

Music History and Cosmopolitanism / abstract & bio
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'Unto *Brigg Fair*': Cosmopolitanism, Delius, and the Identities of Place

Cosmopolitanism has been a prominent term in the reception of Frederick Delius's music ever since the publication of Christopher Palmer's 1976 monograph on the composer. For Palmer and others, resisting the negative trend of much writing on Delius after the Second World War, the term is frequently inflected with positive value, suggesting openness, liberation, and a progressive worldview, rather than critical approbation. Building on the recent work of Bruce Robbins, Amanda Anderson, and Kwame Anthony Appiah, however, I shall argue that the category is far more destabilizing and opaque than its appropriation frequently suggests, and that its valence in Delius studies is especially problematic.

Delius's 1907–8 tone poem *Brigg Fair*, subtitled 'An English Rhapsody', is an indicative case study. Based on a melody collected by Percy Grainger in North Lincolnshire in 1905 and later arranged for unaccompanied choir, Delius's set of orchestral variations offers a transformative vision of the music, whose arch-like expressive trajectory is consistent with late Romantic aesthetics. Closer attention to the score, and to its genesis and reception, however, suggests a more complex reading of the work's multiple points of stylistic reference. Cosmopolitanism here might serve as a straightforward register of the music's layered evocations of place, or, more pointedly, as a critique of the work's thinly veiled colonialism. Attempting to resolve these tensions, I will conclude, prompts renewed reflection about the ideological associations of the term in a music historical context.

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