

Musik-Konzepte Neue Folge 141/142

Frederick Delius

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Abstracts

James Deaville: Beyond the German? Delius' Reception in the German-speaking Countries

Germany was the country of Delius' initial success. Yet this success did not last. Delius' effective removal from the German and Austrian musical landscape after the mid-1930s cannot be traced to a single cause. Rather a variety of factors conspired to it. Among them we have to count the rise of dodecaphony, Nazi Anglophobia, Delius' promotion to a cultural icon in England and the death of his German champion-conductors. Yet possibly the determining issue (and ultimate problem) was that of musical style. In none of its key aspects did Delius' unique style square with the prevailing aesthetic of »Central European Modernism«. To the extent that our perspective on music history widens and nationalist bias becomes obsolete, however, it may well be that Delius' time will yet arrive for Germany and Austria.

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Rebekka Sandmeier: Frederick Delius' *Brigg Fair* and Englishness in Music

Delius has often been called an English composer and the orchestral variations on a folk-song *Brigg Fair* his most English composition. Reasons for the attribution of »Englishness« can hardly be found in Delius' biography or in his compositions, which show connections to France, Scandinavia, Germany and the USA. They originate rather in music literature and concert management by Delius' friends Percy Grainger, Philipp Heseltine and Thomas Beecham propagating Delius' compositions as part of a national English music within the concept of the »English musical Renaissance«.

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Julian Johnson: Plenitude Regained. Nature in the Work of Delius

Delius' compositions often combine resources of a modern, chromatically-mobile tonality and a much older, folk-derived modality. The play between these two systems allows the music to move between expression of a poignantly subjective, often rather wistful feeling, and its suspension in a more contemplative, subject-less process. By this and other means Delius' music (re-)presents nature's plenitude as something lost and only momentarily recovered in the artwork. Understood in this way, his work undercuts an alternative sunk into intellectual cliché: that of negativity and idyll, or of authentic modernism as opposed to regressive sentimentalism.

Guido Heldt: Delius' *The Song of the High Hills* and the Idea of a Vocal Music without Words

The article looks at the use of textless singing in Delius' *The Song of the High Hills*. It sketches a historical and systematic background of the use of textless singing in 19th and early 20th-century stage and orchestral music; it discusses textless voices in Delius' music before *The Song of the High Hills* against this background; it analyses the position of the textless chorus in the dramatic and rhetorical structure of *The Song of the High Hills*, including its relationship to older topoi of pastoral music in the work, and it compares this with Delius' previous uses of the technique.

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Arne Stollberg: Suggestion Replacing Painting. On the Relationship of Perception, Image and Sound in Frederick Delius' *In a Summer Garden*

Even though Delius' orchestral works are to be attributed to the genre of onomatopoeic music, there is hardly any onomatopoeia at work here. Rather, the compositions are based on a concept of »suggestion« referring to aesthetic debates in Fin de siècle Paris (Paul Souriau, *La Suggestion dans l'art*) as well as picking up tendencies of impressionist painting. Taking *In a Summer Garden* as an example, even that fairly detailed »Summary« written as a kind of image description which Delius prefixed to the score, is by no means to be taken as a »program«. Instead, it acts as the verbal evocation of an atmosphere which is meant to set the mood for the sound experience, that is, prepare the musical »suggestion«. The latter is characterised by the fact that Delius sets the mode of perception – the sweeping of the gaze, the formation of images and impressions within the contemplating subject – as the topic of his compositional creation.

Übersetzung: Claudia Brusdeylins

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Andreas Dorschel: »Philosopher is a rotten word«. From Nietzsche's to Delius' Zarathustra

Delius' *Messe des Lebens* (1907) transforms Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883–85) into a Mass, religious services for worshippers of »Life«. An individual reader's train of thought is thus replaced by a collective experience at grand scale. To achieve that, Delius abandons cognitive, in particular philosophical, as well as satirical and parodistic features of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Yet unlike the Christian Mass, *Eine Messe des Lebens* gathers its congregation less by reference to belief, but rather by virtue of a sequence of musically evocative moods (»Stimmungen«). Mood is not to be confused with a mere subjective state (»feeling«). Bound up with Delius' idea of Nature, it is meant

to dispel the suspicion of arbitrariness attached to the particular artistic invention of a Mass of Life, compared to its rival, the anonymous Holy Mass.

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Peter Revers: »Mysterious City –/ City of pleasures«. Frederick Delius: *Paris. The Song of a great City*

Delius' orchestral Nocturne *Paris* belongs to a number of musical city-portraits composed around 1900 (like Charles Ives' *Central Park in the Dark*, Vaughan Williams' *London Symphony* etc.). The appeal of Paris to Delius provides as well close parallels to the cities reception in literature as to the image of simultaneity of very different (and often inconsistent) images. Thus the composition reflects a coherence sui generis, based on the one hand on a concise tonal and motivic network, on the other hand on a subtle dramaturgy of contrasts and heterogeneity. The interdependency of both aspects constitutes an important aesthetic and fundament for Delius' creation of an aural totality of his experience of Paris.

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Barbara Eichner: Beautiful deaths. Frederick Delius' *A Village Romeo and Juliet*

Frederick Delius' fourth opera, *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, is his most successful dramatic work and marks the breakthrough to his mature musical style. Written around 1900, the opera is based on Gottfried Keller's novella *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe*. The first part of the chapter traces the genesis of the opera, its early performance history in Berlin and London and its reception. Although the beauty of the music was widely praised, many critics found the »lyrical drama« lacking in dramatic verve. The second part of the chapter addresses this issue from various angles, including the influence of Wagner and Delius' position within contemporary operatic production of the *fin de siècle*.

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Eric Saylor: Two Together. Delius and the Texts of Walt Whitman

Frederick Delius' three settings of Walt Whitman's poetry (*Sea-Drift*, the *Songs of Farewell* and the *Prelude and Idyll*) are masterful examples of how a sympathetic pairing of composer and poet can result in great art. Their iconoclastic modes of expression inspired harsh criticism from some quarters during their lives, but posterity has largely vindicated their distinctive and deeply moving modes of expression. This essay will examine some of the links between these two artists, with particular emphasis on how Delius was able to adapt Whitman's texts so effectively for his own musical ends.

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Anthony Gritten: Delius' Concertos and the Value of Polyphony

Delius has been charged with formlessness. By this charge, apologists of his music, most notably Deryck Cooke, have felt challenged to demonstrate the essential unity of form in Delius' major compositions. Instead of taking either side of this apparent alternative, a different take on Delius is suggested. It is guided by the idea of polyphony as suggested by Russian literary theorist Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895–1975). On the basis of Bakhtin's categories, we can discern a multiplicity of voices in Delius' music where critics used to see nothing but looseness («rhapsody»). An analysis of the violin concerto – Cooke's very object to prove essential unity of form – serves here as a paradigm of an Bakhtinian approach to Delius.