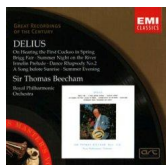


Delius - Orchestral Works (Beecham) [2001]



1. *Brigg Fair (An English Rhapsody)* 15:57 2. *A Dance Rhapsody No. 2* 7:46 3. *On hearing the first cuckoo in Spring* 7:04 4. *Summer Night on the River* 6:42 5. *A Song before sunrise* 6:11 6. *Intermezzo from Fennimore and Gerda* 5:17 7. *Irmelin Prelude* 5:09 8. *Sleigh ride (Winter night) Orchestra* 5:36 9. *Summer Evening* 6:27 10. *I. Daybreak - Dance From Florida Suite Rtvi/1* 10:26 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Sir Thomas Beecham – conductor

With no composer was Sir Thomas Beecham more closely associated than with Frederick Delius: Beecham made his first 78RPM documentation of Delius in the middle 1920s just after the invention of the electrical process; he recorded Delius throughout the period of electrical stylus engraving, continued to do so in the "hi-fi" years of the monophonic long-playing record, and made what were probably the first stereo recordings of Delius in the late 1950s and early 1960s, for EMI. The EMI stereo recordings have rarely, if ever, been out of the catalogue. They appeared initially in the United States in the late 1960s on the Seraphim label, on two LPs. EMI reissued them as a two-CD boxed set in the middle 1980s, and the current, semi-budget edition compiles the best of the older two-CD anthology, reworking the balances just a bit, and making them available at a lower price than previously. The highlight of the program is the wonderful, autumnal performance of "Brigg Fair: An English Rhapsody," a work that Beecham committed to platters three times (in 1928, 1947, and, as here, in 1958). While the music of Delius does not absolutely demand stereo, it certainly benefits from it; the subtleties of orchestral color, the impression of depth so important to an evocation of landscape, the related representation of distance (as noted by Christopher Palmer in his study of the composer) - all of these become more vivid, and more vitally contribute to the living whole, in stereo. Let it be said that however accomplished conductors of later generations have been in their dedication to Delius, none has ever surpassed Beecham: the gentle rocking of the flute and harp in the opening bars of "Brigg Fair" sounds like the rolling countryside itself in warm pastels; the peroration in brass toward the end of the same work blazes for a moment before the music subsides back into its original quietness. The timing (15.51) is comparable with that of Beecham's pioneering 1928 performance (available on Naxos) and shows that the lambent atmosphere is not dependent on a retardation of the pace. The two "sketches," "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring" and "Summer Night on the River," here receive their definitive recordings. (Only Barbirolli, also on

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EMI, comes close.) Beecham brings to life the two other miniatures, "A Song before Sunrise" and "Summer Evening," with the same deft magic; in the less characteristic "Dance Rhapsody No. 2" he knows how to mark the rhythms and does a more effective job than Eric Fenby did on a now deleted Unicorn CD. This is a splendid CD for those curious about Delius who might want an introduction to the autumnal realm. I can detect little difference in sound between this disc and its previous CD re-mastering for the boxed set. The original recordings represented the state of the art for their time and have always sounded as warm as Sir Thomas must have intended them to be. --- Thomas F. Bertonneau, amazon.com

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