



FREDERICK DELIUS

150TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

ICPN 5099908417527 (18CD)

"The last great apostle in our time of romance, emotion, and beauty in music"
Sir Thomas Beecham

"A record to treasure. Quintessential Delius in quintessential performances.
The greatest recordings made in stereo by the greatest British conductor at the peak of his career."
Gramophone on Delius: *Brigg Fair* and other orchestral works, [Sir Thomas Beecham](#)

In celebration of Frederick Delius's upcoming 150th birthday in January 2012, EMI Classics releases an 18-CD set performed by some of the greatest performers of the composer's works, such as Thomas Beecham, John Barbirolli, Vernon Handley, Eric Fenby, Malcolm Sargent, among others. EMI's long association with the music of Delius is represented here in recordings made between 1929 and 2003 by his most noted interpreters, from ever-popular miniatures such as *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* to the elusive flow and sensuous textures of his operas and choral works. This definitive collection, produced with the endorsement of the Delius Society, will be supported with a comprehensive online destination, www.frederickdelius.com offering exclusive interviews, never-before-seen material and an interactive timeline to help listeners journey through the life and music of Delius. Following boxes celebrating the music of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Britten, this set provides music lovers with an opportunity to join the ever-growing band of Delius fans throughout the world.

In addition to Delius's orchestral music, the collection features three of his operas and examples of his chamber and solo works, as well as songs. Among many highlights is a 25-minute promotional presentation given in October 1948 by Thomas Beecham for the launch of his recording of *A Village Romeo and Juliet*.

Lyndon Jenkins, in his booklet note, writes, "EMI has been associated with the music of Frederick Delius since electrical recording began in the mid-1920s. Even before then, some of his music had been captured via the acoustic process, but it was when the conductor Thomas Beecham, already the most ardent of Delius's champions in the concert hall and opera house, began to record his music in 1927 that EMI embarked upon the long service to the composer that it has carried on so loyally ever since." The earliest recordings in the set are songs performed by Dora Labbette accompanied by Sir Thomas Beecham on the piano recorded in 1929. The latest is the *Légende* with Tasmin Little and John Lenehan, recorded in 2003.

Many listeners, even if unfamiliar with much of Delius's output, are likely to have heard – or heard of - *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, *Brigg Garden* and *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*. But there is much more to relish in this collection, works performed by the aforementioned artists, as well as by soloists Janet Baker, Ian Bostridge, Heather Harper, Igor Kipnis, Benjamin Luxon, Yehudi Menuhin, Jacqueline du Pré, John Shirley-Quirk, Robert Tear, Paul Tortelier, Helen Watts and others, conducted by Charles Mackerras, Vernon Hadley, Richard Hickox, Neville Marriner and Charles Groves. The set is a voyage of discovery and delight.

Frederick Delius (1862-1934) was the fourth of 14 children born to a German couple who had immigrated to England. His parents named him Fritz. Although a music lover, his father strongly disapproved of the son choosing music as a career, despite his evident talent. In 1884, Fritz went to the United States, where he managed an orange plantation in Florida and studied music on the side. Within a short period, he was teaching violin in Florida and working as an organist in New York. He was also composing works that reflected his sympathies for melodies he had learned in Florida.

Delius senior relented and agreed for his son to enter the Leipzig Conservatory, which he did in 1886. Not much of an academic, however, he dropped out and moved to Paris, where he lived in the 1890s, associating with such fellow artists as Gauguin, Ravel, Munch and Strindberg. He met and befriended Grieg on a holiday in Norway. He composed operas, songs and tone poems, some of which were performed in Leipzig, London and Berlin. He published his works under the name Fritz Delius until 1904.

From 1897, Delius lived in Grez-sur-Loing near Fontainebleau with Helena ('Jelka') Rosen, who later became his wife. There he composed many of what came to be his best-known works. Before 1907, he was better known in Germany than in the UK but this changed with the first performances in England of some of his compositions and, particularly, with the championship of Thomas Beecham, who not only conducted but often financed performances and edited the music.

During the First World War, Delius and his wife returned to live in England. In 1922, he began to suffer what became a paralysis that rendered him blind and helpless within four years. This would have marked the end of his composing life had a young musician named Eric Fenby not offered to come and serve as Delius's amanuensis. Together they completed a number of works and made revisions of others. Delius died in 1934 but Fenby lived until 1997. He wrote a book *Delius As I Knew Him* and became the first President of the Delius Society.

Frederick Delius - 150TH ANNIVERSARY

The year 2012 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Delius. Among many celebratory projects that the Society intends to support are new recordings, publications and an international symposium in central London.

www.frederickdelius.com

www.delius.org.uk

www.emiclassics.com