

THE MUSIC OF DELIUS
The early recordings (1927-1938, 1948)

RECORD 1

Side One:

1. Paris—The Song Of A Great City—Recorded 9th April, 1934 (CAX.7120/5-SDX.1/3)
2. Summer Night On The River—Recorded 4th October, 1935 (CA.15315/6-LB.44)

Side Two:

1. Sea Drift (Whitman) w/John Brownlee (Baritone) and London Select Choir—Recorded 3rd April and 2nd November, 1936 (CAX.7772/8-SDX.8/11)
2. "Irmelin"—Prelude—Recorded 18th July, 1938 (CAX.8161-SDX.21)

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

conducted by SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, Bart., C.H.

RECORD 2

Side One:

1. Intermezzo from "Fennimore and Gerda"—Recorded 28th September, 1936 (CAX.7848-SDX.11)
2. Appalachia-Variations On An Old Slave Song (Part 1) w/B.B.C. Chorus—Recorded 6th, 7th and 31st January, 1938 (CAX.8153/60, 8167/8-SDX.15/19)

Side Two:

1. Appalachia-Variations On An Old Slave Song (Conclusion)-w/B.B.C. Chorus—Recorded 6th, 7th and 31st January, 1938 (CAX.8153/60, 8167/8-SDX.15/19)
2. La Calinda from "Florida" Suite—Recorded 7th January, 1938 (CAX.8162-un-issued)
3. La Calinda from "Koanga"—Recorded 11th February, 1938 (CAX.8189-SDX.21)
4. Final Scene from "Koanga" w/London Select Choir—Recorded 4th and 11th December, 1934 (CAX.7375/6-SDX.6)

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

conducted by SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, Bart., C.H.

RECORD 3

Side One:

1. Eventyr (Once Upon A Time)—Recorded 14th November, 1934 (CAX.7356/9-SDX.4/5)
2. Over The Hills And Far Away—Recorded 28th September, 1936 (CAX.7845/7-SDX.12/13)

Side Two:

1. In A Summer Garden—Recorded 2nd October, 1936 (CAX.7849/51-SDX.13/14)

"Hassan"—Incidental Music To James Elroy Flecker's Drama:—

2. Intermezzo and Serenade—Recorded 11th December, 1934 (CAX.7377—SDX.7)
3. Unaccompanied wordless chorus—w/London Select Choir—Recorded November, 1934 (TT.1853—un-issued)
4. Closing Scene—w/Jan Van Der Gucht (Tenor) and Royal Opera Chorus—Recorded 28th June, 1938 (CAX.8256/7—SDX.20)

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

conducted by SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, Bart., C.H.

RECORD 4

Side One:

1. Brigg Fair—An English Rhapsody—Recorded 20th November and 11th December, 1928 (WAX.4335, 4441/3—L.2294/5)
2. On Hearing The First Cuckoo In Spring—Recorded 19th December, 1927 (WAX.3156/7—L.2096)
3. The Walk To The Paradise Garden from "A Village Romeo And Juliet" Recorded 20th December, 1927 (WAX.3155, 3160—L.2087)

1.w/SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

2&3. w/ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

conducted by SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, Bart., C.H.

Side Two:

1. (a) Whither (Autumn) (Bjornsen)
(b) The Violet (Holstein)—Recorded 11th February, 1938 (CAX.8190—un-issued)
2. (a) I Brasil (Fiona MacLeod)
(b) Klein Venevil (Bjornsen) (Sung in German)—Recorded 11th February, 1938 (CAX.8191—un-issued)
3. Evening Voices (Twilight Fancies) (Bjornsen)—Recorded 10th July, 1929 (WAX.5104—L.2344)
4. (a) Cradle Song (Ibsen)
(b) The Nightingale (Welhaven)—Recorded 24th June, 1929 (WAX.5069—L.2344)
5. (a) Irmelin Rose (Jacobsen)
(b) So White, So Soft, So Sweet Is She (Ben Jonson)—Recorded 9th April, 1938 (CAX.8231—un-issued)
6. (a) Le Ciel est par-dessus le toit (Verlaine) (Sung in French)
(b) La Lune Blanche (Verlaine) (Sung in French)—Recorded 9th April, 1938 (CAX.8230—un-issued)

DORA LABBETTE (Soprano)

1&2. w/LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

conducted and arranged by SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, Bart., C.H.

3&4. w/SIR THOMAS BEECHAM (Piano)

5&6. w/GERALD MOORE (Piano)

RECORD 5

Side One:

1. Irmelin Rose (Jacobsen)—Recorded 24th June, 1929 (WAX.5068—un-issued)
2. (a) Le Ciel est par-dessus le toit (Verlaine) (Sung in French)
(b) The Violet (Holstein)—Recorded 10th July, 1929 (WAX.5105—un-issued)
3. (a) To The Queen Of My Heart (Shelley)
(b) Love's Philosophy (Shelley)—Recorded 7th December, 1934 (CAX.7380—SDX.7)
4. "Delius" Biography—BBC TV Monitor Programme (Sir Thomas Beecham interviewed by Edmund Tracey)—Recorded 22nd November, 1959 (First published 1976)
By arrangement with BBC Records and Tapes

1&2. DORA LABBETTE (Soprano); SIR THOMAS BEECHAM (Piano)
3. HEDDLE NASH (Tenor); GERALD MOORE (Piano)

Side Two:

"A MASS OF LIFE"

- †1. Radio talk by Sir Thomas Beecham—Recorded 5th June, 1951 introducing:
- *2. Prelude to Part 2—Recorded 8th May, 1948 (2EA.13033—un-issued)
3. Prelude to Part 2, No. 3—Recorded 11th February, 1938 (CAX.8188—un-issued)

2. w/ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

conducted by SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, Bart., C.H.

Solo Horns: DENNIS BRAIN, IAN BEERS & RAY WHITE

3. LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

conducted by SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, Bart., C.H.

† By arrangement with BBC Records and Tapes

* Recorded under the auspices of the Delius Trust

World Records SHB 32, 5 discs, mono. Available from Peters International, 619 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019

An extraordinary thing happened in English music about the turn of this century. A nation that had been parochial in its musical culture and that produced no composers of major significance in the area of serious music since the death of Henry Purcell suddenly blossomed forth with two symphonic composers who had few peers among their contemporaries anywhere in the world.

These two composers, in many ways, developed from the two branches into which the mainstream of German music had divided in the course of the nineteenth century. Elgar derives from the classically oriented, more formalistic branch that flowed from Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms. He composed symphonies, oratorios and other works in the time-hallowed forms, however much he introduced a Wagnerian plasticity into the flow of his music.

Delius was closer to the branch that came from Berlioz, Liszt, Chopin, Wagner, Richard Strauss and the nationalist composers, who brought about the revolution of the tone poem and the striking-out on new paths toward expressiveness without the security of established forms.

Elgar lived in England, took part in its musical life and composed music for the performance forces and performance events of his country. He had an immense practical knowledge of musical performance and his scores were full of performance directions.

Delius lived in a French village. He took little part in the musical life of any country. His compositions were derived from his musical visions alone and he took little heed of certain practicalities of performance. He had relatively little practical experience with the actual performance of music, and his scores leave almost as much to the discretion of the performer as do those of Mozart or Beethoven.

Both had a very recognizable and individual musical personality and both composed music of great expressiveness, beauty and intensity. The symphony orchestra, both with or without voices, was the major medium of each and both were among the greatest masters of its resources.

Elgar's music is characterized by unpredictable changes in mood, which many find perplexing.

Delius's music is characterized by an unchanging mood, which many find perplexing.

Both Delius and Elgar were well served by the major recording company of their native land. Elgar recorded most of his major orchestral works and Sir Thomas Beecham, whose performances had the enthusiastic endorsement of Delius, recorded most of Delius's major works with orchestra.

These recordings, thus, have given us unassailably authentic readings of the music of two major composers. So authentic and "right" do these performances seem that they constitute a standard that contemporary conductors find themselves measured against, thus creating a new situation in the history of performance and of criticism.

The march of technology used to have a way of burying such recordings by relegating them, after a suitable number of years had elapsed, to the bourne of the "technologically obsolete" from which few recordings escaped. However, the march of technology has now included methods of reprocessing the old 78 rpm recordings with such a good quality of sound that the comparison in fidelity with the latest stereo record can now be compensated for, in many cases, by the unique performance values of the older recording.

Having restored to contemporary musical culture the complete published Elgar conducted electrical 78s plus some hitherto unpublished material via two albums of five discs each, EMI have now turned to the historical performances of the music of Delius conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham.

The first volume of five records contains all the published Delius recordings made by Beecham prior to World War II (with one exception) plus some previously unpublished material and also two segments of Beecham speaking about Delius and his music. Additionally, there are some song recordings with Beecham at the piano and, also, some without Beecham that are, nonetheless, appropriate for publication in this volume.

Evidently using the Elgar reissues as an exemplar, EMI have also provided this volume with a book - in this case a reprint of Beecham's *Delius*, to which a discography by Malcolm Walker has been added.

Where does one start with such a magnificent package? I started with the discography, and I regret that this one would not meet ARSC Journal standards. The discography limits itself to those recordings made for Columbia and EMI and supplies only the English issue numbers. It does not concern itself with air checks that are known to exist, nor with such a record as that of the Sir Thomas Beecham Society of the Suite from the Irmelin music. Thus, although the discography reveals an astonishing amount of information about unpublished recordings, nonetheless, one must still refer to the sixteenth issue of *Le Grand Baton*¹ for those aspects of a Beecham-Delius discography that Malcolm Walker failed to address himself to.

Walker, also, is inconsistent in regard to the specification of take numbers. When a single take number is specified, we have confirmed that, in each case, it is that of the published take. However, when multiple take numbers are given, Mr. Walker has not specified which one or ones were published. And sometimes there are no take numbers at all. There is also one major error: an incomplete recording session of *The Song of the High Hills* is given as the published version.

So, I have added a listing of published take numbers and erratum to the end of this review. These have been compiled from the resources of my collection as well as that of Yale University's, and grateful acknowledgement is made to Richard Warren, Jr., the other half of the "we" in the preceding paragraph, for his assistance.

This unpleasantness aside, I next turned to the performances. The Delius recordings of Sir Thomas Beecham may conveniently be divided into four groups:

1. The recordings made in 1927-29 prior to the formation of the London Philharmonic Orchestra (henceforth abbreviated as LPO). We might as well also include in this group the song recordings made in

1929 by Dora Labette with Beecham at the piano.

2. The recordings made with the LPO, 1934-38.

3. The recordings made with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (henceforth abbreviated as RPO), 1946-51, for release on 78 rpm discs.

4. The recordings made with the RPO, 1952-57, after EMI had converted to the long playing record.

Although Beecham had been making records on and off since 1910, it was not until 1927 that he made his first recording of a work of Delius, Walk and Cuckoo being successfully recorded in that year. Brigg Fair followed in the next year, and these three works made their appearance in the United States in Columbia Masterworks albums X-31 and X-30. Summer Night was issued separately on a 10" record, and this is the only published Beecham Delius recording of the pre-World War II ear that is not represented in this reissue, as it was replaced in 1935 by a more satisfactory performance by the LPO, which is included. Sea Drift was also recorded in 1928, but was not deemed suitable for publication. As to what went wrong on that occasion, I refer the curious and diligent reader to pg. 134 of Joe Batten's Book - The Story of Sound Recording.²

In 1929, the year of the great Delius festival, we have only four sides of songs with Dora Labette. After this, the Delius recording project went into eclipse for five years. During this interval, Beecham founded the LPO and, also, two other events of significance occurred on the English record scene: HMV and Columbia merged; and Walter Legge put into operation the society set idea, whereby certain works that had a strong appeal to a limited audience would be recorded after a certain number of subscriptions were received.

So, a Delius "society" was organized to underwrite the issuance of the music of Delius and Jelka Delius, who did not long survive her husband, willed all royalties to a Delius Trust. This still is in existence, underwriting recordings, publications and performances.

The project got off to a strong start with the recording of Paris on April 9, 1934, the orchestra having been exceptionally well prepared by virtue of public performances of the tone poem on Feb. 25 and April 8.³

Recordings of Songs of Sunset and An Arabesque were made at the Leeds Festival the following October. These were never released and, although copies of the recordings evidently still exist, Douglas Pudney informs us in the program notes that it "proved impossible" to include these recordings in this album of reissues (impossible, perhaps?).

Then followed the recordings that completed the three volumes of the Columbia Delius Society sets. Summer Night was re-recorded and issued as a 10" single. Also, three sides of songs with orchestra were recorded with Dora Labette, who had changed her professional name to

Lisa Perli.⁴ This brings us to the next hiatus in Beecham's recording of the music of Delius, as problems of health and of war effected Beecham's withdrawal from the English scene for several years.

During this period, Beecham found time to write his autobiography, "A Mingled Chime"⁵, in which he gave his account of Delius and of Delius's music.

The three Society Sets plus the earlier recordings, meanwhile, were conveying to music lovers all over the English-speaking parts of the world the unique beauty and power of Delius's music and were creating a not inconsiderable demand for recordings of more of this music.

The most optimistic hopes of the Delius lovers started to be realized in 1945 with a resumption of the Delius recordings, this time with Beecham's latest, and last, orchestra - the Royal Philharmonic. In a period of a little over a year the Piano Concerto, Violin Concerto and Song of the High Hills were recorded and Village Romeo and North Country Sketches followed within a few years. Some of the shorter works were re-recorded.

A new era starts in 1952 with the recording of Appalachia, in which the discography no longer specifies 78 rpm side numbers: EMI had finally converted to tape mastering and the issuing of long playing records, and the decision was made to re-record for the new medium the major works that had been in the catalogue since the thirties. This era also brought us recordings of A Mass of Life, that Beecham regarded as Delius's greatest work, and the Hassan music; then the Songs of Sunset and the Florida Suite, stereophonically recorded.

In the course of all this recording activity over a period of some thirty years, some of the shorter works received as many as three published recordings and one (Summer Night) was recorded in four different issues. Thus, with the exception of the songs and Walk, this album does not bring us any music that has not been fairly steadily available in Beecham performances on LP on a variety of labels. However, the specific performances in this album have not heretofore been on long playing records.

Thus, some comparisons between the performances in this album and later Beecham recordings are in order. I shall not clutter up the review with record numbers. The interested reader can find these in the discographies and current catalogues.

One may ask, why bother with the old recordings? Well, the Delius enthusiast is going to find that many of these performances have something different to offer than the later ones and, in this age of cheap records, one does not have to be committed exclusively to one "best" performance. Most of these recordings were made with that marvelous London Philharmonic Orchestra, which achieves a refinement in details

of execution that frequently is superior to that heard in the later recordings.

Eric Fenby has stated that he prefers the earlier recordings: "In later years his (Beecham's) presentations were apt to be marred unaccountably by sudden erratic fluctuations of tempo."⁶

My own reaction in comparing the recordings is one of astonishment that performances sometimes more than twenty years apart usually differ by no more than one would expect from one day to another or from one orchestra to another, and this can be somewhat documented, as we shall see.

Regarding the performance of the music of Delius, Beecham wrote: "It is imperative to maintain a tight control over the motion of the melodic line; otherwise there may be created an unpleasant sense of lassitude or shapelessness."⁷

Others have analyzed Beecham's conducting of Delius as follows:

Roy Henderson: "With Beecham it was phrasing. Time was elastic, with rubato and slight pauses before cadenzas" (sic) (cadences meant?) A favorite trick of Beecham's was to whip up excitement by means of a quick down-beat, which reached its climax well before its due time."⁸ (P-G p. 68)

Ben Horsfall: "Delius had a genius for divisi and dispersal of sensuous, intermediate orchestral sounds. His harmony does not resolve; it dissolves imperceptively into new shapes which in the hands of unenlightened conductors produces a thick yellow London fog. With Beecham I always felt to be on the fringe of a morning mist which was dissipating in sunshine and light breeze. He had an uncanny skill in drawing brief attention to melodic ghosts; there was never a 'crisp definition', and the whole impression was one of hazy activity."⁹ (P-G p. 72)

Eric Fenby: "He would mark every bar of the score in blue pencil, exaggerating Delius's own nuances of expression, to make the fullest impact in performance. Copyists would then transfer these markings to each of the orchestral parts of the work. The rehearsals existed in the main to familiarise the players, all of them experts, with the way he wanted the design to sound in balance and attack." "His chief concern with Delius was in tending the melodic strands that pass from voice to voice and give the piece its form, and, no less important, the balancing of timbres carrying the supporting harmonies."¹⁰ (P-G p. 54 & 55)

Turning, first, to the last three record sides of this set - those that contain mostly previously unpublished material - we are rewarded by a mini-recital of Delius songs beautifully performed by Dora Labette from eight 78 rpm sides, only two of which have been

published previously. The first two of these sides turned out to be the major unanticipated delight of the set: three songs with orchestral accompaniment.

We next have a previously published recording of two songs by Heddle Nash and Gerald Moore. The printed notes convey the regret that the texts of the songs could not be printed "owing to copyright difficulties". "Difficulties" such as these are created for the express purpose of expediting the transfer of money from the user to the copyright holder, and what such a disclaimer probably means is that World Records and the publishers of the poems could not agree on a satisfactorily low rate for their reprinting. One can sympathize, however, with the record producer who, having been required to pay a royalty for each song at the statutory minimum rate, however brief the song, has to pay an additional royalty should he wish to print the text! Fortunately, more than half these songs are currently available in the Peter Pears edition.¹¹

The songs concluded, we next hear Beecham speak from two BBC broadcasts. My favorite highlight:

You discussed his scores with Delius?

Oh, never!

Never?

O, good God, no! 'Course I wouldn't! He couldn't tell me anything about them! I occasionally said, "Now, Frederick, about this piece. I'd like to ask you what you'd like done here." He said, "Well, I can't remember, now, but do anything you like with it." It's shocking! And I have applied that principle to the work of every other composer.

So it's not true to say that you, from your discussions with Delius, have a special understanding of these works which nobody else has?

No, the only thing that happened was when I played them and he heard them in the concert room or on the radio, he said, "That's the way I want it. Don't change that! That's grand!"

And it's on the basis of this that you are preparing your special edition of Delius?

Yes.

And you hope that eventually other conductors will use your edition and perhaps begin to understand him as never before?

Who hopes?

We do, who listen to the music.

Optimist!

Turning now to the front end of this set, we have Paris first. This is the largest single-movement tone poem by Delius that does not require a soloist, either vocal or instrumental, or a chorus. So, according to Reid, back in the days of the Beecham Symphony Orchestra Beecham used to rehearse this work just for the sheer joy of listening to it. There is a fascinating description of a Beecham rehearsal of Paris in Shore's *The Orchestra Speaks*.¹²

Beecham has characterized Paris as "a piece of musical impressionism pur sang, mysterious and poetic for the most part, with here and there wild outbursts of hilarious gaiety."¹³ Both of Beecham's recordings of Paris (LPO, 1934 and RPO, 1955) are magnificent displays of virtuosity in orchestral performance and differ from each other only in subtle details.

The 1955 recording seems to have more of an air of hushed mystery toward the end of the opening section. In the pastoral section, starting on pg. 20 (Universal Edition score)¹⁴ the woodwinds play in a more detached fashion in 1955. The brass snarl more in the fortissimo chords for full orchestra, pg. 70, in 1934. The effect of off-stage piccolo, near the end, is nicely achieved both times. There seems to be one textual change, at cue 23, *Tempo di Marcia*, pg. 47-48. In the 1955 recording I hear the harps only on a single chord at the beginning of each two measure phrase.

There is a bit more in the way of high frequencies in the 1955 recording. Both are nicely balanced, clear and unostentatious examples of fine orchestral recording.

Summer Night concludes the first record side. Fenby has written as follows about this work: "Here Delius's imagination leads him to an orchestral pointillism rare in his mature music but saved from mere artifice by its dependence on melody. Sir Thomas Beecham always maintained that this was the most searching piece by Delius to realize with vision in performance."¹⁵

And so, appropriately, Beecham recorded this work more than any other: four times. Of these, the two most successful seem to me to be the second (LPO, 1935) and third (RPO, 1949). The 1949 recording is more symphonic than the 1935, with more emphasis on the main line and somewhat less clarity in the other figures. Oboes predominate slightly at the start; muted strings are stronger with respect to the woodwinds when they enter at cue 1. The solo cellist has better intonation, although noticeably more vibrato.

In the last recording, stereophonic (RPO, 1957), the working-out of details is not as well accomplished; it does not sound as well rehearsed.

Sea Drift brings us a greater variety of elements for comparison of Beecham's two published performances (LPO, 1936 and RPO, 1954). The most noticeable difference is that between the baritone soloists: John Brownlee in 1936 and Bruce Boyce in 1954. Beecham wrote that Sea Drift "requires a solo baritone with gifts not only of voice but of diction and poetical insight."¹⁶ Boyce sensitively molds individual words and fusses over every consonant sound. He will use a crooning falsetto on high passages, such as at measure 165-166 ("nor ever appeared again")¹⁷, which he sings softly, whereas John Brownlee sings out in full voice right up to the F. Delius indicates no dynamics on the vocal line. At this spot we can notice that some artificial reverberation has been introduced in the reprocessing. John Brownlee is more lyrical; Bruce Boyce's voice tends to sound dry and declamatory and has more of a vibrato. In actual performance the effect may have been more pleasing, but the painfully close microphone placement certainly does nothing to flatter him unless he felt flattered by the absurd degree to which he dominates the chorus and orchestra in the recording. The engineers achieved a better balance with Brownlee, but he gets a bit too prominent at times, too - the balance seems to vary from (78) side to side. Brownlee's intonation is better. Boyce goes noticeably flat on "Sea", cue 20.

Some strange things happen to the orchestral perspective in both recordings due to the too-close microphoning of the baritone. Instruments with important individual lines also have to be close miked and, although this helps the balance as regards the instrumental solos, the effect is, at times, unreal.

The balance of chorus and orchestra is well achieved in both recordings. Honors are fairly evenly divided among the two choirs, save for the a capella passage starting at cue 19 ("O rising stars", etc.), where the London Select Choir goes embarrassingly out of tune.

The choral dynamics of the 1936 recording could have been improved by judicious turning up of some spots that had been turned down in making the original 1936 masters. The second side of the 78s (cue 6: Shine! Shine! Shine! Pour down your warmth, great sun!) did not start loudly enough. Again at cue 11 (Blow! Blow up winds along Paumanok's shore") the chorus lacks impact and, at cue 17, the climax would have benefited by some turning up. The 1954 recording could have been used as a good guide to this.

The instrumental playing is generally more sensitive and refined in the 1936 recording and there is a wonderful continuity of line and ebb and flow of the emotional tide that I have never felt in the 1954 recording. The 1936 recording may have come after a public performance. The LPO performed the work on March 22, 1936 and, according to the album

notes, the recording was accomplished on April 3rd and Nov. 2nd. However, Malcolm Walker's discography has no entry for April 3rd and has all the takes listed under Nov. 2nd.

Sea Drift is followed by the Prelude to Irmelin, a work that Beecham recorded commercially three times: LPO, 1938; RPO, 1946; RPO, 1955.

The stereo Irmelin Prelude (1955) opens faster than the other two and does not get into the slower tempo until after the tenuto in measure 7.¹⁸ The 1946 recording has the slowest opening. Beecham picks the tempo up starting at seven measures after cue A.

The slurred leaps of fifths in the phrase starting seven measures after cue A are beautifully executed with the most discreet hint of portamento in the 1938 recording, emphasizing the contrast with the different bowing of the same phrases shortly after. This is equally beautiful in the 1946 recording but is not as elegantly executed in the 1955 recording. The harp is too obtrusive in the 1946 recording.

The Intermezzo from Fennimore and Gerda opens the second record. Beecham conducted one other recording of this strong, moody piece. That was a stereophonic recording made with the RPO in 1956. The two performances are remarkably alike.

I believe that it would have been a happier arrangement to have put the Intermezzo at the end of the first record, following Sea Drift and the Irmelin Prelude as the opening piece of the second record, as the strong mood of the Intermezzo casts the opening of Appalachia emotionally somewhat into the shade, whereas the more fragile Irmelin prelude would have been an excellent preliminary to Appalachia. Also, the Irmelin Prelude is very slender fare to follow Sea Drift. Was the sequence planned that way because the Intermezzo has a couple of melodic fragments that resemble two in Appalachia?

It was a performance of Appalachia that first opened Beecham's ears to the music of Delius, and, as the event is not as well recounted in Beecham's Delius, possibly some excerpting of his account elsewhere may not be amiss here: "Then came the performance of Appalachia, throughout which my dominant emotion was wonderment that music like this could have remained unknown for years, when any number of inferior compositions were being given daily with the printer's ink scarcely dry upon their scores. ... What should have been evident at first hearing was the remotely alien sound of it, a note in English music stranger than any heard for over two hundred years, and the masterly and personal use of the orchestra. The instrumental combinations, notably those in the variations that depict nature life in the woods and swamps, were a revelation of what the orchestra could be made to utter, and although forty years have passed since it was first put down on paper, the whole work still astonishes by its variety of atmosphere, loveliness of tone and the unorthodox exploitation of those tutti moments which are han-

dled by most composers old and new in such depressingly stereotyped fashion."¹⁹

I became acquainted with Appalachia from the RPO, 1952 recording and acquired the 78s of the LPO, 1938 recording only about five years ago. At the time I was somewhat disappointed in listening to the 78s, and felt that the 1952 recording quite overshadowed it. Now, in hearing the 1938 recording all put together, it turns out to have some definite qualities of its own that make it a very worthwhile alternative performance.

The 1938 performance is more reticent, more chamber-music like and seems to bring forth somewhat more the aspects of the score that are depictive of nature and somewhat less the human drama.

The 1952 performance is more symphonic. It moves forward with more impetus and with somewhat greater tempo contrasts. It emphasizes the more dramatic qualities of the score, with a greater range of dynamics. The fantastic section with the harp glissandi (cues P to R in the Boosey and Hawkes score)²⁰ has more élan and the funeral march variation (just before the choral entry "After night has gone comes the day") is more tragic and dynamic.

The final chorus on the 78s sounds small and thin for the conclusion of such an imposing work. In the reprocessing this has been much improved by the introduction of some artificial reverberation and re-adjustment of the loudness and some equalization, too, I presume. Unfortunately, I feel that it was carried a bit too far in the baritone solo, where "O Honey, I am going down the river in the morning" comes in loud enough to be a bit of a shock. Reference to how this was managed in the 1952 recording may have been helpful at this point.

Beecham has the echoing horn calls at the opening performed with a mute in the 1938 recording. A certain amount of tape modulation noise is audible in some of the opening horn music in the 1952 recording.

Next follow two versions of La Calinda. The first, recorded Jan. 7, 1938 and previously unpublished, is as the dance appears in the Florida Suite with one cut, presumably to fit it on one side of a 12" record. This cut omits a section that does not appear in the version of La Calinda from Koanga that Beecham recorded Feb. 11, 1938 and which was published. This cut makes the two versions identical in layout save for the section from one measure before cue 10 to six measures after of the Florida Suite²¹ which is replaced, in the Koanga²² version, by the section from cue 9 to three measures before cue 11 that is scored with banjos ad libitum (which instruments Beecham takes the libitum of omitting). Otherwise, the differences between the two versions lie in the orchestration, the notation of accents and phrasing and the dynamics.

These two performances of much the same music made a little more than a month apart are as different as many of the others made twenty

or more years apart. The opening section of the second is given a more energetic, slashing performance. Beecham makes the orchestra hit the triplets hard starting six measures before cue 6.

Eventyr is Delius's only rumbustious piece. Fenby writes of it: "The musical interest turns on the play and interaction of two groups of themes; the one, in the strings, expressing the idea of the warm-hearted, superstitious peasantry in these tales; the other, in the woodwind and brass, the eerie interventions in their lives of the fantastic creatures of Norwegian legend - the trolls, giants, demons, pixies."²³

Beecham misses none of the fun in either of his recordings - LPO, 1934 and RPO, 1951, the latter issued here on Columbia ML 4637. I do feel that the first performance has a more subtle molding of the quieter passages, such as the opening, Slow and mysteriously.²⁴ It has a little more magic and the 3/4 With easy movement has more of a "far away and long ago" feeling.

Bernard Shore has written: "Yet who can forget the glorious experience of playing a work like Eventyr with Beecham? Works like the Cuckoo, and Summer Night, are now so well-known to the orchestra that they go with most conductors, but not so the lesser-known Delius."²⁵

Eventyr is followed by Over the Hills, another work with a certain fairy tale-like atmosphere. It must be one of the first Delius works that fascinated me. How can one resist the magic of those horn calls in the opening section?

There are three Beecham recordings: LPO, 1936; RPO, 1950 and RPO, April 2, 1957 - Beecham's last Delius recording.

These three performances are very similar and, lacking a score to sharpen my perceptions, I can only say that I would not venture to characterize any one as being outstanding over another in any particular respect. They are less variable from one to the other than my listening mood could be.

In Summer Garden Delius gives us a pointillistic painting in tones of the Shangri La from whence his strange and wonderful music issued. How many of his works bear geographical titles of some sort or other, from the subtropical Florida to the mountains of the Land of the Midnight Sun!

But Summer Garden is more than a picture. There is love in the music and consummate contentment. The twittering figure that is developed throughout the piece represents, I suppose, the insects darting or fluttering from flower to flower. The slow string music may represent the more passive and vegetative aspects of nature as well as the composer's musing. A climax is reached in which wonder and ecstasy arise out of observation and contemplation, and then we return to the mood of

the beginning.

There are two Beecham recordings of Summer Garden: LPO, 1936 and RPO, 1951. I do not have access to the 1951 recording so, instead, I listened to the recordings conducted by Toye, Collins and Barbirolli for comparison. They are all fascinating. I suppose that no one would venture to conduct this music unless he were deeply committed to it. It must also require a patient and sympathetic orchestra and a good deal of rehearsal time. Otherwise, you are just going to get a lot of notes.

The 1936 Beecham recording allows us to hear more of the scoring than any of the others. In the Toye and Collins recordings the woodwinds are subdued to the point of indistinctness in the opening section. How beautifully Leon Goossens subtly holds back the tempo in the middle of the first oboe solo, in the Beecham recording. He makes the others sound mechanical.

In the following section - the river - with the long-drawn-out melody in the violas, Beecham has the violas play with their brightest tone. Only in the Beecham recording are the chords for the muted violins clearly audible above the violas. The doublings of the violas by horn and trumpet, when they occur, are beautifully balanced. Collins is the slowest in this section but his violas are the least bright. Toye is the fastest. He makes it somewhat more dramatic by concentrating on the melody in the violas to the extent that all the other accompanying parts are greatly subdued.

Beecham also has the horns execute a considerable swell just before the viola section. There is no hairpin in the score. Barbirolli also gives this passage a nice shape. Toye makes it pianissimo.

In the climactic section that follows, only in the Beecham recording can I distinguish the glockenspiel. Beecham has the longest hold after the climax, but I rather prefer the way that Barbirolli times it.

All conductors are restrained in their dynamics. They do not interpret ffff as they would in most other music. However, Beecham is the most restrained of all.

Next we have a few selections from the incidental music to Hassan. First, the Intermezzo and Serenade, which are usually performed together in concert - the best work to play to people who profess to hate Delius.

Beecham made three published recordings of the Intermezzo and Serenade: LPO, 1934; RPO, 1952, and, again with the RPO in 1955 as part of a recording of twelve numbers from the Hassan music.

The three recordings of the Intermezzo²⁶ make a good study of Beecham's subtly different ways with the same music on three different occasions. The work opens with a one measure motif consisting of four

semiquavers, a dotted crotchet and three quavers (if you will accept the Beechamesque way of referring to note durations). This motif is tossed about with changes in tonality and text.

In the 1934 recording Beecham subtly accents the second note of the group of three quavers. In the 1952 recording he accents the first note of the group and in 1955 he is more businesslike and plays the three quavers mostly evenly. The differences in accentuation are subtle and I had to play the recordings several times to realize that this was what was going on. I had initially started this in order to find out why the opening of the 1952 recording seemed more langorous than the 1934.

In addition, there is the subtle and fluctuating treatment of tempo. In the 1952 recording he seems to stretch out, ever so slightly, the three quavers in the first two measures. In the 1954 recording there is a ritard on the quavers at the end of the fourth measure; in 1955 he brings them in early and rushes them. Playing these over a number of times and trying to conduct them, as it were, is a good lesson in Beecham's continual rhythmic flexibility and how these little figures can be subtly different from one measure to another and one performance to another.

"Nothing was ever permanent: he (Beecham) was always making small adjustments and always marked the score in his own hand, the librarian transferring them to the parts"²⁷

In the 1955 performance, after the least sensitive of the three recordings of the Intermezzo, we have the most sensitive recording of the Serenade. There is a considerable ritard in the second measure of the harp solo, and then the solo violin is much quieter after the first hairpin. The performance continues in this hushed mood to the end. As a result, the Serenade is transformed from a lovely piece of decorative music to one more of those works imbued with the "still, sad music of humanity", a quotation from I know not whence that has been used to characterize the music of Delius.

In the unaccompanied wordless chorus the BBC Choir, in the 1955 recording, carries off the honors in comparison with the London Select Choir in the present recording.

All that I can report in comparing the closing scene, for which we have two performances, in which the lovely, evocative melody of the Serenade is turned into a tune whose commonplace character is not masked by the exotic harmonies, is that in the 1955 recording the tenor soloist starts in the distance and gradually comes closer. The music may be effective in its context, but as a concert piece it strikes this listener as one of Delius's least successful attempts to evoke that state of rapture that Cecil Gray has written about with such insight.²⁸

Side 1 of record 4 brings us to the 1927/8 orchestral recordings. These are the recordings that delighted Delius, who did not live to hear any of the LPO recordings.

Interestingly Geoffrey Toye recorded these same works at about the same time for HMV, and the first Toye releases were advertised in the October, 1929 issue of *The Gramophone* with Delius's personal endorsement. However, nowhere in the extant literature about Delius is there as much as a mention of these recordings. Toye had been associated professionally, at one time or another, with both Beecham and Norman O'Neill, a close personal friend of Delius.

Brigg Fair comes first on the disc. We can see, in Malcolm Walker's discography, that there was a complete recording session for Brigg Fair on July 11, 1928 with the London Symphony Orchestra. Obviously the results were unsatisfactory and, so, recording was resumed on Nov. 20 with a pickup orchestra, and the work was completed Dec. 11, according to Walker, who lists five takes for the first side (WAX 4335). The fifth take was the one initially chosen for publication. However, a later issue, a copy of which is in the Yale collection, uses what is designated as a take 10. This has been listened to and it is positively a different take from take 5. Presumably this "take 10" is the one that has been transferred for this reissue. I do not have this take at hand to make the comparison, but the performance in the reissue is definitely not the one on take 5. It is markedly faster in Variations 1-6 (I adopt the synopsis of form published in the *Philharmonic Score No. 207*).²⁹ Discographers undoubtedly would be appreciative if take numbers as well as matrix numbers were specified on all reissues!

Brigg Fair was on the first program that Beecham gave with the LPO, but he did not get around to re-recording the work until 1946 and then he recorded it once more, stereophonically, in 1957.

Thus, we have two performances made years afterward to compare with the two takes of side 1 from 1928.

The 1946 recording was issued by Victor both in a red vinyl edition (DV 14) and on shellac (DM 1206). This performance is distinguished from the start by Gerald Jackson's superb molding of the first flute part and is also memorable for its wealth of expressive nuances and for its climax in Variation 6 followed by the most beautiful of middle sections - slower than the other two versions with lovely legato and tone and rhythmic fluctuations - try beating time to it!

The 1957 reading is more erratic in tempo in Variations 1-6 than are the others tending, at times, to go almost as fast as 1928, take 10 (?), but then pulling back. There is less attention to nuances and there are a few cases of some slight lack of unanimity in ensemble.

I do not hear the harp in the middle section of the 1928 recording. Geoffrey Toye's recording is also particularly successful in the

middle section. Actually, it is amazing how alike all three Beecham recordings and the Toye and Anthony Collins recordings are. Barbirolli's stereophonic recording, on the other hand, is an excellent demonstration of a successful performance of Delius that shows a very different conducting personality from Beecham's.

Variation 11, Slow, with solemnity, seems faster than one would expect from the score marking in all three Beecham versions. The 1928 recording is the slowest of the three. The Collins recording has a slower tempo here but, unfortunately, the orchestra is not well in tune. The Barbirolli stereo recording has the slowest tempo of all in this variation, and one that would seem most in accord with the composer's designation.

The transitional passage after the twelfth variation is a prime example of that "hazy activity" that Ben Horsfall refers to. There is no crisp definition of the flute line, and the combined sounds of flute and clarinet in the 1928 recording are unusual, indeed.

The 1928 orchestra, while not as good as the RPO or, at any rate, not as well rehearsed, has its own charm in the older style of string playing, more akin to the playing that Elgar elicited, although the portamenti are much suppressed under Beecham's baton.

The recording of the tubular bells varies considerably among the three Beecham recordings. In the 1928 recording they are possibly a bit too forward and they have a slightly out-of-tune quality about them. In the 1946 recording they are not sufficiently distinct. At their first entry, in Variation 7, the third stroke is inaudible. In 1957 perfection was achieved. The bells sound from a nice perspective: clear, in perfect balance and beautifully tuned.

Next on this record side is First Cuckoo. The performance is almost indistinguishable from Beecham's 1946 recording with the RPO. The 1959 recording, stereophonic, with the RPO is slower than the others.

The Geoffrey Toye recording is worthy of mention. It has more in the way of tempo changes. For example, at the tail end of the first melody (the Norwegian folk tune), where a figure enters in oboe and clarinet, there is a ritard and then the tempo picks up again as the opening of the melody is resumed.

Finally, on this side, we come to Walk, which Beecham recorded only once more, and then as part of the recording of the complete Village Romeo in 1948.

Thus, in the first recording, the work is a concert piece, scored (by Beecham) for double woodwinds and four horns. In the recording of the opera, the scoring is for triple woodwinds and six horns.

For the recording of the opera, the RPO, as is obvious from

listening to the discs, was prepared to a very high point of perfection with all details executed with practiced finesse. The 1927 performance is what one gets from a fine pickup orchestra rehearsed sufficiently to give a satisfactory performance. As one example of the difference in execution, right at the beginning, notice how lumpily the basses and cellos execute their dotted-note figure when they enter, in the 1927 recording.

The 1927 recording moves along more emphatically in the accelerando sections. This could well be ascribed to the difference between a concert performance of the work and one that is part of the opera.

The 1927 recording sounds thin beside the glow and polish of the 1948 recording. The woodwinds predominate too much for my taste, however, in the 1948 recording. In this respect I prefer the balance achieved in 1927.

The album concludes with a talk by Sir Thomas Beecham about A Mass of Life and the performance of two previously unpublished records of excerpts. The first of these, the Prelude to Part II, is lovely mountain music with superb horn playing. This idyll is rudely shattered by the resumption of Sir Thomas's talk at much too high a volume level and, after the talk is concluded, we have the orchestral introduction to No. 3 of Part II - an excerpt that, to this listener, does not seem to succeed as a concert piece divorced from its context. It serves to remind us that, in this wonderful era of the long playing record, we are no longer required to settle for snippets from large works of music.

I would like to conclude this review with a couple of rounds of applause.

First for Anthony Griffith and all the people at EMI, past and present, who have produced such a superb product. As a recent disastrous reissue of the Mengelberg - N.Y. Philharmonic performance of Ein Heldenleben from another industry giant demonstrates, the consistent level of engineering excellence that we are getting from EMI in album after album cannot be taken for granted.

The sound of the transfers of the LPO recordings from the original master parts, a process explained by Anthony Griffith in the ARSC Journal, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (1976) is outstanding in its clarity, fidelity and lack of noise. These, almost without exception, reproduced more quietly than did the Columbia, Victor and Capitol LP and stereo pressings of the later recordings with which I compared them. All records were played without the use of any noise suppression devices.

In the case of previously unpublished material the transfers evidently had to be made, in most cases, from existing shellacs - most likely from only surviving copies. The contrast with the others is obvious and I hope that EMI will soon acquire the available equipment

that will further reduce that contrast.

Paris and Brigg Fair both sounded unnecessarily ticky for the first few minutes. First Cuckoo sounds as if it had to be reprocessed from shellacs.

The 1927/8 recordings clustered on record 4, side 1 were nicely equalized to conform with the LPO recordings.

Projects like this have to be done on a time and money budget. Delius's compositional procedures cannot be applied to the business world. However, the imperfections that I have called out are almost trivial relative to the totality of the technical achievement. Or, otherwise stated, for every tick that remains there are at least a hundred that have been successfully suppressed.

However, it is the reviewer's duty to report what he hears. This helps keep everyone up to the mark, hopefully.

Finally, our last and greatest round of applause for Sir Thomas Beecham. Did any other composer ever have such a champion? After hearing Appalachia for the first time, Beecham felt that "It seemed that if there was one thing above all else for the orchestra and myself to do at once, it was to acquire all of this music that we could lay our hands on, make it as much our own as that of the lesser eighteenth-century masters, and play it often and everywhere."³⁰

Beecham's espousal of Delius was innocent of any calculation of its effect on his own career, although it did turn out that his relationship with Delius played an important role in his decision to concentrate on conducting.

And Beecham was faithful unto the end: his biography of Delius was published only two years before his own death.

Hearty applause not only signifies our appreciation, it also expresses our hope for an encore. EMI assures us that one will be forthcoming.

List of Published Take Numbers

In those instances in which the Malcolm Walker discography lists only one take number, we have been able to confirm from issued records that the number listed is the one issued. This listing covers those recordings for which more than one take number has been listed or, else, none at all.

WAX3155-3; 3160-1; WAX3156-2, 57-1; WA7621-2, 22-1; WAX4335-5 & -10, 4441-2, 42-1, 43-2; WAX5069-1, 5104-2;
CAX7120-2, 21-5, 22-1, 23-2, 24-2, 25-1;

CAX7356-2, 57-2, 58-2, 59-2; CAX7375-2, 76-5; CAX7377-4;
CA15315-1, 16-1; CAX7848-2, 49-2a, 50-2, 51-1;
CAX7772-2, 73-1a, 74-1a, 75-2, 76-3, 77-1, 78-4;
CAX7845-1a, 46-1a, 47-2a;
CAX8153-2, 54-3, 55-2, 57-2, 58-1, 59-2, 60-2, 56-3, 67-2, 68-2;
CAX8189-2a;
CAX8257-2, 56-2a; CAX8161-3;
2EA11328-3, 13034-1; 2EA11445-2; 2EA11521-2;
2EA13596-2, 97-2, 98-2, 99-2, 13600-1, 01-2;
2EA16980-2A; 81-3A; 82-3A; 2EA16983-2A

The correct matrix and take numbers for the issued recording of The Song of the High Hills are: 2EA11429-2, 30-2, 31-2, 32-2, 33-2, 34-2. We are lacking published take numbers for the following: Summer Night, Summer Evening, and Song Before Sunrise, DB9757/8; Eventyr, LX8931/2; Koanga - Closing Scene, LX1502 (Ed. Take numbers and tape master file numbers for these items are: Summer Night, recorded 18 February 1949 on 2EA 13613-1, 13614-2 and on tape master file numbers 151/2; Summer Evening, recorded 18 February 1949 on 2EA 13614-2 and on tape master file numbers 151/2; Song before Sunrise, recorded 18 February and 6 April 1949 on 2EA 13614-2 and tape numbers 151/2 (18 Feb.) and on 2EA 13745-1 and tape reference number 305 A-9 (6 April). Eventyr, recorded 12 January and 3 April 1951 on CAX 11003-2, 11063-2, 11064-2, 11062-2 and on tape master file numbers 2867/8 (12 Jan.) and 3285/6 (3 April); Koanga - Closing Scene, recorded 26 January 1951 on CAX 11022-3 and 11023-2B and on tape master file numbers 2964/5)

We would much appreciate hearing from anyone who knows of any published takes other than those that we have listed.

Send information either to the author of this review at 216 Stratford St., Syracuse, NY, 13210 or to Richard Warren, Jr., Historical Sound Recordings, Yale Univ. Library, 1603A Yale Sta., New Haven, Conn., 06520

Richard C. Burns

Footnotes

1. Le Grand Baton - Journal of the Sir Thomas Beecham Society, American branch. Address: 664 South Irena Ave. Redondo Beach, CA 90277.
2. Joe Batten's Book - The Story of Sound Recording. Rockliff, London, 1956.
3. Programs and personnel lists of the LPO are to be found in the appendices of Thomas Russell - Philharmonic Decade. Hutchinson & Co., London, etc., n.d.
4. This amusing incident is related in Reid: Sir Thomas Beecham: An Independent Biography. E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York, 1962, p. 209-10 and Cardus: Sir Thomas Beecham. Collins, London, 1961, p. 99-100.
5. Beecham: A Mingled Chime, An Autobiography. G.P. Putnam's Sons., New York, 1943.
6. Proctor-Gregg: Sir Thomas Beecham, Conductor and Impresario, As Remembered By His Friends and Colleagues, privately published, 1971-2. Available from the Sir Thomas Beecham Society, p. 56.
7. Cardus, p. 115.
8. Proctor-Gregg, p. 68.
9. Proctor-Gregg, p. 72.
10. Proctor-Gregg, p. 54-5.
11. Frederick Delius: A Book of Songs (in two sets). Words editor: Peter Pears, Oxford University Press, London, n.d. (copyright 1930).
12. Shore: The Orchestra Speaks. Longmans, Green & Co., London, etc., 1938.
13. A Mingled Chime, p. 242.
14. Universal Edition No. 13874, n.c., n.d.
15. Fenby: Delius. Crowell & Co., New York, 1971.
16. A Mingled Chime, p. 229.
17. Delius: Sea Drift. Hawkes Pocket Score No. 43. Boosey & Hawkes, Ltd., London, etc., 1939.
18. In Delius: Three Orchestral Pieces. Hawkes Pocket Score No. 86.

Boosey & Hawkes, Ltd., London, etc., n.d. c.1938.

19. A Mingled Chime, p. 101-2.
20. Delius: Appalachia, full score, revised and edited by Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart. Hawkes & Son, Ltd., London, etc., 1951.
21. Delius: Florida, Suite for Orchestra (Op. post.), revised and edited by the late Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart. Hawkes Pocket Score No. 748. Boosey & Hawkes, London, etc., 1963.
22. Delius: La Calinda, Dance from the Opera Koanga, arranged by Eric Fenby. In Delius: Three Orchestral Pieces. Hawkes Pocket Score No. 86. Boosey & Hawkes, Ltd., London, etc., n.d. c.1938.
23. Fenby, p. 74.
24. Delius: Eventyr. Full Score. Augener, Ltd., London, c.1923.
25. Shore, p. 143.
26. Delius: Intermezzo and Serenade from Hassan, arranged by Sir Thomas Beecham. In Delius: Three Orchestral Pieces, Hawkes Pocket Score No. 23. Boosey & Hawkes, Ltd., London, etc., 1940.
27. Proctor-Gregg, p. 89, quoting Frederick Riddle.
28. Memories of Delius by Cecil Gray published in A Delius Companion, ed. by Christopher Redwood. John Calder, London, 1976 (p. 140).
This is quoted and discussed in Delius - Portrait of a Cosmopolitan by Christopher Palmer. Duckworth, London, 1976 (p. 3 and 4).
29. Delius: Brigg Fair. Philharmonia Pocket Score No. 207. Universal Edition, A.G., Vienna, etc., 1925.
30. A Mingled Chime, p. 102.