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A Stylistic Analysis of Edvard Grieg's *Slåtter*, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72

Zhiyuan He

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A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF EDVARD GRIEG'S *SLÅTTER*,
NORWEGIAN PEASANT DANCES, Op. 72

by

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ABSTRACT

Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72 is a composition for solo piano by Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg (1843-1907). This set is one of his greatest contributions to piano literature, and shows his attempt to bring the traditional folk music to the rest of the world. The object of this study is to aid musicians toward a better understanding of *Slåtter* through a stylistic analysis of the work. The study includes historical information about the composer and his connection with nationalism in Northern Europe, and conveys how *Slåtter* can be considered a culminating work representing traditional Norwegian style characteristics.

The document includes a detailed biography of Grieg and a discussion of the musical language and compositional traits in *Slåtter*. It also analyzes and describes the influence of other Norwegian musicians and nationalism, including discussion of traditional dances, folk tales, and poems, on Grieg's musical style. The poems and folk tales that appear in the score are mostly from Norwegian folk literature originating from ancient times. The pieces in *Slåtter* can be categorized into four types of Norwegian dances: springar, halling, gangar, and bruremarsj (wedding march). This study analyzes eleven pieces in this set, including examples of all four traditional dances. The analysis of *Slåtter* provides information on thematic and motivic material, harmony, rhythm, and other aspects of the style, including wide dynamic contrast and treatment of ornamentation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) is considered one of the most important Norwegian composers to bring his native folk music to a wider international audience.¹ He had been trained in the German musical tradition in his early years. When he first started his career as a composer in Copenhagen, he developed his musical style in the Norwegian folk tradition. Inspired by many Norwegian musicians, Grieg incorporated cultural elements such as poems, legends, fairy tales, and folk dances into his music.

Among his piano works that invoke a clear Norwegian musical identity are the following: *Twenty-Five Norwegian Dances and Folk Songs*, Op. 17; *Pictures from Folk Life*, Op. 19; *Improvisations on Two Norwegian Folk Songs*, Op. 29; *Four Norwegian Dances*, Op. 35 (for piano duet); *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 64 (for piano duet); *Nineteen Norwegian Folk Songs*, Op. 66; *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances*, Op. 72; *Variations on a Norwegian Melody*, Op. 24; and *Old Norwegian Melody with Variations*, Op. 51. To understand Grieg's musical style, it is important to examine his career in the context of the historical and political environment during this era of European and Norwegian history.

While romanticism prevailed throughout Europe during Grieg's lifetime, movements toward independence occurred in many countries across Europe. The people's national consciousness became strong, especially in Eastern and Northern Europe where

¹ Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), 163.

the economy and politics were relatively underdeveloped. While fighting for independence politically and militarily, writers and artists in these regions also strove for independence at the cultural level. In the field of music, independence was expressed as challenging the dominance of Western European music by an intense commitment to folk music and incorporation of folk music and local musical traditions. Composers were making an effort to establish and develop a national music style that truly belonged to the nation.

In Hungary, the famous composer, conductor, and pianist Ferenc Erkel (1810-1893) created a new musical form strongly associated with his nation, Hungarian grand opera. He also composed the national anthem of Hungary, “Himnusz,” in 1844.² Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884) was a composer who was regarded as the father of Czech music. The national musical style he developed served as an inspiration in the nation’s move toward independence. He was best known for his symphonic cycle *Ma Vlast* (My Homeland), which portrayed the history and landscape of his native country.³ In 1862, composers Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), César Cui (1835-1918), Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881), Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), and Alexander Borodin (1833-1887) formed the “Mighty Five” to create a distinct national style of art music. They became associated in the 1860s and greatly promoted native folk music by incorporating Russian village songs and Caucasian dances.⁴ In Finland, composer and violinist Johan Julius Christian Sibelius (1865-1957) was considered the most important composer to establish the national musical identity for Finland. His birthday became the “Day of Finnish Music” and was celebrated

² Benjamin Curtis, *Music Makes the Nation: Nationalist Composers and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 80.

³ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

by many musicians every year. His most famous piece was a tone poem named *Finlandia*, Op. 26. This piece was composed in 1899 as a secret political protest against the Russian Empire.⁵

After Norway was conquered by the Danish army in 1380, it was a state of Denmark for over four hundred years until the dissolution of Napoleon's empire in 1814. Norway was then ceded to Sweden in 1814, and was allowed to establish a government for domestic affairs. However, in matters related to foreign affairs Norway remained subject to Swedish law. This strained constitutional engagement would continue until complete independence was peacefully gained in 1905.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Norway strove to represent its own culture, which had historically been deeply involved with that of Denmark. Copenhagen remained the cultural center of Norway long after the two countries had been divided. Most Norwegian musicians generally chose to receive their training in Denmark or Germany. With the struggle to be culturally and politically independent, Norway was extremely underdeveloped economically in the first half of the nineteenth century. During that period, most people in Norway lived in rural villages. These villages were separated by mountains and rivers, and transportation was extremely limited. There were only a few railroad lines available in urban cities such as Oslo and Bergen. Most Norwegian residents depended for their livelihood on the business of fishing and wood lodging. Many of them were not able to support themselves economically and immigrated to the United States.⁶

⁵ Benjamin Curtis, *Music Makes the Nation: Nationalist Composers and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 130.

⁶ Jane Ellen Heinrichs, "Two Roads Converged in a Wood: The Intersection of Fairy Tales and Western Piano Music" (DMA diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 2017), 93.

Since subjugation by Denmark in the fourteenth century, Norwegian residents had been using Danish as the main language for centuries. The old Norse language derived from Norway had become extinct, and no official Norwegian language existed in the early nineteenth century. After the country was separated from Denmark in 1814, the government promoted the creation and development of a modern Norwegian language. A group of Norwegian scholars endorsed a Norwegian-Danish combination that was quickly accepted in Bergen and Oslo urban centers. Another group of linguists decided to combine the dialects from mountain villages and form a new Norwegian language. These linguists also developed a written Norwegian, in the early nineteenth century, that was more independent from the Danish language. Grieg strongly supported the new Norwegian language that was derived from the mountain villager's dialect. He incorporated the language into his diaries, letters, and song lyrics.⁷

With the development of this new written language, authors and musicians were able to record Norwegian folk stories and fairy tales in a written format. The first collection of Norwegian fairy tales was published by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe in 1841. They traveled to several remote mountain villages in west Norway and recorded some valuable fairy tales and folk stories that had existed in oral tradition for several centuries. The texts were edited to be suitable for middle-class readers while preserving the folk character of the stories.⁸ Ludvig Mathias Lindeman (1812-87) was an organist and composer who collected over three thousand folk tunes and lyrics during his lifetime. The

⁷ Jane Ellen Heinrichs, "Two Roads Converged in a Wood: The Intersection of Fairy Tales and Western Piano Music" (DMA diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 2017), 98.

⁸ Reimand Kvideland and Henning Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 26.

folk tunes in Grieg's Op. 17 were from Lindeman's folk collection *Ældre og nyere Norske Fjeldmelodier* (Old and New Norwegian Mountain Melody).⁹

In addition to political and cultural aspects, Norway also struggled to have its own musical identity that was separate from the Western European musical tradition. In the mid-nineteenth century, there were a multitude of nationalistic movements in Norway including "Nye Norske Selskab" (New Norwegian Society) in 1859 and "Euterpe" in 1865. Even though Grieg was trained in the German tradition, he still considered himself a Norwegian composer:

I am educated in the German school, and musically speaking I am completely German. It is our Norwegian folk tunes that show me how to develop myself further only on a national foundation. In Germany, the critics treat me badly because I don't fit into the categories into which composers are commonly placed. It is true that I draw on the Norwegian folk tune, but even Mozart and Beethoven would not have become what they were if they did not have the old masters as models. The proud German folk song is a foundation for old masters, and without folk music no art music is possible.

I know very well why my music sounds altogether too national to German ears, but I surely must also take into consideration the fact that a good deal of my individuality is due to my Germanization, for it is not to be found in the Nordic national character. I believe nonetheless that there is a capability in the Norwegian people to grasp this harmony—indeed, that I perhaps lie there hidden in an enigmatic way. As our poets again and again create works based on material from the sagas, so also the composer can and must search out the musical sources for his art.¹⁰

The music of Norway has always been considered exotic music in European musical culture. The unique harmonic and melodic language are inspired by the Norwegian landscape: the steep mountains, forests, and glaciers. Hardanger fiddle player Johannes Skarprud described the relationship between nature and music:

⁹ Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*, 163.

¹⁰ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, trans. William H. Halvorsen and Leland B. Sateren (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 177.

Folk music is a true sapling of the Norwegian folk character. It is Norwegian nature in its changing moods, with its mountainous country and sheltered valleys, wild waterfalls, and still, dreamy fjords. It is the whisper of wind through leaves and cowbells ringing in mountain meadows and in-home pastures that give melody to folk music.¹¹

Skarprud's letter explained how the natural world is related to Norwegian music and also explains the source of Grieg's distinctive musical language.¹² Grieg showed an intense commitment to the Norwegian element in his music. His admiration of the beauty and serenity of the Norwegian landscape permeated his work. He composed music of unique lyricism and emotional depth, expressed through a unique melodic style and sophisticated harmonic language.

The German music tradition strongly influences Grieg's early works. Most of his early works are piano miniatures that are strongly dependent on traditional tonal harmony. For example, in his *Four Piano Pieces*, Op. 1, some of Grieg's late period compositional features, such as quartal harmony and polyharmony, are not present. The only dance music in this set is a mazurka, and traditional Norwegian dance music is not included. The harmonic language is similar to that of German Romantic composers such as Mendelssohn and Schumann. In his *Poetic Tone Pictures*, Op. 3, Norwegian dance rhythm and folk elements are not present. Both Op. 1 and Op. 3 represent the influence of Grieg's teachers at the Leipzig Conservatory.

The stylistic features of Grieg's late period, which draws heavily on Norwegian musical elements, are quite different from the style of the early works. Norwegian musical elements are present in most of his later pieces. Norwegian dance music, folk tunes, and

¹¹ Chris Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 5.

¹² Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*, 149.

folk harmony are apparent in such pieces as *19 Norske Folkeviser (Nineteen Norwegian Folk Songs)*, Op. 66 and *Tusseslått (Gnomes' Tune)* EG 111.

Need for the Study

Although Edvard Grieg's *Slåtter* is a valuable set of pieces representing the Norwegian cultural and musical tradition, it has not become a standard part of the repertoire and is not performed by many pianists. Some special musical elements such as folk tune melody, Norwegian dance rhythm and irregular ornaments are new to the mainstream Western musical world. Grieg's *Slåtter* makes a great international contribution by preserving the Norwegian folk tradition. This study serves to promote *Slåtter* and provide resources for other research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to provide a stylistic analysis of the *Slåtter* by Edvard Grieg. This study discusses the composer's musical language and analyzes eleven pieces in the set. It provides a biography of Edvard Grieg and discusses his relationship to the Norwegian music tradition. Special musical elements such as folk tune melody, Norwegian dance rhythm, and irregular ornaments unfamiliar in the mainstream of Western music are analyzed. This study also identifies the cultural elements of *Slåtter* as related to Norwegian legends, folk stories, and the traditional Hardanger fiddle.

Methodology

The musical and compositional elements in *Slåtter* are examined in depth. Musical examples are provided for analyzing thematic and motivic material, harmony, rhythm, and other aspects of the style, including wide dynamic contrast and treatment of ornamentation. Since this composition is strongly related to the Norwegian culture, the Norwegian customs

and the folk elements including the traditional dances, folk legends, and folk instrument Hardanger fiddle are also discussed in detail.

Related Literature

Current literature related to this topic can be divided into three categories: literature relating to the historical background of Norway and its folk tradition, books relating to Grieg's life and works, and literature about Grieg's other piano works. Benjamin Curtis's *Music Makes the Nation: Nationalist Composers and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Europe* provides historical information of Norway and discusses the nationalistic movements in Europe. Chris Goertzen's book *Fiddling for Norway* and Arvid Vollsnes's article *Norway—Music and Musical Life*, discuss the relationship between the Hardanger fiddle and Norwegian music.¹³ The historical importance and the influence of Hardanger fiddle on Norwegian folk musicians are also stressed in this book.¹⁴ Daniel Sundstedt Beal's Article *Two Springar Dance Traditions from Western Norway* provides detailed information on the traditional Norwegian dance, the springar. The article discusses the cultural importance and origin of the springar in addition to the meters and musical features presented.¹⁵

Among Grieg's biographies, Edvard Grieg's *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*,¹⁶ edited by Finn Benestad, is one the most valuable sources about Grieg's music and life, since it is written by Grieg himself. The editor of this book was a professor at the University of

¹³ Chris Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway*, 38.

¹⁴ Arvid Vollsnes, "Norway—Music and Musical Life," *Norway: Society and Culture* 18 (2008): 279.

¹⁵ Daniel Sundstedt Beal, "Two Springar Dance Traditions from Western Norway," *Ethnomusicology* 28, no. 2 (May 1984): 238.

¹⁶ Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad (Columbus: Peer Gynt Press, 2001), 30.

Oslo in Norway. As a musicologist, he devoted most of his life to researching Edvard Grieg. In 1980, Benestad co-authored, with Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, a biography, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*.¹⁷ This book is significant because it provides an in-depth analysis of Grieg's musical life. Henry Theophilus Finck's *Edvard Grieg*¹⁸ and Ernest Markham Lee's *Grieg*¹⁹ are two important biographies that give a relatively thorough overview of Grieg's personal life.

Daniel Grimley's *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*²⁰ provides both an accurate view of Grieg's life and a general musical analysis of his important piano works. *Grieg: A Symposium*, edited by Gerald Abraham, is a series of critical essays on the music of Edvard Grieg. This book also contains a chronological list of compositions and musical examples to aid researchers in exploring the important repertory of Grieg. The article *Grieg the Man* by Gerik Schjelderup provides valuable information on the major events in Grieg's life. *The Piano Concerto* by Gerald Abraham and *The Piano Music* by Kathleen Dale provide a thorough understanding of Grieg's compositional styles in his keyboard works.²¹

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to a stylistic analysis of the *Slåtter*. Grieg's other pieces that represent his late period style will be cited but not discussed in detail. This study only focuses on examining the musical and compositional elements of *Slåtter*.

¹⁷ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, trans. William H. Halvorsen and Leland B. Sateren, 45

¹⁸ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, 60.

¹⁹ Ernest Markham Lee, *Grieg* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), 33.

²⁰ Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*, 88.

²¹ Gerald Abraham, *Grieg: A Symposium* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 125.

Organization of the Study

This document contains four chapters, a bibliography, and an appendix. Chapter one introduces the historical background, need for the study, purpose of the study, methodology, limitations of the study, related literature on the topic, and organization of the study. Chapter two contains a biography of Edvard Grieg. Chapter three contains a brief consideration of the folk elements and offers a discussion of the musical language and compositional traits in *Slåtter*. This chapter also includes a stylistic analysis of eleven pieces in the work. Chapter four is a conclusion, summarizing the stylistic characteristics of *Slåtter*.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY OF EDVARD GRIEG

Edward Grieg (1843-1907), one of Norway's greatest composers, was born in Bergen, a port city in southern Norway. As a fishing industry center, Bergen was the second-largest city in Norway in the mid-nineteenth century. Grieg's last name came from his great-grandfather, Alexander Greig, who immigrated from Scotland to Norway. In order to keep the pronunciation correct, the family's Scottish last name "Greig" was changed to a Norwegian name, Grieg, by alternating the two letters in the middle.²²

His father, John Grieg, was a successful merchant who could economically support the expense of Grieg's prestigious musical training in his early years. Grieg's mother, Gesine Hagerup, grew up in a wealthy family in Bergen as a daughter of the politician Edward Hagerup. In her early years, she revealed her musical talent at a family party when she sang a Norwegian song. Her family decided to let her receive professional musical training at the music conservatory in Hamburg, Germany. During her music study in Hamburg, she learned piano and composition from the German composer Albert Methfessel. She then studied in London, where she developed the skill that enabled her to perform as a soloist. When she returned to her hometown, Bergen, she served as a chamber musician and accompanist for local concerts. Grieg remembered her brilliant performance of Beethoven's Fantasia, Opus 80, with orchestra and chorus. He especially recalled that

²² Henry Theophilus Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, 2.

she always played the works of her favorite composer, Weber, with remarkable verve and rhythmic animation.²³

As a professionally trained musician, Gesine Hagerup played an important role in Grieg's musical life. Grieg inherited both his mother's artistic taste and musical talent.²⁴ In his diary, he stated:

Had I not inherited my mother's irrepressible energy in addition to her musical talent, I would certainly never have progressed from dream to deed in any sphere of my life. If in those years I had been more diligent and had followed more willingly her loving but strict guidance, I would have escaped many unpleasanties later in life. But my unpardonable tendency to dreaming was already beginning at that time to create for me the same difficulties that were to follow me far into the future.²⁵

Grieg started his music lessons with his mother at the age of six. In addition to the lessons, Grieg's parents invited friends devoted to the art to perform at their home; his enriched musical environment proved to be even more significant than the training he received. This musical atmosphere stimulated Grieg to explore harmony at the piano at a very young age.²⁶

After a few years of music study at home, Grieg began to show his compositional talent and composed his first piece at the age of eleven. In the summer of 1858, the famous Norwegian violinist Ole Bull visited Grieg's house. Ole Bull's short visit proved to be a profound event in Grieg's musical life. He encouraged the parents to send young Edvard to the Leipzig Conservatory for composition and keyboard study.²⁷ As a successful violinist all over the world, Ole Bull had a strong influence on Grieg's artistic career on

²³ Ibid., 6.

²⁴ Ernest Markham Lee, *Grieg* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908), 17

²⁵ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, 10.

²⁶ Ernest Markham Lee, *Grieg*, 25.

²⁷ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, 17.

more than one occasion. Grieg regarded Ole Bull as a role model for his persistent attempts to create a Norwegian Center of Art.

Bull was also born in Bergen, the same city in which Grieg was born, but his educational progress was somewhat different from Grieg's, as his artistic inclinations were discovered by one of his teachers. His Latin teacher first discovered his musical talent and advised him to drop a Latin course and pursue a career as a violinist. Although he decided to pursue studies with the violinist and composer Louis Spohr, he became disenchanted with the traditional performing style of his teacher. He developed his own style, with Nicolo Paganini as a model. He soon became influential in the musical world and traveled to different cities in Europe, Russia, North America, and South America.²⁸ Ole Bull's celebrity and experience inspired Grieg to pursue a musical career. Grieg remembered this significant meeting with Ole Bull in his diary:

When he heard I had composed music, I had to go to the piano; all my entreaties were in vain. I cannot now understand what Ole Bull could find at that time in my juvenile pieces. But he was quite serious and talked quietly to my parents. The matter of their discussion was by no means disagreeable to me. Suddenly, Ole Bull came to me, shook me in his own way, and said I was to go to Leipzig and become a musician. Everybody looked at me affectionately, and I understood just one thing, that a good fairy was stroking my cheek and that I was happy.²⁹

At that time the Leipzig Conservatory was already a leading institution for music study. One of the founders, Felix Mendelssohn, brought the Conservatory to worldwide fame by attracting students throughout Europe and North America.³⁰ Robert Schumann was an instructor, although he later left for another position in Dresden. Although

²⁸ Ernest Markham Lee, *Grieg*, 17.

²⁹ Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad, 98.

³⁰ Eric Werner, *Mendelssohn: A New Image of the Composer and his Age* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 506.

Mendelssohn and Schumann had died before Grieg enrolled in the Leipzig Conservatory, it was considered the best and most modern in Europe. Among influential musicians who taught there were E. F. E. Richter, the author of the famous treatise on harmony, of which more than twenty editions have been printed; Isaac Ignaz Moscheles, an outstanding composer and pianist; E. F. Wenzel, a great piano pedagogue and Moritz Hauptmann, a famous music theorist. Grieg studied piano with Louis Plaidy, but he intensely disliked his teaching style. Plaidy's lessons failed to address technical problems that the students encountered in the pieces they were studying, and this directly resulted in his students' lack of adequate keyboard technique.³¹ Grieg found this to be frustrating and changed to E. F. Wenzel. As a close friend of Robert Schumann, Wenzel aroused Grieg's interest in Schumann's music.³²

Grieg's last piano teacher was Isaac Ignaz Moscheles. Born in Bohemia, Moscheles was a famous composer and piano virtuoso. His splendid performances inspired many musicians such as Arthur Sullivan, Schumann, and in particular Mendelssohn, who studied with Moscheles and developed a close friendship with him. After obtaining an honorary member of the London Academy of Music, Moscheles resided in London as a concert pianist and music educator. When the Leipzig Conservatory was founded by Mendelssohn in 1843, Moscheles was offered a position as a music instructor. As a conservative composer, he viewed Bach and Beethoven as role models and refused to accept the music of his contemporaries such as Berlioz and Wagner. This definitely influenced Grieg's outlook on musical style. Grieg recalled his early learning experience with Moscheles:

³¹ Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad, 290.

³² Jane Ellen Heinrichs, "Two Roads Converged in a Wood: The Intersection of Fairy Tales and Western Piano Music", 80.

Especially his interpretations of Beethoven, whom he worshipped, were splendid. They were conscientious, full of character, and noble, without any straining after effect. I studied Beethoven's sonatas with him by the dozen. In this way, I learned many little technical secrets, and came to value his expressive interpretations. I called attention to the fact that I myself, following his advice, took in hand his twenty-four Studies, Op. 70 and played them all to him, which I do not in the least regret. I liked them and therefore I did my best to please him and myself.³³

Grieg also studied counterpoint and harmony with E. F. Richter and Moritz Hauptmann. These two masters represented a strict German Romantic tradition, and they were constantly criticizing Grieg for breaking the rules of counterpoint writing. The only composition teacher who could tolerate Grieg's liberties was Robert Papperitz, who encouraged young Grieg to express freely his musical ideas in his compositions instead of thinking too much about the rules.

During Grieg's study at the Leipzig Conservatory, he felt pressure from his peers. Many of his classmates were extremely talented, and some of them had already published several important compositions and obtained fame in different countries when they were still students. Arthur Sullivan attended the Leipzig Conservatory during the same time as Grieg and was already considered a distinguished composer. Franklin Taylor was a famous concert pianist who had already given a number of concerts in major European cities. While Grieg was struggling in composing a string quartet with the handicap of no violin background, Sullivan was proving his talent for composition and demonstrating the advanced knowledge of instrumentation which he had acquired before he came to the Conservatory. While still a student he wrote the music to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which contributed significantly to his fame as a composer.³⁴

³³ Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad, 235.

³⁴ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, 29.

As a result, Grieg worked continuously in an attempt to make up for lost time, with barely any time for sleep. Unfortunately, his state of health deteriorated by 1860, and his doctor advised him to take an extended rest in order to recover. He was diagnosed with a severe case of pleurisy, a type of tuberculosis. This disease caused his left lung to completely collapse. At that time, medical technologies were undeveloped, and doctors were not able to perform surgery. As a result, Grieg had to breathe with his right lung for the rest of his life. This disease forced him to develop his career as a composer instead of a conductor or pianist. Despite his accomplished keyboard technique as a concert pianist, he could not give as many concerts as he wanted due to his health condition.

During Grieg's study in the Leipzig Conservatory, he had many opportunities to listen to performances by some great musicians of the day. These concerts included Clara Schumann's performance of Robert Schumann's Piano Concerto.³⁵ In 1862, Grieg passed his final examinations and graduated from the Leipzig Conservatory with excellent marks. Following his graduation, Grieg went to his hometown Bergen and held several public concerts. The concerts Grieg held in his hometown Bergen were relatively unsuccessful. Following his failure to receive a government music stipend, Grieg sought better opportunities outside his home country. After listening to his friends' suggestions, Grieg decided to go to Copenhagen.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Copenhagen was the Danish cultural center that attracted many famous artists and musicians. In the year 1863, Grieg went to a summer resort near Copenhagen named Klampenborg to meet with Niels Gade. Gade was the most

³⁵ Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad, 290.

important figure of the Scandinavian Romantic school. He served as a director of the Copenhagen Musical Society for several decades. In order to encourage local music development, he established a new orchestra and chorus which attracted many young musicians to Denmark. The Musical Society became famous worldwide under his direction.

At that time, Grieg was a young and ambitious musician who was eager to show his talent and abilities as a composer. However, he had not written any large-scaled works of significance. Gade encouraged young Grieg to compose a symphony for him to review.³⁶ Grieg took Gade's advice and finished the first movement of the symphony in 1864. In their next meeting, Gade confirmed Grieg's talent and mentioned that he wanted to see more movements of this symphony. Grieg soon finished the second and third movements and published them as *Two Symphonic Pieces*, Op. 14 (for piano four hands). Even though this piece was not completed in orchestral form, there were some Scandinavian elements in this music that particularly attracted Gade.

Gade was considered one of the first composers who depicted the cultural elements of Scandinavian poetry in his music. The most famous orchestral piece composed by Gade, the concert overture *Echoes of Ossian*, had influenced a number of Northern European musicians, including Grieg. As Grieg stated:

Gade was educated by the poets of his fatherland; he knew and loved them all. The old Danish fairy tales and legends accompanied him on his boyish walks, and Ossian's giant harp loomed up across the water from the English coast. Thus there is manifested in his music, beginning with the Ossian overture, for the first time a decided and specific "Northern character."³⁷

³⁶ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, 16.

³⁷ Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad, 115.

In 1863, Grieg met the young Norwegian musician Rikard Nordraak (1842-1866). Nordraak had a tremendous influence on Grieg's musical life. Grieg described Nordraak in his diaries:

Nordraak's importance for me is not exaggerated. It really is so: through him and only through him was I truly awakened. As a composer, Nordraak was a full round sum of Norwegian melody and Norwegian national enthusiasm, Norwegian character sketches and anecdotes, Norwegian dreams and fairy stories, a profusion of plans for Norwegian operas and symphonies. He was a dreamer, a visionary, but he was not able to bring his own art up to a level corresponding to his vision.³⁸

He was best known as the composer of music for the Norwegian national anthem, "Ja, vi elsker dette landet" (Yes, We Love This Country). He was a musical prodigy and started composing when he was nine years old. However, his family did not encourage him to pursue a career as a musician. When he was fifteen years old, he was sent to Copenhagen to study business. After two years in Copenhagen, he decided to go to Berlin for music study. He was involved in the nationalistic movement named "Nye Norske Selskab" (New Norwegian Society) in 1859 and became acquainted with Norwegian musicians including Ole Bull. In 1864, he composed "Ja, vi elsker dette landet" to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Norwegian Constitution which was the second oldest written national constitution in Europe, with lyrics written by Bjornstjerne. The song was performed on the national day of Norway and became the national anthem.

Soon after writing the Norwegian national anthem, Nordraak went to Copenhagen for further musical study and became friends with Grieg. In order to establish a Norwegian musical identity and avoid the strong influence of German music on Norwegian musicians,

³⁸ Ibid., 167

Grieg and Nordraak joined with Horneman and Hansen to found a musical society called “Euterpe” in 1865. The organization held several concerts to promote contemporary Scandinavian music.

Even though both Nordraak and Grieg admired Gade as a great Danish musician, they still tried to free Norwegian music from the dominance of Danish Romanticism:

It was as though scales fell from my eyes; through him, for the first time, I became acquainted with the Northern folk music and with my own bent. We abjured the Gade-Mendelssohn insipid Scandinavianism and entered with enthusiasm on the new path which the Northern school is now following.³⁹

In the summer of 1865, Nordraak traveled to Berlin to develop his career as a composer. In the same year, he was infected by tuberculosis and died at the age of twenty-three. Grieg was deeply grieved by the death of Nordraak and composed a funeral march named “Sørgemarsch over Rikard Nordråk,” EG 107 (Funeral March in Memory of Rikard Nordraak). This funeral march was originally written for solo piano and later arranged for choir and wind band.

The Norwegian musical elements in Nordraak’s music greatly influenced Grieg. Nordraak encouraged Grieg to break the rules of German tradition and incorporate these elements into his music. In 1865, Grieg composed *Humoresker*, Op. 6. This set of four piano solo pieces was considered Grieg’s first departure from the German Romantic style and shows evidence of the Norwegian musical idiom. The complete set was finished in 1866 and was dedicated to Nordraak.⁴⁰

³⁹ David Monrad Johansen, *Edvard Grieg*, trans. Madge Robertson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), 64.

⁴⁰ Beryl Foster, *The Songs of Edvard Grieg* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), 42.

During Grieg's stay in Copenhagen, Grieg renewed his friendship with his cousin Nina Hagerup, who later became his wife. Nina Hagerup (1845-1935) was a concert pianist and singer who was born in Haukeland, Norway. Grieg and his cousin had known each other since their childhood years. At the age of eight, Nina went to Copenhagen with her family. When she was fifteen years old, her talent in singing was revealed. Her parents sent her to study with the Danish composer and singer Carl Helsted.

Grieg first saw her again at one of her recitals and was attracted by her beautiful voice. They soon fell in love and became secretly engaged. However, their families were not supportive of their engagement. Grieg's father maintained that his son's income was not enough to support a family. Nina's parents disliked Grieg, and her mother stated that "Grieg has nothing, and he makes music that nobody cares to listen to."⁴¹ Despite their families' disapproval, the couple married in 1867.

Even though they were satisfied with their marriage and successful career, their personal lives were nevertheless tragic. Two years after their marriage, their first child, Alexandra, was born. Since her birth, Alexandra had serious health problems, partially owing to genetic abnormalities caused by the marriage of the two cousins. The medical technology was not advanced enough to help Grieg's daughter to recover her health. Alexandra died when she was one year old. Nina also suffered a miscarriage at the same time and was not able to give birth to a child for the rest of her life. At the time of Alexandra's funeral, Grieg expressed his sorrowful feelings in his diaries:

⁴¹ David Monrad Johansen, *Edvard Grieg*, trans. Madge Robertson, 98.

It is hard to watch the hope of one's life lowered into the earth, and it took time and quiet to recover from the pain, but thank God, if one has something to live for one does not easily fall apart; and music surely has—more than many other things—this soothing power that allays all sorrow!⁴²

Although they were unable to have children, the Griegs' musical lives were, in general, quite harmonious. They toured together in major European cities where Nina would sing, and her husband would accompany her. Grieg's love for his wife inspired him to compose numerous songs. When they were first engaged with each other, Grieg composed *Melody of the Heart*, Op. 5 for Nina as an engagement gift.⁴³ This set was a group of four art songs with the texts written by Grieg's close friend Hans Christian Andersen. The third song in this set, "Jeg elsker Dig" (I Love You) was a clear declaration of Grieg's passion for Nina. One of the greatest songs Grieg composed for his wife was "Våren" (Spring), Op. 33, No. 2. The melody of this piece was so popular that Grieg later arranged it for string orchestra as *The Last Spring*, Op. 34, No. 2. Nina was once invited to perform "Våren" for Queen Victoria at the royal court of England.⁴⁴

Grieg and his wife moved to Oslo in the summer of 1867. He was soon appointed as a music director of the Philharmonic Society. During this time, he composed several piano solo pieces including the six *Poetiske Tonebilder*, Op. 3 (Six Poetic Tone Pictures) and the Piano Sonata, Op. 7. Liszt discovered Grieg's unique talent as a young composer after examining his piano sonata, and was particularly fascinated by the Norwegian folk elements

⁴² Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad (Columbus: Peer Gynt Press, 2001), 127.

⁴³ Gerald Abraham, *Grieg: A Symposium* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 125.

⁴⁴ Beryl Foster, *The Songs of Edvard Grieg*, 42.

in the work. These two musicians started to communicate with each other through letters. After Liszt was aware of Grieg's economic struggle, Liszt wrote a recommendation letter to the Norwegian government requesting a stipend for Grieg. In one letter, Liszt expressed his praise to Grieg:

Monsieur, it gives me great pleasure to tell you of the sincere enjoyment I derived from a perusal of your piano sonata. It bears witness to a strong talent for composition, a talent that is reflective, inventive, provided with excellent material, and which needs only to follow its natural inclinations to rise to a high rank. I comfort myself with the belief that you will find in your country the success and encouragement you deserve; nor will you miss them elsewhere; and if you visit Germany this winter I invite you cordially to spend some time at Weimar, that we may become acquainted.⁴⁵

At Liszt's invitation, Grieg traveled to Rome to have a meeting with him, where they played Grieg's piano sonata in Liszt's house. Liszt was especially impressed by Grieg's Piano Concerto, Op. 16, and gave him some advice on orchestration.

From 1864 to 1901, Grieg completed ten sets of *Lyric Pieces*, Opp. 12, 38, 43, 47, 54, 57, 62, 65, 68, and 71, which contain sixty-six short pieces. Most of these character pieces were related to peasant dances and folk songs with a few depicting nature and animals.⁴⁶ For example, *Butterfly*, Op. 43 No. 1 and *Little Bird*, Op. 43, No. 4 vividly imitate the sound of little birds and butterflies by using trills and tremolos frequently. These pieces were favored by amateurs and intermediate piano players since they were not technically challenging. Some of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces* were later to become popular items in the C. F. Peters catalogue.

⁴⁵ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, 106.

⁴⁶ David Monrad Johansen, *Edvard Grieg*, trans. Madge Robertson, 98.

Grieg was selected as a member of the Royal Music Society in Stockholm, Sweden in 1872. As he gained a reputation as a prestigious Norwegian composer, his government decided to grant him an annuity of 1600 crowns a year for life. This was considered a substantial amount of money in the late nineteenth century. With this government support, Grieg could give up his teaching and conducting career and focus on composing for the rest of his life.

Famous Norwegian writer Henrik Johan Ibsen (1828-1906) invited Grieg to collaborate in his new project, a play based on the Peer Gynt legend. *Peer Gynt* was an old story concerned with a Norwegian folk hero named Peer who fought against devils and mountain goblins during his adventures around the world. The incidental music, for orchestra, chorus, and solo singers, was published as Op. 23. Later, eight pieces from this work formed the two Peer Gynt Suites, Op. 46 and 55, and they achieved great success in London and Paris.

About the same time, the famous Norwegian writer and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Bjørnstjerne Martinius Bjørnson (1832-1910), asked Grieg to write music for his *Sigurd Jorsalfar* (Sigurd the Crusader). Grieg composed a set of nine pieces for male chorus and orchestra and later published the complete set as *Sigurd Jorsalfar*, Op. 22. Through this collaboration, Grieg and Bjørnson developed a good friendship and collaborated on several choral works. Grieg's *Den blonde Pige*, EG 138 (The Fair-Haired Maid), *Kantate til Karl Hals*, EG 164 (Cantata to Karl Hals), and *Oppsang for Frihetsfolket I Norden*, EG 166 (Song of the Supporters of Freedom in Scandinavia) were all based on Bjørnson's poems.

The death of his parents in 1875 led to a difficult period for Grieg, and his marriage also underwent serious problems. *Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody*, Op. 24 was composed during this difficult time, and was one of the few large-scale piano works composed by Grieg. This set of variations had special emotional meaning for the composer. Grieg's personal struggle and his deep grief were powerfully depicted in this work. Grieg only performed it on a few occasions for his close friends. One performance in Leipzig may be noted:

In late July 1876, when passing through Leipzig on his way to the Bayreuth Festival, Grieg played it [the Ballade] for Dr. Max Abraham, director of the Peters publishing firm. According to Holter, he put his entire soul into the interpretation; and when he was finished, not only was he so physically exhausted that he was bathed on sweat; he was also agitated and shaken that he could not say a word for a long time.⁴⁷ *Ballade*, Op. 24 was one of the few large-scale piano works composed by Grieg.

The composer occasionally made use of more highly developed forms such as sonata form, and among them were the sonata for piano, Op. 7 in E Minor and the sonatas for violin and piano, Op. 8 in F Major and Op. 13 in G Major, as well as the Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16.

In the summer of 1877, Grieg settled in Lofthus and lived there for eight years. He frequently conducted and performed concerts throughout Northern Europe. After separating from his wife for an extended period, he reconciled with her and they toured together in Denmark and Holland. Two piano sets *Album Leaves*, Op. 28, and *Improvisations on Two Norwegian Folk Songs*, Op. 29 were composed during his stay in Lofthus.

⁴⁷ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, trans. William H. Halvorsen and Leland B. Sateren, 89.

Grieg accepted an offer to be the director of Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra from 1880 to 1882. During his mission in Bergen, he composed two orchestral pieces for the performance at the Bergen music festival. The second piece of *To elegiske melodier* (Two Elegiac Melodies), Op. 34 originally came from a song in Op. 33. *Norske danser* (Norwegian Dances), Op. 35 was originally for piano duet and later orchestrated by Grieg.

Grieg's health started to deteriorate after continuous performing tours in Germany. In 1885, his former student and friend Frants Beyer (1851-1918) suggested that Grieg reside in Bergen to recover his health. The Griegs decided to build a house, and chose a site near Bergen. The building, designed by a famous Norwegian architect, Schak Bull (1858-1956), had a large balcony and a small tower on the roof in a typical nineteenth-century design. The name of the house, "Troidhaugen," was related to the old Norwegian legend, and was derived from two ancient words, "Troid" (troll) and "Haug" (hill).

Grieg described himself as "a troll living in a small valley and not being bothered by the outside world."⁴⁸ However, his reputation as an influential composer attracted a large number of admirers to his house. Grieg's house became so crowded that he could not concentrate on composing. He soon found a solution to the problem by building a small hut for composing within walking distance. The hut was strategically located in the forest and covered with shrubs, and no one could disturb Grieg when he was composing.

Grieg had great love for his home Troidhaugen. Most of his creative output from 1885 to the end of his life was written there. The beautiful landscape and Lake Nordås near his house served as a constant inspiration. His feelings are depicted in his piano piece

⁴⁸ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, trans. William H. Halvorsen and Leland B. Sateren, 129.

Wedding Day at Troldhaugen, Lyric Pieces Op. 65, No. 6, originally composed for his twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.⁴⁹

After moving to Bergen, Grieg was invited to perform in London. Since he was widely acclaimed in England, people were waiting in the street for tickets to his concert. He played several of his solo pieces and the A minor concerto in major concert halls in London. The audience was fascinated by the composer's interpretation of the concerto. As a concert pianist, Grieg maintained a highly disciplined technique. In order to keep his fingers in shape, he would practice on a silent keyboard while traveling to different cities.

After his tour of London, Grieg was awarded an honorary doctorate by Cambridge University in 1894. In order to generate more income from his compositions, he contacted with the famous music publisher Peters. He attained a new maturity in the use of Norwegian folk elements in *Old Norwegian Melody with Variations for Two Pianos*, Op. 51, and *Nineteen Norwegian Folk Songs*, Op. 66 marked the most advanced phase of his nationalism.

Although Grieg was extremely popular all over Europe, he was less welcome in France due to his involvement with political issues in 1899. Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), a military officer, was imprisoned by the military court for communicating military secrets to a German officer. After four years in prison, his case was reinvestigated, and all evidence proved that he was loyal to his country. As an advocate of the Unitarian movement, Grieg, who supported the lower class and gave concerts in support of the unemployed, became a supporter of Dreyfus.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 820.

⁵⁰ Henry Theophilus Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, 79.

Grieg was deeply dissatisfied with the treatment of Dreyfus. When a French conductor, Edouard Colonne (1838-1910), invited Grieg to perform in a concert at the Théâtre du Châtelet, he refused this offer and replied in a letter:

While thanking you very much for your kind invitation, I regret to say that after the issue of the Dreyfus trial I cannot make up my mind, at this moment, to come to France. Like all who are not French, I am indignant at the contempt for justice shown in your country, and therefore unable to enter into relations with the French public.

Pardon me if I cannot feel differently, and I beg you to try to understand me. My wife and I send you our best remembrance. Allow me to thank you for the charming and noble manner in which you referred to my answer to your kind invitation. And I beg you to be so good as to hear me a few moments more concerning the affair.

The French translator of my answer to you asked my permission to print it in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. In the indignation of the moment I consented. There is only one point of view from which I regret this, namely, the thought of having possibly hurt your feelings in neglecting to first get your consent, which would deeply mortify me. But I hope you can readily understand the situation.

In writing my answer I was in the country, in the hospitable home of the poet Björnson, whose family, like my wife and myself, are Dreyfusards. In this way, the whole thing followed naturally. I wish I could show you all the abominable letters I receive daily from your country.

To me they are solely tokens of a bad conscience, and additional proof of the innocence of the unhappy Dreyfus. However, I believe that the easily aroused passion of the French nation will soon be replaced by a saner attitude, resembling the rights of mankind proclaimed by the *République française* in 1789. I hope, primarily for France, but also for my own sake, that I may be able once more to see your beautiful country.⁵¹

Grieg's intense response to the Paris invitation and Dreyfus affair was published in newspapers throughout Europe with his approval, but the French felt insulted and mailed threatening letters to him to express their anger. The hard feeling was eased in Grieg's last visit to Paris to perform his *Peer Gynt Suites*. Despite differing political opinions, French audiences still showed their enthusiasm for his music.

⁵¹ Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad, 153.

During his last visit to Paris in 1903, Grieg was curious about the development of sound recording. This interest prompted Grieg to record some of his music. Since the first sound recording device, the phonograph, had been invented by Thomas Edison (1847-1931) in 1877, recording techniques had improved significantly. Grieg's performance of the "Wedding Day at Troldhaugen" from Op. 65 and the "Norwegian Bridal Procession" from Op. 19 were recorded by the Gramophone and Typewriter Company in its Paris studio. This historical recording was later digitized into LP and CD recordings. Despite its harsh sound and background noise, it still reveals Grieg's performance style. This recording is a valuable source to analyze Grieg's unique interpretation of his own compositions.

When Grieg was planning to travel to England for the Leeds Music Festival in 1907, he invited a young friend, pianist Percy Grainger, to play the A minor piano concerto. Grieg and Grainger prepared pieces for the festival, discussing their differences in interpretation. Grieg was hospitalized one month before the festival began as his health became worse. He was diagnosed with a lung disease, emphysema, in his right lung, which prevented him from performing in England. This emphysema caused heart failure during his hospitalization in Bergen. Grieg died on the evening of September 4, and his ashes were buried in the mountain cave near his home Troldhaugen in Bergen.

Grieg's funeral was held in Bergen, and nearly four thousand people stood on the street to honor him. A male chorus was invited to sing his *Great White Host* at the funeral. Another piece played at the funeral was his early composition, "Funeral March in Memory of Rikard Nordraak." This piece was played in an orchestral version that was arranged by Grieg's friend, Norwegian violinist Johan Halvorsen (1864-1935).

At Grieg's request, all of his documents and original scores were given to the Bergen Public Library located in the downtown area of Bergen. His wife Nina survived him by twenty-eight years, and turned their Troidhaugen home into a museum. Troidhaugen was expanded into three sections: the Edvard Grieg Museum, Grieg's villa, and the small hut that he used for composing. A concert hall named Troldsalen was built next to the Edvard Grieg Museum for the annual festivals of his music.⁵²

⁵² Brendan Ward, *Edvard Grieg: Little Great Man: The unorthodox Life of Norway's Greatest Composer*, (California: ABC Classics, 2015), 35.

CHAPTER 3

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF *SLÅTTER*, Op. 72

Slåtter was composed toward the end of Grieg's life, and is the culmination of his efforts in arranging folk materials into a sophisticated art form. It was published in 1903 and dedicated to the German music theorist Hermann Kretzschmar (1848-1924). The word "Slåtter" is a generic name for a Norwegian peasant's dance. These dances are categorized into four different types: springar, halling, gangar, and bruremarsj. All dances except for the springar are in duple meter. The springar and gangar are dances for couples, while the halling is performed by a single man, and the bruremarsj is for wedding ceremonies.⁵³

In the Norwegian tradition, these dances are usually accompanied by the Hardanger fiddle.⁵⁴ On the title page of *Slåtter*, Grieg states that these pieces were arranged from the original Hardanger fiddle tunes, collected by the fiddle player Knut Dahle (1834-1921) and transcribed by the famous violinist Johan Halvorsen (1864-1935).⁵⁵

The Hardanger fiddle had been a popular instrument in Southwestern Norway since the eighteenth century and had gradually become a national symbol of Norwegian culture

⁵³ Daniel Sundstedt Beal, "Two Springar Dance Traditions from Western Norway," *Ethnomusicology* 28, no. 2 (May 1984): 238.

⁵⁴ Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist*, trans. William H. Halvorsen and Leland B. Sateren, 332.

⁵⁵ Edvard Grieg, *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1895), 1.

and music by the nineteenth century.⁵⁶ The city Hardanger was the home of skilled fiddle makers, which explains the distinctive name. The Hardanger fiddle has a similar shape and sound to a violin with a thicker body and extra set of sympathetic strings. The flatter fingerboard and the lower bridge make it possible for performers to play three or four strings simultaneously, producing an extremely resonant sound.⁵⁷

Knut Dahle regarded Hardanger fiddle music as a precious living tradition in the Norwegian musical world and spent more than thirty years collecting it. In order to preserve the unique idiom of the fiddle tunes, Grieg asked the famous composer Johan Halvorsen to transcribe Dahle's fiddle tunes to the solo violin music for him, as Halvorsen had experience in transcribing folk tunes for string instruments. In Halvorsen's transcription of *Slåtter*, he managed to retain the folk elements of fiddle music such as the different types of the ornaments and the frequent use of modal harmony involving a raised fourth. Grieg received the transcribed music from Halvorsen in 1902 and completed the *Slåtter* in 1903.⁵⁸

In the preface to the published edition of the work, Grieg wrote:

The Norwegian "Slåtter" was brought to the public in their original form for the Hardanger fiddle. This music is handed down to us from an age when the culture of Norwegian peasants was isolated in its solitary mountain-valleys from the outer world. My object in arranging the music for the piano was to raise these works of the people to an artistic level by giving them what I might call a style of musical concord, or bringing them under a system of harmony. On the other hand, by virtue of its manifold dynamic and rhythmic qualities, the piano affords the great advantage of enabling us to avoid a monotonous uniformity, by varying the harmony of repeated passages or parts. I have retained the key in which the original is written down, in order to obtain a fuller effect on the piano.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*, 150.

⁵⁷ Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*, 167.

⁵⁸ Ståle Kleiberg, "Grieg's *Slåtter*, Op. 72: Change of Musical Style or New Concept of Nationality?" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 121, no. 1 (1996): 47-48.

⁵⁹ Edvard Grieg, *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72, 2*.

Grieg's late-period works included frequent use of quartal harmony, polyharmony, and modal harmony.⁶⁰ The raised fourth in Lydian mode is a typical folk element that appears in many dances of *Slåtter*. The use of continuous perfect fifth intervals as accompaniment is an innovative way to imitate the Hardanger fiddle's resonant sound on the piano.⁶¹ The majority of the pieces in *Slåtter* illustrate extreme emotional contrast, reflected in the use of a wide range of dynamics. Grieg explained in his letter:

The folksong is a musical reflection of the innermost soul of the people. The basic feature of the Norwegian folk song in comparison with the German, is a deep sense of melancholy that can suddenly change into wild, unbridled humor. Mysterious gloom and unrestrained wildness—these are the contrasting elements in the Norwegian folk song.⁶²

The use of fifth intervals, found in No. 5 of *Slåtter*, may be found in earlier works. “Klokkeklang”, Op. 54, No. 6, a piece composed in 1891, features the frequent use of perfect fifths in a modal setting which imitates the sound of the Norwegian pillar horn. The first twelve measures also apply polyharmony with the fifth intervals moving to different voices. Musicologist W. Dean Sutcliffe discovered that the “Klokkeklang” in *Lyric Pieces*, Op. 54 “exhibits a flash of Norwegian impressionism by using the innovative harmonic language.”⁶³ The pillar horn is also suggested in *Slåtter*, Op. 72, No. 5, which features the use of fifth intervals throughout the first section of the piece.

⁶⁰ Georgia Volioti, “Reinventing Grieg's Folk Modernism: An Empirical Investigation of the Performance of the *Slåtter*, Op. 72, No. 2,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 31, no. 4 (October 2012): 263.

⁶¹ Ståle Kleiberg, “Grieg's *Slåtter*, Op. 72: Change of Musical Style or New Concept of Nationality?” 53.

⁶² Edvard Grieg, *Diaries, Articles, Speeches*, ed. Finn Benestad, 44.

⁶³ W. Dean Sutcliffe, “Grieg's Fifth: The Linguistic Battleground of ‘Klokkeklang’,” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (Spring 1996): 161.

Slåtter shows Grieg's most serious treatment of folk music material among all his keyboard works. For example, Grieg made an effort to fit the folk music elements into an idiomatic piano writing while retaining the instrumental features of the Hardanger fiddle such as the frequent use of embellishments on the motive and asymmetrical rhythmic patterns. In keeping with the primitive folk element, Grieg restricted himself to the binary and ternary forms which had generally been utilized in his earlier miniatures.⁶⁴ He also applied an important device, "budding technique, which may be defined as repeating, fragmenting, and varying the thematic materials."⁶⁵ Changing themes slightly on repetition is a typical Hardanger fiddle music characteristic.⁶⁶

Eleven pieces of *Slåtter* will be analyzed, and they will be organized according to the dance types: bruremarsj (wedding march) (Nos. 1, 3, 8); springar (Nos. 2 and 16); halling (Nos. 4, 7, 9, 10, and 11); and gangar (No. 6).⁶⁷

No. 1. *Gibøens Bruremarsj*

(Gibøen's Bridal March)

"Bruremarsj" may be translated as "bridal march." In Norwegian tradition, the Hardanger fiddle provides music for the procession of the bride from her home to the location of the ceremony.⁶⁸ The Hardanger fiddle, goat horn, and drums are played as an accompaniment to the folk dances in the wedding ceremony in order to heighten excitement.

⁶⁴ Ståle Kleiberg, "Grieg's *Slåtter*, Op. 72: Change of Musical Style or New Concept of Nationality?" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 121, no. 1 (1996): 50.

⁶⁵ Ståle Kleiberg, "Grieg's *Slåtter*, Op. 72: Change of Musical Style or New Concept of Nationality?" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 121, no. 1 (1996): 49.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁷ Daniel Sundstedt Beal, "Two Springar Dance Traditions from Western Norway," *Ethnomusicology* 28, no. 2 (May 1984): 238.

⁶⁸ Anna Rue, *"In the Party Circle": Norwegian-Americans and Their Fiddle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2009), 50.

Daniel Grimley comments: “Considering the cultural weight associated with such imagery, it is possible to recontextualize Grieg’s creative response to the folk wedding.”⁶⁹

The wedding march appears in many of Grieg’s pieces under various titles. “Brurelåt” is a wedding song from Op. 17, and “Bryllupsdag på Troldhaugen”, Op. 65, No. 6 is a famous wedding march for the Griegs’ twenty-fifth wedding anniversary.

The piece is in the key of D major with the tempo *Marcia*, and is in strophic form (A, A’, A’’) in the meter 4/4. The three sections are, respectively, 18, 17, and 27 measures in length. Theme A is shown in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1. Grieg, “Gibøen’s Bridal March,” Op. 72, No. 1, mm. 1-4

It is repeated four times, and each time it moves to a higher register at the gradually louder dynamic levels, *ppp*, *piano*, *mezzo forte*, *forte*, resulting in a mounting level of intensity. Grieg varies the melodic and harmonic elements in each repetition of Theme A. He adds mordents and appoggiaturas to the melodic line in the second repetition, and these embellishments give the melodic line a vivid character.

The piece is remarkable for its emphasis on rhythm, and Grieg employs dotted rhythm, eighth-note triplets, and syncopated rhythm throughout the piece. The left-hand accompaniment (mm. 1-14) is syncopated with eighth rests which gives the music an

⁶⁹ Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*, 30

agitated character. The rhythmic feature of Theme B (mm. 19-20) is similar to Theme A, both having dotted eighth notes and syncopated rhythmic figures in the lower voices (Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.2. Grieg, “Gibøen’s Bridal March,” Op. 72, No. 1, mm. 19-20

The Norwegian dance usually involves syncopated accents on the weak beats. The dancers emphasize these weak beats by stomping heavily on the ground to heighten excitement.⁷⁰ The repetition of Theme B features a syncopated rhythmic pattern with the accented octaves in the low register emphasizing the effect of stomping (Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3. Grieg, “Gibøen’s Bridal March,” Op. 72, No. 1, mm. 27-28

⁷⁰ Daniel Grimley, *Grieg: Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*, 46.

The variation of Theme A in the coda differs from the original one with the melodic line interrupted by half-note rests in each measure, and the rests make it sound fragmentary and more disconnected.

Such effects as intervals of fourths and fifths, as well as the tremolos in the bass, strongly suggest the timbre of the Hardanger fiddle. The keyboard writing in this *tremolo* passage is also used as a means of building tension (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4. Grieg, “Gibøen’s Bridal March,” Op. 72, No. 1, mm. 31-32

The dynamic contrast of this piece is extremely wide, ranging from *ff* to *pppp*. The marking *ppp* in measure 1 indicates that the bridal march is being heard in the distance. The last note has a marking *pppp*, indicating that the people in the wedding march are moving away from the ceremony.

No. 3. *Bruremarsj fra Telemark*

(Bridal March from Telemark)

Telemark is a geographical and cultural area in Norway which is the birthplace of many famous Norwegian folk musicians including Myllargutten, Knut Lurås, and Håvard Gibøen. Telemark consists of several historic regions including Upper Telemark, a place where the old Norse customs remained for centuries. The different geographic regions of Telemark have distinct cultural traditions in terms of dialect, architecture, and music. It is

an area of mountains and valleys with each community having individual dance traditions.⁷¹ Various folk musicians' pieces were inspired by the rich variety of the folk tunes and dance music in Telemark.

This piece is in the key of D major with the tempo *Alla marcia*, and is in binary form (A, B) in the meter 4/4. The two sections are, respectively, 13 and 32 measures in length. Theme A is shown in Figure 3.5.



Figure 3.5. Grieg, “Bridal March from Telemark,” Op. 72, No. 3, mm.1-3

It is lyrical in nature, which contrasts with the vivid character of Theme A in “Gibøens Bruremarsj.” It is heavily embellished with appoggiaturas, trills, and mordents on each beat, which contrasts with the less ornamented melodic line in “Gibøens Bruremarsj.” In the first measure, the two-note slurs imitate the Hardanger fiddle’s bowing technique. The melodic texture remains the same in its first repetition with a varied bass line on C-sharp, and the different bass lines provide distinct tone colors (Figure 3.6).

⁷¹ Chris Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway*, 36.



Figure 3.6. Grieg, “Bridal March from Telemark,” Op. 72, No. 3, mm. 10-11

Theme B (mm. 14-17) has an accent on the third beat, and the first beat is deemphasized by the use of an eighth note. There is a connection between the two themes in terms of the texture, and both share a similar melodic contour and the supporting inner voice.

The piece is remarkable for its emphasis on modal harmony by employing the raised fourth intervals in the upper voice and continuous fifth intervals in the lower voice. The raised fourth (G-sharp) in Theme A indicates that this piece incorporates the D Lydian mode, which is a folk music feature attributed to the church influence in Norway in the medieval period.⁷² In the first section, the G-sharp creates dissonant intervals, such as major sevenths and ninths, which result in unstable harmony.

Continuous fifth intervals appear in the left-hand accompaniment at the beginning of the piece. This intervallic pattern in the lower voices is a distinctive feature of the Hardanger fiddle since its flat body and bridge permit the simultaneous sounding of three strings. The left-hand intervals (mm. 1-9) vary from one measure to the next, but the bass notes remain the same as D, E, and A. The continuous bass line gives a stable harmonic

⁷² Chris Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway*, 57.

foundation. Another innovative application of harmony is a harmonic progression I-IV7-I-IV7, combined with the dynamic *pp*, which imparts an impressionistic atmosphere (Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7. Grieg, “Bridal March from Telemark,” Op. 72, No. 3, mm 41-43

The dynamic contrast from *pp* to *ff* (mm. 28-29) is another feature of this piece. The extreme dynamic contrast of the octaves in lower voices with the accent on each beat depict the unrefined nature of Norwegian folk music.

No. 8. *Bruremarsj (etter Myllarguten)*

(Myllarguten’s Wedding March)

The name Myllarguten in the title refers to the most celebrated Norwegian Hardanger fiddle player in the nineteenth century, Torgeir Augundson (1801-1872), who was born in a small village named Sauherad, located in Telemark.⁷³ Augundson was called “Millarguten”⁷⁴ (miller boy) by the farmers in his hometown because his father worked in a farmer’s mill. He began his Hardanger fiddle training at an early age and performed at

⁷³ Einar Haugen and Camilla Cai, *Ole Bull: Norway’s Romantic Musician and Cosmopolitan Patriot* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 19.

⁷⁴ Edvard Grieg, *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1895), 27.

local weddings.⁷⁵ The famous violinist Ole Bull discovered Myllargutten’s talent and invited him to perform in the major cities in Northern Europe. Ole Bull wrote down some of Myllargutten’s improvised tunes which became valuable sources for Grieg’s works.⁷⁶

The score of *Myllargutten’s Wedding March* is prefaced by a short comment:

According to a well-known gleeman (Hardanger fiddle player) from Telemarken, this march is by ‘the Miller’, when Kari broke off her engagement with him, in order to marry another.⁷⁷

This piece is in the key of A major with the tempo *Allegretto grazioso* in the meter 2/4, and is through-composed in three sections, 34, 38, and 26 measures respectively.

Theme A is shown in Figure 3.8.



Figure 3.8. Grieg, “Myllargutten’s Wedding March,” Op. 72, No. 8, mm. 1-5

It is supported by a melodic line with its own distinctive contour, which contrasts with Theme A in “Bruremarsj fra Telemark” where the supporting line only functions harmonically.⁷⁸ The supporting line in the middle voice features the frequent use of trills that adds melodic complexity to Theme A. The rhythm is modified in the fifth repetition

⁷⁵ Einar Haugen and Camilla Cai, *Ole Bull: Norway’s Romantic Musician and Cosmopolitan Patriot*, 20.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷⁷ Edvard Grieg, *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72*, 27.

⁷⁸ Edvard Grieg, *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72*, 12.

with frequent embellishments (m. 19). Theme A and its supporting line with the ornaments on the high register create a crystalline resonance.

There are two irregular phrases in the B section, each eleven measures in length. The first subphrase is five measures long, featuring a chromatic line in the lower middle voice. The harmony of this subphrase remains the same throughout the five measures serving as support for the chromatic theme. A clear indication of *ben marcato mano sinistra* is given to make sure the performer plays the chromatic line louder than the other voices.⁷⁹ This chromatic line communicates a feeling of mystery throughout this section. The second subphrase features a canon in the middle voice and the bass line (Figure 3.9).



Figure 3.9. Grieg, “Myllargutten’s Wedding March,” Op. 72, No. 8, mm. 49-54

The harmonic component of this piece is notable. The repetitive tonic chords create a static harmony that imparts a somnolent atmosphere to the whole piece. The use of polychords is another aspect of the harmonic element. The term polychord refers to different triads sounding at the same time, sometimes resulting in bitonality.⁸⁰ The top two voices in measure 19 stay in A tonic, and the accompaniment in the lower voice is composed of B and F sharp, which creates a minor chord based on B (Figure 3.10).

⁷⁹ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁰ Dan Haerle, *The Jazz Language: A Theory Text for Jazz Composition and Improvisation* (Los Angeles: Warner Bros. publications, 1982), 30.



Figure 3.10. Grieg, “Myllargutten’s Wedding March,” Op. 72, No. 8, mm. 19-22

Polychords are usually considered the twentieth-century musical idiom that usually creates dissonant sounds. Grieg keeps the sound of the polychords relatively consonant by omitting the third note of the A major and B minor chords. By avoiding a harsh and dissonant sound, the polychords with the crystalline sonorities in the upper voices create an ethereal atmosphere pervading the entire piece.

In measure 32, there is a cluster chord that consists of the notes G sharp, A, B, C sharp, and D sharp. The cluster chord makes the seventh repeat of Theme A sound aggressive. The A section ends in measure 34, with a suspended secondary chord D7/III resulting in a modulation to a C-sharp minor chord.

No. 2. *Jon Vestafes Springdans*

(Jon Vestafe’s Springar)

The springar is one of the oldest surviving couple dances in Western Norway. The name springar is originally from the Norwegian word “springe,” which means to “spring” or “run quickly.” Both meanings suggest the quick and light manner in which the footwork

of the springar is executed. The earliest record of the springar in Norway dates from 1646, predating the first mention of the waltz in that country by one hundred and fifty years.⁸¹

The mountains and valleys in Western Norway separate the country into several culturally distinctive regions. These differences influence the ways in which Hardanger fiddle players perform the springar. Even though all springar are in triple meter, the length and accentuation of the beats vary considerably between the cities of Valdres, Telemark, and Hallingdal. The springar No. 2 and 16 in *Slåtter* are from Telemark, which features a strong accent on the third beat. Due to the complexity of the accents and rhythm, the fiddler usually taps out the beat for the dancers while playing, and this foot-tapping becomes part of the dance music.⁸²

This piece is in the key of D major with the tempo *Allegro moderato*, and is in strophic form (A, A', A'') in the meter 3/4. The three sections are, respectively, 31, 29, and 30 measures in length.

The use of rhythmic figures in the different themes in this dance is particularly notable in the case of the triadic figures in dotted rhythm in the left hand. The characteristic accent on the third beat is evident (Figure 3.11), and is shown in Theme A (Figure 3.12).



Figure 3.11. Grieg, “Jon Vestafe’s Springar,” Op. 72, No. 2, mm. 1-2

⁸¹ Daniel Sundstedt Beal, “Two Springar Dance Traditions from Western Norway,” *Ethnomusicology* 28, no. 2 (May 1984): 240.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 246



Figure 3.12. Grieg, “Jon Vestafe’s Springar,” Op. 72, No. 2, mm. 5-7

Theme A is repeated two times with more dotted rhythmic figures added to the middle voice to increase rhythmic variety. Theme B consists of two ascending-note patterns in the left-hand with a *sf* mark on the ending note which emphasizes the accent on the third beat. Theme C (mm. 23-25) is embellished with elaborate ornaments which give it a vivid character (Figure 3.13).



Figure 3.13. Grieg, “Jon Vestafe’s Springar,” Op. 72, No. 2, mm. 23-25

Dynamics play an important role with the three repetitions of Theme C ranging from *p*, *piu p* to *pp*, creating a fading effect (mm. 23-31). Theme A, at a soft dynamic level in a high register, communicates a bright mood. The second section steadily grows from *pp* to *ff*, and the dynamic range further increases to *fff* with a *ffz* mark (m. 83) at the climax of this piece (Figure 3.14).



Figure 3.14. Grieg, “Jon Vestafe’s Springar,” Op. 72, No. 2, mm. 83-84

These dynamic marks and various accents create a harsh sound and strongly delineated metric pulse which are characteristic features of Norwegian peasant music.

No. 16. *Kivlemoyane. Springdans*

(Kivlemoyane’s Springar)

The title “Kivlemoyane. Springdans” is related to the mountain valley Kivletal, located in Seljord, Norway. “Kivlemoyane” is connected with a legend that refers to the three ladies living in Kivledal. There are several folk tunes related to this legend that are still played on the Hardanger fiddle today. The score includes an accounting of the legend:

In Seljord in Telemarken there is a little valley called Kivletal. In ancient times, a tiny church stood in this valley. One Sunday, when the community had assembled for mass, loud sounds from the mountain suddenly reverberated through the church. It was the three maidens of Kivletal, the last heathens in the valley, who, while watching their goats on the mountain-slopes, were blowing a “Slåt” on the Trill-horn.

The community rushed out of the church and listened enraptured to the wondrous enchanting tones. The parson followed, and called to the maidens, bidding them stop playing; but as they kept on blowing their horns, he raised his hands and anathematized them in the name of God and the Pope.

The maidens of Kivletal and their herds were at once changed into stone. And to this day, you can see them standing high up on the mountain-slope, the horn to their mouth and their herds around them. This is the legend of the “Slåt” of the maidens of Kivletal, as preserved by the peasants in the valley, and which they still play on their fiddles. The following “Slåt” is related to this same legend: There are

in all three such “Slåtter”, and only that fiddler was considered great who could play all three.⁸³

This piece is in the key of F major with the tempo *Allegro moderato*, and is in binary form (A, B) in the meter 3/4. The two sections are, respectively, 18 and 26 measures in length.

The use of the thematic materials is notable in this dance, which begins with the left-hand accompaniment in lower voices (mm. 1-3) with the accent on the second beat. This is different from Theme A in No. 2, which does not have the accents on the second beat. In the third measure, another accent is added to the third beat of Theme A (Figure 3.15).

The image shows the musical score for the Introduction of Grieg's "Kivlemoyane's Springar". It is in 3/4 time, F major, and marked *Allegro moderato* with a tempo of 132. The score is in piano (*p*) and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first three measures are shown. The bass clef staff has a piano accompaniment with grace notes and ornaments. The treble clef staff has a melody. The first measure has a grace note on the first beat. The second measure has a grace note on the second beat. The third measure has a grace note on the third beat. The score is annotated with "Ped." (pedal) and "*" (ornament) symbols. A box highlights the first three measures, and a circle highlights the grace note on the third beat.

Figure 3.15. Grieg, “Kivlemoyane’s Springar,” Op. 72, No. 16, mm. 1-3

Theme A has the grace notes added to the first beat, and these ornaments in *staccato* create a crisp sound. Theme B is quoted in Figure 3.16.

⁸³ Edvard Grieg, *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1895), 49.



Figure 3.16. Grieg, “Kivlemoyane’s Springar,” Op. 72, No. 16, mm. 10-12

The repeat of Theme B has the original eighth-note rhythmic patterns replaced by the dotted-sixteenth notes and eighth-note triplets, which gives a more impulsive rhythm to this lyrical theme. Theme B is repeated nine times throughout the entire piece with Theme A serving as a bridge between each repeat. In the seventh repeat of Theme B, arpeggiated figures are added to the first beat, which adds resonance.

No. 4. *Haugelåt Halling*

(Halling from the Fairy Hill)

The fourth piece is a halling that, according to Norwegian tradition, has been considered the oldest dance in Northern Europe. The earliest depictions of this dance are found in cave paintings that date from 2500 years ago, and the name halling is related to the Norwegian city Hallingdal.⁸⁴ It is usually performed by a young man in a rapid 2/4 or 6/8 tempo. It can also be performed by a group of men involving some challenging moves

⁸⁴ Nils Grinde. “Halling.” *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed Mar 26, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.12251>

such as leaping, head spinning, and neck jumping.⁸⁵ Syncopated rhythm and accentuations on multiple beats are typical characteristics frequently found in the halling.

The poem prefacing this piece sets a somnolent atmosphere suitable to the middle section:

A man, by the name of Brynjuw Olson, had lost a bull. After searching for the animal in the mountains for several days he became exhausted and fell asleep. He dreamed that he heard a strange song. Behind a hill, he saw a beautiful maiden. She called him and said: “Yea! so shalt thou play on the fiddle, Brynjuw Olson, when thou returnest home to wife and child, and yonder, where the mountains disappear, wilt thou find the bull.”⁸⁶

The piece is in the key of D major with the tempo *Moderato*, and is in ternary form (A, B, A) in the meter 2/4. The three sections are, respectively, 28, 42, and 28 measures in length.

An innovative treatment of harmony is particularly notable. The opening features a group of perfect fifth intervals in a syncopated rhythm which imitates a horn-like sonority. They are repeated in the bass, which defines the harmonic and registral domain of the first section. The frequent accentuations and the increasing range of the intervals in the left-hand culminate in a climax (m. 15).

Considering the dynamics, the harsh sound with the *ff* and *ffz* marks depict the primitive quality of the Norwegian springar. The left-hand octaves in the low register, at an extremely loud dynamic level, express the athleticism and robustness of neck kicking and head spinning in this peasant dance. The dynamic mark *fff* with *ffz* in this passage further increases the dynamic intensity of the climax (m. 18) which illustrates the “uncouth

⁸⁵ Ibid.,

⁸⁶ Edvard Grieg, *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72* (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1895), 15.

power and untamed wildness”⁸⁷ of Norwegian folk music. This piece is organized around a theme shown in Figure 3.17.



Figure 3.17. Grieg, “Halling from the Fairy Hill,” Op. 72, No. 4, mm. 6-8

Theme A is repeated three times and sets the melodic tone of the entire piece. Theme B occurs in measure 11 with a small change in melodic contour and voicing, and it frequently alternates between the top and middle voices (Figure 3.18).



Figure 3.18. Grieg, “Halling from the Fairy Hill,” Op. 72, No. 4, mm. 11-12

The chromatic motion is a key feature of the B section which dramatically changes the character of Theme A. Theme A reappears with the augmented note values while

⁸⁷ Edvard Grieg, *Slåtter, Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op. 72* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1895), 2.

retaining the same melodic gesture. The bass line moves in a chromatic motion which increases the harmonic instability (Figure 3.19).

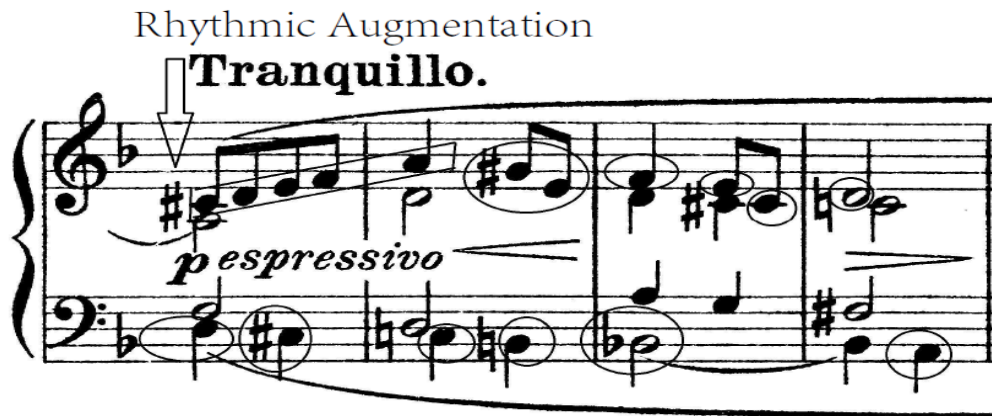


Figure 3.19. Grieg, “Halling from the Fairy Hill,” Op. 72, No. 4, mm. 29-32

The structural design of this piece is notable. The B section contrasts with the A section in key, mood, tempo, texture, and is in D minor, the parallel minor key. The *espressivo* indication suggests a sweet and yearning character which contrasts with the *staccato* sound in the A section.

The coda features a series of descending major third intervals which derive from Theme A. It is repeated nine times continuously with the sustained pedal, which creates a bell-like effect (Figure 3.20).



Figure 3.20. Grieg, “Halling from the Fairy Hill,” Op. 72, No. 4, mm. 71-75

No. 7. *Rotnams Knut. Halling*

(Rotnams Knut's Halling)

The piece is in the key of D major with the tempo *Allegretto moderato, ma vivace*, and is in ternary form (A, B, A) in the meter 2/4. The three sections are, respectively, 52, 97, and 52 measures in length.

It is remarkable for its emphasis on rhythm, and begins with a series of perfect fifth intervals in a syncopated pattern which increases the rhythmic complexity by placing the accents on the offbeats while omitting the downbeat. For example, there are two accents in the first and second beats (m. 4) in the upper voice, and the syncopated pattern adds additional accents in the lower voices (Figure 3.21).

Allegro moderato, ma vivace. ♩ = 100. ★ accents on the melody

The image shows a musical score for the first four measures of Grieg's "Rotnams Knut's Halling". The score is in 2/4 time and D major. The upper voice (treble clef) features a syncopated melody with accents on the offbeats. The lower voice (bass clef) consists of a series of perfect fifth intervals. Annotations include "p" (piano) and "Red." (redaction) in the bass line, and "Downbeat is weakened" with an arrow pointing to the first beat. The tempo is marked "Allegro moderato, ma vivace" with a metronome marking of ♩ = 100. A star symbol (★) is placed next to the tempo marking, and the text "accents on the melody" is written above the upper voice.

Figure 3.21. Grieg, "Rotnams Knut's Halling," Op. 72, No. 7, mm. 1-4

Even though the B section retains the same tempo, rhythmic augmentation is applied to all motivic elements, thereby increasing the feeling of momentum and making the tempo appear to be faster, as may be seen in Figure 3.23.

Considering the harmonic component, the first beat of Theme A contains a dissonant sound created by the raised fourth (G-sharp) and A (m. 2). Another major seventh interval appears at the second half of Theme A, and the G-sharp serves as a leading tone

resolving to the perfect octave (m. 4). The perfect fifth intervals (m. 3) in the lower voices change to the ascending second, third, and fourth intervals with the same D pedal tone. The raised fourth in the upper voice and the ascending intervals in the lower voice increase the harmonic complexity and create more dissonance. Theme B (mm. 12-13) is shown in Figure 3.22.

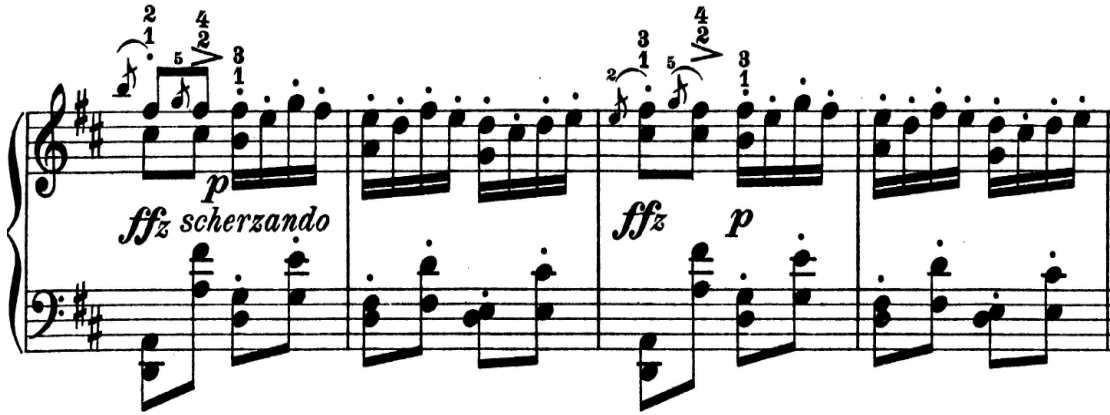


Figure 3.22. Grieg, “Rotnams Knut’s Halling,” Op. 72, No. 7, mm. 12-15

The two themes are rhythmically and motivically contrasting with each other. In contrast, the two themes in “Haugelåt Halling” are more closely connected motivically.

The structural design of this piece is clearly outlined, and the B section (55-149) contrasts with the A section in key, mood, tempo, and texture and is in D minor, the parallel minor to D major. The *con tristezza* indication suggests a sorrowful mood which contrasts with what has preceded it. The materials from the A section also change to a minor mode in a thin musical texture, and the left-hand accompaniment changes from fifth intervals to an ostinato with a D pedal tone which stabilize the harmony. This is quite different from the middle section of “Haugelåt Halling.” Instead of applying an ostinato in a thinner musical texture, the lower voices in “Haugelåt Halling” include a chromatic line and expansion to a complex four-voice texture with unstable harmony.

The B section begins with modified Theme A (mm. 55-58) in D minor. After a measure of the ostinato, the upper voice begins with a raised fourth note (G-sharp) on the second beat of measure 56. The G-sharp together with the B-flat and D form an Italian sixth chord (Figure 3.23).



Figure 3.23. Grieg, "Rotnams Knut's Halling," Op. 72, No. 7, mm. 55-60

Instead of resolving to the dominant, this Italian sixth chord resolves to the tonic, an unusual chord progression. A French sixth chord appears in measure 58 with the tonic note in the bass and resolves to a tonic chord. A modified Theme B appears as the middle voice of a five-voice texture (m. 79) with the accompaniment in the upper voice featuring a series of descending chromatic notes. The augmented sixth chord progressions, combined with chromaticism, provide an atmosphere of mystery and exoticism.

No. 9. *Nils Rekves Halling*

(Nils Rekve's Halling)

The title refers to one of the most prominent Hardanger fiddle players in the nineteenth century, Nils Olavsson Rekves. He grew up in a musical family in the Norwegian city Voss, and his father was a famous fiddler in the town who was skilled at free improvisation. Since Nils Olavsson Rekve was a folk musician who did not publish any of his music, most of his improvised tunes and musical compositions have not survived.

Only a few of his compositions are preserved in the collection *Hardingfeleverket*.⁸⁸ As the title indicates, Grieg referenced the halling by Rekve when composing this piece.

This halling is in the key of D major with the tempo *Maestoso*, and is in binary form (A, B) in the meter 2/4. The two sections are, respectively, 26 and 27 measures in length. The thematic content of this piece is particularly distinctive due to a two-voiced texture in Theme A (Figure 3.24).



Figure 3.24. Grieg, "Nils Rekve's Halling," Op. 72, No. 9, mm. 1-4

The melodic line begins in the upper voice and moves to the lower one in the next measure. The D in the bass line serves as a pedal tone for ten measures. Theme A and the intervals, including the raised fourths, are based on the D pedal tone, which imitates the D string on the Hardanger fiddle. Theme A is repeated eleven times in the A section with the melodic patterns remaining the same, but with harmonic changes in the lower voices. The themes are modified by applying different rhythmic features including syncopated rhythm with thirty-second notes, sixteenth-note triplets, and the frequent use of accent marks.

This piece significantly demonstrates Grieg's strong passion for nature. The thematic materials in the A section reflect his attempt to imitate the different types of bird

⁸⁸ Ingrid Loe Dalaker, *East of Noise: Eivind Groven, Composer, Ethnomusicologist Researcher* (Bergen: Akademika Publishing, 2013), 93.

sounds. Ornaments such as grace notes, mordents, and trills written in thirty-second notes are used to produce this effect. A mordent written in thirty-second notes (m. 7) is added to Theme A, which successfully imitates an echo of the bird call (Figure 3.25).



Figure 3.25. Grieg, “Nils Rekve’s Halling,” Op. 72, No. 9, mm. 14-16

The figuration is reminiscent of Grieg’s famous middle period piece, “Vöglein” (Little Bird), *Lyric Pieces*, Op. 43, No. 4. The whole composition is featured by the frequent use of trills written in thirty-second notes (Figure 3.26).

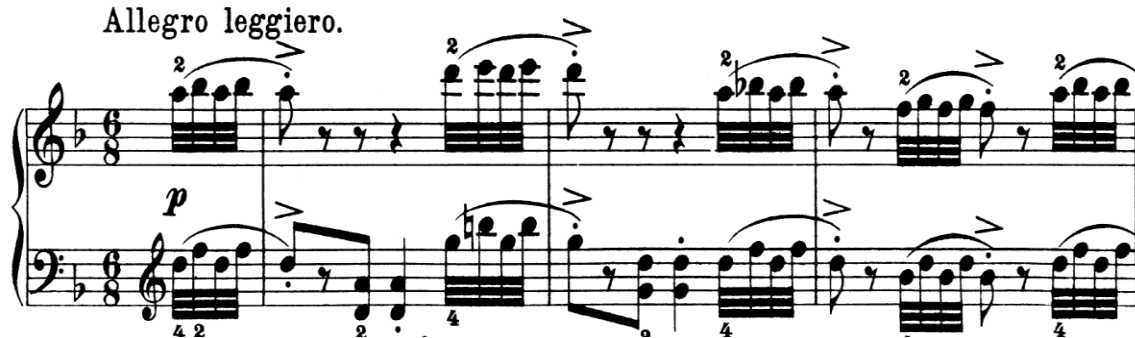


Figure 3.26. Grieg, “Vöglein,” Op. 43, No. 4, mm. 1-4, 50-51

No. 10. *Knut Lurasens Halling I*

(Knut Lurasen’s Halling I)

The title of this piece refers to a famous Hardanger fiddle musician named Knut Lurasen. Lurasen was considered a predecessor of Hardanger fiddle music who influenced later Hardanger fiddle musicians such as Havard Giboen and Myllarguten. He grew up in

a musical family in the small Norwegian city Tinn. His father, a famous musician in the town, introduced him to music. In his early years, Lurasen traveled to different cities in Norway to perform folk music in different wedding ceremonies and dance events. He began to gain fame in the early 1800s and extended his travels to different countries in Northern Europe. His halling is among the tunes transcribed by Knut Dahle.

This halling is in the key of G major with the tempo *Moderato*, and is in binary form (A, B) in the meter 6/8. The two sections are, respectively, 23 and 30 measures in length. It is remarkable for its emphasis on rhythm in all of its thematic materials. Theme A (mm. 3-7) introduces a hemiola pattern which pervades the entire piece (Figure 3.27).

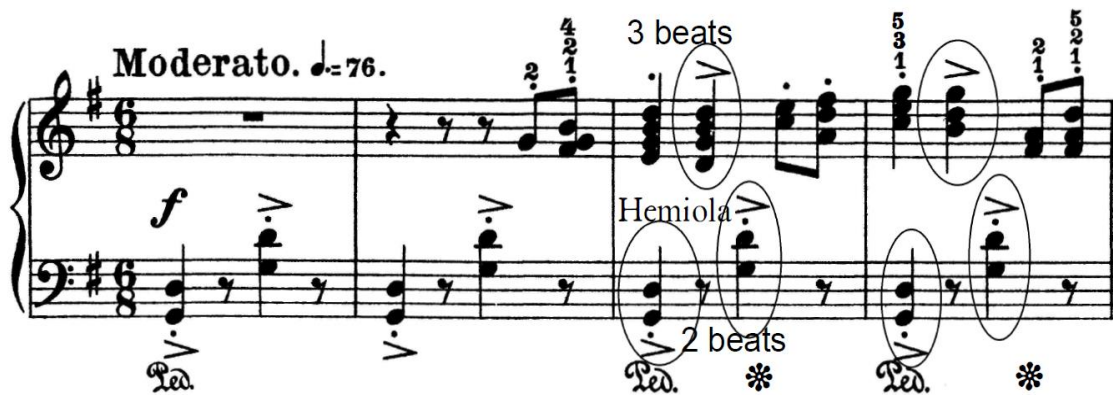


Figure 3.27. Grieg, “Knut Lurasen’s Halling I,” Op. 72, No. 10, mm. 1-4

The left-hand accompaniment has persistent accents which emphasize the heaviness of the halling. The syncopations against the pulsation of the bass heighten excitement. Theme A is modified with additional notes (m. 13), and the frequent alternation of accents and the use of grace notes add rhythmic variety.

Theme B (mm. 24-25) features an accent on the third beat, and a quarter note slurred to the next measure weakens the downbeat significantly (Figure 3.28).



Figure 3.28. Grieg, “Knut Lurasen’s Halling I,” Op. 72, No. 10, mm. 24-26

A short coda (mm. 47-53) contains motivic elements from Theme A utilizing a broad dynamic range. The section begins with a *diminuendo*, but suddenly changes to *ff* with persistent accents. An extreme dynamic change from *pp* to *fff* in measure 52 culminates in a climax at the end.

No. 11. *Knut Lurasens Halling II*

(Knut Lurasen’s Halling II)

As suggested by the title, this piece shares similar motivic and rhythmic elements with “Knut Lurasens Halling I,” although this halling stylistically contrasts with the previous one. Grieg applies the same compositional method that is used in the seventh piece, “Rotnams-Knut. Halling.” Both pieces have one motivic idea undergoing subtle modifications that represent contrasting emotional states, a typical feature of the halling.

The piece is in the key of D major with the tempo *Allegretto tranquillo* in the meter 6/8, and is through-composed in three sections, 18, 17, and 17 measures respectively. It is organized around a theme shown in Figure 3.29. Theme A is similar to the modified theme in “Knut Lurasens Halling I” (Figure 3.30).



Figure 3.29. Grieg, “Knut Lurasen’s Halling II,” Op. 72, No. 11, mm. 1-3



Figure 3.30. Grieg, “Knut Lurasen’s Halling I,” Op. 72, No. 10, mm. 12-14

Both themes start with an anacrusis with a supporting line in the lower voice with accent marks on weak beats, such as the third, fifth, and second. Despite similarities, there are still several contrasting elements between these two themes. The differing tempo marks suggest a contrast in character between the two pieces. The staccato theme of “Knut Lurasens Halling I” expresses a vividness of character, while the legato theme of this piece is lyrical and expressive. The textures of the two settings are different, one more contrapuntal than the other. “Knut Lurasens Halling I” has the supporting harmony in intervals and chords. In contrast, there is a clear four-voice-texture, and the three supporting melodic lines are structured independently, even though they have similar melodic contours. The frequent changes from 3/8 to 6/8 increase the rhythmic complexity (Figure 3.31).



Figure 3.31. Grieg, “Knut Lurasen’s Halling II,” Op. 72, No. 11 mm. 29-31

No. 6. *Gangar (etter Myllarguten)*

(Myllarguten’s Gangar)

The sixth piece is a gangar which is one of the basic forms of the Norwegian village dance “Bygdedans.” The gangar is a duple-meter dance that appears in mountain areas in Northern and Western Norway. It has three sections: Vending, Lausdans, and Samdans. Vending contains various motives and their variations; Lausdans refers to the solo dance in the middle section; in the closing Samdans, the dancer performs rotations with a partner. The form and rhythmic features of the gangar are not strict, and the tempo and rhythm vary in different regions. The fast gangar has two uneven beats with the lengths of each beat varied depending on the location of origin, and the slow gangar is usually danced in two even beats.

The piece is in the key of D major with the tempo *Allegretto e marcato*, and is in binary form (A, B) in the meter 6/8. The two sections are, respectively, 16 and 26 measures in length.

The variety of harmony in the different themes is particularly notable. The A section consists of measures 1-16 and begins quietly with the grace notes in the lower voice.

The A pedal tone in the middle voice and D in the bass remains for four measures, which creates a static harmony in the D tonic. These grace notes over the D pedal tone, with a *senza pedale* marking (without pedal) for ten measures, create a dry sonority (Figure 3.32).

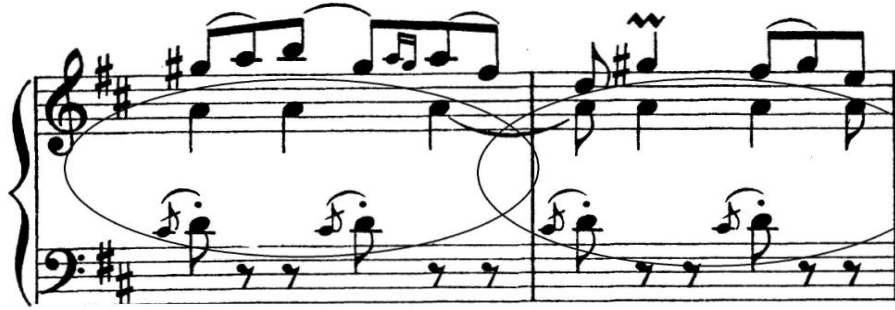


Figure 3.32. Grieg, “Myllarguten’s Gangar,” Op. 72, No. 6, mm. 5-6

In order to avoid the static effect created by the perfect fifth in the bass, Theme A includes the major seventh and major second intervals constructed from the G sharp, B and A (m. 3) in the middle voice, which create dissonances and harmonic tension.

A hint of what would later become quartal harmony occurs in measure 4 in a chord consisting of the A, D, and G-sharp, creating a feeling of suspension and ambiguity. Although this is only an instance, even a suggestion of quartal harmony is quite unusual in the late Romantic era when this piece was composed. Not until 1911 did Schoenberg’s *The Theory of Harmony* discuss how systematic use of quartal chords made it possible to explore new sonorities.⁸⁹

Theme A is varied rhythmically but the melodic line stays the same in measures 7-10. The bass note is changed to A (m. 7), which changes the harmony from tonic to dominant. Theme A is repeated seven times throughout the A section, each time adding

⁸⁹ Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 59.

more ornamentation. Polychords (D and A major triads) appear in measure 10, adding distinct tone colors (Figure 3.33).

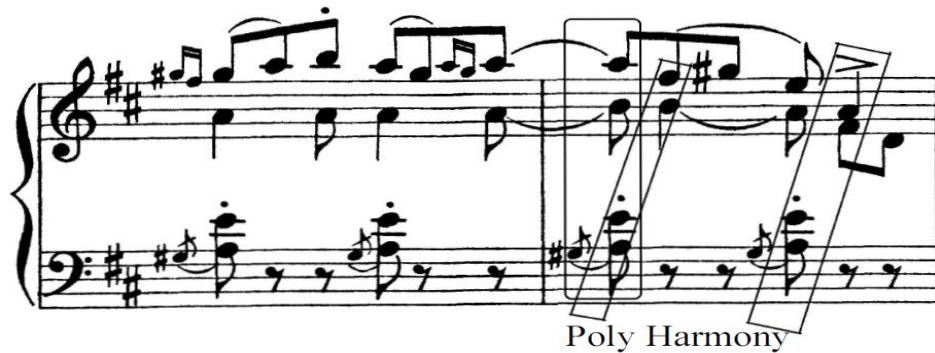


Figure 3.33. Grieg, “Myllarguten’s Gangar,” Op. 72, No. 6, mm. 9-10

Section B (mm. 17-42) consists of two themes. Theme B (mm. 17-18) contains a descending-third note pattern which derives from Theme A. Theme C (mm. 25-26) features a series of descending chords with a pervasive dominant pedal point, and the chromatic motion in the middle voice avoids a static harmonic progression (Figure 3.34).



Figure 3.34. Grieg, “Myllarguten’s Gangar,” Op. 72, No. 6, mm. 25-26

In summary, *Slåtter* utilizes four different dance forms: bruremarsj, springar, halling, and gangar, which show the influence of the Norwegian folk tradition. This set includes various compositional features such as chromaticism, polyphonic textures, complex rhythmic patterns, ostinato figures, modal harmony, quartal harmony, and

polyharmony. Through these means, Grieg creates different colors and distinct characters in each piece.

Grieg indicates that this set is based on Dahle's original Hardanger fiddle tunes, which contribute most to the effect of *Slåtter*. The majority of the pieces in *Slåtter* illustrate extreme emotional contrast, reflected in the use of a wide range of dynamics, which is a distinguished feature of Norwegian folk music rarely found in Grieg's early pieces.

Each piece in *Slåtter* is in a traditional dance idiom which has a complex rhythm in terms of the length of the downbeat and the distribution of the accents in weak beats. Hemiola, asymmetrical rhythmic patterns, and the frequent change of meter add rhythmic variety.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Edvard Grieg's music gives Norway a musical identity uniquely different from that of Western Europe. *Slåtter* was composed from 1902-1903, and during that period the nationalist movement was at its peak in Eastern and Northern Europe. At that time, Grieg was exploring the Norwegian music performed by traditional instruments. *Slåtter* shows Grieg's attempt to bring this traditional folk music to the rest of the world through settings for solo piano.

While romanticism prevailed throughout Europe during Grieg's lifetime, movements toward independence occurred in many countries across Europe. The people's national consciousness became strong, especially in Eastern and Northern Europe where the economy and politics were relatively underdeveloped. While fighting for independence politically and militarily, writers and artists in these regions also strove for independence at the cultural level. In the field of music, independence was expressed as challenging the dominance of Western European music by an intense commitment to folk music and the incorporation of folk music and local musical traditions. Composers were making an effort to establish and develop a national music style that truly belonged to the nation.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Norway strove to represent its own culture and musical identity as separate from the Western European tradition. In the mid-nineteenth century, there were a multitude of nationalistic movements in Norway including the "Nye Norske Selskab" (New Norwegian Society) in 1859 and "Euterpe" in 1865.

Grieg showed an intense commitment to the Norwegian element in his music. His admiration of the beauty and serenity of the Norwegian landscape permeated his work. He composed music of unique lyricism and emotional depth, expressed through a unique melodic style and sophisticated harmonic language. The stylistic features of Grieg's late period draw heavily on Norwegian musical elements, and these elements are all present in *Slåtter*, which is a culminating work.

Slåtter is one of Grieg's greatest contributions to piano literature. The set contains seventeen piano miniatures, and each piece has a title that represents a traditional Norwegian dance: "Gibøen's Bridal March," "Jon Vestafe's Springar," "Bridal March from Telemark," "Halling from the Fairy Hill," "Myllarguten's Gangar," "Tornams Knut's Halling," "Myllargutten's Wedding March," "Nils Rekve's Halling," "Knut Lurasen's Halling I," "Knut Lurasen's Halling II," "Halling from the Fairy Hill," "The Pillar from Os Parish. Springar," "Myllarguten's Springar," "Havard Giboen's Dream at the Oterholt Bridge. Springar," "The Goblin's Bridal Procession at Vossevangen. Gangar," "The Skuldal Bride. Gangar," and "The Maidens from Kivledal. Gangar." These pieces can be categorized into four types of Norwegian dances: springar (Nos. 2, 5, 12, 13, and 16); halling (Nos. 4, 7, 9, 10, and 11); gangar (Nos. 6, 14, 15, and 17); and bruremarsj (wedding march): (Nos. 1, 3, 8).⁹⁰ This study analyzes eleven pieces in this set, including examples of all four traditional dances: Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 16.

Grieg was influenced by other Norwegian composers, folk musicians, and the nationalist movement in Norway. Hardanger fiddle musicians such as Myllarguten

⁹⁰ Daniel Sundstedt Beal, "Two Springar Dance Traditions from Western Norway," *Ethnomusicology* 28, no. 2 (May 1984): 238.

(Torgeir Augundson), Nils Olavsson Rekve, Knut Lurasen, and Håvard Gibøen also inspired Grieg's music. These folk musicians' names appear in the titles of various pieces in *Slåtter*.

The national characteristics in Grieg's music include the traditional Norwegian dances, folk tales, and poems. The poems and folk tales that appeared in the score were mostly from Norwegian folk literature with no identified author. This valuable Norwegian literature existed for several centuries and had inspired many artists and musicians.

Norwegian folk musicians were able to incorporate quartal harmony and polyharmony by using the extra strings on the Hardanger fiddle. In Grieg's *Slåtter*, folk elements such as modal harmony, quartal harmony, and polyharmony are used.⁹¹ Modal harmony has been used in different Norwegian folk songs since the medieval period, including the frequent use of continuous perfect fifths and augmented fourths.

The distribution of the accents on the weak beats is found in most springar and halling in *Slåtter*. The frequent change of meter is also a typical feature of traditional dance music. Hemiola is found in three pieces in *Slåtter* which adds rhythmic variety. Another compositional characteristic found in *Slåtter* includes extreme dynamic contrast. The dynamic indications *pppp* or *fff* with *ffz* are rarely found in Grieg's other piano pieces.

Modification and repetition of the thematic materials are also frequent occurrences in Norwegian instrumental music. In most of the Hardanger fiddle folk music, the thematic development is incorporated with folk musicians' improvisational styles. Grieg adapted this idea and applied this compositional technique in all pieces in *Slåtter*.

⁹¹ Georgia Volioti, "Reinventing Grieg's Folk Modernism: An Empirical Investigation of the Performance of the *Slåtter*, Op. 72, No. 2," *Journal of Musicological Research* 31, no. 4 (October 2012): 263.

Slåtter is an important work that displays Grieg's creative experimentation in utilizing Hardanger fiddle characters, as well as other Norwegian musical elements. The integration of a broad spectrum of folk characters produces a mixture where a great variety of elements merge. The pieces in *Slåtter* are an especially valuable source for scholars and musicians who are interested in an innovative way of utilizing various folk elements.


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APPENDIX A

RECITAL PROGRAM



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

ZHIYUAN HE, piano

in

DOCTORAL RECITAL

Monday, February 18, 2019
6:00 PM • Recital Hall

Nine Variations on a Minuet by Duport, K. 573	W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)
Three Intermezzi, Op. 117 E-flat Major B-flat Minor C-sharp Minor	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Three Romances, Op. 28 B-flat Minor F-sharp Major B Major	Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm (Mikrokosmos, Book VI)	Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Mr. He is a student of Charles Fugo. This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Music degree in Piano Performance.

Figure A.1. Zhiyuan He, First Doctoral Recital



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

ZHIYUAN HE, piano

in

DOCTORAL LECTURE RECITAL

Monday, November 4, 2019

4:30 PM • Recital Hall

Brahms's Six Piano Pieces, Op. 118:
Strong Emotion Within Strict Rules


Six Piano Pieces, Op. 118

- I. Intermezzo in A minor
- II. Intermezzo in A major
- III. Ballade in G minor
- IV. Intermezzo in F minor
- V. Romanze in F major
- VI. Intermezzo in E-flat minor

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Zhiyuan He is a student of Dr. Charles Fugo. This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree.

Figure A.2. Zhiyuan He, Second Doctoral Recital



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

ZHIYUAN HE, piano

in

DOCTORAL RECITAL

Wednesday, February 5, 2020
6:00 PM • Recital Hall

Variations in F Minor, Hob. XVII: 6	Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
Sonata in A Major, D. 664 I. Allegro moderato II. Andante III. Allegro	Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Fantasia (1953)	Benjamin Lees (1924-2010)
Dumka, Op. 59	Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Zhiyuan He is a student of Dr. Charles Fugo. This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctorate of Musical Arts degree.

Figure A.3. Zhiyuan He, Third Doctoral Recital



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

ZHIYUAN HE, piano

in

DOCTORAL RECITAL

**Sunday, August 30, 2020
3:00 PM • Recital Hall**

Partita in C Minor, BWV 826

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

I. Sinfonia

II. Allemande

III. Courante

IV. Sarabande

V. Rondeau

VI. Capriccio

Sonata in E Minor, Op. 91

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

I. Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck
II. Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen

Variations sérieuses, Op. 54

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809-1847)

Souvenirs, Op. 28 (1952)

Samuel Barber
(1910-1981)

I. Schottische

II. Pas de deux

Mr. He is a student of Charles Fagn. This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Music degree in Piano Performance.

Figure A.4. Zhiyuan He, Fourth Doctoral Recital