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# DELIUS

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*Published by Leonard & Virginia Woolf at The  
Hogarth Press, 52 Tavistock Square, London, W.C. 1*

1928



## NOTE

I wish to thank the Editor of *The Musical Times* for his courtesy in allowing me to reprint part of the material of the present essay, which originally appeared in his pages.

R. H. H.

*October 1927.*

Printed in Great Britain by  
NEILL & Co., LTD., EDINBURGH.



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THE purpose of the present essay is not biographical. In his volume on Delius, Mr Heseltine provides an adequate treatment of the composer's life without the sense of limitation which is inevitable in a shorter sketch. The necessary facts are there available to the student, and some account is also to be found in the standard dictionaries of our time. But if the details relating to the biography of a contemporary composer are definite beyond discussion, the same cannot be said in respect to the critical attitude which one should adopt towards his work. There is no one who is better acquainted with Delius's utterances and æsthetic intentions than Mr Heseltine, and in regard to the unique position

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which he occupies I have for his opinions on this subject the greatest respect. On the other hand, the law of averages alone guarantees that some should find a difficulty in identifying themselves exactly with the artistic estimates of another. It is not that Mr Heseltine's views are here held in question; any such direct contradiction would serve only to reflect the foolishness of the attempt. But it is possible that a perspective other than his may allow an alternate reaction on purely æsthetic lines. From a critical standpoint a proprietary attitude need not confuse the observer. In result, the indication is that although the accuracy of Mr Heseltine's deductions cannot be questioned without misfortune to the inquirer, it must be realised that, critically and æsthetically, Delius's works are open to more than one opinion; moreover, lack of perception can be the only excuse for estimating as wrong-headed the judgment of another critic simply

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on the score that it does not happen to be coincident with one's own.

The position of Delius, viewed historically, has a particular interest for those whose concern is with an examination of contemporary developments. At a time when romance is, musically, out of fashion, it is a little curious that the close of the romantic movement should be marked by a composer whose magnitude is comparable to few of his predecessors. The history of romance in music begins, to all intents and purposes, with the advent of Weber. He is the first composer whom we can regard with accuracy as an exponent of those principles of musical conduct and expression epitomised by Delius. In one respect there has been a fundamental change of attitude. The music of Weber as seen, for instance, in *Der Freischütz*, reflects essentially the spirit of revolution and national endeavour which characterised the internal con-

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dition of Germany at the time at which the opera was written. There is in it a vitality of expression which cannot be denied. With Schumann came a change of focus, but the ideal remained; later the inheritance was enriched further by Chopin and Brahms. The early sources of Delius were Grieg and, to some extent, Strauss. But whereas the principal figures of the romantic movement, especially Weber and Grieg, discovered their individuality in music of a character conveniently though vaguely termed "national" for the purposes of identification, Delius makes no such demands. It is true that some of his music is essentially English in character; for example, his development of the pastoral rhapsody is unmistakable in *Brigg Fair* and some of the smaller idylls. But part of the greatness of Delius is due to the fact that his breadth of conception ignores the limitations of country or continent. His work is often

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cosmopolitan. The poetry of his ideas owes little or nothing to academic associations. It may be questioned whether or no this outlook becomes a handicap. To a man musically of small stature it might be so; to Delius the lack of pedagogic restraint spells liberty and not licence.

The question of immediate derivation, although significant in any consideration of a minor composer, need not concern us too closely in an estimation of the mature work of one whose individuality is so definitely determined. The bulk of Delius's music is marked by characteristics for which he alone could be responsible. This isolation is in itself evidence of the personal nature of his art. At a time when music, like painting, is suffering from a host of mediocrities, an independent figure must possess a peculiar importance. The best achievements of Delius show clearly that he is unmoved by the fashions of

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to-day. Perhaps the only other English composer in respect of whom this can be said with certainty is Elgar. This attitude is one of the tests of greatness.

One must admit, however, that this development of independence, although definite in character, did not come to Delius in his earliest years. Beethoven provides a similar example. The connection with romance is to be found principally through the music of Grieg, in which Delius's finest characteristic, his art of contemplative writing, had its beginning. But the debt cannot be reckoned as considerable; its importance lies in the fact that it illustrates the link between Delius and the pioneers of the romantic movement. Nevertheless, Delius developed and expanded his art far beyond anything that Grieg could have conceived, and in consequence one cannot insist with reason upon a very close association of ideas.

If there is to be any clear grasp of

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Delius's music in its entirety, the question of texture cannot remain wholly unconsidered. In a former essay<sup>1</sup> we attempted briefly to trace the transposition from the horizontal writing, which is found at its best in the works of Bach, to the more vertical means of expression according to which the major utterances of Beethoven are fashioned. It was the endeavour to illustrate that in our own time vertical writing has gained an ascendancy which is almost complete. In this respect the methods of the twentieth century form a remarkable antithesis to those of the seventeenth. But if Delius in this respect is in accord with his contemporaries it is not owing to an ill-calculated imitation. Should his purpose require it, he can write counterpoint which is both scholarly and musical. It happens, however, that the medium in which the essential poetry of his art finds the most

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Music.*

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satisfactory expression is not the medium of horizontal writing. To the historian the important point is that Delius's method is not the outcome of an incapacity to think contrapuntally, though an equally decisive pronouncement would not be justified in the case of some of his contemporaries.

It is this distinction which encourages the critic to claim for Delius a position elevated above those whose intent is less thoughtful. Like many another genius, he can afford to disregard artistic conventions if it suits him to do so. There can be no denial that his system is attended with danger when pursued by those of lesser ability. It is a remarkable tribute to his capacity for organised expression that his failures are few. Debussy has been equally fortunate. But as models for their successors the method of neither composer is to be commended. Both have had their imitators, and their disaster

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is itself a warning and an example to posterity.

The intensely chromatic character of Delius's music furnishes another point of interest. Part of this inheritance comes from Grieg, but it may also be traced to Strauss, who in turn had it from Wagner. Admittedly there are works of Bach whose nature is as chromatic as anything which Wagner ever achieved. But with Bach chromaticism is not the rule, and its occurrence is marked by a means of expression entirely different from that employed by the later romantic school. If Delius sometimes approaches the boundaries of tonality he never places himself irreducibly beyond them. In this respect he marks a development widely divergent from Schönberg. Delius is too clearly a poet to be able to accept dissonance with equanimity, even though in his own works he should admit it when the context is suitable. The reflective

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nature of his writings emphasises those subjective tendencies which no external stimulus is able entirely to subdue. And since it is in the contemplative music of Delius that the true essentials of his art are to be found, our present concern is with an examination of those works which may be said fairly to represent this aspect of the composer's creative genius.

Delius's biographers appear to be divided in their opinions as to his merits as a writer of opera. It is interesting, perhaps, briefly to compare the verdicts of two critics, whose opposing views with regard to *A Village Romeo and Juliet* seem fairly to represent the extremities one has to encounter in seeking an impartial estimation of the work. Mr Cecil Gray is at least definite when he says that the voice parts "strike one occasionally as needlessly angular and unvocal." If this criticism is harsh it has, at all events, some show

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of justice on its side. In a further discussion of this opera the same writer indicates, with penetrating mildness, that "the composer has not always been completely successful in subordinating the dramatic action to the exigencies of the music. Here and there it intrudes itself forcibly, and the operatic conventions have not been entirely eliminated. The work seems at times to hover exasperatingly on the border of two worlds."

The opinion of Mr Heseltine appears to be in direct contradiction to Mr Gray's view. He says: "If opera can be defined as perfect correlation between music and action, then *A Village Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most flawless masterpieces that has ever been given to the world."

Between this Scylla and Charybdis the impartial critic has somehow to find his way. In result, one's conclusions incline to the opinion that Delius's

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greatest talents do not lie in the direction of opera. It cannot be allowed that he fails definitely in his handling of drama, but in his rhapsodic works, other than opera, Delius has expressed equal beauty of thought in a form still more compact. It is not to be expected that a composer should find equal success in every medium in which he exerts himself. From a critical standpoint, therefore, it seems wiser to acknowledge these limitations where they occur rather than to falsify the issue with an appreciation which, though it may possess the merit of sincerity, cannot be said fairly to aid the judgment of the discriminating observer.

Any consideration of Delius's choral works must be concerned to some extent with a problem, technical and æsthetic, which has become inseparable from their examination. The voice is of all instruments the most flexible, and to define its possibilities is a task which no critic

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can attempt with impunity. If, however, the discussion is confined to practical limits it is a little easier to make an assessment. The practice of music must be, after all, the ultimate test of what is expedient and desirable. The attitude is of considerable importance, because Delius's methods of choral writing have given rise to two entirely different points of view. It will be our endeavour to present and discuss each of them in turn.

On the one hand is found the opinion that Delius makes demands upon his voices which might be confined more properly to instruments of the orchestra. This argument is not to be dismissed lightly. If the voice is capable of technical gymnastics, as it certainly is, it does not follow that displays of that character are æsthetically admissible. They must seriously interfere with the architecture of the conception, and, so far from enhancing the effect of the

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words with which they are associated, are found in result to detract from their power and ordered coherence. There may be a gain in brilliance, but the cost is incalculable. From another angle the procedure cannot be otherwise than detrimental to that formal expression upon which the successful presentation of a choral work of any magnitude depends. One cannot allow that there is more merit in an angular passage of vocal writing than in a less ambitious though more musical structure. It is foolish to decry experiments if they form the basis for definite progress, but when the means becomes the end it is time to raise the voice of protest. Furthermore, the most significant and lasting achievements in the music which forms our inheritance do not depend for their ultimate effect upon doubtful extravagances of a nature purely virtuosic.

Against this certain critics have

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advanced, somewhat injudiciously, that it is precisely the instrumental use of the voice with orchestra which distinguishes Delius from all other composers. This argument hardly constitutes a justification. A novel or original expression may serve as an aid to identity, but unless it can show a more significant value the artist who claims the characteristic has not improved his former state. In this respect Delius suffers to an unfortunate extent from those who are eager to associate themselves with his every gesture. It is not, one fears, that these supporters are sensible to the true aspects of his greatness. Too often they betray by their actions a grievous lack of that discrimination which is so essential for the foundation of accurate judgment. But to some minds nothing except an extreme policy will serve. After neglecting a composer for years there is an intense and often irrational movement for his support. The ten-

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dency of the present day is to a behaviour of that kind on Delius's behalf. The composer himself is the last person who would wish to encourage anything of the sort. To the critic whose aim is an estimation both thoughtful and detached, the semi-cultured enthusiasms referred to are a constant despair.

A further contention which cannot be ignored is that any composer who, like Delius, attempts to expand choral technique is open to an unjust accusation of writing instrumentally rather than vocally. One cannot regard this assertion as more than a half-truth. The history of music illustrates very fairly the extreme possibilities of choral technique. The point is that the character of the voice is a constant quality. It does not grow more elastic with each succeeding generation. If a singer finds certain music physically unnegotiable in one century, there is no very clear reason why the process of time should bring

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about a change of attitude. The discovery of fresh technical ingenuities will not satisfy as an explanation. Composers recognise the limits of instruments, and, if they are wise, learn to respect them. They do not so often recollect that in performance the voice is governed by equal restrictions.

The power of Delius may be measured in some degree by the fact that despite their acknowledged handicaps his choral works possess a magnificence and grandeur which it would be futile to deny. We cannot ignore, however, that orchestral writing is for him a happier medium. Mr Sydney Grew, in a charming appreciative sketch of the composer, points out that in *A Mass of Life* and, to a lesser extent, in *Sea-Drift*, Delius is very apt to mistake both accent and sense: "The greatness of Delius is, I feel, transcendental; but in fine points like these he speaks with the uncertainty of a beginner."

In *Sea-Drift*, a setting of Whitman's poem, one has the feeling that an essential coherence is somehow lacking. The choral and orchestral writing is, independently, very beautiful, but when heard in conjunction, unity appears to be absent. It is difficult to account theoretically for this impression, which, fundamentally, is a physical association of the concert-hall. The origin is not to be found in defects of performance. The cause, whatever it may be, is of a more significant, though less obvious, nature.

*The Mass of Life* has a nobility of structure and breadth of conception which, together with Delius's fine poetic discernment, almost redeems the work from any of the shortcomings which normally result from the composer's peculiar vocal treatment. In the opinion of the present writer it is Delius's greatest achievement in a choral medium. An inspiration of the first order is com-

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bined with an architecture both solid and satisfying. In this case admiration may well stand before criticism.

The ultimate purpose of our quest, which is to discover the most complete and concise expression of Delius's art, must be delayed, though for a moment only, by a brief consideration of two other choral works. These are the *Appalachia*, variations for chorus and orchestra, and *A Song of the High Hills*. In both cases one is sorely tempted to suspend judgment. The feeling is that when confronted by such beauty of expression analysis should be at an end. *Appalachia*, in its score, is hardly convincing, yet a performance leaves one with the converse impression. The same comment has a partial application to *A Song of the High Hills*. The latter work has faults beyond dispute; the unevenness in construction and texture cannot escape notice. But its vitality is proof against these imperfections, and

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for that reason only the most rigorous critics would urge its final disqualification.

The excursions of Delius into those forms which bring into prominence a solo instrument are not, on the whole, attended with success. The Piano Concerto, even after revision, cannot be considered an example of good or great workmanship. The Violin Concerto is on a different level altogether, but it is for the most part a rhapsody for orchestra which would not entirely lose its beauty were the solo violin altogether absent. To the other works of this class which Delius has attempted this remark has a reference almost similar. One does not feel that the thematic material of the 'Cello Sonata is of sufficient interest adequately to compensate for its vagueness of expression. The second Violin Sonata is, however, more satisfactory. At all events a closer acquaintance with it

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after several performances brings with it a genuine pleasure to the attentive listener.

It is not in the operas or in the choral works that one finds a crystallisation of Delius's poetry, although it is contained to some degree in everything that he has handled. What, then, is left as a reward for the search?

There are five works for orchestra or small orchestra, all rather similar in character, which more than any other of his compositions are representative of Delius. This group includes *Brigg Fair* (1907), *In a Summer Garden* (1908), *A Dance Rhapsody* (No. I) (1908), *Summer Night on the River* (1911), and *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* (1912). If this list had to be extended one would, perhaps, include *Paris* (1899). But one scarcely feels that this latter work contains any typical utterance which has not been repeated or improved upon in one or another of the

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five works we have elected to consider.

Before proceeding to any sort of analysis it may be pointed out that a careful perusal of a considerable quantity of biographical matter by diverse authors has shown one thing definitely: that in no single instance has anyone been found to speak ill of that part of the composer's work which is purely contemplative, whatever disagreements there may have been as to the value of his excursions into other forms. By that the present selection is in some measure guided.

*Brigg Fair*, which Delius has happily described as "an English rhapsody," belongs to the beginning of that period at which the composer was definitely breaking away from external influence. It is characterised by an extraordinary freshness, and conveys with an acute sensitiveness the atmosphere of simplicity which Delius desires to suggest.

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He alone could have written the opening bars of *Brigg Fair*. The delicate flute solo and sweeping harp accompaniment form by their economical presentation an ideal prelude to the principal theme. The tune on which the rhapsody is built is a Lincolnshire folk-song, collected by Percy Grainger, and given by him to Delius. After the delightfully pastoral introduction the melody is announced in its simplest form by an oboe. Later this is decorated by degrees and woven into a fairly complex harmonic scheme. In that section of the work which is purely rhapsodic there is practically no movement beyond an occasional shifting of block chords by way of harmonising the variation of the original theme. Part of the success of Delius lies in the fact that he invariably selects an appropriate and telling chord when he makes a harmonic change.

Delius has never been very successful

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in his writing for brass; only too often the result has been what the composer would desire most to avoid, namely, a touch of vulgarity—sometimes even of blatancy. In the present work the variation marked “Slow, with solemnity” suffers from this defect. It gives, as it were, a glimpse of Strauss on the doorstep. In fairness to Delius, however, I must add that it has not been my good fortune to hear a performance of *Brigg Fair* which has not been execrably bad and an obvious misinterpretation of the composer’s intentions; this work has, indeed, suffered much at the hands of conductors. But even when every allowance is made for inadequate rehearsal and a general lack of perception, it is clear that the variation referred to cannot ever be quite successful.

Apart from this small grumble one has nothing but praise for the rhapsody. Take, for instance, Delius’s treatment

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of the folk-tune in the closing bars of the work, which consists of superimposing the richest and most exalted harmonies above the original melody. With the exception, perhaps, of the apex in the *Dance Rhapsody* (No. I), Delius has not written a passage to surpass in beauty this conclusion to *Brigg Fair*, even though one may find examples to equal it in that respect. This admittedly difficult work is charming enough to deserve something better than those public rehearsals of it which are styled performances.

If in our consideration of *In a Summer Garden* no reference is made to specific passages in the score, it is because, in the first place, the structure is so far built up of little fragments, though wonderfully compact as a whole, that isolated examples cannot give the clue to the complete work as in the case of the other idylls; secondly, no analysis will serve save in minute detail, and

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in the present context the process is inadmissible.

What, then, shall be said in respect of this intimately constructed work? To exhaust further the adjectives connected with beauty of expression may not convince, and yet, of all the impressions that the listener receives, the sense of beauty is strongest. If one takes care not to look for objective impressionism as the foremost consideration, the lines of Rossetti which preface the score may be quoted as indicative of the spirit of the work:

“All are my blooms and all sweet blooms of  
love  
To thee I gave while Spring and Summer  
sang.”

One feels that here Delius's hand is surer than in *Brigg Fair*, though in mood the resemblance is strong. Perhaps a partial explanation may be conceived if *In a Summer Garden* is regarded

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as coming from the composer without any tangible external stimulus. Be that as it may, it is a very lovely work.

The first *Dance Rhapsody* bears some resemblance to *Brigg Fair* in actual form, and, as in the latter work, the main theme is preceded by a few quiet introductory bars. The theme itself is angular, and at first sight would not appear to suggest many possibilities as regards interesting harmonic treatment. But with this tune Delius works wonders; it is in just such circumstances that his chromatic method is most appropriate in its application. His remarkable capacity for handling the woodwind of the orchestra is here seen to the best advantage. The theme is stated and restated, but always against a shifting harmonic background, so that the listener's interest never wanes. It may be well to note that the middle section is entirely satisfactory when performed under proper conditions in the concert-

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hall. Those who know this work only through the medium of the gramophone might be misled into thinking otherwise.

The apex of the rhapsody is reached in what is surely the most beautiful passage that Delius has written; we cannot hope to improve upon Mr Heseltine's description: "The climax of the work is not dynamic, but comes at the music's ebb, a metamorphosis of the dance theme played by a solo violin against a background of divided strings . . . perhaps the most intense and exalted moment in all Delius's work."

But with Mr Heseltine one must agree that the Coda does not and cannot come off in performance. It is startling and upsets the reflections induced by the contemplative nature of the climactic passage. Nevertheless, Delius has willed otherwise, and in theory one cannot resent his conception.

Even at this stage of our quest it is becoming clear, perhaps, what is the

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nature of Delius's art. In an earlier paragraph reference was made to the compactness of Delius's artistic expression when seen at its best, and the findings indicated that this crystallisation is not to be found in the operas or major choral works. There remain for consideration two idylls for small orchestra, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* and *Summer Night on the River*. It is in these pieces, the finest orchestral works that Delius has written, that this compactness is ultimately to be found. "To anyone unacquainted with his music, the *First Cuckoo* might be presented as an epitome of his whole life's work." Viewed in its entirety this idyll is a flawless gem; its neighbour, *Summer Night on the River*, is scarcely less so. Both are conceived in the same contemplative mood, but for the benefit of those who have access only to reductions from full score, one would mention that the texture of the latter work is apt to

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suffer in the process of transcription to terms of the pianoforte.

The significant question which naturally arises after any examination of Delius's work is by what process is he able to attain, without any trace of decadence, the unusual richness of expression which characterises all his best achievements. The clue is hardly to be found in the texture itself. The score of, for instance, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* is to all appearances extraordinarily clumsy, and yet nothing could be more delicate in actual performance. The vertical blocks of chords which on paper seem so ill-arranged convey sounds of reflective beauty as economical as they are luxurious. Furthermore, there are no ingenious devices whose purpose it is to mislead the ear. Delius does not depart from convention in the demands that he makes upon his chamber orchestra. His scores differ from those of Mozart in the

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sense that he divides the strings, whereas Mozart does not. On the other hand, divided string-writing is a characteristic which Delius shares with nearly all other composers of to-day, and yet they are rarely, if ever, as successful as he. The lasting quality of his music is due to something less superficial than an accident of technical expression. It is with diffidence that one puts forward an explanation which may conceivably cover the facts.

There is no movement in the history of music which has been capable of infinite development without interruption. The classical tradition of austerity and impersonal utterance brought about an inevitable reaction, which resulted in a series of romantic composers. In our own day, apart from the more pronounced disorders of contemporary music, there is a tendency again to the classical outlook. From a musical standpoint the pursuit of romance is not

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viewed with favour. So it is that with Delius we come to the close of a great movement. In this case the finest developments are to be found in a composer who is apparently the last exponent, as Weber was the first, of those romantic ideals which do not properly belong to the twentieth century. Delius has at his disposal the experience of his predecessors, and, like Bach, epitomises the best of all that has gone before him. To this he adds the wealth of poetry and imagination together with a fine discernment. Without his powerful and extremely individual idiom Delius might have failed. As it is, the magnitude of his genius enables him to summarise, almost perfectly, the essential principles of that movement of which he is so notable a figure.

As a natural consequence, therefore, it would appear that any further developments in romantic music must be stayed awhile if anticlimax is to be

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avoided. It is difficult to see how an immediate expansion of this particular tradition could be unattended by misfortune. A somewhat crude parallel may be found in the history of the drama. Certain plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are marked to some extent by a decadence which is the logical outcome of retaining the faults of the Shakespearean model without that genius which enabled Shakespeare himself to triumph over disadvantages otherwise detrimental to dramatic expression. Ford and Massinger emphasised the decay still further. The process is too natural to be remarkable. But it is scarcely possible that the final stages of a romantic movement in music should be unaccompanied by similar dangers. As we indicated earlier, Delius has had his imitators, and their failure has been pitiable. There is little excuse for further disasters.

By peculiar ill-luck a combination of

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circumstances renders the present situation more perilous than it would otherwise be. A leading characteristic in English music to-day is the use and abuse of folk-tunes. There is no help for it; the fact has to be admitted. This comment in no way implies a condemnation of folk-music as music; in a suitable context, unattended by artificialities, it is both charming and delightful. The fault rests with those composers who, suffering apparently from a lack of genuine inventive ability, employ folk-tunes in their works with a ludicrous disregard for what is artistic or appropriate. To such an extent has this culture been developed that almost greater credit is claimed for stealing a folk-tune than for the invention of an original theme. Such a condition cannot be regarded as healthy.

It is not to be denied that Delius himself has made occasional use of folk melody, and in consequence the less

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cautious or more arrogant of his supporters feel that they may adopt a more unlicensed procedure with impunity. This presumption on their part brings its own punishment. The bulk of Delius's music is entirely independent of external melodic aid, and he has never used a folk-tune so that by its association the quality of his work has suffered. Such discrimination is, unfortunately, rare in any generation. The difficulty is that to many people there is in music no clear difference between judicious adaptation and wholesale borrowing. If they would learn to appreciate the distinction a recommendation to a closer study of the matter might possibly meet the case.

It is hoped that this brief reference to the problem of folk-music will help to indicate the nature of some of those dangers with which the close of the romantic movement is attended. But although the example of Delius may

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encourage lesser men to extravagance in certain respects, his influence on the present generation is very far from being purely negative.

By way of conclusion it may be profitable to examine two precepts, both of which find physical representation in Delius's best work. The first is economy of statement. The critic can hardly overestimate the importance of this virtue at a time when a reverse process is more clearly the order of the day. In his idylls Delius has not written a superfluous note. The number of composers concerning whom one can, with accuracy, make the same comment is lamentably few. Bach set an example which, one might say almost without exaggeration, was forgotten as soon as he was dead. At all events, the standard declined and continued to do so until comparatively recent times. In the nineteenth century Wagner, consciously or otherwise, made a vigorous attempt

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to check the extravagances which had become fashionable. Let those who doubt the truth of this assertion examine for themselves the Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde* or the *Siegfried* idyll. A careful inspection should convince. Delius carried the development a step farther. In this he is almost alone of his generation. To respect his restraint the curious observer would do well to compare Delius's method with the less rational demands of Strauss, or in an earlier period, Berlioz. The *Requiem* of the latter composer, although one of the most magnificent choral achievements the world has ever seen, indicates plainly enough the terms in which men had become accustomed to think. The revival of the chamber orchestra, which is one of the most hopeful signs of the present revolution, must be attributed partly to Delius's influence. It is not simply a question of finance. By his example Delius has shown the extent

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of what may be accomplished within ordered limitations. The test of greatness is not an ability to express one's musical ideas on a scale requiring an orchestra of more than a hundred performers. This principle is beginning at last to regain recognition. That it has a practical application no musician of sense can doubt. To practise economy it is not necessary to be a composer of the first order. On the contrary, a lesser man than Delius would do well to confine his thoughts to a moderate means of expression. Therein lies his surest and, perhaps, only chance of ultimate survival.

The second precept consists in formal coherence. This quality has never been lacking to those who realise the value of lucid utterance, but its absence characterises the laxness of thought which, in the music of to-day, is more widely spread than one might at first suppose. Delius does not always shape

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his works according to convention; recurring themes, for instance, are occasionally dispensed with almost entirely. But in whatever form he chooses to express his ideas the structure, with few exceptions, is at least definite. He has often been accused of vagueness in his works, but there is little evidence in support of the charge. The fault is with the listeners rather than with the composer. His texture is, in this respect, misleading to the casual observer. At first sight the angular character of his melodies and the shifting chords which accompany them appear to indicate a lack of stability. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is, fundamentally, a conciseness of expression and exact thought which is clear to all who take the trouble to search for themselves. The idylls for small orchestra illustrate more obviously his capacity for coherence within classical form. The example is too valuable

## DELIUS

for present-day composers to ignore. Whether or no they profit by it depends upon the rate at which they value a technical equipment which in all ages is equally essential and appropriate to sound scholarship.

And so it is that we are brought to our conclusion. The value of the present inquiry must be influenced in some measure by individual reaction to Delius's art. His music is above all things personal. Perhaps it is enough if the nature of our findings can be regarded with justice as unbiassed by controversy. The final purpose is to suggest an explanation which may fairly account for the greatness of Delius. In the writings of an acknowledged authority on the musical problems of our time is indicated more clearly than the present author can hope to do what should be the verdict, and it is not necessary that one should attempt any addition to Dr Dyson's admirable summary:

DELIUS

“He (Delius) has at least one quality which is perhaps above all others scarce in our time; he has a deep, a quiet, and an intrinsic sense of beauty. Is it this that our generation has lost or is losing? His idylls *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* and *Summer Night on the River*, and a dozen other movements of tranquil yet enchanted fantasy, were not born of the tumult of to-day. Like the idyll of *Siegfried*, they must be tasted without passion, without impatience. Delius is not of the market-place. . . . His is often a rhapsodic art, but still more is it at times an art of pure contemplation. And an art of pure contemplation is not easy to practise in this twentieth century of ours.”

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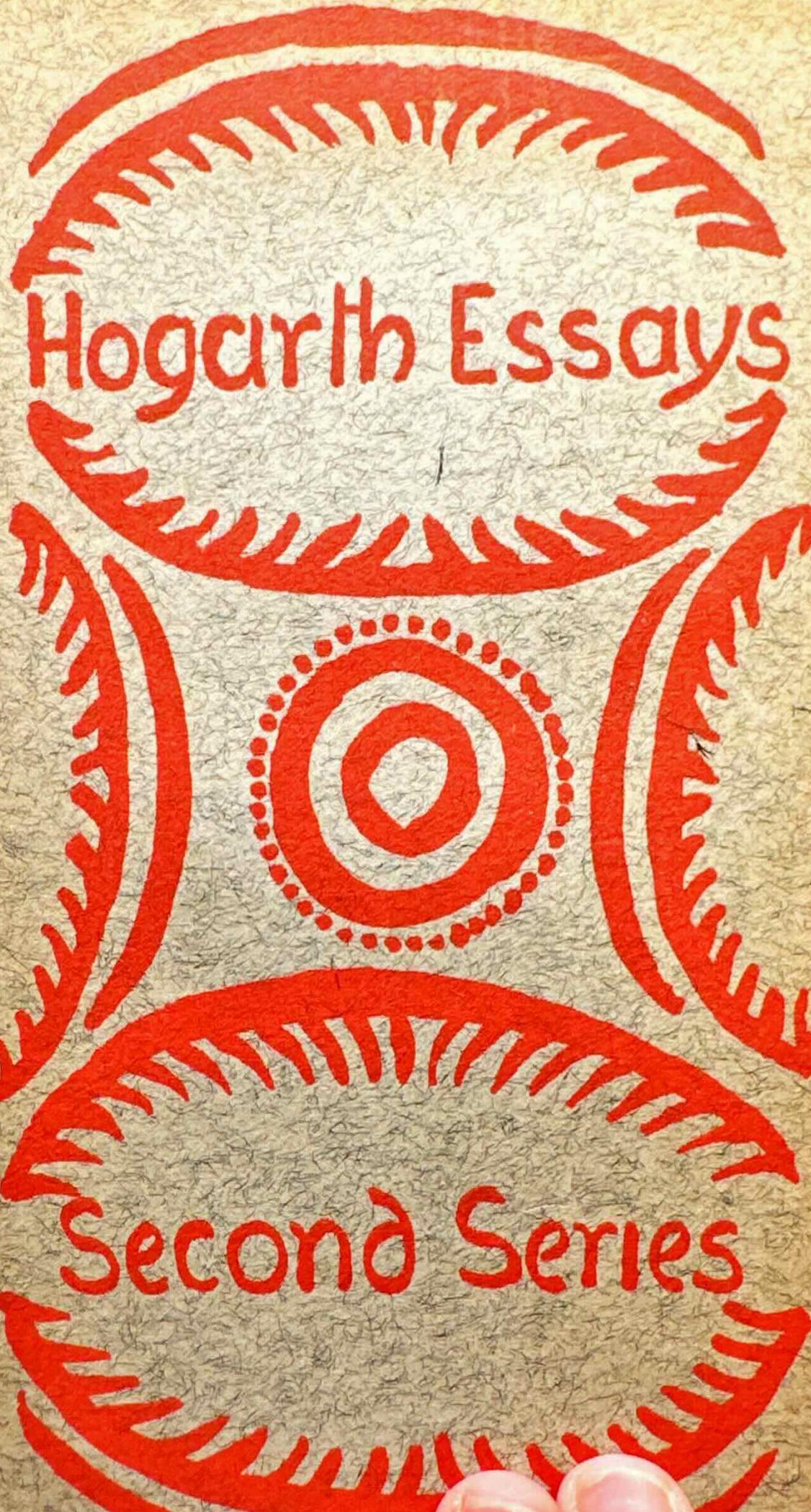
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