



GRIEG

DDD

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Lyric Pieces
Lyrische Stücke • Pièces lyriques
(Selection)

Balázs Szokolay



1989 Recording

Playing Time : 67'20"

Edvard Grieg (1843 - 1907)

Lyric Pieces

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, with 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 visitors 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 24. 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 64.

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. Other collections followed, with a second album, Opus 38, in 1884, and a third, Opus 43, two years later. The fourth collection of pieces, Opus 47, appeared in 1888, followed in 1891 by the six pieces that make up Opus 54. The sixth album, Opus 57, was published in 1893, with further collections until the appearance of the final, tenth series, Opus 71, in 1901. Short character

pieces of this kind had a ready market, and suited well Grieg's particularly colourful handling of harmonic resources and the purely Norwegian elements that were part of his musical vocabulary.

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 Ferenc 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 West 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 Soviet Union, Bulgaria and 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.

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STEREO

DDD

 Playing
 Time :
 67'20"

NAXOS

GRIEG: Lyric Pieces

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GRIEG
 Lyric Pieces

Balázs Szokolay

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|--|--------|---|--------|
| 1. Arietta, Op. 12, No. 1 | (1:09) | 16. Der var engang (Once upon a time),
Op. 71, No. 1 | (3:28) |
| 2. Halling (Norwegian Dance), Op. 38,
No. 4 | (0:46) | 17. Einsamer Wanderer (Solitary
Wanderer), Op. 43, No. 2 | (1:36) |
| 3. Melodie, Op. 38, No. 3 | (1:40) | 18. Elverdans (Elves' Dance), Op. 12, No. 4 | (0:42) |
| 4. Melodie, Op. 47, No. 3 | (2:39) | 19. Vals, Op. 12, No. 2 | (1:40) |
| 5. Halling (Norwegian Dance), Op. 47
No. 4 | (1:12) | 20. Folkewise (Folk-Song), Op. 12, No. 5 | (1:11) |
| 6. Fra ungdomsdagene (From Years of
Youth), Op. 65, No. 1 | (4:27) | 21. Skovstihed (Peace of the Wood),
Op. 71, No. 4 | (4:58) |
| 7. Canon, Op. 38, No. 8 | (4:31) | 22. Stambogsblad (Album-leaf), Op. 12,
No. 7 | (1:11) |
| 8. Småtroid (Puck), Op. 71, No. 3 | (1:42) | 23. Valse-Impromptu, Op. 47, No. 1 | (2:59) |
| 9. Walzer, Op. 38, No. 7 | (1:01) | 24. Forbi (Gone), Op. 71 No. 6 | (2:10) |
| 10. Matrosernes opsang (Sailor's Song),
Op. 68, No. 1 | (1:04) | 25. Sie tanzt (She dances), Op. 57, No. 5 | (2:43) |
| 11. Springtanz, Op. 38, No. 5 | (1:20) | 26. Albumblatt (Album-leaf), Op. 47, No. 2 | (2:58) |
| 12. Halling (Norwegian Dance), Op. 71,
No. 5 | (2:43) | 27. Sommeraften (Summer Evening),
Op. 71, No. 2 | (2:24) |
| 13. Volksweise (Folk-song), Op. 38, No. 2 | (1:33) | 28. For dine fødder (At your feet), Op. 68,
No. 3 | (2:22) |
| 14. Elegie, Op. 38, No. 6 | (2:10) | 29. Valse mélancolique, Op. 68, No. 6 | (3:24) |
| 15. Gangar (Norwegian March), Op. 54,
No. 2 | (2:42) | 30. Efterklang (Remembrance),
Op. 71, No. 7 | (1:45) |

 Recorded at the Italian Institute in Budapest from 27th to
 29th November and on 11th & 13th December, 1989.

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