

THE



DELIAN

The Newsletter of the Delius Society, Philadelphia
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Sorabji: Volume One: Early Works. Two Piano Pieces: *In the Hothouse*; *Toccata*; *Fantaisie Espagnole*; *Valse Fantaisie*; *Hommage à Johann Strauss*; *Pastiche: Hindu Merchant's Song* (Rimsky-Korsakov); *Pastiche: Habanera from Bizet's Carmen*; *Pastiche: Chopin's Valse, Op. 64, No. 1*; **Michael Habermann:** *A la manière de Sorabji: "Au clair de la lune"*.

Volume Two: Nocturnes. *Le jardin parfumé-Poem for Piano*; *Nocturne: Djami*; *Gulistan (The Rose Garden)-Nocturne for Piano*.

Volume Three: Assertive Works. *Introito and Preludio-Chorale from Opus Clavicembalisticum*; *Prelude, Interlude and Fugue: Fragment for Harold Rutland*; *Fantasiottina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid (Tiny Little Fantasy on the Illustrious Name of the Distinguished Poet Christopher Grieve, i.e. Hugh M'Diarmid)*; *"Quere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"* (Seek the rest of this matter among the things that are more secret"; St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower".

Michael Habermann, piano. British Music Society BMS427-429CD. Three CD's for the price of two in the U.K. U.S. collectors may order the set for \$44.00 postpaid from S. C. Trowell, 7 Tudor Gardens, Upminster, Essex, United Kingdom RM14 3DE. Make checks payable to Mr. Trowell.

Delius Society Michael Habermann has been honored by The British Music Society's reissue of these landmark recordings which appeared originally on several Musical Heritage Society and MusicMasters LP's and one Elan CD now out of print. This was a BMS 25th Anniversary project Sorabji enthusiasts (cultists?) may have the LP's and the Elan CD, but these transfers are excellent. The sound levels are uniform, and the presentation is done intelligently. Michael Habermann suggests that Sorabji neophytes put a CD on and let it play as background mu-

sic for a week or two. Then take just one piece and listen to it carefully. CD 1 offers the pieces most easily grasped, and there is some humor in many of the works. The Rimsky-Korsakov piece is, of course, based on the "Song of India". Habermann's own work based on a French nursery tune is a tribute to Sorabji in a light-hearted manner and fits nicely with the pastiches which precede it.

The second CD of Nocturnes requires more of an effort on the part of the listener. Ranging from 19 to 292 minutes in length, DO NOT listen to all of them in a row. It's hard to tell one piece from the other given Sorabji's musical patterns and endless variations. These are impressionistic pieces of a very complex nature.

Volume 3 has the most "difficult" works in this survey. Take it easy here! I was fascinated with the *Fragment for Harold Rutland* (1926, revised 1937) which lasts just 2:47 because Habermann's notes give some biographical information including dated for Rutland (1900-1977) that until now has eluded me. This pianist, critic, organist, composer, adjudicator, and author was even employed by

the BBC from 1940-1956 and was editor of *The Musical Times* from 1957-1960. Some years ago I acquired a copy of A. Eaglefield Hull's 1918 biography of Cyril Scott. It turned out to be Harold Rutland's copy signed by him and dated August, 1918. Inset were two Christmas cards to Rutland from Scott plus a typed letter from 1967. Rutland and Scott had been friends for many decades. And now I learn of the Sorabji-Rutland friendship. Rutland played the *Fragment* twice from memory at the Aeolian Hall, London, on October 12, 1927.

The last two works on Volume 3 both quote the "Dies Irae" theme and are inspired by ghost stories by Montague Rhodes James (1862-1936). These are rather long but taken one at a time can interest the experienced Sorabji fan.

This 3-CD set comes with complete and detailed notes by Habermann including recording details, the make of piano used, and makes note of all the first performances given by him. Incredibly, Michael Habermann played all these pieces from memory and had only the nearly illegible Sorabji manuscripts to work from since only a few of the early works were published.

Most of the more recent Sorabji recordings of very long pieces are all but incomprehensible. For those not too faint of heart, I urge purchase of this important set. At least Volume One will not cause too much stress.