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The Reception of Grieg's Music in Japan

Hikari Kobayashi

This presentation is a report which is based on my research on the first performances of Grieg's works in Japan and on the process of the reception of Grieg's music. These aspects will be illuminated by focusing on performing and educational activities, and on publications of those days.

1. Grieg's works performed at the earliest stage in Japan

In Japan, the performance of Grieg's music started quite early. Presumably, it began in the 1890s. It is documented that one of his pieces was played at the Concert Hall in the Tokyo Music School (*Tokyo Ongaku Gakko*) on December 17, 1893, though it is not known which piece this was. However, there is a possibility that this performance at the Tokyo Music School, a school which played a pivotal role in Japan in the education of and research on European art music in those days, was the very first performance in Japan of Grieg's music. Further, at the graduation ceremony on July 7, 1894, his "Springar" was performed by violins, though which of his springars was played is not known. At a concert on December 12, 1896, "Anitra's Dance" from *Peer Gynt* was performed by six Japanese violinists. At the graduation ceremony on July 8, 1899, "The Death of Aase" and "Anitra's Dance" were performed by a string orchestra consisting of graduates and students. Further, at the third regular concert on

¹ This Concert Hall was set up within the new school building in Ueno, Tokyo, in May 1890. It was the first concert hall for European art music in Japan (100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: Tokyo Music School Vol.1 (in Japanese), 1987, p.290).

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November 25 and 26 in that year, "The Death of Aase" and "Anitra's Dance" were performed by a string orchestra consisting of teachers and students. Thus, Grieg's pieces were often played at the Concert Hall of the Tokyo Music School as early as in the 1890s. Below, I will describe the background and the process.

2. Westernization policy after the opening of the country: Introduction of European music and Grieg's music

The new government established in 1868 made big efforts to introduce European social systems and cultures to Japan, in order to modernize the country. As part of the Westernization policy, Japanese military bands and the Japanese school education introduced European art music. In 1879, the Ministry of Education founded the Music Study Committee (*Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari*), and invited teachers from Europe and the US to train musicians and music teachers. In the first stage, Japanese traditional music was one of the objects of the study as well, but was gradually excluded from the mainstream music education. Since then, European classical music (mainly German music) as well as "School Songs" (*shôka*) became predominant in the school education. This tendency can still be observed today. As European music was introduced unilaterally as part of the national policy, it did not gain broad public support at first stage. However, through the introduction of military songs, hymns, school songs, et cetera, the interest in European music gradually increased. Moreover, as the Westernization of social customs progressed, European music also gained ground.

The Music Study Committee, which was the first national institution for the studies and teaching of music in Japan, changed its name to the Tokyo Music School in 1887.² From its very beginning, the Music Study Committee (or Tokyo Music School) invited teachers from abroad, and the school maintained its education and research in European art music. Many works of European music were also performed for the first time in Japan at this school. The following table shows a list of foreign teachers who were invited to the Music Study Committee or the Tokyo Music School at its initial stage.

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² In 1949, it became the Faculty of Music at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.

Foreign teachers at the initial stage of the Music Study Committee/Tokyo Music School³

Country of birth	Tenure	Subjects
USA	1880?-?	Composition of school songs, etc.
Germany	1883-1886	Orchestra, harmony, composition
Holland (He was a	1886-1888	Piano, conducting
teacher in Italy before		
he came to Japan.)		
Austria	1888-1894	Violin, harmony, composition, vocal
		music
Russia (His father was	1898-1909	Piano
a German-Russian.)		
Germany	1899-1912	Orchestra, performance in general
France	1899-1904	Organ, harmony, composition
Germany	1900-1905	Piano
Germany	1902-1909	Piano, harmony, composition, ensemble,
		organ
Germany (Prussia)	1907-1908	Vocal music
USA (His father was	1909-1912	Vocal music, piano
German.)		
Germany	1907-1921,	Cello, double bass, piano, harmony
	1931-1936	
Norway (She acquired	1909-1924	Piano, vocal music
German nationality		
after marriage.)		
	USA Germany Holland (He was a teacher in Italy before he came to Japan.) Austria Russia (His father was a German-Russian.) Germany France Germany Germany Germany Germany Germany OGermany Togermany Germany OGermany	USA 1880?-? Germany 1883-1886 Holland (He was a teacher in Italy before he came to Japan.) 1888-1884 Russia (His father was a German-Russian.) 1898-1909 Germany 1899-1912 France 1899-1904 Germany 1900-1905 Germany 1907-1909 USA (His father was German) 1907-1908 USA (His father was German) 1907-1921, 1931-1936 Norway (She acquired German nationality 1909-1924

Most of these teachers invited from abroad were Germans. Therefore, the music introduced to Japan was mainly by German composers. However, works from a variety of composers from different countries in Europe were also introduced to Japan from the early

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³ This table is based on the data in: 100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: Tokyo Music School Vol. 1; and 100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: Tokyo Music School Vol. 2.

stage on. Grieg's works were also included. In regard to Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, for instance, August Junker from the list above is said to have highly improved the performance level of the orchestra through his strict teaching. His efforts resulted in the performance of "The Death of Aase" and "Anitra's Dance" at the 25th regular concert on December 9 and 10, 1911. The performance was conducted by August Junker himself. Before coming to Japan, August Junker graduated from the Music Academy in Köln as an honor student, and then he studied under Joachim at the Berlin Music Academy. Junker joined the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra as a violinist, and soon he became the concertmaster of the orchestra.

Peer Gynt was not the only work by Grieg which was performed at the Tokyo Music School up to the beginning of the 20th century. The *Violin Sonata No.2 in G Major*, Op. 13, was performed by Junker and von Koeber on the violin and the piano respectively at the 8th regular concert on May 1 and 2, 1903. Before a Southern Convent, Op. 20, was performed by Marie Kaiser and Chika Sugiura, who sang soprano and alto respectively together with the orchestra at the 11th regular concert on December 3 and 4, 1904. Although the music was sung in German, the Japanese audience seemed to feel familiarity with the music. An article from the musical journal *Ongaku Shinpo* (Musical New Report), described the music as follows: "I could hear that Mr. Grieg who composed Before a Southern Convent was Norwegian, but unlike other European music there is still somehow an oriental feeling in his music. I have heard that Scandinavia is a peninsula in the Northern Europe, and that the Scandinavian countries have fantastic scenery and good conditions for fishery. The place may resemble the northwest coast of Japan which faces the Japan Sea."

In this period, Grieg's music was performed also outside Tokyo. According to a concert report in a musical journal, Grieg's *Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Major*, Op. 8, was performed on January 23, 1905 at the Public Hall of Yokohama. The music was performed by Hermann Heydrich on the piano and Koh Koda (or better known as Koh Ando) on the violin. In Niigata, "Spring", Op. 33-2, was sung by the contralto singer Frederick Dean at the Browning Society's concert at Aster Hotel on January 15, 1908. In Nagasaki, at the first Nagasaki

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⁴ Von Koebel was German-Russian, and he studied composition under Tchaikovsky and piano under Nikolay Rubinstein at the Moskow Conservatory of Music before coming to Japan.

⁵ Ongaku Shinpo (in Japanese), vol.1 no.7, January 1905, p.37.

⁶ Ongaku Shinpo, vol.1 no.8, February 1905, p.26.

⁷ Ongaku-kai (in Japanese), vol.1 no.4, April 1908, p.18.

Concert on February 28, 1908, the "Dance of the Mountain King's Daughter" and "Norwegian Dance No. 4" were performed by orchestra, and "Solveig's Song", "Ingrid's Lament," and "The Death of Aase" were performed by James Jordan on the solo violin.⁸

In this way, around the beginning of the 20th century, some of Grieg's works appeared frequently at concerts not only in the Tokyo Music School but also at other places in Japan. The fact that his music was openly accepted in Japan at that period is reflected in some comments as follows.

3. Articles on Grieg in musical journals in the beginning of the twentieth century

In the musical journal *Ongaku Shinpo* of March 1906, Kosuke Komatsu wrote the following in his essay titled "The Ideal National Music."

Grieg used European music which was the most developed in its structure at the present day, and added a national voice influenced by the nature of his home country. Thus, he created a totally new national music. His music not only succeeded in its harmonization, but also gave life to it in a refined way. He therefore surprised the whole music world. In this way, by establishing a national music, he simultaneously contributed to the whole world of music in an honorable way.

The establishment of an ideal national music, as the present writer believes, is neither more nor less significant than this. More than the preservation of our traditional music, more than the introduction of European music, and more than the harmonization of Japanese and European music, what we should aim for is the establishment of such a national music.⁹

It seems that Komatsu regarded Norway and Japan as being in a similar situation in their relations to Central Europe. In Grieg's music he got a positive perspective of the music in Japan which was introducing European music.

In the monthly journal *Ongaku-kai* (Musical World) of June 1908, a portrait of Grieg appeared as the frontispiece of the journal. This issue of the journal also included an article

³ Ongaku-kai, vol.1 no.4, April 1908, pp.51-52.

⁹ Kosuke Komatsu, "Ideal National Music", *Ongaku Shinpo*, vol.3 no.2, March 1906, p.18. Kosuke Komatsu (1884-1966) was a composer and music critic in Japan. He graduated from the Tokyo Music School, and studied composition in Paris.

discussing Grieg's songs. In this article, the author Naito writes, "it must be said that Grieg's sensible spirit, and his bright feelings and thoughts are definitely reflected in the most perfect way in his songs." Then, the author presents the entire picture of Grieg's songs. There were not so many opportunities for Grieg's songs to be performed in Japan at that time, but when they were sung they were usually sung in German. Nevertheless, it is surprising that the overall picture of his music was viewed quite properly.

I now return to the Tokyo Music School. Many teachers from Germany were invited one after another to the Tokyo Music School, but in 1909, a teacher from Norway was invited (listed at the bottom of the above-mentioned list). This teacher was the one who played the solo piano on Grieg's *Piano Concerto in A Minor*, Op. 16, at the very first performance in Japan of this work in 1912. In the following section I will give a detailed description of her.

4. Hanka Schjelderup Petzold

Hanka Schjelderup (1862-1937) was the sister of the Norwegian composer Gerhard Schjelderup (1859-1933). She was born in Kristiansand, the southernmost city of Norway, and moved to Bergen where her father served as mayor. She began to learn piano from her mother, and made her debut as a child at a concert given by Ole Bull. She studied piano first in Paris, and then in Weimar under Liszt. She endeavored to become a singer as well. She studied song under Marcheisi in Paris, and then under Orgenie in Dresden, and went to Bayreuth to study opera under Cosima Wagner. She made a very successful debut as an opera singer at the Royal Opera in Copenhagen in the role of Elizabeth in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. She performed both as an opera singer and as a pianist in European countries.

As a musician with an international career, she has expressed the following stance: "Music is really an emotional activity, so it might be prejudiced and presented as something uninteresting. Therefore, music from different countries should also be applied as a means of education. I always try to do this." Grieg's music was certainly a part of her repertoire. In Norway she played solo on Grieg's *Piano Concerto* at Harmonien's concert on October 20 in 1885. Her letters to Grieg (undated) are also preserved. After she came to Japan in

100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: Tokyo Music School Vol.2, 2003, p.1218.

¹⁰ Naito, "Maestro Grieg and Norway", *Ongaku-kai*, vol.1 no.6, June 1908, p.11.

¹² It was Musikselskabet Harmonien's orchestra concert at Logens Festsal. The conductor was Iver Holter, and the

December 1909 to teach at the Tokyo Music School, she often performed Grieg's works. She played "From the Carnival", Op. 19-3, on October 21 and 22, 1911, and Violin Sonata No. 2 in G Major, Op. 13, with Hachiya on the violin on June 30 and July 1, 1923. Outside the school she sang for instance "A Swan" and "Solveig's Song" at her solo concert given by YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) in December 1917. 13

As mentioned above, Hanka Schjelderup played solo in Grieg's *Piano Concerto* at the first performance in Japan of this work. This happened at the 27th regular concert at the Concert Hall of the Tokyo Music School on November 30 and December 1, 1912. 14 I have not found any detailed report or review on this performance, but it seems that since then, the Piano Concerto gradually became popular at concerts in Japan. The NHK Symphony Orchestra, which was the first professional orchestra in Japan, included Grieg's *Piano* Concerto in their program as early as in their second subscription concert in 1927. ¹⁵ Also for this occasion Hanka Schielderup played solo. ¹⁶ After that, from the middle of the 1930s, Grieg's Piano Concerto became increasingly popular. At the Tokyo Music School it was performed almost every year until World War II.

Hanka Schjelderup's husband Bruno Petzold (1873-1949) was an eager researcher of Buddhism. He was born in an honorable family in Breslau, Germany. He studied economics and philosophy in Leipzig and Berlin. After working as a foreign correspondent in London, Paris, China, et cetera, he came to Japan on Hanka's taking up of her new position at the Tokyo Music School. Upon the outbreak of World War I in 1914, he was attracted to Buddhism, especially to the teachings (philosophy) of the Tendai sect. He devoted himself to the research of Buddhism while he was teaching German at Daiichi Kotogakko (the present-day College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo). He entered Buddhist

concertmaster was Johan Halvorsen (http://folk.uio.no/oyvindyb/musikk/Halvorsen/registre/kronologi1884_1893.html).

¹³ History of Music in Kyoto, 1942, p.63.

Lexicon of Masterpieces performed by NHK Symphony Orchestra (in Japanese), vol.4, 1958, p.100; and 100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: The Concerts Vol.1, 1990, p.353.

¹⁵ NHK Symphony Orchestra was established in 1926 under the name of "New Symphony Orchestra." Later, in 1942, the name was changed to "Japan Symphony Orchestra." In 1951, the orchestra received full financial support from NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai, Japan Broadcasting Corporation), and changed its name to "NHK Symphony Orchestra." The second subscription concert was conducted by Josef König at Nihon Seinenkan Hall. Since then, the orchestra often performed Grieg's works at its subscription concerts. Sigurd Jorsalfar, Op. 22, and Symphonic Dances, Op. 64, conducted by König at the 10th concert in May 1927; excerpts from *Peer Gynt Suites* No. 1 and No. 2 conducted by Schiferblatt at the 71st concert on June 1, 1930; and again Piano Concerto performed by Florence Hübner-Kajiyama on the solo piano and conducted by Schiferblatt at the 94th concert on September 30, 1931.

Although she retired from the Tokyo Music School in March 1924, she continued being active as a teacher and performer

in Japan.

priesthood on August 18, 1928, and was awarded the title *Dai-sozu*, a title belonging to the Japanese ranking system for Buddhist clergy.

It is said that Hanka wished that she and her husband should be buried on Mt. Hiei¹⁷ which seats the monastery and headquarters of the Tendai sect, Enryaku-ji (Temple). She made this her last wish, and died on August 14, 1937, due to a heart disease. In accordance with her wish, a grand memorial service was held for her on Mt. Hiei in 1940. Bruno continued his research after Hanka's death, and died in February 1949. Bruno was buried in the same place as Hanka, and after his death he was awarded the title *Gon-dai-sojo*.

As described above, Hanka lived more than one third of her life in Japan. She was versed in Japanese culture while she contributed to make Grieg's music a part of the concert repertoire in Japan.

After World War II, avant-garde works have been increasingly performed in Europe and the US as well as in Japan. In this development, Grieg's music has appeared less frequently at concerts in Japan. On the other hand, his familiar music permeated into Japanese schools and homes.

5. Grieg's music in school education after the war

Grieg's music has been actively introduced in the music education of the Japanese elementary school and junior high school, along with various kinds of music in the world. The background for this is a *Course of Study* which appeared after World War II. The *Course of Study* is a school curriculum which is notified by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Every ten years or so the Ministry provides practical contents and detailed plans in each subject of the elementary school and secondary school, based on the Enforcement Regulations of the School Education Law.

The *Course of Study* which came out in 1947 and 1951 functioned as tentative plans, but they suggested using *Peer Gynt Suite No.1* and "Solveig's Song" as teaching materials in music listening in the music education for upper elementary school. In junior high school the *Course of Study* suggested the use of *Peer Gynt Suite No.1* for performance and *Piano Concerto*'s first movement in music listening. A *Course of Study for Elementary School*,

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¹⁷ Mt. Hiei lies on the border between Kyoto and Shiga prefectures, Japan.

which was notified in 1977 and implemented from April 1980 to March 1992, stipulated that *Peer Gynt Suite No.1* be used in music listening for music education in the sixth grade (11-12 years old). A *Course of Study for Lower Secondary School*, which was notified in 1977 and implemented from April 1980 to March 1993, stipulated to use *Piano Concerto* in music listening in music education for the ninth grade (14-15 years old). A *Course of Study for Elementary School*, which was notified in 1989 and implemented from April 1992 to March 2002, stipulated to use *Norwegian Dance* No.2 in music listening in music education for the fourth grade (9-10 years old).

As presented above, some of Grieg's works have been applied in music education for elementary school and junior high school. Due to this situation, these melodies are today widely known among the Japanese people. At the same time, the number of children taking private lessons in piano outside the school increased in the second half of the 20th century, and Grieg's *Lyric Pieces* became their repertoire.

In this research I have tried to illuminate the conditions for the reception of Grieg's music in Japan from the time it was first introduced to Japan, presumably from the 1890s. I have examined these conditions by focusing mainly on performance and educational activities at the Tokyo Music School in the school's early period. The research shows that in spite of the long distance between Norway and Japan, Grieg's music was performed in Japan from quite early and became a repertoire at concerts. In this process, Hanka Schjelderup Petzold who was invited from Norway to the Tokyo Music School played an important role. Research on Grieg's music also appeared in Japanese music journal articles as early as in the beginning of the 20th century. After World War II Grieg's works began to be used in music education for elementary school and junior high school, and the number of private piano students increased as well. Due to this situation, *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1, Piano Concerto, Norwegian Dances* and *Lyric Pieces* have become widely known in Japan.

As described above, Grieg's music was introduced to Japan in various ways. A current trend observed in Japan is that academic research on Grieg is increasing. Finally, I would like to mention some books written in Japanese on Grieg and on Nordic music.

(in chronological order)

John Horton. *Scandinavian Music*. Trans. by Shozo Ohtsuka, Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 1971. 18

Hirokazu Sugano. Grieg: His Life and Works. Tokyo: Ongaku-no-Tomo, 1984. 19

Nordic Masters: Grieg, Sibelius, Nielsen. Tokyo: Ongaku-no-Tomo, 1994.

Shozo Ohtsuka. An Introduction to Nordic Music. Tokyo: Ongaku-no-Tomo, 2000.

Einar Steen-Nøkleberg. *Onstage with Grieg (Med Grieg på podiet)*. Trans. by Shozo Ohtsuka, Tokyo: Ongaku-no-Tomo, 2007.

Further, this year, various concerts and lectures related to Grieg are being planned and held in Japan to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Grieg.

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Editorial Committee of 100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, ed. 100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: The Concerts Vol. 1 (in Japanese). Tokyo: Ongaku-no-Tomo, 1990.

Editorial Committee of 100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, ed. 100-year History at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: The Concerts Vol. 2 (in Japanese). Tokyo: Ongaku-no-Tomo, 1993.

Shozo Ohtsuka (1926-) is the president of the Grieg Society of Japan. He has performed and studied Nordic music since the 1960s and has been an authority in this field in Japan.

¹⁹ The author Sugano (1923-) is a composer and researcher. He has also written *Sibelius: His Life and Works* (Ongaku-no-Tomo, 1967).

Music Society of Kyoto, ed. *History of Music in Kyoto* (in Japanese). Kyoto: Music Society of Kyoto, 1942.

NHK Symphony Orchestra, ed. *Lexicon of Masterpieces performed by NHK Symphony Orchestra*, 6 volumes (in Japanese). Tokyo: Heibon-sha, 1958-1959.

Ongaku-kai (in Japanese). Tokyo: Ongaku-sha.

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The Course of Study of the Past. http://www.nicer.go.jp/guideline/old (in Japanese)

http://www.gunlake.bc.ca/petzold (in Japanese)