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# Before the Champions: Frederick Delius' Florida Suite for Orchestra

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

BEFORE THE CHAMPIONS:  
FREDERICK DELIUS' *FLORIDA SUITE FOR ORCHESTRA*

By

Mary Emily Greene

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Music

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2011

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Before the Champions:

(May 2011)

Frederick Delius' *Florida Suite for Orchestra*

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Frederick Delius' music never appealed to the masses, but rather found ardent support in a devoted few. This trend of select championship was predicted, if not encouraged, by the composer himself: "A few there are who love and understand. They are the ones that count. The rest are not worth bothering about."<sup>1</sup> Throughout Delius' labored career, he was fortunate to meet the very champions of his work that would guide him through the most critical points in his life. Few composers have elicited such devotion and sacrifice that Delius garnered with relatively little solicitation. The aim of this paper is to explore the life of Delius with its history of champions and to examine his early work, *Florida Suite for Orchestra*, encompassing the germs of potential that his committed followers would come to recognize at the height of his powers during the first decade of the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I Knew Him*, 189.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Der Übermensch: Frederick Delius**

Frederick Delius lived at his own pace and adhered to his own values. His talent and conviction won him a number of devoted champions during his career and his music continues to present a unique appeal to listeners today, as evidenced in the current activities of the Delius Trust and Delius Society. As a young man, he found affirmation in the writings of Nietzsche and “remained an autocrat to the very end.”<sup>1</sup> Delius’ life, outlined below, reflected his transcendence above the ordinary toward the evolution of a “true artist.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **Early Life**

Delius began his life on January 29, 1862, as Fritz Theodore Albert Delius in Bradford, Yorkshire, England. He was the fourth child (second son) out of a brood of fourteen born to German immigrants, Julius Delius and Elise Krönig. Fritz appears to have enjoyed a happy, healthy childhood as the son of a successful wool merchant. He was enormously fond of cricket, a sport he continued to follow for the rest of his life, and he was not immune to the temptations of the occasional childhood prank.

Fritz’s parents were stern, but encouraged cultural diversions – especially music. Fritz played piano from a very early age and began taking violin lessons when he was about six or seven. As the son of one of Yorkshire’s most prominent businessmen, Fritz

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<sup>1</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 188.

<sup>2</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 211.



was privileged to have as his first teacher a violinist from the celebrated Hallé Orchestra.<sup>3</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Delius were proud of their little boy's evident musical talent and often had him "brought down in a little velvet suit after dinner to play for the company."<sup>4</sup> These charming improvisations by a miniature Delius were not the only source of an evening's entertainment: the family home frequently hosted musicians of professional caliber to impress the Bradford elite. One such musical guest introduced Fritz to Chopin's posthumously published Waltz in E minor and opened an "entirely new world" from that of the familiar sounds of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.<sup>5</sup> Other strong impressions on the future composer, recounted to his enthusiastic disciple Philip Heseltine, came in the form of Grieg's *Humoresken* as well as a performance of *Lohengrin* at Covent Garden in 1875.<sup>6</sup>

The abundance of quality music available to young Fritz was intended as a means of asserting one's position in society with tasteful recreation – never as an introduction to a possible vocation. Julius Delius instead patterned his second son's education after skills he felt were necessary for a nineteenth-century business scion: After four years at the local Bradford Grammar School, in 1878 Fritz was sent to the International College at Spring Grove, Isleworth, a suburb of London. The hope that Fritz would develop into an international tradesman was never realized. He admittedly had no interest in any of his school subjects, aside from perhaps geography along with French and German, the languages already familiar from his childhood. He was a star cricket player during his term at International College and continued his violin lessons with a Mr. Deichmann

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<sup>3</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 32. His teacher, Mr. Bauerkeller, traveled from Manchester specifically for Fritz's lessons.

<sup>4</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 32.

while also performing with an amateur orchestra in Chiswick.<sup>7</sup> However, it was the college's location just outside London that proved the most beneficial for Fritz's true passion by providing him with ample opportunities to attend concerts only available in the large capital.

The stark contrast between the cultural life of London and the uncreative wool trade in Bradford was hard on the eighteen-year-old Fritz when he returned home to work at the family firm. As a result of his apparent depression, in 1880 Julius Delius arranged for his son to widen his horizons outside Bradford as an agent for the family business on various assignments in France, Sweden, Germany and Norway. These travels would continue for the next three years, and while Fritz found little success on behalf of his father's accounts, he made the most of his time in regards to his musical pursuits. In Norway, the vast mountains came as a revelation to the young man from Yorkshire and the unique landscape was later reflected in much of his music. While in Chemnitz, Germany, he took violin lessons with the famed Hans Sitt and enjoyed performances in Berlin and Dresden. He also became keenly aware of the musical life and education that could be had in Leipzig during this time.

Julius Delius' agents in the various posts to which Fritz was assigned invariably sent back reports of the young man's distractions and general lack of business acumen. Despite the repeated threats and reassignments dealt out by the disappointed father, Julius Delius still held out hope. It was on this thin thread of paternal pride that Fritz convinced his father that perhaps an orange grove on the distant Florida peninsula would be his life's calling. Julius Delius eventually acquiesced to this vague idea after some understandable hesitation, and one might imagine he felt a slight vindication that – for the

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<sup>7</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 33.

time being, at least – his son's intolerable notion of becoming a musician had been replaced by a somewhat more acceptable career as a Florida planter.

## **Florida**

Although it is not clear where the idea originated for the young Delius to try his hand at managing an orange plantation, advertisements for commercial orange growing in Florida were widely circulated in England during the 1880's and doubtless appealed to a population swallowed by the industrial revolution. Fritz Delius, however, had his own reasons for the drastic move: eager to escape the watchful eye of his father, Fritz set sail on the Cunarder *Gallia* out of Liverpool for New York on March 2, 1884, accompanied by Charles Douglas, the son of another wealthy Bradford businessman who was also persuaded to put forth money towards the effort. From New York, the two men continued down the eastern seaboard to Fernandina, Florida, where they hopped a train to Jacksonville. At Jacksonville, one final ferry upriver brought the pair to Picolata, where, just five miles away, a property named Solano Grove could be reached by either dirt road or boat. The journey from England to the final destination in Florida would have taken a committed traveler nearly three weeks to complete; yet, Solano Grove was not wholly isolated: neighbors were easily within reach and riverboats made regularly scheduled trips to Jacksonville and other landings along the St. Johns River.

Fritz's new homestead consisted of one hundred acres on the east bank of the St. Johns forty miles south of Jacksonville, which at this particular point in its course reached roughly four miles wide. Onsite was a four-room house with porches on either side that Fritz would make frequent use of during his musical musings. More importantly,

the property also supplied an overseer named Albert Anderson, and his family, to assist with the oranges and housekeeping.

The Anderson family would play a large role in introducing Fritz to the strong tradition of African American singing and later led the reflective composer to recall to his amanuensis Eric Fenby, “hearing their singing in such romantic surroundings, it was then and there that I first felt the urge to express myself in music.”<sup>8</sup> Fritz never made any systematic record or analysis of the melodies he heard from his workers on the plantation, but the impact of their “truly wonderful sense of musicianship and harmonic resource in the instinctive way in which they treated a melody” stayed with him for the rest of his life.<sup>9</sup>

All told, Fritz happily remained at the Solano Grove property for roughly eighteen months, from March 1884 to September 1885. The same cannot be said of poor Charles Douglas. The nature of the split between Fritz and Douglas remains somewhat of a mystery. Douglas never revealed his side of the story, but Sir Thomas Beecham has provided a very romantic depiction of the events leading up to Douglas’ departure:

Charles had a sharp attack of malarial fever and his companion hurried off to Jacksonville to secure medical aid. The doctor who had been recommended was not for the moment at home, and to pass the time he entered a music shop, retired to a room where there was a piano and sat down to improvise. A visitor to the store, struck by the uncommon sounds that were reaching him, insisted on introducing himself to the author, who was reveling in his first encounter with a keyboard since landing in the New World.<sup>10</sup>

The visitor turned out to be Thomas F. Ward, an organist from Brooklyn.

According to Beecham, Fritz and Ward struck up such a liking for one another that Fritz

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<sup>8</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 25.

<sup>10</sup> Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 27.

utterly forgot about Charles' illness and lingered in Jacksonville so long that only the fast actions of a nearby neighbor saved Charles' condition from deteriorating. Fritz's indifference towards the situation caused Charles to relocate to more reliable companionship shortly after this episode.

With the new vacancy in Solano Grove, it was not long before Fritz invited his new mentor to stay with him on the property. Due to Ward's commitments in Jacksonville as a church organist and private teacher, it is up for debate whether he stayed on at Solano Grove for several months or only intermittently. However, the fact remains that his instruction in counterpoint, its importance attested to in Delius' repeated praise, came at a crucial point in the young composer's career.<sup>11</sup>

## **Development**

The confidence that came with Ward's instruction – and, quite possibly, the unexpected arrival of Fritz's older brother Ernst looking to try his hand at managing the property – led the young composer to leave Solano Grove and make his own way as a musician and teacher.<sup>12</sup> He began in Jacksonville for several weeks before heading north in October 1885 to Danville, Virginia, upon his appointment by John Frederick Rueckert as music instructor to his two daughters. Once in Danville, Fritz became close with a graduate of the Leipzig Conservatory and professor of music at the Roanoke Female College, Robert Phifer. No doubt Professor Phifer's own history at Leipzig, coupled with Thomas Ward's encouragement, strongly influenced Fritz's desire to study at what was then considered Europe's most prestigious conservatory. With this in mind, Danville

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<sup>11</sup> More will be discussed about Ward's influence in Chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 29-30.

became only a temporary stop on Fritz's journey despite his overwhelming success both socially and professionally.

This brief time in Danville may well have been the only period in Delius' life where he was completely independent financially. Indeed, it was later repeatedly referenced by his despairing parents as the only source of hope they held that a music career could possibly sustain him: "That you went to Virginia was your blessing, as that was the only time you made a living."<sup>13</sup>

Fritz proved a sensation among the local female population as a music professor at Roanoke and gained additional income providing private lessons in French and German. His skills as a violinist were put to use in a performance of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto "with conspicuous success at a concert given by the Young Ladies' Baptist College," and his gift of charm was validated by temporarily securing the young belle Virginia Ann Watkins, who dutifully wore his ring until his departure for Europe.<sup>14</sup>

By June 1886, Fritz had saved enough money for his return fare to Europe but continued to maintain a correspondence with many of his fond acquaintances in Danville. Following a ten-day stop in Long Island, Fritz boarded the *Aurania* for England on June 12<sup>th</sup> and suffered a brief visit with his family in Bradford before taking up classes in Leipzig that August.<sup>15</sup> The young man's two-year stint in America had been a success: his parents finally agreed to fund a conservatory education after spending months of worry in attempts to track him down in a foreign country – only to discover that he had proven them wrong and begun to make a living as a music teacher.

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<sup>13</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 167. Letter dated January 13, 1900, from mother Elise Delius to Fritz Delius.

<sup>14</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 159.

<sup>15</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 161.

Fritz's enthusiasm for his studies in Leipzig did not last long. He took classes from the renowned Hans Sitt (whom he initially encountered in Chemnitz during his days as a wool agent), Salomon Jadassohn, Carl Reinecke and others, but always maintained that he never learned anything from his time at the conservatory. He did, however, take advantage of living in the very center of musical activity: Wagner operas and the opportunity to see Brahms and Tchaikovsky conduct their own works were spoon-fed to the students in Leipzig, and Fritz took in a great number of performances during his eighteen months of study. Musicians flocked to the city, and the many friendships Fritz made lasted long after his school days.

Fritz's long affinity for Norway found him within a tight circle of Norwegian composers, including violinist Johan Halvorsen, Christian Sinding and Edvard Grieg. The latter would remain particularly close until his death twenty years later. Throughout their long friendship, Grieg provided a combination of artistic inspiration and practical support. He arranged for the first performance of a Delius orchestral work, *Florida Suite*, and provided honest feedback on early manuscripts such as the above-mentioned *Florida Suite* and *Hiawatha*.<sup>16</sup> In addition, being championed by an established celebrity like Grieg not only convinced the young composer to remain focused but also persuaded Julius Delius to continue financial support of his son's musical ambitions. Towards the end of Fritz's studies in Leipzig, a flowery letter from Grieg dated February 28, 1888, shows the older man's sympathy for Fritz's situation and is obviously intended for the eyes of the young composer's father: "It is my most fervent wish that you will one day

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<sup>16</sup> The first performance of *Florida Suite* is detailed later in Chapter 3.

find in your own country the recognition which you deserve, as well as the material means towards the achievement of your splendid goal.”<sup>17</sup>

Delius senior was sufficiently convinced of Fritz’s talent to provide his son with a monthly remittance upon his exit from school. The amount was not extravagant, but did allow the young man the luxury to compose fulltime without the need for a formal position. Fritz spent the summer of 1888 learning the ways of society in Paris with his wealthy Uncle Theodor and, perhaps through a shared dislike of Julius Delius, won over the support of his father’s estranged brother.

Fritz balanced socializing with a prodigious amount of composing during his first years in Paris, but by 1896 he had yet to earn any money from his compositions despite work on three operas (*Irmelin*, *The Magic Fountain*, *Koanga*), the Violin Sonata in B, and a number of songs and smaller pieces. His social circle in Paris consisted less of musicians than of the literary and visual artists of the day. August Strindberg and Paul Gauguin became regular companions at the famed *crémèrie* of the Mère Charlotte and the Norwegian Edvard Munch also found a kindred spirit in the young Delius. The most important painter, however, to enter Fritz’s circle during this time was Helene “Jelka” Rosen.

Jelka Rosen was a German painter of promise studying at the Académie Colarossi in Paris when she met Fritz Delius at a dinner party arranged by a mutual friend in January 1896. The two connected over their admiration of Grieg and Nietzsche and would eventually marry in 1903, after which time Fritz Delius anglicized his name to

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<sup>17</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 13. Grieg followed this letter by supplying further praise while dining with Fritz’s father at the Hotel Metropole in London that April.



Frederick.<sup>18</sup> During their lengthy and confusing courtship, several key events set the stage for Delius' musical high summer.

### **Maturity**

Two large-scale compositions – the opera *Koanga* and *Appalachia: Variations on an old Slave Song* for baritone soloist, chorus and orchestra – had already begun to take shape by the time Delius embarked on his second trip to America in January 1897.

Opposing schools of thought exist as to the primary motive for this trip. Following the lead of Percy Grainger's assertion found both in his memoir, "The Personality of Frederick Delius," and a letter written to Richard Muller in 1941, violinist Tasmin Little supports the idea that Delius returned to Solano Grove in search of his former lover.<sup>19</sup> As the story goes, the affair resulted in a child and took place with a young black woman during the intervening months in 1885 after Ward had left the plantation and before Delius continued on to Danville. Upon his return, the woman fled with their young boy for fear of the child being taken away, and Delius never heard of his Florida family again. Without any evidence of this episode, we are left to decipher the emotional impact of this second visit with the facts that remain.

Delius was thirty-five at the time of his second journey to America and possibly hoping to revitalize the passion for expression he had discovered on the banks of the St. Johns River over ten years earlier. He took it as welcome escape from Paris to return to the long-neglected Solano Grove and was further buoyed with promises of profit by arranging to lease the land to a tobacco company. Nothing was to come of these

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<sup>18</sup> Jelka's devotion to Delius is legendary and discussed further in Chapter 2.

<sup>19</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 122; Little, "Delius and his Violin Concerto," 12.

preparations, but Delius was obviously enthusiastic enough that he convinced his father to release all obligations of future allowances in return for the title deeds to the property. As a result of this forfeiture of funds, money was tight on the journey to Florida but the entertainment value was high: Delius had planned for violinist Halfdan Jebe to be his travel companion; however, an additional and unexpected guest appeared in the form of a Princesse de Cystria, a transatlantic stowaway and one of our composer's fervent admirers. This incident is an extreme example of the young Delius' appeal amongst women, but the trio made light of the situation by passing off the Princesse as a concert singer and performing in Danville on January 30<sup>th</sup> amid old friends. By the time Delius had reached Solano Grove, he was alone, most likely exhausted from the hoax, and content to work in earnest on his latest composition, the Piano Concerto, through the spring of 1897.

That summer brought about the revelation of Grez-sur-Loing. In May, Delius' dear friend Jelka had purchased a house and garden property along the river in this small French village. Upon his return to Paris midsummer, he relocated to Grez and Jelka. The lushness and tranquility of the riverside garden at Grez must have resonated with those same feelings Delius experienced on Solano Grove along the banks of the St. Johns. Once at Grez, Delius was able to resume revisions on *Koanga* and *Appalachia* to his satisfaction and would remain a resident of this garden oasis for the rest of his life.

Delius was still smarting from his father's canceled allowance when he received a small inheritance from his Uncle Theodor in October 1898. The modest legacy of 25,000 francs was immediately put to use. Delius put 500 francs towards the purchase of Gauguin's now famous *Nevermore* (touted as his most prized possession) and then began

plans to sponsor a full-scale concert of his own works in London. He turned to a London agency, the Concorde Concert Control, to make the arrangements and the date of May 30, 1899, was selected. The forces put forth for this one-man show were enormous: a professional orchestra of ninety-five players, a chorus of over 150, and eight vocal soloists were led by Alfred Hertz with concertmaster – and Delius’ old friend – Halfdan Jebe.<sup>20</sup>

Organizing this performance was understandably exhausting for Delius and the costs associated with the details involved, from a thirty-six-page program book to press releases, were continually rising. The public was not familiar with a note of Delius’ work but filled St. James Hall in Piccadilly that Tuesday night for a performance that lasted from 8:30 PM to roughly midnight. The first half of the program included *Over the Hills and Far Away*, along with a selection of shorter songs, while the second half featured excerpts from his latest opera, *Koanga*, a story of slaves on a Louisiana plantation.

The press reaction to the 1899 concert was generally positive and revealed a somewhat surprising appreciation of the “vitality” of Delius’ music, from which the composer could have profited had he stayed in London long enough to take advantage of his new popularity.<sup>21</sup> Instead, Delius returned to Grez within a couple of days, and interest in his work fizzled in his native Britain until Sir Thomas Beecham took up the cause in 1907 following a performance of *Appalachia* conducted by Fritz Cassirer.<sup>22</sup> In Beecham, Delius found not only the ideal interpreter of his music but also the most

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<sup>20</sup> Carley, *Frederick Delius: Music, Art and Literature*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Carley, *Frederick Delius: Music, Art and Literature*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> 1907 was also the year that Harmonie in Berlin published Max Chop’s monograph on Delius. This was the first publication of its kind devoted entirely to Delius and his music.

persistent programmer of his works in the concert hall.<sup>23</sup> Beecham was not alone in his committed support of Delius' music (other notable conductors were Hans Haym and Julius Butts in Germany), but it was Beecham's popular broadcasts and recordings that brought Delius to an international public.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw Delius "at the very height of his powers – 1900-1, *A Village Romeo and Juliet*; 1902, *Appalachia*; 1903, *Sea Drift*; 1904-5, *A Mass of Life*" and with these works laid the groundwork for the conversion of his final champion: the young Eric Fenby.<sup>24</sup>

Fenby served as amanuensis for the greater part of Delius' final six years. When Fenby joined the Delius household at Grez in 1928, the composer was already a ghost of his former self at only 66 years of age. Beginning in 1910, the composer's customarily robust health had begun to show signs of deterioration due to the effects of syphilis contracted some time around 1895 in Paris. Once the symptoms began to take a more serious toll through the mid- to late-1910's, the succeeding years were full of sporadic false hopes and repeated disappointments, which inevitably led to a protracted decline to such that by 1925 Delius was completely blind and paralyzed. His wife, Jelka, was thankfully on hand to relieve as much physical suffering as possible for her husband; however, Fenby held the dubious honor of collaborating with the older man on his final compositions.

Fenby found his assignment to be no easy task. Always a hard man, Delius in his invalid state had only managed to increase his insensitive outlook on the world. Fenby

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<sup>23</sup> More on Beecham's enthusiastic efforts will be detailed in Chapter 2.

<sup>24</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 119. More on Fenby's collaboration with Delius will be found in Chapter 2.

summed up the good and the bad in Delius' personality in his chronicle of life at Grez,

*Delius as I Knew Him:*

What was extraordinary in the man as I knew him was... namely his intellectual isolation, his inhuman aloofness, his penetrating truthfulness, wholly indifferent thereby whether he hurt people or not, his utter contempt for 'the crowd,' and his all-embracing self-sufficiency. To these were added his colossal egotism, his dreadful selfishness, his splendid generosity (particularly to those of his old friends who had fallen on hard times), his equal indifference to money and honors, his exceptional refinement, and his noble triumph over an almost total physical incapacitation... That he was a true artist if ever there was one, none can deny. Everything and everybody were subservient to the chief business of his life – his music. That was the only thing that mattered.<sup>25</sup>

This was a man facing death as “the aftermath of his wildness in younger life” and “paid the price of his joy-worship unflinchingly and unregrettingly.”<sup>26</sup> The last years of Delius' life were extremely difficult for everyone associated with the Grez household; however, these years were also punctuated by notable honors. He received the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society in 1925 – ironically, the same year as Sir Edward Elgar. (Although Delius apparently liked Elgar as a person, he often complained to Fenby about his music: “He might have been a great composer if he had thrown all that religious paraphernalia overboard.”<sup>27</sup>) Subsequently, 1929 proved a banner year: Delius was created a Companion of Honour in January, and in October he attended his very own Delius Festival (six concerts, organized by Beecham) in London. The University of Oxford followed with an Honorary Doctorate of Music, but Delius was obligated to decline due to poor health and his inability to attend the ceremony. The string of accolades finally came full circle in 1932 when he was recognized by his hometown with the Freedom of the City of Bradford.

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<sup>25</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 163.

<sup>26</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 128.

<sup>27</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 178.

With his life's work complete, death finally came to the emaciated Delius on June 10, 1934 – the same year as two other British-born composers, our aforementioned Elgar and Gustav Holst. Delius' body was temporarily laid to rest in the graveyard at Grez until Jelka, whose health was also waning, was well enough to travel to England per her husband's request and select a suitable country churchyard for permanent burial. Plans were set for the reinterment to take place at Limpsfield, Surrey, England, on May 26, 1935. Great trouble was taken to enable the ailing Mrs. Delius to travel for the ceremony, but once in Limpsfield she was unable to attend the funeral and her own death followed two days later.

Upon her death, Jelka directed that all income from her and her husband's estate be applied towards what became known as the Delius Trust, the first single-composer trust in the United Kingdom. The Trust was established to promote the music of Frederick Delius not only with performances, but also through the systematic recording and publishing of a complete catalog of his works. Interestingly enough, the Trust also provides for the promotion of other British composers born since 1860. This final provision is a continuation of a trend Delius displayed during his lifetime: "Despite his total indifference to the work and aims of others, he was ever ready to lend an ear to any young artist who was still struggling with himself."<sup>28</sup> The elder composer was often noted to take a fatherly interest in the next generation of musicians (the most obvious examples being his relationships with Philip Heseltine and Eric Fenby), and the Trust was organized accordingly.

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<sup>28</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 196.

Frederick Delius as a man and musician is a difficult combination to reconcile. Cecil Gray asked the question, “Which is the fundamental Delius – the ruthless egotist that he was in his life, or the tender, wistful idealist that he was in his best work? ... Never has there been a stranger or more violent dichotomy.”<sup>29</sup> His “colossal egotism” and “dreadful selfishness” long ago faded behind the legend of a frail composer creating unfettered, idyllic music.<sup>30</sup> He lived as a true *Übermensch*, and it was this willful transcendence of human limitations that – although harsh at times – left Delius and his music with “no outward influences, no set principles or theories.”<sup>31</sup> With his life and his music free from any superficial constraints, Delius was proud to dedicate himself to the few who love and understand.

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<sup>29</sup> Gray, *Musical Chairs*, 189 and 196.

<sup>30</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 163.

<sup>31</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 210.

## Chapter 2 The Champions

The modest Eric Fenby characteristically excludes himself from the following quote, but nevertheless adroitly encapsulates Delius' situation:

Delius was a very fortunate man in most respects. It was always his good luck to meet precisely the very people he needed at the crucial stages of his career. First there came Ward, who gave him a sound grounding in his art; then Grieg, who encouraged him with his friendship and practical advice, and to whom he continued to send his scores for comment after he had left Leipzig; and then Jelka Rosen, to whom he was well mated, and who made it materially possible for him to devote himself entirely to composition; and, lastly, Beecham, who did everything that a man could do to establish his genius.<sup>32</sup>

The sacrifices and support of Fenby, as dedicated amanuensis, and the others acknowledged above came without any hint of future repayment or compensation. Their selfless championship enabled Delius to complete a lifetime of work – that otherwise would not have been possible – and only by examining their individual contributions can a listener truly understand the nature of Delius' personality and context.

Ironically, for a man that despised the weakness implied by Christian charity, Delius' career was cradled by two devout Catholics and his living was continually supplemented with the help of friends and family. He entered the world as a privileged child and continued to seek and receive financial support from both his father and uncle through his mid-thirties and, following the arrival of Jelka, was reliant upon her accompanying resources. It is characteristic of Delius, a man "hard, stern, proud, cynical, godless, completely self-absorbed," that he went through life entirely unaware of the

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<sup>32</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 169-70.



generosity bestowed upon him.<sup>33</sup> His unerring confidence in his music doubtless led him to recognize – as his right – the devotion of a young Philip Heseltine (later known as Peter Warlock) and Heseltine’s stylized study of the composer published in 1923; or, to accept without shame his dear friend Balfour Gardiner’s purchase of his home in Grez, which allowed the ailing Delius to live rent-free for the final twenty years of his life.

While much has been said of “Delius’s apparent faith in the abilities of others to carry his cause forward, perhaps an almost wilful [sic] belief in the dynamic that lay in his music as being sufficient in itself to prompt a popular demand,” this is not to presume that Delius “never lifted a finger to promote his works.”<sup>34</sup> He often hid his self-promotion, as evidenced by a typically misleading quote relayed to musicologist, Max Chop: “Promotion is for other people! Once an artist has completed his work, his task is finished... by getting involved I would cut myself off completely from the realm of my imagination.”<sup>35</sup> In reality, Delius’ correspondence throughout the 1890’s shows him on a dedicated crusade to recruit everyone from publishers to conductors to endorse his work. As Lionel Carley suggests, “a Nietzschean yea-sayer is, by definition, not going to sit quietly in a corner hoping piously” for his music to interest someone.<sup>36</sup> Fortunately, his efforts were continuously aided by the following champions willing to sacrifice a great deal on behalf of a struggling composer and his music. This chapter aims to provide a brief portrait of these individuals and their place in the composer’s history.

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<sup>33</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 191.

<sup>34</sup> Carley, *Frederick Delius: Music, Art and Literature*, 4-5.

<sup>35</sup> Jones, *The Collected Writings of the German Musicologist Max Chop*, 102.

<sup>36</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, xxviii.

### **Thomas F. Ward**

Thomas Ward had long been considered the “missing link” in Delius’ biography: “a mysterious musician Delius considered the major influence on his artistic development” that disappeared quietly into oblivion once his task was complete.<sup>37</sup> However, the dedicated appreciation shared by enthusiasts of Delius’ music has led to a growing interest in the one instructor towards whom the composer’s praise never faltered. The years of research invested in Don Gillespie’s *The Search for Thomas F. Ward* created the definitive resource resulting from interest in Delius’ earliest compositional training, but the significance of Ward’s teaching has been included in biographies of the composer since Heseltine’s study published in 1923: “it is not too much to say that the whole of Delius’ technical equipment is derived from the instruction he received from Ward.”<sup>38</sup> Aside from such laudatory comments over the years, the firm facts of Ward’s own journey through life remained a mystery until comparatively recently.

Thomas Ward was born and educated in Brooklyn, the “City of Churches.” Not yet consolidated with New York City, Brooklyn was nonetheless one of the largest municipalities in the United States in its own right, and offered culture-seekers ample opportunities to hear the latest musical trends from the world’s finest musicians. Publications such as the *Brooklyn Eagle* and *Daily Times* provided sophisticated editorials on the bustling international music scene and would later sing the praises of a talented local orphan, Thomas Ward.

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<sup>37</sup> Gillespie, *The Search for Thomas F. Ward*, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 40.

Gillespie's research indicates that Thomas Ward was born in either late 1855 or early 1856, making him only five or six years older than Delius.<sup>39</sup> His mother remains a mystery and his father appears to have been a priest that "quit the active clergy early in 1857 ... to avoid scandal and excommunication" as a result of the indiscretion that produced Ward.<sup>40</sup> The surname, Ward, came from his adoptive parents, a carpenter Francis and his wife Mary.<sup>41</sup> The adoptive family (possibly relations to one of Ward's birth parents?) also had two biological children, Mary and Cecilia. It is unknown why the family eventually split up, but the children were placed into the care of the Catholic Church at various orphanages before Thomas was ten years of age. It was during these early days of upheaval that Thomas most likely contracted the tuberculosis that sent him south to Florida in his late twenties.

Thomas proved to be an exceptionally bright student and thrived within the discipline of the Catholic Church. Commencement records from the respected St. John's College show that he earned numerous awards ranging from Latin to literature and he was applauded for his regular performances at Church and throughout the Brooklyn community. It is unsure when, but Thomas ultimately learned of the sad circumstances surrounding his birth, and it was a constant source of guilt for the aspiring priest.

Following years of earning a favorable reputation as a talented and respected church musician in Brooklyn, Ward was just a year or so shy of thirty when his health demanded that he relocate south. He arrived in Jacksonville in the spring of 1884, at

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<sup>39</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 40; Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 168. Heseltine had placed Ward "some nine years older than Delius" and Fenby's account put him as Delius' "senior by a few months." This new finding is important as it displays Ward as neither an authoritative figure or as Delius' near contemporary, but rather something in-between.

<sup>40</sup> Gillespie, *The Search for Thomas F. Ward*, 22.

<sup>41</sup> It was not until his twenties that Thomas Ward adopted the middle name Francis, after his stepfather.

nearly the same time as Fritz Delius. Ward initially took a position as a church organist in May 1884, but must have met Delius and relocated to Solano Grove soon afterwards, as his name does not appear again in newspaper reports of local concerts until early 1885.<sup>42</sup> Other physical evidence of Ward's association with the young composer is found in the inscription under Delius' piano purchased in Florida, "Del F Delius Solano Grove Wait Thom Ward."<sup>43</sup>

The fabled meeting of Ward and Delius at a Jacksonville music store occurred at Merryday & Paine's. Ward's private teaching brought him there almost daily and A.B. Campbell, the proprietor of the store, was also Delius' first publisher.<sup>44</sup> The amount of time Ward spent at Solano Grove is up for debate and speculation as to what the student and teacher specifically covered during that time lacks any tangible evidence.<sup>45</sup> However, Delius always maintained that Ward's instruction of harmony and counterpoint was all he ever put to use. Indeed, notebooks surviving from his studies at the Leipzig Conservatory show that "in several instances, Delius simply broke off his Leipzig exercises, seemingly out of boredom. The techniques ... had been mastered at Solano Grove three years earlier."<sup>46</sup>

Throughout his own career, Ward had been tasked with occasional compositions for his church duties and, although no complete specimen has survived the century since his death, one four-bar excerpt from the 1890s (Example 2.1) reveals a flowing, chromatic style that resembles his student Delius' later work:

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<sup>42</sup> Gillespie, *The Search for Thomas F. Ward*, 56.

<sup>43</sup> Gillespie, *The Search for Thomas F. Ward*, 54.

<sup>44</sup> *Zum Carnival*, a polka, was published in Jacksonville in 1885.

<sup>45</sup> In his article, *Frederick Delius in America*, William Randel believes that Ward's stay at Solano Grove was brief due to his teaching responsibilities in Jacksonville, but Gillespie's opinion is just the opposite, that Ward's church and teaching duties did not provide enough consistent employment to warrant his traveling back and forth to the city.

<sup>46</sup> Gillespie, *The Search for Thomas F. Ward*, 52.

**Example 2.1. Thomas Ward's *musical cadence*.<sup>47</sup>**



The smooth part writing in Example 2.1 hints at the sense of flow that Delius thought so important, but even in this brief passage Ward's own disciplined personality reveals itself, as one can sense the cool hand of reason balancing the emotional nuances. These four bars suggest that Thomas Ward's music did not enter into the rhapsodic flights so common in Delius' mature works, but instead always maintained a cerebral element.

The roughly six-month stay at Solano Grove provided Ward with his lasting footnote in musical history, but his life did not end on the banks of the St. Johns. He continued work as a teacher and performer in Jacksonville and St. Augustine until 1891, when he took up the monastic name of Frater Paul and relocated to St. Leo Monastery and College on Florida's west coast, about thirty-five miles outside Tampa. There he became a prized instructor and began his own rigorous training for the priesthood. Ward had a difficult time at St. Leo's, which may have stemmed from an irreconcilable conflict between his priestly aspirations and illegitimate birth – a secret kept from his fellow monks. He stayed with St. Leo's on and off until the 1896-97 school term. During that period, he wavered from his vocation at least twice, and twice he changed his religious name, from Paul to Peter – and lastly to Placidus. When he finally left the monastery

<sup>47</sup> Gillespie, *The Search for Thomas F. Ward*, 95.

without notice – an inexcusable transgression – during the 1896-97 term, the monks made a notation in the faculty directory of St. Leo’s that Ward had “died in course of the year.”<sup>48</sup> This was the news that Fritz Delius received when he returned to Florida in 1897 in attempts to sell Solano Grove, and therein arose the legend related to Fenby years later that Ward had “died of tuberculosis, after spending the last years of his short life in a monastery.”<sup>49</sup>

Ward’s death from tuberculosis did not come until 1912. By that time, he had bounced from Tampa to New Orleans and Shreveport, Louisiana, and finally to Houston, Texas, in 1903. He was gainfully employed in Houston as a church organist and music director until Easter 1905 and afterwards took up smaller positions in the area, but was no longer mentioned in Houston’s newspapers until notice of his death on May 15, 1912.<sup>50</sup> It appears that during his final years, Ward’s illness eventually led him to withdraw from a society that looked upon consumptives as a public hazard. He died in poverty with only two reliable friends to arrange for his burial in an unmarked grave: Anton Diehl, a successful musician in the Houston area; and a well-known priest, Father Thomas F. Hennessy. This final act of kindness illustrates that although Thomas F. Ward’s life may have gone unnoticed by the many, he was nonetheless deeply cherished by a few – a sentiment often applied to the music of his student, Frederick Delius.

### **Edvard Grieg**

Edvard Grieg was fortunate to enjoy success during his lifetime. His exhaustive touring, especially in his later years, helped secure him international recognition both as a

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<sup>48</sup> Gillispie, *The Search for Thomas F. Ward*, 96.

<sup>49</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 169.

<sup>50</sup> Gillispie, *The Search for Thomas F. Ward*, 145.

performer and composer, and it was this recognition that not only opened doors but also validated his encouragement for a young admirer, Fritz Delius.

By the time Delius met Grieg in Leipzig, the elder composer had already written his famous Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16, and the incidental music to Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Op. 23. Several books of his popular *Lyric Pieces* were also in circulation and helped to establish Grieg's reputation as a master of miniatures.

Delius' fellow conservatory student, Christian Sinding, made the introduction to Grieg in the autumn of 1887.<sup>51</sup> Long familiar with Grieg's work, Delius later admitted, "I was very proud at having made his acquaintance, for since I was a little boy I had loved his music."<sup>52</sup> Both men shared an intense love of nature and quickly made plans for walking excursions along the Norwegian landscape. This friendship was to last until Grieg's death in 1907.

Grieg has been dubbed "the first nature mystic in music," and Delius accordingly follows his own praise with allusion to Grieg's beloved homeland: "Grieg's music is so fresh, poetic and original – in fact, just like Norway."<sup>53</sup> In turn, Delius himself has been described as a "landscape musician" and "the first composer to give us "nature music" on the grand scale of a Bach, a Wagner, a Richard Strauss."<sup>54</sup> Examples of such overlap give rise to the question – of how far Delius' love of Grieg's music influenced his own compositions. Examples where "Grieg's pictorial technique can be observed at close hand in the *Florida Suite*" and the choice setting of the same Norwegian texts (Ibsen's *The Bird's Song*, Paulsen's *Summer Eve*, Munck's *Sunset*) are evident throughout Delius'

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<sup>51</sup> A piano prodigy, Grieg himself enrolled at the Leipzig Conservatory at age 15. At the time of their meeting, Delius was in his mid-twenties and Grieg in his mid-forties.

<sup>52</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 394.

<sup>53</sup> Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 46.

<sup>54</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 46 and 118.

oeuvre.<sup>55</sup> Technically speaking, one of the most consistent comparisons between the two seems to be a harmonic detail: both shared a “fondness for interminable series of chromatically descending sevenths.”<sup>56</sup> However, the technical similarities between the works of Delius and his predecessor are likely less a result of direct influence than simply a shared aesthetic. Ernest Newman put it best: “For good or ill, Delius was barred by his very constitution from either profiting by or being damaged by the example of any of his predecessors or contemporaries.”<sup>57</sup> A final word on the matter comes from Eric Fenby: “that as Delius he began and as Delius he ended.”<sup>58</sup>

With his individual approach to composition intact, Delius’ main debt to Grieg is a practical one. Edvard and Nina Grieg were generous in their praise of the aspiring composer during his studies in Leipzig. They were both in attendance for the first orchestral reading of Delius’ *Florida Suite* and maintained a sincere interest in the young man’s future over the next two decades.<sup>59</sup> On May 4, 1888, following the completion of his studies in Leipzig, the Griegs were on hand to endorse Fritz’s talent during an auspicious dinner meeting with Delius père in London. The “storming of the citadel of resistance” was successful and provided the young Delius with a living allowance to continue his composition full time.<sup>60</sup> Julius Delius had never been keen on the idea of his son becoming a professional musician, but he was nonetheless capable of respecting the opinion of a popular and financially successful musician such as Grieg. It was with these

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<sup>55</sup> Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 60. Grieg himself even mentions this pattern regarding Delius’ *Five Songs from the Norwegian* in a letter dated September 23, 1888: “How strange that I have set nearly all the texts too.” Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 24.

<sup>56</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 135.

<sup>57</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 97.

<sup>58</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 210.

<sup>59</sup> Details on the first hearing of Delius’ *Florida Suite* can be found in Chapter 3.

<sup>60</sup> Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 42.



modest funds from his father that Delius immediately left for Paris on May 6<sup>th</sup> to begin a life in France that would last until his death in 1934.<sup>61</sup>

The surviving letters between Delius and Grieg reveals how thoughtful a mentor Grieg was to his young friend and how sincerely appreciated he was by Delius. The struggling composer gladly accepted Grieg's criticism and praise. In one early letter dated September 23, 1888, Grieg writes, "there are other things which I find difficult to accept, not where ideas are concerned, for you never lack inventiveness, but in the form and in the treatment of the voice. A Norwegian melody and a Wagnerian treatment of the voice are dangerous things indeed to reconcile."<sup>62</sup> In a later example from the same year, Delius responds to Grieg's criticism gratefully: "Thank you very much for your letter & candid criticism. It pleased me perhaps a lot more than you think for it has shown me that you are the person I always thought you to be."<sup>63</sup> Similar volleys are seen throughout their correspondence and Delius was still eagerly sending scores for Grieg's review in 1906 with *Sea Drift*.<sup>64</sup>

Grieg's early example of encouragement may have later influenced Delius' voluntary involvement in the ill-fated Musical League, an English version of the Allgemeine Deutsche Musikverein.<sup>65</sup> The League was short-lived (spanning roughly 1907-10) and primarily established to support the efforts of British composers. Conductor and composer Granville Bantock successfully recruited the notoriously self-centered Delius to serve as vice-president of the venture (Elgar was named president). Nothing came of the organization, but Delius dedicated large amounts of time in its interest during

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<sup>61</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 11.

<sup>62</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 30.

<sup>64</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 273.

<sup>65</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 278.

his tenure. It provides another example of a contradiction evidenced before in Delius' personality: Although he lacked "the capacity to listen with patience to any music but that of ... himself," he demonstrated a willingness to promote the cause of the next generation of British composers.<sup>66</sup> Only days before his death at Grez, Delius began a codicil to his will stipulating that "his royalties be allowed to accrue and be used to give an annual concert of works by unknown young composers in a programme to include one work of his own."<sup>67</sup> One is left with the notion that Delius recognized the value of Grieg's championship and was therefore inclined to do the same.

Leipzig's conservatory may have proved disappointing, but with his mastery of the basic musical elements obtained under the tutelage of Thomas F. Ward and the continuing professional guidance offered from a maestro like Grieg, Frederick Delius was well set to start off on his own.

### **Jelka Delius**

Following their meeting in 1896, Jelka Rosen's life became so completely enmeshed with that of Delius that her own story is difficult to pry away. She was christened Helena Sophie Emilie but went by the nickname "Jelka" all her life. She was born in Belgrade on December 30, 1868, making her nearly six years younger than Delius. Her father was the German Consul General and a life-long academic with a focus in linguistics, and her mother was an avid painter and daughter of famed composer and

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<sup>66</sup> Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 184.

<sup>67</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 255. These plans were left incomplete at the time of Delius' death and his royalties were instead directed towards the recording and editing of his own works.

pianist Ignaz Moscheles.<sup>68</sup> Jelka was blessed to inherit a combination of her parents' many talents and later put those gifts to use as Delius' wife.

Jelka was the youngest child and it is unsurprising that her newly widowed mother accompanied her to Paris in 1892 when she began studying art at the Académie Colarossi. She was a serious artist and maintained her own studio in Paris while venturing to the village of Grez-sur-Loing, near Fontainebleau, to paint during the summers. Jelka and Delius met at a friend's dinner party on January 16, 1896, and she later recalled that then began "a happy, wonderful time."<sup>69</sup> The two became quick friends and bonded over their love of Grieg and Nietzsche.

A year after their initial meeting, Delius was in Florida making arrangements for Solano Grove and Jelka feared "that he would have forgotten our friendship on his return."<sup>70</sup> While he was away, she convinced her mother to help buy a familiar property in Grez in hopes that she could start her "own life and no longer sit and wait for Fred who surely did not care for me at all."<sup>71</sup> The house and garden at Grez officially became Jelka's sanctuary on May 17, 1897. In June, Delius arrived at her new home with the conclusion that Grez was a place "one could work in" and Jelka's home became his permanent residence until his death in 1934.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Coincidentally, Moscheles spent many years as one of the most sought-after instructors at Delius' alma mater, the newly founded Leipzig Conservatory.

<sup>69</sup> Carley, *Frederick Delius: Music, Art and Literature*, 204; Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 409.

<sup>70</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 412.

<sup>71</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 413.

<sup>72</sup> Carley, *Frederick Delius: Music, Art and Literature*, 204.

After living together openly for years, the couple finally married in September 1903.<sup>73</sup> Pianist and composer Percy Grainger, a close friend of the Deliuses, made the following observation of the two together:

Fred and Jelka married, enjoying rare spiritual unity together. It was an unforgettable treat to see them listening to Delius's music at a concert – leaning slightly towards each other, aware of each other as they drank in the strains that were nirvana to them – for Delius was as much in love with his own music as the rest of us were. On such occasions it was evident that Delius desired only Jelka close to him; he wanted no other friends near.<sup>74</sup>

Their bond was indeed a spiritual one. The marriage produced no children and there is speculation over whether the relationship was ever consummated, either because of Delius' confirmed syphilis or for another reason. The composer was wont to mysteriously depart for Paris for days at a time, leaving Jelka behind in Grez: "A woman possessing less tact and understanding would have made many a scene, but she knew that he would eventually see for himself the futility of all this gadding about" and he always returned.<sup>75</sup>

Their marriage was untraditional to say the least. As Cecil Gray pointed out, "They despised love ... and I even sometimes think that Jelka hated Delius the man as much as she worshipped the artist."<sup>76</sup> If this sentiment was true, Jelka was Delius' ideal partner: "No artist should ever marry ... if you ever do have to marry, marry a girl who is more in love with your art than with you."<sup>77</sup>

Regardless of the role "love" played in their marriage, Jelka was Delius' most devoted champion. She committed her entire existence to the promotion and facilitation

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<sup>73</sup> Delius introduced his new wife in a letter to Grieg as "my friend Jelka Rosen ... she is a painter & very gifted." He also signed the letter with his anglicized "new name!" of Frederick. Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 224-5.

<sup>74</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 122.

<sup>75</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 169.

<sup>76</sup> Gray, *Musical Chairs*, 195.

<sup>77</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 185.

of his art. This involved serving as his primary nurse while he battled blindness and paralysis for the last fifteen years of his life. Her capacity as a caretaker has become legend within the Delian literature and was witnessed firsthand by some of the twentieth century's most celebrated musicians: Balfour Gardiner, Percy Grainger, Peter Warlock, Thomas Beecham, Edward Elgar and others. Creatively, her contributions are found in Delius' most esteemed works.

Like her father the linguist, Jelka possessed command of several languages and her literary tastes reflected an international awareness. She often selected texts for Delius' inspiration (such as those by Ernest Dowson for *Songs of Sunset* and Walt Whitman's in *Songs of Farewell*) and many of Delius' vocal works have been published in her German translations (*Cynara* from the poem by Ernest Dowson, *A Late Lark* from W.E. Henley, and Whitman's texts used in *Sea Drift* and *Songs of Farewell*).<sup>78</sup>

As a visual artist, Jelka's talents were best utilized in Delius' operatic efforts. Beecham's 1920 revival of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* benefited from "many sketches of scenery designed by Jelka herself" and her artwork appears on the vocal score to his last opera, *Fennimore and Gerda*.<sup>79</sup> Luckily for Delius, Jelka also offered some musical assistance.

As the granddaughter of Moscheles, one of nineteenth-century Europe's virtuosos, Jelka "always knew instinctively how to sing a song" and used her acquired musical background as best she could to aid Delius in dictation.<sup>80</sup> "For as long as Delius's eyesight was intact, he dictated his compositions to Jelka, who would write them down in

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<sup>78</sup> Jelka doubtless contributed more translations that have gone undocumented.

<sup>79</sup> Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 178.

<sup>80</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 409.

an amateurish but accurate hand which he would then correct.”<sup>81</sup> When her husband’s impairments and her own limited musical abilities could no longer sustain this process, it was Jelka who organized the help of other musicians – which included Thomas Beecham and Eric Fenby.<sup>82</sup>

Jelka passed away in 1935, just four days after her husband’s body was permanently laid to rest in Limpsfield, Surrey, England. Upon her death, she bequeathed the responsibility and future of Delius’ music to Beecham and Fenby.

### **Sir Thomas Beecham**

At the time of Sir Thomas Beecham’s death in 1961, at the age of 81, many feared that the spell of Delius’ music would go with him. Indeed, even Delius himself was not immune to such a worry: “Whatever should I do without Beecham!”<sup>83</sup> Such was the extent of Beecham’s love and commitment to the art of Delius that “whatever the status of Delius’ music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the way in which it was promoted virtually single-handedly to international acceptance during the last through the genius of one executive musician remains unrivalled in the history of music.”<sup>84</sup>

From his birth in 1879, Beecham was surrounded by a life of privilege as heir to the Beecham Pills fortune. He was primarily self-taught as a musician and no doubt gained the respect of Delius with his individual approach to music. Gifted and determined, Beecham was knighted in 1916 as a result of his services to British music and succeeded to the baronetcy following the death of his father that same year. Further

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<sup>81</sup> Carley, *Frederick Delius: Music, Art and Literature*, 185.

<sup>82</sup> Carley, *Frederick Delius: Music, Art and Literature*, 185.

<sup>83</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 57.

<sup>84</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, x.

augmenting his title were the post-nominal initials “CH” upon his being made a Companion of Honour in 1957.<sup>85</sup> Luckily, Sir Thomas Beecham Bart., C.H., had the wit and personality to live up to such a lofty designation.

Beecham had a gift for organizing ensembles and founded a number of orchestras, the most famous being the London Philharmonic and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestras still in operation today. His name has become synonymous with a reputation as “something of a ‘character,’ amusing orchestras and audiences with an endless stream of anecdotes and recollections from his long career” and his quick humor was renowned for its ability to sting.<sup>86</sup> Whatever others’ criticism, Delius was delighted in his friendship with Beecham, “I like him more and more – he does nothing that I do not like.”<sup>87</sup> Likewise, Beecham’s praise portrays the infamously difficult Delius in a favorable light, “I have never known a keener and brighter spirit than Frederick.”<sup>88</sup> According to Colin Wilson’s analysis, it is not surprising that the two got along so well:

Both were curiously immature split-personalities. Both were more interested in imposing themselves on the world than trying to come to terms with life. It is significant that Delius was intolerant of all music but his own, while Beecham’s taste in music remained unaltered over fifty years. In a certain sense, both men had put up shutters ... Delius and Beecham were egoists who were basically afraid of the world.<sup>89</sup>

Their close association lasted even after Delius’ death when Beecham was on hand with several players from his London Philharmonic Orchestra to provide a final

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<sup>85</sup> Delius was named a Companion of Honour in 1929.

<sup>86</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, ix.

<sup>87</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 367. Letter from Delius to Jelka during a 1908 walking tour through Norway.

<sup>88</sup> Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 153.

<sup>89</sup> Wilson, *Chords and Discords*, 128.

performance and oration at the composer's gravesite in St. Peter's Churchyard in Limpsfield.<sup>90</sup>

As a conductor, Beecham's commitment to performing Delius' music was sealed with his first hearing of *Appalachia* under the direction of Fritz Cassirer in London in 1907. (Cassirer used the 'Beecham-Orchestra' for this performance.<sup>91</sup>) Within weeks, in January 1908, Beecham conducted *Paris* for its first performance in England and the legend of Beecham's championship of Delius began.<sup>92</sup>

Beecham programmed Delius' works consistently throughout his entire career right up to his last recording (1959) and performance (1960). In both categories, he made tremendous accomplishments. Beecham organized successful Delius Festivals in London in 1929 (which Delius attended to the satisfaction of full houses) and 1946; but died one year shy of conducting at the 1962 Delius Centenary Festival in Bradford.<sup>93</sup> On numerous occasions, Beecham's performances of Delius' music were recorded and broadcast throughout Europe (much to Delius' delight at Grez); however, his systematic recordings of Delius' catalog did not begin until 1927, with *The Walk to Paradise Garden* and *On hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*. Delius' work continued to appear without break through his last release in 1959, which included a broadcast performance of *North Country Sketches*.<sup>94</sup> His recordings covered over thirty titles of Delius' work, several of which were released more than once. Many of the discs have been issued under the auspices of the Delius Society, while Beecham's celebrated editions of Delius' scores

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<sup>90</sup> Coincidentally, Beecham's own remains would eventually make their way to the same churchyard only a few feet behind those of Delius and his wife.

<sup>91</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, 5.

<sup>93</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, 52 and 83. Eric Fenby served as Artistic Director of the Centenary Festival and Beecham's associate at the Royal Philharmonic, Rudolf Kempe, was brought in to replace Beecham as conductor.

<sup>94</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, 137-140.



were arranged through his position as editor-in-chief of the Collected Edition of the Works of Frederick Delius organized by the Delius Trust.<sup>95</sup>

An interesting example of the care Beecham invested in Delius' works, whether through the Trust, Society, or otherwise, is evidenced in his only complete recording of the *Florida* suite. Five days of recording sessions at the Abbey Road Studios in London were dedicated to preserving Beecham's account of Delius' first major orchestral work.<sup>96</sup> Lyndon Jenkins describes the recording as a natural fit for Beecham's talents: "Beecham takes each of the suite's four orchestral impressions at face value and lavishes all his art on them, phrasing the tunes with an instinct that invariably seems right, and revelling [sic] in the rich orchestral colour."<sup>97</sup> Beecham's instincts were put to excellent use in the music of Delius, often leading the composer to exclaim: "Splendid, Thomas! That is how I want my music to be played. Beecham is the only conductor who has got the hang of it!"<sup>98</sup>

It is fortunate that Beecham, "who would have excelled in almost anything to which he had applied that remarkable brain of his," choose music as his vocation and Delius as his cause.<sup>99</sup> Delius' legacy owes much to Beecham's belief in him as "the last great apostle in our time of romance, emotion and beauty in music."<sup>100</sup> Few composers in history have ever been blessed with such an intuitive and compelling champion.

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<sup>95</sup> Beecham's position at The Delius Trust was created at the express wish of Jelka Delius upon her death. The Trust was established by a dedicated group of scholars and musicians to promote the music of her late husband and other British composers born since 1860, and the organization is still active today. An offshoot of the Trust was the Delius Society founded in 1962 (Delius' Centenary) for those musicians and non-musicians alike interested in Delius' life and music.

<sup>96</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, 147. November 10, 19, 21-22; December 14, 1956.

<sup>97</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, 147.

<sup>98</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 25.

<sup>99</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 163.

<sup>100</sup> Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 221.

## Eric Fenby

Eric William Fenby was a talented musician, conductor and composer that lived his entire life under the shadow of his association with Frederick Delius and was the last surviving member of Delius' circle when he passed away in 1997, at the age of 90.

Fenby grew up in Yorkshire, the county of Delius' birth, and "blessed with a fine ear, perfect pitch ... and the rare ability to read orchestral scores at sight, he virtually taught himself to compose through the study and assimilation of great music."<sup>101</sup> He encountered Delius' music as a young man through "the occasional broadcast performances ... and with such gramophone records as had then been issued," and was so moved by the "loveliness" this music had brought into his life that he wrote to Delius in the summer of 1928 expressing his gratitude.<sup>102</sup> Soon after, Fenby learned of the composer's illness and was distraught over the idea of Delius unable to complete his life's work due to physical impairments. The sensitive Fenby, aged twenty-two, wrote again to Grez and this time offered his services as amanuensis. The offer was quickly accepted and Fenby arrived at the Delius household in October 1928. For the next six years, Fenby became a fixture at Grez until Delius died in his arms in 1934.

"No young man could have lived for long periods with a man like Delius" without a "nervous breakdown" such as Fenby endured mid-way through his time at Grez.<sup>103</sup> The emotional toll resulting from four years of selfless work – and often painful dictation – necessitated that Fenby spend several months in England battling his own illness before returning to the isolation and autocracy at Grez in August 1932. By this time, aside from their final work, *Idyll*, Fenby and Delius had completed their legacy. Their most

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<sup>101</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, xv.

<sup>102</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 114.

celebrated collaboration came with the 1930 completion of *Songs of Farewell*, based on texts by Walt Whitman, for double chorus and orchestra, and dedicated to Jelka. Such was Fenby's "privilege in helping him" during those "last years of fitful creative activity" that the young amanuensis generously stayed on after their work was complete to serve as Delius' companion and, later, nurse.<sup>104</sup>

Fenby's time at Grez, with its many difficulties and triumphs, played a crucial role in shaping the rest of his career. He had made contacts among many prominent musicians through Delius, and his intimate knowledge of the composer was constantly in demand. He was awarded the OBE (Officer of Order of the British Empire) for his artistic direction of the 1962 Delius Centenary Festival in Bradford and was appointed President of the Delius Society that same year. His active involvement in the Delius Society, and later the Delius Association of Florida, lasted until his death in 1997. As a pianist, his recordings of Delius' three Violin Sonatas (with Yehudi Menuhin for EMI) and Cello Sonata (with Julian Lloyd-Webber for Unicorn) are considered definitive performances, as is *The Fenby Legacy*, a collection of works from his Delius collaboration that he conducted with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Fenby's dedication to the music of Delius throughout his long career should not take away from his individual achievements as a teacher and composer. In 1939, he composed the score to Alfred Hitchcock's film *Jamaica Inn*; and following his services in the Army Education Corps during World War II, he founded and directed the music department at the North Riding Training College until 1962. Subsequent to his involvement in the 1962 Delius Festival, Fenby joined the Royal Academy of Music in 1964 as professor of harmony and composition until his retirement in 1977 – after which

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<sup>104</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 155.

he continued making arrangements of Delius' music and maintained a lively correspondence until his death.

Frederick Delius' organic approach to music had found another ideal interpreter in the natural talents of the young Eric Fenby: "He always insisted that I should have been no use whatever to him as an amanuensis had I not been practically self-taught."<sup>105</sup> Like Delius, Fenby followed his own instinct – musically and otherwise – and arrived unheralded on the doorstep at Grez in 1928 to begin a championship of Delius' music that continued through the end of the twentieth century. Such selfless commitment certainly attests to Delius' enduring "good luck to meet precisely the very people he needed."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 197.

<sup>106</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 169.

### Chapter 3

#### A Student Masterpiece: *Florida Suite for Orchestra*

#### History

It is odd that the *Florida* suite, of all Delius' works, has not found more popularity in the concert hall. Upon hearing the freshness and charm of Delius' true opus one, listeners may be surprised to learn of the piece's difficult path to performance.

The amusing story of the composer's first public hearing of the piece in 1888 appears in nearly all the Delian literature and the present account will be no different:

I was working at the time with Hans Sitt at orchestration and was working at an orchestral suite, which I called "Florida", and it was arranged that it should be played at a rehearsal of a military orchestra ... Sitt had arranged for an orchestra of about 60 to give me a 2 hour rehearsal in the Rosenthal Restaurant and all it would cost me would be a barrel of beer for the orchestra. This accordingly took place one spring morning, the audience being Grieg and Mrs. Grieg, Sinding and myself, Sitt conducting.<sup>107</sup>

Despite the enthusiasm of the small audience present that morning, Delius never again heard *Florida* performed. Owing to the intervention of Grieg a year later, in the spring of 1889, a false hope arose for the work to be presented at one of the popular Crystal Palace concerts in London, but director August Manns proved unable to provide sufficient rehearsal time to prepare the new piece. Delius recovered from this setback with extensive revisions of the suite; however, only the changes to the third movement can be traced: the first and last pages of the original movement's manuscript remain as backing for the adjoining movements and the physical differences are obvious.<sup>108</sup> These revisions were later referenced in a letter to Grieg that June: "I am completely revising

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<sup>107</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 395.

<sup>108</sup> Threlfall, *Tropical Scenes for Orchestra*, 37. This revised portion of the suite is physically obvious from the disparate score paper used: Delius initially composed the piece in an oblong folio whereas the latter portion was pieced together on separate upright sheets.

my Florida suite & have finished two of the main movements. It was clumsily done with many unnecessary orchestral brutalities in it.”<sup>109</sup>

The original *Florida* manuscripts are currently housed in the Grainer Museum at the University of Melbourne, but did not come to their present location without some confusion and controversy. Following the death of Delius in 1934, the manuscripts were placed in a Paris bank vault until Eric Fenby copied a score of the dance section from the first movement (popularly referred to as *La Calinda*) as an interlude to be used for Thomas Beecham’s 1935 Covent Garden run of Delius’ opera *Koanga*. The complete manuscript then remained with Fenby through the War until given to Percy Grainger in 1948 for his Grainger Museum in Melbourne. Fenby and Grainger conducted this transaction without any consultation with either Beecham or The Delius Trust – both of whom would certainly have laid claim to the material.<sup>110</sup> As a result of the Suite’s quiet transfer to Australia, Beecham was confronted with no score when he went to record the work with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in November and December of 1956.<sup>111</sup> The circumstances led Beecham to have his librarian, George Brownfoot, raise a score from the orchestral parts used in Beecham’s only public performance of the piece in 1937.<sup>112</sup> Unfortunately, the lack of a manuscript led to numerous copy mistakes that only compounded inaccuracies already present in the various parts. Nevertheless, Beecham

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<sup>109</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 42. This leads one to believe that most of the revisions centered less on the thematic material than the orchestration itself.

<sup>110</sup> Montgomery and Threlfall, *Music and Copyright*, 387-8. Beecham always insisted that in 1929 Delius granted him ownership of the *Florida* manuscript amongst a number of other works, including *The Magic Fountain* and *Over the Hills and Far Away*. In 1947, he even made a formal declaration of his rights regarding these works under the Statutory Declarations Act 1835.

<sup>111</sup> Beecham’s 1956 recording is the first complete recording of *Florida*; however, Beecham had recorded an expanded version of the second section of the first movement, *La Calinda*, for World Record Club in 1938 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

<sup>112</sup> Threlfall, *Tropical Scenes for Orchestra*, 38. London, April 1<sup>st</sup>. This performance did not even include the entire work: the *Irmelin Prelude* was substituted for the second movement.

added his edits to the copyist's score and this was the version eventually published in 1963 by Boosey & Hawkes as the first edition of the piece. The work was then included in the Collected Edition of the Works of Frederick Delius in conjunction with the Delius Trust.

The mystery of the *Florida* suite's final resting place in the Grainger Museum did not come to light until 1969, when efforts were made by Delius Trust archivists Robert Threlfall and Rachel Lowe to locate all relevant manuscripts not presently accounted for.<sup>113</sup> The Grainger Museum accordingly provided the Trust with microfilm of its original manuscript, which, in turn, revealed the many errors included in the published 1963 edition. Threlfall soon made a list of the obvious errors, such as incorrect entries and wrong notes, and put the revisions to use when the miniature score came up for reprint in 1986.<sup>114</sup>

The 1986 reissue of *Florida* came as a larger study score and in 1990 another reprint was published, but this time as Boosey & Hawkes' Volume 20 of The Collected Edition. The most current version of the score, released in 2006, expanded upon the previous improvements to also include Delius' original German markings in addition to the well-known Beecham editing. (This last modification firmly places the work correctly during Delius' student days in Leipzig.) Despite the numerous efforts over the past three decades to produce a definitive edition of the *Florida* suite, the flawed 1963 edition can still be found circulating today.

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<sup>113</sup> Robert Threlfall was appointed adviser to the Trust in 1975. Rachel Lowe served as archivist from 1964-66.

<sup>114</sup> Threlfall, *Tropical Scenes for Orchestra*, 39.

## Analysis

Delius' *Florida* suite has been described as “insipid if charming” and “water-colourist,” but is nonetheless “more than competently laid out for orchestra, and there is little in it for hardly any composer under thirty years of age to be ashamed of.”<sup>115</sup> Delius' foremost interpreter, Sir Thomas Beecham, held the view “that it is next to impossible for either this generation or any succeeding one to appraise the value of this man's [Delius'] work from his mature accomplishment only” and it is mainly through Beecham's involvement on behalf of the Delius Trust that an early effort such as the *Florida* suite can “see the light” and point listeners to characteristic traits in Delius' later pieces.<sup>116</sup> This analysis of the *Florida* suite aims to illustrate the favored devices employed by the budding composer as well as provide an approach to the piece as an achievement on its own.

The *Florida* suite is the product of a relatively inexperienced composer trying his hand at large-scale orchestral writing for the first time. Undaunted, the scoring calls for full forces: three flutes (third doubling piccolo); two oboes; cor anglais; two clarinets in B-flat and A); bass clarinet in A; two bassoons; four horns in F; two trumpets in D; three trombones; tuba; timpani; percussion (triangle, tambourine, bass drum, cymbals); harp; and strings. It is often noted that although “Delius habitually *worked* at the piano and settled any questions of chord structures or disposition there, he always *thought* directly in terms of orchestral colour and wrote immediately into full score without a

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<sup>115</sup> Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 5; Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 38.

<sup>116</sup> Jenkins, *While Spring and Summer Sang*, 122. Amanuensis Eric Fenby was not in agreement with Thomas Beecham on this issue. He recalled that the aging composer viewed his early works as uncharacteristic and did not want them unearthed.



preliminarily piano draft.”<sup>117</sup> The *Florida* suite shows no exception to this method, and in fact displays several uniquely Delian features of orchestration: every movement of the *Florida* suite begins and ends with thin instrumentation and a dynamic of *piano* or softer. This trait gives much of Delius’ music “the quality of sunsets and sunrises.”<sup>118</sup> “When asked why so many of his compositions ‘faded out,’ rather than closing with some more definite ending, Delius would answer, ‘Most things in nature happen gradually, not abruptly.’”<sup>119</sup>

Delius’ intuitive chord distribution adds to the effective use of the orchestral palette. As Heseltine notes, “if we are to look for a clue to the magic of his scoring ... we must concentrate our attention upon his extraordinary instinct for the right disposition and registration of the notes compounding a chord.”<sup>120</sup> His idiomatic approach to voicing and orchestration produces a sound that is instantly recognizable and his “especial sympathy for the woodwind family is responsible above all else for the distinctive sound of his scoring.”<sup>121</sup> The emphasis on detailed woodwind writing that Delius demonstrated throughout his career (reflecting Grieg’s partiality for the oboe) is also evident in the *Florida* suite as the majority of thematic material is introduced and carried by the wind section. Particularly notable is the shared opening theme of both the first and last movements found in the oboe, of which more will be said later.

The issue of form in Delius’ music is a sensitive subject. His mature works have often been criticized as formless, but as Eric Fenby states, “Delius had a well-nigh perfect

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<sup>117</sup> Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 57.

<sup>118</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 173.

<sup>119</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 173.

<sup>120</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 126-7. Here the term, “scoring” is a bit misleading as Heseltine also writes, “for Delius there is no such thing as scoring, the stuff of music and its orchestral embodiment being conceived simultaneously and notated, even in the first sketches, in full score.” From this, one gathers that the orchestral forces directly influenced Delius’ voicing.

<sup>121</sup> Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 60.

sense of form for what he had to say.”<sup>122</sup> His sense of form was simply less schematic than it was organic. Delius’ own words put it best:

One can’t define form in so many words, but if I was asked, I should say it was nothing more than imparting spiritual unity to one’s thought. It is contained in the thought itself, not applied as something that already exists.<sup>123</sup>

The *Florida* suite was composed during Delius’ student days before his uniquely rhapsodic compositional methods were fully formed, and thus avoids any tricky questions of formal design by adhering to juxtapositions of contrasting material often within a ternary framework. Although Delius would come to heartily dislike any music demonstrating a “palpable design,” his early work displays “a virtuosity of technique, in the academic sense of the word, which gradually disappears as his own personal technique develops into an unmistakable style.”<sup>124</sup>

Possibly the most unique and challenging aspect of Delius’ music is his use of harmony. The young Delius wrote to Grieg, “my instinct has seldom led me astray, my reason often” and it is perhaps this rationale that led to a highly personal and “unacademic” approach to harmony.<sup>125</sup> “For him, the power to stir, or be stirred, was always measured by the harmonic intensity of a work” and although the *Florida* suite was composed before Delius had solidified his “persistent liquefaction of harmony” (as seen in later works such as *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*), his strategic placement of colorful chords and pentatonic melodies over diatonic harmonies nonetheless point to the

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<sup>122</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 198.

<sup>123</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 252.

<sup>124</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 236; Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 121.

<sup>125</sup> Carley, *Delius: A Life in Letters*, 25; Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 48.

use of harmony as a fluid medium.<sup>126</sup> This harmonic fluidity will become all the more apparent in Delius' later works, as his tendency to treat chords as the basis for melodic material is evidenced in "melodies which neither are organically essential nor very interesting, but which are simply superimposed over a harmonic texture which is complete in itself."<sup>127</sup> The importance of harmony and chord distribution, particularly in Delius' mature works, cannot be overemphasized, "since themes and their development, or contrapuntal complexities, arbitrary formal devices, or striking orchestral effects are things too artificial to appeal strongly to Delius' deeply emotional, straightforward musical nature."<sup>128</sup>

Venturing into a discussion of the *Florida* suite, one is reminded that Delius himself "loathed analysis" in music for the very reason that "when you see a lovely rose you treasure it as it is; you don't pull it to pieces to appreciate its beauty and find out where its delicious perfume comes from."<sup>129</sup> Despite Max Chop's warning that "his works fall apart if any attempt is made to dissect them in an analytical way," the *Florida* suite is an early work that deserves mention as the original source of much of Delius' later efforts during his first compositional period (1897 and *Koanga* are often cited as the end of Delius' first period).<sup>130</sup>

The first movement, *Daybreak*, opens quietly in A minor with the pickup to ten bars before rehearsal **1** marking the first thematic entrance in the oboe (Example 3.1):

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<sup>126</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 202; Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 50. Chords and pentatonic passages specific to the *Florida* suite will be given below.

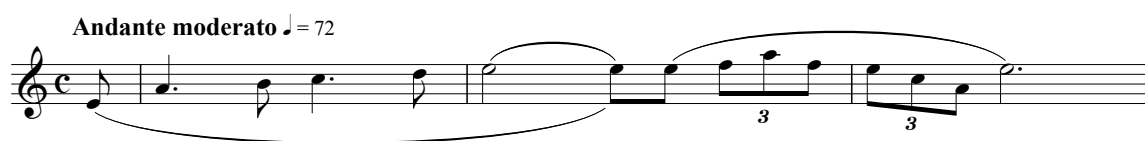
<sup>127</sup> Morrison, "Influences of Impressionist Tonality," 36. Again, the 1912 composition, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, bars 85-7, serves as an example of a melodic line derived from changing chords.

<sup>128</sup> Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 119.

<sup>129</sup> Fenby, *Delius as I knew him*, 197 and 239.

<sup>130</sup> Jones, *The Collected Writings of the German Musicologist Max Chop*, 69.

**Example 3.1. *Florida*, movement I, pickup to ten bars before rehearsal **1**.**



The oboe's opening solo with closing triplets repeats its last two measures three more times, each chromatically descending until the theme is taken up again in its entirety in the pickup to bar four after rehearsal **1**. This folk-like melody is repeated not only within the *Florida* suite, but also in the prelude to the third act of Delius' later opera, *The Magic Fountain*. Hence, as in Delius' own life, the allure of Florida is associated "with the concept of the fountain, the symbol of youth and new life."<sup>131</sup> The oboe's opening passage in *Daybreak* is an instance of what Heseltine describes as "similarity between passages associated with similar ideas or emotions in different works of different periods."<sup>132</sup> Due to Delius' aversion towards repetition, his recycling of musical material is presumed to be unintentional or unconscious.

Delius' characteristically fluid approach to harmony is evidenced within the first few bars of *Florida*. The three echoes of the last two bars of the oboe's opening passage (referenced above) are supplied added interest through Delius' untraditional harmonic movement beginning eight measures before rehearsal **1** (Example 3.2). The unconventional voicing of three German sixth chords seemingly welcome parallel motion (the typical outward resolutions are avoided), and gives the passage a slippery feel that is only enhanced by the horns sliding into the lowered sixth at each occurrence. The

<sup>131</sup> Tumino, "A history and analysis of Frederick Delius' *The Magic Fountain*," 22.

<sup>132</sup> Heseltine, *Frederick Delius*, 130.

temporary tonicization of F major (VI) midway through the passage is given a regal air with a sort of plagal cadence that is similar to the next progression (with the addition of the D#) that Delius uses to re-tonicize A minor. The last two bars of Example 3.2 show the movement back to A minor, which is followed by the passage beginning again on i (pickup to four bars after rehearsal **1**).

**Example 3.2. *Florida*, movement I, eight bars before rehearsal **1**.**

The musical notation shows eight bars of music in A minor. The first bar is a pickup with a single note on the bass staff (i). The second bar has a 7 chord. The third bar has a Ger/C chord. The fourth bar has a V<sup>3</sup>/C chord. The fifth bar has a V/C<sup>b</sup> chord. The sixth bar has a Ger/B<sup>b</sup> chord. The seventh bar has a V/B<sup>b</sup> chord. The eighth bar has a Ger<sup>6</sup> chord. The ninth bar is a pickup with a single note on the bass staff (i<sup>4</sup>). The tenth bar has a vi<sup>o</sup> chord. The eleventh bar has a V<sup>6</sup> chord. The twelfth bar has a V<sup>6</sup> chord. Below the first bar, there is a 'Ger/C<sup>b</sup>' label.

Delius' partiality towards the oboe continues into the ternary dance section of the movement beginning at the Tempo Primo (in the pickup to seven bars before rehearsal **3**). Here the oboe carries the thematic weight throughout section A, which is in the parallel A major. Seven bars after rehearsal **3** begins section B with the violins taking the lead, with assistance by the clarinets one measure later. At rehearsal **4**, the oboe chirps in with several fragmentary entrances of its initial theme (beginning with Example 3.3 showing a C# major orientation and sequentially working its way through B major and then A major) before taking the reins again for the return of the A section, which arrives comfortably in A major in the pickup to seven bars before rehearsal **5**.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>133</sup> This fragment also serves as a theme throughout the opera, *Koanga*.

**Example 3.3. *Florida*, movement I, fragmentary entrances of initial theme beginning at rehearsal **4**.**



The return of the A section brings the climax of this ternary dance portion (pickup to six bars before rehearsal **5**) and leads the way into the popular *La Calinda* at rehearsal **6**. As evidenced in the score, this portion of *Daybreak* was not initially referred to as *La Calinda*. That designation came later as a result of Delius incorporating much of the music of this section into Act II his later opera *Koanga* (1897). The opera was based upon George Washington Cable's novel *The Grandissimes* and the idea for a slave dance no doubt originated from the description, "the ancient Calinda dance with that well-known song of derision, in whose ever multiplying stanzas the helpless satire of a feeble race still continues to celebrate the personal failings of each newly prominent figure among the dominant caste."<sup>134</sup> Philip Jones writes:

At the beginning of Act II of *Koanga* where the negro slaves are celebrating the birthday of Don José and the wedding-day of Palmyra and Koanga, they are probably parodying the social dances held by their masters; this was a customary practice among slaves at this time. What then could be more appropriate than that Delius should take his extended Europeanized folk dance from *Florida Suite* and use it in these new surroundings.<sup>135</sup>

The *Tanz der Majorbauer* (as its labeled in the score) constitutes the second section and roughly two-thirds of *Daybreak*. Typical of Delius, it begins quietly with sparse instrumentation; and again, the oboe is prominent, introducing the primary theme

<sup>134</sup> Cable, *The Grandissimes*, 132.

<sup>135</sup> Jones, "The American Source of Delius' Style," 258.

five bars after rehearsal **6** (the secondary theme is reserved for the violins three bars after rehearsal **8**, although the winds prepare its arrival while still in D major with two entrances beginning ten bars earlier). The syncopated rhythm is relentless and keeps the dance moving for all but 31 of the 225 bars. The structure of the dance is ternary with each section also encompassing a ternary form.

*La Calinda* opens and concludes in D major, the initial A section returning at the *tempo primo* nine bars before rehearsal **15**. While the A section's primary theme is carried by the oboe in D major, the secondary theme (as referenced above three bars after **8**) and key area appear in F# minor. Such use of mediant and chromatic mediant relationships is a favorite device used throughout *Florida* to provide a sense of tonal stability without relying strictly on the tonic-dominant axis. Playful alternations with F# minor continue through *La Calinda*'s larger B section, which takes place in the dominant A major beginning seven bars after rehearsal **10**.

The central climax of the dance indeed takes place at the very center, five bars after rehearsal **12**, at the apex (B section) of the larger B section with the entrance of the trombones and tuba. Here, a conspicuous secondary dominant ninth chord on C# represents another chromatic mediant relationship with the prior A major. (The next several bars demonstrate a similar pattern alternating C# major and F major harmonies.)

Close behind, the *forte* trumpet entrance at rehearsal **13** recalls a brief four-bar passage from the first section of *Daybreak* (occurring one bar after rehearsal **5**). It is a beautiful passage that arrives on the same F# minor (vi) chord and is the only instance where material from the first section of the movement is featured prominently in the

second. From here, *La Calinda* systematically works its way to a subdued close, never straying far from traditional harmonic means.

*By the River*, the second movement of the *Florida* suite, presumably alludes to the St. Johns River and is described by Beecham as “an effective and well-made little piece typical of the earliest Delian manner.”<sup>136</sup> The movement is a simple ABA form with the large-scale key relationships of Eb-G-Eb once again reflecting Delius’ fondness for I – iii (or III) harmonic schemes.

While nothing can be found that specifically implies Americana in *By the River* (if anything the movement itself hints at the second movement of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony, *Scene at the Brook*, in its undulating character and time signature), two features stand out as precursors to Delius’ mature style. The most notable is Delius’ choice of a compound duple time, 12/8. Although Beethoven’s example of *Scene at the Brook* may have held a subconscious association for Delius by depicting water flowing in 12/8 for the entire movement, as does Delius’ *By the River*, the significance of compound duple time (and its related triple time) throughout Delius’ career stems more from his life-long admiration of Chopin.<sup>137</sup> (Interestingly, Delius was ambivalent towards the music of Beethoven.) The second precursor to the latter works by Delius is seen at rehearsal **3**, marking the central section of the movement. Here, “the first indication of his love of the viola section as orchestral soloists” is heard with the following melody (Example 3.4) that will also be restated at rehearsal **4** in the forth movement, *At Night*.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Beecham, *Frederick Delius*, 38.

<sup>137</sup> Stevenson, “Delius’s Sources,” 25. Among many others, C.W. Orr also voices similar thoughts on Delius’ musical ancestry and adds: “From Chopin and Grieg he learned to use harmony as a fluid medium ... while from Wagner he acquired a delight in orchestral colour.” Redwood, *A Delius Companion*, 59.

<sup>138</sup> Jones, “The American Source of Delius’ Style,” 258.



**Example 3.4. *Florida*, movement II, pickup to rehearsal **3**.**



The suite's third movement, *Sunset*, is the only portion of *Florida* where Delius' 1889 revisions have survived. The revisions certainly paid off, as *Sunset* is the most celebrated movement of the suite. The movement continues the pattern of thin instrumentation quietly framing a ternary form, with the center section anchored by a lively *Danse des Nègres*.

Rehearsal **3** marks the simultaneous appearance of several of Delius' favored devices. The F major tonality that opens the *Danse* is subject to Delius' treatment of a chromatic mediant relationship with episodes of A major starting eleven bars after **3** and later (after reverting back to F major for eight bars) at rehearsal **4**. The folk-like melody in the violins (Example 3.5) is made most effective with the use of a 5-6-1 melodic progression followed by a Scotch-snap figure four bars after **3**. This melody is first heard over an established F major tonality in the remaining strings' banjo-like accompaniment.

**Example 3.5. *Florida*, movement III, pickup to three bars after rehearsal **3**.**



The G# at six bars after rehearsal **3** acts as an enharmonic Ab, or “blue note” with similar instances seen throughout the movement, and the suite. (The next instance is found with the C-natural nine bars before **4**.) The “constant ambiguity of the third” leads the listener to feel the effect of a “blue note” as opposed to hearing a diminished seventh, a chord that was not particularly favored by Delius.<sup>139</sup>

At the next rehearsal mark, **4**, a four-bar fragment (Example 3.6) is introduced quietly in the oboe and is remarkable, as it “seems to have haunted Delius over a number of years, for it later becomes part of one of the chief Negro themes in *Koanga* ... and, astonishingly, re-appears some thirty years later in the movement known as *Late Swallows*.”<sup>140</sup> Examples 3.7 and 3.8 illustrate the later occurrences of this fragment.

**Example 3.6. *Florida*, movement III, at rehearsal **4**.**



**Example 3.7. *Florida*, movement III fragment as heard in *Koanga* (eight bars before rehearsal **9**).**



<sup>139</sup> Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 7.

<sup>140</sup> Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*, 7-8. *Late Swallows* is the third movement of Delius' second String Quartet (1916). Eric Fenby later arranged the movement for orchestra.

**Example 3.8. *Florida*, movement III fragment as heard in *Late Swallows* (at the second appearance, four bars after rehearsal **5**).**



The small melody quoted above has been the source for speculation regarding its origin and inclusion in other works. Philip Jones asserts that the first two bars' introduction to Henry Clay Work's popular Civil War march, *Marching Thro' Georgia*, is the source of inspiration for this melody as well as for another permutation found in Delius' tone poem, *Appalachia*.<sup>141</sup> Although this author disagrees in both instances, the significance of this fragment to Delius and his sonic image of America cannot be denied.

The dance's pace escalates at rehearsal **5** with sixteenth notes and syncopation recalling the rhythmic cells found in the first movement's dance, *La Calinda*. The repeated patterns build to a climax at rehearsal **7** where a repeated pentatonic figure is carried over a completely diatonic harmony in A minor. With the return of the A section at rehearsal **10**, a long descent begins into the final movement, *At Night*.

At rehearsal **10**, Delius slips in another appearance of the melody quoted above (from rehearsal **4**) in the oboe; but this time, the melody is in F major over a raised sixth (D#) and marked *pianissimo*. The present F major shifts to A major, a mediant relationship that Delius alternates back and forth towards the movement's end, but not before embarking on a circle-of-fifths progression that ends in G major five bars after

<sup>141</sup> Jones, "The American Source of Delius' Style," 112-113; 127; 131; 164.

**11**. The movement concludes resolutely in A major beginning with its dominate twelve bars before **12**.

The final movement of *Florida* serves as a recapitulation of the previous movements and therefore gives the entire work a sense of thematic unity. While the harmonic design of *At Night* does not support a traditional finale rondo, the thematic content of the movement creates a form akin to a symmetrical ABCACBA where the “A” sections are only similar in that they each use preceding material from other movements.

The first A section begins the movement with an exact restatement of the opening theme in the oboe from *Daybreak*; this includes the same key and time signature. The introduction then leads to the B section, a lovely chorale in the horns that introduces the key of D major. Thereafter the strings pick up the B theme at rehearsal **1** and continue on to section C, in E major, at rehearsal **2**. With rehearsal **4**, 12/8 time is brought in for the A return of the violas’ theme (Example 3.4) from movement two, *By the River*, still in E major. When the 3/4 time returns at the *a tempo* nine bars after **4**, so do the C and B sections respectively. The closing A section occurs at rehearsal **7** with a reference to *La Calinda* from the first movement. Here the key and notes are exactly repeated, only reshaped into a 3/4 (triple) from a 2/4 (duple) time. It is possible that the conformation to the memorable *La Calinda* dance prompted Delius to end this movement, and thus the suite, in the relatively unforeseen key of D major. The final statement from *La Calinda*, as were the ones before it, is broken down into a soft conclusion that allows Delius’ first large orchestral work to gently fade away.

## Summary

Delius was always keen to discard his early works as unrepresentative of the composer behind the masterly rhapsodic broodings through which he would later establish himself. However, the listener today can be thankful for Beecham's intervention in unearthing many of Delius' early works, including the *Florida* suite. *Florida* can be argued as entirely representative of Delius, a composer "intensely aware of the transience of things ... and this ephemerality being mitigated only by nature's 'eternal renewing'."<sup>142</sup> His preoccupation with transience and his idolization of nature are plainly displayed from the opening bars of the *Florida* suite and bring to the work a charm that could only be attributed to Frederick Delius.

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<sup>142</sup> Payne, "Frederick Delius," 74.

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