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Autumn 1985, Number 87

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**THE  
HARRISON SISTERS  
ISSUE**



*The Delius Society  
Journal*

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# *The Delius Society Journal*

Autumn 1985, Number 87

The Delius Society

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### Acknowledgements

The Editor wishes to express his gratitude to Miss Margaret Harrison, Mrs Patricia Cleveland-Peck and Miss Katrina Fountain for their invaluable help in the preparation of this issue. The photograph of Estelle Palmley (from a group photograph) was supplied by Gilbert Parfitt.

The photographic plates in this issue have been financed by a legacy to the Delius Society from the late Robert Aickman.

## IN A SURREY GARDEN

*The story of the Harrison sisters*

by Katrina Fountain

The Harrison sisters - May, Beatrice, Monica and Margaret - were born into a family of strong military traditions, but their immediate kin were both artistic and musical, thus paving the way for one of the most famous duos of the first half of this century.

Their father, Colonel Harrison, was an officer in charge of the Royal Engineers College stationed in India and he was a talented amateur flautist, whilst their mother, a singer and pupil of Henschel and Garcia at the Royal College of Music, was confined by the usual Victorian tradition of entertaining guests. Mrs Harrison therefore was determined that her children should be allowed the chance that was denied her, and throughout her life she offered them the utmost support and encouragement. The girls' uncle, Charles Charrington, married to the actress



*Beatrice, Margaret, May and Monica Harrison*

Janet Achurch (who had been the first to play the part of Candida), was a great friend of George Bernard Shaw and is perhaps best remembered for introducing the works of Ibsen to English audiences. Thus the children were brought up in an atmosphere orientated very much towards performance.

May, born in 1890, and Beatrice, in 1892, were both raised in the Indian Himalayas but the family returned to England when Beatrice and May were quite young because Mrs Harrison found the Indian heat intolerable. The family settled at Chatham Barracks where Colonel Harrison was put in charge of the Royal Engineers Band. It was at Chatham that Margaret, the youngest sister, was born in 1899; Monica was born in London at Redcliffe Square in 1897.

The sisters began their musical studies at an early age. Margaret was the youngest pupil ever to study at the RCM, being only four when she entered the College, and May started to play the violin when she was two. She was also a competent pianist, able to accompany her mother in Schumann songs. Beatrice attended her first orchestral concert when she was eighteen months old and it was at this concert that she decided she wanted to play the cello. Her insistence was unceasing, but she was made to wait until her tiny hands were big enough. Instead she was taught the violin and piano to prepare her fingers and give her the necessary musical groundwork. Finally, when Beatrice was eight years old she was given her first cello – a full-size one. As she recalled: ‘Suddenly the door opened and mother appeared after a day in London. Ah! Who and what was that instrument in her arms? I took a flying leap. It was a cello!’

The girls’ talents being so apparent, the family decided to move to London in order that the girls could study at an established music college, and Colonel Harrison retired from the army to devote the rest of his life to his children. They moved to Kensington and May, Beatrice and Margaret began studies at the RCM. May and Beatrice both won senior Associated Board scholarships to study at the College, competing against thousands of other applicants for their prestigious places. Beatrice studied from 1904 until 1908 with W.E. Whitehouse, a famous cellist who was a member of the London Trio and had toured England with Dr Joachim. May studied from 1902 until 1907 with Fernandez Arbos, a distinguished violinist and conductor of the Madrid Symphony Orchestra. May’s genius, even at the age of fifteen, became apparent to Arbos who invited her in 1906 to make her European début with the Madrid Symphony Orchestra. This was a great success and, with her mother as chaperone, she went to meet the Spanish Royal family and was presented with a gift of jewels.

May had made her London début a few years earlier, on 31 May 1904, with Sir Henry Wood and his Queen’s Hall Orchestra. Her programme would have sent shivers down the spines of much older violinists: Bach’s Chaconne and E major Concerto, Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto, and the *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* of Saint-Saëns. But at the age of thirteen May’s début was an outstanding success: ‘Recalls innumerable, twenty bouquets and flower baskets, a live Persian kitten in a flower-bedecked cage, a Japanese dwarf-tree in a lilliputian glasshouse, and a sea of happy faces belonging to proud relations and friends,’ reported *The Musical Times*, while Henry Wood described the platform as looking like Hamley’s at Christmas. It was at this concert that May first met Kreisler who became a lifelong friend and admirer. On occasions he asked her to

deputise for him at concerts. In 1909 May took Kreisler's place at the Mendelssohn Festival in Helsingfors (Helsinki), and again in 1919, when she learnt the Elgar Violin Concerto in a week and performed it with Landon Ronald. May had an astonishing ability to memorise pieces. As a result of her performance of the Elgar Concerto, Ronald met the Harrisons and was soon conducting May and Beatrice in the Brahms Double. In his capacity as Musical Adviser to the



May Harrison Beatrice Harrison

Gramophone Company, he brought Beatrice to the notice of 'His Master's Voice' and in due course she recorded the Elgar Cello Concerto with the composer.

Margaret entered the RCM just before her fifth birthday, in time studying composition with Stanford and the violin with Rivarde. Initially she wanted to become a Doctor of Music but, as she later said, 'it was too cut-and-dried', and gave it up after passing her Firsts. Her professional début was not until December 1918 at the Wigmore Hall. She frequently accompanied Beatrice on concert tours throughout Europe, including Russia, and in America. She made her Promenade Concerts début in 1925.

Beatrice's début was made at the age of fifteen on 29 May 1907. By all accounts it was as unforgettable as May's had been in 1904. Beatrice's programme included the Saint-Saens A minor Cello Concerto, Leon Boellman's *Variations Symphoniques*, and the first London performance of a new suite by Victor Herbert. Henry Wood conducted the Queen's Hall Orchestra. In his review the *Times* critic wrote of two kinds of child prodigy – 'the child who has remarkable technique or who shows signs of remarkable musical feeling' and the child 'who plays like a musician . . . and cannot help it' – and went on to place Beatrice firmly in the second category as 'a musician through and through. She has a keen sensitiveness to rhythm that enables her to keep up the slow, swinging stride of an andante with just as much precision as the hurried measures of a tarantelle; in the second place she has a strong sense of colour, and uses her tone, which is remarkably full and mellow, with an artist's economy and feeling for "niceness" of effect; and finally, she has the self-control of a practised musician, for not once in the evening did she show the slightest tendency towards hurry or nervous deliberation.' Beatrice's long hours of practice had given her a resounding success.

Monica, who has remained the least known of the family, was also talented musically but she did not have her sisters' physical strength. Her premature birth had resulted in defective tendons in the arms and legs, and she also suffered from poor health for much of her life. Nevertheless she studied singing with Victor Beigel and made her début as a singer in 1924.

After leaving the College, May and Beatrice went abroad, first to Frankfurt where Beatrice was to study with the famous cellist Hugo Becker. When he succeeded Hausmann as Professor of the Hochschule in Berlin they followed him there. May, accompanied by her mother and Margaret, went on to St Petersburg where May became a pupil of Leopold Auer, the distinguished violinist and head of the conservatory there, and Margaret studied with his colleague Nalbandrian. Meanwhile Beatrice, Monica and their father were installed in a flat in Berlin. In 1910 Beatrice became the first cellist and the youngest competitor to win the Mendelssohn Prize at the Berlin Hochschule. May and Beatrice soon began their touring careers around Europe, nearly always accompanied by their mother. As well as giving solo recitals the two sisters frequently played the Brahms Double Concerto. They were in great demand, performing with famous conductors like Artur Nikisch and Felix Weingartner.

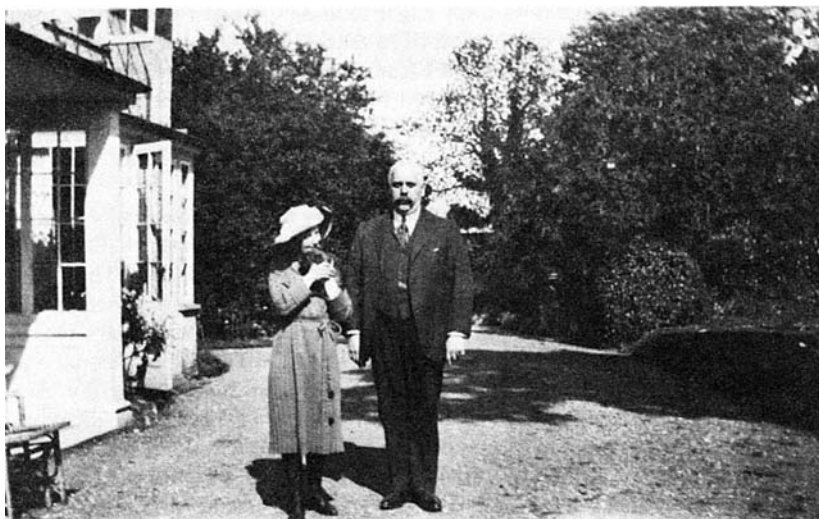
It was at about this time that Beatrice came to possess a magnificent Pietro Guarnerius cello, owing largely to the generosity of an American millionairess, Mrs Almeric Paget, who had paid two thousand pounds for it. Beatrice christened



her cello 'Pietro' or 'Peter' which she treasured. It became her lifelong companion. She would never travel by aeroplane in case 'Peter' got damaged, and her concert dresses were carefully chosen to match the colour of the cello - a deep red.

On 3 December 1914 Beatrice and May played the Brahms Double Concerto at a Hallé concert with Sir Thomas Beecham. After the concert they were introduced by Samuel Langford, the music critic of the *Manchester Guardian*\*, to Frederick Delius who was attending their concert (which also included two orchestral excerpts from *A Village Romeo and Juliet*) and who was delighted by the sisters' playing. He determined to write his own double concerto for them, as Beatrice recalled: 'I wish I could describe our delight when he said that he thought our performance was superb, so much so that he was inspired to write a double concerto and dedicate it to my sister and me. And he did it!' Delius had some difficulty in writing for this particular combination of instruments. He used to go to their London home in Cornwall Gardens to play over what he had written, but at first the parts were written in unison and almost technically impossible to play. Beatrice, with the help of Philip Heseltine, rewrote the cello part to make it playable. Delius, as Beatrice remembered, 'sat for hours with a large score on his knee, surrounded by four Scotties who took a great interest in the proceedings! Heseltine banged out the orchestral part while I, hot and anxious, played one passage over and over again until Delius was satisfied.' The premiere was given

\* 'Their unanimity in attack, phrasing, rhythmic treatment and every other grace of style was next to marvellous,' wrote Langford.



*Monica Harrison with Victor Beigel*

by Beatrice and May on 21 February 1920, with Sir Henry Wood conducting the Queen's Hall Orchestra.

Delius went on to compose his Cello Sonata, *Caprice and Elegy*, and Cello Concerto for Beatrice. The 'heavenly' Cello Sonata was begun in 1916 and Beatrice gave the first performance with Hamilton Harty at the Wigmore Hall in October 1918. The Cello Concerto was begun in the garden of an old farmhouse the Harrisons took near Thames Ditton in Surrey, and Beatrice gave the first English performance in London in July 1923, Eugene Goossens conducting. Beatrice recorded both the Sonata and the *Caprice and Elegy* for the gramophone, and at the outbreak of World War Two the music that broke the silence after Chamberlain's broadcast announcement that Britain was at war was Beatrice's recording of the *Elegy*.

Another work she made very much her own and recorded was the Elgar Cello Concerto. Its first performance, given by Felix Salmond with the composer on 27 October 1919, had been an unmitigated failure, due largely to the fact that Albert Coates took an unreasonable length of rehearsal time for Scriabin's *Poeme de l'Extase* which was also in the programme, but perhaps also, as Dr H.C. Colles suggested, the audience found the concerto too different from the established Violin Concerto. However, Beatrice was subsequently asked to record the work with the composer conducting. On 22 December 1919 they committed to wax an abridged version of the Concerto with 'the symphony orchestra' at Hayes. Lady Elgar became a devoted fan of her interpretation and had this to say to Mrs Harrison at the time of the recording: 'I think your child will make people love this work when she has an opportunity of playing it in public.' The recording was a success and from then onwards Elgar was to use only Beatrice as his soloist whenever he was asked to conduct the work. This first (acoustic) recording was however tinged with tragedy as Lady Elgar died on 7 April 1920 and the final session for the recording's completion (a re-take of the Adagio) was held over until November. In 1928 Beatrice and Elgar made an electrical recording of the Concerto together. Beatrice remembered Elgar at these later sessions as being 'very gay and he told me that it didn't matter what happened to the orchestra as all the faults could be put on to the soloist! How we laughed, at least I did not laugh as much as he did!'

As well as enjoying their friendship with Elgar, the Harrison family kept in regular communication with the Deliuses, visiting the composer at Grez and inviting them to stay at their home on Delius's rare visits to England. They even sent him a radio so that he could listen to the cricket scores, a sport he had always taken a particular interest in. May was a great interpreter of Delius's music, performing with Arnold Bax as her pianist the First and Third Violin Sonatas in particular, recording together the former and with him giving the first performance in November 1930 of the latter (which was dedicated to May). Delius was able to listen in to May and Bax's radio broadcasts of his music on the set given to him by the Harrisons. On his death in June 1934 Delius was buried at Grez-sur-Loing, but he had once told Mrs Harrison that he would like to be buried in an English churchyard. Mrs Harrison herself died earlier that same year (and their father, already ill, died soon after) but the sisters, after consulting Jelka Delius, saw that this wish was carried out, and in May 1935 his body was exhumed

NAPLETON GRANGE,  
KEMPSEY,  
WORCESTER.  
TELEPHONE: KEMPSEY 2.

Oct 24<sup>th</sup> 1926

Dear Beatrice:

Darling May sends her love to you. She is very well & is quite happy with the other demons. Minnie of course keeps her 'in place' & is very jealous at times but they get on extremely well; - sleep in a heap & lick each other's mouths - do anything else can be desired? The weather is bad for DOGS being very hot & raining too do not like it - but the 3 of you & our GARDNER (the boy is this) send love to you & to the family

Yours  
Walter Elgar  
the better above written

A letter to Beatrice Harrison from Elgar

and brought over to England to be laid to rest in Limpsfield churchyard, near to the Harrisons' own mother's grave.

No account of the Harrison family should omit mention of their house 'Foyle Riding' near Oxted in Surrey, close to Limpsfield. It seems to have been a veritable haven for the sisters and numerous musicians - Cyril Scott, Elgar, Gerald Moore and Gordon Jacob, to mention but a few - who went there. The Harrisons' guests stayed at 'Lamberlost', a house designed in Tudor style by Colonel Harrison and built on the land of 'Foyle Riding', along with an old barn

which became a large music room. 'Foyle Riding' and the land belonging to it was immense, so much so that Mrs Harrison employed six gardeners to maintain the garden. The Harrisons adequately managed to fill the large house and grounds, not only with themselves and guests but also with their huge collection of animals. This menagerie had been started by the sisters at an early age, and is still going strong in the hands of Margaret Harrison. Gerald Moore, the accompanist, well remembers the chaos at their Oxted house: 'There were precisely sixteen Aberdeen terriers [one of whom, Merry Meg, was given to Elgar as a present], a very fierce airedale, and a huge wolfhound. The airedale, kept on a running chain on the principle of an electric hare at a greyhound track, was intimidating; he barked unceasingly and menacingly at any sign or scent of human flesh . . . Of budgerigars, canaries and parrots, chirruping and chattering, many abounded.' But the most interesting and comical feature of the collection were General Jefferson and Virginia, two baby alligators, 'ruminating noiselessly' in a tank in the dining-room. Such was the Harrisons' peculiar love of nature.

The garden was perhaps the most talked-about garden in England during the twenties and thirties, due entirely to Beatrice's famous broadcasting of the nightingale. Those broadcasts of her playing to a nightingale must have captured the hearts and imagination of the listeners to the World Service. After first discovering that there was a nightingale in the garden, Beatrice encouraged it to sing by playing to it every night. She then dreamed up the idea of broadcasting this extraordinary 'duet' to the world. She duly went ahead with the plan and persuaded a sceptical broadcasting team, headed by Captain West (father of Peter West, the cricket commentator) and Captain Eckersley, to come and record the nightingale. Beatrice played for nearly three hours without result, except for some *Midsummer Night's* adventures besetting the engineers. As Gerald Moore recalls: 'My friend, acting as a beater to disturb the birds, suddenly shone his torch on the interrogating ears of a startled donkey and, frightened out of his wits, leapt into the air, dropped his torch and got a thorn in his eye.' Other noises were heard through the microphones, rabbits biting the wires and general country sounds, but still no nightingale. Eventually, at 11.45 p.m. the nightingale began to sing and musical history was made. Beatrice performed many more recitals with the nightingale, the first birdsong ever to be broadcast. King George V told Beatrice that she had 'encircled the world with the song of the bird.' These broadcasts, without doubt, became an advertisement for both Beatrice and her cello, and thereafter the nightingale was portrayed in the corner of Beatrice's concert posters and programmes, and was even embroidered on her concert dresses. HMV issued a commercial recording of her playing in her garden to the nightingale in 1927.

This period was perhaps the peak of Beatrice's and May's careers, and the happiest time of the sisters' lives. It is interesting that they never wanted to get married, although they had plenty of opportunities. Cyril Scott once asked Beatrice to marry him but was turned down, and he contented himself with playing and making his own arrangements of Wagner operas for Beatrice. Mrs Harrison's advice to Beatrice was 'don't ever marry unless you can give up the cello'. Beatrice knew that she could never give up her career for marriage. As Margaret explained, they never wanted to get married; they lived for their music

and their family life.

Arnold Bax was another composer to fall under the sisters' spell. As well as being a composer, he was renowned for his piano playing, especially his excellent sight-reading. May persuaded a reticent Bax to accompany her, not only in broadcasts and performances of his own works but of Delius's as well. It is rumoured that May was a little in love with Bax, but their partnership appears to have been a purely professional one, and their 1929 recording of Delius's First Violin Sonata shows a very special partnership and undoubtedly the fine aptitude of Bax's piano playing. In 1923 Beatrice had commissioned from Bax a cello sonata of which she gave the first performance on 26 February 1924 with Harriet Cohen as accompanist. As a result Bax wrote his one-movement *Rhapsodic Ballad* (1939) for her, but she never played this piece in public for fear of making her sister jealous. However Beatrice did give most of the performances of Bax's Cello Concerto (1934) which had originally been written with Cassado in mind. Bax wrote of her interpretation: 'I know that she must be kept in order about the rubatos but I do believe she puts the stuff over better than any English cellist.' Bax's appearances with May were so successful that he was asked to give a solo recital broadcast. But he declined, giving the reason that he had never taken himself seriously as a pianist and that he accompanied May for the sake of his old friend Delius.

The Harrison family had a great many patrons amongst royalty at home and abroad (and their connection with Princess Victoria and the English Royal family has been put forward as a reason why Bax was given his knighthood and his post as Master of the King's Music). May and Beatrice first became involved with the English Royal family in the early part of their careers when they were asked by Lady Cynthia Crewe-Milne to play at a dinner party given by her father for King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. Their daughter Princess Victoria also attended that dinner party and from then onwards she and the sisters became friends. They received an invitation to go every Sunday to Princess Victoria's home at Iver in Buckinghamshire to play with her, for she was a very keen amateur pianist. In 1928 Beatrice and Princess Victoria made a private recording of the Princess's favourite piece of music, an arrangement for cello and piano of the slow movement from Elgar's Cello Concerto. The sisters also arranged for the Princess to go to concerts with them, incognito as it were, as Margaret recalls: 'There was no fuss made, the tickets were booked and the management told that a member of the Royal family would be attending that night, but wished to remain anonymous. Thus the Princess came with us and none of the audience knew. It delighted her that she could become for just a short period of her time one of the ordinary paying public!'

The year 1937 marks perhaps the turning point in the careers of the Harrison sisters. May had already been living in London for some time, but Beatrice and Monica moved from 'Foyle Riding' to Woolborough Farm at Outwood in Surrey where they concentrated on tending their collection of animals. It was as if the sisters gradually faded into graceful retirement. An era in British music had come to a close with most of its brilliant composers – Elgar, Delius, Holst, Warlock and others – already dead. A new generation of younger musicians was gaining recognition, with the passing of the old school of string playing with its stylish

portamentos and rubatos, and the emergence of new players who ‘cleaned up’ the technique, giving string instruments the sound of today. May taught from 1935 to 1947 at the RCM and died in 1958. On 29 May 1946, Beatrice, May and Margaret took part in a Delius Memorial Concert of his chamber works in the Wigmore Hall, in aid of the children of Europe. Beatrice’s last public performance was a televised recital in 1958 to help raise money for the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral. She died in 1965, while Monica lived on until 1983.

However much we admire the soloists of today, things will never be the same as during the lifetime of the Harrison family. They dedicated their lives to the cause of music, paving the way for a generation of women musicians. They gained the respect of the leading composers and performers of their day and set a musical precedent in the history of English music.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

I would like to express my very grateful thanks to Margaret Harrison for all her assistance while I was researching for this article.

The chief books consulted have been the following:

Gerald Moore, *Am I too loud?* (Hamish Hamilton, 1962);

*The Cello and the Nightingales: the autobiography of Beatrice Harrison*, edited by Patricia Cleveland-Peck, (John Murray, 1985);

Lewis Foreman, *Bax: a composer and his times*, (Scalar Press, 1983).

K.F.



*Frederick and Jelka Delius in the Harrisons' garden*

## MARGARET HARRISON REMEMBERS

*In August 1984, at her home in Surrey, Margaret Harrison talked to the Editor about her family, her career, and the many outstanding musicians she has known in the course of her life. She kindly consented to the talk being recorded, and what follows is, with her permission, necessarily an edited version of that conversation. She began by remembering Delius when she first knew him, and it very soon became clear that she is probably in the unique position of having known Delius before he was seriously afflicted with illness in those fatal last years.*

In those days Delius was full of fun; nobody could realise what a happy soul he was then. He was always so very thin, but he had such charm and he was a good smiler too. He had a great sense of humour, of a very quiet kind but always straight to the point. I've seen my mother talk to him with tears strolling down his cheeks: 'Oh! Mrs Harrison, you do make me laugh!' He spoke with a level voice, neither deep nor high, and what he said was very distinct. He always called my mother 'Mrs Herr-ee-son' with a hint of Yorkshire accent. Sometimes when he was excited it would get a little stronger which was rather nice.

My mother talked to Delius a lot, especially after he'd gone blind. He was a very cultured man, no-one really realises *how* cultured he was. He could never have written those wonderful choral works if he hadn't been. He had a great scope of imagination – what an imagination! – and seemed to go off into his own world, but he soon came back with a quick joke. So often he seemed in a dream and then he'd suddenly realise he'd heard us say something and he'd come out with a quick remark. He was very neat, he loved everything to be very neat – all but his music. 'Dear Fred,' I said to him, 'it looks exactly as though spiders have walked all over your music!' He said, 'I can't help it, it's the way I write!' But it was so spidery. He always liked to write on the piano music stand and of course if you write on a score that size half the time it falls down, so I used to spend quite a lot of time picking it all up for him. He wouldn't write on the table. I always think it so remarkable that he would think it all out completely orchestrally but not be able to put it down in the piano. That was where he was helped out by dear Heseltine whom I thought brilliant at the short score.

Delius loved the garden. We'd put a chair out and he would sit there for three or four hours. Dear Jelka would say, 'Fred, what have you been doing?' and he'd reply, 'I've got something planned in my head.' Dear Jelka was such a darling. I think she is one of the most wonderful women you could dream of. She had a gentle Scandinavian voice, she was very pretty and very sweet. She loved my mother and they got on like a house on fire.

Delius actually planned the Cello Concerto while sitting in our garden.<sup>1</sup> I used to say he was watching clouds which I'm sure he was. He had a favourite rose, the Gloire de Dijon. We had a magnificent specimen all over the wall and he sat under it, and he said it was always the Gloire that made him write the cello work. Because his writing was so extraordinary that one was never quite sure which note he wanted, whether it was on the stave or not, Beatrice used to play it to him several times to be sure it was right.



We were all very fond of Delius. We knew him from the early war years, and that was the *real* Delius. Our friendship really started when he wrote the Double Concerto, but May was playing Sonata No 1 with Hamilton Harty even before we knew Delius well.<sup>2</sup> (May also played the Delius with Fanny Davies and Fanny was very naughty - she could be naughty at times! On her copy she wrote 'Miaow' just like cats. You can imagine what we thought of that! She couldn't play it, she didn't understand Delius - Schumann, yes, but not Delius.) From the very first note of Sonata No 1 I adored it. While very young I used to come and listen and even turn the pages for Hamilton Harty. Being an Irishman Harty understood so much of the imagination in the work. Those performances by May and Hamilton Harty were very fine. He was such a fine pianist and *such* a dear. I knew him well.



*Delius and Beatrice in the Harrisons' garden at The Waffrons, near Thames Ditton, Surrey (see also p.39)*



Both May and I loved Sonata No 1. I played it a lot. I played both the First and Second Sonatas to Delius who seemed to enjoy it. He always praised when one played, he was very good in that. May and Beatrice went to Grez before I did. When we went over we would always play to Delius (and that was before Eric was there so much). May went to Grez a lot, especially later when they were doing the



*Margaret Harrison at about the time of her début*

Third Sonata which Delius wrote for her. Of course, what Eric did was a miracle. I've heard them there when Eric would call out, 'Is that the note?' and Delius would say, 'No, that's not the note!' and they'd go on like that for hours. That's how he got it all down. His patience was infinite. I don't know how it would ever have been done otherwise. And yet Delius was dead-sure which note he wanted. Then there was Gerald Moore who was wonderful. My mother took him out to Delius. In his book *Am I too loud?* he tells quite a bit of what went on when we were out there. He was a great help because he fitted in so well. He accompanied me in the Second Sonata. He was so good with Delius, and he could make him laugh too!

When Delius began the Double Concerto at our house in Cornwall Gardens, Kensington, he wrote a lot of it in unison. Both May and Beatrice said, 'You can't do that – it doesn't sound right.' And when they played bits he said, 'No, you're quite right. I see what you mean.' Heseltine was there day after day. Delius used to come over with two pages, sit at the piano and then say, 'Play this.' Then he'd say, 'That is what I want.' He'd then bring two more pages and so in this way it was built up. When the Double Concerto was being written we had four Scotties and Delius was rather frightened of them. Two or three of them would sometimes stray into the drawing room where they were playing and Delius would put his hand down while he was listening and a Scottie would come up and have a lick. Delius never knew it, he was so far in the music!

Delius didn't write very gratefully for the instruments. He made it technically very difficult, especially in the Violin Concerto. May thought the same, we were agreed on that, although I did play the Violin Concerto in Birmingham with Boulton.<sup>3</sup>

My limited piano-playing was enough to enable me to accompany in the Cello Sonata, so Beatrice and I played it everywhere.<sup>4</sup> We played it at our sixpenny concerts to the miners. I also played it to Delius, just as I played the orchestral piano part of the Elgar Concerto with Beatrice, and once when I was playing Elgar called out, 'Play it with more *abandon!*' and came and sat on the stool to play, throwing me onto the floor.<sup>5</sup> I've never forgotten landing on the floor: after that I played it with *plenty* of abandon!

Elgar was a dear. How he loved Beatrice's playing! When I hear these young ones playing the Elgar, I think, 'Dear me, perhaps in 20 years' time you'll be able to play it.' They don't quite understand it. Beatrice absolutely *lived* it and Elgar always said that *she* really conducted it much more than he did. No wonder he didn't want *everybody* to play it. Elgar could get very excited when he was conducting, and when he was really excited his eyes used to sparkle. Beatrice always said that when she got to a certain passage in the Concerto she used to look at him, and she said his eyes were sparkling so much she thought they'd fall out!

Elgar had a very pleasant speaking voice and a great sense of humour – wicked sometimes! He was friends with the Forbes-Robertsons. He and Norman Forbes-Robertson used sometimes to call somewhere for dinner and Elgar would rag the poor waiter as hard as he could. He loved motoring, so when we were down for the Three Choirs Festival (Beatrice was often playing there) we used to go round for the rehearsal and Elgar would come up and say, 'Come on, let's go off motoring,' and off we'd go with his three dogs in the back. He had a Scottie which

we gave him, a little Cairn, and his adored Marco the spaniel. They all wore black sun-glasses! These three dogs sat on the back seat while he and I were simply flying over the country to get back in time for the concert. He was a dear. When he was broadcasting and he came to take his bow, he'd go up to the microphone and say 'Good-night' to his darling Marco! We were at a party on one of the first times when he came to see us all. My father (who hadn't met Elgar) was talking to someone and he turned and remarked, 'Who's that distinguished-looking general?' 'But that's Elgar!' they said. You couldn't have given dear Elgar a greater compliment. His one wish was not to be thought a musician.

Glazunov was a charming man. He conducted the Double Brahms for May and Beatrice. How rarely it is played and yet it is such a lovely work, especially the slow movement. It's very difficult to get two performers to agree perfectly - you must absolutely live it. It is as one German critic put it: it is two hearts and one beat. I arranged the Bach Double for Beatrice and myself. She played the second violin part on the cello and I played the first. We had great fun. We used to play it at our sixpenny concerts and it was wonderful how beautifully the two tones merged. She played on the top register and it was exactly like a full-toned violin.



*Elgar at 'Mar! Bank', Worcester*

I was Stanford's pupil for composition. He was always full of jokes. I always liked writing my music very much like print. It was Father who had said, 'You must write well. You must write your music as well as words.' When I brought it to Stanford, he said, 'You're wasting an awful lot of time writing these notes. Why don't you scribble like me?'<sup>6</sup>

I love *The Song of the High Hills*. Once we were travelling with Heddle Nash and we were stuck – as usual – at Crewe. We had about two hours to wait and Heddle came up and said, 'Look, I'm going to sing *The Song of the High Hills*. Do you think you could help me? I've never sung this.' So for two hours we went through the score with him, telling him a little bit of what Delius would like. When he sang it he had a wonderful notice.

Delius had told Mother, 'When I am buried, I want to be buried in the South of England.' And that's what we arranged. It was Beatrice and myself who did it. It had gone around that Delius was an atheist and it was said that nobody would want to bury him in a churchyard. We were good friends with our rector, the Rev. Steer, and we told him the whole story. 'Could you let Delius be buried here?' we asked him. 'I will be honoured to do it,' he replied. 'He is a great man and whatever he thought has nothing to do with the legacy he has left us.' The burial was done at night and the ceremony was the next day. The police said there were well over 1000 people in the churchyard. Loudspeakers were set up so that everyone could hear the service. Jelka had wished to be at the funeral but her doctor knew she couldn't; it was impossible. She was far too ill and she was taken to a nursing home. Boulton arranged with the BBC that the whole thing should be recorded.<sup>7</sup> He was wonderful, and he went with the engineers to the nursing home that evening when the recording was played through to Jelka. 'Now I can go to sleep,' she said. 'I have been to Fred's funeral.' That was all arranged by Boulton and I admire him for having done that. After the funeral dear Beecham came to our house where we had refreshments. He was marvellous. That oration, I'll never forget it. I only wish that Delius had a better memorial stone, and he should also have a plaque inside the church.

1. After the First War the Harrisons moved from 51 Cornwall Gardens to an old farmhouse called The Waffrons, near Thames Ditton in Surrey. It was there that Delius began writing his Cello Concerto.
2. May Harrison and Hamilton Harty gave the first London performance of Violin Sonata No 1 at the Aeolian Hall, London on 16 June 1915. (Arthur Catterall had given the first performance in Manchester the previous February.) Hamilton Harty also accompanied Beatrice in the first performance of the Cello Sonata at the Wigmore Hall on 31 October 1918.
3. 12 December 1926, City of Birmingham Orchestra.
4. Beatrice and Margaret performed the Cello Sonata in the United States on tour in 1926, and the following year on tour in Holland. They gave at least one broadcast of this work for the BBC, on 11 January 1934.
5. The occasion was Elgar coaching Beatrice prior to the first recording of the Concerto.
6. Stanford wrote an *Irish Concertino* for violin and cello for the sisters which Margaret and Beatrice first performed in December 1918 at Margaret's début Wigmore Hall recital, accompanied by Hamilton Harty. In May 1919, also in the Wigmore Hall, Beatrice gave the first performance of Stanford's *Ballata and Ballabile* for cello.
7. Enquiries were made to the BBC Sound Archives Office who replied that the recording is not in their library.

# DELIUS AT REST

## BURIAL IN A SURREY CHURCHYARD

### SIR THOMAS BEECHAM'S EULOGY

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LIMPSFIELD, MAY 26

Nearly a year after the death in France of Frederick Delius, the Yorkshire-born composer, his body was committed to-day to a last resting place in the quiet churchyard of Limpsfield, in Surrey. Delius for the greater part of his life was an exile, but he died with the wish that he should be buried in English soil and with surroundings such as have been found for him. The grave, which this afternoon was lined with laurel leaves, is beneath a yew tree of great age, and is near to that of his friend, Mrs. Harrison.

The coffin was brought to Limpsfield from Grez-sur-Loing, near Fontainebleau, yesterday, by Mr. Eric Fenby, the companion to whom the composer dictated much of his music. The sea journey was by way of Boulogne, and from Folkestone the shell was carried by road. Mrs. Delius had left for England on Thursday to be present at the re-burial, but severe illness prevented her attendance to-day. Last night the body was reverently lowered into the tomb prepared for it, and this afternoon the Rector of Limpsfield, the Rev. Charles Steer, performed the last rites of the Church. Before the committal, members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra played in the church some of the music in which Delius expressed his love of the countryside.

#### MUSICIANS' TRIBUTE

The afternoon had all the loveliness of May. There was the perfume of hawthorn in the air, and warm sunshine coloured the turf and flowers of a churchyard typical of the South of England. Hundreds of men and women who have come to know and appreciate the work of Delius had made a pilgrimage to Limpsfield, and those who could not find a place in the church grouped themselves round the grave for the last part of the ceremony. The service in the centuries old church was brief and simple. The rector read passages from the Burial Service, and a Lesson taken from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The congregation joined in the Lord's Prayer, and this was followed by Collects. The orchestra, comprising strings, wood wind, and harp, then played "Summer Night on the River," the serenade from "Hassan," an elegy with violoncello solo, and "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring." Sir Thomas Beecham conducted three of the numbers, and Mr. Paul Beard the elegy.

When the musicians had made their tributes the congregation passed out of the church to the graveside and stood in silence while the rector recited the committal sentences. Crumbled earth was dropped on the coffin, and then Sir Thomas Beecham walked to the head of the grave and spoke of the character of Delius and his place in the future of music. "We are here to-day," he said, "to bid farewell to the mortal remains of Frederick Delius, a great Englishman and a famous man. It was his wish to be buried in the soil of his native country and in a village churchyard such as this. I think it may be said that nowhere in the breadth of this land could a fairer spot be found to satisfy his wish, nor a more auspicious occasion than this beautiful day, at a time of the year that we, his old friends, know was specially dear to him and had kindled, perhaps more than any other time, his inspiration and finest thought."

#### THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND

Sir Thomas Beecham went to to supply an answer to the question why Delius, a wanderer, and almost an exile, had come back in death to the land of his birth. The England we lived in to-day, he said, was by no means the England into which Delius was born some 75 years ago. That England provoked the rage of Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, and Ruskin, who preached against the brutality, inhumanity, and insensibility of an age when the country seemed to be given up to the worship of commercial prosperity and to little else. Delius was born in a part particularly odious to men of critical intelligence, the hard, arid, business North of England, and he grew up a rebel. He strove to escape, and he did escape.

After speaking of the composer's settlement in France, Sir Thomas referred to the revelation of British character which came with the War when this country "turned its back on the idols of the market place and the counting house and embarked on the greatest adventure in idealism the world had ever known." This, he said, was a revelation to Delius, as it was to the entire world, and it caused him to turn inquiringly towards the shores of his native land. In the meantime, also, another strange thing had happened. His music, so redolent of the soil of this country and the finer elements of the national spirit, had come to be loved and understood, and six years ago a great event took place in London which was without parallel in the musical history of Britain. A festival was given of the work of Delius at which he was present, lying paralysed but able to listen, a festival on a scale of achievement not approached before.

This, too, was a revelation to Delius, and on his return to France he asked those in charge of him in the boat, for he could not see anything to place his chair so that his eyes might be directed to England that had given him recognition that he had not obtained anywhere else. "I say farewell to his mortal remains," Sir Thomas added, "in no spirit of sorrow or regret. The most precious part of this man is the immortal part. His spirit is revealed in his work. In whatever sphere that spirit is now, I would like our greetings to pass to let him know we are here not in a spirit of vain regret but rather one of rejoicing that his work is with us and will remain with us for evermore."

[THE TIMES, May 1935. Beatrice Harrison was the cello soloist in the *Elegy*]

# Frederick Delius at Home

By Beatrice Harrison

*[Miss Beatrice Harrison, the famous 'cellist, is well known to listeners for her successful attempts to lure the shy Surrey nightingales to the microphone. In the following article Miss Harrison gives an intimate and colourful picture of a visit she recently made to the home of Frederick Delius, one of the greatest of contemporary English composers, a programme of whose works is to be broadcast from London at 3.30 p.m. on Sunday, January 30.]*

I HAVE just had the privilege and happiness of visiting Mr. Delius and his charming wife in their lovely old French home at Grez-sur-Loing. We found Delius seated in an arm chair, ready to welcome us, and though he is in such delicate health he had insisted on waiting lunch for us, although we were very late. He is the most charming host imaginable, and immediately sent for a bottle of the finest wine from his famous cellar.

Delius bought this little property in 1899. Grez was the place that Robert Louis Stevenson loved so dearly in the 'seventies and he has thus described it: 'It lies out of the forest—a cluster of houses with an old bridge, an old castle in ruins, and a quaint old church.' Delius's house lies in the shadow of the church, with a lovely old garden, with a fish pond and tiny orchard, leading down to the river. In the spring and summer time Delius goes down to the river and sits in a boat in the midst of just such a scene as Corot loved to paint. Even at this time of the year he often goes out twice a day, and sometimes also after tea, the air being so soft and warm. The outside of the house is white with the window-shutters painted a vivid blue-green.

After lunch we went through many passages Delius's beautiful studio where he has composed all his music. It gave me an intense thrill to play his concerto to him in that wonderful atmosphere, and I confess I felt very nervous and excited. Mr. Gerald Moore accompanied me on the piano.

Afterwards my sister Margaret played Delius's violin concerto and he was delighted with her interpretation of the work.

It is a wonderful thing to look at Delius when he is listening to music: his face is lighted up in a state of spiritual rapture, and although he is helpless and partially blind his whole soul shines out of his face like a living lamp. It is extraordinary what odds he fights against

and yet still takes such an interest in life generally. I believe it is his imagination and his love of music that keep him alive.

It was very interesting to hear him talk about broadcasting. He has a fine wireless set, and recently the Amplion Company has presented him with one of their loud speakers, so that he can now hear the best music with ease and delight. Living, as he does, so far away from all music, the value of wireless to him is inestimable.

I have always insisted that Delius's music would be most popular if the public could have a chance of hearing it. On one occasion, when I played his 'cello concerto on a Sunday evening to a popular audience, the enthusiasm was so intense that a second rendering was demanded, but, alas! time did not permit. I like to think now that wireless and the gramophone will do this glorious work of making Delius's music known to millions of listeners.

Some people say that Delius has no humour.

but I know that no one is wittier than he. During my visit we had such fun with him talking over old times and about the wee pup who was born on the day the concerto was begun in our garden in Surrey, where the daffodils and spring flowers were in full blossom and the birds singing.

In conclusion, let me quote what Delius says about music: 'Music is a cry of the Soul. It is a revelation, a thing to be revered.' And again, 'Performances of a great musical work are for us what the rites and festivals of religion were for the ancients—an initiation into the mysteries of the human Soul.'



This interesting photo, which was taken some years ago, shows Beatrice Harrison with Mr. Delius in the beautiful grounds of her house in Surrey.

For Beatrice Harrison

# SONATA

FREDERICK DELIUS  
1910

**Allegro, ma non troppo**

Violoncello

Piano

## DELIUS by Beatrice Harrison

*[The following article appeared in Vol.2 No.37 of Everyman, a weekly magazine on books, drama, music and travel, on 10 October 1929, two days before the first concert of the Delius Festival. Apart from one correction, the text has been reprinted as it appeared there.]*

Delius is able to express through the medium of his music the sight, the sound and even the very scent of Nature perhaps more exquisitely than any other composer. As the colours of a rainbow blend into a perfect whole, so Delius's harmonies and strangely sensitive chords weave themselves into a transcendental reflection of the beauties of Nature.

One realizes what joy Nature is to him when one sees him sitting in a garden as I remember seeing him when he began to compose the lovely Cello Concerto in our garden. It was on a Good Friday, one of the most perfect spring mornings. As he sat in the garden he seemed literally bathed in the golden sunlight among the starry folds of the daffodils, the spreading blue-bells, the laburnums, the primroses, the violets and, above all, the flower that Delius loves so well, the Gloire de Dijon rose, the very earliest to breathe out its perfume. Delius seemed to steep himself in its fragrance. The crystal air was vibrating with the chanting of many birds, the skylark floating upwards to the clouds in an unseen world, the white doves beating their wings through the air, the blackbird, the robin, the thrush, the tiny tits and the chuckling linnets, even the little jenny-wren; all seemed to vie with each other to charm him. Unfortunately, it was too early for my beloved nightingales to come over.

### Dawn and Sunset

Delius can even express the silent working of the dawn, the soft fleecy clouds vanishing into the blue as the sun rises. But perhaps best of all can he describe the after-glow of the sun sinking into the West, leaving a blessing over the world; the stars emerging and then gently fainting away as the moon rises. Such fine shades

To May & Beatrice Harrison  
 in remembrance of the splendid first performance  
 of this work.  
 Frederick Delius

1920

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of tone can he describe that even into his music 'there crept a little noiseless noise among the leaves born of the very sigh that silence heaves.' Surely does he burst his immortal bars and wander into unknown regions in search of his divine harmonies and create melodic shapes from the invisible world. So intangible does his music seem that it is difficult for the ordinary mortal on first hearing it to become attuned and follow his wandering spirit to the borders of his unseen world. Like all the loveliest music it must be heard over and over again. One can never tire of it any more than one can tire of the beauties of Nature. Delius might even be called the naturalist in music.

### My First Meeting With Delius

It was a great thrill the first time I met Delius. My sister May (who is a very fine violinist) and I were playing the Double Brahms Concerto with Sir Thomas Beecham at Manchester, and after the performance a very charming looking man came forward, and when Sir Thomas introduced him we were enchanted to hear that it was Delius in the flesh. I wish I could describe our delight when he said that he thought our performance was superb, so much so that he himself was inspired to write a double concerto and dedicate it to my sister and me. And he did it! Of course we had that marvellous conductor and a splendid orchestra that evening, and we feel we can never thank them enough for helping us to inspire Delius to write his glorious Double. Many critics consider it one of his finest orchestral works.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1914.**

### CONCERTS, &c.

## THE HALLÉ CONCERTS SOCIETY.

FREE TRADE HALL.

EIGHT CONCERT TO-DAY (THURSDAY).

At 7.30 p.m.

Artists:

Solo Violin ..... Miss MAY HARRISON.

Solo Violoncello ..... Miss BEATRICE HARRISON.

Conductor ..... Mr. THOMAS BEECHAM.

### PROGRAMME.

Part I.

Overture—"La Fatale" ..... Liszt

Double Concerto for Violin, Violoncello, and Orchestra (Op. 103) ..... Brahms

Solo Violin ..... Miss MAY HARRISON.

Solo Violoncello ..... Miss BEATRICE HARRISON.

Symphonic Poem—"Thaïs" ..... Balakirev

(First time at these Concerts.)

Part II.

Selection from "Vilca Hinojo and Juliet" ..... Delius

(An opera in 3 acts.)

(First time at these Concerts.)

(a) Valse, Fair and Dance, leading to

(b) Intermezzo (The Walk to "Paradise Garden).

Symphony, No. 3, in C minor (Op. 78) ..... Saint-Saëns

Pianist—Messrs. F. ANGERON, TIERRE and

JOHN WILLS.

Organist ..... Mr. C. H. FROD.

Admission 1/6, 2/6, 3/6, 5/6, 7/6.

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**LONDON, SATURDAY, MAY 29, 1920.**


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WIGMORE HALL.  
**T**ODAY, at 3.  
 MAY, MARGARET, and BEATRICE  
**HARRISON** **HARRISON**  
 RECITAL.  
 Assisted by YORK BOWEN.  
**HARRISON** **HARRISON**

Programme includes:  
 Violoncello Concerto (second performance)—ELGAR.  
 (First time with pianoforte.)  
 Double Concerto (second performance) — DELIUS.  
 (First time with pianoforte.)  
 Prelude, Lento—Minuetto I and II—Gigue —BACH.  
 From Sonata in E major, for Violin Solo.  
 Chappell Grand Pianoforte, 41, Abchurch Lane, E.C. 4, London.  
 IBPS and TILLET, 19, Hanover Square, W. 1. Mayfair 4158.

AN unusually interesting concert was given by the Misses May, Beatrice and Margaret Harrison at the Wigmore Hall on May 29, when second performances were given of the two new concertos—that of Delius for violin and violoncello, and that of Elgar for violoncello alone. One is very glad to have had these two works put through the test of a performance with pianoforte accompaniment, for in both cases the orchestral background is treated with such unusual care that they stood to suffer relatively even more than do most concertos through such a reduction. Both of them, however, came through very well, especially the Delius, which confirms one's first impression of a clearer thematic definition and greater structural cohesion than one usually gets from this composer. In the Elgar one got a deepening conviction of both what is good and what is bad in the work—and there are things here and there that are rank bad. On the whole, one might say that about sixty-five per cent. of it is really good Elgar. The piano score was in the hands of Mr. York Bowen, who was also heard in a group of his own rather superfluous compositions.

[*Athenaeum*, 4 June 1920]

SOME CHAMBER MUSIC.

The opportunities of hearing works like the Elgar Violoncello Concerto in its orchestral form are so few (I think it has only been given once in London) that we are indebted to the Misses Harrison for giving us a second performance with piano, and also of the Delius Double Concerto, which they recently played with orchestra. Miss Beatrice Harrison interpreted the Elgar work fluently, and with warmth, but somehow the work, in spite of its fine moments, does not quite reach our expectations. I heard the orchestral performance, and though it was not a good one, I felt that, well written for the instrument though the work is—it does not merely show off the 'cello's capabilities—and attractive as are parts of it (the tiny slow movement and some of the others), it does not quite "come off" as a concerto. The orchestral writing is unusually subdued, and, partly through poor performance, was quite ineffective on the first hearing, and the work does not lose so much as do concerti from a piano arrangement. But I still cannot quite see what the composer is getting at in part of the last movement; with further hearing, it might become clearer—that is the drawback of rare performances of music such as this, that has more in it than appears on the surface. (I have played through the Concerto in its piano arrangement, with a good 'cellist, some half-dozen times, so am not deciding hastily about it.) The Delius work is interesting, but for a double concerto little use is made of the instruments in contrast.

[*Musical News*, 5 June 1920]

## Beatrice Harrison Is Cello Soloist With Philharmonic

English Artist Presents Com-  
position by Delius for First  
Time Here at 2,217th  
Concert of the Orchestra

Miss Beatrice Harrison, the accom-  
plished English cellist who has already  
been heard here this season in recital,  
appeared last night as soloist at the  
2,217th concert of the Philharmonic  
Society in Carnegie Hall.

Miss Harrison chose as her vehicle  
the cello concerto of her compatriot,  
Frederick Delius, which we believe had  
not been played before in New York.  
The work was begun in Mrs Harrison's  
Surrey garden in the spring of 1931,  
and completed in that year; and to  
Miss Harrison fell the honor of giving  
the music its first public hearing at  
Vienna, in the year of its composition.  
Delius has said that he "wishes the  
music to be regarded as inspired to  
some extent by the thought of the  
spring season, although the elegiac  
mood which tinges some parts of it  
will not escape notice, and may be  
explained as an emotional mood en-  
gendered by the memories that spring  
may awaken."

The texture of the music is contin-  
uous from beginning to end. The form  
is uncommonly free. The mood is in  
effect that of a sustained reverie. There  
is rare beauty in the score at its best.  
Delius is a poet, a sensitive dreamer,  
and he knows how to spin a web of  
rich and iridescent tone. The defect  
of the music is its monotony of mood.  
A twenty-minute reverie is a long one,  
unless the artist who projects it is a  
greater master of those enlivening  
variations of pace and rhythm and  
harmonic color than Delius has shown  
himself to be.

Miss Harrison played the work with  
rapt devotion, with aristocratic fine-  
ness of tone, with deeply poetic com-  
prehension of the style and purport of  
the music. Some moments of technical  
insecurity may possibly have been due  
to nervousness.

The cellist was warmly greeted by a  
distinguished house, which manifested  
pleasure in the rest of the program as  
well—Haydn's Symphony in E flat (the  
"Symphony with the kettledrum role"),  
Stravinsky's youthful "Scherzo Fan-  
tastique," introduced here by the com-  
poser himself in January, 1923, and  
Debussy's captivating tone-pictures of  
the Spanish scene, "Iberia."

## WARM RECEPTION FOR PHILHARMONIC

By GRENA BENNETT.

AN enthusiastic audience  
attended the first Sun-  
day concert of the Philhar-  
monic Society in Carnegie Hall y-  
esterday afternoon began with  
a habit of hand-clapping  
ended with applause  
greeting of a concert  
usually that of a concert  
is reserved for  
yesterday, by  
master was  
ductor Mr.  
his at-  
tention  
in with  
in the

For the  
the orches-  
tration  
ancient Con-  
certo  
Vivaldi, and  
by Rietz. Of  
these was exact  
the three pre-  
viously per-  
formed. The  
old work  
of the  
responses.

That is,  
Tchaikovsky's  
The closing number.

That is,  
Tchaikovsky's  
The closing number.

That is,  
Tchaikovsky's  
The closing number.

Two talented young English  
girls, Beatrice and Margaret Har-  
rison, gave a recital at the Guild  
Theatre last evening. Beatrice, a  
cellist of exceptional ability, re-  
newed the pleasant impression  
made two seasons ago.

The programme consisted of a  
sonata by Handel, three move-  
ments from a suite by Bach,  
sonata by Delius, Hungarian  
sonata for unaccompanied cello  
by Kodaly, some arrangements of  
Irish tunes by Hughes and pieces  
by Nardini and Senalle.

The cellist not only mastered  
the string problems of those num-  
bers heard by the writer, but in-  
vested her reading with deep feel-  
ing and dramatic significance.

Her artistry was matched by the  
performance of the piano parts by  
her sister musician.



[1927 American press reviews. The superimposed design  
is by Horace Taylor.]

Since that was written Delius has composed a most lovely Cello Concerto for me, the one I have already been speaking of, which was begun in the garden. The orchestration is most lovely and subtle. This concerto is the last orchestral work Delius has composed and is characteristic of his later style. It commences full of

virility and joy, continuing with a slow movement 'which for sheer beauty of orchestral sound must surely be unexcelled in the whole range of modern music.' Towards the close of the work an echo of regret seems to foreshadow his approaching blindness. Did he perhaps faintly realize that all that riot of colour he was so enraptured with in the garden would become only a memory? But Delius creates such a world of his own that he has triumphed over his blindness and every physical disability. I have already played the lovely concerto many times and had the joy of bringing it out in Philadelphia with its fine symphony orchestra; Mr Reiner was the guest conductor that night. I also played it with Mr Mengelberg and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. These are perhaps two of the world's finest orchestras.

Delius also did me the honour to compose a very beautiful sonata which I have brought out on the Continent and in America, and I am looking forward to playing it with Mr Howard-Jones at the Delius Festival. Everyone hopes that the composer himself will be able to be present at this Festival.

I think all the privations the great composer went through during the War are the real cause of his tragic illness. Such a sensitive nature as his could not stand the awful horrors of war, and he suffered terribly, waiting in the streets all night, turned from his lovely home at Grez-sur-Loing, and seeing the streets running with blood. The awful carnage almost killed him physically. But nothing can kill his wonderful genius and imagination. Though it is a wonder that all that agonising noise and turmoil did not kill such as he who can make music out of the very silence.



*Another photograph of Frederick and Jelka Delius in the Harrisons' garden (see also p.12), this time with Evelyn Howard-Jones*

### 9.40 Chamber Music by Delius

ELSE SUNDAY (Soprano)  
 ALBERT SAMMONS (Violini)  
 BEATRICE HARRISON (Violoncello)  
 HOWARD JONES (Pianoforte)  
 ALBERT SAMMONS and HOWARD JONES  
 First Sonata (1914)  
 With easy movement, but not quick: Slow  
 --with vigour and animation  
 ELSE SUNDAY  
 The Violet  
 In the Scarglio Garden  
 Cradle Song  
 HOWARD JONES  
 Dance for Harpsichord  
 Five Pianoforte Pieces  
 Mazurka; Waltz (for a little  
 Girl); Waltz; Lullaby for a  
 Modern Baby; Toccata  
 ALBERT SAMMONS and HOW-  
 ARD JONES: Second Sonata  
 (1905-15) (in One Movement)  
 ELSE SUNDAY  
 Four Elizabethan Songs  
 (1915-16)  
 It was a Lover and his Lass  
 (Shakespeare)  
 Spring, the Sweet Spring  
 (Thomas Nash)  
 Daffodils (Robert Herrick)  
 So Sweet is She (Ben Jonson)  
 BEATRICE HARRISON and  
 HOWARD JONES: Sonata  
 (1917) (in one Movement)

BBC broadcast 6 May 1929  
 [Radio Times]

### His House and Garden

I wish I could describe his lovely place at Grez, near Fontainebleau, which once belonged to Robert Louis Stevenson,<sup>1</sup> who has left such a delightful description of the little village that I cannot do better than quote it:

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 antennæ, 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.

The garden behind the house is so interesting and Delius almost lives in it, or in his boat on the river in the summer, and his sweet wife describes to him the different lights and shades of the flowers. He listens to the birds and I am certain he hears glorious music from the invisible air as it wafts around him. He has quite a passion for birds. I once took him a Hartz-röller canary and a Chinese nightingale. The canary was christened Tommy, after Sir Thomas Beecham, as he was really such a fine musician and sang divinely. I have, by the way, great hopes of playing the concerto with Sir Thomas Beecham one day, for he has such a

wonderful vision of Delius's music and takes such infinite pains that any work of Delius that he takes in hand is sure to be a success.<sup>2</sup>

### **A Man of Charm and Sympathy**

Delius has wonderful charm himself, and in spite of all his physical disability he takes a keen interest in everything going on in the busy world. And he is courteous. I remember upon one occasion we were late for lunch; the train was behindhand and Delius, notwithstanding his delicate state of health, insisted on waiting lunch for us, ordering his very best wine to be brought up from the cellar. Just before Mr and Mrs Delius were forced to flee from their house they buried this most excellent old wine under the earth, and, wonderful to relate, the Germans never found it and Delius upon his return had it dug up intact!



*Statuette of Beatrice Harrison by Lady Scott, wife of the Antarctic explorer. First exhibited in March 1921.*

Not only has he charm, but sympathy. I remember the day he began the Concerto my Scotch terrier was born, and we immediately christened him Frederick, after Delius (which we have had to change to Podge as he has got so very stout!). Delius always asks after him with great interest.

### My Visit last May

The last visit I paid to Grez, last May, was a very happy one, for Delius really seemed a little better and Mr Fenby, a clever young musician, was helping him write down the music which Delius dictates to him. I had the joy of playing to him in that wonderful studio where so many of his lovely compositions were written. As I played, Delius listened in the garden. Somehow he seems to belong to the open air. It is not to be wondered at that so many of his works are about gardens.

I cannot end this without mentioning his sweet and lovely wife. I have never met anything more exquisite than her devotion to him and her love for him. Throughout the sad times she has never faltered nor failed him. She is ever at hand bravely cheering him on in his hours of darkness with such real adoration and love.

It will indeed be a joy to see them both at the Festival.

1. Robert Louis Stevenson visited Grez (1875-7) and met his future wife there. But he was not a former owner of Delius's house.
2. Beecham was never to conduct Delius's Cello Concerto (see *Journal* 79, p. 15).

### MR. DELIUS'S NEW CONCERTO:

LONDON, SUNDAY.

The new concerto for violin, violoncello, and orchestra performed yesterday at the Queen's Hall, marks a further development of Mr. Delius's style. The orchestral part is still in the old manner, but the two solo instruments—the violin and the violoncello—add a new character to the music, less ornate perhaps, but infinitely warmer and more poignant. It corrects the one weakness of Mr. Delius's idiom, which, in spite of its very striking individuality and ornate harmonic scheme, was apt at times to appear just a little cold. The concerto retains all the characteristic design of the previous works, but the music has suddenly gathered speed. It does not evolve in an atmosphere of dream but of action.

It would be difficult to say which of the three movements will be the favourite. The concerto runs along without pause from beginning to end, but the three sections are clearly defined. At the end of the second there is a particularly fine cadenza for the two soloists with occasional support from the orchestra. The reception on Saturday was genuinely enthusiastic, and the performance was about as admirable as one could wish to hear. Miss May Harrison (violin) and Miss Beatrice Harrison (cello) appeared to have made the concerto their own, and the *ensemble* was perfect. F. B.

A new work by Mr. Frederick Delius is an event which everyone abreast with modern development looks forward to with anticipation, and the crowded audience on Saturday was undoubtedly due to the first performance of the Bradford composer's new Concerto for Violin, Violoncello, and Orchestra. Like all Mr. Delius's recent work, it displays his ready command of harmonic device. Such delightful harmonies, as unexpected as they are simple, lead into space that one is compelled to marvel at the invention of such a master.

Mr. Delius in this composition, does not employ a large orchestra, and yet his colour effects are captivating and brilliant. The work for the two solo instruments is not merely composed as an exhibition of technical skill by the executants, as the parts for the soloists are so interwoven with that for the orchestra that it is impossible to separate either. Neither of the solo instruments has any showy cadenza to perform, yet each instrument has some effective double stopping and harmonies which only the most proficient of executants can accomplish. The solo instruments were beautifully played by Mrs. May and Miss Beatrice Harrison, who were evidently in sympathy with Mr. Delius's music.

At first hearing of this remarkable work, compels admiration, but all its inherent beauties can only be grasped after repeated hearings. I know of no composition in the whole literature of music to which it can be compared. Its originality in treatment, in melodic invention, and harmonic device is such as to place Mr. Delius among the few British composers who have something to say, and the means wherewith to, express it. It is a work of such importance that I hope Sir Henry Wood will repeat it before the close of his present season of symphony concerts.

the reason we plan to ~~visit~~  
 the concerts. I should have  
 come over to London before  
 you had been but I would  
 is so difficult & avoid a  
 lot of formalities & then  
 it is very difficult to leave  
 So, I can't again. I would  
 like a wonderful success  
 & safe journey  
 with love to you all from  
 us both. I love you

Very sincerely,  
 your affectionate son,  
 Frederick, D. C.

Gretchen - Long  
 (D.P.M.)  
 - Oct 10<sup>th</sup> 1918

My dear Miss Harrison  
 Your kind letter came in  
 the great pleasure & I hasten  
 to reply. I am not going  
 over to America for this  
 coming season but for  
 the next one 1917-18 &  
 there will be a certain number  
 of concerts arranged for me  
 with Choral & Orchestral  
 soloists <sup>probably</sup>  
 some of which I ~~am~~ <sup>am</sup> confident  
 myself that it should be



excellence as to play  
the Concerto all together  
in the States: ~~and~~ your  
further insight arrange this  
for us all - The first  
performance of all, of course,  
in New York rather than  
the large musical centres.  
Acheron might publish  
the Concerto as the Sonata  
has been bought by Beckham  
who is publishing it. will  
for, the Handel to stand  
if your doctor would play,  
it, as too in America.

shall understand as well  
for a cello piece also.  
Let your doctor play  
my Sonata most beautifully  
in London & I will come  
to introduce it to  
America & you find in my  
to see, in both play the  
concerto. you can't find  
you stay over there. I will  
be pleased in the States.  
The season so it will  
be first good for

A letter to Beatrice Harrison from Delius

*For May Harrison*  
**SONATA N<sup>o</sup> 3**  
 for  
**VIOLIN and PIANOFORTE**

**FREDERICK DELIUS**  
(1890)

Phrased and Edited by  
 May Harrison and Eric Fenby

**I**

Slow J. = 78

## THE MUSIC OF DELIUS

### by May Harrison

*[The article which follows is an illustrated talk which Miss Harrison gave on 22 March 1945 to the Royal Musical Association, and which appeared in their Proceedings LXXI. It is reprinted here by kind permission of the RMA. Miss Harrison concluded her programme by playing the Third and Second Sonatas, accompanied by Eric Gritton. In the light of recent knowledge some facts in this article are open to question, especially some details of Delius's ancestry which have not been substantiated. Footnotes have been added to correct some further errors. Another article on Delius by May Harrison, which appeared in the RCM Magazine in 1937, was reprinted in A Delius Companion, edited by Christopher Redwood (Calder, 1976).]*

The subject is such a vast one, and Sir Thomas Beecham has written so perfectly and with such beauty about Delius, that I feel most diffident at speaking, and will only touch on the chamber and instrumental music, and recall some of the many lovely memories which my sisters and I treasure of Delius and his wonderful wife Jelka, whom we knew very intimately for about the last eighteen years of their lives.

To those who love Delius's music it holds a magic so irresistible and a beauty so individual that the sound at times can bring actual pain. The playing of Delius's music is, I consider, an instinct, an improvisation on the spur of the moment, and because of this elusive quality, this intangible something, I maintain that it is practically impossible to teach that music. No composer, I think, depends to such an extent on his interpreters, who can make or mar to such a degree as to change the whole colour and meaning of his work; and no composer suffered more from indifferent playing than he did. Exact intonation is one of the greatest difficulties. I have seen him shudder with agony at bad intonation or insensitive phrasing; and now when I see his works so often set for examinations I feel I must offer up a prayer that Delius may be comforted for the performances that are bound to come forth!



*May Harrison*

We first came to know Delius at Manchester, where my sister Beatrice and I were playing the Double Concerto by Brahms at a Hallé Concert with Sir Thomas Beecham. He came into the artists' room with Mr. Langford, the well-known critic, at the rehearsal. At that time Delius was well and vigorous. He told us that he usually had not much liking for Brahms, but that the Double Concerto had greatly impressed him, and had given him the idea possibly of writing a double concerto also for violin, cello and orchestra, which he did eventually, and gave it to Beatrice and myself.

During that year and the following one we saw a great deal of Delius and his wife, both in London and down in the country, where we had a little house on Ditton Hill, and during the time that Delius was composing the Double Concerto, and later the Cello Concerto, they would come and spend day after day with us. Delius would sit in the garden completely alone, listening, with that amazing look, eyes half closed, and so remote that it was as if the spirit had left his body—just as he always listened to music. It was most arresting. On one other musician's face have I seen the same look on listening to music, and that is on the face of Kreisler.

After those happy days I did not see Delius again for some ten years; the next time was when I went to visit him at Grez from Paris, where I was staying with some friends. In the meantime Delius had become blind and paralysed, and when I again saw him the shock was so great that I could hardly speak; but he was so cheerful and gave me such a wonderful welcome that I soon recovered. He spoke then of some slight sketches he had written down about sixteen years before and said he might possibly do something in the nature of a third violin sonata with them. Anyway, in the following Spring came a telegram from Mrs Delius telling

## 9.20 Sunday Orchestral Concerts

Fifth Season—17

THE B.B.C. ORCHESTRA  
(Section B)

Leader, ARTHUR CATTERALL  
Conductor, ADRIAN BOULT

MAY HARRISON (violin)

LIONEL TERTIS (viola)

### ORCHESTRA

Overture, Froissart.....*Elgar*  
Scherzo.....*Holst*

MAY HARRISON, LIONEL TERTIS, AND  
ORCHESTRA

Double Concerto.....*Delius*  
(Transcribed by LIONEL TERTIS)  
(First Performance)

### ORCHESTRA

Symphony No. 5.....*Bax*  
1. Poco lento, Allegro con fuoco; 2.  
Poco lento; 3. Poco moderato  
--Epilogue: Doppio movimento alla  
breve

(From *Regional*)

BBC broadcast 3 March 1935

[*Radio Times*]

me the exciting news that the Sonata was completed with the help of Eric Fenby, and inviting me to go and stay for a fortnight! I was thrilled! Just about then Philip Heseltine had discovered the long lost score of *Koanga*,<sup>1</sup> so I took it over with me to Grez, to the great relief of Eric Fenby, who told me that he was actually preparing to copy out a score from the parts! I found Delius far better than I had expected, in very good spirits, and quite excited over the Sonata, which had been taken down by Eric Fenby straight through within three weeks, both Delius and he working at it hours every day. That fortnight was, as can be imagined, one of the never-to-be-forgotten times in my life. It was perfect Spring weather, and the garden was one mass of flowers. Delius spoke of them as if he could see them, and during that time he told me many interesting things.

Speaking one day of how cosmopolitan his family was, he told me that his maternal grandfather had been the Crown Prince of Sweden, and his grandmother a beautiful German girl from Hamburg, who with her father was cruising round the coast of Scandinavia in their yacht when the young Prince saw her, fell in love with her and renounced his claim to the throne to marry her. They settled down in Vienna, where their only child was born, who was Delius's mother. She married Julius Delius at the early age of about sixteen or seventeen, and became the mother of fifteen children, of whom Delius was the third. Delius had not much affection for his mother, but a great admiration for his father, who, he said, was an exceedingly musical man, even though he would not allow his son ever to listen to or study music in any way.

The only other member of the family who was really musical was Delius's eldest

brother Ernest, who played the cello, and he, being the naughty boy of the family, was shipped off to Australia<sup>2</sup> at the age of seventeen. One fact which Delius very definitely told me was that he had no Jewish blood; sometimes people had stated to the contrary, and should I ever hear so, I was always to contradict it. Mrs Delius was, of course, partly Jewish, as her mother was of the English branch of the Moscheles family. Delius's father's family was of Dutch origin, and to quote from Sir Thomas Beecham 'had at some time in the sixteenth century changed its patronymic from Delij or Deligh to a latinised form of it, a common enough practice at the time. A member of it was numbered among the Chaplains of Edward VI of England, and others are traceable to Spain, France and Germany. But whatever were the divers elements that united to make up the interesting amalgam of Frederick, anything less Teutonic would be hard to imagine. His earthy solidity and delicate romanticism were English, his uncompromising logic and analytical insight French, and his spiritual roots went deep down to that layer of far Northern culture which, half Icelandic, half Celtic, gave birth centuries ago to the beautiful folk-music of Scotland and Ireland, and in the nineteenth century to the boundless imaginative genius of Ibsen.'<sup>3</sup>

Delius told me much about his life in Florida, where his father bought him a grapefruit<sup>4</sup> farm, and where he seemed to have quite enjoyed the few years he spent there in his early youth: of the luxurious natural beauty of the country and of the exciting times he spent shooting crocodiles at night from a small canoe, with the aid of a small lantern held by a negro. He was very attached to his negro servants, whom he found most faithful and kind, and whose singing he said was quite beautiful and was the only music he heard. His eldest brother, the cellist, suddenly appeared one day from nowhere and stayed about three months. He seems to have painted the whole place red, and did everything he could to annoy and tease Delius. Then he left them as suddenly as he had come. None of the family ever saw or heard of him again until his death, years after, somewhere in Australia, where he had made good and left them all some money.

Norway was undoubtedly Delius's spiritual home, and he told me that Grieg was the greatest and most loved friend he ever had. It was on Grieg's advice, I believe, that Delius went to Leipzig to study after leaving America. But he told me that once he began to study or learn it was finished. He could do nothing: he had to do things his own way or not at all. He never made a piano score, but composed directly on to the full score.

I played the three Violin Sonatas with Eric Fenby over and over again during that fortnight, and found to my great joy that he liked all the *tempi* which I took. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to know that I was working. Whenever I went off to practise he was delighted. For WORK had been the God in his life and I really believe that all the experiences he assimilated, and all those he sought, were merely spiritual food to enable him to reproduce. He lived in France, he told us, because it was the only country where one could be left completely and utterly alone to work. Until Sir Thomas arranged that wonderful Festival in the autumn of 1929 he had always been rather disappointed at musical conditions in England, at the lack of rehearsals and the general want of enthusiasm in the early days; but when he came over for the Festival he was touched to the core by the ovation he received, and (once again to recall Sir Thomas Beecham, in his most beautiful and memorable oration over Delius's grave at the sweet little church of Limpsfield,

Delius dictates: 4.1.1928

My dear May,  
The way Sonnets  
played my  
Clara might absolutely  
by delighted me. You  
are a great artist.

The intonation was  
perfect and the end-  
ing so poetic and  
there was so much  
warmth and depth  
in your playing.  
Dax tho on the

Piano was excellently  
in sympathy.

I listened with the  
greatest interest to  
the Bar Sonnets and  
liked it immensely.  
Unfortunately it had  
away entirely. In  
the middle for quite  
a time.

I thank you for the  
great pleasure you  
gave me.

Your affectionate  
friend  
Frederick Delius

A letter (dictated) to May Harrison from Delius

Surrey) so much did he feel and appreciate the real tribute which England had given him that when they carried him on board the boat to return to his home at Grez, he said: 'Turn me towards England,' so that he should face his own country to the last.

Three months after his death I went to stay with Mrs Delius, who had been ill and was so terribly lonely and worried. She told me that ever since the Festival, and at any rate repeatedly during the last year of his life, Delius had expressed a very strong wish to be buried in England, not in his native Yorkshire, where it was too cold and bleak, but somewhere in the South, and she was quite nonplussed to know where it could be. I suggested Limpsfield, which was our own little church and very closely bound up with all we loved, and which Sir Thomas later spoke of as 'this fairest spot.' Mrs Delius was delighted at the idea, which seemed to lift a load off her mind; and so it came to pass that those two – she had loved him with a selfless devotion and sacrifice so astonishingly beautiful – were buried in the same grave within four days of each other.

Of Delius's music nothing can to me surpass in beauty and poignancy the end of his *Village Romeo and Juliet*, or the beginning of *Sea Drift*. His chamber music is a mere drop in the ocean, so to speak, for he always thought in terms of the orchestra. He gave us the first copy made of his String Quartet, but to my mind there has never yet been a perfect performance of that work. The Cello Sonata written for my sister Beatrice he was very fond of, and of his three Violin Sonatas he told me that he thought on the whole he liked the first one the best, though he loved the little third, and at times thought it his favourite. The second one he liked the least, though I suppose it is the most popular. This was the last work he himself ever wrote down. Sonata No I was my first introduction to the music of Delius. It had been originally composed many years before in the old days in Paris, when Delius first showed it to Rivarde, who I believe gave a private performance of it.<sup>5</sup> Rivarde told me that Delius in his youth was a very striking figure, and 'qu'il avait un air de grand seigneur.' He re-wrote that Sonata again, not very long before we knew him, and Hamilton Harty and I gave the first performance of it in London in manuscript. Hamilton Harty was wonderful and his quick understanding of that music was marvellous. He spent hours correcting and editing the piano part and I did the same to the fiddle part. Delius was simply delighted, and after the concert said he would take it straight off to his publishers the next day; but for some unknown reason both parts completely vanished and the wrong ones were published – hence all the mistakes in the only existing publication.

The little Third Sonata is more in the nature of a poetic utterance in sound, especially the last movement, where, as so often happens with Delius, he seems to look back at what has been with a longing to recapture some beauty that has gone, like the fading light of the setting sun.

1. But see Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, pp.95-6.
2. New Zealand, not Australia.
3. *A Mingled Chime*, p.72, but see also Beecham *Frederick Delius*, p.15 (this biography had not been written at the time of May Harrison's talk)
4. Oranges.
5. The work played c.1893 by Rivarde was the Sonata in B (1892), not Sonata No 1 (1905-14). See Carley *Delius – the Paris Years*, p.33 and *Delius: a life in letters*, p.127. (Rivarde was Margaret Harrison's professor of violin at the RCM.)

# THE CELLO AND THE NIGHTINGALES

**The autobiography of Beatrice Harrison**

[with acknowledgement to John Murray (Publishers) Ltd.]

*Beatrice Harrison wrote her autobiography shortly before her death in 1965. Fragmentary in places, it has now been skilfully edited for publication by Patricia Cleveland-Peck with the inclusion of some diary extracts, letters and other valuable linking material. Beatrice's informal but informative narrative gives a fascinating insight into an extraordinarily gifted family and its utter devotion to music. There are accounts of her many tours of Europe, Russia and America in the early years of this century, and her story also includes such amusing incidents as being presented with two alligators, and exposing German spies on a war-time sea-voyage home (after narrowly missing sailing on the ill-fated Lusitania). But of greater interest is her contact with such figures as Nikisch, Glazunov, Melba, Paderewski, Kodaly, Elgar, and Delius whose friendship and the musical fruit it bore are affectionately described in this entertaining book.*

*With 176 pages and 24 photographs, a discography, and a foreword by Julian Lloyd Webber, it is published at £10.95 by John Murray, by whose kind permission the following extract appears. This is taken from an article 'From the Performer's Point of View' which Beatrice wrote for the August 1927 issue of the Music Bulletin and which also appears in this book.*

Delius makes so manifest in his music the richness, fullness and loveliness of Nature, that the player is consumed with the desire to respond to the emotion. This love and almost passion for nature, this miraculous power and understanding of her and perfect sympathy with her, is greatly intensified in this Concerto. In the opening chords one feels the herald of Spring, which gives that intense thrill and joy that no other season of the year can give, when the sun vibrates through the earth and the sky has that radiant clearness that makes one's very heart leap for joy, and the whole earth seems full of passionate blossoming. After this comes a simple overflowing melody which fills one with heartsease. The song of the bird pervades the whole atmosphere of the work, sometimes full of the joy of spring, sometimes, it would seem, of regret for a past which can never return. For again that strange mystic shadow creeps into the music which is so true to nature, as in all spring-joy there is a foreshadowing of the autumn and its dying beauty and fading leaves. There is in all Delius's music that spiritual emotion which the performer must feel, and which has been well expressed in the following lines:

'. . . that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy  
We see into the life of things.'





Certainly this work requires much time, thought and contemplation; as with all great art, its beauties are only reached by intense love and patience. The honour and glory is attained when the artist can convey the message that Delius speaks throughout the work.

In playing the Concerto the soloist has to realise that his part does not predominate but should weave its way through the exquisite harmonies of the orchestra, almost like a beautiful river passing through a lovely landscape ever flowing on, sometimes clear and sometimes in shadow, but ever conscious of the rhythm of the work which seems in the end to vibrate into eternity. The artist's conception of this Concerto must be an emotional one. Joy and sadness are so intermingled and the moods vary so exquisitely that it is only by understanding these transcending beauties that Delius's music can be interpreted. So mysteriously and so delicately are the harmonies interwoven that the ear must be attuned to the most sensitive degree to catch their mystic beauties. The artist must be inspired by a wealth of musical imagination to be able to interpret this music. It would seem almost impossible to describe this wonderful work adequately: for me it has been one of the greatest joys to strive to interpret it and I still hope one day to come a little nearer to the ideal.

## THE HARRISON SISTERS – A BRIEF REMINISCENCE

by Frederick Arnold

I went as a music student to the University and the Midland Institute School of Music in the twenties, when Birmingham and Bantock were so inextricably entwined as to be almost synonymous. It was customary for the University Music Society at that time to have a performing musician as President, as well as a student chairman. At this formative period of my musical career it so happened that the President was Beatrice Harrison, and I have a vivid recollection of her inaugural recital when I was introduced to her (as one of a handful in the Music Honours School) and I remember her comments about the auditorium. I had expected these to be adverse, for the Medical Theatre in the Edmund Street buildings was bare and functional. To my surprise she was most complimentary, and expressed a liking for being at the bottom with the audience piled up in tiers around her.

On that occasion she did play Delius as I had assumed. (The appearance of British music and the ‘performing President’ were alike, I am sure, Bantock inspirations.) The programme, however, was mainly eighteenth century and I remember sonatas by Handel and Sammartini. When I left Birmingham I was in the North West for several years, and then went to Hull as organist of the Queen’s Hall which was then (in the thirties) the home of the fortnightly Popular Celebrity Concerts. The hall was very large, seating over three thousand, and in order to ensure correct seating audiences had to be in their places far in advance of the starting time. It was arranged that I should give an organ recital during this lengthy waiting time, and also provide organ accompaniments for these celebrities who might need them, to say nothing of being a ministering angel in the green room.

I looked forward with excitement to the appearance of Beatrice Harrison, with her sister Margaret, especially as a corpus of music by Delius was to be included in the programme. I was unable to meet them at the outset as I had barely scrambled off the organ stool when they had made their entrance, and as an aspirant meeting with the great, preferred that they should make the first move. I was put at ease by an incident which had its humorous side. The exit from the green room was level with the top tier of the orchestra, and a long and awkward staircase had to be negotiated in order to reach the stage. A young man seated on the top deck, observing doubtless the fullness of Beatrice’s gown – and the cello – said, ‘Could I carry your cello for you, Miss Harrison?’ and she replied, ‘You are very kind, but I really wouldn’t dare to let you!’ This was said with a twinkle, no doubt engendered by her vision of a fall and her precious instrument’s conversion to matchwood!

In addition to playing splendidly the piano accompaniments for her sister, Margaret Harrison played solo violin (and, I think, viola) with accompaniments from Beatrice, who, in the quiet of the green room and with a wry smile, said that she did not profess to be a pianist. At the end of the recital the ovation was rapturous and the encore inevitable. I whispered, ‘Will you play the *Hassan* Serenade?’ There was a silence which had more meaning than words, followed by

‘What! More Delius!’ and then she turned around and said, ‘Ah! but I know you. I met you in that lovely room in Birmingham which is like the Royal Institute in London. As it is for you, I will certainly play the Serenade.’ An impressionable fellow, I floated on my pink cloud at being remembered after a lapse of years, to say nothing of the striking looks of both sisters, Beatrice with her violet eyes and dark red hair, and Margaret a tall brunette, with whom I conversed about music in general, and that of Delius in particular, when the audience at last dispersed.

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## RECORD AND BOOK REVIEWS

FREDERICK DELIUS: *The Song of the High Hills*, Maryetta and Vernon Midgley, Ambrosian Singers; *Twilight Fancies*, *Wine Roses*, *The Bird's Story*, *Let Springtime come*, *Il pleure dans mon coeur*, *Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit*, *La lune blanche*, *To Daffodils* (orch. Fenby), *I-Brasil*, Felicity Lott, Sarah Walker, Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Eric Fenby. Recorded under the auspices of the Delius Trust. Unicorn-Kanchana DKP 9029 LP, cassette and CD.

It is not often that a performance or recording so fundamentally challenges one's conception of a work as to force a radical rethinking on the listener's part. But that is just what this new recording does. *The Song of the High Hills* is something of a problem work in the Delius canon. Its single-movement span is structurally nowhere near as polished as, say, *Sea Drift*, and a poor performance can make its weaknesses only too apparent. Yet it contains moments that equal Delius at his most inspired, and a fine performance – such as the revelatory one offered here – can cast a spell that is not easily shaken off.

Anyone who has grown up with the Beecham recording will on first hearing find the tempi here surprisingly slow. But just wait until the opening measure slackens at about figure 9 or even more markedly just before 18: the work then takes on a wholly new perspective and this recording comes into its own. At this point the score is headed ‘The wide far distance – The great solitude’ and Delius himself had written in a brief note that appeared in the programme for the work's first performance: ‘I have tried to express the joy and exhilaration one feels in the mountains, and also the loneliness and melancholy of the high solitudes, and the grandeur of the wide, far distances.’ It is these very qualities that Fenby captures and conveys so magnificently. Beecham's is a more vigorous reading, a climber's commentary as it were, befitting one who had himself walked the Norwegian heights with Delius (and by all accounts found the going tough!). By contrast Fenby, in inspired mood, stands back in philosophical contemplation, opening up the panorama with all its grandeur in a manner that quite takes one's breath away with his feeling for space. ‘The human voices represent Man in Nature – an episode which becomes fainter and then disappears altogether,’ the composer's note concluded, and Fenby achieves astonishing pianissimos which give the wordless chorus a truly ethereal quality. He is matched at every turn by a recording of demonstration quality, of great clarity, with a wide dynamic range,

and (on LP) excellently pressed. The big choral passage with its unaccompanied entry, particularly impressive on CD, becomes an awe-inspiring moment that one is unlikely to forget. (The mixed chorus and the two soloists are cleverly differentiated by having the former group sing closed to the soloists' open vowel sounds.)

The remainder of the record breaks fresh ground with nine orchestral Delius songs, though these are not quite all first recordings as the sleeve claims since Beecham recorded *Twilight Fancies* and *I-Brasil*. However, totally new is an orchestration of *To Daffodils* made by Eric Fenby at the request of Sarah Walker, a beautiful arrangement which she sings splendidly. All are well performed, with one small reservation about the tempo adopted for *I-Brasil* which seems marginally too slow to allow the Scotch snap to have full effect. It is good to have the Verlaine songs amongst this selection (the closing phrase of *Il pleure* lingers like an echo from *Margot*), and there is a pleasant surprise in *The Bird's Story* which catches Delius in untypically extrovert mood. The Scandinavian songs have been, as Grainger would say, 'Englished', and an insert provides all the texts. With nearly all the gaps in the Delius catalogue now satisfactorily filled, perhaps we may hope for further recordings of orchestral songs, ideally with these artists.

**BEECHAM CONDUCTS DELIUS:** *Over the Hills and Far Away, Sleigh Ride, Irmelin Prelude, Dance Rhapsody No 2, Summer Evening; Brigg Fair, On hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring, Summer Night on the River, A Song before Sunrise, Marche-Caprice; Florida Suite; Songs of Sunset, Intermezzo from 'Fennimore and Gerda'*. John Cameron, Maureen Forrester, Beecham Choral Society, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Sir Thomas Beecham. HMV *Greensleeve* 2 LP set EM 29 0323 3 or 2 cassettes EM 29 0323 5.

The release in February 1984 of *Sir Thomas Beecham conducts Delius* in the HMV 'Portrait of the Artist' double-play cassette series was especially welcome. Retailing at up to £6.49, not only did it preserve the classic Beecham readings but – a strong feature of this series – it broke away from the side-length restrictions of the LP. Too rarely it seems have manufacturers recognised the full potential of the cassette format. Why, for instance, should any multi-movement work break halfway on cassette as is only too usual in its LP counterpart? The rrp of this issue has now come down to 'around £4' (even lower in some discount shops, with the companion cassette *Sir Charles Groves conducts Delius* also available at this lower price).

However, the attractions of that release have been more than matched by the new HMV *Greensleeve* set *Beecham conducts Delius*, on two LPs or cassettes in the 'English Heritage Series'. Although the lay-out of the two cassettes here follows that of the LPs, the side-lengths are of between 35 and 39 minutes' duration, with *Florida* comfortably accommodated onto one side. This new set for the first time gathers together all Beecham's stereo Delius recordings, adding *Over the Hills and Far Away, Dance Rhapsody No 2* and – a real bonus – *Songs of Sunset* to the works duplicated on the 'Portrait of the Artist' cassette (which has no single LP or album equivalent).

All these works were recorded in the space of about five months, between 31 October 1956 and 2 April 1957 (Beecham's last recordings for the gramophone were made in the first week of December 1959). *Brigg Fair* curiously enough encompasses the first and last of these Delius sessions, which may account for the noticeable change in ambience at figure 20 where a different 'take' is used.

If anyone wonders why the name of Beecham is invariably invoked whenever the question of Delius performance arises, then this set quite plainly provides the answers. Listen, for example, to the *Lento e molto tranquillo* section of *Brigg Fair* from figure 15; the pacing, the orchestral balance and the phrasing all combine with a charm, elegance and beauty of tone that are unmatched. Short pieces like *Summer Evening* and in particular *Sleigh Ride* are brought off to perfection, while with *The First Cuckoo* Beecham might well have had in mind de la Mare's injunction to 'Look thy last on all things lovely, every hour' for in his hands this cuckoo becomes not the first of many but the last, with all the poignancy of an experience never to be repeated. On a much larger scale *Florida*, which by any standards is a remarkably assured work when compared with what else Delius was writing at the time, here receives a glowing performance and recording that is no less remarkable. In the first movement Beecham makes the three cuts totalling 27 bars that are marked in his edition of the score, none of which gives any real cause for regret (though we lose one repeated-note bird-call figure that appears nowhere else; Sir Charles Groves restored the cuts in his 1973 broadcast as apparently did Donald Hunt at last year's Three Choirs Festival). Two small details: in 'Sunset' four bars after figure 8 the percussion of the second bar is repeated (though not marked thus in the score), and for the first note of the oboes' entry a bar before figure 12 Beecham keeps to the printed B whereas Sir Charles had his oboes play A, perhaps in agreement with the first violins.

Beecham's last Delius recordings were (apart from tidying up *Brigg Fair*) *Over the Hills and Far Away* and *Songs of Sunset*. According to Michael Gray's Beecham discography, *Songs of Sunset* was taken in a single day. Two previous attempts, in 1934 and 1946, were both left incomplete, and even this final version had not been approved for release by Sir Thomas at the time of his death. Issued initially in mono only, the stereo version did not appear until 1980, on Concert Classics SXLP 30440, LP and cassette. This 1957 recording provides further evidence of Beecham always rethinking and reshaping his Delius, for at the work's heart, in 'Exceeding Sorrow', we find at 'Be no word spoken' he has the contralto sing the solo line as printed, unlike his two previous attempts in which the soloist for five bars followed the first violins. Maureen Forrester has a lovely voice and may be preferable to Nancy Evans (in 1946), but this last version, though a good one, does not have the white heat of the Leeds 1934 sessions which one hopes will some day appear on disc, together with an incomparable *Arabesque* of similar vintage.

The sound quality throughout this set is excellent, especially on cassette, the bass rather light by today's standards, but with a splendid bloom on the strings. These are not absolutely faultless performances for that curious flute error about two-thirds the way through *Over the Hills* will persist, and however many times one plays *Briggs Fair* the bass drum will still come in fractionally late towards the end. Yet none of this really matters: one would forgive ten times as many slips in

modern recordings if they had but an ounce of the style and character of these glorious performances. Out of all the currently available Delius recordings, this set and 'The Fenby Legacy' album must surely form the basis of any Delius collection. Put quite simply, the performances here are unlikely to be surpassed. Even if you already possess older copies of these performances, go out and buy this new set, you will not regret it. Or wait and hope for the CD.

DELIUS: *Irmelin*. Eilene Hannan, Michael Rippon, John Mitchinson, Brian Rayner Cook, BBC Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra, Norman Del Mar. World première recording of the performance broadcast on 18 December 1984 on BBC Radio 3. Records produced in association with the Delius Trust. BBC Artium 3002 (3 LP boxed set).

On the strength of its mediaeval setting and its array of castles, knights, a king, prince and princess, Grainger might well have classified the composer of *Irmelin* as a Pre-Rafaelite,\* understanding the term as he did to denote 'art which takes a conscious charm from what is archaic, an art in which knights or heroes are always present'. Charm is certainly present in abundance, which may help explain Beecham's love affair with this opera, much of which he found to 'exude charm and allurements' and on which he lavished considerable time and money.

Like the *Florida Suite*, *Irmelin* has an appealing freshness and innocence (with a touch of naivety) that frees it from the *angst* that informs Delius's finest scores. Indeed, it may have been by only a matter of a few years (in respect of the date of composition) that the hero and heroine, Nils and Irmelin, escape the fate of their counterparts in Delius's later operas. Sali, in *A Village Romeo*, was not quite the Hugh the Drover type that Nils turns out to be.

As Robert Threlfall commented in his note for *The Magic Fountain* record set (Artium 2001), that opera, Delius's second, is 'a work of far greater maturity than its predecessor [*Irmelin*] musically, structurally and dramatically'. Certainly the dramatic element in *Irmelin* is negligible, and the lack of any real action must present formidable problems for any attempts to stage the work. Even Thomas Round, Beecham's Nils in 1953, remembers it as a very static opera.

But *Irmelin* is by no means a work to be lightly dismissed. If the vocal lines are often undistinguished (Nils seems to come off worst), as is usually the case with Delius it is in the orchestra that the interest chiefly lies. The orchestra is the work's redeeming feature, especially the magical writing for horns (that makes one think ahead to *A Village Romeo and Juliet*). The best music is found in the last two acts, particularly in response to such nature scenes as a swampy thicket, a mountainous and rocky country covered in woods seen in the early morning, or a garden with a stream flowing down to the woods. These passages alone are sufficient to recommend this set and Norman Del Mar coaxes from the BBC Concert Orchestra some playing that is in the true Beecham tradition.

Eilene Hannan is an expressive Irmelin. Her brief but touching aria in Act Three just before Nils's entry is one of the high-spots. (But why is she constantly referred to as *Ermelin*?) Of the other soloists only John Mitchinson as Nils is less

than ideally cast. His part surely calls for a much younger voice. Although the pressings are not immaculate, the recording is good without being outstanding, with a slightly restricted orchestral spread. But this need not in any way detract from one's enjoyment. *Irmelin* might well be one of those operas that are better suited to the gramophone than to the stage. It may not make the emotional demands of the later Delius operas but it is after all in effect only a fairy story with the traditional happy ending. It is the music that matters, and for that alone one is profoundly grateful to have *Irmelin* at last available on records.

\* Grainger's spelling

DELIUS: *Margot la Rouge*. Orchestration realised by Eric Fenby. Lois McDonall, Kenneth Woollam, Malcolm Donnelly, Ludmilla Andrew, BBC Concert Orchestra, Normal Del Mar. Sung in French. Records from the original recording for Radio 3 on 9 October 1981, produced in association with the Delius Trust. BBC Artium REGL 458.

The best way to approach *Margot la Rouge* is probably by first forgetting that the *Idyll* ever existed! There is little profit in recognising those parts that were later reworked into that exquisite score. If *Margot* is to be allowed a chance it must be approached on its own, as a whole, for what it is. We should forget, too, the circumstances of its composition. Having said that, there is a strong case to be made out for *Margot*, of all the Delius operas, standing the best chance of being commercially viable and attracting performances.

There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, lasting approximately forty minutes, it offers itself as an admirable half to a double-bill (as was convincingly demonstrated at Camden last year). Secondly, the music throughout is on a generally high level (even if much of it was later 'borrowed' for the *Idyll*) and Delius surely did not surpass the vocal writing to be found in *Margot* when he is pitting one voice against another. And by no means the least important consideration, at its simpler level it presents none of the staging problems encountered in the other operas. We need have no qualms about the plot: it is no better, no worse, than dozens of other operas.

Hearing it 'cold' on record only reinforces one's views as to its effectiveness. Seeing it on stage confirms them. With a strong cast of singers, Norman Del Mar argues the musical case as persuasively as anyone could, and this episode of Parisian café night-life unfolds in one continuous span with a sense of purpose and inevitability that is both musically and dramatically satisfying. This BBC performance, sung in French, used the Fenby realisation before the original score turned up, but such was the skill with which this version was prepared and the result so thoroughly idiomatic, that what differences there may be are not going to alter one's appreciation of the opera (although a comparison of the two will greatly increase our admiration of the transcriber).

The recording is excellent, but again one has to complain at the quality of the pressings which have been below standard on inspected copies of all three Delius operas on BBC records. The sleeve carries a note on the work by Eric Fenby and an English translation made by Pamela Stirling and Felix Aprahamian from the original French libretto, which is itself also included on a separate insert.

BRITISH OPERA: excerpts from Holst's *Sita* (first performance), Stanford's *Much Ado about Nothing*, Delius's *Irmelin*, Naylor's *Angelus*, Ethel Smyth's *The Boatswain's Mate*, with works by MacCunn, d'Erlanger, Corder, Boughton, Goring Thomas and Cowen. Soloists and Orchestra of Opera Viva, Leslie Head. Recorded at a public performance in St John's, Smith Square, London on 12 February 1983. OV 101/2. Limited edition from Opera Viva, 76 Tongdean Lane, Brighton, Sussex. £11.99 p.&p. free UK only, \$22 USA & Europe.

In 1983 Lewis Foreman devised for Opera Viva an interesting concert survey of British Opera including arias and excerpts from works written between 1876 and 1914. This two-record set contains live recordings of highlights from that concert. The rarity (though all are to some extent rarities) is the closing scene from Act 3 of Holst's *Sita* in a version edited by Colin Matthews. At 22 minutes it is the longest of the excerpts, a fascinating example of the influences and youthful ambitions a composer has to struggle with on the path to maturity.

The excerpt from the closing scene of *Irmelin* begins a bar before figure 850 and plays to the end. The final duet (a prototype of the *Village Romeo* duet) receives a passionate performance from Janine Osborne (in splendid voice) and David Skewes, even if their impetuosity at one stage puts them half a bar ahead of the orchestra. They are given very able support by Leslie Head, and it is the greatest credit to him and Opera Viva that their performance compares favourably with the one in the complete set on BBC Artium. The tempi here are more spacious and leisurely than Del Mar's but Leslie Head judges them to perfection. The recording, made with a single Calrec Soundfield stereo microphone, has excellent presence and one would hardly be aware that it was made at a public performance were it not for the applause at the end of each extract.

Anyone wanting to find out what operatic company Delius was keeping in the period up to the First War would do well to investigate this set. Not all the excerpts are up to the level of *Irmelin* but there are a few pleasant surprises. The performances throughout are good.

DELIUS *Cello Concerto*, HOLST *Invocation\**, VAUGHAN WILLIAMS *Fantasia on Sussex Folk Tunes\**. Julian Lloyd Webber, Philharmonia Orchestra, Vernon Handley. \*World première recordings. RCA RS 9010, cassette RSK 9010.

It seems appropriate in this special Harrison issue to include a recording that has hitherto escaped a full review in these pages, of the Delius Cello Concerto which was written for Beatrice Harrison at her request. The soloist on this record, Julian Lloyd Webber, has made no secret of his affection for this work, and in recent years he, more than any other soloist, has championed it. He made his Prom début with the Concerto in 1980, and he first played it in a 1973 broadcast with the conductor on this record.

It is by no means an easy work to bring off, containing as it does so much slow music without contrasting faster sections. Eric Fenby, in an informative sleeve note, remarks on the unusual shape of the Concerto and warns of the problems that can result if the Allegramente passage in the latter half of the work is taken



too slowly, unlike the impassioned entry that Delius felt it to be. Both Julian Lloyd Webber and Jacqueline du Pré (in the only other record of this work) instead draw out the lyrical quality of that passage, and one wonders if any soloist has brought to it the sweep and increase of momentum in quite the way that Barjansky is said to have played it. (Barjansky gave the work's première in Vienna in 1923.)

Both records offer outstanding performances and one's preference may ultimately depend on the degree of romanticism one looks for in the reading. The orchestral accompaniment on the new RCA disc under Handley is tidier but it doesn't *smile*, if one may use that term, as Sargent's does. That is partly due to the recording. The RCA has the benefit of modern digital techniques but the result, although well balanced and remarkably clear, is not as mellow as the HMV (ASD644, reissued on ASD2764) where, despite its age, the cello tone is warmer. On RCA Lloyd Webber's phrasing is tauter and Handley correspondingly more tight-reined whereas du Pré and Sargent seem overall more relaxed without being any slower. Lloyd Webber projects a firmer line while du Pré's reading frequently has a becoming fragility which makes it the more romantic.

But both are such fine interpretations that ideally one would wish to possess both, and this new issue is greatly to be welcomed. It may have some claim to being more authentic, for although both record sleeves state that Herbert Withers's edition of the solo part is used, Sargent apparently made some amendments of his own for du Pré's recording. Lloyd Webber's record furthermore has the attraction of the Holst discovery which is a valuable addition to the cello repertoire. The Vaughan Williams *Fantasia* is not on the same level.

S.F.S.L.

[First recordings of Delius's Suite for violin and orchestra and *Legende* in its orchestral version, together with the Violin Concerto, with the late Ralph Holmes and the RPO conducted by Vernon Handley, have been issued by Unicorn-Kanchana on record DKP9040, cassette and CD. It is hoped to review this release in the next issue of the *Journal*.]

***Sensibility and English Song: Critical studies of the early twentieth century*** by Stephen Banfield. 619 pp. in two volumes. Cambridge University Press. Vol.1 £27.50, Vol.2 £25.

Although the subtitle clearly implies that this is not intended *per se* as a comprehensive study of English song, nevertheless its scope, depth of perception and thoroughness make it the nearest to that goal any writer has yet achieved on this vast subject. It is a selective study, but the very nature of its selectivity has permitted a depth into certain aspects that would otherwise hardly have been possible in the allotted space.

Stephen Banfield unfolds the history of English song, starting with the dominance of the royalty ballad at the turn of the century, and following the growth of the art-song to its inter-war peak and subsequent decline. This union of

composer and the usually unknowing partner of poet is a marriage whose critical success would seem to depend on the sensibility of the more active partner, 'sensibility' being understood as a 'capacity for refined emotion', and it is by the degree of refinement brought to bear that Dr Banfield has assessed the songs.

With an impressive grasp of his subject, he writes most persuasively and informatively, where necessary helpfully sketching in the biographical background of the composers who are mostly grouped according to period, but there are whole chapters devoted to Ivor Gurney and Finzi's Hardy settings, a good one on the First War and its 'lost composers', and a thorough evaluation of the setters of Housman.

One of the most stimulating aspects of this study is the way it persistently urges one to rehear or discover the songs under discussion. Amongst a personal pile close at hand while reading these volumes was a copy of John Ireland's first Housman setting, *The heart's desire*, signed and dated 'C.W.Orr 1.7.19', a song that Orr is quoted as finding 'quite haunting' and which he knew (from Elwes's singing) and possessed a couple of years before making his own first Housman setting, a reminder if needed that composers don't work in complete isolation. Did Ireland incur the wrath of Housman with that song, as Vaughan Williams did, for having 'mutilated' his verses by the omission of two stanzas from 'March'? One wonders if Masfield was as touchy, and how that single word 'go' became almost universally accepted in the much anthologised 'Sea-Fever' after Ireland had set it. (Even the 1926 *Collected* edition seems undecided on this issue by inserting the word into the first verse only but omitting it from the index of first lines!)

Of much practical value are an excellent bibliography and the Song Lists which detail the output of 54 composers, totalling about 5310 songs. A number of limitations have necessarily been imposed here: for composers born after 1900 there is a post-war cut-off, and songs to non-English texts are omitted (considerably reducing Delius's listing). Equally valuable is the index in which are also entered by title or first line all the songs in the Lists as well as a number by composers not represented there but referred to in the text. Using this index it is possible, for example, to discover quickly nine composers who set Whitman for the solo voice, 48 who set Housman, and three other composers besides Delius who set Herrick's 'To Daffodils' (not including Quilter's and Moeran's part-songs which lie outside the scope of this study). Delius's contribution to English song cannot be accounted a highly significant one; probably of greater relevance is the harmonic influence he had on a number of composers like Quilter, Warlock, Moeran and Orr.

To end this review, unconventionally, with two off-beat questions: which English composer of song took an interest in endangered species of apple tree and possessed about 400 different variations in his own orchard; and which composer friend of Holst wrote over 500 songs (all dutifully listed in Volume Two) and, amongst many novels, one entitled *The Enigma Mystery* with a murder taking place during the finale of Elgar's *Enigma Variations* (one assumes it was one of the characters and not the music being murdered)? The answers are to be found in Stephen Banfield's splendid volumes which are thoroughly recommended to anyone interested in song, whether as listener or performer.

## OBITUARY: ESTELLE PALMLEY



There can be few members of long standing who have not been deeply saddened by the news of Estelle Palmley's death in May. In recent years poor health had forced her to withdraw from Society activities, but who can forget her warmth, enthusiasm, drive and devotion when, as Honorary Secretary, she seemed almost single-handed to carry the Society along? Indeed, it was rightly suggested, during spoken tributes to her at our recent AGM in Cambridge, that without her years of loyalty the Society would not be flourishing as it is today. Estelle will always occupy a very dear place in our affections. How many new members in the Holborn days did she put at their ease and make welcome? At each of those meetings, with that rare gift she possessed of remembering names and faces, she was always looking out for recently joined members and she would go out of her way to greet them, never leaving them on their own but making them feel at home and introducing them to others. This warm friendliness and enthusiasm were consolidated in her voluminous correspondence.

The printed word can at times seem so hopelessly inadequate, leave so much unsaid. But there could be no finer tribute to Estelle than the spontaneous and unsolicited expressions of members' feelings in the following letters which may stand as representative of our collective sense of loss.

'No news I've received during the last few years has saddened me quite so much as the brief announcement in the last issue of the *Journal* of Estelle Palmley's death.

To say that she was a remarkable lady sounds trite but it is, nonetheless, true. I believe that the Society owes her an enormous debt of gratitude for the sterling work she put in as Secretary. It is no exaggeration to say most of the success of the Society could be attributed to her efforts.

My first encounter with her was at my first AGM, held at the YMCA in Great Russell Street, which I attended with my (then) young son. Estelle came over and spoke to us, new members, and gave us cups of tea. She was bubbling over with kindness and her enthusiasm for members to feel at home and welcome. Equally so was her deep love and affection for Delius and his music. She was no musical heavyweight or technician, but she gave second to no-one in her devotion to the cause so dear and close to her heart.

This week I've been rummaging in my loft, looking at old letters. Inevitably there were many from Estelle (what a splendid correspondent she was!) and it brought home to me, and I know this will be echoed by all members and Delians who knew her, what a void she has left. It is one that, in my humble view, we will never fill.'

[Roy Price, Northampton]

'I was very shocked to read in the April *Journal* of the death of Estelle Palmley. In the early days of the Society, when I first joined, Estelle was a great help to this expatriate and no request for assistance went unanswered. We maintained a lively correspondence through the years and we met occasionally during my infrequent UK visits. Her cheerfulness and interest in many subjects was always apparent.

There seemed to be a very marked change after her last hospital stay but I never realised how ill she must have been; correspondence and contact just ceased.

I'm sure each member of the Society will have her or his personal recollections of Estelle and all realise how much effort she put into the Society activities. For myself I feel the loss of a stimulating and warm-hearted friend. She will be greatly missed.'

[Bob Gilhespy, Walchwil, Switzerland]

'I am very saddened to read the news of Estelle's death in the current issue of the *Journal*. While I realise that a full appreciation will appear in a subsequent issue, I would like to make a personal tribute in respect of someone who was a person of great personal warmth and generosity as well as being an outstanding officer of the Society.

I joined the Society in the days when Estelle acted as Membership Secretary. What a marvellous approach she had. Her response was deeply personal, full of information, enthusiasm and warmth. I promptly joined the Society.

One of her great concerns was that the Delius Society should be a friendly organisation, and although I am not a regular attender of meetings she always went out of her way to introduce me to fellow members and make me feel at ease. This approach was extended to all.

Over the years I have received many letters from her – always conveying her special qualities of warmth and friendliness. I was particularly honoured to be invited as her personal guest at the AGM dinner - Kettner's, I remember. She was also most helpful and enthusiastic in providing information and advice concerning my visit to Grez some years ago.

I am aware that Estelle suffered considerable ill health and tragedy in recent years and it was a sad day for the Society when she was forced to surrender her official duties. I am sure that those who knew her and those aware of the great work she gave to the cause of the Delius Society will remember her as an outstanding founder member of the Society and as a person of great warmth, generosity and vivaciousness.'

[Robert Sabine, London]

'I first met Estelle Palmley in 1962 shortly after my newspaper advertisement in attempting to found a Delius Society and the resulting correspondence with prospective members. Estelle invited me to lunch at her home one Sunday. After lunch we talked about Delius. I shall never forget her rather dreamy deliberate way of speaking, suffused on this occasion with enthusiasm for the Delius cause. She said that for her Delius was at his most beguiling in *In a Summer Garden* which always gave her the impression of a beautiful smile. Later of course, after successive shaky secretaries including myself, she became Secretary of the Delius Society, and what a Secretary! It was largely thanks to her that the membership grew and was maintained.'

[Roland Gibson (Founder Member), Eastcote, Middlesex]

'Those of us who were at the AGM will have heard the Chairman relate that before Estelle Palmley became Secretary she was an ordinary committee member, but that after attending two or three meetings she resigned *because she was not contributing anything to the running of the Society*.

Many people – it might be true to say, most people – join societies such as ours for what they can get out of their membership; the few join for what they can give to the society, and of these the supreme example was Estelle. Her resignation from the committee was typical of her feelings about the Delius Society. She would not be satisfied just to sit back and let others do the work; there was plenty to be done and she wanted to share in the doing. As things turned out she did far more than could be considered her share, and it is no exaggeration to say that without her influence the Society would have been a different, less successful, less friendly organisation than it is today. Particularly less friendly. It has been said of some few people that they have had a genius for friendship; no-one deserved this description more than Estelle.

She always acted in the knowledge that each member was an individual, a person, not just another entry in the Society's register. She went out of her way to learn as much as she could about us and remembered what she learnt. And this was true whether we lived near London, in another part of the country, or even

in another continent. She wrote to us, letters full of friendship, and we in return wrote letters to her. How, at a time when she was doing a full-time job in the Civil Service, she found time to read our letters and reply to them on top of her other secretarial activities can only be explained by her having devoted the whole of her leisure to the advancement of the Society and to ensuring that every member felt a part of it.

The friendly atmosphere that is characteristic of all the Society's gatherings has often been remarked upon. This is Estelle's legacy to us; this is what we must cherish and preserve; this is what we must see is passed on to future members; this, more than anything else, will enable the Society to look to the future with confidence. And this, I am sure, is what Estelle would wish to be remembered by.'

[Gilbert Parfitt, Orpington, Kent]

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday 17 September at 7 p.m. Mary Ward House, 5 Tavistock Place, London**  
Delius Society meeting: 'A celebration of the famous Harrison sisters', with Margaret Harrison and Patricia Cleveland-Peck, who has recently edited for publication the autobiography of Beatrice Harrison. Copies of the book will be available.

**Monday 14 October at 8.30 p.m. Theatre de Beaulieu, Lausanne**  
Jeffrey Tate conducts L'Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne in Delius's *Summer Night on the River*, and works by Mahler, Britten and Mozart.

**Wednesday 23 October at 7 p.m. BMIC, 10 Stratford Place, London**  
Delius Society meeting: 'Hamilton Harty – a life of music' presented by Brian Radford.

**Wednesday 27 November at 7 p.m. BMIC, 10 Stratford Place, London**  
Delius Society meeting: a programme of music by Delius, Vaughan Williams, Ireland and others performed by Victoria Trotman (oboe), Margaret Ozanne (piano) and Rachel Sherry (soprano). [See *Journal 86* p.22]

### 1986

**Monday 20 January at 7 p.m. BMIC, 10 Stratford Place, London**  
Delius Society meeting. Members' evening: 'The first time I heard Delius . . .'

**Wednesday 19 February at 7 p.m. BMIC, 10 Stratford Place, London**  
Delius Society meeting: 'The Delius Papers – a new appraisal' by Rachel Lowe.

**Friday 28 February to Sunday 2 March Danville Delius Centennial Festival**  
The Danville Festival, commemorating Delius's nine-month stay in the city, will include a lecture by Dr Lionel Carley, the unveiling of an historical marker with a talk by Dr William Randel, and performances by the Richmond Symphony and Southside Virginia Singers of *Appalachia* and the Piano Concerto.

Further details of Society events from Programme Secretary Derek Cox at 01-837 4545 (home) or 01-677 8141 ext. 220 (work).



