

GRIEG

Lyric Pieces

Lyrische Stücke • Pièces lyriques

Peer Gynt Suite No. 2

Balázs Szokolay, Piano



Edvard Grieg (1843 - 1907)

Lyric Pieces • Peer Gynt

Edvard Grieg, the most famous of Norwegian composers, was descended on his mother's side from a Norwegian provincial governor who had adopted the name Hagerup from his adoptive father, the Bishop of Trondheim. On his father's side he was of Scottish ancestry. His great-grandfather, Alexander Greig, had left Scotland after the battle of Culloden and the final defeat of the Stuart army by the Hanoverian rulers of England. In Norway the Greigs became Griegs and during the nineteenth century established themselves comfortably in their new country, with the composer's grandfather and father both serving in turn as British consul in Bergen.

The Grieg household provided a musical background for a child. Musicians visited the family and these guests included the distinguished violinist Ole Bull. It was he who persuaded the Griegs to send their son Edvard to the Conservatory in Leipzig, where the boy became a student at the age of fifteen, there to undergo the rigours of a traditional German musical education.

In Leipzig not everything was to Grieg's liking. He objected to the dry nature of ordinary piano instruction, based on the work of Czerny and Clementi, and was able eventually to change to a teacher who was to instil in him a love of Schumann. He attended concerts by the famous Gewandhaus Orchestra that Mendelssohn had once directed and was present when Clara Schumann played her husband's piano concerto there, as well as at performances of Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*. At the same time he was able to meet other musicians, including the Irish composer, Arthur Sullivan, whose later fame, at least, was to depend on his operetta collaboration with W.S. Gilbert.

After a short period at home again in Norway, where he was unable to obtain a state pension, Grieg moved to Denmark. The capital, Copenhagen, was a cultural centre for both countries and here he had considerable

encouragement from Niels Gade. The principal influence, however, came from a meeting with Rikard Nordraak, a young Norwegian, who fired him with ambition to seek inspiration in the folk-music of his own country.

Nordraak died tragically young, at the age of twenty-four. Grieg, however, continued to prepare himself for employment in Norway, first of all taking a long holiday, which led him to Rome, where he met the great Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen. It was a concert arranged by Grieg in Christiania (Oslo) and given by him with his cousin and future wife Nina Hagerup and the violinist Wilhelmine Norman-Neruda that secured him a position in Norway and provided support for the projected Norwegian Academy of Music, established in the following year, 1867.

The period that followed saw Grieg's struggle, with the backing of Liszt and the support of his friend, the dramatist and theatre-director Bjørnson, to establish some sort of national musical movement in Norway. He divided his time between concert activities, on tour as conductor and pianist, composition, and periods spent in the enjoyment of the Norwegian countryside.

Grieg's ambitions for Norwegian music were very largely realised. At home he came to occupy a position of honour, and his collaboration with Bjørnson and with Ibsen further identified him with the emerging national culture. He died in 1907, as he was about to undertake one more concert tour. For years he had suffered from lung trouble, the result of an illness in his student days. It was this that brought about his death at the age of sixty-four.

Grieg wrote a large number of so-called *Lyrische Stücke* (Lyric Pieces), primarily for piano solo, although he arranged some of them for orchestra. The first set of eight short pieces was published as *Opus 12* in Copenhagen in 1867. The present collection includes four pieces from *Opus 12*, the second, fourth, fifth and seventh of the eight pieces, a *Vals* (Waltz), an *Elverdans* (Elves' Dance), *Folkweise* (Folk-song) and *Stambogsblad* (Album-Leaf).

The *Opus 38 Lyric Pieces* were published in 1884, the second album. Of the six pieces here included, the second of the set is *Volkswaise* (Folk-song), the third a simple *Melodie*, the fourth a *Halling* (Norwegian Dance), the sixth *Elegie*, the seventh *Walzer* (Waltz) and the eighth *Canon*. Two years later the *Opus 43* album appeared, from which *Einsamer Wanderer* (Solitary Wanderer) is drawn.

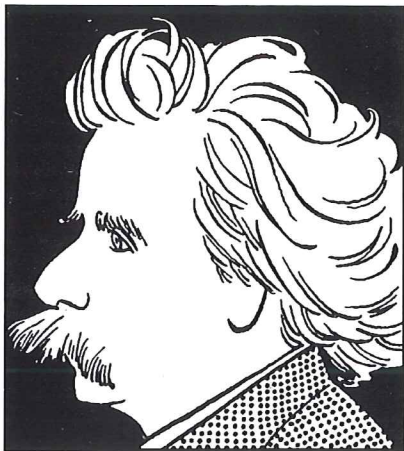
Opus 47 was published in 1888. From this is included the first piece, *Valse-Improptu*, the second *Albumblatt* (Album-Leaf) and the fourth, a characteristic Norwegian dance, *Halling*. Five years later Grieg published a further collection, *Opus 57*, here represented by the fifth of the set, *Sie tanzt* (She dances). From *Opus 68* come the first piece of the set, *Matrosernes opsang* (Sailor's Song), *For dine fødder* (At your feet) and a *Valse mélancolique*. From the album of 1901, *Opus 71* come five pieces, *Sommeraften* (Summer Evening), *Småtrolld* (Puck), *Skovstilhed* (Peace of the Wood), *Halling* (Norwegian Dance) and *Forbi* (Gone). *Gangar* (March) belongs to *Opus 72*, a collection of piano pieces published in 1903 in a collection of Norwegian peasant dances.

Among the best known music that Grieg wrote was his incidental music for Ibsen's remarkable play *Peer Gynt*, first performed in Christiania in 1876. The second of the two suites drawn from the music opens with *Ingrid's Lament*, the introduction to the second act, set on a high narrow mountain-track, where Peer Gynt has taken Ingrid, a bride that he has abducted from her wedding and now plans to betray. The *Arabian Dance* is taken from the fourth act, where Peer has donned Arab robes, and *Peer Gynt's Homecoming* brings the hero back home again as an old man to his own country. *Solveig's Song*, from the fourth act, offers a brief glimpse of the girl, now a middle-aged woman, who sits waiting for Peer Gynt in the far North. She is there to accept him home again after his wandering, as the fifth and final act of the drama comes to an end.

Balázs Szokolay

The Hungarian pianist Balázs Szokolay was born in Budapest in 1961, the son of a mother who is a pianist and a father who is a composer and professor at the Liszt Academy. He started learning the piano when he was five and in 1970 entered the preparatory class of the Budapest Music Academy, where he completed his studies with Pal Kadosa and Zoltán Kocsis in 1983. He later spent two years at the Academy of Music in Munich, with a German government scholarship.

Balázs Szokolay made an early international appearance with Péter Nagy at the Salzburg Interforum in 1979, and in 1983 substituted for Nikita Magaloff in Belgrade in a performance of the *Piano Concerto No. 1* of Brahms. He is now a soloist with the Hungarian State Orchestra and has given concerts in a number of countries abroad, including Austria, Switzerland, France, Italy, Poland, the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria and the former Czechoslovakia. In September, 1987, he made his recital début at the Royal Festival Hall in London. He has won a number of important prizes at home and abroad, including, most recently, success in the 1987 Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians Competition. He took fourth place in the Leeds International Piano Competition in 1990, when his playing was particularly commended in the British press for its energy and imagination.



Edvard Grieg



8.553387

STEREO

GRIEG

DDD

 Playing
 Time:
 68'16''

Lyric Pieces

Lyrische Stücke • Pièces lyriques

Peer Gynt

Balázs Szokolay, Piano

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|--------|--|---|--------|
| 1 | Halling (Norwegian Dance),
Op. 38, No. 4 | (0:46) | 15 | Folkevisse (Folk-song), Op. 12, No. 5 | (1:10) |
| 2 | Melodie, Op. 38, No. 3 | (1:40) | 16 | Skovstilhed (Peace of the Wood),
Op. 71, No. 4 | (4:57) |
| 3 | Halling (Norwegian Dance),
Op. 47, No. 4 | (1:12) | 17 | Stambogsblad (Album-leaf), Op. 12, No. 7 | (1:10) |
| 4 | Canon, Op. 38, No. 8 | (4:30) | 18 | Valse-Impromptu, Op. 47, No. 1 | (2:59) |
| 5 | Småtroid (Puck), Op. 71, No. 3 | (1:42) | 19 | Forbi (Gone), Op. 71, No. 6 | (2:10) |
| 6 | Walzer, Op. 38, No. 7 | (1:00) | 20 | Sie tanzt (She dances), Op. 57, No. 5 | (2:43) |
| 7 | Matrosernes opsang (Sailor's Song),
Op. 68, No. 1 | (1:04) | 21 | Albumblatt (Album-leaf), Op. 47, No. 2 | (2:57) |
| 8 | Halling (Norwegian Dance),
Op. 71, No. 5 | (2:43) | 22 | Sommeraften (Summer Evening),
Op. 71, No. 2 | (2:23) |
| 9 | Volkweise (Folk-song), Op. 38, No. 2 | (1:32) | 23 | For dine fødder (At your feet),
Op. 68, No. 3 | (2:21) |
| 10 | Elegie, Op. 38, No. 6 | (2:10) | 24 | Valse mélancolique, Op. 68, No. 6 | (3:24) |
| 11 | Ganger (Norwegian March) | (2:43) | Peer Gynt: Suite No. 2 (transcr. Grieg) | | |
| 12 | Einsamer Wanderer (Solitary Wanderer),
Op. 43, No. 2 | (1:36) | 25 | Ingrid's Lament | (3:35) |
| 13 | Elverdans (Elves' Dance), Op. 12, No. 4 | (0:42) | 26 | Arabian Dance | (4:32) |
| 14 | Vals, Op. 12, No. 2 | (1:40) | 27 | Peer Gynt's Homecoming | (2:59) |
| | | | 28 | Solveig's Song | (4:38) |

Recorded at the Italian Institute, Budapest,
 from 27th to 29th November, 11th and 13th December 1989 (Tracks 1 - 24)
 and 29th and 31st August 1994 (Tracks 25 - 28).

Producer: György József (Tracks 1 - 24), Zsuzsa Dvořák (Tracks 25 - 28)

Engineer: János Horváth (Tracks 1 - 24)

Music Notes: Keith Anderson

Cover Painting: After Sunset by Kitty Kielland

