As a postscript, I note that Demidenko's recording of the four Chopin Ballades and the B Minor Sonata, made just three and a half months earlier with the same producer and recording engineer, is entirely different. It is thunderous, relentlessly athletic, and (to me, at least) infinitely less interesting – in fact, even occasionally unpleasant. To me, the two recordings sound as if the pianist had entirely rethought his approach to the piano (or perhaps his steroid intake) between them, and the difference in approach between the two recordings is utterly inexplicable.

Jonathan Bellman
University of Northern Colorado

Delius

Marche Caprice
Summer Evening; Winter Night (Sleigh Ride); Spring Morning
American Rhapsody
The Walk to the Paradise Garden
Two Pieces for Orchestra: On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring; Summer Night on the River
A Song before Sunrise
Fantastic Dance

Royal Scottish National Orchestra
David Lloyd-Jones *cond*
Naxos 8.557143 (64 minutes: DDD), £4.99
Notes in English and German.

Through their picturesqueness, variety and general popularity, the miniature orchestral works of Delius have been a favourite 'theme' for many recording companies over many decades. The interpretations of Beecham, fascinating not only for their energy and insight but also for their direct connection with the composer, are available on digitally remastered CDs from SOMM; a 'must' for any Delius acolyte. But there have been numerous others, from Anthony Collins (Decca), Vernon Handley (Classics for Pleasure), Charles Mackerras (Argo), William Boughton (Nimbus), Richard Hickox (on both EMI and Chandos) and John Hopkins (Records International). This latest recording from Naxos with David Lloyd-Jones and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra is yet one further contribution to this catalogue, though it does also provide a useful contextual foil to an earlier recording on Naxos (8.553535) by the same conductor with the English Northern Philharmonia that featured larger works such as the *Florida Suite*, *Over the Hills and Far Away* and the final scene from *Koanga*. A distinctive element of this CD is, however, its chronological 'commentary' of Delius's development as a composer, covering a period from 1887 when Delius was a student at Leipzig until a year before his death in 1933 when receiving physical help from Eric Fenby at Grez-sur-Loing.

The earliest period of Delius's output is here represented by *Marche Caprice* and the *Three Small Tone Poems*, heard here as a group for the first time. The

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earliest piece, 'Winter Night' or 'Sleigh Ride' (taken from its original title *Eine Schlittenfahrt*), was composed as a piano piece in 1887 for a Christmas Eve party given by Grieg (and which included Sinding and Halvorsen) at which the various composers present were to play their works and ask for subsequent criticism; according to Heseltine, 'the good cheer and general festivity of the occasion prevented the realization of this project'.[1] This constituted the middle piece of the three orchestral poems. Either side, 'Summer Evening' and 'Spring Morning' date from 1888–90, though they were not heard publicly until the Delius Festival of 1946. The peculiarly Graingeresque *Marche Caprice*, dated by Beecham from as early as 1887 and by Heseltine from 1888,[2] appears to have been completed in Paris in 1889 and revised in 1890. This clutch of early works amply demonstrates that Delius had, contrary to the disdainful denunciations of his last years, learned much from his university years in Leipzig. Some of this had undoubtedly come from the practical experience of composition and orchestration exercises under Reinecke and Jadassohn, some from rehearsing the student orchestra at the Leipzig Conservatoire, some from his contact with Grieg, Sinding, Halvorsen and others, and much from his concert- and opera-going, his appetite for which was, according to Grainger, unquenchable. All four essays exhibit a considerable competence for orchestration and, more especially, a liking for solo woodwind timbres that were later to colour his mature works so characteristically. This is telling in 'Summer Evening' (arguably the best of the three tone poems) with its opening rhapsodic flute melody, the antecedent pizzicati that initiate the *Marche Caprice* and the concerted answer of the woodwind, and the delicate strands of sound in the trio of 'Winter Night'. Lloyd-Jones's interpretations of these 'juvenilia' are infectious; he has an affinity for Delius's fluctuating phraseology and dynamics in these early pieces, and the grading of crescendos and orchestral texture is well measured, especially in those thoroughly Griegian modulations as one finds in 'Summer Evening'. There might have been spared a little more rubato for the typically Delian anapaest with its opening rhythm of triplet quavers, minim and crotchet, which Hickox does so well with the Northern Sinfonia (EMI), but the scanning of the longer melodies and the woodwind filigree is felicitously managed.

It was an interesting choice to include here Delius's *American Rhapsody* 'Appalachia' of 1896 – not to be confused with the larger variation structure *Appalachia* of 1899, which Delius based on the same Negro slave song – as an example of his transitional period of 'self-communion' (as Beecham described it) during the 1890s. There are many incipient moments of Delius's mature style here, not least that intensified amplification of Grieg's colourful, chromatic harmonization of diatonic melody (or as Dahlhaus described it, 'a rift between melody and harmony … [where] melodic pitches so straightforward as to have eradicable tonal implications are forced into almost bizarre nonfunctional roles in the harmony'[3]) and that 'added-note' harmonic colour (especially the 6th and 9th) so common in the 'cadential' sections of the works after 1899. Unperformed until 1986, the *American Rhapsody*, imaginatively scored, reminds us of just how formative the tropical climate of the New World was in creating Delius's individual, cosmopolitan iconoclasm. While the influence of Grieg's

1 P. Heseltine, *Delius* (London, 1923), 27.
2 See T. Beecham, *Frederick Delius* (London, 1959), 36, and Heseltine, *Delius*, 160.
3 Carl Dahlhaus, *Ninteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley, 1989), 310.

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music, with which Delius very probably became acquainted in England and (even more so) America (well before his personal acquaintance with the Norwegian during his Leipzig years), is still conspicuous, there is nevertheless a major change of syntax. The deceleration of harmonic rhythm, the slow introduction evoking nature (already prevalent in 'Daybreak' of the *Florida Suite*) and the powerful narrative element of the symphonic poem (to erupt so potently in the Straussian *Paris* in 1899) are more than embryonic in this little-known essay. Indeed the work, with its miniature variation structure on the slave song, provides a fascinating snapshot of America through Delius's eyes. Freedom for the slaves had only belatedly arrived in 1863, a fact very much in the minds of the former slave-owning Floridians and Virginians whom Delius knew in Jacksonville and Danville, and in whose memories the Civil War was a recent trauma. This past division in American politics is captured by the quotations of 'Dixie' and 'Yankee Doodle', whose symbolism is thrown into relief by the tunes' interruption to the successional structure of the variations. A new recording of this rarely heard work is to be welcomed and there is much in Lloyd-Jones's interpretation (which is considerably more well balanced than that of John Hopkins and the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra) that is compelling, especially the coda (arguably the strongest part of the score), where the sounds of Delius's future style are most palpable.

By 1901, with the completion of his fourth opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, the timbral concept of Delius's orchestra, influenced by the post-Wagnerian world of Strauss, Zemlinsky, Schreker and Schmidt, was richer, more contrapuntal and more stylistically homogeneous. *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, the entr'acte played between the last two scenes, was not actually composed until rehearsals were taking place for the opera's premiere in Berlin in February 1907. A much shorter interlude had originally been composed beginning with the first fifteen bars of the version now so familiar. But Delius was required to write something much more extended to cover the scene change between 'Fair' and the country inn known as 'The Paradise Garden'. Later, when Delius reconceived the opera as a series of tableaux, this interlude became a more integral part of the structure – indeed a focal point for the orchestra – in which the entire thematic and tonal schemata of the opera are effectively encapsulated in a through-composed essay of extraordinary passion.[4] Lloyd-Jones's pacing of the interlude's 'progressive tonality' is nicely controlled, though the clarity and richness of the orchestral sounds lacks the vibrancy of Hickox's Chandos recording (CHAN 9355). Also Hickox (who is surely now one of Delius's premiere interpreters) provides that insight into the ebb and flow of Delius's phraseology and orchestral counterpoint which is lacking here in what I feel is

[4] In his desire to detach the interlude from the opera for concert purposes, Beecham rescored the piece for a slightly smaller orchestra than the one used in the opera. It is this version we hear most frequently today. For more recent recordings of the entire opera, Meredith Davies' recording on EMI (1972) with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (which is now available on a remastered recording from EMI) and Mackerras's magnificent recording on Argo (1990) with the ORF Symphonieorchester (which also found its way onto DVD from the production for television) are well worth further scrutiny. There are also two Beecham interpretations that can be studied. EMI issued a studio recording (CMS 7 64386 2) as part of the 'Beecham Edition' in 1948 and a further recording, not actually intended for commercial release, made by the BBC (also in 1948) is available from SOMM Recordings, SOMM-Beecham 12-2.

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the conductor's desire to press on with the tempo. That is not to say, however, that there are not impressive parts to this interpretation. There is some lovely, felicitous woodwind playing from the Royal National Scottish Orchestra, especially in the central lyrical 'chamber music' section (beginning in E major), though even here I longed for a little more phraseological suppleness in the haunting oboe and clarinet solos for which Hickox gives room (as does Collins in his compelling recording made with the LSO for Decca many years ago). Where Lloyd-Jones really does succeed, though, is in the breadth of the last major climax and the coda (in a thoroughly Tristanesque B major) where the 'Liebestod' sentiment of Gottfried Keller's quasi-Shakespearean drama comes to life.

The more austere harmony and pointillism of Delius's later works, especially after 1911, is evident in the *Two Pieces for Small Orchestra* (1911–12), which reveal the composer in a more economical frame of mind. Many of these later works, including *A Song before Sunrise* (1918), also written for small orchestra, accentuate Delius's increasing preoccupation with harmonic colour. Indeed, one may argue that the versatility of his musical thinking – evident in such 'pliable' works as *Paris*, *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, *Sea Drift* and *Brigg Fair* – was ultimately compromised in the widening rift between the vertical and linear dimensions of his style that occurred as the First World War approached; and this predominant feature of his method is even more starkly conspicuous in the works of the 1920s and 1930s. The discipline created by the smaller orchestral forces of the *Two Pieces* and *A Song before Sunrise* of course does much to mitigate Delius's harmonic bent of mind. Lightness and fluidity are vital in giving life to these scores and this recording certainly has a 'chamber' ethos, especially the more chromatically astringent *Summer Night on the River*, which has a 'modernist' angularity redolent of expressionism, an approach Delius was to explore with even greater asceticism in 'Autumn: The Wind Soughs in the Trees', the first of the *North Country Sketches* (1913–14). Lloyd-Jones's tempi in all three pieces are deftly chosen, and he gives a suppleness to Delius's compound metres (which, at their worst, can have a stereotypical banality). Here they have a freshness and dance-like spirit that is both infectious and well shaped. The detail of the woodwind filigree is also well brought out in the recorded sound (better, I think, than *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*), and the ensemble of *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* (especially the opening seventh chord on C and the transition to the 'dance') is excellently judged.

The final work on this recording – the *Fantastic Dance* (1933) – is one that is rarely heard today. Delius's last composition (dictated to Fenby, to whom it is also dedicated), it was first performed in London in January 1934, which performance the composer, in the last painful phase of his terminal illness, heard broadcast on his radio at Grez. He died four months later. The 'whole-tone' melody, in Delius's favourite Nietzschean-inspired triple metre, initially gives this work a 'modern' gloss, and the harmonic palette of the framing sections of the ternary design belongs to the more extreme chromatic realm of the composer's language (as is evident in the *Dance Rhapsody No. 2* and the developmental phase of *A Song of Summer*), though as the work progresses, the rhetoric of other dance works – the *Dance Rhapsodies*, *Brigg Fair* and the later operas –soon establishes itself. Lloyd-Jones is, in many ways, at his best in this final piece and the panache he has shown in his series of Bax symphonies and tone poems for Naxos (which has a distinct affinity with this branch of Delius's art) has clearly found an empathy here. For Delius devotees, the inclusion of this work alone makes having the CD worthwhile. But for those less familiar with Delius's

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orchestral works, and especially the miniatures, this recording is undoubtedly very good value, and as an introduction to the composer's output, across fifty years of creativity, it is invaluable. I am now left wondering if Lloyd-Jones, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Naxos will turn their hands to some of Delius's larger works, or perhaps even to recordings of the earlier operas such as *The Magic Fountain*, *Irmelin*, *Koanga* or even the one-act *Margot-le-Rouge* since there are, as Beecham intimated, riches we have as yet not fully appreciated.

Jeremy Dibble
University of Durham

Lamond
d'Albert

Frederic Lamond — Symphony in A major op. 3
Ouvertüre aus dem schottischen Hochlande op. 4
Sword Dance

Eugen d'Albert — Overture to *Esther* op. 8

Martyn Brabbins *cond*
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
Hyperion CDA67387 (60 minutes: DDD), £13.99
Notes and translations included.

Eugen d'Albert (1864–1932) and Frederic Lamond (1868–1948) are nowadays more likely to be remembered for their careers as pianists than for their contribution to the orchestral repertoire as composers. Critics and historians have seldom referred to the small corpus of works produced by each man other than in footnotes to discussions of late nineteenth-century British music. This premiere recording by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Martyn Brabbins aims to bring a small sample of the music of d'Albert and Lamond into the limelight in the same way that they have illuminated the works of Mackenzie, Wallace, MacCunn and Coles.

As pianists, the reputations of both men still hold good. Each spent a substantial amount of time abroad during his formative years, following a pattern that seems to have been established by selected British musicians in the previous generation – Mackenzie, for instance, spent five of his teenage years in Germany from 1857. Furthermore, they both became associated with the monumental musical personality of Franz Liszt, the late nineteenth century's pianist *par excellence*, as pupils and colleagues. Indeed, John Purser, in the opening remarks of his sleeve notes to the CD, states that Lamond may often only be 'remembered by the cognoscenti as a pianist who was renowned for his Beethoven playing, or as a pupil of Liszt's with interesting memories'.

The legacy of d'Albert and Lamond as pianists is beyond doubt. As composers, however, the jury has long been out on their work, particularly on their place among the 'Scottish Romantics' of the same vintage: William Wallace (1860–1940), Hamish MacCunn (1868–1916) and Learmont Drysdale (1866–1909).

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