

A Delius Collection
of rare historic recordings

featuring

*Sir John Barbirolli
Sir Eugène Goossens
Constant Lambert
Isobel Baillie
Heddle Nash
and others*

Frederick Delius (1862-1934)

[1] La Calinda (arr. Fenby) 3:29

Hallé Orchestra/Constant Lambert

Recorded 30 July 1941 : HMV C3273

[2] Irmelin Prelude 5:03

National Symphony Orchestra/

Sidney Beer

8 June 1944 : Decca K1834

[3] Caprice & Elegy 6:43

Anthony Pini *cello* Wilfrid Parry *piano*

1955 : Argo RG47

[4] Air and Dance 4:33

The Boyd Neel String Orchestra

20 October 1938 : Decca X147

[5] The Violet 2:32

Joan Stuart *soprano* Gordon Watson *piano*

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[6] Sweet Venevil 2:54

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[7] On hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring 6:18

London Symphony Orchestra/

Anthony Collins

23 & 25 February 1953 : Decca LXT2788

[8] Indian Love Song 3:12

Maggie Teyte *soprano* Rita Mackay *piano*

1937 : Decca LXT6126

[9] To the Queen of my Heart 3:07

Heddle Nash *tenor* Gerald Moore *piano*

7 December 1934 : Columbia SDX7

[10] Love's philosophy 1:48

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Hallé Orchestra/Sir John Barbirolli

1 April 1948 : HMV C3864

[12] Three Preludes for piano 3:34

Evlyn Howard-Jones *piano*

4 April 1929 : Columbia 5444

[13] The Walk to the Paradise Garden 9:23

[A Village Romeo and Juliet (arr.Beecham)]

Cincinatti Symphony Orchestra/

Eugène Goossens

14 February 1946 : RCA Victor 11-9493

[14] Légende for violin & piano 8:40

Henry Holst *violin* Gerald Moore *piano*

7 August 1942 : Columbia DX1094

[15] A Song of Summer 11:02

Hallé Orchestra/Sir John Barbirolli

2 February 1950 : HMV DB9609/70

A Message from Jesper Buhl

I have always been an admirer and lover of the music of the composer Frederick Delius, ever since I began to listen to it on the wonderful old recordings made under the direction of the British conductor Thomas Beecham. When the Danacord label came into being it became a privilege for us to extend the catalogue of Delius's works on disc by offering some hitherto unrecorded pieces by him alongside more familiar repertoire: elsewhere in this booklet you will find them listed, and also details of some new issues we are planning to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth in 2012. I am really excited about these. But aside from new recordings, the Danacord catalogue will readily reveal that I have also long been interested in historic recordings, and not only of the music of Danish and Scandinavian composers. And so, as a further contribution to the Delius anniversary celebrations, the present volume is offered to cover that aspect of his output as well. I have been delighted to have my English friend and colleague Lyndon Jenkins, an expert on Delius and his recordings, to join me in this venture, not only to advise on the programme of music on the disc but also to contribute authoritative documentation. I hope that our joint tribute to a great composer will commend itself to our listeners.

The Artists

When Britain's leading conductor Sir Thomas Beecham died in 1961, his pre-eminent position during the previous half-century as a peerless interpreter of the music of Frederick Delius was interpreted in some quarters as a signal that Delius's compositions would disappear from the scene with him. Naturally this did not prove to be the case; other native conductors (and indeed some international figures) appeared on the scene and the music continued to be played and recorded; not only that, Delius works which had not previously been recorded were committed to disc for the first time.

What is true is that due to Beecham's lifelong personal identity with the Delius repertoire, and his habit of recording it two or three times as sound techniques improved, his performances on records always tended to sweep the board. He made his first Delius disc as far back as 1927, and in the 1930s, in the wake of the composer's death in 1934, he was the mainspring in founding a Delius Society for which he recorded three volumes of Delius's greatest music on twenty-one of the old 78rpm shellac discs. These were for decades acclaimed as touchstones of excellence, and they turned Delius into

something of a cult figure; indeed, such was the aura that surrounded them and the esteem in which they were held that one could be forgiven for thinking that Beecham was Delius's divinely-appointed disciple of his music on earth.

But of course there were other instrumentalists and conductors playing the music on their own account during Beecham's lifetime, and while they may have left Delius's major works to Beecham – such as the choral work *A Mass of Life* and the opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* which only he would ever have had the prestige to record – it is to display some of the best examples of *their* work on behalf of Delius, as well as providing a varied programme of his music, that this collection has been conceived.

But if Beecham's name is absent his musical presence is not, because his association with nearly all of these artists is quite unavoidable. **Eugène Goossens**, for instance, appeared as early as 1920 as Beecham's assistant at performances of Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet* staged at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. One of Goossens's crucial tasks was to manage the sinking from view of the boat carrying the doomed lovers Sali and Vreli to their watery grave. Unfortunately, on the first night he gave the

signal too soon and boat and occupants disappeared prematurely, completely ruining the effect. Beecham was incensed: "Next time, you conduct the damn thing yourself!" he ordered. They remained lifelong friends nevertheless, and Goossens actually made the first-ever recordings of Delius's *Brigg Fair* and *On hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring* (by the acoustic process in 1923-4); his brother Léon and sister Marie also played for Beecham as first oboist and harpist in the London Philharmonic Orchestra which he founded in 1932.



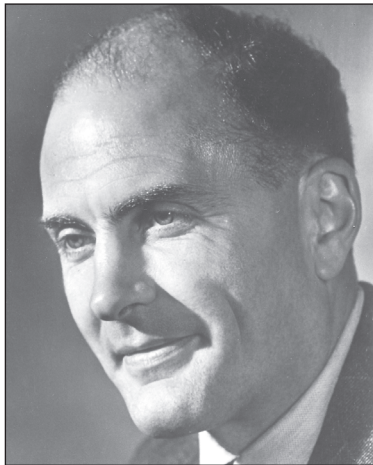
Eugène Goossens 1893-1962

Constant Lambert was involved in preparing the same opera when Beecham revived it in London in 1934. Lambert was a brilliant musician, excelling as a ballet as well as a concert conductor; he was also a fine composer and a penetrating writer. He and Beecham occasionally collaborated over ballet projects, notably the latter's ballets based on his arrangements of Handel's music. Lambert was also a fearless, though witty, critic: once, after a concerto première from which he had felt compelled to flee at the end of the first movement, he wrote that the music 'had seemed to last as long as my first term at school' ... Even Beecham did not escape : reviewing a performance of a Mozart symphony by him, Lambert wrote: 'Sir Thomas's gear-change into the second subject of the first movement would have brought a blush to the cheek of a Parisian taxi-driver'...



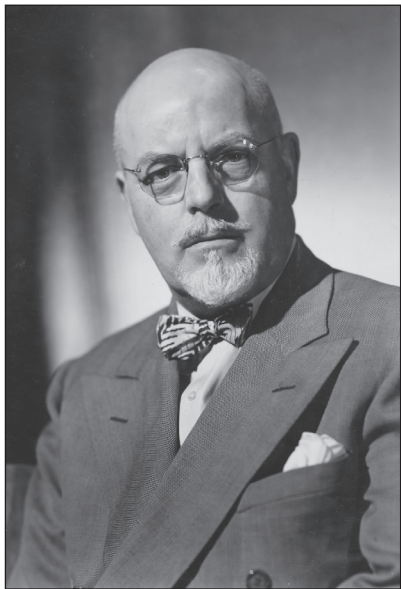
Constant Lambert 1905-1951

Boyd Neel was a medical man by profession but, inspired by the high quality of Beecham's new LPO in 1932, wanted to see if such a playing standard could be equalled with an ensemble of much smaller proportions. He succeeded, and the Boyd Neel String Orchestra made a highly successful debut on 22 June 1933 (after which, he liked to recall, he delivered a baby at midnight the same night). He and his players soon began recording, and it is our loss that the Delius repertoire for strings provided them with so few opportunities.



Boyd Neel 1905-1981

Anthony Collins was a viola player before becoming an admired conductor; as principal viola in the London Symphony Orchestra in the 1920s and 30s he would have had experience of playing Delius's music with Beecham, which obviously stood him in good stead when he came to make some recordings of his own of the music in the 1950s.



Anthony Collins 1893-1963

The cellist **Anthony Pini**, who plays the *Caprice and Elegy* that Delius composed for the English player Beatrice Harrison in 1930, was Beecham's principal cellist in the LPO from the start, and for many years held the same position in his last orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic. On the occasions that Beecham included Delius's Concerto for violin and cello in his programmes Pini was always the soloist.



Anthony Pini 1902-1989

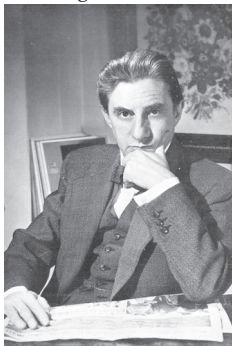
The Danish violinist **Henry Holst**, whose 1942 disc of the *Légende* was its first, was a regular soloist under Beecham's baton; earlier in his career he had led the Berlin Philharmonic for eight years from 1923, but in 1931 settled in England and joined the staff of the Royal Manchester College of Music; at the time he made this record he was leading the Liverpool Philharmonic, an orchestra that Beecham frequently guest-conducted.



Henry Holst 1899-1991

Sidney Beer was a wealthy amateur who founded the National Symphony Orchestra himself (in London in 1942), drawing on the best of the younger British players then available. The orchestra made many successful records for the Decca Record Company (becoming almost its 'house' orchestra) but disbanded in 1947 after most of its players were subsumed into two new British orchestras, the Royal Philharmonic and the Philharmonia. **Evlyn Howard-Jones** was a brilliant pianist, equally at home in the classical or romantic repertoire, who became Delius's favourite interpreter of his Piano Concerto (which he played at Beecham's 1929 Delius Festival and elsewhere, almost always with Beecham conducting). Delius's handful of piano pieces are mostly dedicated to him; he recorded some of them at the time of the 1929 Delius Festival.

Sir John Barbirolli was a committed Delius enthusiast right from his earliest days: when he played in performances of Delius's String Quartet in the 1920s he was just starting out as a young cellist, and during his subsequent international career as a conductor he gave Delius's music all over the world. In 1943 he returned to England from the USA, after a seven-year tenure at the head of the New York Philharmonic, to reform the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester: *A Song of Summer* figured in his very first concert. It remained a personal favourite, and he recorded it again after this première version made with the Hallé in 1950. A few years earlier he had recorded Delius's *Two Aquarelles*, transcriptions for strings of two choral pieces dating from 1917.



Sir John Barbirolli 1899-1991

Beecham's influence on music in England naturally extended to singers, all of whom represented here sang with him at one time or another. **Maggie Teyte** was a favourite choice in opera in the early decades of the last century, and **Isobel Baillie** sang in his oratorio performances at various times. Delius's music was a speciality of **Heddle Nash**, whose eager style and mellifluous sound suited the songs perfectly: at Beecham's 1929 Delius Festival he was the soloist in the first performance of *A Late Lark* with the conductor. In 1954 **Joan Stuart** sang with Beecham in some televised excerpts from Delius's opera *Irmelin* which the previous year the conductor had staged for the first time anywhere.



Heddle Nash 1894-1961

The Music

[1] The dance entitled *La Calinda* occurs in the scene of the wedding feast of Koanga and Palmyra in Act II of Delius's opera *Koanga* (1895-7). In 1938 Eric Fenby (1906-91), who served as the composer's amanuensis between 1928-34, made an arrangement of it for concert orchestra, in which form it became (and has remained) very popular. Beecham recorded it in 1938 but his version was locked inside the Delius Society volumes, multiple sets that were hardly for the ordinary purchaser (especially in wartime); Lambert's 1941 record, one of his happiest, satisfied a real need.

[2] *Irmelin* was the first of Delius's six operas. When in 1931 it was still unperformed the composer decided to develop an orchestral miniature based on four themes taken from it. The result was the *Irmelin Prelude*, first heard when Beecham used it as an interlude in performances of Delius's opera *Koanga* which he revived in 1935, though it subsequently achieved its own independence. *Irmelin* the opera finally reached the stage when Beecham conducted it in 1953.

[3] *Caprice and Elegy* (1930) was completed with the help of Eric Fenby in answer to a request from the outstanding English cellist of her day, Beatrice Harrison, for a new piece to play on a tour that year of the USA. She had earlier been the dedicatee of Delius's Cello Sonata and (with her violinist sister May) of his Concerto for violin, cello and orchestra. Originally scored for cello and small orchestra and premièred in that form, *Caprice and Elegy* was subsequently provided with a piano accompaniment by Eric Fenby.

[4] *Air and Dance* has its origins in 1915 and was heard at a private concert in London that year conducted by Beecham. It was subsequently revised in time for its first public performance at the Delius Festival in 1929, when the composer, who by then had himself lost his sight, dedicated it the National Institute for the Blind.

[5] *The Violet*, one of 'Two Songs from the Danish' (1900), is a setting of words by Ludvig Holstein (1864-1943).

[6] *Sweet Venevil* is the fourth of 'Seven Songs from the Norwegian' dating from 1889-90. The words are by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910).

[7] *On hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring* was completed in 1912 and first performed in Leipzig the next year under the conductor Artur Nikisch. It introduces a tune from the Norwegian folk song 'In Ola Valley, in Ola Dale' taken from No.14 of Grieg's *Norwegian Folk-Tunes Op.66*. Grieg and Delius had been firm friends since first meeting in 1887.

[8] - [10] Although in most of his songs Delius set words by his favourite Scandinavian, French and German poets, for this group of three dating from 1891 he chose English lyrics, matching the ardent nature of the poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) to a high degree.

[11] The *Two Aquarelles* are arrangements of a pair of unaccompanied wordless part-songs originally entitled *To be sung of a summer night on the water*, dating from 1917. With Delius's approval - the composer suggested the title - Eric Fenby transcribed them in 1932 for string orchestra, though they were not published until 1938, when Boyd Neel and his players seized on them as a coupling for their recording of *Air and Dance* ([4] above).

[12] When his illness took hold in the mid-1920s Delius's composing career came to a temporary halt. Before Eric Fenby's arrival in 1928 he did, however, manage to complete some piano pieces: these were eventually published as *Five Pieces for the Piano and Three Preludes*. The first of the *Three Preludes* he dedicated to Evelyn Howard-Jones who played and recorded the set in 1929.

[13] This celebrated orchestral interlude was designed to cover the scenery change between scenes 5 and 6 of Delius's opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (1900-1) as the young lovers Sali and Vreli make their way to the inn called 'The Paradise Garden'. The music was intended to be heard in silence but, at his first performances in 1910, as the curtain descended at the end of scene 5 to Beecham's chagrin the noise of workmen moving scenery on the stage and the conversation of the audience struck up together and completely ruined its effect. Sir Thomas determined that in future the curtain should not come down: "Better to let it remain up with operations of scene-shifting in full view, for possibly a fair proportion of the spectators would leave the building under the impression that these were actually part of the entertainment", was his humorous verdict. Beecham's arrangement of this music for a slightly reduced orchestra is still in wide use.

[14] The *Légende*, composed during Delius's years living in Paris in the 1890s (reflected in its French titling) was included in an all-Delius concert in London 1899 when it was heard with orchestra. The piano score was not published until 1916.

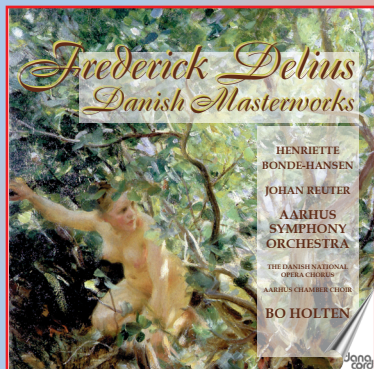
[15] *A Song of Summer* is another of the works produced with the assistance of Eric Fenby, the material coming mainly from an earlier work (*A Poem of Life and Love*, dating from 1918) which Delius had not allowed to be published. In 1929 the composer conceived an entirely new opening, before reworking portions of the earlier music into the new piece. Sir Henry Wood conducted the first performance of the newly-titled *A Song of Summer* at a Promenade Concert in London in September 1931.



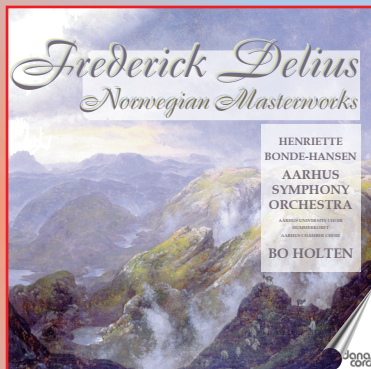
Frederick Delius 1862-1934

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Vice-President, The Delius Society of GB;
author of *While Spring and Summer Sang:
Thomas Beecham and the Music of Frederick
Delius* (Ashgate, 2005)



DAC OCD 536



DAC OCD 592

In preparation with Bo Holten:

Delius French Masterworks

Delius American Masterworks

Delius English Masterworks



DACOD 717

MONO ADD
Total playing time
76:05

Recorded in London
(except [1] & [11]
Manchester UK; [13]
Cincinnati USA)

Transfers from 78rpm &
33 1/2rpm originals by
Brian Savin

Compiled and produced
by Lyndon Jenkins

Executive producer:
Jesper Buhl

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The music by Delius has been recorded consistently ever since electrical recordings began, notably by the English conductor Thomas Beecham. This disc brings together a fascinating mix of familiar and less familiar Delius works recorded on rare 78s between 1929-55 by other devoted Delius interpreters such as John Barbirolli and Eugene Goossens.

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Hallé Orchestra/Constant Lambert
Recorded 30 July 1941 : HMV C3273

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