After-Thoughts on Delius

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THE PERFORMING RIGHT SOCIETY AND CHURCH MUSIC

In the *Sunday Times* of October 20 appeared an article entitled 'Copyright Laws: Position of Church entertainments. Warning against infringements.' We quote the main points therefrom:

> 'The English churches have recently had to face an important point respecting the use of copyright songs at entertainments held on their premises. In the past, almost unrestricted use has been made of copyright works in this way without permission or any acknowledgment. The Performing Right Society has, however, now brought the matter to an issue, and Diocesan Conferences, the Federal Council of the Free Churches, the English Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, and the Wesleyans have had to take account of the situation. . . . The Wesleyan Conference . . . has now decided to advise the Wesleyan Circuit to secure licences from the Society. . . . Church authorities are now warning their members of the legal position, and pointing out that the owner of the copyright is entitled to his rights. If, therefore, churches desire to avoid legal trouble they should secure a licence. In churches where they do not wish to take a licence, it is suggested that they should set up a notice warning performers at entertainments to secure consent in writing from those holding the copyright before contributing their items to the programme.'

Since the above appeared, correspondence received by Messrs. Novello seems to indicate the existence of misunderstanding in regard to performing rights. It seems clear, too, that the Wesleyan Conference has been led to believe that the Performing Right Society controls practically all copyright songs and other music. Messrs. Novello therefore desire to state clearly and comprehensively their position in the matter.

As the chief object of the publication of music is to ensure performance, it does not seem reasonable to tax the performer for doing the very thing the publisher wants him to do. Messrs. Novello, therefore, do not belong to the Performing Right Society. This does not mean that they do not retain performing rights in connection with the works they publish. They retain such rights, but they exercise them in a purely defensive manner. In other words, they use them only for the purpose of controlling (or even preventing) performances from borrowed, second-hand, or hired copies.

On the other hand, the purchaser of *new* copies of a work published by Messrs. Novello, whether obtained direct from them or through a dealer, may perform that work in public free of further charge as often as he pleases. In fact, the more frequent the performance the better. Anyone borrowing those copies from him in order to give a performance is on an entirely different footing.

There are only two exceptions to this rule: (1.) Works which Messrs. Novello publish on commission for the owner, and which do not, therefore, belong to them; (2.) All broadcast performances.

It is important that performers of Church music should understand that, although the Performing Right Society controls a large number of works, there is a very considerable amount of English Church music which is entirely free from its jurisdiction. This is due to the fact that many important publishers of such music remain outside the Society, realising that, as a tax on performance would fall in many cases on Church choirs, choral societies, and other organizations and performers who usually work without fee or reward, it would discourage enterprise in the very quarters where encouragement is most needed.

We understand, however, that the Performing Right Society waives its claim to a fee in connection with a performance that occurs in the course of a recognised religious service.

On the whole, Church Committees and others who are naturally disposed to regard the warning by the Performing Right Society referred to in the *Sunday Times* article as a kind of ultimatum, will be well advised to give the matter careful consideration before deciding whether they will take out a General Licence from that Society or whether they prefer to adopt the alternative course suggested by the Wesleyan Conference.

AFTER-THOUGHTS ON DELIUS

BY HUBERT J. FOSS

'Courteous and kind, hear what we do not do'—the opening of Charles Williams's 'Myth of Shakespeare' will courteously serve us here. For happily there is no need to seize the random opportunity of the Delius Festival to write a critical and biographical account of Frederick Delius. That was well done by Mr. Philip Heseltine in 1923, to whom all later commentators have been indebted for their facts, and even for some of their ideas. Particularly after the meed of deserved, if sometimes fulsome, praise that has been recklessly offered, alike by those who know their subject and those who do not, to a great composer during the recent Festival, any discussion of Delius's ultimate position in musical history would be inappropriate. That very subject, indeed, recoils from

analytical treatment, for while on the one hand it resembles prophecy too closely for safe judgment, on the other it calls forth from many a conviction so strong that reasoning can act but as a weakly buttress for belief.

So, as the concerts of the Festival have been recounted elsewhere in this journal, I have to offer an excuse for writing about Delius; which is that outside the multitudinous words earned, now and before, by this great man's hours of continuous musical thought, stand a small number still unspoken, to voice a random aspect or two that, for lack of room, for obscurity or simplicity of character, perhaps even because of a too frequent similarity of critical approach, have even now escaped notice.

For example, interest has been much drawn to the importance and excellence—even necessity—of a Delius Festival. But a finer avenue of approach to the composer's mind can surely be found in the consideration of the causes of his neglect before the Festival and the other efforts of its promoters removed that cause of reproach. What is there in this music which has kept it a close secret even from the musicians, has denied it the public success of, say, Elgar or Vaughan Williams or Holst, has gained its composer less of recognition and honours in his native country than many workaday musicians of a minimum of talent? Factors of outside assistance have, it is true, not all been propitious; the composer's long residence abroad may have lost him something of present public appeal—but not more than Percy Grainger's. For many years printed scores of a large number of the works have been available, and the music itself with its frequent use of the chorus makes no greater demands on the English performing society than, say, the 'Planets' or 'A Sea Symphony.' Finally, the immediate appeal of the music is sensuous and beautiful, its subjects mainly romantic, its technique of far less novelty or obscurity than that of 'Petrouchka' or 'Psalmus Hungaricus.'

It is the musical or mental reasons we seek. Four of them at once appear as stars trailing, perhaps, lesser lights of practicality; all of them (as human characteristics always must) join together into one planetary mass. Let me enumerate them before discussing them severally. The first is the different cast of Delius's mind from that of the world around him. The second is the peculiar character of its simplicity. The third is the inability of this mind to submit to measurement by the academic foot-rule. The fourth is its preoccupation with beautiful human expression as something more important to it than strength, or pattern, or idealism, or religion, or anything else that can be found in the work of other great masters.

Mere verbiage as this epitome may seem, it will begin to have meaning when one considers the first reason of 'difference.' There was given to us in this Festival a mind which, for all its obvious influences and its passage across thirty years of music, remains complete and individual, unlike other musical minds, recognisable at a glance, clearly original. In Delius, music took a new turn in the road, which led that one voyager on a long if narrow trail. His followers have not gone so far, nor can they turn aside or back. It is a path that leads others nowhere, for that way music will never—cannot ever—go further. It is the path of instinct, of one man's nature, unplanned by theory, not to be developed by thought or argument or experience into a highway. The most ardent lover of Delius will confess that if by nature you do not like this music, nothing will persuade you to it. But nearly every human ear takes an immediate liking to it. That is the essence of its purely popular appeal, an appeal which has so far had too little chance from the musicians to show how inevitably it can hold the public. For this music never convinces by mere threats of external strength; it appeals; in giving, it receives.

By this time I have postulated an instinctive quality in Delius's music which could only with a wrench be considered as separate from a natural simplicity. This simplicity needs no proof, though it seems to need explanation. For there are certain set meanings for musical simplicity, one relating it to mere notes, another to texture, or development, or general insouciance. Delius has none of them; he has simplicity of mind without conventional simplicity of musical utterance. There is an almost definable unit of his musical utterance, but in economy of sound it cannot compare with the same unit of, say, Mozart's mind.

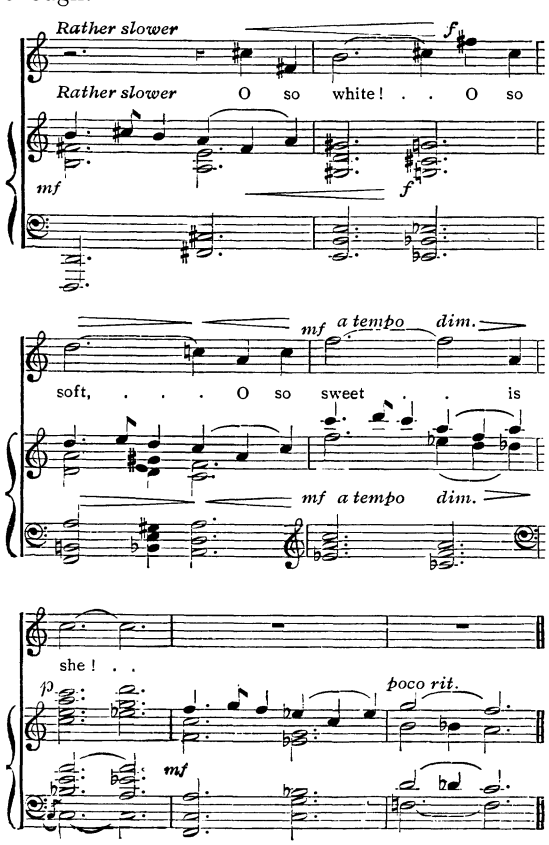
In this connection nothing could be more apt than the quotation by Miss Viola Meynell, in the Biography of her mother, of Alice Meynell's essay on the transition from 17th- to 18th-century letters. She writes:

> 'The 18th century, admired for its measure, moderation, and good sense, should be considered rather an age of extravagance, because in it imagination, which needs no exaggeration, failed. When it saw no clouds and stars it kindled artificial fires. The extravagance of Crashaw is a far more lawful thing than the extravagance of Addison, whom some critics believe to have committed none. Pope, and poets less great than he, were all for what they called "a rage"—a poetic "noble rage." Of sheer extremes it is not in the 17th-century conceits that we should seek examples, but in this 18th-century rage. The 18th century invented the art of raving. It was resolved to be behind no century in passion, to show the way, to fire the nations. Addison taught himself, as his hero taught the battle, "where to rage." Dr. Johnson must have created his phrase "the madded land," in order to prove that he, too, the poet of reason, could lodge the fury in his breast.'

Coming from one so richly conscious of words, so fully charged with meanings, and yet so simple in herself, this view has especial significance. Mrs. Meynell has probed through the diction and the style to the mind and the desires. She has discovered the matter despite the manner. So we, perceiving the thought through the notes, can see that the chord of the ninth need be no more complicated as a means of musical expression than the triad or the turn ; that the mind which rests by natural desire on a full-sounding chord is not thereby denied the superiority of simplicity over a mind which ranged happily only over the three fundamental chords of the major scale, with an occasional seventh kept in reserve for poignancy.

Simply posed, it is a question of which simplicity we choose—ours, as listeners, or his, as composer. If ours, then we are asking impossibilities of any composer ; if his, then we are rightly trying to learn from the composer his conception of life, expressed in what to us as music lovers is the most complete and beautiful form of art.

But, if this reasoning is right, there is practical proof both of Delius's simplicity and also of its instinctive inability to conform to book-made ideals. We need not go to ' O Zarathustra,' in ' The Mass of Life ' : the song, ' So white, so soft, so sweet is she,' with its closing bars, is enough.



The unity of tonal conception here is sufficient to prove a direct simplicity of thought that no mere agglomeration of harmonizing notes could obscure. If this is not simplicity recognisable by all, it is beyond mistake Delius's simplicity ; if we do not accept it, we must at least allow it the preference of mental superiority over ourselves, and accept its challenge to us to find both an elusive definition and an example of a more clear and simple result.

The same fundamental simplicity of thought appears in the philosophical side of Delius's mind. To give an example of it would be to quote *in extenso* from all the longer works. Yet the very soul of this poet of Nature has sometimes eluded critics who have seen nothing but complication of thought in his individuality, and only obscurity in his richness.

A similar conventional taint has marred some critics' judgment of Delius's musical texture. This music is not at all what we were taught at the colleges to think ' good ' music. The conception is not primarily melodic, nor the texture contrapuntal. Though without conscious atonality, yet the formal system is not built upon contrast of keys or even of subjects. The development is strange in method, the harmony essential and not merely additional to the main thought. In fact, by every rule the music is poor save that any application of the rule makes it fade away before the eyes like the Cheshire Cat.

That Delius's musical thought is harmonic in basis has retarded his appreciation more than anything else, though on the face of it there is no apparent reason why the harmonic unit is less proper (or less simple) than the melodic. His melody often derives from his harmony—clothes it with a tune, as it were ; sometimes a secondary subject grows out of a figure of an inner part into a prominent melodic utterance of great length and unflagging beauty. This is particularly noticeable in the string concertos, where the solo part is as often harmonic as it is melodic, moving about now with snatches of tune, now with accompanying figuration, now with a phrase of harmonic intention or of mere emphasis.

His methods of development are no less his own ; they are of a piece with the poetic side of his mind. A whole piece like ' Brigg Fair ' presents a whole picture ; its musical shape is determined by its poetic content and not by the demands of musical pattern. The development of the subject-matter is rhapsodic ; it is the enlargement of a mood rather than the conscious working out of a musical theme. Regarded in the light of conventional ' sonata form,' Delius's formal works (the concertos and sonatas) seem to have no backbone ; the text-book forgotten, their structure is acceptable because it is logical in both the poetic and the musical senses.

Our fourth point helps us here. Along with beauty of conception goes a desire for sheer beauty of sound. Undeniably this desire for immediate effect sometimes mars the shape of the whole, but the immediate effect is often so beautiful that nothing could compensate its loss. Delius seems to lack any moral conscience with regard to technique, a quality refreshing in a country where skilful writing so often passes for good music. His orchestration, exquisite as it is, makes heavy demands on the conductor and players, as a recent performance of the 'Cello Concerto showed us. There are solo passages in the Double Concerto, for example, which are inaudible; but the music is not really less beautiful for that. Just as he is no theorist in harmony, so Delius is no technician. The professionalism of the composer is put aside; the human expression of a beautiful mind remains. It is sufficient indeed.

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The question of Delius's nationality is often discussed, and we are told that his music bears a cosmopolitan stamp. That is true enough, but the interest of this cosmopolitanism lies not in its absence of national influences but in the number of national impressions it bears. The most obvious influence of his musical life was Grieg, chief among nationalist composers; not only in the formal works (where it is not all for good), but almost everywhere one feels that Northern guidance. Yet even in the later works there is strong evidence of German education, in the lay-out of the music no less than its length. Alongside stands the English characteristic of song, evident not only in Delius's frequent use of the human voice but in the vocal quality of his themes and phrases, his liking for the pentatonic scale, his continued reminiscence of folk-song. Finally, there is more than a little of France in his music, as any comparison with Debussy will show.

The result suggests four coloured strands which, woven together, make up an individual texture, with a pattern all its own.

. . . . . .

The comparison between Delius and Tennyson has been made before; it is close, with an odd divergence in the objects of the religious reverence which each mind felt so strongly. I mention it here because a quotation from Mrs. Meynell again illuminates the problem:

> 'Tennyson [one might well substitute Delius] is a subject for our alternatives of feeling as is hardly another poet. He sheds the luminous suns of dreams upon men and women who would do well with footlights . . . speeds his carpet knight upon a carpet of authentic wild flowers. . . . The style and the manner run side by side. . . . There should be no danger for the more judicious reader lest impatience at the peculiar Tennyson trick should involve the great Tennyson style in a sweep of protest. There is never a passage of manner but a great passage of style rebukes our dislike and recalls our heart.'

Oh, that our musical critics wrote as well and truly as that!

. . . . . .

It is sometimes the side-view of the object that shows it best. If these random and added considerations on Delius's work give no more than a new basis for further study and investigation, they will have served their purpose.

THE ARTS IN REVOLT
III.

BY RUTLAND BOUGHTON

(*Continued from November number, p.* 984)

The attack upon the communal conception of mediæval Christianity culminated in the kingship of Louis XIV. During his reign came the turn of a tide which subsequently advanced in two great waves, having their crests in the French Revolution of 1789 and the pressure of to-day. Each wave had its due expression in the arts. The first wave soaked into the plays of Molière, the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau following in natural order. A number of artists in other parts of Christendom were affected by the same current, highest expressional climax being reached in the works of Goya, Blake, and Beethoven, the French themselves finding fullest expression, not in art, but in action.

Molière developed his art in the provinces. Early lack of success in the capital threw him back upon the less sophisticated stage of the people. When, later on, royal favour was extended to the comedist, his mental outlook had already been fixed, and he proceeded to scarify the silly people he met, including those of the Court. As it all took place under the protection of the king there was the less heroism in it. Perhaps the most heroic thing Molière ever did was when in 'Le Misanthrope' he satirised himself. For the rest it was the pedantry of fashionable artists, the meanness of money-grubbers, the absurdities of the bourgeois, and, most bitter of all, the exposure of the religious in 'Le Tartufe.'

> 'Since 1627 there had existed in France a religious society called the Society of the Holy Sacrament. It was not a sect, properly so-called, but an association of men and women who, on the basis of the Roman Church, worked for moral purity and strict observation of religious ordinances — a kind of mission which was founded originally with the best intentions, and counted many persons of high repute among its members, but which had gradually become a scourge to its fellow-creatures by insolent interference in other people's affairs, by espionage and delation, till it terrified the weak-minded and all who had reason for concealment. And as with all similar so-called "holy" societies, this