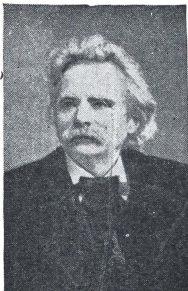


**MUSIC APPRECIATION SECTION****GREAT COMPOSERS OF MUSIC**

## SECOND SERIES

By BERT PAUL OSBON

## IX. GRIEG



GRIEG

*Famous Norwegian Composer*

In the snowy northland called Norway there was born in the year 1843 a little boy, Edvard Grieg (pronounced *greeg*), who was destined to paint the icy, blue, and glittering scenes of his homeland in music. His grandfather was a Scotchman and his father a British consul in Norway. His gifted Norwegian mother was a singer and skilled pianist, and she gave Edvard his earliest music lessons at the age of six. His mother was very strict, and although it pleased her to see the boy improvising at the piano, nevertheless she was relentless in making him work at his scales and exercises. Sometimes when his mother was not in the room, Edvard would improvise at the piano. This did not escape the ears of his mother, and she would call to him from the kitchen or whatever part of the house she happened to be: "Edvard, now aren't you ashamed?" In a threatening voice she would insist that he practise.

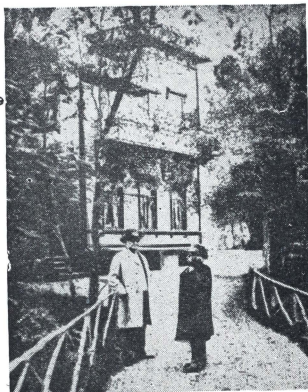
His parents were very much interested

in music. They lived in a beautiful large house, and it was possible for them to arrange for the production of complete operas in their home. On one occasion little Edvard witnessed in his home a magnificent performance of Beethoven's *Fantasia*, with chorus and orchestra, his mother appearing as soloist. She was admirably fitted to instil in her young son a great love for music.

Edvard had an older brother John who was learning to play the 'cello. He was sent to one of the music centers of Germany to study, but he gave it up to become a business man. He always retained his love and interest in music; later he was an important music critic in his town.

When merely a boy, Edvard was taken by his father on long trips through the picturesque mountain scenery of Norway.

*A Norwegian Fjord*



*Grieg (on the right) and a Friend at his Villa*

He learned to love deeply the pine woods, the fjords, forests, and hills of his native land. (See the picture on page 325.) The boy was captivated with the tunes played by the Norwegian fiddlers upon their curious old fiddles. Often he heard the peasant dances and wedding processions, and he longed to preserve the Norwegian music which he heard.

Afterwards, when he began to write beautiful music, it was always reminiscent of these native songs, dances, fairy tales, and wild mountain legends. Trolls and pixies and bearded mountain kings peopled the tales told him during his happy childhood. These things he used in his later compositions, for Grieg was always Norwegian in character.

He wrote his first musical composition when he was nine years old. When a great Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull, who was living at that time, was shown some of the boy's work, he advised that Edvard be sent to the Leipsic Conservatory of

Music in Germany to study music. His good parents gladly agreed to this. He already had an excellent musical background which he had received from his mother. After studying music in Germany for some years, he went to Denmark and then returned to his native Norway.

After his return to Norway, he married his cousin who was an excellent singer. He founded a musical society which did much to bring forth Scandinavian music. The members of this society solemnly vowed to do all in their power to further the development of national music. Grieg's wife was one of the supporters of this organization, for she sang Grieg's songs when, together, they made concert tours of Germany, England, France, Holland, and Denmark. The ocean trip to America was too strenuous an undertaking for Grieg who suffered and eventually died from tuberculosis, but the honors heaped upon him abroad caused his music to be very much liked in America.

The Norwegian government granted him a pension so that he might devote all his time to composition. Grieg belongs at the top of the group of Scandinavian composers who were unusually fine creators of art-songs. Indeed, Grieg is generally considered among the leading song-writers of the world. Much of his work is distinctly in the German style, because he received much of his later musical training at the conservatory in Leipsic, Germany, but gradually he wrote his music to express a Norwegian style.

When the writer of plays, Ibsen, wrote his great drama called *Peer Gynt*, he asked Grieg to write music for the play.

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## GRIEG

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The music was so lovely that it became better liked than the play itself, and finally was arranged in two orchestral suites, giving the whole story in a series of beautiful tone pictures. Some of them are in Norway, and some in far-away Arabia or Egypt.

If you wonder how music can tell a story without words, you have only to listen to one of the most remarkable stories ever told in music—the *Peer Gynt* music by Grieg. *Peer Gynt* is a Norwegian legend of a worthless fellow whose life was dissipated in wandering from one land to another and carousing, while his old mother Ase waited in vain for his return.

During his wanderings, *Peer Gynt* met an Oriental dancer named Anitra who got all his possessions and then left him. At another time he met the trolls and their king in a hall under the mountains. All these events are told in the music of *Peer Gynt*.

Grieg chose certain events of the story to tell in his music. Those which you will enjoy the most (you can hear them on a phonograph), and which carry the thread of the

story are:

*Morning*

*Anitra's Dance*

*Ase's Death*

*Sunshine Song*

*In the Hall of the Mountain King*

*Cradle Song*

Try to hear any of these or all of them at your first opportunity.

In another composition called *March of the Dwarfs* Grieg tells us of the old fairy tales, and in the *Norwegian Bridal Procession* he tells of the quaint marriage customs of the peasant folk. In his compositions entitled *To Spring* and *Butterfly* he has caught the spirit of spring, the song of the birds, and smell of grass and flowers and trees. Grieg never wrote great symphonies, but contented himself with composing beautiful songs and smaller works.

The Northland is a country of mountains and fjords of snow and northern lights, of a rugged race of liberty-loving people. A deep and lasting love of the North warms the hearts of its people. These characteristics Grieg expresses in his music which reminds us of the deep fjords, and dark mountains of Norway, his native land.

Grieg lived in a villa outside of his native city. Here he died in 1907.

## BE AN OPTIMIST

(Continued from page 331)

endure. We must be optimists and believe that right will again prevail, and it will. Be an optimist. Liberty *will* enlighten the world. If you believe this, you are an optimist.

And when the entire world is again controlled by the right, in the new age that will come science will give us power, and power will give us leisure. We are beginning to use the power of the sun. The optimist says, Who knows how far that power will take us?

Forever great events are in the making. There is never a day—even in the present terrible world condition—but what *some* good seed is sown that will bear unexpected fruit. There is no limit to the promise of the future. We have among us even now men whose names will endure when some of the stars in the sky have ceased to shine. The world *will* become better. Right *will* conquer wrong. Be an optimist and believe this and do your tiny bit to bring it about.

## SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

1. What is an optimist?
2. What is a pessimist?