

***Music and Copyright: the Case of Delius and his Publishers.* By Robert Montgomery and Robert Threlfall. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, in association with the Delius Trust, 2007. xii, 410 p. ISBN 978-0-7546-5846-7.**

Montgomery and Threlfall, both advisers to the Delius Trust, present here a fascinating case study for the business side of being a composer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Delius is a particularly good choice for such a case study. His productive span as a composer began soon after the 1886 signing of the Berne Convention. By the time of his death in 1934, mechanical rights for sound recordings, radio broadcast fees, and sound synchronization for motion pictures had all become important factors in the quest to earn a living as a composer or make a profit as a music publisher. World War I and the economic ups and downs of the 1920s and 1930s added further complications, compounded by the fact that Delius, though a British citizen, lived in France for much of this time, and had his most important works published by firms in Germany and Austria.

Delius' interactions with his publishers, and the performing rights societies to which he belonged (first Genossenschaft Deutscher Tonsetzer (GDT) in Germany, and later the Performing Right Society (PRS) in Britain) are documented here through a selection of his numerous letters. Many of these letters were originally in German and are presented here in translation. The 22 appendices provide transcriptions (or translations where needed) of Delius' numerous publishing contracts, a table of the publishing income from his copyrights from 1920-2006, and the text of Ernst Roth's lengthy letter of 1950 documenting the complicated history of Universal Edition under the Nazi regime and the interrupted sale of Universal Ltd to Boosey & Hawkes.

The background information in the opening three chapters of the book provides a context for the correspondence. Chapter One, "The Business Background" begins with a succinct but highly informative history of music copyright leading up to the important Berne Convention, signed by nine countries in 1886. Berne established the composer's right to control public performances and clarified principles under which works published in a Convention country were accorded protection in the other signatory countries. "Berne provided a springboard from which the music publishing business could develop, to the benefit of composer and publisher." (p. 2). In this chapter the authors also outline the seven categories of income sources that were of potential benefit to Delius: sales of printed music, hire fees, performing right income, broadcasting income, mechanical right income, film fees, and "grand rights" (i.e. stage performance rights) fees. Each of these is discussed in turn, both in general terms and with specific facts relating to Delius' situation.

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Chapter Two provides a historical summary of Delius' publishers to his death in 1934. Delius had great difficulty getting his music published at first, even as his compositions gained some public acclaim.

The year 1905, then, reveals the extraordinary position of a composer of a whole range of major works, choral and orchestral, most of which had won generally acclaimed performance, and of no less than five operas, one of which had recently been staged (using MS material), but whose total published output consisted of less than a couple of dozen songs. (p. 23)

This was about to change in 1906 when Alexander Jadassohn, head of Harmonie Verlag, a new music publishing house in Berlin, offered to publish Delius' recent major scores. As will be seen in Delius's correspondence, however, this was not ultimately a successful collaboration. Delius later published a few works each with F.E.C. Leuckart of Leipzig, and Tischer & Jagenberg of Cologne. Delius began working with Universal Edition (Vienna) in 1913; that firm ultimately became his principal publisher for the rest of his life.

Chapter Three recounts the management of Delius' publications from his death in 1934 to 2004, including the establishment of the Delius Trust according to the provisions of his widow Jelka's will, the publication of the Complete Edition, and the changes in copyright law that continue to affect the fortunes of Delius' output.

The correspondence that forms the main content of this book is arranged chronologically, beginning in 1892 with a letter from Delius to Augener (publisher of some of his early songs), and ending with two letters written by Jelka Delius to Thomas Beecham in 1934 (after Frederick's death) concerning the disposition of the estate. A brief introduction to each group of letters (usually a year, in a few cases a range of years) provides relevant biographical background for the period and an overview of the main issues addressed in the letters. Numerous footnotes also help to fill in the inevitable gaps that arise from reading someone else's mail. It is unfortunate that in many cases we only see one side of the conversation, since many letters are now lost. Nevertheless, the selection of letters together with the background information, form a coherent, readable narrative.

Part of the fascination of a group of letters such as this is the glimpse it gives us into the personality of the writer. While Lionel Carley's¹ previously published collections of Delius' letters illuminate his personal relationships and life milestones, the present collection illustrates his often emphatic involvement in the business side of his life's work, and the difficulties of making a living as a composer. In his letter of 10 May 1921 to Universal he complained about the high prices being charged for his music in England.

I have ... received your catalogue of my works & see with amazement and regret that you are demanding quite impossible prices – 40/- with 100 per cent surcharge

¹ Lionel Carley, ed. and transl., *Delius: A Life in Letters* (London: Scolar Press in association with the Delius Trust, 1983); see also his *Grieg and Delius: A Chronicle of their Friendship in Letters* (London: M. Boyars, 1993)

for a lithographed score of Appalachia ... is pure madness & you will not sell a single copy. Only musicians buy these scores; the whole thing is prohibitive and you just will not cover your costs. (p. 162)

He was also greatly concerned about the quality of his publications, as shown in his letter to Universal of 25 January 1923.

...I am really furious about the score of Appalachia. It is just the old autograph Harmonie score, but made quite impossible by the omission of one variation. I shall not tolerate a score of mine going out into the world with this empty space. Besides this, all the other errors are still in it. (p. 187)

The people of Universal Edition were generally patient but pointed in their side of the conversation. Their letter of 17 December 1929 was not the only instance where they pleaded with Delius to give them a share of his mechanical rights.

As you may be aware the growth in mechanical media, by which I mean radio broadcasts, gramophone recordings and not least motion pictures, that we have witnessed over the past one or two years has caused sales to plummet in the printed music sector. For this reason publishers like composers have increasingly come to depend upon the income from the so-called small rights without which the future for all publishers would look extremely bleak. We have now concluded agreements with our numerous composers to the effect that we shall in future receive the normal publisher's share in respect of small rights; it is only your works where no provision exists for the publisher to participate in mechanical income. (p. 284)

While Delius scholars will be the most obvious audience for this book, there is much here for those researching other composers of that era or exploring the history of music publishing, copyright, performance rights, and other related topics. While not the easiest reading for the uninitiated, the introductory material on copyright and performance rights and some of the letters would serve well as assigned readings for music students as they prepare to enter the marketplace as performers, teachers, or composers. Many of Delius' concerns and frustrations at the difficulties of making a living as a composer still ring all too true today.

Laura Snyder
University of Alberta