

Frederick Delius

## A VILLAGE ROMEO AND JULIET

Music Drama in Six Scenes

### CAST

Manz, a rich farmer ..... Donald McIntyre  
Marti, a rich farmer ..... Lawrence Felley  
Sali, son of Manz ..... John Wakefield  
Vrenchen, daughter of Marti..... Elsie Morison  
The Dark Fiddler, rightful heir to the Wildland ..... Neil Easton  
Gingerbread Woman ..... Joan Davies  
Wheel of Fortune Woman..... Angela Wheeldon  
Cheap Jewelry Woman..... Joan Clarkson  
Showman ..... Tom Swift  
Merry-go-round Man..... Kenneth Fawcett  
Shooting Gallery Man..... Charles Draper  
1st Woman ..... Gwynneth Jenkins  
2nd Woman ..... Dilys Davies  
3rd Woman ..... Ruth Roberts  
1st Man ..... Cecil Lloyd  
2nd Man ..... William Davies  
Slim Girl..... Margaret Gale  
Wild Girl..... Shirley Chapman  
Poor Horn Player ..... John Chorley  
Hunchback Bassviol Player ..... Don McIntyre  
1st Boatman..... Tom Swift  
2nd Boatman ..... Kenneth Fawcett  
3rd Boatman..... John Chorley  
Vagabonds, Peasants and Bargemen.

Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Meredith Davies

Place of Action: Seldwyla, Switzerland

Time: Middle of Nineteenth Century. Six years elapse  
between the First and Second scenes.

The opera was given its premiere in Berlin, February 21, 1907. The present recording is a live performance from Bradford, 1962. The text is by the composer, based on a story, "Folk of Seldwyla," by Gottfried Keller. "Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe" was the title of the work at its premiere as it was performed with the German text. This recording is in English, the text differing slightly from the published score.

## SYNOPSIS

### Scene I

September. A piece of land luxuriously overgrown on a hill, the broad fields of Manz and Marti lie on either side, only a small piece of either field being visible. Manz and Marti are rivals for the strip of wild land which lies between their fields. They are both ploughing when the action begins, and each, when the other is not looking, takes an extra furrow out of the waste land.

Sali and Vrenchen bring their parents' midday meals, then go off to play together in the woods. Manz and Marti reappear to eat their dinners together. The children come out of the wood at the same time as the Dark Fiddler can be heard in the distance. Marti recognizes him, and knows that the land should be his, but that, being a bastard, he has no legal right to it. The Fiddler disappears, watched by the children. Their parents are no less baffled by his appearance than they are. They start to discuss the prospective sale of the land, each criticizing the way the other has stolen a furrow here and there. They quarrel furiously, and forbid their children ever again to play together.

### Scene II

Six years later. Outside Marti's house, which has an air of neglect. The children are now grown up, and ever more closely drawn towards one another. Sali comes toward the house, from which Vrenchen presently looks out longingly. They patch up a quarrel, caused one imagines by the lawsuit in which their parents have been throwing away their heritages. They are pessimistic about the situation, but Sali hopes all may yet come right if they stick together. They plan to meet that evening in the fields.

### Scene III

The wild land, overgrown with poppies. Sali waits for Vrenchen, who comes in and calls him, then hides until he finds her. Their delight in each other's company is obvious. The sound of the Dark Fiddler's playing is heard, and he reminds them that they have played on his land. Now that they are all beggars, he feels they are equal. Why do they not come with him and share his vagabond's existence? He does not seem to expect an answer, but is confident they will meet again. Vrenchen remembers that the last time they saw him was on the dread day when their fathers quarrelled. Sali reassures her, and they talk happily of their childhood days. They embrace.

Marti can be seen looking for Vrenchen. He spies them, and is dragging Vrenchen away when Sali fells him with a blow.

### Scene IV

The interior of Marti's house, now quite bare, apart from a bed and a bench. Vrenchen is sitting in front of the fire, reminding her-

self sadly that this is her last night in her old home. Sali comes in, and after an ecstatic greeting, they sing of their love, and pledge their word never to leave each other again. Vrenchen tells Sali that she has just taken her father away, as he has lost his mind as a result of Sali's blow. She will have to leave as the house has been sold. They sit down together in front of the fire, and fall asleep in each other's arms. The stage grows dark, and their dream is represented in music. They dream they are being married in the old church of Seldwyla. Church bells ring, the organ plays, a hymn is sung, and finally the bells ring again merrily.

Dawn breaks, and the lovers awake to understand that it was all a dream. Can they not have a whole day together, asks Vrenchen, in which to wander through the woods, and dance? "To Berghald," exclaims Sali. The sound of yodelling can be heard in the distance, and together they leave the house.

#### Scene V

The fair. The whole apparatus of a fair, from merry-go-rounds to shooting galleries, is visible. The various sellers cry their wares, and the showman leads some of the crowd into a tent. Enter Sali and Vrenchen. They look happy, and join in the gaiety of the fair until they are recognized by a woman from Seldwyla, with her companions. They are buying everything that attracts them, but suddenly notice that they are being watched curiously by the crowd. Self-conscious, they leave the fair, and make for the Paradise Garden, another dancing place.

The interlude during the change of scene is the famous walk to the Paradise Garden (composed five years later than the rest of the opera to themes from it). In the middle of the interlude, the stage directions indicate that Sali and Vrenchen should be seen resting on their journey.

#### Scene VI

The vagabonds are heard in the distance before the curtain rises. When it does, it is to reveal a dilapidated country house, now used as an inn. The river flows nearby, and a boat full of hay is moored on it. The Fiddler and his companions the vagabonds sit round a table. It is evening. The Dark Fiddler is evidently telling his friends the story of the strife between Manz and Marti and its origin.

As he reaches the inconclusive end of his story, Sali and Vrenchen come into the garden. The Dark Fiddler strongly advises them to take to the road and join him and his friends. The Dark Fiddler plays while they dance. All join him in trying to persuade the two young lovers to join them, but they fear they are too respectable for a vagabond's life. Sali and Vrenchen agree that they could never take to the new life that suggested to them. Bargemen are heard singing in the distance, and gradually it dawns on Sali and Vrenchen that the only way out for them is to drift down the river like the bargemen, but with a difference; they

can never return.

Watched by the Dark Fiddler and the vagabonds, they get into the boat. Vrenchen throws her bouquet into the river, and Sali draws the plug from the bottom of the boat and throws it in too. As the boat moves out into the middle of the stream, Sali and Vrenchen fall into each other's arms on the bed of hay. Boatmen can be heard in the distance singing "Ho, travellers we a-passing by."

Of the ending, Professor Arthur Hutchings has written: "The orchestra alone then concludes the work with a perfection unattainable by words; the music can suggest the deep and enfolding waters. However (as) much (as) the pathetic emotions have been stirred, we are satisfied and comforted almost as by the 'happy ending' of comedy."

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Besides chamber music, orchestral works, sixty-three songs, several works for chorus and many large works for soloists, chorus and orchestra, Frederick Delius wrote six operas -

"Irmelin"	1890-92
"The Magic Fountain"	1893
"Koanga"	1895-97
"A Village Romeo and Juliet"	1900-01
"Margot-la-Rouge"	1902
"Fennimore and Gerda"	1908-10

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