

SBLX-3835



first recording

FREDERICK DELIUS



FENNIMORE AND GERDA

ELISABETH SÖDERSTRÖM
ROBERT TEAR
BRIAN RAYNER COOK
Danish Radio Symphony
Orchestra & Chorus
MEREDITH DAVIES
conducting

TWO DISCS
LIBRETTO ENCLOSED

first recording • FREDERICK DELIUS

FENNIMORE AND GERDA

Stereo/Quadraphonic



SBLX-3835

(Libretto by Delius after Jacobsen translated by Heseltine) sung in English
ELISABETH SÖDERSTRÖM • ROBERT TEAR • BRIAN RAYNER COOK
Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra & Chorus • MEREDITH DAVIES conducting



FREDERICK DELIUS



JENS PETER JACOBSEN

INTRODUCTION

Fennimore and Gerda, Delius's last opera, was completed in 1910. It was a remarkable conception of opera at the time, anticipating much that has happened since in the theatre and on television in dispensing with musical and scenic unessentials. 'Short, strong emotional impressions given in a series of terse scenes' was how Delius described his intentions. He had dedicated the opera to Sir Thomas Beecham hoping, no doubt, he would bring it out. This, unhappily, was not to be. Sir Thomas had revelled that very year in his fine production at Covent Garden of Delius's *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, a work he loved with all his heart, and was quite alarmed by the improbable path his favourite contemporary composer was taking. He could not warm to the new opera. Its conventional happy ending appalled him, an opinion later to be shared by Delius's friend and biographer Philip Heseltine. And when in October, 1916, Delius had remarked in a letter to Heseltine that 'realism on the stage is nonsense, and all the scenery necessary is an impressionistic painted curtain at the back with the fewest accessories possible'—this, indeed, was too much for Beecham. So the work had to wait until 1919 for

its première in Frankfurt. A glance at the libretto will show that Delius had had to compromise. In the 1914-18 war-years, the Deliuses had fled to their cottage in Norway, and despite their German origins, were somewhat nervous of their reception when attending the final rehearsals. But their fears were groundless and Delius took several curtain-calls on the night. Back at their home in rural France, they were further encouraged to hear from Frankfurt that the opera was still running successfully.

The libretto of *Fennimore and Gerda* is based on central episodes from a novel, *Niels Lyhne*, by the Danish writer Jens Peter Jacobsen, a kindred spirit whom Delius admired for his firm rejection of Christian beliefs. The novel itself hinges on predicaments of deep concern to Delius: artistic disillusionment and its consequences; a love of—yet Nietzschean contempt for women; the futility of striving for happiness through passion; and 'the lonely burden of unbelief that needs must develop stronger individuals than those accepting Christianity'. It is this latter predicament intensified to a harrowing climax in Jacobsen's prose from which Delius recoiled in planning his opera. Admitting his own fearless unbelief and occasional sorely trying outspokenness, Delius was a very private person and must have flinched at the problems of adding this crescendo of incredulity, the gist of which is as follows. The triangle of love between Niels, his friend Erik, and Erik's wife Fennimore has snapped in tragedy. Niels, the atheist, now in middle age, is eventually ogled into marriage by a teenage flapper, Gerda. Their bliss is brief; Gerda dies and their baby son later. Niels is left shattered but defiant. War is declared and he enlists in the army. He is wounded in battle and dies in hospital 'the difficult death, babbling of his armour and how he must die standing!' This conveys no hint whatever of the powerful tensions deployed by Jacobsen. The reader's solution is simple enough. The opera consists of eleven mood-

pictures with pauses to mark the passage of time. Those who agree with Beecham and Heseltine may lift up the needle from the disc at the pause before the tenth picture. It may well be that, had Delius chosen to end the opera here and called it *Niels Lyhne*, its public impact would have been greater. However, the nature-preludes in the tenth and eleventh pictures are gems in themselves.

Each of the eleven pictures is a separate musical movement developed concisely with economy of means in textures original in colour and design from a large orchestral palette. Nothing could be farther from the ways of grand opera than the tragedy of these ordinary people made pathetically insignificant by reflection in Delius's autumnal orchestral imagery. There are the familiar ingredients of his art—the intimate phrase indelibly drawn, usually from instrumental voices, but first vocally immediately the curtain rises on Fennimore and Niels, 'How peaceful! I wish I could always sit beside you and watch you'—the perfect timing of a commonplace remark in Erik's 'Sit down and have a cigar'—the inevitable operative passionate duet between soprano and baritone—the overwhelming emotional outburst, 'No one knows how deep down in a man his soul extends!'—the simultaneous use of foreground and background in the wordless tenor voice on the water, or the dirge in its crowning orchestral climax as Fennimore awaits Erik's body being borne back from the fjord over the snow, or the wordless choruses from the village evoking a sense of Niels' contentment in managing his farm.

Delius's vocal lines, though angular, allow convincing characterisation and freedom of interpretation to the soloists. But as always with Delius the orchestra expresses what words cannot tell nor feelings make known. No work by Delius, apart from his *Requiem*, reveals the man more faithfully as I knew him than this laconic Danish opera.

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The Records

side one PICTURES 1 & 2 (15:10)

side two PICTURES 3 & 4 (band 1, 11:38)
PICTURES 5 & 6 (band 2, 12:00)

side three PICTURE 7 (band 1, 8:20)
PICTURES 8 & 9 (band 2, 12:20)

side four PICTURES 10 & 11 (17:34)

Recorded in association with Danmarks Radio

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FREDERICK DELIUS

FENNIMORE AND GERDA

*Two episodes from the life of Niels Lyhne
in eleven pictures after the novel of
Jens Peter Jacobsen*

English version by Philip Heseltine

FENNIMORE		ELISABETH SÖDERSTRÖM
GERDA		
NIELS LYHNE		BRIAN RAYNER COOK
ERIK REFSTRUP		ROBERT TEAR
Consul Claudi	Fennimore's	Birger Brandt
Mrs. Claudi	parents	Hedvig Rummel
A Voice across the water		Anthony Rolfe Johnson
A Lady visitor		Kirsten Buhl-Møller
A Sportsman		Mogens Berg
A Town Councillor	Erik's	Peter Fog
A Tutor	companions	Michael W. Hansen
A Distiller		Peter Fog
Councillor Skinnerup, Gerda's father		Hans Christian Hansen
Ingrid	Gerda's	Bodil Kongsted
Lila	sisters	Ingeborg Junghans
Marit		Kirsten Buhl-Møller
A Maidservant		Eva Tamulenäs

DANISH RADIO CHORUS
DANISH RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
conducted by
MEREDITH DAVIES

Recorded under auspices of the Delius Trust

Cover: Edvard Munch—FREDERICK DELIUS, 1920 (lithograph). By courtesy of the Munch Museum, Oslo.



SYNOPSIS

First Picture

Two young friends, almost brothers from boyhood—Niels Lyhne, a writer, and Erik Refstrup, a painter—are staying with Consul and Mrs. Claudi and their daughter, Fennimore, at their country home at Fjordby in Denmark. Erik goes off to the fjord to paint whilst Niels is content to be with Fennimore. They sit at her window, she working at her embroidery and he curious about her childhood. She tells him of her boring existence and how she longs for life: Copenhagen, artists, Italy! Niels is saying how much he loves her when Erik returns at the threat of rain, and asks Fennimore for a song. She sings a ballad about a girl pining for excitement.

Second Picture

It is evening. Erik and Fennimore are sitting in a boat by the Claudis' landing stage. They hear a voice singing in the distance as another boat approaches rowed by Niels. Erik and Fennimore disappear in the darkness before her father's party land. Niels is left to moor the boat and catches sight of Erik and Fennimore embracing passionately in the garden. Her song, he now knows, was not meant for him!

Third Picture

Three years have passed. Erik and Fennimore have married. Alone at their house on the Mariagerfjord, their marriage is on the verge of breakdown. Erik has lost interest in his work and has written to Niels inviting him to visit them. No answer has come; then Niels remembers the telegram in his pocket. Meanwhile Niels and his baggage arrive, and while Erik shows the porter out, Fennimore pleads with Niels to help Erik who returns with glasses and bottles of wine. The three drink each other's health.

Fourth Picture

Later that evening, over wine and cigars, Erik and Niels recall old times and the aspirations they shared in their teens. Niels is busy on a novel, but admits that he works very slowly. Erik's disillusionment is all too clear. He talks of death: but death of the spirit when a man works on and achieves nothing, when travel abroad is of no avail, and a man is wrung to the depths of his soul.

Fifth Picture

It is a late summer afternoon. Erik sits despondently at his easel. There is a commotion outside. Some of his companions have come to take 'the great painter' to the fair at Aalborg. There will be women! actors! Fennimore begs him not to go. Surely he has Niels for companionship? But he leaves her weeping on the sofa. Niels, seeing her distress from the window tries to console her with memories of Erik as he was as a boy. Niels gives her his word he will be her friend always.

Sixth Picture

Fennimore stays up for Erik, dozing in an easy chair. She stirs, yearning to recapture their first days of love. Erik comes home sodden with drink, twits Fennimore for not being in bed and falls on the sofa in a stupor.

Seventh Picture

Autumn has come and Niels and Fennimore are out for a walk. Niels discovers a bird's nest and Fennimore bends over the bush to see it. Niels clasps her hand and kisses her passionately. For a moment she is horrified by the consequences, but when Niels reassures her he has loved her all along she yields and vows to be his for ever.

Eighth Picture

It is now winter. Niels and Fennimore have

become lovers. Fennimore awaits him impatiently in the twilight. Her maid enters with a telegram: Erik is dead! thrown out of a cart! His body is being brought back to her. Fennimore is distraught. Niels must never enter the house again. She rushes out to meet him.

Ninth Picture

Niels looks at Fennimore in disbelief. He is stunned. They both feel the sting of remorse which in Fennimore is fired to hatred. She rails on Niels nevermore to come near her. Niels slinks away towards the fjord while she watches the approach of Erik's body being borne back sadly and slowly to her. The sight of it is too much: she flees and collapses in the snow.

Tenth Picture

Three years have passed. Niels has given up his writing and returned to Lønborggard where he played as a child. It is harvest-time. The farm-lads and land-girls, still busy in the fields, sing happily in the evening light. Niels has found contentment on his farm.

Eleventh Picture

The following spring Niels calls on Councillor Skinnerup. The object of his visit soon becomes apparent. Councillor Skinnerup has four teenage daughters who are playing a hoop game in the garden. Gerda, the eldest, seems preoccupied and is not concentrating on the game. The others tease her till she ceases to play. When Niels joins them from the house they scatter giggling out of the way. Niels greets Gerda with a little present, a book with a pressed ivy leaf plucked in Verona from Romeo and Juliet's grave. He proposes, is accepted and the councillor gives them his blessing. He leads his delighted daughters indoors leaving the new pair of lovers to kiss.

LIBRETTO

SIDE ONE

First Picture

A spacious room in Consul Claudí's house, furnished in an old-fashioned Danish style. The room is rather low and has several windows with white curtains. Fennimore is sitting by a window with her embroidery; Niels Lyhne on a low stool at her feet.

NIELS LYHNE

How peaceful, how still! I wish I could always sit beside you and watch you. *(Fennimore smiles)* Was it here you used to sit and sew when you were quite a child?

FENNIMORE

I was so wild, so wild! I never could endure to stay at home with mother.

NIELS

Why did I not know you! All those years of happiness I've missed! Oh, tell me about your childhood! I should love to hear you.

FENNIMORE

I feel I've never lived: I long for life, oh, how I long! Your childhood was happy though, always together with Erik as if you were brothers: then in Copenhagen!

NIELS

Copenhagen? I've almost forgotten: it seems as though I had been here forever, as though I'll always stay here! Your flower window where you sit and sew *(he kneels to her)* I want no other world than that.

FENNIMORE

It is so dull here, so lifeless! You must know everything: Copenhagen, artists, Italy!

NIELS

Oh, Fennimore, out in the world one longs for one's homeland: perhaps it's a longing for a kindred soul one loves. Ah, how I love you, I can't tell you how much! *(He grasps her hand and is about to kiss it when Erik goes past the window outside. Fennimore, who has been listening dreamily to Niels, starts up quickly at the sight of Erik, frees her hand and then sits down and continues her work with unconcern. Erik enters.)*

ERIK

There'll soon be a downpour. How tiresome. Shall we have a song? Will you Fennimore? Your voice is quite enchanting.

FENNIMORE

Gladly!
(She throws away her sewing and goes out to fetch her lute. Enter Consul Claudí)

CONSUL CLAUDI

It's grown quite dark now. And pouring with rain!

MRS. CLAUDI *(entering by another door)*

That's good for my poor garden, the plants were nearly dying.

(She sits down on the sofa with her sewing. Claudí with his pipe sits on the other end of the sofa. A maid-servant brings in lighted lamps.)

CLAUDI

I am glad to have you here together, Niels and Erik! Now, make yourselves at home here!
(Fennimore comes back with her lute)

ERIK

Many thanks Uncle Claudí; you make me feel quite at home in your house!
(Niels nods assent absent-mindedly. He has settled down on the stool by the window and is gazing thoughtfully out) Sing now, Fennimore!

FENNIMORE *(accompanying herself on the lute)*

Young Svanhild sat alone and sighed,
Of freedom and joy despairing.
"Over yonder's the land of my dreams"
she cried
"And thither I would be faring.
I feel like a captive bird confined,
While the sun in the heaven is shining!
Oh, I'm longing to soar on the wings of wind,
For the joy of life I'm pining.

(She gets up and joins Erik)

The rivers flow down to the ocean wide,
And away to the ocean they draw me,
With dreams and with longing alone I bide
While year after year passes o'er me."

Curtain
(Interlude)

Second Picture

The lower end of Claudí's garden which reaches down to the fjord. At the extreme end there is a small landing stage surrounded by large old trees. In the distance can be seen the harbour, the masts of ships and the towers in the town. At the landing stage lies a boat in which Erik and Fennimore are sitting. It is dark and the sea sparkles with phosphorescence. On the right hand side of the stage the lighted windows of the Claudí's house glimmer through the trees. From the fjord comes the sound of singing, though no boat is visible.

TENOR VOICE *(on the water)*

Ah...

FENNIMORE

How beautiful it sounds on the water!

ERIK

Now all is quite still.

FENNIMORE

The other boat is coming.

ERIK

Yes, I hear it already. Come before the others land, into the garden.

FENNIMORE

O Yes!

(They leave the boat and go off left through the dark garden. The other boat, rowed by Niels, approaches the landing stage. Consul Claudí and his wife and some other guests disembark while Niels pulls in the oars.)

CLAUDI *(helping his wife)*

Mind how you go!

A WOMAN

How lovely it was on the water!

(Claudi goes to moor the boat, while his wife and the others return towards the house)

MRS. CLAUDI

And the beautiful song!

NIELS

Never you mind, uncle, I'll see the boat is moored all right.
(Niels fastens the boat with a chain and Claudí goes after the others towards the house. Fennimore and Erik return. Niels, catching sight of them, hides in the shadow of the landing stage. Erik seizes Fennimore's hand, draws her slowly and hesitatingly towards him and kisses her.)

ERIK *(passionately)*

Fennimore!

FENNIMORE

Erik! Is it true? Oh, how I love you!

ERIK

And you are mine!

FENNIMORE

Thine, only thine!

(They embrace again and remain clasped in each other's arms)

ERIK

Mine! What boundless joy!

FENNIMORE

For ever!

ERIK

For ever!

(he bends her head back and gazes into her eyes)

FENNIMORE

You knew it long ago.

ERIK

I never could believe it!
(Erik puts his arm around Fennimore's waist and they walk slowly towards the house)

BOTH

Yet 'tis no dream? Wondrous fulfillment!
(Exeunt)

NIELS *(coming forward)*

Fennimore! 'Tis him you love! For him you sang! How can I bear it! Erik, my only friend! Fennimore!

Slow Curtain

SIDE TWO

Third Picture

Three years later. The verandah of a house on the Mariagerfjord, built close down the water so that one has the sea for the background. Towards evening in summer: a blue-grey atmosphere with fleeting clouds. Erik, who now has a beard and looks rather unkempt, stands and gazes at the sea. Fennimore, now his wife, sits and stares in front of her. She, too, has altered: she has grown more voluptuously beautiful, but there is something disillusioned and weary in her expression.

FENNIMORE

You're not working today? The sea tempts you no more?

ERIK

Ah, the sea! I need a new impulse.

FENNIMORE

Yes; would that Niels were here now. I'm so glad that you wrote to him! Why has no answer arrived yet?

ERIK *(taking a telegram from his pocket)*

Oh, I'd forgotten the answer. He says he'll be here this evening. How glad I shall be to see him! My dear old faithful Niels.

FENNIMORE *(with unconcern)*

I have made all arrangements for him.

ERIK

Won't you too be glad to see him?

FENNIMORE

I am quite indifferent. You are not as you once were Erik! I don't know why it is. Perhaps you're quite tired of me.

ERIK

O no, but everything is always the same. You too are not as you were.

FENNIMORE

Who knows who is to blame for it!

(Niels, followed by a porter, is seen below in the garden)

ERIK *(hurrying forward to meet him)*

There he is! Niels, dear old friend, you're welcome!

NIELS *(embracing him)*

How are you Erik? How are you Fennimore?

FENNIMORE *(cheerfully)*

How are you?

NIELS

How is it with you? This place is quite enchanting. So near the sea?

(Erik goes out with the porter)

FENNIMORE

I fear you will find it bleak and lonely.

(they sit down)

NIELS

Not I!

FENNIMORE

I'm glad you have come at last; you must help poor Erik. He paints nothing now. Day after day he broods his time away, and when the day is done his horrible friends keep him drinking all night long.

NIELS

But can't you help him?

FENNIMORE

Ah, no, I can do nothing. Life is not all one dreamed it would be. Reality is grey and pitiless.

NIELS *(pensively)*

I thought you were happy.

(Erik comes hurrying back, followed by a maid carrying bottles and glasses. Fennimore has risen and goes slowly into the house.)

ERIK

Well, you are welcome, dear old friend! It's grand that you're here now! Make yourself at home.

NIELS *(heartily)*

My dear old friend!

(Erik eagerly prepares a whisky and soda and lights a cigar)

ERIK

Sit down and have a cigar!

NIELS *(taking a cigar)*

Many thanks *(he lights it)*

ERIK *(raising his glass)*

Come, welcome once again.

NIELS

Your health, Erik!
(they clink glasses and drink.)

Curtain

Fourth Picture

The same scene, only late in the evening. It is almost dark. Black clouds with pale rifts of light. Erik and Niels in their armchairs, their cigars aglow and bottles and glasses in front of them.

ERIK

These recollections! What unbounded hopes we cherish when one is twenty! How golden everything seemed then! Life has not much to offer, now.

NIELS

My life is wrapped in dreams of my own. Reality for me is the same as dreaming. All my life is poetry. One day I shall start to write it.

ERIK

Write it? Have you written a book yet?

NIELS

At present I'm writing a novel. But I work very slowly.

ERIK

Tell me Niels, have you thought of death at all?

NIELS

I have!

ERIK

By death I mean not sickness and dying. At times a sense of despair comes over me. I sit and work and nothing comes of it: and time is speeding on, weeks and months go by barren of result for me. Yet whenever I paint a picture the time it has taken is mine for ever, although it's past and gone. It makes me ill when I think of all the years I've lived and yet have created nothing. Now here I am in perfect health with a mind that's clear. I want to work so much and yet naught can I do. So run my days and years away with relentless haste, with relentless haste! Oh, Niels, what shall I do?

NIELS

Travel!

ERIK *(starting up)*

What makes you say that? Don't tell me I am done for yet.

NIELS

No, I only thought that new surroundings...

ERIK

I have known many who travelled thus, and in every case it was useless.

NIELS

With painters I never heard of that before.

ERIK

There were many such men in Italy. Is there some vital nerve in me that's snapped asunder? Travel? I long to leave and go abroad, you don't know how much!

NIELS

Then why don't you go?

ERIK

I would gladly, but supposing all it brought me was proof that I had come to the end of my career as an artist! The soul of a man can be bruised and broken, and no-one knows how deep down in a man his soul extends!

Slow Curtain

Fifth Picture

A room in Erik's house on the Mariagerfjord. On the right, a small door leading to the corridor. It is afternoon, in late summer. Erik is sitting at his easel, palette in hand. He paints listlessly for a few moments, then sits brooding, his head resting on his hand.

ERIK

No. It's useless! It's no good!
(Companions enter noisily through the garden and verandah: first the Sportsman, then the Distiller, the Tutor, the Town Councillor and the Doctor)

SPORTSMAN

Hello, Refstrup, coming out? We're going to Aalborg, there's a fair on, and a play as well.

TOWN COUNCILLOR

A whole troupe of actors.

TUTOR

And women. The little dark one you liked so much a year ago.

ERIK

Ah, women! I don't care.

TUTOR

Hark at him!

THE SPORTSMAN

We'll have supper with them after the show.

TUTOR *(coming nearer)*

I see you are much too busy with your immortal creations.

THE DISTILLER *(looking at the picture)*

Stupendous! We'll drink a toast to the great painter.

TUTOR

Splendid!

THE SPORTSMAN

Will you come then? Forward! What's up with you?

ERIK

Oh yes, I'm coming.

TUTOR, TOWN-COUNCILLOR, DISTILLER

Hurrah!

(they go out noisily onto the verandah. Fennimore comes in and looks sadly at Erik's companions)

FENNIMORE

Erik, don't go with them!

ERIK

I must go! I need the companionship.

FENNIMORE

But you have Niels.

ERIK

Niels? He's no earthly good to me!

FENNIMORE

You will never find a friend truer than he.

ERIK

I may not, but what is that to me?

THE SPORTSMAN *(impatiently)*

Goodbye, we're off.

ERIK

I'm coming too! *(he shuts his paint-box and follows his companions. To Fennimore:)* I'll be back before long.

(Fennimore sadly watches him go, then falls on the sofa and cries despairingly. Niels comes quietly over the verandah, sees her crying and walks in. It is getting dark)

NIELS

What is it Fennimore? You are weeping.

FENNIMORE

I have a headache, and Erik has gone. They've taken him off to drink with them. *(Fennimore dries her eyes)* You've never told me what Erik was like as a boy. How was he then?

NIELS

All that was good and noble, Fennimore. He seemed the ideal type of boy one dreams about: comely, bold, daring.

FENNIMORE

Were you very great friends?

NIELS

I loved him with a passionate devotion and he let himself be worshipped. I was a dreamer. He was alert and active, a lad of impulse given to wild, outrageous maddish pranks.

FENNIMORE

Don't you think it strange that he should have wanted to become an artist?

NIELS

Oh no, for you see sometimes a man of action feels a deep longing for something infinitely tender.

FENNIMORE *(rather astonished)*

But Erik's not like that.

NIELS

Think of him as he was at the time you first loved him, and when gladly you would have given your life for his sake.

FENNIMORE

Perhaps I have too often sat and mused over that time, for I am always alone, now you no longer live with us. *(She stretches out her hand to him)* You'll be my friend, Niels?

NIELS

I've always been your friend.

FENNIMORE

Promise me Niels.

NIELS

Always!

(They clasp each other's hands and gaze into each other's eyes.)

Curtain

Sixth Picture

The same room. Fennimore is asleep on an easy chair in the window. Grey morning twilight. Fennimore wakes and looks round the room in astonishment.

FENNIMORE

I have been sleeping, 'tis getting light. Where can Erik be? *(she looks out of the window)* Oh Erik, could we but regain the time when you and I were first in love together! Perhaps I am myself to blame that our love has grown cold so quickly. Would that I could make it right again!

(She gazes pensively out of the window. Erik comes in. He is drunk. Fennimore jumps up to meet him, but, seeing his condition, recoils, horrified.)

ERIK

Why on earth are you not in bed?

FENNIMORE

I waited up for you, dear.

ERIK

Stupid!

(Erik throws himself on the sofa and falls asleep. Fennimore looks at him and goes out slowly)

Curtain

SIDE THREE

(Interlude)

Seventh Picture

In the beech forest. Autumn. The leaves are russet on the trees. Clear blue sky with white clouds: the ground strewn with leaves of various colours. Through the branches in the distance the sea may be seen. Niels and Fennimore come on from behind, he carrying a few flowers in his hand, she an armful of coloured leaves and berries.

FENNIMORE

See what masses of leaves have fallen in the night.

NIELS

The blood-red leaves! And yesterday they looked so fine!

FENNIMORE

Now you can see the branches that before were hidden deep in foliage!

NIELS

The wind soon will sweep them all down.

FENNIMORE

But the ferns are lovely still. Oh, I see some little blue berries, and here are red ones.

NIELS *(bending over a bush)*

Look, Fennimore, a bird's nest. It is deserted.

(Niels suddenly clasps Fennimore's hand. He kisses her passionately.)

FENNIMORE

Oh, yes Niels! *(she hides her face)* O God, what are we to do? We could have been so happy together, so happy.

(Fennimore sinks down on a fallen tree-trunk and buries her face in her hands. Niels bends over her)

NIELS

Don't be so despairing, Fennimore. Should I have kept it from you? Would you rather not have known I loved you?

FENNIMORE

I wish I could know it and be dead. That would be good, so good.

NIELS

How bitter 'tis that our first moment of love should bring us naught but tears and suffering.

FENNIMORE

Don't be angry with me, Niels, I cannot help it. Would that I could still resist you, for I'm bound to another. My love had then been buried deep within my heart's innermost recesses. Oh, but I could not, I could not, and I cannot live without you. *(She springs up and throws herself passionately into Niels' arms)* O beloved! Here I am! I'll leave you no more! I never will leave you! I cannot, I cannot, beloved!

NIELS

Ah, my love, mine, my only love! *(He holds her fast in his arms)* I hold you now, beloved!

FENNIMORE

Beloved! Oh, Niels, why must I belong to another still?

NIELS

I loved you from the day I saw you first.

FENNIMORE

And I chose Erik!

NIELS

You followed him.

FENNIMORE

I was blind. Oh, but I have paid for it dearly!

NIELS

Now you are mine!

FENNIMORE

Beloved!

NIELS

Beloved!

FENNIMORE

Thine only!

NIELS

Ever thine!

(they sink down on a mossy bank in a passionate embrace)

Curtain

Eighth Picture

Same scene as in Sixth Picture, but it is now winter. Twilight. The verandah door is shut and through the glass can be seen the frozen surface of the fjord and the ground thick with snow. The stove is burning. On the window-sill are hyacinths in bloom. The lamp stands between the flower-pots on the window-sill. Fennimore stands at the verandah door and peers out, then goes and looks at the old grandfather clock.

FENNIMORE

Oh, when will you come, my lover!

(she goes to the piano and sets a thick book of music before her, but does not play, only listens intently. Suddenly she runs to the window again)

I think he is coming. *(She listens)* It was the wind. Maybe it is too cold. It is freezing out on the fjord. *(She listens again)* Surely I heard him approaching. No, he won't come. Oh, Niels, my beloved! You must come! *(she listens)* No! Nothing! *(She settles down on an easy chair with her sewing, but after a few stitches puts it away again)* How happy I am! It is so good, so good to be loved. Oh, Niels, how I adore you! Your voice, your eyes! If only he'd come! I cannot live without him, no, not another day!

(A maid enters)

MAID

Here is a telegram.

FENNIMORE

What can it be? From Niels?

(Fennimore rises quietly and signs for the telegram. The maid goes out with the receipt. Fennimore tears open the telegram, reads it and totters backwards, clutching the chair for support.)

FENNIMORE

Erik dead! Thrown out of the cart. His head is shattered! Dead! Dead! They're bringing him back here! No, no, that's more than I could bear. No, not in here, how dreadful! I cannot see him, I cannot!

(She hurries distractedly onto the verandah, peers out into the darkness and then rushes in again and slams the door.)

What shall I do?

(She falls on her knees and clasps her hands as though she would pray)

My God, my God, what shall I do?

(She rises slowly and solemnly)

This I swear: all is now at an end 'twixt Niels and me, for ever! Oh, why did he lead me on? Faithless! And now we never can atone for it.

(She rushes in a frenzy and looks through the verandah door onto the fjord)

By God, that man shall ne'er enter this house again! I must go and find him.

(She runs out to the verandah)

Curtain

Ninth Picture

Deep snow. The frozen surface of the fjord. Right: a part of the verandah, the steps covered with snow. Light from within the house. Fennimore runs down the verandah steps, wild and distraught. Niels comes from behind with his skates and looks at Fennimore in alarm.

NIELS

Fennimore, what is it? Fennimore?

FENNIMORE

Erik is dead!

NIELS

Dead! What! Erik dead? He can't be!

FENNIMORE *(stiffly)*
That is what I said. He is dead. In Aalborg, thrown out of the cart, his head was shattered while we, sitting in his home here, betrayed him.

NIELS
God, how awful! Poor old Erik. How appalling! *(he sobs aloud)* Oh. I wish with all my heart that we had been faithful to him. Would that I had died instead of him! *(He is bowed with grief)*

FENNIMORE *(stern, slowly and deliberately)*
Niels Lyhne, you're to blame for it. With all your poetry, with all your beautiful speeches, leading me astray. Detested you shall be until my dying day, you wretched man, how I hate you now!

NIELS
Fennimore! You don't know what you're saying. *(He lays his head lightly on her shoulder)* Come in now and calm yourself.

FENNIMORE
Leave me alone! Can't you see how much I hate you?

NIELS *(stretching his arms out to her)*
What are you saying Fennimore? Fennimore!

FENNIMORE *(unmoved)*
Go! Go!

NIELS
Am I dreaming?

(Niels turns slowly and departs, with bowed head, towards the fjord. Fennimore looks at him for a moment in astonishment then buries her face in her hands. From the fjord four dark figures approach bearing the body of Erik. Fennimore hears them and starts up in alarm, as though beside herself. She rushes up the steps of the verandah and collapses in the snow)

SIDE FOUR
(Interlude)

GERDA

Tenth Picture
Three years later. The farmyard at Lønborggard with stables, barns and outhouses. Harvest time, towards evening. A loaded corn-wagon stands before the barn in the background. Niels, dressed in simple farmer's clothes, is sitting on a low wall, left. Behind him, the garden is seen and beyond the garden is the fjord. Niels has just returned from the fields. He looks somewhat older and has a beard. Farm-lads and girls in the background busy with the harvest.

LABOURERS IN THE FIELDS
La, la, la, etc.

NIELS
Dear old home! Peaceful haven, 'twas here I played when I was a child. O Earth, O Earth, our old and trusty mother, thine be my life now. The other things? The world with all its noise? My poetry? Gone! Vanished forever with my beloved. Gone, vanished, friend and my beloved one. Ah, 'tis over! I'm healed now. *(He looks with gladness at the fields)* I'm healed now.

(Some farm-lads and girls pass over the stage with rakes and pitchforks and greet him respectfully.)

LABOURERS IN THE FIELDS
La, la, la, etc.

Curtain

Eleventh Picture
Councillor Skinnerup's garden in spring. An old-fashioned garden with old apple-trees in blossom on the lawn. Through the trees the low, snug-looking house is visible. In front of the house are beds where tulips, turk's hats and yellow narcissi are growing in wild profusion. Niels crosses the lawn and goes towards the house. A maid comes out to him.

NIELS
Good day! Is Mister Skinnerup at home?

MAID
He will be back soon. Won't you come in, sir, and wait for the master?

NIELS
I will.

(He goes in and is seen standing at the window. Ingrid, Lila and Marit come rushing wildly out singing: Hurrah! Now we can play! Hurrah! Gerda comes in from the other side with a bunch of violets in her hand)

LILA
Let's have a game now!

INGRID
Yes, let's have a game now.

MARIT
O yes, O yes!

INGRID
Have you the hoops there? Who'll begin?

(Lila distributes the hoops)

MARIT
Come Gerda!

LILA
Let's begin!

(they play)

INGRID
Gerda, mind yourself! *(she throws the hoop to Gerda)* She's asleep.

LILA
Higher, higher!

MARIT
Gerda, you!

GERDA
Such a silly game!

MARIT
No, it's lovely!

LILA
What are you thinking of?

MARIT
Always dreaming.

INGRID
Gerda's thinking of someone.

LILA
Gerda is in love.

MARIT
Niels Lyhne.

GERDA
Don't talk such nonsense!

INGRID, LILA, MARIT
Ha, ha, ha!

MARIT *(pointing at Gerda)*
See her blush!

GERDA *(embarrassed)*
Now that is unkind!

(They all laugh aloud and dance round Gerda teasing her. Gerda looks embarrassed and tries to slip away.)

INGRID, LILA, MARIT
La, la, etc.

GERDA
Let me alone! Now let's play again. Marit, your turn.

(Gerda throws the hoop to Marit, they arrange themselves for the game again)

MARIT
Wait a moment.

LILA
Higher, higher!

INGRID
Oh, how jolly!

(They continue playing and singing at the same time, growing more and more excited)

INGRID, LILA, MARIT
La, etc. Hurrah, hurrah!

GERDA
Don't get so excited!

(Gerda turns away from the game and does not catch the hoop that is thrown to her, whereupon the children throw the stick at her as well and dance wildly round her)

INGRID, LILA, MARIT
La, etc. In love, that's it, in love!

GERDA
Now I'll play with you no more.

INGRID, LILA, MARIT
Don't be angry.

(Niels Lyhne comes out of the house and walks hesitatingly towards the group. As soon as the three little girls catch sight of him they scamper away giggling. Gerda watches them helplessly.)

NIELS
How are you, dear Gerda?

GERDA
How are you Mister Lyhne? Papa won't be long now.

NIELS
I've brought you the book I spoke about when last I saw you.

GERDA
Oh, thank you.

(She takes the book and sits down on a little seat turning over the pages)

NIELS
The faded ivy leaf I plucked in Verona on Romeo and Juliet's grave.

GERDA
Did you? You went to the grave yourself!

NIELS
Would you like to keep it for remembrance of those lovers?

GERDA
Will you not miss it?

NIELS
Oh no, if it would give you pleasure.

GERDA
How kind of you. *(Stretches out her hand to him)* You are always so good to me.

NIELS
O Gerda, little darling Gerda, oh, if you knew how sweet and good and dear you are and how, with all my heart, I love you.

GERDA
Do you mean that?

NIELS
Can you then truly care for me? Truly? Will you be my little wife Gerda, oh, how happy I should be! A companion in my loneliness!

(He takes both her hands)

GERDA
How good it sounds! I feel so happy Niels, oh so joyful! You are my life. *(He takes her in his arms)* What would my life have been without you Niels, oh Niels, I've dreamed of you so long, loved you, longed for you, for you I've waited, now I am yours! Oh, how passing sweet our life will be together!

NIELS
Gerda, rest your clear and trusting eyes deep within my soul, let me hear you say those words of love that are so dear to me. That you can love me now inspires me and gives new life, for now I will live, beloved!

(The councillor is seen coming through the garden door.)

NIELS
Here comes your father, shall we ask his blessing?

GERDA
Oh, yes! Oh yes!

(They approach him hand in hand and he comes towards them)

COUNCILLOR
My dearest children, I knew it long ago. *(He folds them both in his arms)* God bless you both! *(The three little girls who have overheard the last words now rush in and surround the couple)*

INGRID
What, engaged?

LILA, MARIT
Engaged!

INGRID
Really?

LILA
To Niels!

MARIT
To Niels!

INGRID
Gerda, whoever would have thought it?

LILA
Oh, how lovely, how lovely!

MARIT
When is the wedding?

INGRID, LILA, MARIT
Congratulations! Hurrah, hurrah!

(They dance about for joy and all embrace one another. Skinnerup and the girls walk slowly into the house. Niels and Gerda stay behind. Niels kisses Gerda.)

Curtain



Brian Rayner Cook, Elisabeth Söderström and Robert Tear during the recording sessions.

BRIAN RAYNER COOK

After graduating with a degree in music from Bristol University, Brian Rayner Cook's professional singing career began in 1967. (Before this he had gained considerable experience as an organist and then as a choral and orchestral conductor). Whilst studying at the Royal College of Music in London he won all the major singing prizes offered there and in 1969 was awarded a Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship.

Brian Rayner Cook is one of the busiest recitalists of his generation and is much in demand. His current repertoire, which is a large one, ranges from song cycles including Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel*, Fauré's *L'horizon Chimérique* and Ravel's *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée*, to lesser-known works by German, French, and particularly British composers, whose songs he has championed over the past few years. He has sung with such musicians as Sir Adrian Boult, Pierre Boulez, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Sir Charles Groves, Yehudi Menuhin, Karl Richter, and the late Sir John Barbirolli. He has also appeared with most of the major British orchestras.

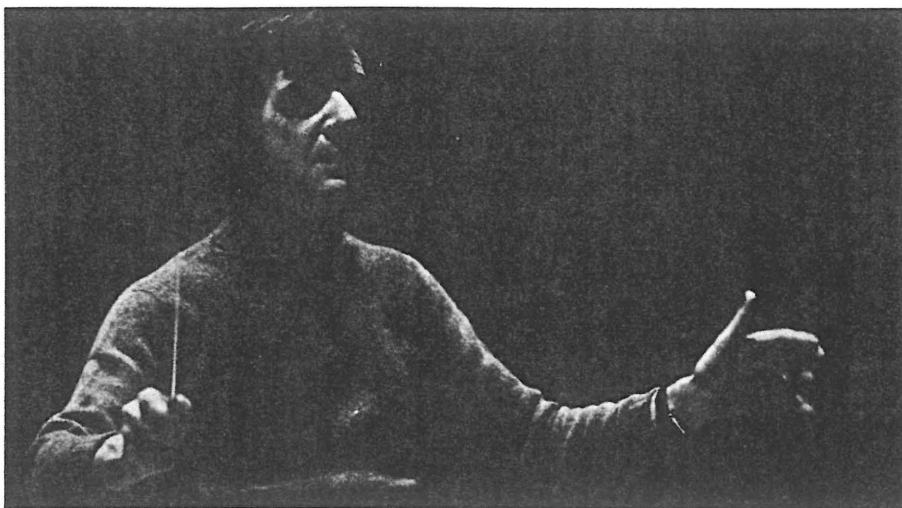
Abroad he has recently appeared with the Antwerp Philharmonic Orchestra in a concert of British music, and with the Munich Bach Choir for their Easter performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* conducted by Karl Richter.

MEREDITH DAVIES

After reading Music, Philosophy and Politics at Oxford, Meredith Davies was appointed organist at Hereford Cathedral and conductor of the Three Choirs Festival. This led him to study at the Academy of Santa Cecilia, Rome, under Fernando Previtali where his ability was confirmed when he was prize winner at an International Competition for young conductors. Later, while holding the position of organist, Fellow and Lecturer at New College, Oxford, he was appointed Associate Conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Subsequently, he was appointed Music Director but asked to be released so as to broaden his experience, particularly in the field of opera. At this point he was invited to become a guest conductor at the Aldeburgh Festival and some time later Music Director of the English Opera Group. He also had the distinction of conducting the first performance of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*. He has been much associated with the music of Frederick Delius, and has previously recorded the Delius *Requiem* and his opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet* for EMI.

From 1964 to 1971 he was Music Director and Conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. He is Musical Director of



Conductor Meredith Davies.

Photos: Frederiksen

the Royal Choral Society and was formerly Chief Conductor of the BBC Training Orchestra, two positions which gave him the sort of challenge on which he thrives for he has always worked extremely well with choirs and enjoys the stimulus which the moulding of young and inexperienced musicians provides.

On his recent tours abroad, he has conducted in Bangkok, Vancouver, and Belgium. He is planning to return to Hong Kong and Copenhagen.

ROBERT TEAR

Robert Tear, born in Barry in South Wales, went to the local grammar school from where he won a choral scholarship to King's College, Cambridge. Here three years in the choir gave him valuable experience in choral and solo singing and in 1960 on leaving Cambridge he joined the St. Paul's Cathedral Choir as a lay chorister, where he remained for eighteen months. He subsequently embarked upon a career as a soloist and soon established himself as one of Britain's leading tenors.

Apart from regular engagements in concert in Britain and abroad, Tear has appeared regularly with the English Opera Group and is particularly admired for his interpretation of Britten roles with the company. In 1963 he sang the Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* and the following year sang Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* in Britain and also in Leningrad and Moscow during the company's successful Russian tour. He has also sung the roles of the Novice in *Billy Budd*, The Madwoman in *Curlow River* and Nisael in the first performance of *The Burning Fiery Furnace*.

Tear's travels are becoming ever more frequent; he sings regularly in Germany and in January and February of 1968 he made his first tour of America and Canada and returned there in December to sing Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ* with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. In June he sang the title role in the world premiere of *The Prodigal Son* at Aldeburgh and in September sang in *Curlow River* at the Edinburgh Festival. New roles in 1969 included an Aldeburgh performance of Gordon Crosse's new opera, *The Grace of Todd*.

In December 1970 Tear made his debut at Covent Garden in the world premiere of Tippett's *The Knot Garden*. This was followed by further appearances at the Garden as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*, King Priam, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Khovanshina* and *Fidelio*. Tear also sings regularly with Scottish Opera where roles he has sung and will sing are Alfredo, Ottavio and Peter Grimes. Tear has taken part in numerous recordings for EMI including Howells' *Hymnus Paradisi*, Monteverdi *Madrigals*, Messiah, Britten's *St. Nicholas* and *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*.

ELISABETH SÖDERSTRÖM

Elisabeth Söderström was born in Stockholm in 1927. In her early teens she had her heart set on a stage career but meeting with opposition from her father she compromised by studying history of theatre at the university, while continuing piano lessons with her mother and singing lessons with a private teacher. She left the university after a year, however, and went to the Swedish Academy of Music where she studied violin and piano.

The early years of her career were spent in Sweden gaining valuable experience in opera. At the age of 19 she made her professional debut at the Drottningholm Palace Theatre in Mozart's *Bastien et Bastienne* and three years later signed a contract with the Stockholm Opera company, a contract which continues today but which allows her freedom to accept invitations to appear outside Sweden. The mid-fifties saw the beginning of her international career with performances of *Pelléas et Mélisande* in Monte Carlo and Pfitzner's *Palestrina* in Salzburg. In 1957 she made her debut at Glyndebourne, followed by regular appearances with the company. Two years later in 1959 she appeared at the Metropolitan for the first time, which again proved to be the first of many seasons there.

Miss Söderström's repertoire is varied and extensive; she has sung all three roles in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Marschallin, Octavian and Sophie), also Fiordiligi in *Così Fan Tutte*, Susanna and the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin*, Jenny in *The Mines of Sulphur* and Marie in *Wozzeck*. In 1965 she was chosen as Sweden's best actress for her performance in Janacek's *The Makropoulos Case*. She also enjoys concert and recital work: her concert repertoire includes works by Beethoven, Mahler, Britten, Honegger, Weber and Dallapiccola—again a varied repertoire—and she has toured Europe and North America giving recitals.

Her homeland, Sweden, has honoured her many times. In 1959 she was appointed Singer of the Court—the equivalent of 'Dame' in Britain—and in 1965 was invited to become a member of the Swedish Music Academy. She also has her own radio programme. Miss Söderström in turn has done much to promote her art in Sweden; she takes her responsibilities at the Academy very seriously and has also done a great deal to promote an interest in opera in the Swedish provinces by touring with chamber operas to all parts of Sweden. She now lives in Stockholm with her husband, a Captain in the Swedish Royal Navy, and their three sons.