

CHANDOS



DELIUS

HASSAN

- complete incidental music -



ZEB SOANES NARRATOR

BRITTEN SINFONIA VOICES · BRITTEN SINFONIA

JAMIE PHILLIPS



Peter Joslin / ArenaPAL

Frederick Delius, right, with his wife, Jelka, and Percy Grainger, c. 1920

Frederick Delius (1862 – 1934)

Hassan, RT I / 9 (1920 – 23)

*The Story of Hassan of Bagdad and How He Came to Make
the Golden Journey to Samarkand*

Complete Incidental Music to the Poetic Prose Play
in Five Acts (1911 – 13)

by James Elroy Flecker (1884 – 1915)

with Linking Narration by Meurig Bowen

'General Dance', Act II, Scene I, contributed by
Percy Grainger (1882 – 1961)

	Act I	18:49
1	Prelude.* Slow – Quietly but expressively – Marcato – Rather slower – Passionately – Curtain. Very slow	4:23
2	Narrator: 'We are in old Baghdad'*	2:29
3	Interlude between Scenes 1 and 2.* Very quietly –	1:50
4	Scene 2. Moonlight. The street of Felicity, by the fountain of the two pigeons, in front of the house.* Very quietly	0:26
5	Narrator: 'It is later that night'*	0:57
6	Serenade.* Con moto moderato	1:49

7	Narrator: 'The shutters open, and Yasmin appears'*	2:27
8	Melos. † Hassan falls under the shadow of the fountain. The first light of dawn shines in the sky. Very quietly	0:52
9	Chorus behind the scenes. † Not too slow	2:08
10	Narrator: 'The first light of dawn shines in the sky'*	1:27
	Act II	18:45
11	Prelude. † With animation - Becoming slower and more sombre	0:50
12	Narrator: 'The filthy, inanimate bulk of Hassan...'*	0:37
13	Fanfare preceding the Ballet (Gaily, outside) †	0:08
	Ballet	
14	1. Dance of the Beggars. †† There enters the most awful selection of Eastern beggars the eye could imagine. Quick and vigorously Frederick Long <small>bass (Chief Beggar)</small>	1:20
15	Narrator: 'And then, after the Beggars'*	0:06
16	2. Chorus of Women. †† (Enter a band of fair and dusky beauties.) Quietly	2:22
17	3. Divertissement. † Con moto	2:27
18	Narrator: 'Rafi is then announced as The King of the Beggars'*	0:58
19	4. General Dance. †† Andante moderato - Allegro - Più mosso	2:53

20	Narrator: 'Rafi is asked why he hates the Caliph so'*	0:46
21	Chorus of Beggars and Dancing Girls (from behind the scene, after the descent of the iron curtain).†‡ Comodo	1:21
22	Narrator: 'This House of the Moving Walls...'*	0:51
23	Scene 2. The Street of Felicity.‡ Very quietly	0:38
24	Narrator: 'The SOS message has fallen from the balcony...'*	1:11
25	Music accompanying Ishak's poem.*‡ Not too slow	1:32
26	Narrator: 'Yasmin's regard for Hassan has instantly shifted'*	0:39
	Act III	11:46
27	Prelude.†‡ Moderato – Slower	1:33
28	Scene 1.†‡ Curtain	0:43
29	Narrator: 'Hassan is installed at the Caliph's Palace'*	0:26
30	Interlude between Scenes 1 and 2.†‡ Very quietly – Slower	1:43
31	Narrator: 'The slaves inform Hassan that there is a beautiful lady...'*	1:05
32	Scene 2. The great Hall of the Palace.†‡ With vigour – Quieter	2:26
33	Narrator: 'We are in the Great Hall of the Caliph's Palace'*	1:00
34	Fanfares, in the great Hall of the Palace‡	0:11
35	Narrator: 'As more and more people gather...'*	0:29
36	Entry of the Caliph.‡ Pompously	0:17

37	Narrator: 'The Caliph declares the trial of the beggars open'*	0:09
38	Fanfares†	0:21
39	Narrator: 'Then Rafi, King of the Beggars, is summoned'*	1:17
	Act IV	7:52
40	Prelude.‡ Slow – Passionately – Passionately but not too quick – Slower – Heavily	4:14
41	Narrator: 'In the Palace's dark vaults'*	0:26
42	Interlude between Scenes 1 and 2.‡ Slow and ponderously	1:57
43	Narrator: 'Sunlight streams through the cell's grating'*	1:14
	Act V	23:12
44	Prelude.†‡ Quick – Slower, softer – Not too quick – Curtain. The Garden of the Caliph's Palace, in front of a pavilion. Sunset. Quietly – Enter the Caliph with attendants as Hassan comes from his Pavilion –	2:29
45	The song of the Muezzin at sunset† – Ruairi Bowen tenor (Muezzin)	1:08

46	Narrator: 'With another sunset approaching'*	1:51
47	The Procession of Protracted Death.* March tempo – Slower and slower – Still slower	2:53
48	Narrator: 'The long, dreadful execution ensues...'*	1:29
49	Prelude to the last scene.* With flowing movement – Slower – Quicker –	3:03
50	Closing Scene.** Slow – (The Caravan recedes farther and farther into the distance.) – (Dying away in the distance)	10:16
	Ruairi Bowen <small>tenor</small>	
		TT 80:25

Zeb Soanes narrator / Ishak*

Britten Sinfonia Voices†

Eamonn Dougan chorus master

Britten Sinfonia†

Thomas Gould leader

Jamie Phillips



Britten Sinfonia and Britten Sinfonia Voices, performing Delius's 'Hassan' at Saffron Hall

Britten Sinfonia Voices

Eamonn Dougan chorus master

soprano

Anna Crookes
Eli Rolfe Johnson
Emily Jennings
Lisa Beckley

alto

Sophie Timms
Harriet Goodwin
Rebekah Jones
Rebecca Leggett

tenor

Ruairi Bowen
Tom Herford
Sam Jenkins
Ben Thappa

bass

Frederick Long
Jack Comerford
Mike Wallace
Sam Gilliat

Delius: Hassan

On 15 July 1920, the actor and director Basil Dean paid a visit to Frederick Delius and his wife at their house in Grez-sur-Loing, south of Paris. The purpose of his trip was to persuade Delius to compose incidental music for a production of a play entitled *Hassan*, by the recently deceased James Elroy Flecker, which Dean was planning to stage at His Majesty's Theatre, in London, the following year. Dean's initial soundings had been unpromising – Delius claimed that he was not interested in writing for plays, despite having previously composed six operas as well as music for Gunnar Heiberg's political satire *Folkeaaadet* – but the personal approach appears to have changed the composer's mind. Delius's wife, Jelka, later wrote to Dean:

I shall never forget how you came here
and read the whole Drama to us. It was so
thrilling to see how Delius got more and
more interested.

Much of the music was drafted within a few weeks, and the score would eventually prove one of the greatest successes of Delius's career.

Dean had first become acquainted with Flecker's script via his then-employer, Herbert

Beerbohm Tree, who had balked at the cost of staging a substantial five-act drama by a virtually unknown author. Flecker was an elusive and ultimately unfortunate figure. Born in 1884, the son of the headmaster at Dean Close, in Cheltenham, he studied at Trinity College, Oxford, where he became friends with John Addington Symonds and a follower of the Aesthetic Movement associated with Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. After graduating, Flecker joined the consular service and studied Middle Eastern languages at Cambridge before being posted to Constantinople, in the Ottoman Empire. It was here that his interest in Islamic culture and tradition was stimulated. He sketched the first two acts of *Hassan* in 1911, completing the remaining acts in 1913 whilst recuperating at a sanatorium in Switzerland. He died, in Davos, from tuberculosis on 3 January 1915, aged just thirty.

The instability of the London theatre market following the end of the First World War meant that Dean's plans for the project encountered significant obstacles and delays. At one point, Dean had to go back to Delius and request more music for the

production's many complex scene changes, which he had failed to commission during his initial meeting with the composer. Later, Delius's close friend the Australian pianist-composer Percy Grainger wrote an additional ballet movement (the General Dance, in Act II) which was added anonymously to Delius's score. A German production of the play with Delius's music, directed by Gustav Ludwig Hartung, staged in Darmstadt on 1 June 1923, was visually and acoustically unsatisfactory, and omitted the final scene altogether – hence, to Dean's mind, missing the whole point of the drama.

The London première eventually took place on 20 September 1923 and was a critical sensation. Benefiting from costumes and set designs by George W. Harris and choreography by Mikhail Fokine – who had worked with Diaghilev and the Ballets russes – the performance took place before a star-studded audience that included J.M. Barrie (the author of *Peter Pan*) and the future Nobel prize winner John Galsworthy (who remained sceptical about Delius's score). The music was conducted on the first two nights by Eugene Goossens, whose brother, the oboist Leon, and sister, the harpist Sidonie, played in the band. After the opening night, Delius wrote excitedly to his publisher, Emil Hertzka, at Universal Edition, in Vienna, that

the whole thing was splendidly staged & the press marvellously favourable. The music is very good, orchestra as well as choruses & the various new interludes & the newly added ballet were magnificently done.

Flecker's play is a sinuous double-narrative that intertwines the twin stories of the lovelorn but worldly-wise Hassan, confectioner at the court of the cruel and vindictive Caliph Haroun al Rashid (called Haroun ar Rashid in Flecker's play), and the young lovers Pervaneh and Rafi, caught up in the aftermath of a failed uprising and condemned to a terrifying and brutally protracted death. In tone and setting, Flecker's text drew on nineteenth-century English translations of *One Thousand and One Nights* as well as other heavily fictionalised accounts and travel literature. Very much a product of the racial and class-based attitudes of its time, the play revels in imaginary scenes of a despotic Eastern court and its gruesomely barbaric practices. But his first-hand experience of living and working in the Levant may also have attuned Flecker to other aspects of Islamic thought and cultural practice. The final scene, in which Hassan joins the pilgrims' caravan travelling across the desert to the great educational and religious sites of Bukhara

and Samarkand, brings the drama to a deeply reflective and existential spiritual conclusion.

It was evidently this concern with spirituality and the human condition that appealed to Delius. His previous stage works had repeatedly dwelt on the figure of the marginalised individual and on the tragic fate of star-crossed lovers – from the eponymous enslaved African prince Koanga in his opera based on George Washington Cable's epochal novel *The Grandissimes*, to Sali and Vreli in *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. The story of Pervaneh and Rafi, and of Hassan's self-imposed exile, follows a similar trajectory. But whereas much of Delius's earlier music had been conceived on an expansive scale, often employing a Mahler-sized orchestra, the physical limitations of the theatre pit demanded a much more modest and streamlined approach in *Hassan*. The result is one of Delius's most beautiful and luminous scores. Laid out for chorus and an ensemble of fewer than thirty musicians, the music provides much more than simply a wistfully evocative backdrop; it arguably becomes integral to the play's underlying psychological drama.

In common with other early twentieth-century incidental scores, the sequence of movements which Delius provided for the play serves several purposes. Some of

the numbers function as introductions or entr'actes – prefacing and shaping the action that follows or providing continuity from one scene to the next. Other movements are diegetic – that is, they comprise music performed on stage as part of the play, such as the ballet sequence in Act II or the fanfares in Act III. Other movements again underscore scenes, intensifying the atmosphere of a particular passage or adding an element of local colour in the manner of nineteenth-century operatic evocations of the Orient. Delius did not attempt to capture the sound of ancient Baghdad with any ethnographic accuracy. Rather, the music is characterised by his delicately pointillistic approach to instrumental timbre, distinctive modal harmony, and chromatic voice-leading. One particular figure acts as a recurrent motto, or *idée fixe*: a sighing melismatic *arpeggio*, which appears first as an interlude between scenes in the opening act and later as a broader symbol for the play's concern with longing, rapture, and the release from earthly pain. No less remarkable is the final scene, 'The Golden Road to Samarkand', which Delius himself regarded as the very best part of the score. The music revolves around just three closely related modal chords, which Delius harmonically re-contextualises to breathtakingly imaginative effect as the

pilgrim's procession slowly moves off the stage. Little wonder that Diana Bourbon, critic for the *New York Times*, after the London première described the passage as 'the most exquisite thing I have ever seen on any stage'.

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Zeb Soanes is the presenter of *Smooth Classics at Seven* on Classic FM, the UK's most popular classical music station. For over twenty years he was an authoritative newsreader and the reassuring voice of the Shipping Forecast to millions of listeners on BBC Radio 4. He announced some of the biggest events in recent years, from the final result of the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump to the unfolding of the Coronavirus pandemic. He was a regular fixture on *The News Quiz*, reported for *From Our Own Correspondent*, and presented BBC Radio 3's *Saturday Classics*. Readers of *The Sunday Times* voted him their favourite male voice on UK radio. On television, his was the first voice to launch BBC Four, where he also presented the BBC Proms. Described by the *The Daily Telegraph* as 'the go-to person for music narration', he performs with the UK's leading orchestras, narrating children's classics such as *Babar the Elephant*,

Paddington's First Concert, and *Peter and the Wolf* and technically demanding works such as Walton's *Façade* which he recorded to critical acclaim with John Wilson. He was the Voice of God in the Aldeburgh Festival production of *Noye's Fludde*, also featuring Dame Felicity Palmer and Andrew Shore, which concluded the 2013 Benjamin Britten Centenary. He took part in the premières of Ben Palmer's *Eggs or Anarchy*, based on William Sitwell's award-winning book about the wartime Minister for Food, Lord Woolton, and *Beethoven, Wordsworth and the French Revolution*, with the pianist David Owen Norris (for the 250th anniversary of the composer's birth). In a gala at St Martin in the Fields, he also gave the first live performance for over thirty years of *Banana Blush*, John Betjeman's verse set to music by Jim Parker. Zeb Soanes has authored several children's books; two of them, *Gaspard's Foxtrot* (2021) and *Gaspard's Christmas* (2022), are also major new narrated concert works with music by Jonathan Dove. www.zebsoanes.com

Established in 2010, **Britten Sinfonia Voices** is a professional vocal ensemble that brings together some of the finest emerging voices and established solo singers possessing a wealth of experience. Like Britten Sinfonia, the choir is a flexible ensemble, appearing

both as a small group of soloists and as a larger chorus, performing a particularly broad range of repertoire and genres. It is directed by the choral conductor and singer Eamonn Dougan, who selects and prepares the singers for each project. Britten Sinfonia Voices has given the premières of works by composers including Nico Muhly, Eriks Ešēvalds, and Sir James MacMillan.

A different kind of orchestra, **Britten Sinfonia** is defined not by the traditional figurehead of a principal conductor, but by the dynamic and democratic meeting of its outstanding individual players and the broad range of their collaborators – from Steve Reich, Thomas Adès, and Alison Balsom to Pagrav Dance Company and Anoushka Shankar. Rooted in the East of England, where it is the only professional orchestra working throughout the region, it also has a national and international reputation as one of today's finest ensembles. It is renowned for its adventurous programming and stunningly high-quality performances, and equally for its record of commissioning new music, nurturing new composing talent, and inspiring schoolchildren, hospital patients, and communities across the East of England. The orchestra is an Associate Ensemble at the Barbican, in London, Resident Orchestra

at Saffron Hall, and is also resident in Norwich. It performs regularly at London's Wigmore Hall as well, and appears at UK festivals such as the Aldeburgh Festival, Brighton Festival, Norfolk & Norwich Festival, and the BBC Proms. Its prolific discography features many award-winning recordings. During its 2023/24 season Britten Sinfonia will perform Handel's *Messiah* with the BBC Singers and appear with the soprano Elizabeth Watts, saxophonist Jess Gillam, harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, cellist Abel Selaoocoe, tenor Nicky Spence, horn player Ben Goldscheider, The Marian Consort, and New York City Ballet. www.brittensinfonia.com

'Phillips is a dynamic presence on the podium and on tonight's evidence has an uncommon ability to pick up a familiar piece by the scruff its neck and shake invigorating new life into it.' So wrote the online international music magazine *Bachtrack* about the conductor **Jamie Phillips** whose penetrating insight, innate musicality, and infectious joy in music making have made him a regular presence on platforms across the UK and the European continent. A natural storyteller possessing a clear and expressive technique, he held a four-year tenure with the Hallé, appointed as Assistant Conductor aged only twenty, then serving as Associate Conductor.

He has enjoyed recent engagements with the Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Antwerp Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern, NDR Radiophilharmonie, Münchener Kammerorchester, Philharmonie Zuidnederland, Oslo Philharmonic, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Camerata Salzburg, and Orchestre national d'Île de France. During the season 2023 / 24 he will conduct the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Münchner Rundfunkorchester, Norwegian Radio Orchestra (Kringkastingsorkestret), and Aalborg Symfoniorkester, as well as the Philharmonie Zuidnederland in Pina Bausch's production of *Le Sacre du printemps*. His repertoire ranges from baroque to the present

day, recent programmes encompassing works by Adès, Copland, Dvořák, Elgar, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Ravel, Saint-Saëns, Schubert, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Kari Beate Tandberg, Tippett, Vaughan Williams, and Walton. His release of recordings of eleven commissioned works inspired by J.S. Bach's Goldberg Variations with the violinist Niklas Liepe and the NDR Radiophilharmonie won an Opus Klassik Award while the magazine *Classical Music* praised his recording of works by Tarik O'Regan and Helen Grime with the Hallé. Jamie Phillips was a semi-finalist in the 2011 International Besançon Competition for Young Conductors and a prize-winner in the 2012 Nestlé Salzburg Young Conductors Award, both while still a student at the Royal Northern College of Music, in Manchester. He was a Dudamel Fellow with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2016. www.jamie-phillips.com

Jamie Phillips



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Delius: Hassan

Am 15. Juli 1920 war der Schauspieler und Regisseur Basil Dean zu Besuch bei Frederick Delius und seiner Frau in deren Haus in Grez-sur-Loing südlich von Paris. Zweck seiner Reise war es, Delius dazu zu überreden, Bühnenmusik für eine Inszenierung des Schauspiels *Hassan* des kurz zuvor verstorbenen James Elroy Flecker zu komponieren, die Dean im folgenden Jahr am His Majesty's Theatre in London auf die Bühne bringen wollte. Deans erste Anfragen waren nicht gerade vielversprechend gewesen – Delius behauptete, er sei nicht am Komponieren für die Bühne interessiert, obwohl er bis dahin schon sechs Opern sowie Musik Gunnar Heibergs politische Satire *Folkeraadet* verfasst hatte – aber das persönliche Gesuch scheint den Komponisten umgestimmt zu haben. Delius' Frau Jelka schrieb später an Dean:

Ich werde nie vergessen, wie Sie herkamen und uns das ganze Drama vorlasen. Es war so aufregend, zuzusehen, wie Delius immer interessierter wurde.

Ein Großteil der Musik wurde in wenigen Wochen skizziert, und die Partitur sollte sich mit der Zeit als einer der größten Erfolge in Delius' Karriere erweisen.

Dean hatte Fleckers Manuskript durch seinen damaligen Arbeitgeber Herbert Beerbohm Tree kennengelernt, der sich gegen die Kosten sträubte, ein substanzielles fünftaktiges Drama eines fast unbekanntes Autors auf die Bühne zu bringen. Flecker war eine schwer fassbare und im Endeffekt bedauernswerte Gestalt. 1884 als Sohn des Rektors von Dean Close in Cheltenham geboren, studierte er am Trinity College, Oxford, wo er sich mit John Addington Symonds anfreundete und Anhänger des Aesthetic Movement wurde, verbunden mit Walter Pater und Oscar Wilde. Nach seinem Studienabschluss trat Flecker dem Konsularwesen bei und studierte außerdem in Cambridge Sprachen des Nahen Ostens, ehe er nach Konstantinopel im Osmanischen Reich versetzt wurde. Hier wurde sein Interesse an islamischer Kultur und Tradition erweckt. Die ersten beiden Akte von *Hassan* skizzierte er 1911 und stellte die übrigen Akte 1913 während eines Kuraufenthalts in einem Schweizer Sanatorium fertig. Er starb am 3. Januar 1915 in Davos im frühen Alter von dreißig Jahren an Tuberkulose.

Die Unbeständigkeit des Londoner Theatermarkts nach dem Ende des Ersten

Weltkriegs bedeutete, dass Deans Pläne für das Projekt bedeutenden Hindernissen und Verzögerungen ausgesetzt waren. An einem Punkt musste Dean zu Delius zurückkehren, um weitere Musik für die vielen komplizierten Szenenwechsel zu erbitten, die er bei seinem ersten Zusammentreffen mit dem Komponisten nicht in Auftrag gegeben hatte. Später schrieb Delius' enger Freund, der australische Pianist und Komponist Percy Grainger, einen zusätzlichen Ballettsatz (den General Dance im Zweiten Akt), der anonym in Delius' Partitur eingefügt wurde. Eine deutsche Inszenierung des Stücks mit Delius' Musik unter der Regie von Gustav Ludwig Hartung, aufgeführt in Darmstadt am 1. Juni 1923, erwies sich als visuell und akustisch unbefriedigend und ließ die letzte Szene ganz aus – was nach Deans Ansicht den springenden Punkt des ganzen Dramas verfehlte.

Die Londoner Erstaufführung fand schließlich am 20. September 1923 statt und war ein sensationeller Erfolg bei der Kritik. Begünstigt durch Kostüm- und Bühnenbildentwürfe von George W. Harris und der Choreographie von Michel Fokine – der mit Djalilew und den Ballets Russes gearbeitet hatte – fand die Aufführung vor einem Publikum voller Prominenz statt, darunter J.M. Barrie (der Autor von *Peter Pan*) und der

zukünftige Nobelpreisträger John Galsworthy (der Delius' Partitur weiterhin skeptisch gegenüberstand). Die Musik wurde an den ersten beiden Abenden von Eugene Goossens dirigiert, dessen Bruder, der Oboist Leon, und seine Schwester, die Harfenistin Sidonie, im Orchester spielten. Nach der Erstaufführung schrieb Delius aufgeregt an seinen Verleger Emil Hertzka bei der Universal Edition in Wien, das Ganze sei wunderbar inszeniert, die Presse fabelhaft positiv. Die Musik sei sehr gut, auch das Orchester, die Chöre, die verschiedenen neuen Zwischenspiele und das neue Ballett.

Fleckers Drama ist eine verzwickte Doppelerzählung, in der die paarigen Geschichten des liebeskranken, aber weltklugen Hassan, Zuckerbäcker am Hof des grausamen und rachsüchtigen Kalifen Harun al Raschid (in Fleckers Stück Haroun ar Rashid genannt), und den jungen Liebenden Pervaneh und Rafi, verwickelt in die Nachwirkungen eines gescheiterten Aufstands und zu einem schrecklichen, brutal langwierigen Tod verurteilt. Vom Ton und der Kulisse her bezog sich Fleckers Text auf englische Übersetzungen von *Tausendundeine Nacht* des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts sowie andere ausgeschmückte Darstellungen und Reiseliteratur. Das Stück ist in jeder Hinsicht ein Produkt

der rassistischen und klassenbezogenen Einstellungen seiner Epoche und schwelgt in imaginären Szenen eines tyrannischen östlichen Fürstenhofs und dessen grausam barbarischen Praktiken. Aber seine eigenen Erfahrungen des Lebens und der Tätigkeit in der Levante könnten Flecker auch auf andere Aspekte islamischen Denkens und kulturellen Praktiken eingestimmt haben. Die Schlusszene, in der Hassan sich einer Pilgerkaravane anschließt, die durch die Wüste zu den großen Bildungs- und Religionszentren von Buchara und Samarkand unterwegs ist, bringt das Drama zu einem zutiefst besinnlichen und existentiell vergeistigten Ende.

Es war mit Sicherheit dieses Anliegen mit Spiritualität und dem menschlichen Befinden, das Delius reizte. Seine vorhergehenden Bühnenwerke hatten sich immer wieder mit der Gestalt des marginalisierten Individuums und dem tragischen Schicksal unglücklicher Liebender befasst – von dem verklavten afrikanischen Prinzen Koanga seiner gleichnamigen Oper auf der Basis von George Washington Cables epochalem Roman *The Grandissimes* bis hin zu Sali und Vreli in *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe). Die Geschichte von Pervaneh und Rafi sowie von Hassans selbstgewählten Exil nehmen einen ähnlichen

Verlauf. Aber während ein erheblicher Teil von Delius' vorheriger Musik groß angelegt konzipiert war und oft ein Orchester von Mahlerschen Ausmaßen erforderte, verlangten die physischen Begrenzungen des Orchestergrabens in einem Theater für *Hassan* ein viel bescheideneres Herangehen. Das Ergebnis ist eine von Delius' schönsten und strahlendsten Partituren. Angelegt für Chor und ein Ensemble von weniger als dreißig Musikern, bietet die Musik viel mehr als nur einen wehmütig bewegenden Hintergrund; sie wird wohl ein integraler Bestandteil der psychologischen Dramatik des Stücks.

Ebenso wie andere Gelegenheitspartituren des frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts diente die Abfolge von Sätzen, die Delius für das Drama aufbot, mehreren unterschiedlichen Zwecken. Einige der Nummern fungieren als Einleitungen oder Zwischenaktsmusiken – sie leiten die folgende Handlung ein, geben ihr Gestalt oder bieten Kontinuität von einer Szene zur nächsten. Andere Sätze sind diegetisch – d. h. sie bestehen aus Musik die auf der Bühne als Teil der Handlung dargeboten wird, wie beispielsweise die Ballettsequenz im Zweiten Akt oder die Fanfaren im Dritten Akt. Wieder andere Sätze sind bestimmten Szenen unterlegt, um die Atmosphäre einer bestimmten Passage zu verstärken oder

ein Element von Lokalkolorit zu bieten wie die Heraufbeschwörung des Orients in Opern des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts. Delius versuchte nicht, die Klänge des alten Bagdad mit ethnographischer Genauigkeit einzufangen. Die Musik ist vielmehr von seinem dezent pointillistischen Herangehen an instrumentales Timbre, unverkennbare modale Harmonik und chromatische Stimmführung bestimmt. Eine spezielle Figur dient als wiederkehrendes Motto bzw. *idée fixe*: ein seufzendes melismatisches *Arpeggio*, das zuerst als Zwischenspiel von Szenen im ersten Akt dient, später als umfassenderes Symbol für die Beschäftigung des Stücks mit Verlangen, Verzückung und die Erlösung von irdischem Schmerz. Keineswegs weniger

bedeutsam ist die letzte Szene, "Die goldene Straße nach Samarkand", die Delius selbst für den allerbesten Teil der Partitur hielt. Die Musik dreht sich um nur drei lose verbundene modale Akkorde, die Delius als atemberaubend einfallsreichen Effekt in neue harmonische Zusammenhänge stellt, wenn die Pilgerprozession sich langsam von der Bühne entfernt. Kein Wunder, dass Diana Bourbon, Kritikerin der *New York Times*, die Passage nach der Londoner Premiere folgendermaßen beschrieb: sie sei "das Erlesenste, das ich je auf einer Bühne gesehen habe".

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Übersetzung: Bernd Müller



Zeb Soanes

Charlie Ketchen

Delius: Hassan

Le 15 juillet 1920, l'acteur et metteur en scène Basil Dean rendit visite à Frederick Delius et à son épouse, dans leur maison de Grez-sur-Loing, au sud de Paris. Le but de sa visite était de persuader Delius de composer la musique de scène pour une pièce intitulée *Hassan*, qui avait été écrite par James Elroy Flecker, alors récemment décédé, et que Dean projetait de monter à Londres, l'année suivante, sur la scène de His Majesty's Theatre. Ses premiers travaux d'approche s'étaient avérés peu prometteurs – Delius ayant déclaré que l'écriture de ce genre de musique ne l'intéressait pas, en dépit du fait qu'il avait auparavant composé six opéras, ainsi que la musique de scène de *Folkeraadet*, satire politique du cru de Gunnar Heiberg. Toutefois l'opinion du compositeur semble avoir été modifiée par le recours à une approche personnalisée. Jelka, l'épouse de Delius, écrivit plus tard à Dean:

Je n'oublierai jamais que vous êtes venu
ici nous lire la pièce en entier. C'était si
fascinant de voir l'intérêt de Delius grandir
de plus en plus!

Une grande partie de la musique fut
esquissée en quelques semaines, et la

partition devait finalement se révéler un des
plus grands succès de la carrière de Delius.

Dean avait d'abord pris connaissance du
texte de Flecker par l'intermédiaire de son
employeur de l'époque, Herbert Beerbohm
Tree, qui avait regimbé devant le coût de
mettre en scène une pièce imposante, en
cinq actes, écrite par un auteur quasi inconnu.
Flecker était un personnage insaisissable, qui
fut en définitive malchanceux. Né en 1884,
fils du directeur de la Dean Close School de
Cheltenham, il étudia au Trinity College d'Oxford
où il devint l'ami de John Addington Symonds
et un disciple de l'Esthétisme, mouvement
associé avec Walter Pater et Oscar Wilde. Après
avoir obtenu sa licence, Flecker entra dans le
service consulaire et étudia les langues du
Moyen-Orient à Cambridge, avant d'être envoyé
à Constantinople, au sein de l'Empire Ottoman.
Et c'est là que son intérêt pour la culture et
les traditions islamiques se trouva stimulé. Il
esquissa les deux premiers actes d'*Hassan*
en 1911, complétant les actes restants en 1913
alors qu'il faisait un séjour de convalescence
dans un sanatorium suisse. Il mourut de la
tuberculose, à Davos, le 3 janvier 1915, âgé de
seulement trente ans.

L'instabilité du marché théâtral londonien durant la période ayant suivi l'achèvement de Première Guerre mondiale fit que les plans qu'avaient Dean pour le projet durent faire face à des obstacles et des délais importants. À un certain moment, Dean dut en outre recontacter Delius pour lui demander d'écrire un complément de musique afin d'accompagner les nombreux changements de tableau, pleins de complexité, intervenant dans la mise en scène, ce qu'il avait omis de commander lors de sa rencontre initiale avec le compositeur. Plus tard, le pianiste-compositeur australien Percy Grainger, qui était un ami intime de Delius, écrivit un mouvement de ballet supplémentaire (la Danse générale de l'acte II) qui fut ajouté, anonymement, à la partition de Delius. Le 1er juin 1923, une mise en scène allemande de la pièce, présentée avec la musique de Delius, fut montée à Darmstadt, sous la direction de Gustav Ludwig Hartung. Peu satisfaisante sur le plan visuel et acoustique, elle omettait complètement la scène finale – ce qui, aux yeux de Dean, la faisait passer totalement à côté du message de la pièce.

La première londonienne eut finalement lieu le 20 septembre 1923, et fit sensation auprès de la critique. Jouissant de costumes et de décors dessinés par George W. Harris et d'une chorégraphie de Mikhaïl Fokine – qui

avait travaillé avec Diaghilev et les Ballets russes – la représentation eut lieu devant une salle remplie de personnalités, dont J.M. Barrie (l'auteur de *Peter Pan*) et le futur lauréat du prix Nobel John Galsworthy (qui resta peu convaincu par la partition de Delius). Les deux premiers soirs, la musique fut dirigée par Eugene Goossens, dont le frère et sa sœur, le hautboïste Léon et la harpiste Sidonie, jouaient dans l'orchestre. Après la première, Delius écrivit avec enthousiasme à son éditeur, Emil Hertzka, chez Universal Edition, à Vienne:

La mise en scène du tout a été splendide
& la presse merveilleusement favorable.
La musique est très bonne, l'orchestre
de même que les chœurs & les divers
nouveaux interludes & le ballet ajouté
depuis peu ont été exécutés à merveille.

La pièce de Flecker est un double conte sinueux entrelaçant deux histoires, celle d'Hassan, personnage amoureux, mais averti, confiseur à la cour du cruel et rancunier calife Haroun Al-Rachid (appelé Haroun ar Rashid dans la pièce de Flecker), et celle des jeunes amants Pervaneh et Rafi, rattrapés par les retombées d'une insurrection ratée et condamnés à une mort terrifiante, accompagnée d'une souffrance cruellement prolongée. Le texte de Flecker, par son cadre et par le ton utilisé, s'inspire

des traductions anglaises des *Mille et une Nuits* faites au dix-neuvième siècle, ainsi que d'autres récits et écrits de voyage fortement romancés. Pur produit des attitudes raciales et du comportement de classe prévalant à l'époque, la pièce se repaît de scènes imaginaires présentant une cour orientale despote, aux pratiques d'une effroyable barbarie. Cependant il se peut que l'expérience personnelle de Flecker, le fait qu'il avait vécu et travaillé au Levant, l'ait également rendu plus réceptif aux autres aspects de la pensée et des pratiques culturelles de l'islam. La scène finale, au cours de laquelle Hassan se joint à une caravane de pèlerins traversant le désert pour se rendre aux grands sites religieux et culturels de Boukhara et de Samarcande, mène la pièce à une conclusion empreinte d'une spiritualité profondément méditative, à caractère existentiel.

Ce furent évidemment ce souci de spiritualité et cette réflexion portant sur la condition humaine qui plurent à Delius. Précédemment, les œuvres qu'il avait écrites pour la scène avaient fréquemment porté sur le personnage d'un être marginalisé ou le destin tragique d'amants maudits – de Koanga, le prince africain réduit en esclavage, personnage éponyme de son opéra basé sur *The Grandissimes*, roman ayant fait époque

de George Washington Cable, à Sali et Vreli dans *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (Un Roméo et Juliette villageois). L'histoire retraçant la destinée de Pervaneh et de Rafi, et l'exil auto-imposé d'Hassan, suit un parcours analogue. Cependant, alors qu'une grande partie de la musique antérieure de Delius avait été conçue sur une vaste échelle, ayant souvent recours à un orchestre d'ampleur mahlérienne, pour *Hassan*, les dimensions limitées de la fosse de théâtre imposaient le recours à une approche bien plus modeste, avec des effectifs plus réduits. Il en résulta une des musiques les plus belles et les plus lumineuses trouvées chez Delius. Composée pour chœur et un ensemble comptant moins de trente musiciens, la musique fait bien plus que fournir une toile de fond évocatrice, teintée de mélancolie; il est permis de penser qu'elle devient une partie intégrante du drame psychologique à la base de la pièce.

Tout comme d'autres musiques de scène datant du début du vingtième siècle, la série de mouvements ayant été fournie par Delius pour la pièce remplit plusieurs objectifs. Certains numéros servent d'introduction ou d'entracte – préfaçant et façonnant l'action qui suit ou assurant la continuité d'une scène à l'autre. D'autres mouvements sont diégétiques – c'est-à-dire qu'ils sont composés de musique exécutée sur scène

dans le cadre de la pièce, comme le ballet de l'acte II ou les fanfares de l'acte III. D'autres mouvements encore viennent mettre en relief certaines scènes, en intensifiant l'atmosphère d'un passage particulier ou en ajoutant un élément de couleur locale, à la manière des évocations de l'Orient trouvées dans les opéras du dix-neuvième siècle. Delius n'essaya pas de rendre les sons de la Bagdad des temps anciens avec une minutie ethnographique. C'est au contraire la touche subtile de pointillisme avec lequel il aborde le timbre instrumental, la spécificité de l'harmonie modale et la conduite chromatique des voix, qui donne son caractère à la musique. Un motif y fait en particulier fonction de *leitmotiv* ou idée fixe: c'est un *arpeggio* mélismatique émettant des soupirs. Il apparaît d'abord sous forme d'interlude placé entre les scènes de l'acte d'ouverture, et plus tard comme symbole plus général de

l'attente teintée de nostalgie, l'extase et la délivrance de la souffrance terrestre dont traite la pièce. Quant à la scène finale, "The Golden Road to Samarkand", elle s'avère tout aussi remarquable, d'ailleurs Delius lui-même la considérait comme la meilleure partie de la partition. La musique se contente de tourner autour de trois accords modaux proches, dont Delius change le contexte harmonique, obtenant un effet d'une inventivité prodigieuse tandis que la procession de pèlerins quitte lentement la scène. Il n'est donc guère étonnant qu'après la première londonienne, Diana Bourbon, critique du *New York Times*, ait décrit le passage en ces termes: "la chose la plus exquise qu'il m'ait jamais été donné de voir sur une quelconque scène".

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Traduction: Marianne Fernée-Lidon



Shoel Stadlen / Britten Sinfonia

Zeb Soanes, narrating 'Hassan' at Saffron Hall

Hassan

Act I

1 Prelude

Narrator

2 We are in old Baghdad – in the backroom of a sweet-shop, where a large cauldron steams with boiling sugar.

On a single large Persian carpet sit two men facing each other: the confectioner, Hassan, mid-forties, rotund, not especially lovely to look at; and his friend Selim – younger, vulgarly handsome and gaudily clothed.

Hassan is making the repeated sighs of someone sickened by unrequited love.

'If I am indeed a fat, old, ugly tradesman, have I not good reason enough to be sorry and rock upon my mat – for how shall I attain my heart's desire?'

Selim asks about the lady in question, and Hassan continues:

'A customer came to my shop, dressed as a widow. I could see her eyes beneath the veil, and they were like twin fountains in the Caliph's garden; and her lips beneath her veil were like roses hidden in moss, and her waist was flexible as a palm tree swaying in the wind, and her hips were large and heavy and round, like water melons in the season of water melons.'

Selim proposes the infusion of a magic potion into Hassan's sweets to cure Yasmin's indifference. He knows of a

magician, Zachariah, whose costly brews are guaranteed to drive women into a frenzy of love.

Hassan hands over the cash. Selim is despatched to obtain the potion, and his older, fatter friend is renewed with hope.

'Now I will make her sweets like globes of crystal,' he cries, 'like cubes of jade, like polygons of ruby. I will make her sweets like flowers. Great red roses, passionate carnations, daisies, violets, and curly hyacinths. And in the heart of each flower I will distil one drop of the magic of love.'

3 Interlude

4 Scene 2

Narrator

5 It is later that night, and we are by a Fountain in the Street of Felicity. The cloaked Hassan interrogates the servant who has just delivered his casket of specially flavoured sweets. What did she say upon receiving them, he asks urgently? Did she eat the confectionery?

She reported to the servant. 'His sweets sparkle like diamonds and rubies in the crown of our Caliph.' 'But curses on the fat sugar cook and his love-sick eyes. Allah be praised that his confectionery is better than his countenance.'

Hassan continues to put his faith in

the love potion, and serenades her in the moonlight. 'Ah Yasmin! Yasmin!'

6 Serenade

Narrator

7 The shutters open, and Yasmin appears. Hassan implores her to unveil herself, and reveal her full beauty.

'Do you take me for a Christian, father of impertinence?' Yasmin asks. 'Since when do the daughters of Islam unveil before strangers?'

But she is persuaded, and at the sight of her, Hassan is awash with poetic entreaties of love.

Yasmin concedes that she has been enchanted. Until now, the thought of Hassan's appearance had narrowed her heart with disgust. But since she ate his gift of sweets, her heart is changed and inclined towards him.

Hassan burns with joy, and they exchange ever more passionate expressions of desire.

'I am drowning in a wave of madness', Hassan says. 'Let me in, Yasmin, let me in!'

But Yasmin tells him she cannot. For she is not alone. She is with Selim, who appears by Yasmin and thanks Hassan for directing him to this rose-strewn bower. Yasmin thanks him, too, for sending her this handsome young friend to console a widow's loneliness.

Hassan is enraged by this treachery and deceit.

'O thou villainous, unclean dog, Selim. O thou unutterable woman. I will have you both whipped through the city and impaled in the marketplace, and your bodies flung to rot on a dung-heap. Oh, Yasmin, so beautiful, so brutal. You have killed me!'

The new lovers merely taunt him.

'Go home, old fellow! Go home, and write poems! Go home, and cook sweets!'

Instead, the devastated, deceived Hassan falls asleep under the shadow of the fountain.

8 Melos

Chorus behind the scenes (unaccompanied)

9 Ah

Narrator

10 The first light of dawn shines in the sky, and a group of men dressed as merchants appear. They are Caliph of Baghdad, Haroun ar Raschid, Jafar, his Vizier, Masrur, his executioner, and a younger man, Ishak, his poet.

Seeking nocturnal entertainment, they hear music and see lights in the house opposite Yasmin's. Speaking to a man at a first floor window, they request entry, claiming to be travelling merchants from Basra who have lost their way in this great

city. There is no door to this mysterious house, but instead a basket is lowered. The Caliph ascends first, then the Vizier and the Executioner. Ishak should follow last, but he has no desire for further adventure that night. He espies Hassan lying in the shadows, thinking first that he is dead.

The others call again for Ishak to ascend in the basket. But, realising that Hassan is in fact alive, he escapes his master's service for one free dawn upon the hills, and bundles Hassan into the basket instead.

'Take my place brother,' he says, 'and find your destiny.'

Act II

Scene 1

11 Prelude

Narrator

12 The filthy, inanimate bulk of Hassan tumbles from the basket. The Caliph and his companions are surprised it is not Ishak, and their host, Rafi, calls for him to be bathed, scented, and clothed with a ceremonial coat.

The Caliph comments on their surroundings – a house of grand proportions and eccentric features. Rafi explains it is called the House of the Moving Walls. And then there is more music, heralding the Dance of the Beggars.

13 Fanfare

Ballet

14 1. Dance of the Beggars

Chief Beggar

Fathers of two feet, advance,
Dot and go ones, hop along,
Two feet missing need no dance,
But will join us in a song.

Chorus of Beggars (Tenors and Basses)

But will join you in a song.

Chief Beggar

Show your most revolting scar,
People never weary of it.
The more nauseous you are,
More their pity and your profit!

Chorus of Beggars (Tenors and Basses)

And your profit, profit, profit!

Chief Beggar

Cracked of lip and gapped of tooth,
Apoplectic, maim or mad,
Blind of one eye, blind of both,
Up, the beggars of Bagdad!

Chorus of Beggars (Tenors and Basses)

Up, the beggars of Bagdad!

There's a cellar, I am told,
Where a little lamp is lit,
And that cellar's full of gold,
Sacks and sacks and sacks of it.

Chief Beggar

Sacks of it,

Chorus of Beggars (Tenors and Basses)

Stacks and stacks and stacks of it.

Chief Beggar

Stacks of it.

Chief Beggar and Chorus of Beggars (Tenors and Basses)

Open eyes and stiffen backs,
There are sacks and sacks and sacks,
And gold for him who lacks of it.

Narrator

¹⁵ And then, after the Beggars, a Chorus of beauties.

¹⁶ **2. Chorus of Women**

Daughters of delight, advance,
Petals, petals drift along.
Cypress, tremble! Firefly, dance!
Nightingale, your song, your song!

We are pale
as dawn, with roses:
O the roses, O desire!
We are dark,
but as the twilight,
Shooting all the sky with fire.

Daughters of delight, advance, etc.

¹⁷ **3. Divertissement**

Narrator

¹⁸ Rafi is then announced as the King of the Beggars, the Caliph of the Faithless. The real Caliph and his retinue are stunned, as this King of the Beggars reveals his plot to overthrow the regime with ten thousand downtrodden peasants. The Caliph of Baghdad, that sack of debauchery, he will personally nail into his coffin alive. And he promises all the Caliph's riches will be ripe for pillaging – his palaces, his gardens, his camels, his elephants, his Egyptian eunuchs, his gold, his jewels, and his women.

Jafar attempts unsuccessfully for his party to be released from Rafi's clutches, and then Hassan re-appears, spruced up and shining in new clothes.

¹⁹ **4. General Dance**

Chorus (Tenors)

Ah
La la la la la la la

(very nasal and strident)

Ah la

Chorus (Tenors and Basses)

La la la la la etc.

Chorus

La la la la la etc.
(shout)

Narrator

[20] Rafi is asked why he hates the Caliph so, and he explains. His betrothed beloved, Pervaneh, was abducted, and taken to a slave market far away in Baghdad. Rafi followed her there and bought her back for a colossal sum. But the Caliph's pimp procured her all the same for his master. So from this stems all of Rafi's hatred – his wish to avenge the honour of Pervaneh, and to wash Baghdad in blood.

The Caliph mocks Rafi's conspiracy, but suddenly he and his friends are surrounded by archers with bows drawn taut.

Chorus of Beggars and Dancing Girls (from behind the scene)

[21] Today the fools who catch a cold in summer
Will fly for winter in the windy moon.

Today the little rills of shining water
Will catch the fire of morning over soon.

Today the state musicians and court poets
Will set new verses to a special tune.

Today Haroun, the much-detested Caliph,
Will find his Caliphate inopportune.

Narrator

[22] This House of the Moving Walls then shows why it is so called, as sheets of iron crash down and surround the Caliph, Jafar,

Masrur, and Hassan. The first three are convinced they are trapped, and that Rafi's sacking of the city will proceed. But Hassan espies a shaft of light between the iron walls and the balcony, and proposes dropping a message from there into the street.

Jafar promptly writes the message. He calls for soldiers and police, and warns of Rafi's plot.

'O Hassan,' the Caliph cries with hope, 'if we are rescued I will fill thy mouth with gold.'

[23] **Scene 2**

Narrator

[24] The SOS message has fallen from the balcony into the hands of two scruffy down-and-outs. They don't appreciate its significance, but they hand it to the Chief of Police, who has come in search of the missing Caliph with his poet Ishak. The Military Captain is fetched, and between them, with ladders, they reach the balcony and prise apart the iron walls that imprison the Caliph.

With Yasmin witnessing this rescue, the Caliph proclaims to the crowd that Hassan, by his skill and invention, has saved his life and rescued the city from great peril. Grandly, he nominates Hassan to hold rank in his court second to none save Jafar, his Grand Vizier.

The Caliph then realises that his poet Ishak forsook him the previous night.

Execution is threatened – but not followed through – and Ishak sings a song of Dawn.

Song of Ishak

[25] Thy dawn, O Master of the world, thy dawn;
The hour the lilies open on the lawn,
The hour the grey wings pass beyond the mountains,
The hour of silence, when we hear the fountains,
The hour that dreams are brighter and winds colder,
The hour that young love wakes on a white shoulder,
O Master of the world, the Persian Dawn.

That hour, O Master, shall be bright for thee:
Thy merchants chase the morning down the sea,
The braves who fight thy war unsheathe the sabre,
The slaves who work thy mines are lashed to labour,
For thee the waggons of the world are drawn –
The ebony of night, the red of dawn!

Narrator

[26] Yasmin's regard for Hassan has instantly shifted, and she tosses him a rose admiringly. Hassan is bemused with the turn of events – with his elevation to court, and Yasmin's change of heart.

'Last night I baked sugar and she flung me water: this morning I bake gold and she flings me a rose.'

Ishak implores Hassan to forget her. 'Come with me,' he says, 'and I will instruct you in the pleasures of the court.'

Act III

[27] **Prelude**

Women's Voices

Ah Ah Ah

[28] **Scene 1**

Narrator

[29] Hassan is installed at the Caliph's Palace, living in a peaceful garden pavilion and waited upon by a quartet of slaves. His new home is bedecked with beautiful things – a new carpet from Ispahan, a splendidly carved mirror, an exquisitely upholstered couch, with cushions embellished with peacocks.

[30] **Interlude**

Women's Voices

Ah Ah

Narrator

[31] The slaves inform Hassan that there is a beautiful lady waiting for him in his bed. It is Yasmin. She tells him that she has left Selim, whom she found a coward and a fool, and that she finds Hassan instead a man of taste and valour. She attempts a tender,

extended seduction, but the confectioner's heart has hardened. She is tainted meat. She is 'a stupendous harlot', the enraged Hassan replies. Wishing to taste the ecstasy of power, he prepares to kill her with a sword.

Yasmin entreats, 'I could have sung you a song sweeter than the nightingale's, and shown you a whiteness whiter than the moon'.

In the end, Hassan cannot kill her. For he knows that for her there is only infinite tenderness.

32 **Scene 2**

**The great Hall of the Palace
Chorus of Soldiers**

We are they who come faster than fate:
We are they who ride early or late:
We storm at your ivory gate:
Pale Kings of the sunset beware!
Not on silk nor on samet we lie,
Nor in curtained solemnity die
Among women who chatter and cry,
And children who mumble a prayer.
But we sleep by the ropes of the camp,
And we rise with a shout and we tramp
With the sun or the moon for a lamp,
Or the spray of the wind in our hair.

Narrator

33 We are in the Great Hall of the Caliph's Palace. A band of soldiers have entered and sung the War Song of the Saracens, to celebrate the vanquishing of the beggars and their plot.

The Chief of Police feels this battle song exaggerates the soldiers' achievement in mowing down some beggar conspirators. 'With such a splendid song, I thought they must have captured Cairo', he says. 'To save Baghdad is better than to capture Cairo', the Military Captain replies.

The Herald announces with fanfares the arrival of Princes, Governors, and Rajahs. The wisest philosopher in China, a mighty Turkish wrestler. And the latest addition to the Caliph's court, his friend Hassan al Baghdadi.

34 **Fanfares, in the Great Hall of the Palace**

Narrator

35 As more and more people gather for the Caliph's grand Assembly, Ishak takes Hassan aside and reminds him of the Caliph's potential for treachery.

'No man can ever be his friend', he warns. 'He uses his supremacy to play the artist with the lives of men.'

And then the Grand Vizier Jafar enters, followed by the Caliph Haroun ar Raschid himself.

36 **Entry of the Caliph**

Narrator

37 The Caliph declares the trial of the beggars open. None of the beggars denies conspiracy, and all are condemned to death.

38 Fanfares

Narrator

39 Then Rafi, King of the Beggars, is summoned. The Caliph is drawn to him for his lack of flattery. 'Let me study the hatred in his eyes', he says.

Rafi's enslaved lover Pervaneh is then brought to the court, and she discovers with rapture the purpose of his conspiracy.

The Caliph charges Rafi as a Blasphemer, a Traitor, and a Lunatic. And for these, he will be nailed, stretched, and split – the most hideous of punishments.

Pervaneh pleads for mercy, and asks that her life is taken instead. His final judgement offers the two lovers a dreadful choice: two deaths with torment or two lives with separation. Either Pervaneh agrees to become the Caliph's wife, with Rafi banished from Baghdad never to see her again. Or the couple may spend a full day and night in a loving embrace.

'But when that time is over,' the Caliph declares, 'they shall die together in merciless torment.'

Act IV

40 Prelude

Scene 1

Narrator

41 In the Palace's dark vaults, close to Rafi's cell, Hassan and Ishak stumble upon each other. Both have come, uneasily, to spy on souls in trouble: to listen to a debate more weighty than the council of kings – the debate of love and life. They bribe the prison guards, and are allowed into the cell.

42 Interlude

Scene 2

Narrator

43 Sunlight streams through the cell's grating. Rafi and Pervaneh have just one hour before sunset, the time at which they must declare their choice between separation and death.

They debate their terrible dilemma. Life will not be worth living apart from each other. Death will be gruesome and shaming.

Cowardice looms over Rafi. 'Shall we choose life?' he asks. 'Shall we choose the sky and the sea, the mountains, the rivers and plains? Shall we choose laughter and tears, sorrow and desire, speech and silence?'

'But such life will be empty without your heart', Pervaneh replies.

At last, with sunlight fading and their decision required, they choose death. 'Death with thee, death for thee, death to attain thee.' They accept torture and confront their end.

Act V

44 **Prelude**

Women's Voices

Ah Ah Ah

Scene I

Voice from the Minaret

45 La Allah il la Allah il Allah!

La Allah il la Allah il Allah!

Narrator

46 With another sunset approaching, the night and day of passion for Rafi and Pervaneh is almost at an end. Hassan is appealing to the Caliph for mercy. 'Had you but witnessed,' he implores, 'how they made that awful choice, you would have forgotten expediency, justice, revenge, and listened only to the appeal of the anguish of their souls.'

'If all of the governors of my provinces were prostrate with supplication before me,' the Caliph replies, 'I would not spare them one caress of the executioner's hand.'

Hassan is enraged, and calls the Caliph a hideous tyrant, a torturer from Hell. For this grand impudence, he is stripped again of all his favours, and is to be banished from the Grand Palace. But the punishment is worse still: the Caliph directs that the execution of Rafi and Pervaneh takes place in Hassan's garden pavilion, and that Hassan must feast upon every ghastly moment of their death as a spectator.

There then follows the Procession of Protracted Death. Masrur, the mighty executioner, wields a scimitar. There are four assistants, all wearing black. Others carry a monstrous wheel, the rack, a hammer, and a whip. The half-naked Rafi and Pervaneh pull a cart that bears their coffins.

47 **The Procession of Protracted Death**

Narrator

48 The long, dreadful execution ensues in the pavilion's darkness. Appalling screams are heard.

Hassan is finally ejected, his face white and haggard. He collapses by the fountain, while the coffins are brought out, nailed down, and put on the cart.

Ishak finds Hassan, and they talk of their disgust for the tyrant Caliph. Ishak is so disillusioned, he vows never to write another verse, never to associate with the Caliph again. Instead, he will join the great summer caravan for the cities of Bokhara and Samarkand. He asks Hassan to join him in this Golden Journey, to forsake this city of slaves, this Baghdad of fornication.

Later, at the Gate of the Moon, in blazing moonlight, Hassan and Ishak are dressed as pilgrims. They join this handsome procession of merchants, with their carpets, embroideries, oils, and spices. Together they take the Golden Road to Samarkand.

49 Prelude

50 Closing Scene
Voice (Tenor)
Ah Ah Ah Ah etc.

Chorus

We take the Golden Road to Samarcand, etc.
(*The Caravan recedes farther and farther into
the distance.*)

Ah Ah

Ah

(*dying away in the distance*)

Ah

(*scarcely audible*)

Ah

James Elroy Flecker (1884–1915)
Linking narration: Meurig Bowen

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Chandos 24-bit / 96 kHz recording

The Chandos policy of being at the forefront of technology is now further advanced by the use of 24-bit / 96 kHz recording. In order to reproduce the original waveform as closely as possible we use 24-bit, as it has a dynamic range that is up to 48 dB greater and up to 256 times the resolution of standard 16-bit recordings. Recording at the 44.1 kHz sample rate, the highest frequencies generated will be around 22 kHz. That is 2 kHz higher than can be heard by the typical human with excellent hearing. However, we use the 96 kHz sample rate, which will translate into the potentially highest frequency of 48 kHz. The theory is that, even though we do not hear it, audio energy exists, and it has an effect on the lower frequencies which we do hear, the higher sample rate thereby reproducing a better sound.



Executive producer Ralph Couzens
Recording producer Peter Newble
Sound engineer Ben Connellan
Editor Peter Newble
Mastering Peter Newble and Alexander James
A & R administrator Sue Shortridge
Recording venue Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden, Essex; 11 November 2022 (live)
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Country of origin UK

CHANDOS DIGITAL

CHAN 20296

FREDERICK DELIUS

(1862–1934)

1-50 **HASSAN, RT I / 9** (1920–23)
*The Story of Hassan of Bagdad and How He Came to Make
the Golden Journey to Samarkand*
Complete Incidental Music to the Poetic Prose Play
in Five Acts (1911–13)
by James Elroy Flecker (1884–1915)
with Linking Narration by Meurig Bowen
'General Dance', Act II, Scene 1, contributed by
Percy Grainger (1882–1961)

TT 80:25

ZEB SOANES narrator / Ishak
BRITTEN SINFONIA VOICES
EAMONN DOUGAN chorus master
BRITTEN SINFONIA
THOMAS GOULD leader
JAMIE PHILLIPS

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