



DELIUS

INCIDENTAL MUSIC TO HASSAN

Words by James Elroy Flecker



stereo ED 29 1186 1
digitally remastered

ED 29 1186 4

SIDE ONE (31'36")

- band 1. Prelude to Act I
- band 2. Act I: Interlude between Scenes 1 & 2
— Scene 2 — Serenade with Ronald Thomas solo violin
- band 3. Hassan falls under the shadow of the fountain — Chorus behind the scenes
- band 4. Serenade with Martyn Hill tenor
- band 5. Prelude to Act II — Fanfare preceding the Ballet — Ballet with Brian Rayner-Cook baritone
- band 6. Chorus of women — Divertissement
- band 7. General Dance
- band 8. Chorus of Beggars and Dancing Girls
- band 9. Act II: Scene 2 — Act II Music accompanying Ishak's poem — Prelude to Act III — Act III: Scene 1

SIDE TWO (31'17")

- band 1. Act III: Interlude between Scenes 1 & 2
 - band 2. Scene 2 — The War Song of the Saracens — Fanfares — Entry of the Caliph — Fanfares — Prelude to Act IV
 - band 3. Act IV Interlude between Scenes 1 & 2
 - band 4. Prelude to Act V — The Song of the Muezzin at sunset.*
 - band 5. The Procession of Protracted Death
 - band 6. Prelude to the last scene — Closing scene*
- *with Martyn Hill tenor

Bournemouth Sinfonietta Chorus
Chorus Master: Nigel Carver
Bournemouth Sinfonietta
conducted by Vernon Handley

Recording Producer: John Fraser
 Balance Engineer: Stuart Eltham
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 in the Guild Hall, Southampton

Front cover illustration: Christopher Fry



Yasmin (Cathleen Nesbitt) and Selim (Esmé Percy) mock Hassan in Act I, Scene 2, of the London Production (from 'The Sketch', October 10, 1923).

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THE PLOT

The story of Hassan of Bagdad concerns a middle-aged confectioner, smitten with love for the young and voluptuous Yasmin. He makes her some sweetmeats and purchases a love-philtre, and sends a young friend, Selim, to deliver them. Selim, however, tricks his friend, pretending that the gifts are presented on his own account, and thus gains entrance to Yasmin's boudoir. When Hassan calls to see what effect his presents have had, Selim and Yasmin appear together and mock him, and he sinks into a stupor of despair beneath the Fountain of the Two Pigeons.

While he is asleep the Caliph and his entourage appear, dressed as merchants and seeking an evening's diversion. Finding a likely-looking house they call up to the window, a basket is lowered, and they are invited to enter in this unconventional manner. All accept the invitation except for the poet Ishak who, choosing to turn his back on the fickle court life, places Hassan's

unconscious body into the basket instead of his own.

Act II takes place inside the House of the Moving Walls, as it is called. At the command of the host Hassan is cleaned and dressed and the companions are then treated to an extraordinary chorus and ballet of, first, beggars, and later dusky beauties. At its conclusion Rafi, the King of the Beggars, reveals himself and also his plot — no less than to "nail the Caliph down in his coffin, bound and living and with open eyes". Pressed for a reason, he tells how his betrothed, Pervaneh, was abducted on the day before their wedding and sold into the Caliph's harem. The Caliph and his party attempt to arrest Rafi, but the moving walls descend and they are imprisoned. The women and beggars mock them in song.

A message pushed through the crack under a grating at Hassan's suggestion is found in the street below by two beggars who eventually pass it to the Chief of Police, leading to the rescue of the Caliph. Hassan's reward is to be given a position at court, while the faithless Ishak is sentenced to be executed for abandoning his master — a sentence which he narrowly avoids by extemporising an exquisite poem.

Act III finds Hassan attired in splendour at the Caliph's court. Yasmin, her feelings changed by his exalted rank, visits and attempts to seduce him. At first he repulses her and threatens to cut her in two with his sword, but cannot bring himself to strike the blow and capitulates to her. The next scene opens with the soldiers singing "The War Song of the Saracens". It is the Caliph's Divan, and Rafi is to be tried. By way of sentence the Caliph gives him and Pervaneh a choice: either Pervaneh returns to the harem and Rafi leaves Bagdad for ever, or they may spend one day of love together and then die in merciless torment.

The setting of Act IV is the prison. Hassan and Ishak bribe the guards to let them take their places so that they may observe the lovers making their decision, and in the second scene Pervaneh persuades Rafi to choose the second of the two alternatives. In Act V Hassan pleads with the Caliph to have mercy on the lovers, but is rewarded by being turned out of his new home and given place of honour among the spectators at the execution. The Song of the Muezzin indicates that the sun has set. Yasmin arrives, eager to enjoy the horrors of the Procession of Protracted Death, which Hassan has to be forced to witness. In the final scene Hassan and Ishak, both thoroughly disillusioned with the transparent life of the court, join the merchants and pilgrims at Bagdad's Gate of the Moon and take the Golden Road to Samarkand.

Note: The above synopsis refers to the 1922 edition of the play (pub. Heinemann) which was in five Acts. Dean later made a three-act version (pub. 1951) in which the numbering of the scenes is, of course, different.

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THE MUSIC

After the war Dean resumed his theatrical career as joint director of Reandean, a theatrical company whose home was St. Martin's Theatre. However, the stage there was not large enough to suit his ideas for *Hassan* and although he was continually being pressurised by Mme. Flecker to produce the play he had to wait until early 1923 before the stage of His Majesty's Theatre became available. Meanwhile, similar plans had been afoot in Germany since before the war, and in the end the Germans just beat Dean to a stage production by three months.

During the interim period he had approached or considered no less than nine musicians to provide incidental music. Maurice Ravel was his first suggestion, but Ravel put off a decision, partly because he was busy writing *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* and partly because he could not fully understand the play in English. The turning-point for Delius apparently came one evening in the spring of 1920 when Dean was walking through Covent Garden with his designer, George Harris. Outside the Royal Opera House advertisements announced that Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet* was playing that evening. "I had recently read a notice of this little-known opera and, on a sudden impulse persuaded George to come in and listen to it. We crept into the back of a box and soon found ourselves immersed in the glorious music of *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*. Never had I heard such a fountain of sound. I was enthralled. I turned to George and said: 'This is the man I want for *Hassan*'. I wrote off next day to Mme. Flecker and told her I was not going to wait any longer for Ravel's decision."* Actually, examination of the correspondence shows that two months elapsed between the last performance of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* and Dean's letter.**

Flecker's widow was living in Paris at the time, so it was arranged that she should visit Delius at his home in Grez-sur-Loing, about forty miles away. "Judging from his appearance," she wrote to Dean, "— a bundle of quivering and spasmodic nerves — he is probably a very good musician." In point of fact Delius's nervous state was the first evidence of the final stage of the illness which was to render him blind and paralysed for the last ten years of his life, and no-one could have foretold that the incidental music to *Hassan* would be his last unaided composition.

Dean's original commission to Delius was for music before each Act and between most of the scenes, but after attending the German première at Darmstadt he realised that he would require several additional numbers, and these he had to extract "from a loudly protesting composer".* It is not surprising that Delius protested, for whereas in 1920 he had been able to write down the music, albeit in a rather shaky, pencil hand, he was now barely able to hold a pencil at all and had to dictate the smaller notes to his wife. Furthermore, Dean's requests arrived just as he was leaving for a holiday at his cottage in Norway. Ultimately, with both time and his health against him, (rather as had been Flecker's case), he was forced to ask his friend Percy Grainger to add a central section to the 'General Dance' in the Act II ballet.

Delius, like his contemporary Strauss, habitually used a very large orchestra, and he found the reduced numbers available in the theatre a severe challenge. At first Dean only offered 21 players; Delius maintained that nothing less than 30 would suffice, and finally they compromised at 26. The instrumentation was: 1 flute (doubling piccolo), 1 oboe, 1 cor anglais, 1 B-flat clarinet, 1 bassoon, 2 horns in F, 1 trumpet in C, 1 trombone, 1 bass tuba, timpani, tambourine, triangle, side-drum, wood block, cymbals, pavillon chinois, xylophone, camel bells, 1 harp, 6 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos and 1 double bass.

The composer was able to attend the two



Basil Dean

dress rehearsals and two of the performances. He was appalled by the audience who chattered and munched chocolates through most of his music, but told Percy Grainger "the whole show is really magnificent" and that he was pleased with the music.

The production, which opened on 20th September 1923, was acclaimed a huge success and ran for 281 performances. One critic wrote: "Had Flecker and Delius worked in collaboration there could hardly have been a closer spiritual affinity between the drama and the music. . . ."

Notes on *The Author*, *The Music* and *The Plot*
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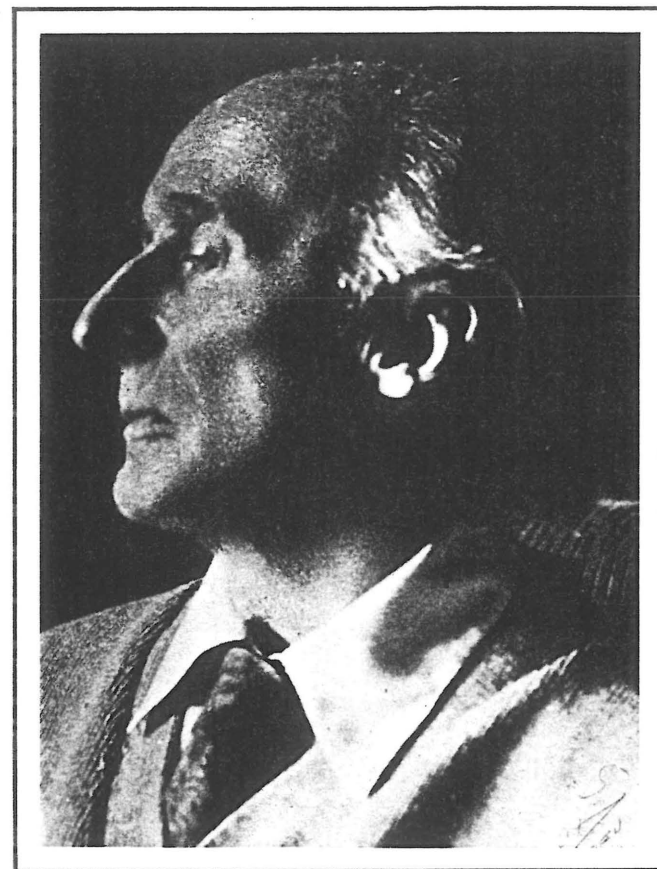
*Basil Dean: *Seven Ages — An Autobiography, 1888-1927* (Hutchinson, 1970)
**Dawn Redwood: *Flecker and Delius — the Making of "Hassan"* (Thames Publishing, 14 Barlby Road, London W10 6AR, 1978)



above: Michel Fokine, the famous choreographer who arranged the ballet sequences for the first London production.

right: A page from the 'Divertissement' in the manuscript of Delius's original score for 'Hassan'. In the original MS the composer's shaky pencil can be detected beneath the inking-in of another hand. The names of the instruments are in the hand of Jelka Delius. Reproduced by courtesy of the Delius Trust and of Boosey & Hawkes Ltd., owners of the copyright in the music.

Delius



THE AUTHOR

James Elroy Flecker was born in 1884. His very strong literary and artistic flair became evident at an early age, despite a very strict traditional education. He read classics at Oxford and only just managed to attain a third-class degree. He came down with no career in mind except an ambition to write, enrolled in the Levant Consular Service, and went on to Cambridge to study oriental languages with a view to working as an interpreter. He chose this course partly because his two years of study would cover those aspects of literature for which he had acquired a taste and partly because it would allow him to continue with his writing. *Hassan* is very much based on and influenced by his study of the oriental style and parts of the play date from this period.

In June 1910 he took up his first post, in Constantinople. In May 1911 he married a Greek girl and it was during their honeymoon (and his sick leave) in Corfu that he embarked on a play that was to take many shapes before assuming its final form as the *Hassan* that Basil Dean produced in 1923. The inspiration appears to have been a small book of farcical plays in Turkish that Flecker read. However, ill-health, apart from his own languid enthusiasm for his job, dogged his progress in the Consular Service, and he had to take many periods of sick-leave for treatment of his disease, at that time undiagnosed, which turned out to be the incurable tuberculosis.

He attempted to leave the Consular Service and earn his living as a writer, but despite many good reviews of his work (mainly poetry) he was forced to return to Beirut and a job he had come to hate. He considered that the success of *Hassan* would change all this, and pinned all his hopes of fame and fortune on it. Edward Marsh became very interested

in the play and they began their correspondence on possible alterations and improvements to Flecker's manuscript in January 1913. By March Flecker was very ill indeed (although no-one knew quite how seriously) and it was from his hospital bed that he not only completed the play but made any alterations that he had the time and strength to do. By 5th August 1913 the play was complete, albeit very long and in need of drastic cuts and alterations. It was through Marsh's friendship with Viola Tree's husband that the play reached her. Realising that it was too long for her father, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, to consider, she passed it to his assistant producer and reader, Basil Dean. Recognising its potential he immediately contacted Marsh and made an agreement with Flecker to arrange the play for production upon the stage.

Flecker, however, realised that time was running out for him. In March he wrote: "Honestly, I don't expect to trouble the face of the earth much longer, and as long as *Hassan* comes off I shall expire content." He and Dean never met, although they arranged to do so at Locarno early in 1914. Unfortunately the climate changed and Flecker was forced to return to the mountain air. He asked Dean to come to Davos, but Dean was on his honeymoon and cancelled the visit. "Had I recognised it as my last opportunity of seeing him alive, I might have acted differently", he wrote later.*

The war broke out and both poet and producer worked on alterations which Flecker would never read or see enacted on the stage. Dean was forced to postpone the production of such a prize, and Flecker thought that his world was coming to an end. In August he wrote that the war had "... bust up all ideas of *Hassan* being played. ... I feel I have no reason to go on living. ..." He died on 3rd January 1915.



James Elroy Flecker, Beirut, 1912



The final scene in the London production, with Henry Ainley (left) as Hassan and Leon Quartermaine as Ishak.

Thursday, September 20th, 1923, at 7.30 p.m.
Subsequently at 8 p.m.

GEORGE GROSSMITH and J. A. E. MALONE'S PRODUCTION
OF

"HASSAN"

and how he came to make the Golden Journey to Samarkand

A Play in Five Acts

by

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

Arranged for Production on the Stage by BASIL DEAN

The Characters in the Order of their Appearance :

HASSAN, a Confectioner	by Mr. Henry Ainley
SELIM	Mr. S. Esmé Percy *
YASMIN	Miss Cathleen Nesbitt
A PORTER	Mr. Sydney Bland
THE CALIPH, Haroun Al Raschid	Mr. Malcolm Keen *
ISHAK, his Minstrel	Mr. Leon Quartermaine
JAFAR, his Vizier	Mr. Frank Cochrane
MASRUR, his Executioner	Mr. Edmund Willard
RAFI, King of the Beggars	Mr. Basil Gill
ALDER	Miss Rita Page
WILLOW } slaves	Miss Kitty McCoy
JUNIPER }	Miss Maureen Dillon
TAMARISK }	Miss Eileen Raven
BEGGAR }	Mr. Nicholas Nadegin
LEADERS }	Mr. Robert East
ALI } nondescripts	Mr. Ivor Barnard *
ABDU }	Mr. Andrew Leigh
THE CHIEF OF THE POLICE	Mr. Alfred Clark
THE CAPTAIN OF THE MILITARY	Mr. Tarver Penna
A HERALD	Mr. Douglas Burbidge
PERVANEH	Miss Laura Cowie

* These Artists appear by permission of REANDEAN

The first page of the lengthy cast list from the programme of the 1923 London production.