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MORNING

THE TIMELESS MUSIC OF GRIEG

"The realm of harmonies was
always my dream-world."

— EDVARD GRIEG



Edvard Grieg 1843-1907

- 1 **Morgenstemning (Morning Mood)** from Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Op. 46 4'00
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, David Stanhope *conductor*
- 2 **Praeludium** from Fra Holbergs tid (Holberg Suite), Op. 40 2'41
Queensland Symphony Orchestra, Wilfred Lehmann *conductor*
- 3 **Solveig's Song** from Peer Gynt, Op. 23 4'45
Yvonne Kenny *soprano*, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Vladimir Kamirski *conductor*
- 4 **Skovstilhed (Woodland Peace)** from Lyrische Stücke (Lyric Pieces), Op. 71 No. 4 4'58
Roger Woodward *piano*
- 5 **Åses død (The Death of Åse)** from Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Op. 46 5'10
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, David Stanhope *conductor*
- 6 **Notturmo** from Lyrische Stücke (Lyric Pieces), Op. 54 No. 4 3'49
Roger Woodward *piano*
- 7 **I Love Thee** from Hjertets melodier (Melodies of the Heart),
Op. 5 No. 3, orch. Max Reger 2'28
Yvonne Kenny *soprano*, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Vladimir Kamirski *conductor*
- 8 **Air** from Fra Holbergs tid (Holberg Suite), Op. 40 6'01
Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, Pinchas Steinberg *conductor*
- 9 **Bryllupsdag på Trolldhaugen (Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen)** from Lyrische Stücke
(Lyric Pieces), Op. 65 No. 6 5'19
David Stanhope *piano*
- 10 **Adagio** from Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16 6'05
Simon Tedeschi *piano*, The Queensland Orchestra, Richard Bonyngne *conductor*

11	Ave, maris stella (Hail, Star of the Sea) Choir of Trinity College, University of Melbourne, Michael Leighton Jones <i>director</i>	3'49
	To elegiske melodier (Two Elegiac Melodies), Op. 34	[9'31]
12	Hjertsår (The wounded heart)	3'36
13	Våren (Last Spring) Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, David Stanhope <i>conductor</i>	5'55
14	Berceuse from Neue lyrische Stückchen (Lyric Pieces), Op. 38 No. 1 Roger Woodward <i>piano</i>	2'55
15	Norwegische Tänze (Norwegian Dances), Op. 35 No. 2 , orch. Hans Sitt West Australian Symphony Orchestra, David Measham <i>conductor</i>	2'25
16	Arietta from Lyriske småstykker (Lyric Pieces), Op. 12 No. 1 Roger Woodward <i>piano</i>	1'25
	Total Playing Time	67'04

As a boy, Edvard Hagerup Grieg was so impressed by the scenery of his native Norway that he considered becoming a painter. Fate took him in a different direction, but it was one in which he was no less able to express the beauty of his homeland. He became his country's most famous composer, portraying the landscapes and culture of Norway with sound.

Born in 1843 in the town of Bergen, Grieg was sent to study at the Leipzig conservatory at the age of 15, and his early music was based on German Romanticism. Later in Copenhagen, then the centre of both Danish and Norwegian cultural life, he befriended Rikard Nordraak, composer of Norway's national anthem, who instilled in Grieg his desire to develop a unique Norwegian style.

Grieg thereafter became active in trying to encourage acceptance of native music in Norway. He also began to develop his own distinctive sound, one that was to become inexorably linked to his homeland. He turned to folk music for inspiration, using its motifs, idioms and forms, and finding harmonic freedom within.

Despite contributing some larger-scale works to the international concert repertoire, Grieg was primarily a master of the small form. Dissatisfied with his only symphony, completed in 1864, he later marked on the score that it was never to be performed.

There is plenty in Grieg's smaller works, however, to justify Grieg's popularity. His emotional expressiveness ranges from jollity to deep pain, his melodies are always beautiful, and his rhythmic and harmonic ingenuity influenced later innovators such as Bartók, Ravel and Debussy – although the latter was loath to admit it.

Plagued by respiratory problems throughout his life, Grieg died suddenly in the town in which he was born, on the eve of a concert tour in 1907.

Grieg composed many songs, and once wrote that these had been inspired by genius: "The flash of genius was: love. I loved a young girl who had a wonderful voice and an equally wonderful gift of interpretation. This girl became my wife and my lifelong companion to this very day. For me, she has been – I dare admit it – the only genuine interpreter of my songs."

I Love Thee is the third in a set of five songs, *Melodies of the Heart*, published in 1864. This was the year in which Grieg became engaged to his first cousin Nina Hagerup, who was both inspiration for and performer of the songs. Originally set to Danish words by Hans Christian Andersen, the rather trite English text is by Henry Chapman. The piece displays Grieg's younger style, influenced heavily by the early Romantics, particularly Schumann. The orchestration adds richness to the song, which originally had a piano accompaniment.

Grieg was a gifted pianist who performed widely, and it is no surprise that piano music makes up a significant portion of his output. The **Piano Concerto in A minor**, one of his rare large-scale pieces, brought him international recognition. Completed at the age of just 25, it displays a youthful boisterousness in the first and third movements. The second movement, *Adagio*, seems more mature in its thematic development. It opens with a long, lush orchestral introduction. When the piano finally enters, ethereally, it plays a pattern of falling seconds and thirds, reminiscent of the opening flourish of the first movement. These descending intervals are characteristic of Norwegian folk music and pervade Grieg's work.

Franz Liszt, who provided encouragement to Grieg, and amazed him by playing the entire concerto at sight off the score, told the young composer to give the second movement melody to a solo trumpet rather than the cellos. Grieg did so, but reverted to his original choice shortly before his death.

Over the course of his career, Grieg published ten volumes of small but elegant mood pictures for solo piano, entitled 'Lyric Pieces'. Many of the 66 tunes are based upon or influenced by Norwegian folk music, and most use traditional structures. Although miniatures, and often aimed at the amateur musician, the pieces display Grieg's harmonic ingenuity and his ability to use the timbre of the instrument to create atmosphere.

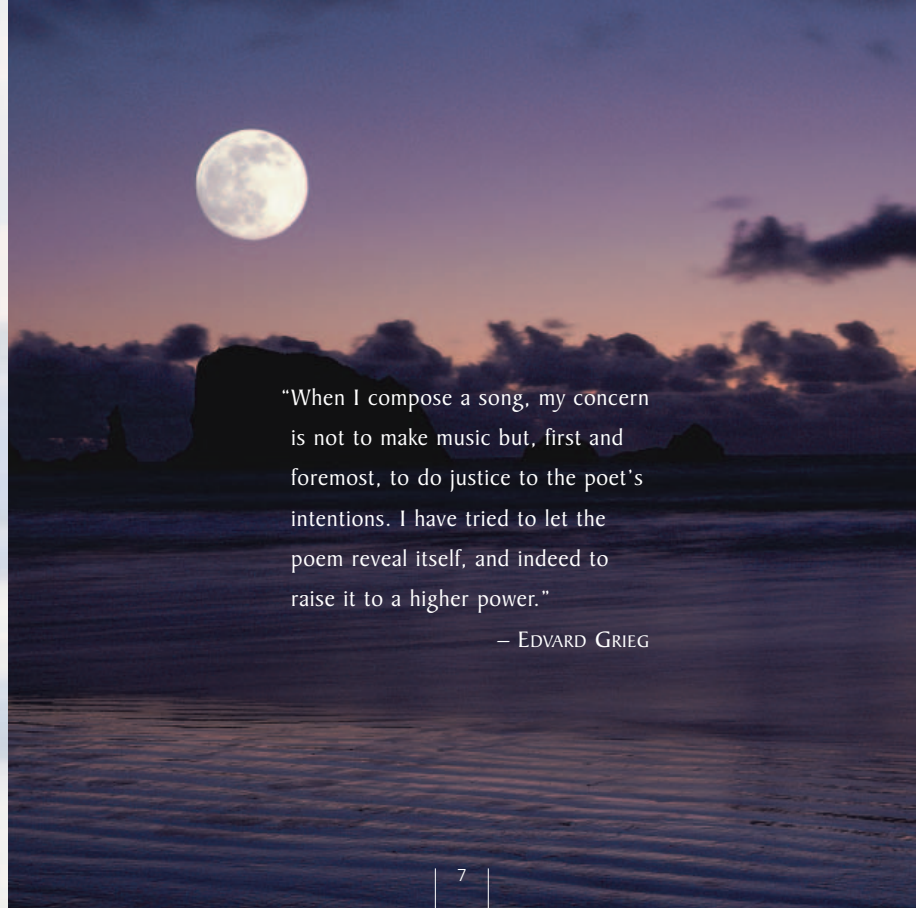
The first volume was published in 1867. The opening piece, **Arietta**, is very short and very sweet. Grieg was so fond of the melody that he used it again, in waltz time, 34 years later in his final Lyric Piece, 'Remembrances'.

In the gently rocking **Lullaby**, published in 1884, the use of parallel fourths creates an airy, haunting sound. The more dramatic and vigorous central section may very well wake the child, before it delicately leads back to the main theme.

Notturmo, published in 1891, shows why Grieg has been called the "Chopin of the North", while the middle section contains impressionistic textures worthy of Debussy. The high, delicate patterns in the right hand appropriately evoke a starry sky.

The fiercely joyous **Wedding Day at Troldhaugen**, from the 1896 volume, is one of the best-known works of the Lyric Pieces. It was perhaps inspired by the celebrations for his silver wedding anniversary at Troldhaugen, where he lived from 1885 until his death. The clamour of the main theme is broken by a lyrical middle section. Open fifths, a feature of Norwegian folk music, are used throughout the piece, in the final phrase suggesting wedding bells.

The serene **Woodland Peace** is from the last set of Lyric Pieces, published in 1901. Simply stated chords evoke stillness, while the impressionistic



"When I compose a song, my concern is not to make music but, first and foremost, to do justice to the poet's intentions. I have tried to let the poem reveal itself, and indeed to raise it to a higher power."

— EDVARD GRIEG

murmuring of the arpeggios paints a scene of shimmering leaves.

In January 1874, one of Norway's other favourite sons, the playwright Henrik Ibsen, asked Grieg to write the incidental music to his dramatic poem *Peer Gynt*. The play tells the story of its eponymous anti-hero, whose discontent leads him to abandon his faithful lover, Solveig, in search of fantastical adventures around the globe, before finally returning to seek redemption as an old man.

The task turned out to be much larger than Grieg had anticipated, partly due to the scale of the work and the particularity of the playwright. The play premiered on 24 February 1876, but the music soon took on a life of its own, as Grieg used it in various manifestations. Most famously, he extracted eight of the 26 pieces into two orchestral suites that became, and have remained, immensely popular.

Morning Mood opens the first suite, and is one of Grieg's best-known works, thanks in part to the tendency of Carl Stalling to use the melody in Warner Bros. cartoons. In the play, the music depicted a sunrise over the Sahara desert, but with its smooth, undulating melodic lines and the lush strings underscoring flittering woodwinds, it is hardly surprising that the piece is more commonly associated with green, Nordic scenes.

The Death of Åse, for strings only, with its slow, hymn-like phrases, was written to accompany the spoken dialogue between Peer and his dying mother. Grieg's harmonic ingenuity can be heard as a simple, repeated ascending theme builds to a piercing climax, before gradually descending once again into stillness.

Solveig's Song was extracted for the second orchestral suite, but was also used to open 'Three Songs from Peer Gynt'. The words express Solveig's love and worry for the missing Peer and her conviction that they will one day be reunited, if not in life, then in death. The minor melody, featuring Grieg's trademark descending seconds and thirds, becomes major in the dance-like interludes she sings to herself, perhaps reflecting her bitter-sweet thoughts.

In 1880 Grieg wrote a set of 12 songs to words by Aasmund Olafsson Vinje and then promptly arranged two of them for string orchestra, creating *Two Elegiac Melodies*.

The Wounded Heart opens with a descending semitone, appropriately evoking pain from the very beginning, yet the harmonic anguish is resolved by the final cadence. The work's origins as a strophic song are clear, with the melody being played three times, while the orchestration gives each verse its own character.

The words to **Last Spring** describe northern Norway's emergence from winter, and the

music reflects this in its slow, lyrical unfolding of a theme. As in 'The Wounded Heart', Grieg makes the most of the different string sonorities to create mood.

An example of Grieg's more jocular music can be heard in his 1881 set of **Four Norwegian Dances** for piano duet. Grieg based the pieces on tunes he found in Lindeman's collection of Norwegian folk music. He built on the original melodies through variation and added his own sections for contrast. Three years later they were orchestrated by viola player Hans Sitt.

The entertaining second movement in A major, marked *Allegretto tranquillo e grazioso*, is based on a *halling*, a Norwegian folk dance. The middle section is Grieg's own, a variation on the last four bars of the original tune.


In 1884 the town of Bergen celebrated the 200th anniversary of the birth of its literary great Ludvig Holberg. Although Grieg was commissioned to write a cantata for the occasion, he was far more inspired by a four-hand piano piece he working on. The following year he orchestrated this suite *From Holberg's Time* (Fra Holbergs tid).

Holberg was a contemporary of Bach and Handel and, in keeping with this, Grieg uniquely imbues the five movements of a French Baroque suite with his own Romantic sensitivity. In the dynamic **Praeludium**, with its driving, galloping rhythms, Grieg does not neglect to provide his customary lyricism in the upper strings.

Marked *Andante religioso*, the fourth movement, **Air**, is full of passionate fervour. It is by far the longest in the suite, and exhibits Grieg at his best in thematic development, while the embellishments of the melody evoke the Baroque era.

Although Grieg was a religious man, he was cynical of the church and only wrote a few liturgical works. One of these is **Ave, maris stella**, from 1899, a simple but sincere vespers hymn setting in praise of the Virgin Mary. Rather than displaying Norwegian folk influences, the piece is an example of Grieg's gift for lyrical melodies underscored by structural phrasing and harmony.

Camilla Gregg



“Artists like Bach and Beethoven
erected churches and temples on the
heights. I only wanted ... to build
dwellings for men in which they
might feel happy and at home.”

— EDVARD GRIEG

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