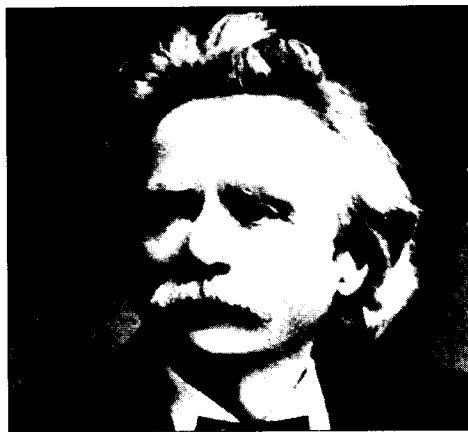


Gibøen's Bridal March

Grieg's Piano Concerto and first *Peer Gynt Suite* are universally familiar to music lovers—even to music haters. While these works certainly deserve their popularity, they give a misleadingly incomplete idea of Grieg—a much more complex and interesting artist than even most musicians and serious listeners realize. From these pieces, one could hardly guess that he would also be capable of the subtle and almost unbearably poignant song cycle *Haugtussa*, the impassioned String Quartet, and for the piano, the harmonically bold folksongs, Op. 66, and the earthy piano *Slåtter*, Op. 72.

The piano was Grieg's own instrument. Not only does his solo piano music cannily utilize the instrument's resources, but it also gives an indication of the range of his style. The *Slåtter* (Norwegian Folk Dances) Op. 72 is the work most likely to challenge the conventional assumption that Grieg's music is always pretty and accessible. Its history began in 1888, when Knut Dahle, a musically illiterate Hardanger fiddle player, wrote to Grieg with arresting naïveté: "from newspapers and reports, I have heard that you are our country's greatest musician. . . ."

Dahle had learned his repertoire of *Slåtter* directly from Norway's legendary folk fiddler, "the Millerboy," and feared that unless someone wrote them down, they would be lost to posterity. In 1901, Grieg commissioned his friend, the concert violinist and composer Johan Halvorsen, to transcribe the dances, and financed Dahle's trip to Oslo. Grieg ultimately found the "sin" of arranging them for



Edvard Grieg

piano "too tempting to resist."

Unlike the folksongs of Op. 66, the Hardanger fiddle tunes are long and very sectional—much material is repeated, sometimes with little or no variation. Too little adaptation would result in monotony, robbing the dances of the characteristic gritty tone color of the fiddle without giving anything to them in return, while the least hint of the genteel or the arty would vitiate what Grieg called their "untamed wildness."

"Gibøen's Bridal March," the first of the *Slåtter*, illustrates Grieg's ability to achieve variety without diluting the pungency of the original. Its pervasive use of pedal point is clearly inspired by the Hardanger fiddle—this instrument has extra strings which vibrate in sympathy with its bowed strings, creating an accompanying drone.

In many of the *Slåtter*, the raised fourth of the scale has a purely melodic character—the tunes hover between the lydian and major modes. Grieg's setting plays with this ambiguity. The key of A major is barely established in bars 19-22, when repeated, obtrusive G-naturals willfully sabotage it. Starting in bar 31 and ending only with the piece's coda, a dominant pedal point rumbles in the bass. Its indistinct

tremolo figuration enhances the more sustained melodic figures of this section.

Not only does Grieg find opportunities for bringing the various registers of the piano to the fore, but also juxtaposes them in striking ways. In bars 23-26, the left hand is so high in the treble that it is almost entangled with the right. In bar 27, it is suddenly crashing out dissonances in the bass. (The arpeggio, the piano's most familiar means of euphoniouly blending registers, is conspicuously absent from the *Slåtter* as a whole.) The dynamics, which range from *ppp* to *ff*, are more used to define sections than to make gradations.

Grieg's pedal markings in "Gibøen's Bridal March" are very much integral to dynamics and articulation. For instance, if in bar 3 we depress the pedal with the melody notes on the first and third beats, rather than, as marked, on the syncopations, we find that the tone has become too thick to allow us to execute the theme's delicate play of slurring and separations.

Seeing the single pedal through the third and fourth beats of bar 43 (and bar 45), the eye fears an ugly clash of harmonies. In practice, though, the ear hears simply a continuous crescendo, as though the treble dotted quarter-note A were itself capable of swelling.

While the *Slåtter* have always been admired by serious Griegophiles, they remain seldom performed. Like Schumann's glorious *Novelletten*, for example, the opus as a whole is too long and too unrelievedly energetic to perform complete, and a selection does not give a concert program the prestige of a "major work."

Gibøen's Bridal March

Op. 72 No. 1

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Marcia. M.M. ♩ = 92

ppp

Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* *

5

P

Ped. * *simile*

9

mf

Ped. *

12

cresc.

Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* *

15

più f

ff

p

Ped. * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* * *Ped.* *

19

pp *p*

Tea * *Tea* * *Tea* *

23

ff

Tea *

27

p *trem.*

Tea * *Tea* * *Tea* * *Tea* * *Tea* * *una corda*

31

più p

Tea *Tea* *Tea* *Tea* *simile*

35

pp

Tea *Tea* *Tea* *Tea* * *Tea* * *Tea* *Tea* *Tea* *Tea*

40

cresc. poco a poco

cresc. rff

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

44

p *cresc.* *ff* *p*

Trillo

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped. Ped. Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

53

Musical score for 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written for piano (p) and features a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The melody is in the treble staff, and the accompaniment is in the bass staff. The piece is in 2/4 time. The score includes a repeat sign and a first ending. The lyrics 'The Rose Tree' are written below the bass staff.

58

morendo

pppp

Ped.

2)

Ped.