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## AN "AUTHENTIC" PEER GYNT-MUSIC? A SOURCE-CRITICAL STUDY OF EDVARD GRIEG'S OPUS 23 – SOME ASPECTS

Reading the title of the Edvard Grieg Congress, Copenhagen 2011, I was more or less automatically drawn to the staging of *Peer Gynt* at the Dagmar Theatre in Copenhagen January 1886. Edvard Grieg's *Peer Gynt* had been a subject during several years spent preparing vol. 18 of *Edvard Grieg Complete Works* (GGA). In 1886 no one knew that Grieg would never succeed in publishing a score to *Peer Gynt*. As we shall see later, he expressed his regret for this on more than one occasion. In 1983, nearly 100 years after the production at the Dagmar Theater, Finn Benestad and I started the work investigating the possibility of publishing an authentic score to *Peer Gynt*, i. e. a score in accordance with Grieg's own intentions. One of the sources, the score used at the production in 1886, now preserved in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, turned out to be of great importance.

To be sure there exist two published versions of *Peer Gynt*. The first one is a compilation of pieces that had earlier been printed, for example the eight items constituting the two *Peer Gynt*-suites for orchestra. In a letter to Gerhard Schjelderup of 4 December 1906 Grieg writes: "But since the materials needed for the performance—both the score and the parts—have been printed by Peters, it simply will not do—indeed, it is an impropriety—to say such things as that one does not know that "Solveig's Cradle Song" exists." Our investigation has shown that what Grieg writes about in this letter is a shortened version consisting of 13 pieces only, in fact renting material that C. F. Peters prepared for productions in Germany.

The second published version is a score published by Peters in 1908, the year after Grieg's death. This version comprises 23 pieces. At first sight one may get the impression that this is a score in compliance with Grieg's own wishes, as if he towards the end of his life had managed to prepare a complete *Peer Gynt* score, ready for publication. However, this score was not prepared by Grieg, but by Johan Halvorsen, the conductor of the National Theater Orchestra in Kristiania (Oslo).

In 1983 the question was quite simply this: if Grieg himself had managed to publish his Op. 23, what would the content of that score have been? We scrutinized in detail all the accessible source material—some 1700 pages in all. The sources show that *Peer Gynt* had comprised more pieces than the 23 published in 1908. This can be seen from Grieg's

letter of 14 December 1875 to the conductor of the first performance in 1876, Johan Hennum, who mentions 26 pieces. Add to this that all the main productions in Grieg's life-time was incomplete as to the number of pieces. In addition pieces not originally composed for *Peer Gynt* were also used—specifically the *Norwegian Dances*, Op. 35, and the *Bridal Procession*, Op. 19 No. 2—and on two occasions one piece was re-arranged. Did any of this indicate that Grieg at any point in time had made permanent alterations of the content?

Having made clear the content of all the productions of *Peer Gynt* in Grieg's lifetime, this question followed nearly by itself: did Grieg by using the *Norwegian Dances*, Op. 35, in 1886 and 1892 integrate them into Op. 23? To this Grieg has given a very unambiguous answer. In a letter to Max Abraham 12 February 1892 Grieg writes: "No 2 aus den norwegischen Tänzen anzuwenden, geht schon deshalb nicht, weil das Thema nicht von mir ist, sondern einem Volkstanz entlehnt ist. In Per Gynt muss Alles original sein." This eliminates any thought of integrating the *Norwegian Dances* in *Peer Gynt*—all four dances are based on Norwegian folk melodies. What then about the *Bridal Procession*, Op. 19 No. 2, which is an original work by Grieg. Johan Halvorsen, the outstanding conductor at the National Theater in Kristiania (Oslo), has not recognized the *Bridal Procession* as part of *Peer Gynt*—Halvorsen did not use it at the production in 1902. In the printers copy of the 1908 edition he writes: "'Brautzug im Vorüberziehen' gehört wie bekannt nicht zur Peer Gyntmusik. In den Christiania-Aufführungen von Per Gynt wird es nicht verwendet." This is supported by a very detailed letter of 1 April 1895 to Louis Monastier-Schroeder who had asked Grieg about the content of *Peer Gynt*. Grieg lists 21 of the pieces without any mention of the *Bridal Procession*. Add to this that in Grieg's correspondence between July 1902 and February 1903, dealing with the renting material that Peters prepared at this time, the *Bridal Procession* is not at all discussed as part of *Peer Gynt*. On the contrary, Grieg and Hinrichsen, the new director of C. F. Peters, discussed if the piece should be orchestrated by Halvorsen and published separately or together with orchestrations of the two other pieces of Op. 19.

From this it was clear that neither the *Norwegian Dances* nor the *Bridal Procession* should be published in an authentic *Peer Gynt*-score. What then with the rest of the pieces varying from production to production?

When Grieg lists the 21 pieces from *Peer Gynt* in the 1895 letter to Monastier-Schroeder he leaves out five pieces (nos. 6, 18, 20, 22 and 23). This may be the reason why Grieg concludes by saying that the survey is incomplete: "I hope the time is not too far distant when a complete piano reduction—yes, a complete orchestral score—of all the *Peer Gynt*

music can be printed, perhaps with associated text.” Grieg’s comment in his letter of 1 March 1902 in connection with the new-production that year is extremely important: ”If I am granted a few more years of life I will perform *all* of this music as I have conceived it, and as I am capable of making it sound.” The phrase ”*all* of this music” is crucial, clearly indicating that the seven pieces left out at the staging in 1902 in fact belong in *Peer Gynt*. 23 August 1903 Grieg again regrets that he has not been able to publish a full score of the play. To Monastier-Schroeder Grieg writes: ”You are absolutely right: It is sad that the complete *Peer Gynt* score has not been published. But the publisher has given out the two suites and the songs and doesn’t want to compete with himself!”

The phrase ”*all* of this music” points to the fact that no music composed originally for *Peer Gynt* should be excluded from an authentic score. And considering the strict carefulness that Grieg shows in two very detailed letters (one of 28 pages to the conductor Johan Hennem 14 December 1875 and one to Björn Björnson 7 February 1892) neither can nor should the order of the *Peer Gynt* be altered. As a result of the investigation so far it was concluded that everything tended towards the fact that the number and the order that *Peer Gynt* consisted of when Grieg completed the score in 1874/75 is the original version (~~i. e. the authentic version~~). There is nothing in the source material that indicates that Grieg ever parted from the original version of *Peer Gynt*. The question at this point was: did there exist sources, primary sources showing the content of the original version. In Grieg’s lifetime the most complete production as to the number and the order of the pieces, is the first-production from 1876. One might therefore be tempted to take this production as the point of departure to decide the content of the original version. However, the only source for this production is a secondary source, namely the orchestral parts (source W1) in Johan Hennem’s hand-writing. Another question emerged: how to be sure that the original version did not have a content that we did not know to the full—a version comprising more pieces than the 26 pieces mentioned earlier, even pieces that Grieg may have rejected and destroyed before the first-performance? Pieces that were rejected do not of course belong in an authentic score. However, in the light of all the changes that had taken place in connection with the different stagings of *Peer Gynt*, it was highly unsatisfactory not to seek an answer to this—and of course to seek an answer in the primary sources.

When the investigation started we had two dated primary sources prior to sources of the first performance. One was Grieg’s letter of 14 December 1875 to Johan Hennem, in the following named ”the Hennem letter” (or simply ”the letter”). The Hennem

letter contains a large amount of detail that Grieg wants Hennem to insert into the score. Grieg comments upon every single piece numbering them from one to twentyfive. He leaves out only one number—that for the hymn he mentions between number 24 and 25. Accordingly the Hennem letter comprises 26 pieces in all. However, it is not possible, apart from the number and the order, to trust solely on the Hennem letter to decide the exact content of the original version. None of the pieces in the letter is equipped with titles. And to rely on Grieg's comments under each number, is not sufficient to identify each single piece. A music text is necessary, preferably even a title.

In addition to the Hennem letter there existed an even older dated primary source—the seven last pages of the manuscript of "Solveig's Cradle Song" (source V1 in GGA vol. 18). At the end of the manuscript which is in Grieg's hand, one finds the following dating: "16/7/75". In his letter to Ibsen 25 July 1875 Grieg tells that the music was completed at this point in time. Therefore this source (V1) most probably shows the last seven pages of Grieg's original score.

The source (V1) has two signs that we found very important: the music is first written out in pencil, then partly written over in ink. In addition the pagination of the manuscript is also written in pencil. The manuscript is preserved in the Bergen Public Library together with some other manuscripts showing pieces—partly or in whole—of *Peer Gynt*. We checked if these sources had the same signs as the first one (V1). The result was that these signs are found in five additional sources (L, P, R, S1 and T1) and indicate that these six sources are part of Grieg's concept score.

Reading the Hennem letter it becomes clear that there must have existed two scores of *Peer Gynt* at that point in time, 1874/75. On page two in the letter Grieg writes: "I will, therefore, set the score in front of me and go through it, and I ask you now to do the same." Obviously Grieg has had his own score copied and mailed the copy to Hennem. In the letter Grieg asks Hennem to make several corrections and insertions, among other things the following: "Here a change has to be made in the horn parts. The first and second horns beginning at 'Allegro marcato' must be changed as follows: [then follows a music example]". The insertion is found in source R *in Grieg's hand*. The conclusion must be that source R is part of the concept score. If the music text had been found in Hennem's hand-writing, the score would most probably have been the copy of the concept score. And as source R shows the same two signs as in the five sources just mentioned (L, P, S1, T1 and V1) the conclusion must be that these

six sources all stem from the concept score. Table no. 1 shows the oldest sources, sources that were part of the concept score at the time when our investigation started.

**Table no. 1** shows the oldest sources that were part of the concept score at the time when the investigation started.

”No.” = Griegs original pencil numbering; ”Titel in the concept score” = titel or numbers found in the concept score; ”Page” = Griegs original pencil pagination:

GGA No	Source initials, GGAVol. 18	No.	”Titel” in the concept score	Page
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6	L	6	”En Lid med store, susende Løvtrær”	75–78
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18	P	18	No. 18. ”Karavanevej! Oasen langt tilbage i det Fjerne”	213–220
19				
20				
21				
22	R	22	No. 22	254–260
23	S1	23	No. 23	261
24	T1	24	”No. 24 Melodrama”. [The opposite side of source S1. Musical text missing in T1].	[262]
25				
26	V1		[Seven last pages of ”Solveig’s Cradle Song. Date of completion:”16/7/75”.	297–303

From a chronological point of view the next primary source is source A, the score used at the production of *Peer Gynt* in Copehagen 1886. For the most part this score is in Grieg’s hand. It

contains a good deal of corrections and erasures, is, however, clearly legible. Strikingly most of the parts that are in Grieg's hand show the same two signs as the six sources from 1874/75. This indicates that Grieg may have used his own score in preparing the production at the Dagmar Theatre in 1886—or the previously mentioned copy of the score which was mailed to Hennem i 1875. We therefore collated the Hennem letter with the score (source A) to see if anything found in the letter had been inserted into the score. Insertions in Hennem's handwriting would of course indicate that the score would be the 1875 copy, while insertions in Grieg's hand would indicate that the score would be Grieg's own original score, the concept score.

Parts of what Grieg states in the letter may have been inserted in the score, prior to the mailing of the copy from Bergen to Christiania Theater i 1875. On the other hand, what Grieg writes concerning piece no. 10, "Peer Gynt haunted by the trolls", cannot possibly have been written in the score prior to the mailing. Grieg writes: "No. 10 ... After Peer Gynt's line, "Oh, were I a louse!" where the whole orchestra comes in *ff*, the trombones have been inadvertently omitted. Their parts must be added as follows: [then comes a music example]". The music example is found *in Grieg's handwriting* in source A. Source A must therefore be the concept score from 1874/75, however, the music is now in Grieg's revised version for the Copenhagen production of 1886.

That settles that what is found in Grieg's hand in source A in addition to the six sources mentioned earlier (L, P, R, S1, T1 and V1) have two important signs in common: "pencil-ink"-writing in addition to "pencil-pagination". Table no. 2 shows those parts of source A that together with the six sources from 1874/75 constitute the parts of the concept score that still exists—185 pages out of 303, approximately 60% of the score. As you can see, in one instance source A and one of the six sources, source L, are very concretely and neatly tied together: source L is "inserted" into source A by continuing the original pencil pagination: pp. 43–74 (source A), pp. 75–78 (source L), pp. 79–80 (source A).

**Table no. 2** shows the parts of source A that together with the six sources from 1874/75 (shown in ex. no. 1) constitute the parts of the concept score that still exists.

"No." = Grieg's original pencil numbering; "Titel in the concept score" = title or numbers found in the concept score; "Page" = Grieg's original pencil pagination; "GltH" = Grieg's letter to Johan Hennem 14 December 1875:

GGA No.	Source initials, GGAVol. 18	No.	”Titel” in the concept score	Page
1	A	1	Indledning til 1ste akt	1–26
2				
3				
4				
5	A	5	3 Jenter	43–74
6	L	6	No. 6 En Lid med store, susende Løvtrær	75–78
7	A	7	Per Gynt: På Ridestellet skal Storfolk kjendes!	79–80
8	A	8	I Dovregubbens Kongshal /2 <sup>d</sup> Akt	81–97
9	A	9	Dands af Dovregubbens Datter	98–102
10	A	10	Per Gynt jages af Trolldunger	103–126
11				
12				
13				
14	A		Tyven og Hæleren	157–168
15	A	15	Anitra og Pigerne / (4de Akt)	169–196
16				
17				
18	P	18	No. 18	213–220
19	A	19	Solvejgs Sang / (4de Akt)	221–228
20	A	20	No. 20 (On p. 229 in Grieg’s hand: Foran 3die Akt / Nybyggerhytte i Skogen / Mørkning)	229–231
21	R/GltH/A		[Page 253 in source R contains the four last bars of ”Peer Gynt’s homecoming. Stormy evening on the sea”.]	[253]
22	R	22	No. 22	254–260
23	S1	23	No. 23 [before the accolade.: ”Solvejg (synger i Stuen)”.	261
24	T1/GltH/T2	24	[The source T1 contains only number and title, no musical text:] ”No. 24 Melodrama” [262]	
25	GltH		[GltH mentions:] ”Salmen”.	
26	V1		[Seven last pages of Solveig’s Cradle Song] Date of completion: ”16/7/75”	297–303

As mentioned the table no. 2 shows pieces that belong in the original version, 17 in all. The question remains if the remaining nine pieces mentioned in the Henum letter (GGA No. 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 25) also have been part of the original version. This question requires a closer examination. The main source to decide this is the Henum letter, however, supplied with information from other parts of the source material.

The Henum letter contains music examples for four pieces (no. 4, 13, 16 and 17), but lacks examples for five pieces (nos. 2, 3, 11, 12 and 25). Collated with the orchestral

parts from 1876 (source W1) the music examples in the letter are in accordance with the orchestral parts (source W1). Apart from differences on a detail level the version of no. 4 in the orchestral parts (source W1) also corresponds with the version found in Grieg's autograph of the piece in source A. Accordingly no. 4 of the Henum letter has been the *The Abduction of the Bride. Ingrid's Lament*, the prelude to act 2, in the original version. The same procedure just used for no. 4 may be used for pieces no. 13, 16 and 17.

As for no. 2, 3, 11, 12 and no. 25 the Henum letter lacks, as already mentioned, music examples. Naturally there is every possible reason to imagine that the original version of *Peer Gynt* may have had complete different versions of GGA no. 2, 3, 11, 12, and 25. Add to this the possibility that the original version of *Peer Gynt* may have contained pieces quite unknown to us. However, in the light of the existing source material there is one very striking fact in this connection: to more or less all pieces in Op. 23 one finds greater or smaller differences between the different sources of the pieces (see the editorial commentary of GGA vol. 18). What is not found in the source material is any shred of evidence indicating that Grieg at any point in time composed pieces to the play that are *unknown* to us. From this it is quite natural to draw the conclusion that what Grieg aims at for no. 2, 3, 11, 12 and the hymn between no. 24 and 25 in the Henum letter, must be the same pieces shown in the orchestral parts from 1876 (source W1). Therefore these pieces must have been part of the original version from 1874/75.

Together with the nine pieces mentioned in the Henum letter and the 17 pieces from the existing parts of Grieg's concept score these 26 pieces constitute the original version of *Peer Gynt*. Table no. 3 shows the original version of *Peer Gynt*, its number in GGA, the sources, the original numbers, the existing "titles" and the original pencil pagination.

**Table no. 3** shows the original version of *Peer Gynt*, its number in GGA, the sources, the original numbers, the original "titles" and the original pencil pagination where such pagination exists. All pieces are based on primary sources that are prior to the first performance: sources A, L, P, R, S1, T1, V1 and GltH. Source GltH is supplied by sources of a later date:



GGA No.	Source initials, GGA vol. 18	No.	Titel in the concept score/primary sources later than the concept score	Page
1	A	1	Indledning til 1ste akt	1–26
2	GltH/X	2	[GltH:] Halling	
3	GltH/X	3	[GltH:] Springar	
4	GltH/W1/A	4	[Title in Grieg's hand in A, but the musical version in A is a later version than the concept score:] Indledning til 2 <sup>d</sup> Akt. / (Per Gynt og Ingrid).	
5	A	5	3 Jenter	43–74
6	L	6	Per Gynt og den Grønklede	75–78
7	A	7	Per Gynt: På Ridestellet skal Storfolk kjendes!	79–80
8	A	8	I Dovregubbens Kongshal	81–97
9	A	9	Dands af Dovregubbens Datter	98–102
10	A	10	Per Gynt jages af Troldeunger	103–126
11	GltH/B	11	[Separate addition in Grieg's hand in B:] Bølgscenen.	
12	GltH/A/X	12	[Title in Grieg's hand in no. (13) in A:] Åses død.	
13	GltH/W1/A	13	[Title in Grieg's hand in no. (14) in A:] Indledning til / 4de Akt. / (Morgenstemning).	
14	A	14	Tyven og Hæleren	157–166
15	A	15	Anitra og Pigerne	169–196
16	GltH/W1	16	[Title in Grieg's hand in no. (13) in A:] Anitras Dands	
17	GltH/W1/O2	17	Peer Gynts serenade	
18	P	18	No. 18	213–220
19	A	19	Solvejgs Sang / (4de Akt)	221–228
20	A	20	No. 20 (Foran 3die Akt / Nybyggerhytte i Skogen / Mørkning)	229–231
21	A/GltH	21	Title in Grieg's hand in no. (19) in A: Stormfuld Aften på Havet.	
22	R	22	No. 22	254–260
23	S1	23	No. 23 [on the opposite p. of p. 261:] "N <sup>o</sup> . 24". Melodrama"]	261
24	T1/GltH	24	No. 24 Melodrama.	[262]
25	GltH/U1/U3		Salme[n – see GltH]	
26	V1/GltH	25	[Seven last pages of Solveig's Cradle Song] Date of completion:] 16/7/75.	297–303

Grieg's many revisions of *Peer Gynt* resulted in several sources of the different pieces. For every single piece and every single source the GGA vol. 18 states the reasons for the chronology of the sources giving Grieg's latest approved version as the main source. There is one exception only: no. 11, *Peer Gynt and the Boyg* which exists in a manuscript of a later date than the one used as the main source for the version in the GGA vol. 18. The manuscript had so many corrections and erasures that it was impossible to read (see the printed paper on this point).

As one understands, the score used at the production at the Dagmar Theatre in 1886 (source A in GGA) was of decisive importance to solving the question of an authentic

*Peer Gynt* score. Without the concept score the basis for the publication of *Peer Gynt* in GGA would have meant considerable—may be insurmountable—unsteadiness. As already mentioned Grieg used the concept score revising the music for the *Peer Gynt* production in 1886. After the staging, the score became part of the archives of the Dagmar Theatre. Together with a large part of these archives the score was rescued from a fire in the "Tivoli" in 1944. As mentioned it is to-day preserved in the Royal Library in Copenhagen.