



**FREDERICK *d*ELIUS** (1862-1934)

- 1 **On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring** [6:35]
- 2 **Summer Night on the River** [7:12]
- 3 **A Song before Sunrise** [5:44]  
**Two Aquarelles**  
*(arranged by Eric Fenby)*
- 4 No. 1 [2:08]
- 5 No. 2 [2:19]
- 'Hassan'**
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TT = 49:22

**BOURNEMOUTH SINFONIETTA**  
**NORMAN DEL MAR**

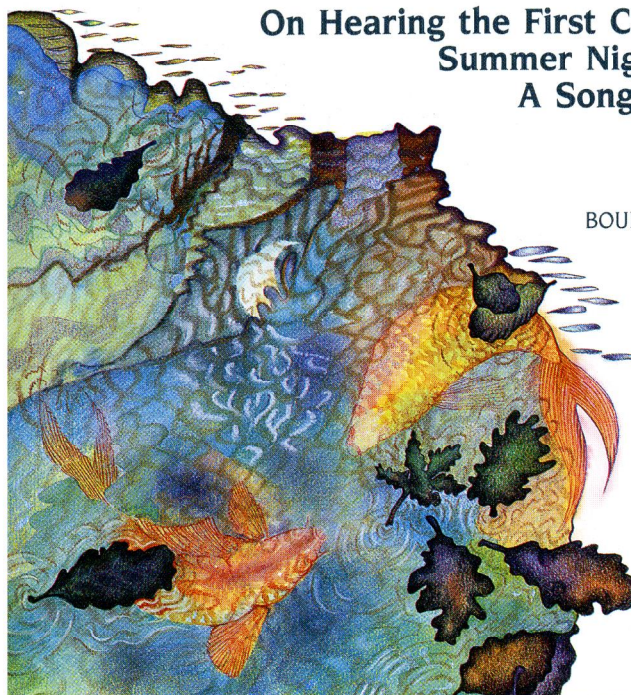
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<b>Frederick Delius (1862–1934)</b>		
<b>Two Pieces for Small Orchestra</b>		<b>13:51</b>
1	On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring	6:35
2	Summer Night on the River	7:12
3	<b>A Song before Sunrise</b> for small orchestra	<b>5:44</b>
<b>Two Aquarelles</b> for string orchestra Arranged by Eric Fenby		<b>4:31</b>
4	1 Lento, ma non troppo	2:08
5	2 Gaily, but not quick	2:19
<b>From 'Hassan'</b>		<b>4:20</b>
6	Intermezzo	2:04
7	Serenade Arranged by Sir Thomas Beecham	2:12
8	<b>Prelude to 'Irmelin'</b> Lento	<b>5:18</b>
9	<b>Late Swallows</b> for string orchestra Arranged by Eric Fenby	<b>9:25</b>
10	<b>Intermezzo from 'Fennimore and Gerda'</b> Edited and arranged by Sir Thomas Beecham	<b>5:29</b>
		<b>TT 49:22</b>
<b>Bournemouth Sinfonietta</b>		
<b>Norman Del Mar</b>		

## Delius: Orchestral Works

Frederick (christened Fritz) Theodore Albert Delius is as a matter of convenience described as a 'British' composer. He was born in Bradford on 29 January 1862 of German parents and educated in England, but after the age of twenty he spent very little of his time in Britain. After stays in the United States and Germany (at the Leipzig Conservatory) he settled in France where he lived for the rest of his life – except for a period during the First World War when he was forced to leave his home; he died at Grez-sur-Loing on 10 June 1934. Moreover, there is no aspect of his musical language or style which remotely suggests anything British. In fact, his musical voice is essentially cosmopolitan: Florida and the negroes; Scandinavia, Wagner and Russia. It is this amalgam of stylistic influences which led Delius to write music that is unique.

The **Two Pieces for Small Orchestra** ('Summer Night on the River' of 1911 and 'On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring' of 1912) were first heard in Leipzig in October 1913. These exquisite miniatures are scored for two flutes (only one in the 'First Cuckoo'), an oboe, pairs of clarinets, bassoons and horns plus strings. The theme of the 'First Cuckoo' is taken from No. 14 of Grieg's *Nineteen*

*Norwegian Folk-tunes*, Op. 66, called 'In Ola Valley, in Ola Lake', but Delius's use of orchestral colour and scoring completely belie the music's origins at the piano. The forward impulse of the piece (Delius's marking is 'with easy flowing movement') is maintained in the luminous chordal flow of the divided strings (in nine parts) with the woodwind adding their own distinct voice. Strangely, Delius only once mentions the word 'cuckoo' in the score (four bars after figure 8, when the clarinet plays the same two-note motif ten times in five bars). In 'Summer Night on the River' it is the woodwind that dominate the tonal balance and dynamic shading, and the demands made upon the sensitivity and skill of the players make this one of Delius's most difficult scores to realise in performance. Certainly it is a remarkable work of musical scene painting. One can almost perceive the insects darting over the water and a mist hovering just above the overhanging trees on a late summer's evening; and the solo cello passage at figure 3 easily evokes the slow, langorous river moving along. The score's opening, marked 'very quietly', is amended at figure 7 to read, 'the melody becoming softer and softer as if dying away in the distance'.

Comparable in style and scoring is *A Song before Sunrise* which dates from 1918. The woodwind again contribute much to the mood of the work, which opens with the marking 'Freshly'. The rhythmic bite here is all important. The piece is in ternary form, the opening theme returning at figure 7.

Delius's compositions include nine works for the stage, of which eight were completed. Among these are the operas *Irmelin* (1890–92) and *Fennimore and Gerda* (1908–10), and the incidental music to *Hassan* (1920–23). *Irmelin* was not performed during the composer's lifetime, but in the last years of his life Delius composed a short *Prelude* based on two themes from the opera. This delicate pastoral-like miniature, marked 'Lento', is exquisitely scored with solo passages for bass clarinet, violin and flute. *Fennimore and Gerda*, Delius's last opera, is based on episodes from the novel *Niels Lyhne* by the Danish author Jens Peter Jacobsen. The *Intermezzo* recorded here was arranged by Sir Thomas Beecham from the sections preceding Pictures (scenes) Nos 10 and 11. The first part, up to figure 4, is pastoral in character with passages for solo flute; the second part has solos for both flute and oboe.

*Hassan*, Delius's last work for the stage, is in many ways his most fascinating and evocative in this genre. The author of the play, James Elroy Flecker, had died in January 1915

aged thirty-one, and his widow had originally wanted Ravel to write the incidental music. At the time, the producer Basil Dean had just been introduced to the music of Delius through a revival of his opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (1899–1901). When, in 1920, Delius was eventually approached to write the incidental music, the play was still unpublished. However, after the composer had submitted his score, the existing economic situation delayed the production of the work still further, until June 1923. The play and Delius's score were much praised when the first London production opened in September 1923 and there were more than 250 performances at His Majesty's Theatre. The 'Intermezzo' is a short atmospheric piece whose main theme is heard at the opening, played by a solo cello. The scene in which the 'Serenade' originates is described in the score as 'Moonlight. The Street of Felicity, by the fountain of the two pigeons, in front of the house'. Hassan, taking his lute from beneath his cloak, serenades Yasmin. The 'Serenade' is scored for solo violin (replacing the original wordless solo tenor part), strings and harp.

In his poignant book *Delius As I Knew Him*, Eric Fenby (1906–1997) recalls the painfully slow and exhausting working sessions with the blind and physically enfeebled composer during the years 1928–34. It is a story

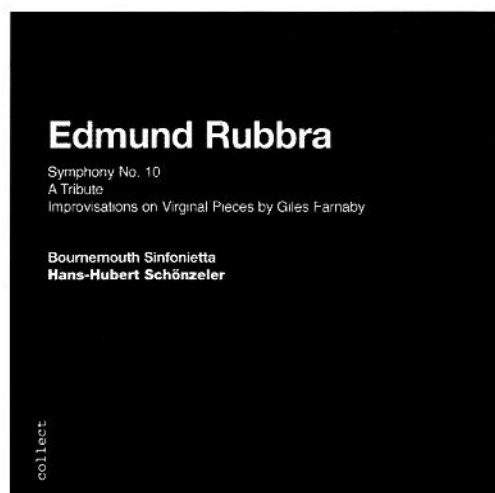
without parallel in music. Following Delius's death in 1934, Fenby made a number of arrangements of his fellow Yorkshireman's music, two of which appear on this CD. The *Two Aquarelles* for string orchestra were arranged in 1938 from the two unaccompanied wordless partsongs *To Be Sung of a Summer Night on the Water*, dating from 1917. The first of these, marked *Lento, ma non troppo*, presents a slow melody which uses typical Delian harmonies, dying away at the end. The second, *Gaily, but not quick*, is brisker and more extrovert but it, too, comes to a peaceful, quiet conclusion. The longest item on this disc is the arrangement which Eric Fenby made in 1962 for string orchestra of

the third movement, *Late Swallows*, of Delius's only published string quartet (1916–17). Fenby's description of the piece cannot be bettered:

The third movement... is a beautiful Autumnal soliloquy in sound conjured up from thoughts of the swallows darting to and fro from the eaves of the studios at Grez, now that Delius and his wife had had to abandon their homes to the military authorities and flee from France in the first World War. 'When we were away from home, Fred missed the swallows most', Mrs Delius told, and I well remember his 'Tell me, lad, are the swallows late this year?'

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