with Beecham at Grove Mill House, Watford, and in London.
- 1915.—Violin Sonata, No. 1 (begun in 1905) completed. Air and Dance, Double Concerto, and Songs to Old English Words. Guest of Honour at the Music Club, Craiton Galleries, London. Spent the summer in Norway. Returned to Grez in October.
- 1916.—Dance Rhapsody (No. 2) and String Quartet.
- 1917.—"Eventyr" and Cello Sonata composed.
- 1918.—"Song before Sunrise" composed. Returns to London in the autumn. House at Grez commandeered by troops.
- 1919.—Violin Concerto, "Eventyr," and String Quartet produced in London. "Fennimore and Gerda" produced at Frankfurt-am-Main.
- 1920.—"Song of the High Hills" produced in London by Coates. Commissioned to write music for James Elroy Flecker's play, "Hassan." "A Village Romeo and Juliet" revived by Beecham at Covent Garden.
- 1921.—Cello Concerto composed in London.
- 1922.—Delius stricken with paralysis. Goes to Germany for medical treatment.
- 1923.—Sixtieth birthday celebrations (until the Somerset House registers were searched in 1929, Delius believed his birth date to be 1863). Festival concert given by Paul Klenau at Frankfurt-am-Main, including "North Country Sketches," "Song of the High Hills," and Violonello Concerto. Delius concert given at Grefeld by Dr. Siegel. Second Violin Sonata composed by dictation. "Hassan" produced at His Majesty's Theatre, London, in the autumn.
- 1925.—"A Mass of Life" given at Wiesbaden. Delius, though very ill, goes there and is accorded a wonderful reception by the whole town. "A Late Lark" composed by dictation. Delius's sight fails. Third London performance of "A Mass of Life" given by Paul Klenau and the Philharmonic Choir. Presented with the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society.
- 1927.—"A Mass of Life" performed by Schuricht in Berlin with enormous success.
- 1929.—Made a Companion of Honour. Completes "Cynara" and composes "A Song of Summer," for orchestra, by dictation. The Delius Festival given by Sir Thomas Beecham in London.

Philip Heseltine died, by his own hand, in December 1930, aged 36.

*O Nightingale, my heart . . .
 Alas, poor rhapsodist, how sad thou art!
 Is thine hour come? so soon, then, must thou part?*

from 'Swansong' (for Philip Heseltine)
 in 'Aurelia and other poems' by Robert Nichols [Chatto & Windus 1920]

The Delius Society Journal

Autumn 1987, Number 94

The Delius Society

Full Membership £8.00 per year

Students £5.00

Subscription to Libraries (Journal only) £6.00 per year

USA and Canada US \$17.00 per year

President

Eric Fenby OBE, Hon DMus, Hon DLitt, Hon RAM, FRCM, Hon FTCL

Vice Presidents

Felix Aprahamian Hon RCO

Roland Gibson MSc, PhD (Founder Member)

Sir Charles Groves CBE

Meredith Davies CBE, MA, BMus, FRCM, Hon RAM

Norman Del Mar CBE, Hon DMus

Vemon Handley MA, FRCM, D Univ (Surrey)

Chairman

RB Meadows

5 Westbourrie House, Mount Park Road, Harrow, Middlesex

Treasurer

Peter Lyons

160 Wishing Tree Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex

Secretary

Miss Diane Eastwood

28 Emscote Street South, Bell Hall, Halifax, Yorkshire

Tel: (0422) 50537

Editor

Stephen Lloyd

85a Farley Hill, Luton, Bedfordshire LU15EG

Tel: Luton (0582) 20075

