
EDVARD GRIEG: BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

EDVARD GRIEG: BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

By
REBEKAH JORDAN

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts

McMaster University

© Copyright by Rebekah Jordan, April, 2003

MASTER OF ARTS (2003)
(Music Criticism)

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

Title: Edvard Grieg: *Between Two Worlds*

Author: Rebekah Jordan, B. Mus (Eastman School of Music)

Supervisor: Dr. Hugh Hartwell

Number of pages: v, 129

ABSTRACT

Although Edvard Grieg is recognized primarily as a nationalist composer among a plethora of other nationalist composers, he is much more than that. While the inspiration for much of his music rests in the hills and fjords, the folk tales and legends, and the pastoral settings of his native Norway and his melodic lines and unique harmonies bring to the mind of the listener pictures of that land, to restrict Grieg's music to the realm of nationalism requires one to ignore its international character.

In tracing the various transitions in the development of Grieg's compositional style, one can discern the influences of his early training in Bergen, his four years at the Leipzig Conservatory, and his friendship with Norwegian nationalists -- all intricately blended with his own harmonic inventiveness -- to produce music which is uniquely Griegian. Though his music and his performances were received with acclaim in the major concert venues of Europe, Grieg continued to pursue international recognition to repudiate the criticism that he was only a composer of Norwegian music.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that the international influence of this so-called Norwegian maestro had a profound influence on many other composers and was instrumental in the development of Impressionist harmonies.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Hugh Hartwell for all of his assistance and support in supervising my thesis. Without your insight, guidance, and thoughtful direction I would have been unable to complete this substantial work. I would also like to thank my second and third readers, Dr. Fred Hall and Dr. Keith Kinder, for all of their intelligent observations and suggestions and for all of their encouragement and professionalism. My experience at McMaster would not have been as fruitful or enjoyable without the assistance of Dr. James Deaville or without the encouragement of Nancy and Terry in the School of the Arts office.

I would especially like to thank my fiance, Joel Miller, for all of his prayers, love, and support, and my wonderful, beautiful parents, Bruce and Sharon Jordan, who have been a constant source of joy and faith throughout my entire life. I thank you all!

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
CHAPTER ONE: <i>"The Development of Grieg's Music"</i>	1
Early Biography	
Leipzig Conservatory	
Harmonic Inventiveness	
Influence of Norway's Folk Music	
Gade, Nordraak, and Copenhagen	
Nationalism and Grieg	
CHAPTER TWO: <i>"Grieg's Attempt for International Recognition"</i>	53
Music and a Sense of Place	
The Development of Grieg's Compositional Style	
Impressionist Elements	
Grieg's Influence on Others	
Relationship With Other Composers .	
CHAPTER THREE: <i>"The Critical View of Grieg"</i>	94
Reception in Europe	
Dreyfus Affair	
Public Criticism	
Cosmopolitan Credo	
CHAPTER FOUR: <i>"Conclusion"</i>	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY	126

Chapter 1

“The Development of Grieg’s Music”

“Just immerse yourself in the study of your art and follow your own true nature and the inner voice in your quest for the ideal.”

~ Edvard Grieg, letter to Frederick Delius, 28 February 1888

Edvard Grieg wrote, in a response to a proposed biography to be written by his friend, Iver Holter, in 1897, “If I were to give you any advice, it would be this: Write without regard to me or anyone else. Just let the completely independent ‘I’ speak.”¹ This phrase captures the identity of Grieg. He was a man who “allowed his entirely independent self to speak,” through both his words and his music. This thesis is not designed to be a documentary on the genius of Grieg - that is a matter of opinion. In the following Chapters, I will investigate the “Norwegian Sound” that seemingly consumed Grieg and his compositional style, and I will consider the ways in which his national sound influenced his international identity. In the following three chapters, I will look at how Grieg’s life and works influenced music and musical thought inside and outside of Norway.

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) was born into a noble, well-situated family. His maternal grandfather, Stiftamtman Hagerup, was a member of the Norwegian

¹ Edvard Grieg to Iver Holter, 8 January 1897, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, trans. William H. Halverson (Columbus, Ohio: Peer Gynt Press, 2000), 414.

parliament for Bergen, and he was eager to obtain the best possible education for his children. Therefore, Gesine Hagerup (1814-1875), Grieg's mother, "who from her early years had shown a decided talent for music, was given not only the best instruction that could be obtained for her in Bergen, but was permitted also to go abroad to continue her education - an exceptional privilege at that time in the case of a young girl."² Sent to Hamburg, Gesine studied piano playing, singing, and music theory. In later years, she played an influential part in the musical life of Bergen, where she often appeared as soloist and took part in performances of chamber music. Thus, it was very natural and expected that her children would also begin to study music at a young age. Edvard Grieg learned much more from his mother than simply musical skills; he also possessed her work ethic. He wrote in a letter to a friend, "Here energy is what's needed, and I shall work till my back breaks. I have that from my mother, my noble mother."³ Grieg's father, Alexander, was the exact opposite of his wife. He was a very jovial, impulsive, and easy-going man. Alexander Grieg was also musical and he often played piano duets with his wife. Though music did not consume him as it did his youngest son and his wife, he did enjoy going to concerts. Four months before he died, Alexander wrote to his son that he wished he had had the opportunity

² David Monrad-Johansen, *Edvard Grieg*, trans. Madge Robertson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), 12

³ *Ibid*, 13

of hearing more concerts for “music has been my greatest enjoyment all my life through, and the love of it will certainly follow me to the grave.”⁴ It is evident throughout Grieg’s life that he was influenced by both his mother and father.

Recalling his earliest childhood experiences, Grieg writes, in “My First Success,” (November to December, 1903) of experimenting at the piano when he was about five years old. He stretched out his arms to discover - “not a melody: that was far off: - no; it must be harmony. First a third, then a chord of three notes, then a full chord of four; ending at last with both hands, - O joy! A combination of five, the chord of a ninth. When I found that out, my happiness knew no bounds.”⁵ A year later his mother began to teach him and he found the exercises and practice very unpleasant. Although as a child he deeply resented his mother’s demands that he persist in the rigours of practice rather than dreaming and experimentation, he later conceded that “had I not inherited my mother’s irrepressible energy as well as her musical capacity, I should never in any respect have succeeded in passing from dreams to deeds.”⁶

Just prior to Edvard’s fifteenth birthday (July, 1858), the famous violinist, Ole Bull (1810-1880), visited the Griegs. On learning that Edvard had composed

⁴ Alexander Grieg to Edvard Grieg, 26 May 1875, quoted by Monrad-Johansen, 14.

⁵ Edvard Grieg, “My First Success,” Grieg the Writer, Volume 1: Essay and Articles, comp. Bjarne Kortsen (Bergen: Bjarne Kortsen, 1972), 3.

⁶ *Ibid*, 4.

several pieces, Bull insisted on hearing them. Following this private recital, Bull spoke the life-changing words, "You are to go to Leipzig and become a musician."⁷

Edvard Grieg was an avid letter writer, which is extremely fortunate because historians have Grieg's own account of his student period at the Leipzig Conservatory, as well as many other transitional times in his life. The Leipzig Conservatory was founded in 1843, the same year Edvard was born. Very soon it was known as one of the leading institutions of its kind, attracting students from around the world. Naturally, Edvard felt out of his league and unsure of himself, as he was among the most musically elite of Europe and America. It must have been quite unsettling to arrive in a large foreign city and find himself suddenly independent and alone. In *My First Success* he wrote: "It is no accident that the phrase 'was sent' comes naturally to mind in this connection. I felt like a package stuffed with dreams."⁸

At the Conservatory, as well as the schools in Bergen, any assignments that were compulsory, repetitious, and regimented were completely foreign to Grieg's nature. He required inspiration for his imagination or situations in which his dreams and longings were ignited in order for him to be energized to

⁷ Henry T. Finck, *Grieg and his Music* (New York: Johnston Co., 1909), 18.

⁸ Edvard Grieg, "My First Success," *Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, and Speeches*, eds. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson, (Columbus: Peer Gynt Press, 2001), 76.

work. Grieg always felt a strong connection to his Norwegian home and this is evident in his first impressions upon arriving in Leipzig.

We crossed the North Sea to Hamburg, and after a one-day stay there we continued by train to medieval Leipzig, whose tall, dark, and gloomy houses and narrow streets almost took my breath away. I was delivered to a boarding house, my father's old friend said goodbye -- the last Norwegian words I was to hear for a long time -- and there stood I, a fifteen-year-old boy, alone in that foreign land among only foreign people. I was overcome by homesickness. I went into my room, and I sat crying continuously until I was called to dinner by my hosts. The husband, a genuine Saxon post-office official, tried to console me. "Look here, my dear Herr Grieg, it is the same sun, the same moon, the same loving God you have at home." Very well intended. But neither sun nor moon nor loving God could compensate for my father's vanished friend, the last link that bound me to my home.⁹

Leipzig was a distinguished cultural centre. J.S. Bach had directed the Thomas School Boy Choir there and traditions dating from that era were maintained by the townspeople. Especially important to Grieg was the music he heard at the Gewandhaus concerts, where the conservatory students had free admission to the dress rehearsals. Superb musicians from around the world came to play with the world-famous Gewandhaus Orchestra or to give solo recitals. Later he fondly recalled these musical opportunities in Leipzig. In *My First Success* he wrote, "It was fortunate for me, however, that in Leipzig I got to hear so much good music, especially orchestral and chamber music. This made up for the knowledge of compositional technique which the Conservatory failed

⁹ Ibid.

to give me. It developed my mind and my musical judgment in the highest degree, . . .”¹⁰ Shortly after he arrived in the city, Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* was performed at the opera house, and Grieg was so spellbound by it that he saw it fourteen times (1858)!

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) had been a founder of the Leipzig Conservatory and principal conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, and thus, his music was included in concerts each year. Mendelssohn founded the Conservatory in 1843, only four years before his death. Schumann also had served for a year and a half (1843-1844) as a teacher of composition, piano, and score reading at the Conservatory, but was considered far too “modern” by the leaders and other faculty. In the journal, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which Schumann founded in 1834 in Leipzig, he wrote enthusiastically concerning the newest trends in music. Grieg was very impressed with Schumann’s poetic music and hearing Clara Schumann play Robert Schumann’s piano concerto was a revelation for him. Ten years later it became a model for his own A - minor Concerto. Shortly before his death, Grieg wrote in his diary, concerning the Schumann concerto: “. . . each tempo remains indelibly impressed on my soul. Youthful impressions such as that do not lie. The brain is as soft as wax, to

¹⁰ Ibid, 84.

receive impressions, and the imprint remains for life.”¹¹ Grieg was drawn to Schumann more than to Mendelssohn. In Grieg’s eyes, “Mendelssohn was without doubt extremely competent, clear thinking, and elegant; but unlike Schumann, he did not succeed in expressing the secret longing that is at the heart of Romanticism. In Schumann’s music Grieg saw the fulfillment of his own dreams.”¹² Grieg was very excited to study with Ernst Ferdinand Wenzel, “Schumann’s brilliant friend,” who eventually became one of his favourite piano teachers. It was to Wenzel that he dedicated his first published work, *Four Piano Pieces*, Opus 1, composed towards the end of his stay at the Conservatory.

Grieg often spoke of his education at the Conservatory with a certain amount of bitterness, saying that he left the Conservatory “as stupid as when he came to it.” In a letter to Julius Röntgen more than twenty years after he had left the Conservatory he stated, with regard to his lack of technique, “for this it is not only I who am to blame, but chiefly that damned Leipzig Conservatory where I learnt absolutely nothing.”¹³ Grieg criticized the teaching at the Conservatory as failing to stimulate him and described his lessons there as being “given stones bread.”¹⁴

¹¹ Edvard Grieg, Diary entry 20 January 1907, *Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, eds. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson, 163.

¹² Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, trans. William H. Halverson and Leland B. Sateren (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 31.

¹³ Monrad-Johansen, 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

His first piano teacher, Louis Plaidy, failed to excite him. Plaidy did not appreciate the more contemporary composers and insisted that his students play only Czerny, Kuhlau, and Clementi. Each lesson, as Grieg describes it, was monotonously identical. Plaidy would sit beside the piano, “while the pupil played on in the deadliest weariness, admonishing in the ever repeated words, ‘Slowly, always slowly, firm; lift your fingers; slow, firm; lift your fingers!’ It was simply maddening.”¹⁵ Grieg, to be fair, observed that his lack of success under Plaidy’s instruction was not totally the teacher’s fault. Other students, he pointed out, emerged from Plaidy’s class demonstrating exceptional technical results. Grieg concludes that the rules and restrictions were not for him and that he “was lacking in the conditions necessary for appreciating Plaidy.”¹⁶ On one occasion Plaidy, frustrated with Grieg’s playing of a Clementi sonata, threw the music across the practice room and shouted at Grieg to “go home and practise.”¹⁷ This incident served to arouse Grieg to venture to approach the director of the Conservatory and request to be moved to another teacher. His request was granted and he was placed with Ernst Ferdinand Wenzel, Robert Schumann’s very intellectual friend. What a difference for the young student! Grieg describes his admiration for Wenzel in *My First Success*: “He was a master in the

¹⁵ Edvard Grieg, “My First Success,” Grieg the Writer, Volume 1: Essay and Articles, comp. Bjarne Kortsen, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

art of imparting his conceptions of playing; and he could make a bar stand out in a convincing way quite different from Plaidy's. Above all, there was music behind his words."¹⁸ Later on, Grieg became a pupil of Ignaz Moscheles who, although he criticized Grieg's beloved Chopin and Schumann, was respected by Grieg for his expressive interpretations of Beethoven.

No less frustrating were his classes in harmony. One of Grieg's teachers was E.F. Richter who expected his students to apply the rules of thorough bass to the bass line he had assigned, but Grieg saw no sense in following rigid rules and, instead, applied his own standard - that the work should sound well. Grieg also took harmony lessons from Dr. Robert Papperitz, who allowed him greater liberties. However, even Papperitz remonstrated with Grieg over his insistence on introducing chromaticism wherever he could. As Kjell Skjellstad (a frequent critic for the journal, *Listen to Norway*) notes, Grieg's surroundings were primarily focussed on the future. "As was the case in Leipzig, the concept of music of the future was associated with Wagner and considered practically synonymous with revolutionary trends in music. Grieg himself did not escape being labelled a nonconformist when the string quartet he had composed for his teacher Carl Reinecke was withdrawn from a public concert programme in 1861 because the influential violinist, Ferdinand David, regarded it as too futuristic.

¹⁸ Ibid, 11.

This was probably due to Grieg's advanced treatment of harmony, which even during his years at the Conservatory had broken new ground in musical expression."¹⁹ He completed his studies in harmony at the Conservatory with lessons from Moritz Hauptmann, whom Grieg loved for all of his fine and intelligent observations. "For him rules in themselves meant nothing; they were simply the essential laws of nature."²⁰

Grieg's writings tend to portray his years at the Conservatory as bleak and disappointing. In *My First Success*, he commented that he benefited from the opportunities to hear world-class musicians in Leipzig, while he complained that the instruction he received at the Conservatory did not enable him to attain the musical levels to which he aspired. "It developed my mind and my musical judgment in the highest degree; but it introduced great confusion into the relations between my desires and my ability to carry them out, and I must, alas, say that this confusion was the result of my stay in Leipzig."²¹ Grieg did point out, though, that the feeling that he was seeking something not taught in his classes motivated him to press on towards an elusive future goal. "But at first it brought me much disillusionment," he writes, ". . . when I was distanced by my fellow - students, who made immense strides forward and were able to manage

¹⁹ Kjell Skjellstad. *Listen to Norway*, "A Man of Visions," 18:09:2002, p. 40

²⁰ Edvard Grieg, "My First Success," Grieg the Writer, Volume 1: Essay and Articles, comp. Bjarne Kortsen, 12.

²¹ *Ibid*, 14.

the tasks set them."²² Though this comparison with his peers may have initially given rise to a feeling of dejection, he reported to J. de Jong that, "The desire to compete spurred him on, for he realized that he, too, must work hard if he was going to make anything of himself. In order to get what he had missed he now began to work with such zeal that he damaged his health."²³ When he became ill in the spring of 1860, pneumonia was suspected. Later it became clear that it had been the first stages of tuberculosis which so affected his health that he lost the use of one lung and, for the rest of his life, had difficulty breathing, was susceptible to sickness, and had to curtail many activities due to his general weakness. In his summary statement regarding his time at the Conservatory, Grieg accepts some of the blame for his apparent lack of success. "It was primarily owing to my own nature that I left the Conservatory more or less as stupid as I was when I entered, I was a dreamer with absolutely no talent for competition, I was unfocused, not very communicative, and anything but teachable."²⁴

By all of Grieg's own testimonies of his experience in Leipzig, one would be very surprised to look at his compositions and the assignments in his workbooks, found in the Bergen public library. Almost all of the compositions

²² Ibid.

²³ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, 33.

²⁴ Edvard Grieg, "My First Success," Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, and Speeches, eds. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson, 88.

show that Grieg was a very conscientious, assiduous pupil, though the degree to which his teachers allowed him to write chromatically is surprising. The following sample of an exercise in harmony from Papperitz's class illustrates this.²⁵ (See figure 1) Although Grieg often claimed that he learned little in his classes at the Conservatory, the next example of his response to an exercise in counterpoint in 1861 reveals his proficiency in contrapuntal techniques.²⁶ (see figure 2) One can observe the complexity of his harmonic writing within this excerpt. He maintains a continuous, chromatic line, despite the wide leaps from chord to chord.

Figure 1



²⁵ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, 34.

²⁶ Ibid.

Figure 2
Allegro

The musical score for Figure 2 is presented in three systems. The first system is marked **Allegro** and features a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a bass clef. It includes dynamics such as *pp* and *sf*. The second system has a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a bass clef, with dynamics including *pp*, *sf*, and *ppp*. The third system also has a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a bass clef, featuring dynamics like *ppp*, *sf*, and *ff*, and concludes with the tempo marking **Presto**.

Grieg frequently unfairly belittled his own work. For his final examination at the Conservatory in 1862, he played his *Four Piano Pieces* and “scored a formidable triumph with them, and had to make several curtain calls.”²⁷ However, in an 1877 letter to Dr. Max Abraham, director of the C. F. Peters publishing house, Grieg commented, “With respect to Opus 1 [Four Piano Pieces] I would absolutely have been happiest if the work had not been

²⁷ Edvard Grieg, “My First Success,” *Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, and Speeches*, eds. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson, 89.

published . . . but instead have been left in total oblivion.”²⁸ Grieg said he was “no prize conservatory student” but a few days before his final examination, Moritz Hauptmann (1792-1868), with an endorsement from Carl Reinecke (1824-1910), wrote, “Mr. Grieg . . . must be counted among the best students in composition with respect to both theoretical mastery and practical application. An exemplary diligence and love of study have always undergirded his natural talent.”²⁹ These accounts illustrate the modesty that Grieg possessed and the pressure that he placed upon himself constantly to seek perfection. This is a reflection of Grieg’s character as an individual and as a musician. Moritz Hauptmann was a German theorist, teacher, and composer who studied violin and composition with Louis Spohr. Carl Reinecke was a German composer, teacher, pianist, and conductor. He was appointed court pianist in Copenhagen in 1846, where his duties included accompanying the violinist, H.W. Ernst, as well as giving his own solo recitals. Both Hauptmann and Reinecke were Grieg’s instructors in harmony, counterpoint, and composition at the Conservatory.

Although Grieg did not appreciate the rigid classical style promoted by the Conservatory and found classes there to be dry and dull, in Leipzig he was also exposed to more “modern” music and developed a fervent love for the

²⁸ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, 37.

²⁹ Ibid

Romantics (especially Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, and Wagner). The contemporary Romantic style appealed to Grieg, as illustrated by the preceding examples, and he was evidently allowed to make use of it in his class work in harmony, counterpoint, and composition. His interest in the "new" style intensified during his four years in Leipzig and "he acquired a style of Romantic harmony which was going to be essential for him. Important elements from this style were to pervade his works throughout his career."³⁰

Through an analysis of Grieg's music, definite characteristics of style can be identified. In his early works, immature expressions of the contemporary Romantic idiom can be seen. They serve to illustrate his enormous interest in harmony, especially chromatic harmony. Frequent innovations such as parallelisms, complex dissonant chord structures, unexpected modulations, and abrupt changes of key, occur in his music. "To Grieg, as to other harmonic innovators of the later nineteenth century, colour became of supreme importance resulting in the discarding of established rules of harmony."³¹

When Grieg had left Bergen at fifteen to commence his studies in Leipzig, he naively imagined that in three years he "would return home as a wizard in the kingdom of music."³² However, after four years at the world-renowned

³⁰ Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg 1858-1867* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), 82.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

³² Edvard Grieg, "My First Success," *Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, and Speeches*, eds. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson, 77.

school, he came home, not as the “wizard of music” but certainly as a musician and composer of note. Shortly after his arrival in Bergen, he gave a concert in the Workers’ Society hall with a varied program consisting of Beethoven’s *Pathétique* sonata, some études by Moscheles, and three of his own *Four Piano Pieces* in Opus 1, as well as his own string quartet in D minor. He also accompanied the singer Wibecke Meyer in his own *Four Songs* and performed as the pianist in Schumann’s piano quartet Opus 47. The Bergenposten reported, “The high reputation which had preceded him does not seem to have been exaggerated. His compositions were singularly pleasing and it would seem that Herr Grieg has a great future before him as a composer. As an executant also, he won universal applause, especially in the Schumann quartet for piano and strings which might be called the crowning feature of the concert.”³³

With this success, a young musician (he was not quite nineteen) might have felt that he had “arrived.” But Grieg knew that his skills required further refinement. His father, however, felt that he had supported him long enough and the King of Norway, in response to Grieg’s request, also refused to provide him with a stipend. After a year of private study in Bergen, Grieg was ready to venture forth, but certainly not to Leipzig. In a letter to Iver Holter, he wrote that he really didn’t know where he should go “when a vague longing drove me

³³ Monrad-Johanson, 48.

toward Copenhagen.”³⁴ He had liked the city when he passed through it on his way to Leipzig; he had close relatives there; and his good friend from the Conservatory, Emil Horneman, was there. In an interview with Robert Henriques, the Danish music critic, Grieg suggested that part of the motivation to go to Copenhagen was the presence of the noted Scandinavian composer, Niels Gade. Although Grieg had come to Denmark, partly to be close to Gade, once there, he associated with a circle of musicians who were not close to Gade and were generally in direct opposition to *Musikforeningen*, Gade’s orchestral society. It appears that, although Grieg respected Gade’s talent and skills, he felt that Gade’s Scandinavian music was too influenced by German Romanticism, especially that of Mendelssohn. So it was that Grieg was attracted to Horneman and a group of musical “revolutionaries.” In Copenhagen, Grieg and Horneman were members of a circle of progressive young musicians including Louis Hornback, Gottfred Matthison-Hansen, Julius Steenberg, and August Winding. During his first year in Denmark, in the company of these Northern artists, Grieg began to move, somewhat away from German romanticism, towards these Northern influences. This transition is evident in his *Poetic Tone Pictures* Opus 3, No. 1, when Grieg combines the use of the *springar* rhythms (Norwegian folk-

³⁴ Edvard Grieg to Iver Holter, 9 February 1897, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, 417.

dance with an accent on the second beat), with the Dorian mode on E.³⁵ (see Figure 3). Grieg was aware of the emerging Norwegianness in his music (*Poetic Tone Pictures*, Opus 3) when he wrote to his American biographer, Henry Finck, “Norwegian folk life, Norwegian sagas, Norwegian history, and above all Norwegian nature have had a profound influence on my creative nature ever since my youth.”³⁶ Grieg goes on to assert, though, that up to this time he “knew virtually nothing about Norwegian folk-tunes.”

Figure 3
Allegro ma non troppo
Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 3 No. 1 (Grieg)

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/8. The tempo is marked 'Allegro ma non troppo'. The score includes several measures with triplets, accents, and dynamic markings. The title is 'Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 3 No. 1 (Grieg)'. The tempo marking 'Allegro ma non troppo' is written in bold. The figure number 'Figure 3' is also in bold. The score is written in black ink on a white background.

Even though Edvard Grieg grew up in a musical home it is interesting to discover that he rarely heard “Norwegian music.” He told Finck, that “even in music the ‘cultivated’ classes in Norway lived only on what they could get from abroad.”³⁷ For the summer of 1864, Edvard returned to Bergen where he renewed his acquaintance with Ole Bull, the Norwegian violinist. They spent a great deal of time together, with Bull expressing his passion for Norway

³⁵ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, 48.

³⁶ Edvard Grieg to Henry T. Finck, 17 July 1900, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, 226.

³⁷ Monrad-Johansen, 25.

and his devotion to the land and the people. "Dr. Olav Gurvin has placed Ole Bull as 'the first who consciously started the work of building up a Norwegian music and a Norwegian musical life.'"³⁸ Bull proudly identified himself as "the Norwegian Norseman from Norway." For the young composer, with a growing interest in Northern music, it must have been exciting to be in his company. In trying to reproduce the sound of the Norwegian *hardingfele* (folk fiddle), Bull had to develop a revolutionary harmony style involving "pedal points, sharp dissonances on strong beats, and an individual handling of the major scale with an augmented fourth."³⁹ Ole Bull was once asked by Professor R.B Anderson what had inspired his weird and original melodies. "His answer was that from his earliest childhood he had taken the profoundest delight in Norway's natural scenery."⁴⁰ Bull went on to describe how every facet of his native land - whether it was flowering valleys or deep fjords, rushing rivers, or sparkling brooks - filled his head with music. He added that all the Norwegian tales and the folk-songs sung in the little villages were sources for the music he created. It is no wonder that Edvard Grieg and Ole Bull developed a life-long friendship. They both possessed an intense love for the beauty of Norway, and this beauty provided compositional inspiration for both of them. For these two musicians

³⁸ Schjelderup-Ebbe, Edvard Grieg 1858-1867, 91.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 92.

⁴⁰ Finck, 34.

music revealed itself through nature. Sara Bull told Finck that “when, in early childhood, playing alone in the meadows, he [Ole Bull] saw a delicate blue-bell gently moving in the breeze, he fancied he heard the bell ring, and the grass accompany it with most enrapturing fine voices; *he fancied he heard nature sing*, and thus music revealed itself, or came to his consciousness as something that might be reproduced.”⁴¹ Although Bull and Grieg appeared strikingly similar, they did have their differences. Ole Bull had no appreciation or understanding of the modern composers and he had no use for Wagner, a composer Grieg considered a musical genius. During Grieg’s training at the Conservatory, he had studied the great masters and therefore had a love and admiration of their music. Ole Bull did not have the same training and consequently looked to what was familiar: the Norwegian folk tunes. Grieg’s father and Ole Bull might have disapproved of the extent to which his music was Wagnerian, but his inner strength and resolve, in spite of persistent ill health impelled him to follow his own heart.

However, the greatest impetus to pursue his dreams in this new direction arose from Grieg’s friendship with Rikard Nordraak (1842-1866). Contrary to the assertions of the early biographers, Finck and Monrad-Johanson, that Grieg met Nordraak in 1864, their first meeting actually occurred a year before in the early

⁴¹ Ibid.

summer of 1863. The encounter apparently so impacted Grieg that, almost twenty years later he wrote "my first meeting with Nordraak as it really happened was so characteristic of Nordraak that I can recall it at this moment as if it were just yesterday."⁴² Upon Grieg's return to Bergen, the two Norwegians became inseparable. Like Ole Bull, Rikard Nordraak was a Norwegian patriot above all else, his mind totally occupied with "things Norwegian." Björn Björnson wrote that Nordraak was "a full round sum of Norwegian melodies and Norwegian national enthusiasm, Norwegian character sketches and anecdotes, Norwegian dreams and fairy story, a profusion of plans for Norwegian operas and symphonies."⁴³ Grieg, whose primary source of inspiration had always been his rugged Norwegian homeland, was now ablaze with patriotic passion, especially because of Nordraak's contagious enthusiasm. Even though Gade had criticized his music as being too Norwegian, the fact was that Grieg's music still reflected German romanticism. His association with Nordraak, though, "hastened Grieg's journey from Germany to Norway, musically speaking."⁴⁴ Grieg recalled later in a letter to Aimar Gronvold that although his national enthusiasm had already been aroused, it was largely Nordraak and Nordraak's passion that caused Grieg's smouldering, national fire

⁴² Edvard Grieg to Aimar Gronvold, 18 March 1883, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, 311.

⁴³ Monrad-Johanson, 64.

⁴⁴ Monrad-Johanson, 64.

to burst into flame. Grieg wrote, "Suddenly it was as if the scales fell from my eyes and I knew what I wanted to do. It was not precisely what Nordraak wanted, but I think that the way to me went through him."⁴⁵ During the winter of 1864-65, they established the Euterpe Society in Copenhagen, to encourage Scandinavian composers and "to become a voice for the musical youth of the Nordic countries whose compositions hitherto have lacked the opportunity for general dissemination."⁴⁶ The Society only lasted a few seasons. For Grieg this was a period of excitement and great productivity. His creativity was at its height and he quickly composed several songs: Opus 5, *Humoresques* Opus 6, *Piano Sonata in E minor* Opus 7, and the *Violin Sonata in F major* Opus 8.

Another life-changing event for Grieg occurred in 1864 when he became engaged to his first cousin, Nina Hagerup. Their Christmas engagement was not announced immediately, as it was known that both sets of parents objected to it. Nina's mother said of Grieg, "He is a nobody, he has nothing, and he writes music that nobody cares to listen to."⁴⁷ Grieg's father expressed his concern, regarding the betrothal, calling it "this stupid engagement."⁴⁸ Finally, in the following July, they were able to publicly announce their engagement. Grieg's relationship with Nina had an immediate effect upon his music. By December,

⁴⁵ Edvard Grieg to Aimar Gronvold, 25 April 1881, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, 306.

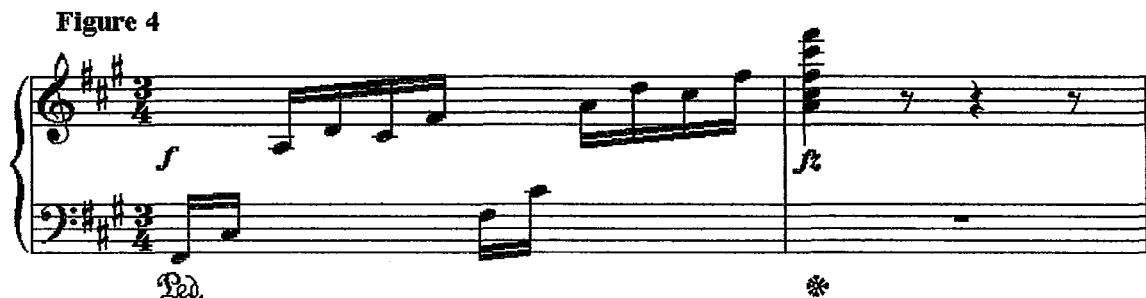
⁴⁶ Finck, 41.

⁴⁷ Finck, 41.

⁴⁸ Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, Edvard Grieg, 64.

1864, Grieg had written a collection of four songs for voice and piano, *Hjertetes Melodier* (Melodies of the Heart) Opus 5, based upon lyric poems by Hans Christian Anderson. Although two of the songs, *Jeg elsker Dig!* (I love you!) and *To brune Öine* (Two brown eyes), became extremely popular, Grieg's close friend, Benjamin Fedderson, later wrote, "Nobody had wished to publish his *Hjertetes Melodier* and very few had bought them after he himself had paid for their publication."⁴⁹ Although inspired by Scandinavian poems, the songs are neither full of sharp, syncopated accents, which would reflect Norwegian folk-dance rhythms, nor do they contain the frequent appoggiaturas or sudden modal changes which characterize Norwegian folk-dance music. These four songs are remarkable in their structure and still reflect, in the harmony, the strong influence of his conservatory training and of German Romanticism. However, hints of the developing Grieg style can be sensed in the chromaticism and occasional dissonances. The ending of the second song, *Du fatter ej Bölgernes evige Gang* (*The Poet's Heart*, Opus 5 No. 2) is dissonant, an approach used by Grieg for the very first time in this piece. (See Figure 4) Schjelderup-Ebbe suggests that the effect is created by using a triad plus an accessory-note (the d in the ascending passage) which is sustained by the piano pedal and, therefore, all of the dissonant sounds are left to "evaporate."

⁴⁹ Schjelderup-Ebbe, Edvard Grieg 1858-1867, 210.



Throughout his life, the influence of his formal training at the Leipzig Conservatory is evident in his compositions in a number of ways. First, in considering form, Grieg's greatest output was in the shorter forms -- the lyrical pieces and the songs. These pieces are frequently structured in "three-part, ABA form, with part A being a song form, part B contrasting with it in key and movement, and part A returning again, sometimes the same, and sometimes slightly changed."⁵⁰ Several examples of this formal structure, in Grieg's music are: Opus 1, Nos. 2, 3, and 4 (*Four Piano Pieces*); Opus 2, Nos. 1 and 2 (*Four songs for alto voice and piano*); Opus 4, Nos. 1, 2, and 5 (*Six Songs for alto voice and piano*); and Opus 5, No. 1 (*Melodies of the Heart - "Two Brown Eyes"*). *Humoresques* Opus 6, Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, also have an ABA structure but this set is a little different because the pieces also contain rondo-like elements. This early nineteenth century form is used extensively in the piano pieces of Chopin, in the *Songs Without Words* of Mendelssohn, in the piano pieces of Schumann, and in the

⁵⁰ Mary Ruth-Myers, *The Use of Chromatic Harmony in Grieg* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester, 1939), 10-11.

songs of Schumann and Schubert. Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, concerning the first piece in *Three Piano Pieces*, composed in 1860 while Grieg was still in the Conservatory, remarked on "the undulating, constantly arpeggiated chords that are typical of Mendelssohn."⁵¹

Other German-school matters of form were mirrored in Grieg's pieces. As an example, David Monrad-Johansen states in an observation of Grieg's piano concerto, "So far as the construction is concerned, [the concerto] runs parallel with the Schumann concerto."⁵² Both the Grieg and the Schumann concerto were composed in the German romantic tradition, with three full movements, alternating fast - slow - fast, with a very dramatic first and third movement. The main theme is stated by both the orchestra and the soloist which was also very common in this tradition. It has been noted that Grieg used the first movement of Schumann's concerto as a model for his own and this is a possibility. Both Grieg and Schumann begin with an improvisational piano flourish which comes in before the orchestra, which was fairly uncommon for this time. Each left out a separate orchestral exposition, leaving both the principal and the secondary subjects divided between the soloist and orchestra. In fact, in February of 1872, following the premiere performance of Grieg's

⁵¹ Schjelderup-Ebbe, 51.

⁵² Monrad-Johansen, 111.

concerto in Germany (in the Gewandhaus), Bernsdorf, one of Germany's leading journalistic writers and critic for the *Signale*, complained that Grieg's concerto resembled too closely works by Gade, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Weber.

However, Edmund Neupert, who played the concerto for the first time in Copenhagen, on 3 April 1869, wrote to Grieg, "On Saturday your divine concerto resounded in the great hall of the Casino. . . The three dangerous critics, Gade, Rubinstein, and Hartemann, sat in the stalls and applauded with all their might. I am to send you greetings from Rubinstein and say that he is astounded to have heard a composition of such genius; he would like to make your acquaintance."⁵³

Considering Grieg's harmonies, Mary Ruth Myers, in her Master's dissertation, suggests that: "Grieg inherited all that had been developed in Europe. Chopin and Schumann, especially, were influential on Grieg's harmonic style. Their use of embellishments, widening of the concept of tonality, use of chromatics, and departure from strict adherence to fundamental bass paved the ways of Grieg's writings."⁵⁴ One can observe these influences in works prior to Opus 6, such as *Poetic Tone Pictures*, *Opus 3*, Nos. 1, 3, and 5. The melodies are filled with chromatic passages, moving chromatic bass lines, and ornamented, syncopated bass lines. See Figures 5a, b, and c.

⁵³ Edmund Neupert to Edvard Grieg, 6 April 1869, quoted by Monrad-Johansen, 112.

⁵⁴ Myers, 11.

Figure 5a

Allegro ma non troppo*Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 3 No. 1 (Grieg)*

Figure 5b

Con moto*Poetic Tone Pictures, Opus 3, No. 3 (Grieg)*

Figure 5c

Allegro moderato*Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 3 No. 5 (Grieg)*

As Grieg began to transform many of his compositional techniques to include elements of his Norwegian heritage, he could not escape the sound of the

hardingfele (a Norwegian folk fiddle). The *hardingfele* was a violin-like instrument with four (sometimes five) sympathetic strings below the regular (played) strings which pass through an opening in the bridge and under the fingerboard. Although with this instrument there was little possibility for modulation, there existed twenty different ways of tuning, all of which have an assigned name. Some of these ways of tuning the *hardingfele* are illustrated in Figure 6.⁵⁵ “These tunings interpret the mood of the various types of dances and thus take the place of modes.”⁵⁶ In any tuning, other than the “lowered bass,”

Figure 6

♩ = sympathetic strings

Normal Tuning: Lowered Bass:

Troll Tuning 1: Troll Tuning 2: Gorrolaus Tuning:

one or more of the sympathetic strings would act like “transposing instruments” so that the sound produced would be different from the notes played. This can be seen in figure 7⁵⁷ which shows the differences between the music notation and the sound produced by the *hardingfele* for two of the tunings. One of the

⁵⁵ Nils Grinde, *A History of Norwegian Music*, trans. William H. Halverson and Leland B. Sateren (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 92.

⁵⁶ Schjelderup-Ebbe, *A Study of Grieg's Harmony*, 20.

⁵⁷ Grinde, 93.

foremost characteristics of Norwegian *hardingfele* music was the major scale with

Figure 7

Figure 7 displays musical notation for a Norwegian *hardingfele* piece. The notation is in 2/4 time, key of D major. It includes 'Tuning' and 'Notation' sections, followed by 'Sound' sections. The notation features a raised fourth (F#) and a tritone (Bb). The 'Sound' sections show the actual sound of the notes, with 'tr' indicating trills.

a raised fourth, which produced the Lydian mode. It is this mode that Grieg began to utilize most frequently. An example of this in Grieg's music is found in *Opus 72 No. 7* (see figure 8). The augmented fourth is also present in the minor

Figure 8
a tempo animato Opus 72 no. 7

Figure 8 displays musical notation for a piano piece by Grieg, *Opus 72 no. 7*. The notation is in 2/4 time, key of D minor. It includes 'meno p' and 'a tempo animato' markings. The notation features a raised fourth (F#) and a tritone (Bb).

Grieg's music."⁵⁸ The zither-like *langleik* was also very popular in rural Norway and had a strong influence on Norwegian folk music. The typical *langleik* scale had each string tuned slightly higher or slightly lower than the tuning of a tempered instrument. To our ears the intervals produced sound weird and irregular, deviating as much as a quarter tone from standard intervals.

Additionally, the ecclesiastical chant, brought to Norway in mediaeval times, introduced modal characteristics such as "the flat seventh (the low leading-tone) in minor and major, the major ('Dorian') sixth and the minor ('Phrygian') second"⁵⁹ into Norwegian folk music. These "unnatural" tunings and intervals and the irregular qualities of his native folk music attracted Grieg and served as a pattern for his melodic and harmonic style. Schjelderup-Ebbe states that a number of writers have remarked on this, among them P. H. Láng, who wrote in his *Music in Western Civilization*, "The slightly exotic perfume emanating from Russia and the Scandinavian countries acted as a tonic -- Bohemian music did not seem exotic, and young composers gloried in the typical harmonic turns of Grieg and in the piquant orchestration of Rimsky-Korsakov."⁶⁰ One example of this exoticism, arising from Grieg's use of minor scales with raised fourths, is

⁵⁸ Schjelderup-Ebbe, *A Study of Grieg's Harmony*, 21.

shown in figure 9.



It is important to note that modal characteristics are found in nearly all of Grieg's music. Schjelderup-Ebbe is critical of the fact that Kurt von Fischer, in his 1938 dissertation *Griegs Harmonik und die nordlandische Folklore*, did not more fully investigate the modal character of Grieg's music. He felt that, for Fischer who generally presented a detailed examination of Grieg's works, this was an unfortunate oversight. Schjelderup-Ebbe suggests that, "Modal effects are obtained by: a) modal progression of chords; b) chords being conditioned by modal scales; c) melodies using modal scales."⁶¹ Several modal progressions, which Grieg employed frequently, were I-II; II-III; V-VI; and V-IV. Figure 10a and 10b present two examples of such progressions in Grieg's music. Chords conditioned by modal scales was also a frequent compositional technique used in Grieg's music. He accomplished this by chromatically modifying certain chords so that they displayed modal characteristics to give modal colouring to the piece,

⁶¹ Ibid, 23.

Figure 10a *Peasant's Song, Op. 65 no. 2*

A: I VI V VI IV6 V IV

Figure 10b *Jesus Christ our Lord is risen, Op. 74 no. 3*

cresc. *f* *p*

He cap - tured hell's dread re - gions.

Bb: V IV III VI7 V6 VI6/5 V VI I4/3 IV

as shown in figure 11. Melodies using common in Grieg's music, but there is

Figure 11 *Nordic Melodies, Op. 63 no. 2*

p

only one case where a modal scale is used exclusively in an entire piece (i.e.

a modal scale is used exclusively in an entire piece (i.e. *Dance of the Dovredaughter* from *Peer Gynt*). Generally, Grieg introduces contrasting modal passages, from two to ten measures long, to provide added colour within compositions which are in the usual major or minor modes. The following example of the insertion of an Aeolian b minor section into this piece written in the key of b minor is shown in figure 12. That Grieg was strongly influenced in his compositional style by his Norwegian roots and the folk music of his native land is unquestioned. Besides his natural affinity for “things Norwegian,” history was also pushing him in this direction.

Figure 12 Op. 66 no. 18

The musical score for Figure 12, Op. 66 no. 18, is presented in two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The time signature is 2/4. The key signature consists of two sharps (F# and C#). The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The first staff features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff features a bass line with eighth notes. A crescendo (*cresc.*) marking is placed above the second staff. The piece ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a final chord in the bass staff.

Grieg, born in 1843, lived and composed during the rising nationalism of the nineteenth century. Louis Snyder, an expert in the study of nationalism, wrote that nationalism was “a condition of mind, feeling or sentiment of a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, speaking a common language, possessing a literature in which the aspirations of the nation have been

expressed, attached to common traditions and common customs, venerating its own heroes, and , in some cases, having a common religion.”⁶²

The concept of nationalism and “nationalism movements” arose following the French Revolution, largely from the idea of “popular sovereignty,” although nations certainly were in existence long before the late eighteenth century. The German philosopher, Herder, in his *Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit* of 1784, stressed the “divine diversity of the family of nations, the unique quality of each culture.”⁶³ He also underscored the significance of language as the foundation of nationality. Nikolai Grundtvig (1783-1872), the Danish nationalist, agreed. In a lecture given on 16 November 1838 he proclaimed that a people’s real spirit is “the invisible life force common in greater or lesser degree to all those who have a mother tongue in common -- a life force whose element is free activity and whose breath is the mother tongue.”⁶⁴ Grundtvig proposed that “folk or patriotic high schools” be established for the sole purpose of developing in the people (i.e. peasants) an appreciation for their Danish cultural heritage. The first such school was opened in 1848 and between 1848 and 1900 Grundtvig and his disciples established a vast number of schools. The revolutionary ideas of Herder and Grundtvig spread, via the educated élite, across Europe and eventually to

⁶² Louis L. Snyder, *The Meaning of Nationalism* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1968, 196.

⁶³ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977) 6.

⁶⁴ Rolland Paulston, *Other Dreams, Other Schools: Folk Colleges in Social and Ethnic Movements* (Pittsburgh: University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1980), 58.

Norway.

Prior to the Napoleonic Wars, which began in 1792, Norway was a province of Denmark. However, Denmark had fought on the side of the losing French; following the defeat of Napoleon, in January of 1814, Denmark was forced, by the Treaty of Kiel, to give up Norway to Sweden . Even while it was a vassal-province of Denmark, national pride had not been dead in Norway, and Norwegian patriots forged a society for this purpose, *Selskabet for Norges vel*, in 1809. Its goal was "to instil national consciousness and desire for unity and to push toward national independence."⁶⁵

In a flash of nationalistic fervour, Norway refused to accept the conditions of the Treaty of Kiel, declared independence from Denmark, adopted a new constitution, and in May of 1814, asked Prince Christian Frederick of Denmark to be King of the new, independent Norway. His reign was short-lived, because in October the Swedish army invaded and declared Norway to be an independent kingdom under the rule of Sweden's King Charles XIII, formerly Napoleon's military leader Marechal Bernadotte. Nevertheless, the burning embers of Norwegian nationalism had not been extinguished. Herder's assertion that language generally could be found as the "seed-centre" of nationalism proved to be true in Norway.

⁶⁵ Shafer, 217.

As in most regions of Europe, there was not one national tongue in Norway, but rather, a number of distinct dialects spread about the country. Because Norway had for centuries been a province of Denmark, the educated people spoke and wrote Danish. In fact, when the Reformation came to Norway, it was through Danish translations of the scriptures. "A smouldering conflict had long existed between the two layers of population in Norway -- the native Norwegian on the one side and on the other the official [Danish speaking] class."⁶⁶ During the 1840's, interest in Norwegian folk stories and poetry grew into a movement and the formation of an ultra-Norwegian party, led by the poet-nationalist, Henrik Wergeland (1808-1845), whose aim was to create a written language for Norway. In 1848, Ivar Aasen wrote a new Norwegian grammar and, two years later, a Norwegian dictionary, "which standardized the dialects and made the speech of the people, the Landsmaal, the national language."⁶⁷ Ole Vig (1824-1857) was on the front lines of the "folk movement" in Norway. During the 1850's he edited the journal *Den norske Folkeskole* (The Norwegian Folk School) in which he promulgated Grundtvig's ideas. In 1864 the first Folk High School was opened in Norway by one of Vig's followers. It was felt that such schools were to be "the instrument, the medium through which the

⁶⁶ Agnes Matilde Wergeland, *Leaders in Norway and Other Essays*, ed. Katharine Merrill, Essay Index Reprint Series (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1966), 41.

⁶⁷ Shafer, 207.

rebirth of Norway's national spirit might take place."⁶⁸ Though undoubtedly the schools played a role, they were not to be the final "instrument" for, by the 1880's, the schools were in decline, but the nationalist movement in Norway continued to flourish, and by 1900, it was an almost unstoppable force. World-renowned Norwegians, such as Ibsen, Björnson, Amundsen, and Grieg, brought Norway to the world stage.

Grieg was drawn to the ideals of the French Revolution - liberty, equality, fraternity. The gross inequality of the society of his day and his detestation of its social stratification were matters of concern for him even as a youth, as he mentioned in his last letter to Henry Finck on 30 December 1905. His sympathies always rested with the weak rather than the strong. He gave and supported many concerts in aid of suffering people, such as the victims of natural disasters. Together with Björne Björnson, he was a republican and developed at an early age a deep distaste for anything related to royalty. Reflecting this distaste he wrote to his close friend, Gottfred Matthison-Hansen, on March 27, 1885: "Do you ever see Svendsen, or does he spend all his time with the royal court and people with silk gloves?"⁶⁹ After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, Grieg was

⁶⁸ Paulston, 113.

⁶⁹ Edvard Grieg to Gottfred Matthison-Hansen, Finn Benestad ed., Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, 512.

asked to write a coronation march for King Edward VII, which he absolutely refused to do. Encouraged by Björnson, Grieg saw himself as a political radical, championing the cause of the common people he felt were repressed by the upper classes. In a letter to Dr. Max Abraham, his publisher, on 30 September 1898, he declared that some day the “unenlightened masses” would rise up and take the power in their own hands: “Believe me,” he wrote, “there will be other times; they will come whether through blood or intelligence. Let us hope through the latter!”⁷⁰ Despite his radical views in politics, Grieg never joined a political party. He states his position in a letter to Bergen author, John Paulsen, on 3 June 1881: “Christiania [Oslo] is nothing but one big insane asylum. And then all the party-puffery in Norway! No, the older I get the more I say to myself: Not conservative, not liberal – but both. Not subjective, not objective, but both. Not realist, not idealist, but both. The one must be fused with the other.”⁷¹ When a parliamentary democracy was finally established in Norway in 1884, Grieg’s joy was evident in a 21 July 1884 letter to the Danish composer, Niels Ravnkilde: “It is a wonderful time for those who believe, as I do, that what has happened is a step forward. Hopefully the struggle will continue, for

⁷⁰ Edvard Grieg to Max Abraham, 30 September 1898, quoted by Gerik Schjelderup, “Grieg the Man,” *Grieg: A Symposium*, ed. Gerald Abraham (England: Lindsay Drummond Ltd., 1948; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 15.

⁷¹ Edvard Grieg to John Paulsen, 3 June 1881, Finn Benestad ed., *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, 562.

without the struggle for freedom life isn't worth a plugged nickel."⁷² As the relationship between Sweden and Norway became more and more tense in the 1890's, Grieg became even more aggressive in his determination to throw off the Swedish yoke, suggesting in an 1892 letter to Iver Holter that he would "take part in throwing them out." Towards the end of the nineteenth century, it became clear that a termination of the Swedish-Norwegian Union was becoming increasingly inevitable. Prompted by the increasing divergence in the trading interests of Norway and Sweden, in 1905 the Norwegian parliament (Storting) passed a bill creating its own consular service. When the Swedish king vetoed the bill on 27 May, Norwegian politicians unanimously refused to form a ministry to carry out the Swedish policies, giving rise to an announcement by the Storting on 7 June that government could not function and that the union with Sweden was over. Sweden did not wish to use force to maintain the union, and, "by Karlstad Conventions of 23 September, 1905, Norway became an independent kingdom."⁷³ Swedish bitterness over Norway's action was obvious when, during concerts in Strömstad, Sweden, the audience greeted Grieg's works with boos and cat calls. On 29 August 1905, he wrote to Matthison-Hansen that he could not "travel through Sweden without risking mistreatment and

⁷² Edvard Grieg to Niels Ravnkilde, 21 July 1884, *Ibid*, 580.

⁷³ Seton-Watson, 74.

expulsion. Isn't that incredible? They won't perform Björnson's dramas, and when my music is played they hiss and demonstrate against it"⁷⁴ During the Karlstad negotiations, Grieg thought that, because of his international position, he might be able to serve as a moderator, so he sent telegrams to Emperor Wilhelm II and King Edward VII asking them to get involved to prevent an outbreak of war. However, he received no reply from either of them. Following Norway's separation from Sweden in September, a vote was held in November to decide whether Norway was to be a republic or a monarchy; Grieg, in spite of his previously-held republican views, saw that continued monarchy was the only sensible course of action at the time. On November 25, 1905, King Haakon and Queen Maud (a Danish prince and his English wife), were placed on the Norwegian throne. Grieg expressed his joy in his diary entry on New Year's Eve: "Now the year 1905 - the great year - goes to rest, and I part from it with deep gratitude because I experienced it! And yet, without the youthful dreams which this year has made real, my art would not have had its proper background. The longings have transformed my personal experiences into tones. Had the 7th of June come in my youth, what would have happened? No, it is good that things happened as they did. The lifelong struggle has been the greatest good

⁷⁴ Edvard Grieg to Gottfred Matthison-Hansen, 29 August 1905, Finn Benestad ed., Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, 519.

fortune both for the individual and for the nation. Freedom is: the struggle for freedom!"⁷⁵

There have been a number of historical treatises which have observed that these growing nationalistic feelings in the nations of Europe during the nineteenth century often found expression in art and music. In Russia, France, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Norway and other countries, composers of that period rediscovered the folk-music of their respective country and attempted to create a style of music expressing the distinctiveness of their "nation" and "nationality." In Norwegian music, this movement away from classicism toward a national Norwegian style was best expressed in the works of Edvard Grieg. However, the drive to express "Norway" in his music did not originate with the growing nationalism movement.

Grieg's biographer, Henry Finck, pointed out that, even as a young man, Grieg was enthralled with Norway and its mountains and fjords. He quoted Otto Schmid who observed that Grieg's father was more interested in the uses man made of the land and remarked that, "Where nature revealed its grandeur and sublimity; where snowy solitudes, amid towering precipitous cliffs, sent their rivers of ice, their glaciers, down into the valley; where the ice-coloured

⁷⁵ Edvard Grieg, 31 December 1905 Diary, *Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, eds. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson, 106.

streams, after devious toilsome paths, thundered as cataracts over disintegrating rocks, the father was displeased by the sternness of scenery, the rugged charms of which did not appeal to him; whereas the son [Grieg], overwhelmed by thrills of delight, was struck dumb in deep admiration."⁷⁶ It was not only the majestic scenery of Norway's west coast which had its influence upon Grieg but, as he recalled in a letter written on 17 July 1900 to Henry Finck, Norwegian sagas and history had, from his youth, a great effect upon Grieg.

Responding to comments by German critics that his music was not original and that he merely copied Norwegian folk music, Grieg claimed in the same letter to Finck that he had not really studied the Norwegian folk song until later in his life, after he had composed *Poetic Tone Pictures for Piano*, Opus 3 and *Humoresques*, Opus 6. However, both Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe question this assertion, as unmistakable influences of Norwegian folk music can be discovered in his earlier works. One of these, *Poetic Tone Pictures*, was Grieg's first composition in Copenhagen in 1863, shortly after his graduation from the Conservatory and, already, certain very Norwegian-sounding sections can be found. In the first two measures of the first piece in the set, Norwegian folk-dance (springar) rhythms with accented second beats are combined with the Dorian mode on E. See figure 13. In the third measure of this example is found

⁷⁶ Finck, 4.

the melodic phrase which is characteristic of Norwegian folk music and is often called "the Grieg formula," a descending line in which a minor second is

Figure 13
Allegro ma non troppo *Poetic Tone Pictures, Op. 3 no. 1*

followed by a major third (c-b-g ~ see *1). Another version of the "formula" is found in the first two measures of this musical sample with a descending major second followed by a minor third (e-d-b ~ see *2). The former could be called the "major form" and the latter the "minor form" of the Grieg formula. However, after spending the summer of 1864 with Ole Bull, Grieg's latent national feeling and his love for "things Norwegian" was really awakened. In a conversation he had with Arthur M. Abell in 1907, Grieg made it clear how important this time with Bull had been in developing his desire to express his Norwegian nationalism in his music. He reported that Ole Bull "used to take me with him down into a deep, almost inaccessible 'cave,' as he called it, and there he played for me the trollish Norwegian melodies that so strongly fascinated me and awakened the desire to have them as the basis for my own melodies."⁷⁷ Through Bull, Grieg

⁷⁷ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg*, 57.

also met some of the fiddlers from western Norway and this aroused his interest in Hardanger-fiddle music. It was through his association with Rikard Nordraak, though, that all the latent "Norwegianness" truly began to burst forth in Grieg's music.

When, in the spring of 1865, he composed the four *Humoresques*, Opus 6, which clearly have their source in the folk music of Norway, it signalled his first noteworthy success as a composer. His self-assurance in weaving the language of Norwegian folk music into these pieces had not been seen before in the music of Norway. "The use of motives with small, concise 'buds' that in subsequent variations are constantly sending out new 'shoots,' coming directly from the special variation technique of the Hardanger-fiddle music."⁷⁸ In their melody and rhythm these pieces unquestionably are reminiscent of Norwegian folk dances. The first and last pieces in the set bring to mind a springar (in $\frac{3}{4}$ time) and the third piece resembles a halling dance tune (in $\frac{2}{4}$ time). The harmony of the four pieces displays such folk-music attributes as modality, pedal point and other sustained-tone effects, and sharp dissonances. For example, consider this excerpt from the first piece in *Humoresques*. See figure 14. A number of Norwegian and Scandinavian composers, such as Bull, Lindeman, and Kjerulf, who preceded Grieg or were his contemporaries, employed some of the same

⁷⁸ Ibid, 67.

elements in their music as he did. They frequently demonstrated that it might be possible to integrate components of the classical music style and those

Figure 14
Tempo di Valse
Humoresques, Op. 6 no. 1

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system features a vocal line in the upper staff with lyrics 'cre - - - - - scen - - - - - do' and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The second system shows a piano accompaniment with a rising melodic line in the right hand and a descending line in the left hand over a repeated G in the bass line.

of folk music. In the end, though, it was Grieg who was able to fully integrate the two and this “blend” of the classical and folk music idioms is a characteristic of his compositional style. The last piece in the *Humoresques* clearly demonstrates how well Grieg, among his contemporaries, was able to integrate the two and illustrates Grieg’s anticipation of future developments in the music of Norway. In the final three measures of this piece, a rising melodic minor scale is to be played with the right hand, while the left hand plays a descending form of the same scale over a repeated G in the bass line. This introduced fairly sharp dissonances in measures 1 and 2 (of the example). The sequence from G major to G minor and back to G major is also typical of Grieg. See figure 15.

Figure 15
Allegro alla burla



From his youth, Grieg clearly had a love for Norway and desired to be able to express “Norway” in his music. This passion was fuelled by his interaction with Ole Bull and Rikard Nordraak, as indicated earlier. In addition, a number of other Scandinavian composers had been experimenting with the expression of the nationalist idiom in their music. One of these, Ole Bull, was able to imitate the sound of the Hardanger fiddle by using chords and chord progressions of which classically-trained musicians would generally have disapproved. However, Bull who had little formal training, disregarded the harmonic conventions of his time. To create the “Hardanger sound” he used a tonic pedal point in the bass, setting off the Lydian colour of the melody, and he introduced frequent sharp dissonances. This can be seen in the following excerpt from Bull’s *Haugtussaatten*. See figure 16. Another source for Grieg was

Figure 16 *Haugtusslaatten* (Bull)

Ludvig Mathias Lindeman (1812-1887), who spent his life (especially 1841-1863) collecting Norwegian folk music. His arrangements of the folk melodies were often very innovative, revealing a courageous and skilful approach to harmony. In *Norske Fjeldmelodier* No. 19, one of Lindeman's earlier works, some of the harmonic devices he commonly used in later arrangements can be found. In figure 17, we see his "daring use of dissonant chords in conjunction with an inner tonic pedal point. In this respect the handling of the two six-four chords is noteworthy, the first being followed by a V7 of V, the second, in the last measure appearing as a sort of deceptive cadence, being the tonic six-four of a new key, a harmonic device later typically associated with Grieg."⁷⁹ Lindeman made extensive use of pedal points in his arrangements in an attempt to emulate the sounds created by the Hardanger fiddle.

⁷⁹ Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg 1858-1867*, 100.

Figure 17

Allegretto

Norske Fjeldmelodier No. 19 (Lindeman)

Pedal points imitate the use of open strings in the folk instruments and pedal points in lower notes of the piano affects the overtones of the melody at the higher end of the piano, emulating the sympathetic strings of the Hardanger fiddle. Lindeman also frequently alternated between major and minor modes within a short space in a work. This is also a characteristic of Grieg's harmony. The similarity between the two can be observed if we consider the first two measures of Lindeman's song, *Han Ole* no. 203, and Grieg's later arrangement of the same folk song in his *Album for Mandssang*, Op. 30. See figure 18.

Figure 18:

Lindeman: **b: I - I D: I^{6/4} - IV - I⁶ - I - V b: V - (I)**

Grieg: **b: I - VII^{o2} D: III - IV - I - I - V b: V^{6/5} - (I)**
I - {- 5, -3}

However, as Dr. Olav Gurvin concluded in his treatise on the

development of Norwegian music, *Rikard Nordraaks musikk og dei nasjonale føresetnadene for han i kunstmusikken*, "Neither Bull nor Lindeman used folk music as the basis for [original] compositions. To be sure there are many [folk] melodies and dances in Bull's works, but it is more borrowing than development. The Norwegian melodies are employed in their original form, and they occur in a piecemeal way within the usual international style of music. They have not yet become building material for the composer."⁸⁰

Halfdan Kjerulf (1815-1868) admired Lindeman's work in collecting the folk melodies of Norway and acknowledged those collections as the source for much of his own work. Kjerulf was a Norwegian composer and piano teacher. His family did not approve of his interest in music, so he began studying law. In 1839, he became quite ill and for health reasons went to Paris, where he experience rich musical life for the first time. This, of course, led to an amplified interest in music. Kjerulf desired to create national art music, not copied from, but built upon features of the folk music idiom. To simulate the sounds created by folk instruments, he made considerable use of pedal points, open fifth basses, sudden dissonances, modal passages, and a blending of modal as well as wavering scales with standard major and minor scales to produce an instability of modes. The following example illustrates his creation of glaring dissonances

⁸⁰ Ibid, 117.

using pedal points (see figure 19). The harmonies created in this piece are well-demonstrated in these two measures as well. In both measures, the Phrygian

Figure 19
Allegro *Wedding March (Kjerulf)*

The musical score for Figure 19 consists of two measures of piano music. The first measure is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The right hand plays a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, Bb4, and C5. The left hand plays a bass line starting on Bb3, moving to C4, D4, and E4. The second measure is also in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The right hand plays a melody starting on G4, moving to A4, Bb4, and C5. The left hand plays a bass line starting on Bb3, moving to C4, D4, and E4. A forte (f) dynamic marking is present in the second measure. A Phrygian cadence is indicated by a 'V' above the notes in both measures.

cadence is given an original treatment. In the first, the major seventh chord over a pedal point creates a unique effect while, in the second measure, the dominant seventh chord played over the pedal is chromatically altered to become an augmented sixth chord. In *Caprice*, Kjerulf uses the pedal with a number of non-harmonic notes to produce a succession of blurred sounds. His style in this piece, to a large extent, anticipates that of Grieg. See figure 20.

Figure 20

Caprice, Op. 12 no. 4 (Kjerulf)

Vivace *un poco ritenuto*

p (dolce cant.)

In an article, in *Illustreret Tidende*, Grieg wrote, "He [Kjerulf] had no predecessor on whom he could lean; only the expression of the most primitive intellectual life, the folksong, existed. This he took as a point of departure, choosing the art song as his field. For this we owe him thanks, because only in this domain was he able to achieve the national colour, through which our music may obtain its natural and healthy development."⁸¹ The foundations for the Norwegian musical style were built by men like Bull and Lindeman, and

⁸¹ Ibid, 133.

especially Kjerulf. Rikard Nordraak did not himself add significantly (i.e through his own compositions) to the development of this unique national style, but he contributed immeasurably by clarifying the vision and cementing the commitment of the "master builder" - Edvard Grieg.

Chapter 2

“Grieg’s Attempts for International Recognition”

“The invisible scarlet thread that unites artists who do not even know each other personally is truly beautiful -- indeed, it is one of the most beautiful things in art.”

~Edvard Grieg, letter to Edward MacDowell, 8 April 1901

A great deal has been written about the nationalism of Grieg and the national character of his music. At its centre, nationalism is about land and, in a letter to Wilhelm Hansen, Grieg spoke about “the roots which bind me to my fatherland.”⁸² When considering “our land” or “our territory” one does not limit this to mean the particular landscape or geography of the place that one may call home. In addition, we tacitly include our history, our language, our heroes, and our stories and myths in our understanding of what constitutes “our nation”. Herder spoke about the importance of rediscovering “the collective self through philology, history, and archaeology, of tracing one’s roots in an ‘ethnic past,’ in order to ascertain the authentic identity beneath the alien accretions of the centuries.”⁸³ That is why Norwegian intellectuals like Wergeland, Aasen, and Björnson were so keen to rediscover Norway’s obscured past, the golden age of the Vikings, its heroes, and the Norse legends, from the folk songs of the

⁸² Edvard Grieg to Wilhelm Hansen, 21 November 1889, Grieg the Writer: Volume 1 Essays and Articles, ed. Bjarne Kortsen, 46.

⁸³ Anthony D. Smith, National Identity (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 75.

peasants, so that Norwegians “might re-enter the living past of their community and thereby restore their collective dignity and bind themselves into the chain of generations that alone could confer immortality.”⁸⁴

Not speaking of nationalism, particularly, Martin Stokes argued that music and its place of origin were often inseparable. He stated that “music informs our sense of place,”⁸⁵ and, even if we relocate, the music of our previous home or homeland arouses memories of that place “with an intensity, power, and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity.”⁸⁶ He goes on to suggest that music does not simply reflect the culture from which it sprang but can provide the means to transform oneself to resemble a member of the group represented by the music. Additionally, music, representing a place not previously experienced, has the power to create, in the mind of the listener, a mental picture and definition of that place and its social mores. Stokes uses the example of the augmented second in the Turkish Delight advertisement which depicts in our imagination an image of the Orient full of violence and repressed sexuality. Edward Said pointed out that such portrayals present “not the Orient as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized.”⁸⁷ In this thesis, though, I am more

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁸⁵ Martin Stokes, “Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity, and Music,” *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978; Vintage Books, 1979), 104.

concerned with the ability of the composer to compose music, such that the landscape, history, and culture of the place of origin are reflected in the music. In his introduction, Stokes wrote, "I would argue therefore that music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries that separate them."⁸⁸ This is largely true of the music of Grieg. In fact, some critics complained that his music was too Norwegian; many of his works could be used to illustrate this. Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was one, among many composers, who found Grieg's music beautiful and unique. Liszt was actually responsible for securing a government travel grant for Grieg in 1868 when Liszt wrote several flattering things about Grieg's Violin Sonata in F major. In 1870 Grieg arrived at the old monastery in Rome where Liszt was living to thank him in person for writing the recommendation. Interestingly, Grieg arrived with his newly composed Sonata for piano and violin in G major (1867) under his arm, so perhaps there was an ulterior motive for his visit. Liszt asked Grieg to play a sample from the sonata. Grieg reluctantly obliged him and Liszt, quite graciously, sat next to him and played the violin part 'exquisitely.' In a letter to his parents in 1870, Grieg described his meeting with Liszt in Rome. After playing the first movement of the *Violin Sonata* with Liszt, Grieg asked if he could play something for piano

⁸⁸ Martin Stokes, 5.

alone and he chose to play the *Minuet* from the *Humoresques* Opus 6. Grieg wrote, "when I had played the first eight measures, and repeated them, he sang the melody with a certain heroic expression of power in his gesture, which I readily understood. I noted, of course, that it was the national peculiarities that appealed to him."⁸⁹ Dr. Erik Eggen has established that the beginning of the *Minuet* closely resembles the Norwegian folksongs, *Alle Mand havde Fota* and *Grisen*, both of which were included in Lindeman's collection of Norwegian folksongs arranged for piano, *Eldre og nyere norske Fjeldmelodier samlede og bearbejdede for Pianoforte*. The folksong character and peasant energy of this piece can be seen in figure 21.

Figure 21

Tempo di Menuetto ed energico

The musical score for the beginning of the *Minuet* is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. The right hand plays a rhythmic melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady bass line. Dynamics markings include *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *v* (forte). The second system contains measures 5 through 8. The melody continues with a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking, leading to a *f* (forte) dynamic. The piece concludes with a final chord marked with an 'x'.

⁸⁹ Edvard Grieg to Alexander and Gesine Grieg, 17 February 1870, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, 274.

Note especially the sharp accents and the many syncopations. Stokes concluded, "Music and dance ... do encourage people to feel that they are in touch with an essential part of themselves, their emotions, and their community."⁹⁰

In examining "the discourses of place and authenticity surrounding the notion of an identifiable Liverpool Sound,"⁹¹ Sara Cohen found that, although there was considerable debate among individuals concerning both the existence and the nature of a distinctive Liverpool Sound in its music, the research did indicate "various ways in which people create an image or sense of place in the production and consumption of music."⁹² She concluded that such images or sense of place might be awakened through the processes of its composition, rehearsal, or performance, through recollections aroused by the music, or through dialogue about the music. "The linking of particular musical styles, instruments, voices, or sounds with particular places, and with various characteristics and stereotypes associated with those places is fairly common."⁹³ Even in this post-modern era, Cohen explains, it is overly naïve to believe that the blurring of boundaries separating places, times, and identities signals the end of individuality and the sense of community. Rather, "place and placelessness, the

⁹⁰ Martin Stokes, 13.

⁹¹ Sara Cohen, *Identity, Place and the 'Liverpool Sound'*, *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 117.

⁹² *Ibid*, 129.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 121.

particular and the universal, are part of the same process. The globalization of cultural forms has been accompanied by a localization of cultural identity and claims to authenticity, resulting in a tension or dialectic between the two trends."⁹⁴ Such a dialectic faced Grieg and his supporters and critics also. In what way could the national and the international co-exist? Could Grieg, at the same time, be the Norwegian composer of Norwegian music and also be a cosmopolitan composer?

Although Grieg was fired with the desire to paint a musical picture of his native Norway and to have Norwegian music known and recognized on the international stage and although he was frequently accused of being "too Norwegian," in fact, Grieg's studies began on the international platform, while he was studying in Leipzig. I have mentioned in the first chapter that Grieg was at the conservatory to "learn" and to grow as a composer and that he did not enter the Conservatory without considerable musical background and knowledge. His *Three Piano Pieces* (C.W. 103, later included in C.W. 105) have been identified by Sverre Jordan as the earliest extant Grieg compositions, notated for him by his older sister, Benedicte, likely in 1858 before he departed for Leipzig. Though somewhat amateurish, compared to his later compositions,

⁹⁴ Ibid, 132-133.

some understanding of chromatic harmony is revealed in these pieces, especially the first, *Schmsucht*. In this small sample, Grieg's stronger interest in harmony, compared to melody, and his understanding of the rules of harmony is evident. See figure 22⁹⁵. Even in this very early example (Grieg was only fourteen or fifteen), the mood created by his repeated use of the tonic-supertonic-tonic

Figure 22

Allegro con desiderio

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piece 'Allegro con desiderio'. The first system shows the first seven measures, with a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The music features a tonic-supertonic-tonic progression in the first seven measures. The second system shows the last four measures, characterized by parallelisms and an Aeolian flavour. Dynamics include 'dim...' and 'p'.

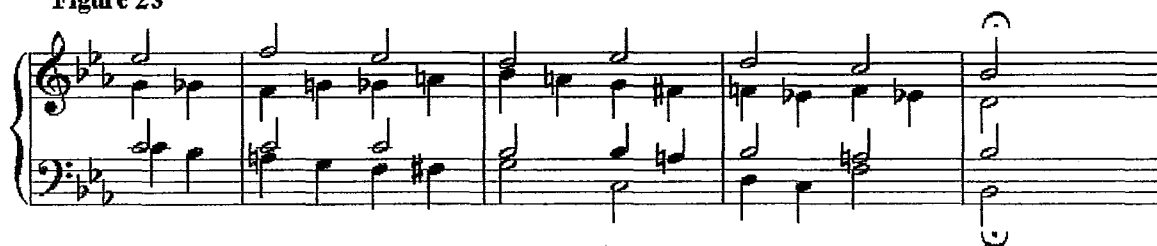
progressions in the first seven measures and the parallelisms (with an Aeolian flavour) in the last four measures is a departure from the romantic ambience typical of the mid-nineteenth century.

In his letters, Grieg frequently complained about the “stiff conservatory” and the lack of imagination in the teaching there, but writers such as Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, Brian Schlotel, and Finn Benestad have concluded that Grieg’s

⁹⁵ Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg 1858-1867*, 22.

comments in this regard were quite often gross exaggerations. He described one of his instructors in harmony, Ernst Friedrich Richter, as being a “pedantic, old foggy” who insisted that Grieg follow the prescribed harmonic rules. However, it appears (from extant samples of Grieg’s work accepted in their classes) that his professors in harmony were really quite tolerant of Grieg’s departures from traditional part writing. Here is a little example of Grieg’s chromatic part-writing from Richter’s class – Grieg’s harmonization of the chorale, “*Ich weiss mein Gott*,” in figure 23⁹⁶. It is important to note that the only corrections made by Richter did not involve Grieg’s chromaticisms but were simply changes to rectify errors in the basic rules of harmony. Richter corrected the augmented second in the first full measure by changing the g flat in the alto into a g sharp and he also rewrote the f sharp in the alto in the second complete measure into a g flat (which would be the more conventional name for that note).

Figure 23



As delineated in the first chapter, a number of influences contributed to

⁹⁶ Ibid, 46.

the “Grieg style.” His early training from his mother and his formal musical education at the Conservatory formed the foundation upon which were added the inspiration of the rugged natural features of Norway’s Westland, the influence of Norwegian folk-music, the music of previous as well as contemporary composers, and Grieg’s own musical originality. Many other composers may have had similar compositional backgrounds, but Grieg’s “individuality thrived, however, because he was able to assimilate these various elements, and a strong *personal* voice speaks out in nearly all his compositions from the age of twenty-two.”⁹⁷ As discussed earlier, the three-note phrase identified as the “Grieg motif” (see figure 24) is not used only by Grieg, but has been utilized by numerous other composers, including Bach, and is also found in the folk-music of a number of countries besides Norway. However, Grieg made use of it more than any composer before him and he was able to assimilate it into his own melodic style. Similarly, Grieg “borrowed” a number of features from

Figure 24



Norwegian folk-music and incorporated them seamlessly into his own

⁹⁷ Brian Schlotel, *Grieg* (London: Ariel Music, BBC Publications, 1986), 8.

compositions. Attributes of folk-music such as the dominant of the scale being the focal point of the melody; a proclivity for modal scales; unstable scales wavering between major, minor, and modes; and frequent changes of tonality were all used by Grieg, as they were by other composers, as well. However, he made such imaginative use of them, blending them so completely into his own musical language that it is extremely difficult to separate the "threads" of the component parts from the "whole tapestry" of his music.

With the guidance of his instructors at the Conservatory, Grieg gained a solid understanding of counterpoint. Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe agree that this is best demonstrated by the Fugue in F minor for string quartet composed in December, 1861 (see figure 25). It appears that Grieg was quite comfortable with the fugal form and was able to plausibly integrate contrapuntal devices without interrupting the natural flow of the music. Some indicators of the "later Grieg" are found in this section which precedes the coda, at the end of the piece. The harmonic colour that Grieg introduces with "the chromatic ascending lines in the outer voices in combination with the pedal point effects, the sharp dissonances, the avoidance of the usual cadences, and the truly amazing juxtaposition of dynamics,"⁹⁸ point forward toward some of his later, more "impressionistic" works. However, although his early compositions (from 1858 to 1864) did

⁹⁸ Schjelderup-Ebbe, Edvard Grieg 1858-1867, 59.

frequently incorporate many of his own harmonic innovations, for the most part they spoke the language of German romanticism, with Gade, Mendelssohn, and

Figure 25

Allegro

The musical score for Figure 25 is presented in three systems. The first system begins with a treble clef and a bass clef, with a tempo marking of 'Allegro'. It features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands, including a prominent melodic line in the treble and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the bass. Dynamics range from 'pp' (pianissimo) to 'f' (forte). The second system continues this texture, with a 'pp' dynamic in the treble and 'f' in the bass. The third system concludes with a 'Presto' tempo marking and a 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic, indicating a shift in the piece's character.

Schumann being the primary models, together with influences from Chopin, Liszt, and Wagner. Such is the case in his first published collection, *Four Pieces for Piano*, Opus 1. Particularly in the second piece (see figure 26), we can see the influence of Schumann in his use of figurations and of inner contrapuntal voices.

By 1863, it was clear that although the principles of German romanticism continued to be the basis of his compositional style, his music had begun to move in new directions. After reading through the unpublished score of Grieg's

Piano Concerto, Liszt concluded that Grieg was an individual with great talent

Figure 26

Non Allegro e molto espressivo

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system is titled "Figure 26" and "Non Allegro e molto espressivo". It consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music features a melody in the right hand with slurs and dynamic markings of *fp* and *f*. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs. The second system is marked *ritardando* and also consists of two staves. The melody in the right hand is more expressive, with a *pp* dynamic marking. The left hand continues with a similar accompaniment style.

and creativity. Subsequent to sight-reading the Concerto, Liszt instructed Grieg to "Keep right on; I tell you that you have the ability to succeed. Do not let yourself be deterred."⁹⁹ The "Sturm and Drang" characteristics were not as obvious and his harmonies often reflected the music of his native Norway. This gradual movement away from German romanticism can be seen in his first work of 1863, *Poetic Tone Pictures* for piano, Opus 3 (see figure 27). One can still see that there are elements of "Sturm and Drang," however, there is much more of a subtle approach. The melody, in Opus 3 no. 4, creates this tension and release by

⁹⁹ Alan Walker. *Franz Liszt: The Final Years (1861-1886)*. Vol. III. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1996, 169-170.

the chromatic ascent which reaches its climax on the high 'g,' in the third measure, which resolves to a beautiful 'f#.' The tension is also created by the

Figure 27

The musical score for Figure 27 is in D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. It consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system shows a melodic line in the right hand starting with a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4), followed by a chromatic ascent (C5, B4, A4, G4) and a final note (F#4). The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The second system continues the melodic line with a ritardando and diminuendo marking.

syncopated rhythm in the melody because this generates a sense of uncertainty.

Although there was some development in Grieg's compositional style during this period, the change was gradual and not at all radical.

As mentioned earlier, it was the meeting with Nordraak which signalled a compositional change of direction for Grieg. Although Nordraak, in a letter to his friend, Louis Hornbeck, expressed the view that Grieg's compositions, to that point, were in need of improvement and revision and that he was concerned about "his exclusive predilection for Schumann,"¹⁰⁰ he also said that he thought

¹⁰⁰ Rikard Nordraak to Louis Hornbeck, 24 May 1864, quoted by Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: 1858-1867*, 165.

that Grieg had talent which might soon develop. In fact, most commentators agree (Schjelderup-Ebbe, Schlötel, Benestad, and Monrad-Johansen) that this was a turning point and, for the first time, Grieg found a style entirely his own.

Nordraak reawakened Grieg's interest in Norwegian folk music and this became immediately apparent in his first compositions in 1865, *Humoresque* Opus 6.

Grieg seldom copied Norwegian folk music, but characteristics typical of the folk dance music of Norway are easily seen (see figure 28). Using pedal points in this excerpt, Grieg was able to replicate Norwegian folk dance music in which

Figure 28
Tempo di Valse

The musical score for Figure 28 is titled "Tempo di Valse" and is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). It consists of two systems of piano music. The first system shows a treble clef with a melody and a bass clef with a bass line. The second system continues the piece, featuring a "pesante" section with a "f" dynamic marking. The music includes various rhythmic patterns and pedal points.

noticeable dissonances are created by keeping one note of an interval as a pedal while the other note moves. The syncopated accents create the feeling of the *springar* dance. Other ideas borrowed from Norwegian folk music that were blended into his chromatic harmonies were drones, bare fifths, parallel fifths,

and repeated motifs. An example of his use of open fifths and repeated motifs is seen in figure 29. "This opus is important in Grieg's evolution because it represents the integration accomplished at this time between the audacious ideas of advanced harmony, cultivated in Leipzig and ripened in Copenhagen, and influences from Norwegian folk music. He has here achieved a style entirely his own."¹⁰¹ Grieg's ability to transcend the purely nationalistic aspects of his music and to incorporate them within contemporaneous trends in harmony moves him from the category of folk composer to cosmopolitan creator, both

Figure 29
Allegro alla burla

The musical score for "Allegro alla burla" is presented in two systems. The first system shows the right hand with a melodic line and the left hand with a bass line. The second system continues the piece with a *pp* dynamic marking and a *sempre dimin.* instruction. The score features various musical notations including slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

influenced by and himself influencing other major international artists.

One of Grieg's greatest contributions to Romantic harmony is his ability to make such wide use of modality in the melody and in the chord progressions

¹⁰¹ Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: 1858-1867*, 233.

and blend them so successfully with the chromatic harmony that it is extremely difficult to isolate the parts within the whole. The first movement of the *Violin Sonata No. 1 in F major*, Opus 8, illustrates the mature way in which Grieg is able to so subtly merge these elements (see figure 30). A number of remarkable chord

Figure 30
Allegro con brio

The musical score for Figure 30 is an excerpt from the first movement of Grieg's *Violin Sonata No. 1 in F major*, Opus 8. It is marked **Allegro con brio**. The score is written for violin and piano. The piano accompaniment features a series of parallel triads in the root position, with the roots doubled or tripled. The violin part has a melodic line with chromatic movement. The excerpt shows a progression of chords that create arresting dissonances in the outer voices.

progressions occur in this small excerpt from the *Violin Sonata* creating some arresting dissonances in the outer voices. Grieg did not follow the traditional rules for harmonic progressions as shown in figure 31, an excerpt from the second movement of the *Violin Sonata*. Rather than continuing the series of parallel triads as Grieg did here, composers would typically resolve to a chord within the key (V, IV, VI, etc.). This excerpt is also an example of Grieg's style of writing parallel triads in the root position where the roots are doubled or sometimes tripled.

Figure 31

The musical score for Figure 31 consists of two systems. The first system features a piano part (p) in the upper staff and a string part in the lower staff. The piano part begins with the dynamic marking *p* and the tempo instruction *tranquillo molto cresc.*, followed by a dotted line and the instruction *stringendo*. The string part includes a piano marking *p* and a *molto cresc.* instruction, followed by a dotted line and *stringendo*. Both parts contain triplet markings (3) and a final measure with a fermata. The second system continues the piano part with a dotted line and the string part with a fermata in the final measure.

Another example of this type of compositional technique is found in the *Twenty-five Norwegian folk songs and dances* Opus 17 No. 5 (see figure 32). One can witness the parallel chromatic third motion in the left hand (measure 5) with the repeated motivic passage in the right hand melody. Although the first five years, following his meeting with Nordraak were a period of rapid development and of great productivity for Grieg, much of his finest work was yet to come.

Figure 32

Moderato e marcato

Another period of intense productivity for Grieg was from 1874 -1878.

During those years, he refined and further developed his harmonic skills and some of his best chromatic writing occurred here. Grieg made extensive use of modal colorization. In this excerpt (see figure 33) from "Borghild's Dream," the second piece of incidental music written for Björnson's play, *Sigurd Jorsalfar*, modal colouring was used by Grieg. Notice the difference between the concluding phrase in the first line, and the tonal cadence in the second line.

Figure 33

The musical score for Figure 33 consists of three systems of piano music. Each system is written for a grand piano with a treble and bass clef. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and *a tempo* marking. It features a melodic line with triplets and parallel dissonant chords, with a *espressivo* marking. The second system starts with a *poco rit.* (ritardando) marking, followed by a return to *a tempo*. The third system concludes with a *poco rit.* marking. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Grieg made extensive use of parallel dissonant chords. These chords need no immediate resolution but can slide into new parallel dissonant chords. Such “slides” of diminished seventh chords can be found in eighteenth century compositions and those of dominant seventh chords were present in early romantic pieces. Grieg, however, broadened this practice to include “parallel dominant seventh chords in inversions, dominant ninth, eleventh and thirteenth

chords, as well as, secondary seventh chords and altered chords."¹⁰² These compositional techniques foreshadowed the style of the Impressionists.

With regard to Impressionism, Serge Moreux stated, "the classical musician concentrates in the first place on the melody, always bearing in mind the harmonic rules of tonality, while the impressionist begins with harmonies and their progressions, while bearing in mind the empirical laws of modality."¹⁰³ In summation, Moreux wrote, "the impressionist style . . . arises from an architecture of sensations; intuition and modality are its logic, and taste its only law."¹⁰⁴ Gerald Abraham and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe both observed that the younger French impressionists were also quite impressed by Grieg's harmonic innovations. They observed that the subtleness and vagueness in his music both pointed towards impressionism and, at the same time, some of his more vigorous and forceful music (sometimes described as barbarous) leaned more towards Stravinsky or Bartók. Peter Tchaikovsky observed those characteristics of impressionism in Grieg's music and, in fact, it was those very qualities which drew him to the Norwegian's compositions. Benestad quotes from Tchaikovsky's *Autobiographical Account of a Foreign Journey in 1888* to illustrate the Russian's admiration for Grieg. Tchaikovsky wrote, "when we hear Grieg we

¹⁰² Schjelderup-Ebbe, *A Study of Grieg's Harmony*, 109.

¹⁰³ Serge Moreux, *Béla Bartók*, trans. G. S. Fraser and Erik de Mauny (London: The Harvill Press, 1953; reprint, New York: Vienna House, 1974), 81.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

realize instinctively that this music was written by a man driven by an irresistible longing to give expression by means of sound to the stream of feelings and sentiments of a deeply poetical nature -- without being a slave to a theory, to a principle, or to a banner hoisted aloft as a consequence of this or that accidental circumstance of life -- but rather yielding to the prompting of a living, sincere artistic feeling."¹⁰⁵ Tchaikovsky was not the only Russian composer or musician to admire Grieg. Alexander Siloti (1865-1945), a Russian pianist and conductor who considered Grieg an 'old friend,' invited him on a number of occasions to perform and conduct in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Grieg declined offers from Russia several times because of his poor health and the political unrest in that country. In 1904, Siloti sent another invitation signed by Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, Lyadov and other well-known masters to try to persuade Grieg, but he still declined. This is not to say that Grieg avoided the Russian artists. He had great admiration for the artists in that country. In fact, in 1902 he wrote, "Oh well, I can peacefully depart this world without having visited Russia. But Russian art, which, with its grand conception, richness of colour and advanced technique has meant so much to me, cannot be taken from me. I carry it with me in my heart with infinite gratitude!"¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, 287.

¹⁰⁶ Edvard Grieg to Alexander Siloti, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 631.

Such vagueness and indefiniteness was a characteristic of many of the pieces in Opus 43 and 54. In *March of the dwarfs*, Opus 54 No. 3, this tonal vagueness is apparent in measures 1 through 10 (see figure 34). He created it by

Figure 34
Allegro moderato

The musical score for Figure 34 consists of three systems of piano music, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system is marked *pp* and begins with a rest in the right hand. The bass line starts with a tonic pedal point on B-flat. The right hand features a descending chromatic passage. The second system continues this pattern with complex chordal textures in the right hand. The third system shows the right hand playing rapid sixteenth-note passages, while the bass line remains anchored on the tonic pedal point.

using a tonic pedal point, in the bass, while the right hand moves in a descending chromatic passage, generating a sense of tonal ambiguity as the melodic notes in the right hand do not necessarily correspond to the notes in the left hand. This is again noticed in measures 11 through 16 (see figure 35), when the open parallel fifths in the left hand descend in a sequential pattern, always omitting the third of

the chord. This elusiveness is also created by the lack of cadential motion within this example.

Figure 35
Allegro moderato

sempre pp

una corda

cresc. poco a poco

tre corde

A device that Grieg frequently used to create ambiguity in the tonality of a piece was to postpone the introduction of the tonic chord. Sometimes he accomplished this by starting a composition in a key different from the principal key or by modulating to other keys before the tonic chord is played. A favourite chord for Grieg was the tonic chord with the addition of the sixth. He used this

in *Snail, Snail*, Opus 69 No. 4, where the tonic chord, without the added sixth, does not make its appearance until the 45th measure. In *Salon*, Opus 65 No. 4, Grieg used fifteen dissonant chords before he used the tonic 6/4 chord, the first consonant chord in the piece (see figure 36).

Figure 36 Harmonic scheme of m. 1-15 of *Salon*, Op. 65 no. 4

The figure displays three systems of musical notation for the first 15 measures of the piece. Each system consists of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with chords indicated by circles and stems. Below the staves, the chords are labeled with Roman numerals and figured bass notation:

- System 1 (measures 1-6): V9, V9 of II, V9, V9 of II, V9, C: V9, V9 of II
- System 2 (measures 7-12): V9, V9 of II, V9, Eb: V9, V9 of II, V9, A: V13
- System 3 (measures 13-15): VII7 of V, I6/4, V7 of V [-5, -3], V13, I

Mary Ruth Myers, in her Master's dissertation, identified a number of features in Grieg's compositions which were later to be characteristic of impressionism. She mentioned his "extensive use of modes, melodically and harmonically; a great use of all kinds of seventh chords, frequently going from one seventh chord to another; fundamental bass movement more by thirds and

seconds than by fifths; a free although purposeful use of chromatics."¹⁰⁷

Examples of Grieg's use of a variety of modes have been provided in chapter one.

Earlier in this chapter mention was made of Grieg's use of irregular and

unusual dissonant chords. His use of parallel ninth chords is illustrated in figure

37 and in figure 38 one can witness an example of Grieg's clever use of a series of

parallel seventh chords.

Figure 37
Andante tranquillo

Opus 66 no. 1 (Coda)

dolce *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

I6/4 V9 V9 of IV IV6/4 I

¹⁰⁷ Mary Ruth Myers, *The Use of Chromatic Harmony in Grieg* (Rochester: Eastman School of Music, 1939) 49.

Figure 38
Più Lento

Poco Allegro

Black were the wings that bore him far o'er the sea.

p *rit.* *rit.* *sp*

p *rit.* *sp*

aIV7 V7/3 \sharp VI7 IV7 V7/3 \sharp VI7

VI7

ppp

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The top system features a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics: "Black were the wings that bore him far o'er the sea." The tempo is marked "Più Lento" and "Poco Allegro". Performance markings include *p* (piano), *rit.* (ritardando), and *sp* (sforzando). The piano accompaniment consists of three systems. The first system has a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a bass line. Chord symbols are provided below the piano part: aIV7, V7/3 \sharp , VI7, IV7, V7/3 \sharp , and VI7. The second system shows a more active piano part with a right-hand line of eighth notes and a left-hand line of chords. The third system features a right-hand line with a melodic line and a left-hand line with sustained chords. A *ppp* (pianissimo) marking is present in the second system.

Grieg "had the subtle mind of an artist, open to suggestions from nature as well as poetry, which gave him the urge to paint by means of tones. Ideas of sound, like the murmuring of a brook; the tolling of church-bells; the soft fall of

spring rain, as well as more abstract poetic ones, like the gliding of a swan across a lake, inspired him to some of his most beautiful passages, and he felt instinctively what were the right harmonic means to draw from in each situation."¹⁰⁸ An example of the way in which Grieg was able to paint the scene he "saw," in musical tones, is clearly demonstrated in figure 39. Typical of impressionism, Grieg succeeded in diffusing the shape of the music, as though seen through cloudy glass, by supporting the soft, almost dreamy melody over a series of non-traditional chords and progressions with very careful pedalling.

Christian Lange and Arne Östvedt feel that Grieg's music arrived at the right historical moment. They conclude that the public was ready to hear the sentiments spoken in Grieg's music. For them it was a breath of fresh air from the mountainous North, blending nationalism and love of nature and expressed with emotional intensity. They conclude that "Grieg opened up fresh fields and influenced the trend of European music -- that of harmony."¹⁰⁹ Often referred to as one of Grieg's most audacious compositions, with strong impressionistic characteristics, is the sixth piece in *Lyric Pieces* Opus 54, "Bell Ringing," composed in 1891. It is presented as a constantly developing tone-picture. For its entire 108 measures, a series of fifths, uninterrupted in both the right and left hands, creates innovative harmonic effects through irregular chords and tonal

¹⁰⁸ Schjelderup-Ebbe, *A Study of Grieg's Harmony*, 165.

Figure 39
Allegretto

Spring-rain, Op. 49 no. 6 (Grieg)

pp con mezza voce

Das klingt, als wie von zar - ten In - stru -

pp dolcissimo

VII6/5

men - ten das grü - ne Blatt musst du bei Sei - te

V9 VII6/5

pp sempre

bie - gen, zu seh'n des Par - kes El - fen, wie sie

pp sempre

V9=Gb: V9 of V Gb: V13 [-3]

combinations (see figure 40 - m. 1-22). "Grieg was one of the first composers to

¹⁰⁹ Christian Lange and Arne Östvedt, "Edvard Grieg: The Composer," *The World of Great Composers: From Palestrina to Debussy*, ed. David Ewen (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1962), 418.

perceive the latent possibilities of music as an agent of evocation and suggestion; he cultivated the properties of atmosphere and colour as opposed to form and dialectic. He was prompted by his desire to reproduce something of the essential spirit of his country, not only of its people but also – and in this respect Grieg was a pioneer – of its landscape.”¹⁰⁸

Figure 40
Andante

The musical score for Figure 40 is in 2/4 time and consists of three systems of piano music. The first system includes the instruction *pp sempre* and *Ped.*. The second system continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system features a repeat sign followed by a section marked *pp*.

Speaking of Claude Debussy, Lange and Östvedt conclude that, although Debussy often made concerted attacks on Grieg, his music did owe much to the Norwegian composer. In spite of some similarity, no one would accuse Debussy

¹⁰⁸ Christopher Palmer, *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1976), 47.

of patterning his gamelon-like music after Grieg's *Bell Ringing*, even though it was composed many years before Debussy's pieces. Finn Benestad writes, "... it is indisputable that he [Grieg] was an important influence on the work of Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. While Debussy was reluctant to admit any debt to his predecessors, Ravel on one occasion declared that he had not written a single work that had not been influenced by Grieg."¹⁰⁹ Both Gerald Larner and Percy Grainger make reference to a conversation between Frederick Delius and Maurice Ravel in which the English composer suggested that "'modern French music is quite simply Grieg, plus the third act of *Tristan*.' Ravel agreed with him: 'It's true. We are always unfair to Grieg.'"¹¹⁰ Christopher Palmer, in speaking of the development of twentieth-century music, looked at the various catalysts which contributed to Debussy's individual style and concluded that one of the most obvious forerunners of impressionism was Grieg. Gerald Abraham states "it is a commonplace that Debussy's String Quartet owes something to Borodin: hardly anyone has observed that it owes considerably more to Grieg, specifically to one of Grieg's weaker works, the G minor Quartet."¹¹¹ Abraham concludes that, whether consciously or unconsciously, Debussy's Quartet of 1893 was modelled, to some degree, after Grieg's Quartet of 1878. He observes that both

¹⁰⁹ Finn Benestad, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, 403.

¹¹⁰ Gerald Larner, *Maurice Ravel*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) 37.

¹¹¹ Gerald Abraham, "Preface," *Grieg: A Symposium*, 8.

quartets evolve from primary themes which begin with the same four notes. Following the initial theme in both quartets is a faster pianissimo section. The first movements of both quartets conclude with faster sections in which the primary theme, broken into repeated quavers, is played by all four instruments in octaves. In his essay, Abraham goes on to point out several more similarities.

Schjelderup-Ebbe also noticed striking similarities between Grieg's *Vuggesang* Opus 9, No. 2, one of his earlier pieces, and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Act III. This is illustrated in figure 41a and 41b.¹¹² When speaking

Figure 41a

(Ikke for langsomt, med dyb Sorg)
(Not too slowly; with deep grief)

Vuggesang, Op. 9 no. 2 (Grieg)

Figure 41b

Pelléas et Mélisande, Act III (Debussy)

¹¹² Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: 1858-1867*, 299-300.

with Jaime Pahissa on one occasion, Manuel De Falla "recalled the admiration which he shared with Debussy for the music of Grieg. He said that his [Grieg's] work influenced Debussy, who used to play some of Grieg's music in concerts along with his own."¹¹³

Frederick Delius (the English composer) had a great admiration and love for both Grieg and Grieg's music. Not only was Grieg's influence a matter of friendship, expressed through frequent assistance, encouragement and advice from a mature composer of distinction to a younger artist. "However, in the technical sphere as well, Grieg's influence reigned paramount and supreme over Delius's early work; and despite the numerous extraneous elements which came in due course to contribute to distinctive identity, in tone and temper Delius's music remained fundamentally Scandinavian to the end of his life, with Grieg as its primary source."¹¹⁴ He was a frequent visitor to Norway and was always welcome at *Troldhaugen*, Grieg's home in Bergen. *In Ola Valley, in Ola Lake*, Opus 66 No. 14 is considered to be one of Grieg's most impressionistic piano pieces. Delius admired it so much that he made use of the melody in one of his best known orchestral works, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, which he composed in 1912, without acknowledging Grieg as the source.

¹¹³ Jaime Pahissa, Manuel De Falla: His Life and Works, trans. Jean Wagstaff (London: Museum Press, 1954; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1979) 170.

¹¹⁴ Palmer, 46.

Percy Grainger, the noted Australian composer and performer, was also an admirer of Grieg. Although he did not personally meet Grieg until 1906 in London, he had been exposed to Grieg's work much earlier and, after seeing Grieg's *Norwegian Folk Songs* Opus 66 in 1899, he wrote in his notes: "Then Grieg joined Bach, Brahms, and Wagner in the firmament of my compositional stars."¹¹⁵ Grainger was not Scandinavian, nor were his parents, but he always had a strong interest in that part of the world. When Grieg met Grainger, in 1906, he wondered how an Australian could play his music "perfectly in rhythm and modulation while a Norwegian cannot grasp either?"¹¹⁶ However, Grainger explained that he saw in Grieg's music "the general human tendencies of the heroic, active, poetic, excitably emotional Norwegian race from which he sprang . . . no less, the characteristic of the hillscapes and fjordscapes of his native land, the brilliant colouring and striking clarity of the scenes, and the almost indescribable exhilaration of the Northern atmosphere."¹¹⁷

A number of other composers were influenced by Grieg. As was previously mentioned, Grieg was a great influence on Maurice Ravel. Concerning Ravel, Pierre Lalo, the distinguished critic for *Le Temps* noted, "with regard to

¹¹⁵ John Bird, *Percy Grainger* (London: Paul Elek Ltd., 1976) 115.

¹¹⁶ Palmer, 80.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

structure, or the lack thereof, his style recalls that of M. Grieg."¹¹⁸ Additionally Ricardo Viñes observed that in his youth Ravel was attracted to Grieg's music. Richard Strauss also appeared to borrow some ideas from the Norwegian. Norman Del Mar suggests that the piano writing for Strauss's *O süsßer Mai* has "much of the delicacy (and indeed some markedly similar passage work) of Grieg's popular little Lyric Piece *Schmetterling*."¹¹⁹ Another contemporary composer who "borrowed" from Grieg was Igor Stravinsky. Richard Taruskin, in his essay *From Subject to Style: Stravinsky and the Painters*, observed that when Stravinsky tried to write music with folk music base the music came out sounding like Grieg. More convincing, though, are the similarities in Stravinsky's *Norwegian Moods*, which were written originally as part of the score for the Columbia Pictures film, *The Commandos Strike at Dawn*, to several Grieg pieces. Jann Pasler, in his introduction, contradicts Stravinsky's claim that he borrowed nothing from Grieg by stating categorically that "three tunes [were] taken from Grieg in *Four Norwegian Moods*."¹²⁰ Stravinsky claimed that all the themes in *Norwegian Moods* had their source in a collection of Norwegian folk music his wife found in a second hand bookstore and not from Grieg. However, Lawrence

¹¹⁸ Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975) 25.

¹¹⁹ Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: a critical commentary on his life and works*, Volume 3 (London: Chilton Book Company, 1972), 297.

¹²⁰ Jann Pasler, "Introduction: Issues in Stravinsky Research," *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, Musician, and Modernist*, ed. Jann Pasler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), xii.

Morton discovered that Stravinsky had based his compositions on pieces found in *The Norway Music Album*, published by the Oliver Ditson Company. "Of the ten melodies [Stravinsky] used, one was an arrangement by Halfdan Kjerulf, three were arranged by Carl Warmuth, four come from the Lindeman collection, and three were by Grieg -- which makes somewhat disingenuous Stravinsky's disclaimer of any indebtedness to Grieg."¹²¹ Percy Grainger suggests, in his letter to Wilhelm Munthe de Morgenstierne, Norwegian ambassador to the United States, that there were others who owed much to Grieg. He wrote, "The originality and daring of Grieg's harmonic innovations have proved highly fructifying to progressive composers in many parts of the world -- composers such as, César Franck, Debussy, Ravel, Delius, Cyril Scott, Sibelius, MacDowell, Gershwin, Albeniz, Puccini."¹²²

On occasions when Grieg felt that he required extra influence in order to positively affect some future decision to be made by someone in authority, he did not hesitate to request the assistance of influential persons. Such was the case in late 1868 when Grieg desired to escape Christiania (Oslo) for a time to travel abroad. Although in a letter to Aimar Gronvold (25 April 1881) Grieg claimed

¹²¹ Lawrence Morton, "Stravinsky at Home," Confronting Stravinsky: Man, Musician, and Modernist, 339.

¹²² Percy Grainger to Wilhelm Munthe de Morgenstierne, 5 November 1954, The All-Round Man: Selected Letters of Percy Grainger 1914-1961, ed. Malcolm Gillies and David Pear (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 266.

that he had not personally appealed to Liszt for support in an effort to obtain a stipend to assist with his travels, a letter he wrote to Niels Ravnkilde, the Danish composer who he met on his first visit to Rome in 1865, reveals otherwise. "As you will see from the enclosed letter," Grieg wrote, "I am already trying to assemble the resources needed for the realization of my plan. I am applying for a grant for next spring and am now asking Liszt for a recommendation. Don't you think he will give me one? Encouraged by your report in your last letter about his having played my *Violin Sonata*, I have confidently taken this step and hope that you will use whatever method seems best to get the letter into Liszt's hands."¹²³ Benestad records that, in his desperation to obtain financial aid in the form of a study grant, Grieg also sent letters of appeal to Ignaz Moscheles, J.P.E. Hartman, and Niels Gade. All of them responded positively, but it was Liszt's reply that Grieg referred to fondly in later years and to which he gave credit for receiving the desired grant. Liszt wrote, "It is with the greatest pleasure that I express to you the sincere joy that I felt upon reading through your sonata, opus 8. The sonata bears witness to a great talent for composition and shows a well-conceived, inventive and excellent treatment of the material; it demonstrates a talent that needs only to follow its

¹²³ Edvard Grieg to Niels Ravnkilde, 2 November 1868, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 575.

natural bent in order to attain to a high level. I hope and trust that in your homeland you will receive the success and the encouragement that you deserve."¹²⁴ Liszt's encouragement and support of Grieg did not end with this letter. For, as Grieg records in a letter to his parents following his second meeting with Liszt in Rome during the spring of 1870, Liszt not only deeply appreciated the Norwegian's compositional skills, but also expressed an affection for him. After sight-reading Grieg's *Piano Concerto in A minor*, as he returned the score, Liszt said, "Hold to your course. Let me tell you, you have the talent for it, and -- don't get scared off!"¹²⁵ As Grieg expressed to his parents, these kind, encouraging words from Liszt were "of infinite importance to me. It is almost like what I call a sacred mandate. Time and again when disappointments and bitterness come I shall think of his words, and the memory of this hour will have a singular power to sustain me in days of adversity; that is my confident hope."¹²⁶

In his quest for support for his European journey, there is no record that Grieg made an appeal to Björn Björnson, the noted Norwegian poet and dramatist, however, he did receive backing from Björnson, the editor of *Norsk Folkeblad*, in an 1869 article: "Grieg has not received any obvious encouragement

¹²⁴ Franz Liszt to Edvard Grieg, 29 December 1868, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, 575.

¹²⁵ Finn Benestad ed., *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, 136.

¹²⁶ Edvard Grieg to Alexander and Gesine Grieg, 9 April 1870, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, 277.

as a composer here in Norway, but has in fact encountered many, many kinds of obstacles. Elsewhere, however, he has received wide acclaim. In Germany, and especially in Denmark, he is regarded as the man of the hour."¹²⁷ Grieg expressed his pleasure at this unexpected support in a letter to Matthison-Hansen.

After completing his *Piano Concerto in A minor*, Grieg was frustrated in his attempts to have it published. He wrote to publishers in Leipzig and Copenhagen but was turned down by all of them. The Peters firm in Leipzig were unwilling to take a chance on it as was another Leipzig publisher, E. W. Fritsch, who "returned the concerto with a note stating that it did not interest him enough to print it."¹²⁸ He wrote asking Sophus Hagen, a publisher in Copenhagen, to publish the concerto which had enjoyed such success in Copenhagen, but that company also was reluctant to take the risk. Grieg complained to several of his friends about his publishing dilemma and then received support from one of them. Johan Svendsen, Grieg's contemporaneous Norwegian composer and conductor wrote, "I have spoken at length with Fritsch concerning your piano concerto -- without being familiar with it -- and

¹²⁷ Björn Björnson in *Norsk Folkeblad*, 10 April 1869, quoted in Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist, 127.

¹²⁸ Finn Benestad ed., Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist, 141.

made his mouth water. I am completely confident that he will publish it."¹²⁹

That Svendsen would risk recommending the concerto without being familiar with it certainly attests to his faith in Grieg. After receiving Svendsen's commendation, E. W. Fritsch changed his mind and, in 1872, published the concerto.

Grieg first heard Clara Schumann play while he was a student at the Conservatory. However, he had never personally met her when he wrote in 1879, requesting her assistance and influence to obtain performance engagements in England. In his letter he wrote, "I intend to go to England in the spring to perform some of my own compositions (a piano concerto, chamber-music works and songs). Would you be so exceptionally kind as to prepare the way for me with some recommendations? To whom? That you yourself certainly know best! Mr. Von Herzogenberg [a German composer], who will write further details to you regarding the matter, has informed me that you know something about me."¹³⁰ At the same time Grieg sent a letter to Joseph Joachim, the Austro-Hungarian violinist, asking for his support. Clara sent both her own and Joachim's recommendation on behalf of Grieg. On this occasion, though, Grieg's plans did not work out and he did not visit London until 1888.

¹²⁹ Johan Svendsen to Edvard Grieg, 14 July 1871, quoted in *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, ed. Finn Benestad, 141.

¹³⁰ Johan Svendsen to Edvard Grieg, 14 July 1871, quoted in *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, ed. Finn Benestad, 141.

Another incident which serves to illustrate Grieg's desire to be recognized as a member of the musical élite of Europe occurred on the last day of 1887.

During the year, Edvard and Nina had met Adolf and Anna Brodsky in Leipzig and were frequent guests in their home there. That year Adolf Brodsky, professor of violin at the Leipzig Conservatory premiered Grieg's *Violin Sonata No. 3* with Grieg at the piano. A few weeks later, at a New Year's party at the Brodsky home, Grieg was to meet Tchaikovsky. Present at the party were Johannes Brahms, Peter Tchaikovsky, and Edvard and Nina Grieg. Anna Brodsky wrote in her *Recollections of a Russian Home*, "We went to the table. Nina Grieg was seated between Brahms and Tchaikovsky, but we had scarcely sat down when she jumped up and cried: 'I can't sit between these two. I get so nervous.' Grieg stood up and said: 'But I can.' So the two exchanged places, and the three composers sat together in the best of spirits."¹³¹ Tchaikovsky had become a great admirer of Grieg's compositional style and wrote in his account of his 1888 travels, concerning Grieg's music: "What warmth and passion in his singing phrases, what a fountain of pulsating life in his harmonies, what originality and entrancing distinctiveness in his clever and piquant modulations, and in the rhythm as in everything else -- how endlessly interesting, new,

¹³¹ Finn Benestad ed., *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, 287.

original!"¹³² Tchaikovsky endeavoured to use his influence to obtain a performing engagement for Grieg in London, writing Grieg, "From Prague I sent a telegram to Francesco Berger [Secretary of the Philharmonic Society in London] telling him that I would like to perform with *my friend Grieg* on March 22."¹³³ He also passed on an invitation from The Royal Russian Music Association for Grieg to perform in Moscow.

From the number of people that were influenced in their work by the style of Grieg, it seems hard to conceive that Grieg would not be confident of his place among the musicians of the world. So many performers, composers, and others among the musical élite held him in high esteem, but Grieg was extremely sensitive to any suggestion of criticism of his music. In his pursuit of public affirmation we will see in the third chapter that he pushed himself far beyond the limits of his frail body.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Peter Tchaikovsky to Edvard Grieg, 2 March 1888, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 652.

~ Chapter Three ~

“The Critical View of Grieg”

“In my more recent compositions, I have striven increasingly toward a broader and more universal view of my own individuality, a view influenced by the great currents of our time - that is, by the cosmopolitan movement. But this I willingly admit: Never could I bring myself to violently tear up the roots that tie me to my native land.”

~ Edvard Grieg, letter to Alfred Wilhelm Hansen, 14 September 1889

Popularity abroad never appeared to be a real problem for Grieg. Year after year he performed and conducted at the major concert venues throughout Europe. His concerts were consistently sold out - often over-subscribed - and he frequently had to add extra dates to his concert schedule to satisfy the demands of the public. In a letter to Grieg in 1888, Peter Tchaikovsky wrote, “Are you aware that you are very *popular* in Paris? Something by you is played at nearly every concert. Colonne [Édouard Colonne, conductor and initiator of the Colonne Concerts in Paris] was very glad when he heard from me that you yourself could play your concerto. You will certainly get an invitation from him; he likes you very much.”¹³⁴ Similarly, as has already been mentioned, Grieg was welcomed and befriended by many of the most noteworthy international composers and performers. Grieg’s difficulties did not generally arise from his public or fellow artists, but from music critics and the press. In numerous letters

¹³⁴ Ibid.

to colleagues and friends, Grieg complained of the unfair appraisal of his music by some critics and of the inconsistent and incorrect judgement of his performances by the press.

Perhaps the most noteworthy example occurred at a concert in Paris in 1903. Grieg first appeared at the Colonne Concerts in December of 1889. For only the second time in his life, Colonne yielded the podium to another and allowed Grieg to conduct the orchestra (he had allowed Tchaikovsky the same privilege a year earlier). Grieg was invited to return again in April 1894. He was received so well on these two occasions that Colonne tried several times, during the 1890's, to persuade him to return to Paris. However, politics intervened. In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a French army officer of Jewish descent, was convicted of high treason and condemned to life imprisonment. It was soon clear that his conviction had been based on false evidence. In the legal investigation that followed, though, the true perpetrator was acquitted. A number of noteworthy people in France, as well as around the world, were outraged at the injustice. Émile Zola, the noted French author, published his famous article *J'accuse* in January 1898 trying to arouse public sympathy for Dreyfus and, in June, the conviction was overturned and a new trial was ordered. Several influential people (Grieg among them), from both inside and outside France, had been asked by Dreyfus supporters to become publicly involved in the case. At

the time of the new trial, Edvard and Nina Grieg were guests of Norwegian author, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. Imagine their dismay when they heard that, despite overwhelming evidence that Dreyfus was innocent, the earlier guilty verdict had been reaffirmed. The very next day, Grieg received yet another invitation from Colonne to perform in Paris. Grieg immediately wrote a reply declining the invitation because of the outcome of the Dreyfus trial. Bjørnson and his son-in-law, Albert Langen, persuaded Grieg to allow his written reply to be published in the German newspaper, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and it was soon reprinted in newspapers across Europe. Grieg's reply, in part, read, ". . . in view of the outcome of the Dreyfus affair I cannot make the decision to come to Paris at this time. Like all foreigners, I am so indignant about the contempt with which law and justice are treated in your country that I am not inclined to appear before a French audience."¹³⁵ The French press and government officials were outraged. Later, Grieg wrote to a number of his friends complaining about the hundreds of letters that he had received as a result of his stand, many of them threatening various forms of bodily harm.

In September 1902, Colonne again invited Grieg to take part in the Colonne Concerts but Grieg was worried about the continued ill-feeling toward

¹³⁵ Edvard Grieg to Édouard Colonne, 12 September 1899, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 199.

him in France, as he had been warned that he should expect a beating "if he ever showed his face" in Paris again. In response to Grieg's queries, regarding the letters threatening such violence, Colonne responded, "There is no reason for your anxiety you can come back without fear. The storm has passed, and France is now in the hands of reasonable people."¹³⁶ However, as soon as it was known that Grieg would be coming to Paris for the Colonne Concerts in April 1903, Jean Jaurés, the French socialist politician, began to whip up public sentiment against Grieg. Grieg later wrote to John Grieg, his second cousin and a book publisher in Bergen, "If I had gotten the invitation from Colonne *after* Jaurés had revived the passions regarding the Dreyfus affair, I would not have accepted it."¹³⁷ In letters to Frants Beyer, his close friend, and to John Grieg, Grieg described the April 19 concert. His friends had warned him that there might be catcalls and whistling and he was anxious that demonstrators, if there were any, might try to prevent him from starting the program. As he walked onto the platform of the theatre, packed with about 3500 people, loud applause greeted him. He had to acknowledge the enthusiastic audience four times and became aware that whistling and shouting, mixed with the applause, was becoming louder and louder. Grieg put down the baton and stepped quietly to the wings

¹³⁶ Édouard Colonne to Edvard Grieg, 25 September 1902, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 201.

¹³⁷ Edvard Grieg to John Grieg, 20 April 1903, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 289.

waiting for the noise to subside. Some shouted “À la porte!” (“Out with him!”) while others chanted in mimicry of the Mountain King’s daughter in *Peer Gynt* (see figure 42). After police carried out the noisiest protesters, Grieg



“... then mounted the rostrum again, but Heaven help me, did they not start anew. Fortunately the Autumn Overture begins fortissimo, and, not giving the whistlers a moment’s advantage, I made brisk signs to the orchestra and the large string section played the first two bars with great vigour. Silence fell upon the auditorium and the overture went splendidly.”¹³⁸ Grieg reports that, following each piece, there was thunderous applause and that a number of songs in *Peer Gynt*, in response to demands from the audience, had to be repeated. In his descriptive letters to John Grieg and Beyer, he wrote, “After the Hall of the Mountain King the whole place went crazy. I took 4 or 5 calls, but they continued to applaud so it had to be repeated too. After that there were ovations, so they say here, as not even a French composer has ever received.”¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Edvard Grieg to Frants Beyer, 21 April 1903, Grieg The Writer Vol. II: Letters to Frants Beyer, ed. Bjarne Kortsens, trans. Helen M. Corlett, 52

¹³⁹ Ibid.

However, his reception in Paris left a bad taste in his mouth, though it was not the boisterous demonstrators in the theatre who upset Grieg. Indeed, as he was escorted to his carriage surrounded by a triple wall of police, he confided to Beyer that he felt triumphant, not at all like a criminal, but more like a king, emperor, or pope.

The reports in the newspapers the following day astounded and hurt Grieg. He noted that the writers were all furious because his concert, in spite of their articles to rally the opposition, had turned out so well and had been so enthusiastically received. He observed that the only favourable review was written for the newspaper, *Le Figaro*, by the French composer Gabriel Fauré, who wrote, "among the most famous living musicians there is none I know of whose popularity equals, with us, that of M. Grieg; none whose works have entered into our inmost musical life in the same degree as have his compositions, which are so full of simple charm, so fine, strange, ever individual, and, for the most part, of a comparative ease of execution which makes them accessible to the lesser talents, and has greatly aided their coming into vogue."¹⁴⁰ and that the others were "vileness from beginning to end." Irritably, Grieg complained that Pierre Lalo, the conservative critic for the Paris newspaper, *Le Temps*, criticized the very same works which he had praised in critical reviews a few years earlier. It did not

¹⁴⁰ Finck, 103.

provide any solace for Grieg that Lalo's father, composer Edouard Lalo, had (without asking or acknowledgement) "borrowed" much of Grieg's *In The Mountain*, Opus 19, for his own *Norwegian Rhapsody for Orchestra*. The greatest sting, as Grieg wrote, was that, "He [Lalo, the critic] also says that my songs are stolen from folk tunes! You know that out of all my hundred-and-something songs there is only one, Solveig's song, which borrows atmosphere and no more."¹⁴¹ Even Claude Debussy joined the forces lined up against Grieg. In a condescending article in *Gil Blas* on April 20, 1903, under the pseudonym, Monsieur Croche, Debussy concluded, ". . . his [Grieg's] visit to Paris has taught us nothing new about his art. He's a sensitive musician as long as he sticks to the folk music of his own country, although he nowhere near approaches what M. Balakirev and Rimsky-Korsakov do with Russian folk music. Apart from this he's just a clever musician more concerned about effect than genuinely artistic."¹⁴² Of all the attacks against him at this time, Debussy's remarks appear to have hurt Grieg most deeply. In a letter to Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi, French musicologist and Paris music critic, Grieg claimed that Debussy had purposely misquoted Grieg's 1899 reply to Colonne (i.e. saying that he would never return to France) in order to "smear a colleague." Grieg went on to state that he had a

¹⁴¹ Edvard Grieg to Frants Beyer, 21 April 1903, *Grieg The Writer Vol. II: Letters to Frants Beyer*, 53.

¹⁴² Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, comp. Francois Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 180.

great admiration for Debussy and was hurt that such a talented artist would avail himself of such means in his criticism of another. Grieg summarized his feelings when he wrote, "The main point is and must be the vitriolic and disrespectful tone he [Debussy] employs. A true artist should always aspire to a high intellectual level and show respect for the standpoints of other serious artists and people."¹⁴³ Perhaps Debussy's lack of respect for Grieg is shown most clearly when he writes in *Gil Blas* that Grieg's music produces "the charming sensation of eating a pink bon-bon stuffed with snow,"¹⁴⁴ although he omitted the comment when he gathered his articles together in book form.

The reception which Grieg was given in Paris, in 1903, was not typical of the Parisian public's response to his music. On December 22 and 29, 1889, Grieg conducted two orchestral concerts for Édouard Colonne and gave a recital of chamber music on January 4th, 1890. All of the concerts were extremely successful and the audiences were enthusiastic in their response to him. Even the French critics were effusive in their praise. Charles Darcours, the reviewer for a Paris newspaper, *Figaro*, wrote, "the Parisian public gave Grieg a brilliant reception instantly, they greeted his entry with shouts and applause such as Mozart and

¹⁴³ Edvard Grieg to Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi, 2 May 1903, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 187.

¹⁴⁴ Lawrence Gilman, foreword to Claude Debussy, Monsieur Croche, The Dilettante Hater (New York: The Viking Press, 1928), xi.

Weber never heard."¹⁴⁵ *La Liberté's* critic was more specific when he reported, "Grieg is the living, thrilling incarnation of Norway. I do not know how it is but somehow when I hear his music it seems as though I see and think of that land which I have never seen but which I feel I 'recognize' at once in his naively plaintive melodies."¹⁴⁶ Following the chamber music, on January 4th, Grieg wrote to tell his publisher, Dr. Abraham, that the whole evening was a wonderful success and that the *Violin Sonata in C minor*, especially, created a tremendous sensation. Grieg had taken Paris by storm.

Paris was not the only European venue conquered by Grieg. In the spring of 1888, as he was preparing to leave for London, Grieg expressed his anxiety about the upcoming concerts and his reception there in letters to Frants Beyer. However, when he mounted the podium in St. James hall, he was greeted with a continuous ovation which lasted more than three minutes. The London audience adored him and the opening concert there, on May 3rd, was one of his greatest triumphs. Immediately he telegraphed to Beyer, "Yesterday magnificent. Joyful, boundless acceptance. Colossal success. Conducted 'Last Spring' da capo."¹⁴⁷ The London press was also unanimous in its praise of Grieg. Some of the papers announced that in London's musical world there was raging a "Grieg fever."

¹⁴⁵ Monrad Johansen, 290.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, 290.

Writing to Adolf Brodsky, Grieg was ecstatic over the success he had enjoyed during the London concerts and confided that he had never had an experience like that before. Almost as an afterthought, Grieg added, "it appeared that the music critics, too, were really enthused."¹⁴⁸

On January 21 and 29, 1889, Grieg was engaged for two concerts in Berlin. Again, he was a huge success. The enthusiastic audiences left no doubt about the high esteem in which they held Grieg and his compositions. Although Grieg felt that the critics gave negative reviews of these concerts, this does not seem to be the case. The critic for the German paper, *Nationalzeitung*, wrote, "One's ear listens attentively to the harmonic subtleties which give the simplest melodies an original stamp. Everything seems to develop in an unforced and spontaneous way – an effect which in reality is a result of extensive study and a manifestation of one of the most sensitive talents of our time."¹⁴⁹ The critic for the Berlin newspaper, *Berlinertageblatt*, concluded his review of the concerts by writing that "the effect was gripping and overwhelming." When Grieg returned to Berlin on his final concert tour in 1907, enthusiasm for his music was still strong. The three concerts in Munich, Berlin, and Kiel were all sold out and, to accommodate the public's desire to enjoy his music, a second matinee concert was added in Berlin.

¹⁴⁸ Edvard Grieg to Adolf Brodsky, 10 May 1888, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, 167.

¹⁴⁹ *Nationalzeitung*, 22 January 1889, quoted in *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, 292.

His concerts in Stockholm, Warsaw, Prague, and Vienna met with similar enthusiasm from the audiences and positive remarks from the critics.

If most of Europe's cities welcomed Grieg with shouts of adoration and their critics, with some consistency, bestowed upon him a plethora of praise, Leipzig was another matter. The concert audiences in Leipzig did indeed love Grieg and his concerts were always great public successes. However, Edouard Bernsdorf, principal reviewer for the noted music journal, *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, always gave scathing criticisms of any Grieg work. In 1878, Bernsdorf mercilessly criticized the *A minor Concerto* after its performance at the *Gewandhaus*, in Leipzig. Six years later, Grieg was worried about the reception of his *String Quartet No. 1 in G minor Opus 27*, when the Heckman Quartet, from Cologne, performed it in the *Gewandhaus*. As expected, Bernsdorf's review of the concert and of Grieg was intensely negative. He wrote, "the Griegian products have given us no joy or pleasure at all -- not the *G minor Sonata for violin and piano* (Opus 13), not the still - unpublished *String Quartet* (also in G minor), and not the many songs or the little piano pieces from Opuses 6, 19, and 28. Quite the opposite. We have felt only displeasure and repugnance toward all the boorish and absurd stuff that is gathered together under the guise of a Norwegian national stamp, toward the mediocrity of the compositional inventiveness that

lurks behind the rough-hewn and exaggerated Norwegian exterior . . ."¹⁵⁰ On occasions when Grieg again appeared in Leipzig, Bernsdorf did not let an opportunity go by without criticizing the Norwegian composer. He said that the *Violin Sonata in C minor* Opus 45 "lacked organic development, the harmony sounded contrived, and the composer's lack of talent was plain to see in the tastelessness and musical trickery with which the piece abounds!"¹⁵¹ In Vienna, also, Grieg felt that he was not receiving his due recognition from the noted music critic for *Neue Freie Presse*, Eduard Hanslick. He mentioned this slight in a letter to Johannes Brahms, not recognizing that Brahms was a close friend of Hanslick: "We talked together one day about the critics, toward whom, in fact, I have an insurmountable feeling of shyness. Mr. Ed. H. in *Neue Freie Presse* is now slaying me with silence, certainly as thanks for my not paying him a visit. And he is supposed to be the 'foremost' of the lot!"¹⁵² Although such comments from critics were certainly hurtful to Grieg, by themselves, in the midst of the continuing public adoration and affirmation by most critics, such isolated attacks would have done little harm. However, the German reviews (especially those by critics as well known as Bernsdorf or Hanslick) were frequently picked up by

¹⁵⁰ Edouard Bernsdorf in *Signale* 1878, p. 1046, quoted in Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, 221.

¹⁵¹ Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, 277.

¹⁵² Edvard Grieg to Johannes Brahms, 1 April 1896, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, 159.

newspapers at other centres so that the lies and "slights" were repeated in newspapers in Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Oslo.

It would appear that, since Grieg was so sensitive to negative criticism, he would have hesitated to perform in cities where such criticism was predictable or possible. However, after giving his first concert at eighteen years of age, he continued throughout his life (up to four months before his death) to concertize throughout Europe. Even though touring and performing were more difficult for him as he grew older, he did not allow the physical limitations placed upon him by his one non-functioning lung or his rheumatic legs and hips or his chronically ill stomach to prevent him from maintaining a busy performance schedule.

Undoubtedly, Grieg's reasons for touring were multiple: his health encouraged him to escape the unpleasant climate of Western Norway in the winter; he was a performer and he loved performing; he enjoyed the atmosphere of the major metropolitan centres of music; he sought the company of the world's leading artists and received inspiration and "life-giving impulses" from them. Grieg expressed this in a letter to Oscar Meyer, the German pianist and composer (who he addressed as "dear Mr. Court Pianist"), writing, "You are absolutely right to be amazed that I am still giving concerts. But the fact is that people beguile me into it and I, unfortunately, am not sufficiently principled to decline. To perform in public is the most frightening thing I know. And yet, to hear my works

brought to life in a wonderful performance in accordance with my intentions -- that I cannot resist."¹⁵³ Even Leipzig, which had many unpleasant memories for him (both from his time at the Conservatory and the negative press he received at the hands of Edouard Bernsdorf), held an attraction for him. He expressed this to his dear friend Frants Beyer: "I am negotiating about three concerts in Vienna . . . My fingers itch to get hold of a conductor's baton. I am also in discussion with Amsterdam and Berlin, but everything is uncertain at the moment. . . I long for Leipzig -- its art and its artists -- more than I can say."¹⁵⁴

Throughout his life, Grieg had to contend with criticism that his music was either "too Norwegian" or that it was "not Norwegian enough." He himself felt that his compositions and compositional style could be divided into three periods, defined by his three violin sonatas. He wrote, ". . . these three works are among my best compositions and represent periods in my development: the first, naïve, reflecting many antecedents; the second, national; and the third, with its wider horizons."¹⁵⁵ After completing the *Humoresques* (which I have demonstrated to be his first "Norwegian" composition), Grieg showed it to Niels Gade. Later Grieg recalled this event: "When I as a young man (1865) showed

¹⁵³ Edvard Grieg to Oscar Meyer, 12 February 1906, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 530.

¹⁵⁴ Edvard Grieg to Frants Beyer, 8 October 1887, quoted in Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist, 286.

¹⁵⁵ Edvard Grieg to Björnstjerne Björnson, 16 January 1900, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 137.

him [Gade] my *Humoresques*, he sat paging through the manuscript, initially without saying a word. Then he began to grunt a little, then a little more, and finally he blurted out: 'tell me, Grieg, is this stuff supposed to be Norwegian?' And I, somewhat hurt, replied: 'Yes, Herr Professor, it is.'"¹⁵⁶ On another occasion Gade characterized Grieg's *Violin Sonata No. 2 in G major* as being "too Norwegian." In a letter of correction to Gerhard Schjelderup, who was writing a book on Grieg, he wrote, "it was, rather, the second violin sonata, composed in Christiania in the summer of 1867. After its first performance in Copenhagen, Gade came down to the green room and said, 'No, Grieg, you must not make the next sonata so Norwegian.' I tasted blood at that moment and I answered, 'Yes, Herr Professor, the next one will be even worse!' (as you know, however, it wasn't.)"¹⁵⁷

Comments about the "Norwegianness" of his music continued to be a point of contention throughout his composing career. Dismissive comments, such as Debussy's "pink bon-bon stuffed with snow," *Die Musik's* suggestion that Grieg "never reached the ocean but stuck in the fjord," Moszkowski's accusation that Grieg wanted to be "the Messiah of Norwegian folk music," and another critic's comment that Grieg, "struck with the freshness of the native [Norwegian]

¹⁵⁶ Edvard Grieg to Iver Holter, 8 January 1897, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, 416.

¹⁵⁷ Edvard Grieg to Gerhard Schjelderup, 11 May 1904, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, 608.

dances, transplanted them bodily into his academic flower-pots,"¹⁵⁸ were as unfair as they were hurtful to Grieg. He never denied his Norwegian roots. In fact, in his response to the Moszkowski criticism, he wrote, ". . . never could I bring myself to violently tear up the roots that tie me to my native land."¹⁵⁹ However, to narrowly define Grieg's music as "Norwegian" cannot be justified. In 1892, Ernest Colosson wrote, "Strange thing! Grieg has so thoroughly identified himself with the musical spirit of his country that the roles have become, as it were, reversed. His personality -- a personality which in itself has nothing in common with the music of the people -- seems to have become the prototype of this same music of the people; and the composers, his compatriots, imitate and copy him quite innocently in the belief that they are simply making use of local colour!"¹⁶⁰ It was precisely the spirit of Norway which filled Grieg's music and from which his inspiration sprang. The melodic lines and the harmonic techniques were all his -- both totally foreign to Norway. However, Grieg's unique gift was his ability to blend it all together -- the mountains, fjords, legends, and folk tunes of Norway, with the techniques of the Romantics and his own developing sense of the "new harmonies" -- and to combine them so well that what was Griegian became almost indistinguishable from what was

¹⁵⁸ Finck, 126.

¹⁵⁹ Edvard Grieg, in *Musikbladet*, 8 October 1889, quoted in Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist, 332.

¹⁶⁰ Ernest Colosson, "Edvard Grieg et la Musique Scandinave," quoted in Finck, 131-132.

considered to be "Norwegian". In 1903, marking Grieg's sixtieth birthday, Leonard Liebling commented on the national/international question in an article he wrote for the New York journal, *Musical Courier*: "Posterity will fix his worth as a composer -- even though some of our contemporaries have hurriedly tried to forestall posterity. It is not always safe to deny a composer greatness simply because he is 'popular.' . . . The publishers are doing as good business as ever with the 'Humoresken,' the violin sonatas, the cello sonata, the wedding marches, the piano concerto, the songs, the 'Peer Gynt' music . . . and the albums of 'Lyric Pieces.' *It is stupid to reproach Grieg with being too national. Had he been less so he would not now be universal* [sic]."¹⁶¹ Joakim Reinhard, in an article in the journal, *Looker-on*, draws a comparison between Grieg and Chopin. Again, he emphasizes the influence of the totally-blended national foundation upon the overall unique compositional style of each composer. Figuratively, using a simile to "paint his picture," he writes, "Thus both composers [Chopin and Grieg] are intensely national in the sense that the peculiar rhythms and harmonious modulations of the folk-music of their respective peoples lie at the root of their work, *flowing through it as the sap of a wild trunk flows through a twig of a rare and highly cultivated fruit tree that has been grafted upon it.*"¹⁶² The frequent accusations that he was just

¹⁶¹ Leonard Liebling, *Musical Courier* vol. 46, quoted in Finck, 141.

¹⁶² Joakim Reinhard, *Looking-in*, quoted in Finck, 142.

a Norwegian composer continued to irk Grieg, but it was the previously quoted "Messiah of Norwegian music" appellation by Moszkowski which finally roused Grieg to take action.

In response to the article by the German music critic, Moszkowski, in the Copenhagen music journal, *Musikbladet*, edited by music publisher Alfred Wilhelm Hansen, Grieg felt compelled to write a response. This he did, in the form of a letter to Hansen, requesting that his letter be published in the journal so that the matter of the Norwegianness of his music could be clarified. Grieg's letter, which he later called his "Cosmopolitan Credo" in a letter to Angul Hammerich, was published in *Musikbladet* on October 8, 1889. Grieg wrote:

In an article entitled "About National Compositions", which appeared in your music periodical, you have quoted the views of a Berlin critic on this topic - views that are patently open to contradiction. However, I shall not take the trouble to act as the defender of national art in general, for the history of art has taken care of that defence so thoroughly that any further attempt is superfluous. The author of the aforementioned article has, however, tracked down a statement that I made many years ago, a remark that belongs so completely to my very "green" period that I consider it my duty to publicly disavow it here. The remark to which I refer was this: "We (Nordraak and I) conspired against the Mendelssohn - inspired, effeminate Scandinavianism of Gade, and we set out with enthusiasm on the new road on which the Nordic school now finds itself."

You will understand that from my present standpoint I cannot acknowledge a statement that to a greater degree than one might wish expresses mere youthful arrogance. I hardly need to assure you that I am neither so one-sided as not to have deep respect and admiration for a master such as Gade, nor so superficial as to - as the author of the article puts it - actually claim to be "the most national among the national composers, the true Messiah of Norwegian music." Faced with such an assertion, I dare say that the author

lacks the most essential qualifications for judging me. If the author had been familiar with my work in its entirety, it would hardly have escaped him that in my more recent compositions I have striven increasingly toward a broader and more universal view of my own individuality, a view influenced by the great currents of our time - that is, by the cosmopolitan movement. But this I willingly admit: Never could I bring myself to violently tear up the roots that tie me to my native land.¹⁶³

Subsequent to writing his rebuttal to Moszkowski's article, Grieg evidently felt the need to clarify what he had written, for, a few weeks after his letter of correction was published in *Musikbladet*, Grieg wrote to Angul Hammerich, the music critic for *Nationaltidende* in Copenhagen, explaining himself further. Hammerich's review of a performance of *Scenes from Olav Trygvason* in which he commented that it was clearly an expression of Grieg's "new" cosmopolitan credo, occasioned Grieg's response in which he pointed out that, in fact, ". . . *Olav Trygvason* was drafted in its entirety in 1873, i.e. sixteen years ago. Only the orchestration is of recent date. You can see, therefore, that a certain "cosmopolitan" strain was in my blood even in the fiercely nationalistic days of my youth."¹⁶⁴ Grieg continues, in the letter, to emphasize that he was never totally nationalistic, nor totally cosmopolitan, as he explains, "It is my opinion that just as the human being is both *individual* and *social*, so the artist is both national and cosmopolitan -- but he does not always have occasion to reveal

¹⁶³ Edvard Grieg to Alfred Wilhelm Hansen, 14 September 1889, *Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, 96.

¹⁶⁴ Edvard Grieg to Angul Hammerich, 21 November 1889, *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, 358.

both sides of his personality in the same degree."¹⁶⁵ Grieg concludes by asking Hammerich to ensure that no one attaches the appellation "cosmopolitan" to him, signalling an abrupt change in his compositional style, for, he asserts, both elements -- national and cosmopolitan -- are present in his works.

Few would dispute that Grieg's music contained elements of the "Norwegian." That his music remained always intimate with the folk songs of Norway, is open to question. Again and again one can see innovative elements and aspects of his works which are quite complex; elements that, at a first glance, may appear quite simplistic, because of the exquisite manner with which the original harmony and singing melody are fused together. For example, looking at *The Wounded Heart* Opus 33 No. 3, a song from Grieg's "Middle Period" (1860 - 1870's), one might classify it as being typically "Norwegian." It is written with *nynorsk* (a 'New Norwegian' text) and it is in strophic form, as are nearly all of the songs. However, the treatment of the form is far from typically Norwegian. Grieg's innovation is found in the melodic and harmonic line (i.e. all of the chromatic alterations within the melody which provide a certain dissonance with the harmony and this gives the song a tonal colour which is quite 'Griegian'). Another element of this song, which resembles the songs of Schubert and Schumann, is the relation between the motivic material and the text. The victory

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

implied in the text “from scars bright blooms come to flourish” is reflected by the corresponding change in key (from C# minor to C# major - enharmonically reinterpreted to Db major - measures 9-10). Another characteristic of Grieg’s “Middle Period” is the strong use of chromatic harmony. This song is filled with altered dominant chords of the dominant, deceptive resolutions, Neapolitan sixth chords; the list could go on. These characteristics are not aspects of traditional Norwegian folk music, but elements of Grieg’s own style and reflections of his compositional training at the Leipzig Conservatory. Grieg has masterfully blended the two elements of his compositional style to create a superb work of art. I have marked the various harmonic devices on the score in figure 43.

Another example of a work which represents Grieg’s compositional training, as well as his innovative style, is the *Notturmo* Opus 54 No. 4 (one of the many Lyric Pieces), a section of which is provided in figure 43. The Nocturne steps away from any common “Norwegian” musical form (the folk song, dance, march, etc.). Undeniably, the model that Chopin has provided to hundreds of

Figure 43

4

cresc.

mangt_ eit Sår har det feng - jet; Det jag sjukt og sår i so
er pa hver ei__ nast Si da, Og_ up dei brjo - ta hver
blöm - an - de Blom_ er ta - ret. Det so - leids og - so med

cresc.

Deceptive Resolution

Enharmonic Reinterpretation
A C# E G - Bbb Db Fb G

7

mf

mang - ei Rid, men en - da har det til den - ne Tid fra Leiken med Li - vet
e - vig Var, nar Lou - vetspret - ter og I - sen gar og Gau - ken gjel - lar i
Jor - den er: nar Regn og Dogg hun fra Him - len faer, so vek - sa Blo - mar i

p

Neapolitan 6th Chord

Altered dominant of the dominant

11

molto

ff

gjeng - et fra Leiken med Li - vet gjeng - et.
Li - da, og Gau - ken gjelar i Li - da.
Sa - ret, so Vek - sa Blomar i Sa - ret.

cresc. molto

ff

dim.

p

artists is evident in this work; it begins with an introduction in the left hand;

there is a singing, melodic line in the right hand with the left hand maintaining a fairly consistent rhythmic pattern; there is a middle section marked *Più mosso* which returns to an exact repetition of the opening theme thirteen measures later; and the piece concludes with a long *Adagio* arpeggio of the tonic triad. The work is more than just a perfect imitation of what Chopin had done many times before. Grieg experiments with tonal colour in a very innovative and effective manner. There is a descending motive in the left hand which corresponds beautifully with the melody in the right hand. There are many chromatic alterations which generate a sense of tonal ambiguity, that one would not expect in a song that usually functions as a 'night song' or lullaby. The rhythm in the left hand is fairly unusual for a piano Nocturne. The most common left hand passages consist of ascending and descending arpeggiated patterns. The left hand in Grieg's Nocturne sounds somewhat syncopated, which creates a waltz-like feeling. (see figure 44) The "mystery" of this work is enhanced by the chromatically altered harmonies and the constant, atypical rhythmic pattern. The brief, agitated *Più Mosso* section resembles several passages in Debussy's *Clair de lune*, which was composed in the same year as Grieg's *Notturmo* (*Clair de lune* was composed after Grieg's work). Once again, this is evidence of Grieg's influence on the musical language of other artists around the world. Even though the formal structure was quite common for composers during the Romantic period, Grieg's use of

harmonic colour was not usual; it was his own.

Figure 44
Andante *Notturmo, Op. 54 No. 4 (Grieg)*

The musical score consists of four systems of piano music. Each system has a right-hand staff (treble clef) and a left-hand staff (bass clef). The time signature is 9/8. The first system is marked 'p' (piano) and includes a 'Ped.' marking with an asterisk. The second and third systems feature double bar lines and various musical notations such as slurs and fingerings. The fourth system also includes a 'p' marking and 'Ped.' markings. The overall texture is complex, with a melodic line in the right hand and a dense, rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

As Grieg experimented with harmonies foreshadowing many of the developments of the Impressionists, he also experimented with effects produced

by the sustaining pedal. This musical effect began in the Romantic period with Chopin and Liszt. It was a means for them to capture new harmonic colour, filled with rich sonorities, and a tonality which could now be obscured. Debussy was yet again to follow in Grieg's footsteps, with his attraction to the pedal in many of his works. In many of the Peters editions, Grieg's very specific compositional details are provided. Sometimes Grieg's pedal markings would continue over several measures, completely blurring the melody. He would frequently mark *Ped. Sempre*, which was his specific indication for a performer to hold down the pedal for several bars at a time. Many piano teachers have dismissed them as editorial mistakes. In a letter to his biographer, Henry T. Finck, Grieg complained about performers who do not follow the composer's markings. "When will it be legal to punish someone for such things?!" he asked. "Not more than four weeks ago at a concert in Bergen I heard 'A Mother's Grief' -- Album II, no. 23 -- performed exactly *twice as slowly* as is indicated! One should have a feeling of the correct tempo in one's blood. If this is not the case, you can swear to it that the rest of the composer's intentions will be mutilated as well."¹⁶⁶ A perfect example of Grieg's use of pedal effects is seen in *In the Mountains*, Opus 19 no. 1. In this piece Grieg creates a mystical tonal ambiguity with his use of the

¹⁶⁶ Edvard Grieg to Henry T. Finck, 17 July 1900, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 235.

pedal. The basic harmonic outline, in eight measures of this piece, is a dominant pedal with a VII7 of V. Within this harmony, Grieg adds a number of non-chord tones. By the end of these 8 measures, all twelve notes of the chromatic scale are sounding over the unreleased pedal. This can be seen in figure 45. However, in considering Grieg's music it is important not to focus on the individual, technical devices that Grieg employed to create his innovative harmonies, but to look at each piece in its entirety -- the Norwegian inspiration, the traditional classical/romantic techniques, and the experimental, the typically Griegian devices.

At this point, it is worth recalling Sara Cohen's conclusion that it is quite common to link particular musical styles, instruments, voices, or sounds with particular places and that, as Martin Stokes contends, music, representing a place not previously experienced, has the power to create in the mind of the listener a mental picture and definition of that place. In turn, this parallels Edward Said's point that often the portrayal of the real becomes, in the mind of the recipient (in the case of music - the listener), reality. This appears to have occurred, to some extent, with the music of Edvard Grieg apropos what constitutes "Norwegianness," as pointed out by *La Liberté's* critic, who wondered how it was possible that he felt he could "recognize" Norway, a land he had never seen, when listening to Grieg's music.

Figure 45

In the Mountains, Op. 19 No. 1 (Grieg)

The musical score is presented in five systems, each consisting of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system includes dynamic markings *mf* and *molto cresc.*, and a *ped.* (pedal) marking. The second, third, and fourth systems are marked with a circled '8' at the beginning of the first staff. The fifth system is marked with a circled '8' and a '1' at the beginning of the first staff, and contains several *V* (vibrato) markings. A small asterisk symbol is located at the bottom right of the page.

Chapter Four

"Conclusion"

"I wish one thing for the New Year, that my optimism may thrive at the expense of my pessimism"

~ Edvard Grieg to Frants Beyer, 6 January 1906

In the foregoing chapters, I have traced the sources of Grieg's compositional style. From his childhood it was apparent that he possessed a curiosity about and love of harmony. Nurtured by his mother, his first piano teacher, and his exposure to musicians (such as Bull), Grieg's passion for harmonic inventiveness was allowed (and sometimes encouraged) to grow during his four years at the Leipzig Conservatory. His training at the Conservatory was another valuable building block in his development as a composer. Although Grieg frequently complained that he left Leipzig as stupid as when he arrived," in fact, I have shown that the influence of his training there with teachers such as Papperitz, Hauptmann, and Reineke, is clearly discernible in his music. In this dissertation, I have also discussed Grieg's inborn love of Norway and things Norwegian. Ignited by his young friend, Nordraak and fuelled by Bull, Lindeman, Kjerulf, and others, Grieg's Norwegian passion infused his music, so much so that a number of composers (such as, Stravinsky) borrowed from his works, thinking that they were Norwegian folk tunes.

However, as has been shown earlier, Grieg did not model his “Norwegian” compositions after folk tune melodies, but rather attempted to infuse his works with the “spirit” of Norway. Instead of attempting to replicate the harmonies of Norwegian folk tunes, when Grieg heard the “different” harmonies created by the peasant folk instruments, his natural love of harmonic experimentation and inventiveness was inspired and extended to new levels. The sounds produced by the *hardingfele* and other folk instruments certainly encouraged Grieg to make imaginative use of modal scales, drone bass, pedal points, and dramatic dissonances. The rising nationalism of the nineteenth century also spurred him on in his desire to showcase to Norway and the world, things “Norwegian.” He was passionate about the pursuit of Norway’s independence, both politically and culturally. However, rather than just a desire to create “Norwegian” music, Grieg was filled with a yearning to craft his own individual sound. In doing so, he prepared the way for the Impressionists to follow.

Many noted twentieth century composers, such as Ravel, Grainger, Delius, and MacDowell have willingly acknowledged their indebtedness to him. Grieg recognized that he was part of a music continuum and that today’s innovations will inevitably give way to those of tomorrow. He recognized and was willing to acknowledge innovations of younger composers, such as Claude Debussy. After reading through Debussy’s *Nocturnes*, he wrote to Michel-Dimitri Calvocoresi,

“They [the *Nocturnes*] reveal a significant talent for coloration and an exceptional degree of inventiveness, and I am most grateful to you for having given me the opportunity to get acquainted with this work.”¹⁶⁷ Three years later, Grieg again comments about Debussy and the high regard in which he holds him and the unconventional musical experimentation in which he was engaged. Grieg wrote in his diary: “To get acquainted with Debussy -- for a gourmet that certainly was a real treat. It is a brilliant orchestral web that he weaves. A strange harmony, freed from all traditions, but genuine and felt -- although exaggerated. As experiments by a personality suited thereto I find these things highly worthy of note, but a school must not be established along these lines. Unfortunately, that certainly is going to happen anyway, for this is precisely the sort of thing that copycat composers will try to counterfeit.”¹⁶⁸ He was always ready to encourage others in the development of their craft and his letters to Delius demonstrate this. Grieg was also never reluctant to use his influence to “open doors” of opportunity for younger musicians. His letter to Ernst von Dohnányi on behalf of the promising Norwegian pianist, Fridtjof Backer-Grøndahl, illustrates this. Dohnányi’s response advised Grieg that Dohnányi “did not take private pupils but that he would make an exception in this case since ‘Mr. Grøndahl is

¹⁶⁷ Edvard Grieg to Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi, 2 May 1903, Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends, ed. Finn Benestad, 187.

¹⁶⁸ Edvard Grieg, “Diary,” 8 December 1906, Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, Speeches, ed. and trans. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson, 155.

recommended by you.”¹⁶⁹ Grieg also, though, was not reluctant to solicit aid from others (e.g. Franz Liszt and Clara Schumann) when he felt their influence might be beneficial to him. Grieg was extremely sensitive to criticism, especially from fellow musicians of the stature of Debussy. Although he was held in high regard by such musical “giants” as Tchaikovsky, Brahms, and Liszt, Debussy’s critical comments were still able to affect him deeply. Additionally, even though it was recognized that Grieg was adored throughout much of Europe, especially France and England, still the negative comments from critics such as Lalo, Moszkowski, Bernsdorf, and Hanslick caused him a great deal of distress. Even though he was Norwegian and the “spirit of Norway” permeated his music, Grieg viewed music as the international language. He did not want his compositions to be “stuck in the fjord” but to be recognized internationally.

The debate centred around the national and/or international character and appeal of Grieg’s music will certainly not be settled in this treatise. Considering the numerous musical examples cited earlier, the “spirit” of Norway can be discerned underlying most of them, for Grieg is the Norwegian well from which they sprang. However, in most cases, it is extremely difficult to separate specific features which clearly belong to Norway. In studying his music, it becomes clear

¹⁶⁹ Ernst von Dohnányi to Edvard Grieg, 4 January 1906, Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, Speeches, ed. and trans. Finn Benestad and William H. Halverson, 214n

that the "colour" of his compositions is full of his love of Norway -- its land, its people, its legends, its folksongs -- but that, though his music may have a distinct Norwegian flavour, its source is not directly Norwegian. Grieg's own harmonic inventiveness, noted even before he attended the Leipzig Conservatory, was also spurred on and encouraged by the harmonies created by the Norwegian folk instruments, but it was uniquely Griegian, not uniquely Norwegian. That his compositions are "national" in that, in time, they defined Norwegianness for many, is indisputable, but that they are international, in that they appealed to the world and were used by the world's foremost composers in moving forward in musical invention, is equally without question.

Bibliography

Abraham, Gerald, ed. Grieg: A Symposium. England: Lindsay Drummond Ltd., 1948.
Reprint, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1971.

. A Hundred Years of Music. Great Britain: Butlet and Tanner Ltd., 1938.
Reprint, Great Britain: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1974.

Allen, W. Gore. Renaissance in the North. New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1946.
Reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970.

Baycroft, Timothy. Nationalism in Europe 1789 - 1945. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Benestad, Finn, ed. Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends. Translated by William H. Halverson. Columbus: Peer Gynt Press, 2000.

Benestad, Finn and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe. Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist. Translated by William H. Halverson and Leland B. Sateren. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988.

Benestad, Finn and William H. Havlerson, eds. Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles and Speeches. Columbus: Peer Gynt Press, 2001.

Bird, John. Percy Grainger London: Paul Elek Books Ltd., 1976.

Carley, Lionel. Grieg and Delius: A Chronicle of their Friendship in Letters. New York: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1993.

Dahl, Erling Jr., ed. Edvard Grieg: The Portraits. Edvard Grieg Museum - *Troldhaugen*, 1996.

Debussy, Claude. Debussy on Music. Collected and introduced by Francois Lesure. Translated and edited by Richard Langham Smith. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.

- _____. Monsieur Croche: The Dilettante Hater. With a foreword by Lawrence Gilman. New York: The Viking Press, 1928.
- Del Mar, Norman. Richard Strauss: a critical commentary on his life and works. Volume 3. London: Chilton Book Company, 1972.
- Demarquez, Suzanne. Manuel de Falla. Trans. Salvator Attanasio. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1968.
- Dreyfus, K., ed. The Farthest North of Humanness: Letters of Percy Grainger 1901 - 1914. Saint Louis: Magnamusic-Baton Inc., 1985.
- Engel, Carl. An Introduction to the study of National Music; Comprising researches into popular songs, traditions, and customs. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1976.
- Ewen, David, ed. The World of Great Composers: From Palestrina to Debussy. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962.
- Finck, Henry T. Grieg and His Music. New York: John Lane Company, 1909.
- Finkelstein, Sidney. Composer and Nation: The Folk Heritage in Music, 2d ed. New York: International Publishers, 1989.
- Foster, Beryl. Edvard Grieg: The Choral Music. Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 1999.
- _____. The Songs of Edvard Grieg. Aldershot, England: Scholar Press, 1990.
- Gillies, Malcolm and David Pear, ed. The All-Round Man: Selected Letters of Percy Grainger 1914-1961. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Gilman, Lawrence. Nature in Music. Essay Index Reprint Series. Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1966.

Grieg, Edvard. Lyrical Pieces for the Piano Op. 54. New York: G. Schirmer Inc. 1932.

Grieg, Edvard. Lyrische Stücke für Pianoforte Op. 54. Leipzig: C.F. Peters, n.d.

Grieg, Edvard. Nordische Tänze und Volksweisen für Pianoforte übertragen Op. 17.
Leipzig: C.F. Peters, n.d.

Hanning, Barbara Russano. A Concise History of Western Music. New York: W.W
Norton and Company Inc., 1998.

Hobsbawm, E.J. Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: programme, myth, and reality.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Kortsen, Bjarne. Grieg the Writer Vol. I: Essays and Articles. Bergen, Norway: Edition
Norvegica, 1972.

_____. Grieg the Writer Vol.II: Letters to Frants Beyer. Translated by Helen M.
Corlett. Bergen, Norway: Edition Norvegica, 1972.

Larner, Gerald. Maurice Ravel. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996.

Lawford, Irene. Edvard Grieg and his Publishers: Max Abraham and Henri Hinrichson.
London: Peters Edition Ltd., 1996.

Leone, Bruno. Nationalism: Opposing Viewpoints, 2d ed. rev. St. Paul, Minnesota:
Greenhaven Press, 1986.

Mason, Daniel Gregory. From Grieg to Brahms: Studies of Some Modern Composers
and Their Art. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927. Reprint, New York:
AMS Press, 1971.

Monrad-Johansen, David. Edvard Grieg. Translated by Madge Robertson. New York:
Tudor Publishing Company, 1972.

- Moreux, Serge. Béla Bartók. With a preface by Arthur Honegger. Translated by G.S. Fraser and Erik de Mauny. London: Harvill Press, 1953. Reprint, New York: Vienna House, 1974.
- Myers, Mary Ruth. The Use of Chromatic Harmony in Grieg. Rochester, New York: University of Rochester, 1939.
- Orenstein, Arbie. Ravel: Man and Musician. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
- Pahissa, Jamie. Manuel de Falla: His Life and Works. Translated by Jean Wagstaff. London: Museum Press, 1954. Reprint, Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1979.
- Palmer, Christopher. Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan. New York: Homes and Meier Publishers, 1976.
- Pasler, Jann, ed. Confronting Stravinsky: Man, Musician, and Modernist. Berkley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Paulston, Rolland. Other Dreams, Other Schools: Folk Colleges in Social and Ethnic Movements. Pittsburgh: University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 1980.
- Pollack, Howard. Aaron Copland: the life and work of an uncommon man. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1999. Reprint, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
- Purdy, Claire Lee. Song of the North: The Story of Edvard Grieg. New York: Julian Messner Inc., 1941.
- Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Random House, 1978; Vintage Books, 1979.
- Schjelderup-Ebbe, Dag. A Study of Grieg's Harmony. Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1953.
- _____. Edvard Grieg 1858-1867. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1964.

- Schlotel, Brian. Grieg. London: Ariel Music, BBC Publications, 1986.
- Schonberg, Harold C. The Lives of the Great Composers. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970.
- Seton-Watson, Hugh. Nations and States. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977.
- Shafer, Boyd C. Faces of Nationalism: New Realities and Old Myths. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1972.
- _____. Nationalism: Myth and Reality. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World Inc., 1955.
- Skylstad, Kjell. "A Man of Visions," *Listen to Norway*, (September 18, 2002): 40.
- Smith, Anthony D. National Identity. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Snyder, Louis C. The Meaning of Nationalism. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1968.
- Spivak, Samuel, ed. The Finest Music of Grieg: Selected Piano Compositions. New York: Edward Schubert & Co., 1945.
- Stokes, Martin, ed. Ethnicity Identity, and Music: The Musical Construction of Place. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994.
- Walker, Alan. Franz Liszt: The Final Years 1861-1886 Vol. III. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1996.
- Wergeland, Agnes Mathilde, Leaders in Norway and Other Essays. Edited and arranged by Katharine Merrill. Essay Index Reprint Series. Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1966.
- Williams, Ralph Vaughan. National Music and Other Essays. 2d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.