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BEECHAM
conducts *Delius*

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Appalachia positively gains, in a superlatively good recording such as this, by not being seen in the concert hall: and few of us have strength of mind enough to shut our eyes listening to music there. The work gains, I mean, because we do not see the chorus and wonder when they are going to sing, and having sung their first few bars, when they are going to break in again, and so on. "The mysteriousness and haunting suggestiveness" of these little "choral doxologies", as Philip Heseltine says in his life of Delius, contribute much to the beauty of the work and, as I have hinted, make their fullest effect with the chorus unseen, especially as the voices are used instrumentally up to the extended choral finale, where they have words to sing.

Delius's interest in the negro may have been that of a sympathetic onlooker, but in *Appalachia* he creates a wonderfully vivid picture of the negro's humour, gaiety, sadness and simplicity, and ends with a poignant farewell of husband and wife when, to quote Heseltine again; "one might be sold for a slave in a distant plantation and the other left behind".

This work is of particular interest because the many quick Variations have none of the weakness Delius was apt to fall into sometimes when moving away from contemplative writing. They are virile, exceptionally brilliant in their orchestration, and most resourceful in their treatment of the slave song melody: one that might easily have become monotonous, lovely as it is.

Once again Sir Thomas Beecham, who seems to live nowadays on a high peak of inspiration, gives us an absolutely magical performance of this grand and moving work, and gets playing of the same superb quality as in *The Mass of Life*.

The old set, issued by the Delius Society in 1949, still sounds well but there is, of course, nothing like the clarity of detail we get in this issue, nor could the big climaxes be so well contained at that time. Of many felicities in the recording I must mention the cor anglais solo, playing the main theme, true in tone and finely balanced with clarinet and bassoons (in three parts), scoring with a real tang in it: the rich tone of the 'cellos in the second variation (which they begin) and, just before the recapitulation of this long variation, the soft string tone in twelve of Delius's most magical bars. The string tone, loud or soft, is indeed very good all through.

On the second side comes the splendid March (based on the main theme), with solemn booms on bass drum, massive scoring very well recorded, and followed by the distant unaccompanied chorus, with the atmosphere perfectly caught. The great sweep of the last chorus, with full orchestra, is most inspiring, and there is one of Delius's characteristically lovely endings to the work.

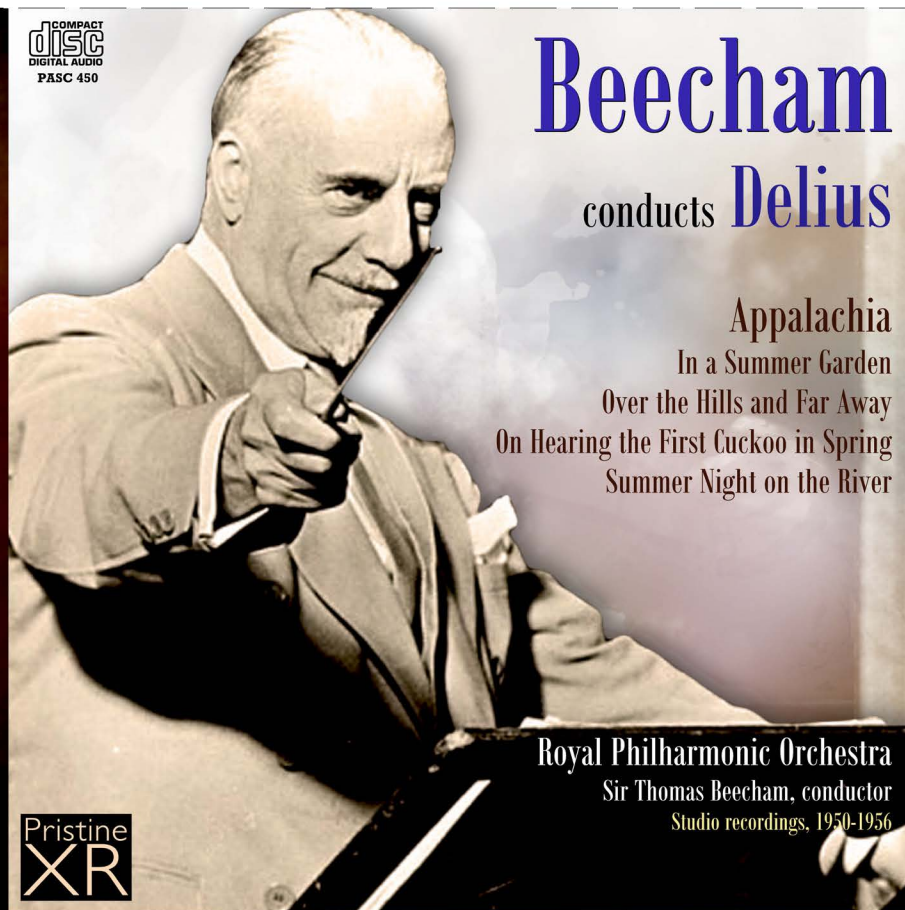
This is most accessible music—more so than *The Mass of Life*—and we must again thank the Delius Society for their enterprise, and Sir Thomas Beecham and all concerned (including the un-named chorus) for a grand performance and recording.

A. R. - *The Gramophone* January 1954 (*excerpts*)

Producer's Note

I had prepared *Appalachia* for release some four years ago only to find it just too long to fit with the other works planned for that release. Here I've returned to it with a fresh transfer and remastering, and coupled it with two other mono Delius recordings Sir Thomas made in the early 1950s *In A Summer Garden* and *Over the Hills and Far Away*. All of these have seen great tonal improvements in these XR remasters. Beecham returned to a number of earlier recordings and remade them with the advent of stereo - the first two of these three mono recordings were not remade. *Appalachia* itself was a remake of his 1938 78rpm recording. The final two recordings, from *Two Pieces for Small Orchestra* see us entering the stereo era - they were recorded together in October 1956. The results of this recording session were remarkably hissy, and a great deal of effort has gone into preserving the full orchestral tonal range whilst trying to minimise this hiss - something at least one other recent major-label reissue has tackled with such a heavy-handed approach to digital noise reduction that has had a quite destructive effect on the musical content. Hopefully this release puts the record straight, so to speak!

Andrew Rose



Beecham
conducts *Delius*

Appalachia
In a Summer Garden
Over the Hills and Far Away
On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring
Summer Night on the River

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor
Studio recordings, 1950-1956

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BEECHAM *conducts* Delius



DELIUS *Appalachia* (Variations on an old slave song)

- 1 Introduction (6:06)
- 2 Theme (1:01)
- 3 Variation 1: Moderato (0:20)
- 4 Variation 2: Piu vivo (1:02)
- 5 Variation 3: Molto moderato (4:29)
- 6 Variation 4: Con moto (0:51)
- 7 Variation 5: Giocoso - Allegro moderato (2:25)
- 8 Variation 6: Lento e molto tranquillo (1:41)
- 9 Variation 7: Misterioso (3:00)
- 10 Variation 8: Andante con grazia (2:01)
- 11 Variation 9: Lento sostenuto e tranquillo (2:55)
- 12 Variation 10: Allegro con marcia (1:44)
- 13 Variation 11: Marcia - Molto lento maestoso (1:49)
- 14 Variation 12: L'istesso tempo (chorus) (1:35)
- 15 Variation 13: Misterioso lento (2:13)
- 16 Finale: Lento - Piu mosso (3:44)

17 DELIUS *In A Summer Garden* (14:17)

18 DELIUS *Over the Hills and Far Away* (13:58)

DELIUS *Two Pieces for Small Orchestra*

- 19 1. On hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring (7:01)
- 20 2. Summer Night on the River (6:32)

Royal Philhamornic Orchestra & Chorus *Sir Thomas Beecham*

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph
of Sir Thomas Beecham

Appalachia
Recorded 29 October 1952
Issued as Columbia 33CX1112

In A Summer Garden
Recorded 27 October 1952
Over the Hills and Far Away
Recorded 7 February 1950
Issued as Columbia 33C1017

Two Pieces for Small Orchestra
Recorded 31 October 1956
Issued as HMV ALP1586 (mono)
and ASD357 (stereo)

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio 1, London

Total duration: 78:44

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