

MEREDITH DAVIES

Delius - A Village Romeo & Juliet

Pristine
XR

The mistake, with *Delius's* opera, as so often, is to compare it with something else. Compared with *Tristan and Isolde* his lovers are poor pale figures, shadowy and tremulous on the verge of a world they have never experienced; their decision to leave it and float down the river, sinking the while into the womb-like waters, can easily be represented as a piece of adolescent silliness beside which Mr. David Holbrook's moist-palmed prescriptions for youth in *The Borderline* are absolutely bursting with maturity. There is never any doubt what *Tristan and Isolde* are up against, whereas in *Sali and Vrenchen* the determination to find life impossible seems stronger than their external reasons for doing so; when they meet for the first time after the childhood separation forced on them by their quarrelling fathers, they can talk only of 'recapturing the past' or at most of snatching a single hour of bliss—and they are not yet twenty. Realistically speaking, their woes—poverty, the neighbours' hostility or the alternative of promiscuity held out to them by the vagabonds—are too insubstantial for a suicide pact.

But this is prejudice, not criticism. *Delius* is not concerned with realism. If we forget (while we can) what Wagner, or anyone else, did with a related but quite different theme, we can accept this work on its own terms. Happiness, *Delius* is saying, cannot be achieved on this earth—it comes rarely, briefly and sharpened with the foreknowledge of its own death—and he says it with the whole force of his limited but intensely lyrical genius. The symbols of the insensitive world—the land-greedy fathers, the obsessive rancour of the Dark Fiddler (a whimsical Wanderer) and his anarchistic answer to life, and so on—are not all embodied in equally convincing musical shape. But the central theme and dream is perfectly realised. I have never been a Delian; the Graingerian mixture of folk song and lush chromatic harmony in a piece like *Dance Rhapsody No. 1* makes me physically ill, and even in his more reputable works I have often been moved less by the music than by Beecham's passionate belief in it. But *A Village Romeo and Juliet* seems to me a work of indisputable beauty and dramatic validity; and at Sadler's Wells, outstandingly well conducted by Meredith Davies, it makes its point for all to hear.

David Cairns, *The Spectator*, 12 April 1962

Producer's Note

This live broadcast was transmitted from the Sadler's Wells Theatre in London on the BBC's Third Programme on the evening of Tuesday 10th April, 1962, and preserved excellently from the FM broadcast on open-reel tapes from which this release was drawn. This marks only the sixth full recording of the opera to be issued, though of course *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* is a highly popular orchestral piece, drawn from the opera's penultimate act. The tapes were in excellent condition. There was some intrusive electrical hum, which was easily removed, and two very short patches were required to cover tape turns. Sound quality from the original BBC transmission was exemplary, with a generally very quiet audience. Alas this was broadcast just five months before the start of experimental stereo broadcasts by the BBC, though the application here of our Ambient Stereo processing does go some way to giving a little breathing space around the mono sound image.

Andrew Rose

delius

a village romeo & juliet

PACO 132

john wakefield
elsie morison
donald mcintyre
lawrence felley
neil easton



Meredith Davies, conductor
Sadler's Wells Opera Chorus and Orchestra
BBC Radio broadcast, 1962

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delius a village romeo & juliet

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PACO 132

- CD 1
- 1 Scene 1 - September - A piece of land on a hill (16:19)
 - 2 Scene 2 - Six years later - Outside Marti's house (10:46)
 - 3 Scene 3 - The Wildland (13:12)
 - 4 Scene 4 - Interior of Marti's house (15:17)
 - 5 Scene 4 - The dream of Sali and Vrenchen (11:15)

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of John Wakefield, Elsie Morison & Neil Easton in A Village Romeo and Juliet

- CD 2
- 1 Scene 5 - The Fair (8:25)
 - 2 Scene 5 - The walk to the Paradise Garden (9:32)
 - 3 Scene 6 - The Paradise Garden (25:13)

DELIUS A Village Romeo and Juliet

Sadler's Wells producer:

Basil Coleman

Broadcast from Sadler's Wells Theatre

7.30 pm (Scenes 1-4)

8.35pm (Scenes 5 & 6)

on BBC Third Programme

Tuesday 11 April, 1962

DELIUS The Walk to the Paradise Garden

An ABC/Blue network broadcast

also appears on PASC461

Total duration: 1hr 49:33

CAST

Sali - John Wakefield

Vrenchen - Elsie Morison

The Dark Fiddler - Neil Easton

Manz - Lawrence Felley

Marti - Donald McIntyre

Sali as a child - Soo Bee Lee

Vrenchen as a child - Sheila Amit

The Slim Girl - Margaret Gale

The Wild Girl - Shirley Chapman

The Poor Horn Player - John Chorley

The Hunchbacked Bass-Fiddler - Donald McIntyre

First Peasant - Cecil Lloyd

Second Peasant - William Davies

First Woman - Gwynneth Jenkins

Second Woman - Dilys Davies

Third Woman - Ruth Roberts

Wheel-of-Fortune Woman - Angela Wheeldon

Cheap Jewellery Woman - Joan Clarkson

Gingerbread Woman - Joan Davies

Showman - Tom Swift

Merry-go-Round Man - Kenneth Fawcett

Shooting-Gallery Man - Charles Draper

Three boatmen - Tom Swift, Kenneth Fawcett, John Chorley

Sadler's Wells Chorus

Chorus Master - David Tod Boyd

Sadler's Wells Orchestra

Leader - Barry Collins

Conductor - Meredith Davies

BONUS TRACK

- 4 DELIUS The walk to the Paradise Garden (9:01)

Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor

Blue Network Symphony Orchestra

An ABC radio broadcast 7 April, 1945

Live from the Ritz Theater, New York City

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