

REDISCOVERING GRIEG'S *LYRIC PIECES*

Pikes Peak Music Teachers Association

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**Dr. Jennifer Hayghe, Associate Professor of Piano
University of Colorado-Boulder College of Music**

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) studied composition and piano as a youth at the Leipzig Conservatory. He later claimed he learned nothing there, and blamed his education for his difficulty in handling larger forms. Grieg spent the rest of his life in his native Norway and is primarily known as a nationalist composer, having successfully integrated the melodies, harmonies and rhythms of Norwegian music into his classical compositions.

Stylistic characteristics in Grieg's music:

Drone effects

Pedal points (either direct or inverted)

Scale with #4 and/or flat 7

Lots of 2nds and 7ths, perfect and augmented 4ths and 5ths

Final cadences falling on the dominant

Modal writing, especially Lydian and Dorian

Ornamentation

Dotted rhythms

Irregular accents

Repetition of phrases, either varied, in sequence, or directly repeated

Specifics of Norwegian music:

Hardanger fiddle: A folk fiddle of western Norway with four "melodic" strings and four or five metal sympathetic strings running beneath the fingerboard. There is a special dance-music repertory associated with the instrument and a distinctive playing style that makes use of drone effects.

Halling: A Norwegian folk dance in a moderately fast duple meter, usually danced by a solo dancer and accompanied on the Hardanger fiddle. (*Harvard Dictionary*)

Gangar: Norwegian walking dance

Springar: Solo dance form with leap and jumps in a triple beat irregular rhythm.

Lyric Pieces for piano:

66 short character pieces in 10 opuses (also called books). Very popular at the time of composition (1867-1901), they helped enhance Grieg's reputation as a composer. The pieces fall into the following categories according to Einar Steen-Nøkleberg: character pieces, waltzes, *springars*, *hallings*, *gangars*, marches, folk songs, "troll" pieces, lullabies, melodies, elegies, album leaves.

Editions:

Complete Lyric Pieces	Henle, edited by Einar-Steen Nøkleberg (\$45.56) Dover (\$19.95) Schirmer (\$15.99) Kalmus (\$24.95)
Separate opuses	Peters (\$7.96-\$28.25) Henle (\$11.16-\$16.76) Konemann Verlag, in two volumes (\$12.95 each)

Selected pieces included in various Grieg compilations (Kjos, Alfred, etc) and other editions.
Prices found on www.sheetmusicplus.com on March 31, 2020.

Recommended Recordings:

Leif Ove Andsnes *Grieg: Lyric Pieces* (Warner Classics 2002) – recorded at Grieg’s home on his 1892 Steinway.
Emil Gilels *Edvard Grieg: Lyrische Stücke * Lyric Pieces*. (Deutsche Grammophon, 1974).
Stephen Hough *Grieg: Lyric Pieces* (Hyperion 2015).
Einar Steen-Nøkleberg, *Grieg: Piano Music, Vol. 8, 9 10* (Naxos, 2002).

Recommended Resource:

Steen-Nøkleberg, Einar. *Onstage With Grieg: Interpreting His Piano Music*. Trans. By William H. Halverson. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Woodland Peace, Op. 71 No. 4 (Jennifer Hayghe, piano)

<https://youtu.be/BMGfVes4bk0>