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"BEYOND GRIEG -

Edvard Grieg and his Diverse Influences of Music of the 20th and 21st Centuries"

Grieg's opus 5 no 3 Jeg elsker Dig! in the Gramophone Era

A short introduction to the recording of music

In his novel "L'histoire comique des états et empires de la Lune" Savien Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655) wrote that the people on the Moon had some small boxes with some wheels, shrews and a sheet (membrane) and by using a needle they could listen to music. No one tried to build this box, after all the description was in a novel! But 220 years later Thomas Alva Edison made the first phonograph using materials that existed in Bergerac's time. In an article in June 1878 Edison listed ten different activities in which his new invention could be used, music reproduction being just number four on the list. Edison was most interested in developing his machine as a Dictaphone (it could reproduce speech in any language!) and kept the cylinder as sound carrier long after Emil Berliner's patent of the gramophone record in 1887 and Berliner/Johnson's change to shellac in 1895.

It took only twenty years from Edison's invention to the development of a commercial gramophone market in 1898. This is a very short time compared to the change Gutenberg's invention in 1455⁵ made on literacy. There is another interesting difference between the reproduction of music and literature; the publishing houses were governed by people from the cultural elite based on their knowledge in literature. But in the new Gramophone Companies musicians had to compromise their knowledge with the technicians and the marketing/finance people.

Therefore we usually divide the gramophone era according to the technical innovations, and not according to changing performance practices in music. The most fundamental change was the digitalisation in the beginning of the 1980's. We usually divide the analogue era in the acoustical and electrical period and even split the electrical in two with the introduction of stereophonic and vinyl records in the middle of the 1950's. This means that we have four periods: Acoustical from the beginning to 1925, Electrical from 1925-1955, Stereophonic from 1956-1985 and Digital from 1985 to the present time.

Melodies of the Heart

Edvard Grieg wrote his Melodies of the Heart as his opus 5 based on the text of H. C. Andersen in Copenhagen in 1865 and gave it to Nina for Christmas. It was first published by Horneman in 1866⁶ and later by C.F. Peters in Leipzig⁷ and Wilhelm Hansen in Copenhagen. The third song; Jeg elsker Dig, became very popular, and Peters, covering the European market except Scandinavia, printed it as sheet music in over 60.000 copies in the period 1883-1906. In most of the Peters editions this song had two stanzas in German, and this text was translated to all other languages. There were no repetition marks in the score though, so different practices developed.

There are several deviations from the manuscript to the different editions of this song, even those editions Grieg supervised. This does not necessarily mean that Grieg was not a good supervisor, but it can indicate an understanding of the performers need to have a space for his

interpretation where the music score is an important but not a compulsory input to his performance practice. Grieg often used Jeg elsker Dig in his concerts accompanying both his wife (who he said was the "only true interpret of my romances" and other singers. The practice of singing two stanzas (like the German version) seem to be so influential that even Scandinavian singers started to sing Andersen's text twice in Grieg's time. So when Jeg elsker Dig entered the gramophone era it was a well-established song both in concerts and in private music making in many homes.

The first recordings

In my dissertation I have a chronological discography with 318 entries of the gramophone recordings of Jeg elsker Dig. ¹¹ I have listened to and analysed 214 of these recordings. In establishing this discography I have red many catalogues from early gramophone companies, and Jeg elsker Dig seems to be an introduction song for a singer entering the gramophone market. The first recording was made in London 6th of November 1899 by the Danish singer Otta Brønnum. She sings Andersen's text twice, and so does Cally Monrad in the first Norwegian recording, made at Grand Hotel in Christiania (Oslo) in the beginning of September 1905. Grieg accompanied Cally Monrad several times in his concerts. Last time was probably their concert in Prague in April 1906. In his diary we find the following statement about her interpretation: "Cally Monrad sang wonderfully beautiful, but far away from my intentions."

In the first ten years of gramophone recordings there were at least 50 different recordings of Jeg elsker Dig sung in nine different languages, ¹³ from all European gramophone industries at that time. Originally with piano accompaniment only, the song has come to be performed with orchestra as well. Max Reger made an orchestration in 1914, published by Peters¹⁴, but there are at least 10 recordings with orchestra before that. ¹⁵ This indicates that there was a tradition of performing this song with orchestra before the music was available in print. The studio orchestras recorded music in various genres, and it seems likely to assume that musical expressions could make a crossover in the studio.

The recording equipment in the acoustical era made a severe narrowing of the soundscape on records. Both the dynamic and frequency range were much less than in a normal concert situation. In addition the sound from the performance had to be kept mechanically and no editing was possible. Sometimes several cuts were made in the music in order to fit the duration time of the record. This was no problem with Jeg elsker Dig, but we find different solutions to the question of how to make the repetition.

Two traditions

After listening to the 214 different interpretations I had in my collection, I found it necessary to develop a categorisation of the performance practice throughout the whole century. 75% of the recordings seemed to be a kind of documentation of a concert situation. But in about 25% of the recordings the connection to Grieg's score is much less, and with additional musical elements from other traditions outside the concert hall, these recordings directs itself to those who do not go to classical concerts but would like to have "some classical music" to play at home (on their gramophone). In my presentation of the results from my analysis of the 214 recordings, I will refer to these two traditions as the concert tradition and the commercial tradition.

With the introduction of the microphone and electrical recording technology from about 1926, a lot of new elements of musical expressions were added to the range of performing practices.

Electrical recording also made the sound from the record covering much more from the acoustical parameters in a performance. In my material I found that the number of recordings in the commercial tradition increases in first five years of every new technology; that is the electrical, stereophonic and digital periods, while at the same periods the number of recordings in the concert tradition decreases. One reason is that the gramophone companies wanted to establish the new technology as soon as possible, and it was more efficient to produce recordings in the commercial tradition because then they reached more people than recordings in the concert tradition. ¹⁶

The use of microphone opened the gramophone record market for other singers than those traditionally trained as opera and lieder singers. There was no need for a voice that could fill the opera or concert hall, when recording with the microphone. New vocal expressions based on close up microphone were developed, and some of these recording techniques were adapted in the production of a recording in the concert tradition. The possibility to adjust the balance between singer and accompaniment while performing, might be seen as the germ cell of establishing the Tonmeister /the producer as the superior judge of musical aesthetics in a recording session. ¹⁷

Today the ideal Tonmeister/producer is supposed to know the preferences of the actual segment of the music market, he (seldom she) should know the intentions in the music to be produced and he is supposed to feel the performers needs in the recording session¹⁸. Before putting a record on the market the Tonmeister/producer has to evaluate the potential of his takes together with the commercial strategies of the record company. The repertoire of gramophone recordings will never give a complete or direct picture of the concert life in music, but will be restricted to those music expressions the recording company think has commercial value.¹⁹

One of the most characteristic differences between the concert and commercial traditions is that in the commercial tradition we find separate orchestrations for each production while the other ones usually follow Max Reger's arrangement. ²⁰ The commercial tradition also makes use of additional form elements (introductions and endings, or one instrumental interlude between the lyrics). In 1944 the song was included in the musical Song of Norway and 9 different recordings were made from 1944-59 by singers like Helena Bliss, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Nelson Eddy. In this musical about Grieg's relations to Nina and Rikard Nordraak, the text was changed from the traditional English translations (form "I love Thee" to "I love you") in order to fit the plot and mood of the musical. ²¹

Three developments in the performance of Jeg elsker Dig!

In my analysis of the recordings of Jeg elsker Dig! I found a number of changes in the interpretation of this song that can be related to the general cultural and technological development. It is more difficult to argue for Grieg's influence on music of the 20th and 21st Centuries, if we by that refer to developments that would be completely different if Grieg's music did not exist. On the other hand, there are so many recordings of Grieg's music in the gramophone era that his contribution to the cultural development is substantial. His influence is therefore a part of the performing practice both at studios, concert halls and in the bourgeois homes in Europe and America. I will here present three areas where there have been considerable changes in the performing practice of Jeg elsker Dig! as documented on recordings.

Language

Three languages have dominated the recordings of Jeg elsker Dig! in the gramophone era. Of the 318 recordings there are 116 in Norwegian/Danish, 98 in German, 47 in English and 57 in other languages. ²² A distribution of these four categories expressed in percentage of total distribution in every 5 year, shows different developments for each of them.

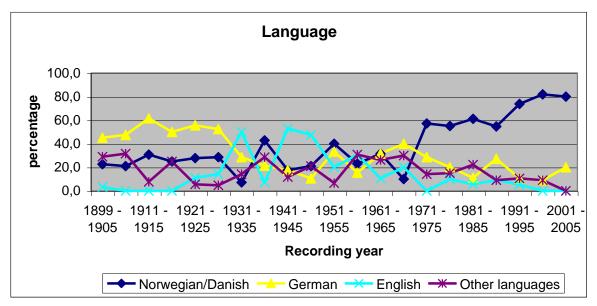


Figure 1 Distribution of language in percentage of total market in 5-year periods (N=318)

Recordings in German dominated the market up to the 1930s, which underlines the strong position the German Lied tradition set on songs originally in other languages. The decline in the 1930s and 1940s might have something to do with the general development in Germany in that period. We can also see the effect from The Song of Norway in the 1940s. The increased market share for recordings in Norwegian/Danish from the 1970s might be a result of the authenticity movement²³. The Grieg jubilee in 1993 enhanced this development.

Grieg's songs have been a part of the international repertoire, but we can see from Figure 1 that being in Norwegian, the text was not accepted without a translation. If the extra stanza in German (and then to the other languages) indicates a primary adaptation to the international (German) standard, this was challenged at the second half of the century. Then Grieg's influence as such was part of the reorganisation of the music/cultural hierarchy in Europe. Even a song with non-German text could now be accepted as a work of art with its own qualities independent of the traditional characteristics.

Tempo variations

In my analysis of recordings of this song I was eager to see if I could find empirical data for Robert Philip's convincing statement in "Performing Music in the Age of Recording" where he says: "The most basic trend of all was a process of tidying up performance: ensemble became more tightly disciplined; pianists played chords more strictly together, and abandoned the old practice of dislocating melody from accompaniment; the interpretation of note-values became more literal, and the nature of rubato changed, becoming more regular and even." The tempo variations are in my view the most informative parameter of a music performance that is independent of the record's soundscape. After editing 214 different interpretations into my computer I got durata for each performance and could make an overview of my material.

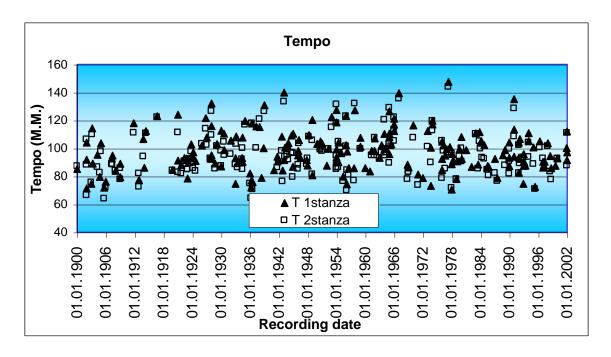


Figure 2 Tempo in 1. and 2. stanza, distributed by recording date (N=214)

The traditional assumption that the tempo was slower in the old recordings was not confirmed at all. There have been many individual differences all through the century, as figure 2 shows, but the arithmetic mean for the tempo have been the same throughout the century.²⁵

The next step was to divide Jeg elsker Dig! in several sections. ²⁶ Then I decided that the singer's first section was to be set as the tempo of the interpretation. I could then calculate a relative tempo of each section in this performance, and I could compare the deviations of tempo in each section by different singers independent of their performing tempo. ²⁷ After listening and marking the 214 performances ²⁸ I could establish a tempo deviation graph for each performance. There are still big individual differences, but when grouped in the four periods of recording history, there was a pattern of deviations; I got a profile of tempo variations in performing Jeg elsker Dig!

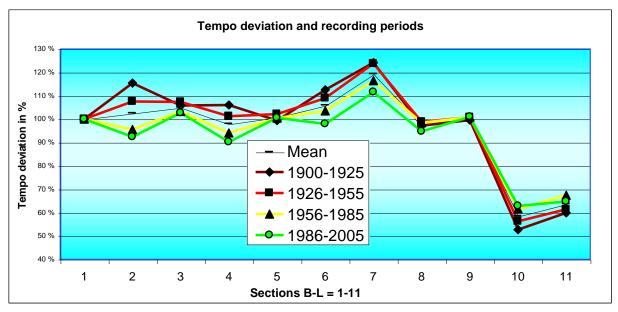


Figure 3 Tempo deviations in the sections, means for each era (N=214)

This profile of deviations seems to be very stable compared with a lot of other parameters other than the recording date, like the different voices, repertoire, age and nationality of the singers, the language, the type of accompaniment, and it is unaffected by the difference of chosen form elements. Even if there is a constant development from the acoustical to the digital periods, it cannot be characterised as a process of tidying up performances, because the deviations are on both side of the normal tempo (defined as the singer's first verse).

So the next thing for me to do was to calculate the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation for each section (using section 2-11 in the first stanza), and group the data in the four different stages of recording technology. Then I linked the data from each section together to get a total of the standard deviations for each era of the recording technology. This total will show us the range of variance of tempo deviations in the performances in each period. Using the data from my 214 different recordings of Jeg elsker Dig! I finally found what I was looking for, because this decline indicates a tidying up of performances.

Stabled standard deviation in sections 2-11 1,8000 1,6000 11 Standard deviation (stapeled 1,2000 1,0000 1,0000 0,8000 0,6000 0,4000 **10** 9 8 7 6 4 3 0,2000 0.0000 1900-1925 1926-1955 1956-1985 1986-2005

Figure 4 Stabled standard deviation in sections 2-11 (N=214)

The decline in the total of standard deviations from the sections in these four groups of the century is continual, and this gives a completely different picture than my figure showing the tempo variations as duration data for each performance during the whole century. The sudden fall from the second to the third period might indicate that from the 1960's the record became more used by musicians and music students in their study of repertoire and performance practices. Even if the performer still chose his tempo quite individually, the deviations from his/her chosen tempo became smaller in the second half of the century.

It would be interesting to see if analysis of another repertoire would give the same results, but I think this kind of tidying up performances is not restricted to Jeg elsker Dig! or Grieg's music at all. Grieg's position and influence in the classical repertoire in the 20th and 21st

century, makes it relevant to say that his music can be used as a qualified representation of classical music in the study of performance practice in the gramophone era.

Commercialisation

The simple technology combined with the possibility to earn a lot of money made the gramophone industry attractive for commercial interests from day one. The normal situation has been to make adjustments in the performance of a music work in order to fit the technology or a marketing profile. In the beginning the recording technology was far from delivering a sound quality close to that of a concert hall. This meant that the repertoire of classical music that was recorded ought to be very well known and have some highly significant characteristics that could survive if moulded in the recording process. The result was several recordings of the same repertoire also serving the new group of music lovers; those who could not play music themselves but loved to listen to music, preferably on records.

In this perspective the recording industry made a strong contribution to the narrowing of the classical repertoire and at the same time enhancing some pieces into a codex of standard repertoire. In the digital era this has changed. Even if we still have multiple recordings of the standard repertoire, there are many recordings in classical music of a repertoire that nearly have been active in a concert hall for a long time. But still adjustments in the performance of a music work are made in order to fit the new technology or a new marketing profile.³¹ Generally we may conclude that recordings will always involve a commercialisation of the performance practice.

In Grieg's oeuvre some pieces have been permanently present in the gramophone catalogues in more than hundred years. Jeg elsker Dig is among the first³², and definitively the most recorded of his songs, sung by both man and women. Some of the Lyric Pieces, the Peer Gynt music and the Piano Concerto are among the favourites with many recordings throughout the gramophone era. All these works are well known, and they have the necessary individual characteristics to be recognised and loved even if listening to the recording is far from a concert hall experience³³. The quality of Grieg's music is far beyond the acoustical presence and therefore it was adopted to the gramophone medium from the beginning of its commercial life.

It is in the accompaniment of Jeg elsker Dig! we find the most obvious and interesting development of commercialisation. In the acoustical period there are only a few recordings with some kind of orchestral accompaniment, but when the electrical recordings came from 1926, orchestral arrangements was the most common accompaniment up to the war. Only after the 1970s the piano again became the preferred medium. Of the arrangements some used Max Reger's orchestration, which is quite close to Grieg's own idiom in his orchestral songs. But there are many other arrangement using idioms from different musical traditions: gypsy orchestra, salon orchestra, film-) studio orchestra, theatre and musical orchestra, big band and military band.

In these arrangements we find that the melody and rhythm are kept unchanged as long as there is a text, but an additional obbligato often indicates another music tradition than Grieg's. In addition changes in the harmony and the use of orchestral effects⁴¹ also make the song adjusted to a specific segment of the commercial market.⁴² Quite often these arrangements also make new introductions and endings.⁴³ But the people who have bought these recordings must have loved their version of Jeg elsker Dig! Otherwise they would not buy the record, and that would stop producing that kind of interpretations.

In my analysis of the 214 recordings I divided the material between what I called the concert hall tradition and the commercial tradition as two poles of a continuum of interpretations. In the 25% recordings in the commercial tradition, the use of arrangement is much more common than in the concert hall tradition. There is also another difference between the two. It is typical for the commercial tradition to use a longer reverberation time, establishing a bigger (religious) sound-space for the interpretation of this song (and text). The balance between singer and accompaniment (either piano or orchestra) is also different as the commercial tradition use much more close up microphone and put the singer much more in front⁴⁴ than in the concert hall tradition.

Grieg's music and especially the song Jeg elsker Dig! has been adapted by the gramophone industry because it has a inherent quality that can endure the adjustments of a recording session. The distribution of music as a performance practice was radically changed with the introduction of the gramophone record⁴⁵. The musical work as a social construction had traditionally been taken care of by the composers, musicians and the performance institutions. With the gramophone a new public market established itself with its own aesthetic values, and this represented a possibility for new tastemakers without any profession music knowledge⁴⁶.

The dissemination of gramophone records also represented a democratisation of music, bringing the classical music directly to the people without any demand of sight-reading ability or social-economic status allowing them to attend a performance of music⁴⁷. Therefore I would conclude that Grieg's influence in the 20th and 21st century is not restricted to the classical music society, but being recorded among such a variety of artists as documented in my discography, his music ideas has spread beyond the inner circle of performers and audience.

Notes

¹ Bergerac (1657): "L'histoire comique des états et empires de la Lune" and its parallell "L'Historie comique des États et Empires du Soleil" published in 1662 was translated to English by Geoffrey Stachan published in 1965.

² There is a minor dissimilarity between Koeningsberg (1969), Gelatt (1956), Dearling (1984) and http://www.fact-index.com/p/ph/phonograph.html, but all agree on the importance of the year 1877.

³ North American Review June 1878, referred to by Winther Larsen (1993)

⁴ Read & Welsh (1976): From Tin Foil to stereo. Evolution of the Phonograph

⁵ The first Bible was printed in 1455 even if Gutenberg had printed letter of indulgence in 1452.

⁶ Published in April 1865 (printing sheet no.91)

⁷ The first albums of Grieg songs were published in 1875, 12 songs in each volume and Ich liebe dich as number 13, first in the second volume (printing sheet number 5782). The translation was by Franz von Holstein. This Volume published again in 1888 and this time with another stanza (!) in German by Frank van der Stucken (printing sheet no. 7277)

⁸ When Wilhelm Hansen bought Horneman in 1879 the reprinted they Horneman edition (same printing sheet), but from 1880 Wilhelm Hansen started publishing 10 volumes of "Romance og Sange" where Jeg elsker Dig is number 9 in the first volume. Grieg supervised only Volume 1-4.

⁹ For details see: Dahl (2006) Chapter 2.3 En revisjonsberetning (page 28-31)

¹⁰ Grieg in a letter to his biographer H. T. Finck July 17. 1900.

¹¹ For details see Dahl (2006) Chapter 7 (page 149-170). Reissuing of a recording is not counted among the 318 entries, but mostly commented in footnotes.

¹² Grieg (1993): Dagbøker

¹³ German 23, Russian 7, Norwegian 6, French 5, Danish 3, Spanish 1, Czech 1, Polish 1, English 1.

¹⁴ There is a misprint in bar 16 in the Violin I part making wrong harmony. In some orchestral sets this is corrected in the violin part, but clearly not always, as can be heard on several recordings.

¹⁵ Half of the first 50 entries in the discography have no indication of piano or orchestral accompaniment.

¹⁶ See more details in Dahl (2006) Chapter 5.1.10 (page 121-124)

- Other recordings are in Russian (15), French (12), Czech (8), Estonian (5), Italian (4), Catalonian (2), Polish (2), Rumanian (2), Finish (2), Spanish (1), and two recordings with one stanza in Danish and one in English.
- ²³ It might also be a result of a better and higher educational system in music and economic possibilities for record production in Scandinavia, even for classical music as early as the 1970s. Usually the authenticity movement did not reach vocal music until the 1980s.
- ²⁴ Philip (2004): Performing Music in the Age of Recording (p.232).
- ²⁵ It is also possible to see that the tempo in the 2.stanza usually is slower. This is mostly a result of the singers extra long fermata on the last high note.
- ²⁶ As this song was recorded both in its originally form (one stanza) and in the extended German version, I had to make a set of sections to cover all different form solutions. In my analysis of tempo I focused on the 1.stanza and skipped the piano introduction and ending from my analysis of tempo deviations.
- By this way I also reduce the problem of finding correct speed of the 78 records in studying the tempo variations. For investigations including the sonority, the question of correct pitch/speed was essential.
- ²⁸ I used the software program Trancribe! in the registration of each section, and these markings could be transferred to Excel for further calculations.
- ²⁹ In the first half of the century musicians seldom listened to records due to the poor quality of sound, but also because of the many adjustments of the repertoire. When the LP and stereophonic recordings came, the recordings could be much closer to the everyday life for a musician and it became more relevant to listen to records in order to study repertoire and performance practices.
- ³⁰ Pekka Gronow & Ilpo Saunio (1998): An International History of the Recording Industry
- ³¹ Timothy Day (2000): A Century of Recorded Music.
- ³² Otta Brønnum also recorded Solveig's Song at the session in London 6.11.1899, but being a song for soprano there are not so many recordings as with Jeg elsker Dig!
- ³³ Eric F. Clarke (2005) argues for an ecological approach to the perception of musical meaning, in order to release the listening from the historical concert situation.
- ³⁴ Reger's score is for a small orchestra (1-1-2-1, 1-0-0-0, T, strings). In Emmy Bettendorf's recording of 22nd February 1929 (Parlophon P9400 matrix 2-21243) the playing of the concertmaster make it sound like a salon orchestra. Recordings from the second half of the century often use the whole symphonic orchestra.
- ³⁵ Ungarischer Zigeuner-Kapelle Budapest on Deutsche Grammophon 61555 (Matrix 5787r)
- ³⁶ Sven d'Ailly with Georg Enders Salongorchestra recorded in September 1930 (Utraphone A 45 101 matrix 15111/15)
- ³⁷ Frank Sinatra /Bing Crosby's interpretations is based on The Song of Norway, but with new arrangement of the orchestra accompaniment adapted to their image. Alex Stordahl made the orchestration in Frank Sinatra's recording from November 1947 (Columbia DB 2346 matrix mxHCO). Bing Crosby is accompanied by John Scott trotter and his Orchestra on the recording from 11.12.1944 (Brunswick 0 3647-B matrix L3706A)
- ³⁸ Helena Bliss's recording is from the first Broadway-production of The Song of Norway made in September 1944 (MCA Records MCA-2032 matrix MG7-1021-W1
- ³⁹ Julia Migenes sings with the ORF-Big Band in her recording from 1987, with new and very egocentric German text and changing the metre to 4/4 (!) (HEK AC 23556, reissued on Preiser Records 90047 CD)
- ⁴⁰ Lauritz Melchoir's is accompanied by a military band in a concert in a park in 1963, Melchior being 73 years old (Golden Age EJS-288B)
- ⁴¹ Dreadful examples are to be found in the recordings of Felicia Weathers 13.10.1984 (AMP Musikverlag 3784/K-A matrix ED7350/A) and Franco Corelli in June 1965 (Hist.rec.enterpr. HRE 352 also on EMI Classics 7243 5 69530 2)
- ⁴² Like in Peter Schreier's recording from September 1976 (DGG 2536 292 also on DGG; 3336 292, 2372 744 and 2536 663 and Polydor 2562 039). The use of cembalo in this orchestration must be indicating something classic for those who never goes to classical concerts. This orchestration would have no possibility to work in a concert hall.

¹⁷ See Michael Chanan (1995): Repeated takes, chapter one

¹⁸ Stephen Davies discuss this situation in connection with his exploration of the Musical Work, Performance and Recording in Davies (2001): Musical Works & Performances.

¹⁹ See Dahl (2006) Chapter 6.2 (page 135-139) and Hans Hirsch (1987): Schallplatten zwischen Kunst und Kommerz.

²⁰ Even if they use Max Reger's small orchestration, the soundscape is quite different from the early acoustical recordings to the digital ones, both due to the technical development, but also by the use of an orchestra becomming gradually larger ending with full symphony orchestra in the latest recordings.

²¹ Robert Wright & George Forrest (1944): Song of Norway. An Operetta based on the life and music of Edvard Grieg. Chappell Music Company

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⁴³ In the recording from The Three Tenors in Paris 1998 (issued on Decca 460 500-2) the arrangement stops at Carreras last high note as an athletic victory more than a moral statement.

⁴⁴ This fronting-process was continued to the LP-cover were pictures of the singer dominated in the commercial tradition. In the last 20 years the promotion of classic singers seems to be equal in using their photogenic image to promote their interpretations.

⁴⁵ In Cook (2003) he points out that: "... thinking of "art" performances as reproductions may be less useful that thinking of them as monolithic, culturally privileged instances of intertextual reference." (page 210). Recordings being reproductions of performances are then far away from the performance practice.

⁴⁶ See Dahl (2006) Chapter 7 (especially page 139-148)

⁴⁷ In his stratification of taste in the society based on socio-economic parameters Bourdieu (1984) do not take sufficient consideration to the fact that on records the dissemination of music of any genre transcend his three categories.