

Edvard Grieg Society Conference.

Bergen May 29–31 2015

Work, Identity and Interpretation in gramophone recordings of *Jeg elsker Dig!*

Introduction

In my doctoral thesis (2006) I have a chronological discography of 318 unique recordings of *Jeg elsker Dig!* I had access to 214 of these recordings and will use some of the results as a background to the exemplars I will play and comment in the last part of this lecture.

Let us start with some music! Cally Monrad/Eyvind Alnæs (1905) *Jeg elsker Dig!*
(PP Cally Monrad 1)

- *Jeg elsker Dig!* G&T 83579 (mx 2570)
- Cally Monrad (mz), Eyvind Alnæs (pn)
- Recorded 1.9.1905 at Grand Hotel, Kristiania
- Dagboken: 16.04.1906 (after a concert in Prag): «*Cally Monrad sang henrivende vakkert, skjønt altfor ofte langt borte fra mine intensjoner.*» / «*Cally Monrad's singing was ravishingly beautiful, albeit far removed from my intentions much too often.*».
- (Benestad/Halverson 2001)

Play Ex 1 Cally Monrad

(PP Cally Monrad 2) Diary/Dagboken: 16.04.1906 (after a concert in Prague): «*Cally Monrad sang henrivende vakkert, skjønt altfor ofte langt borte fra mine intensjoner.*» / «*Cally Monrad's singing was ravishingly beautiful, albeit far removed from my intentions much too often.*».

(Was this their first meeting/playing together?)

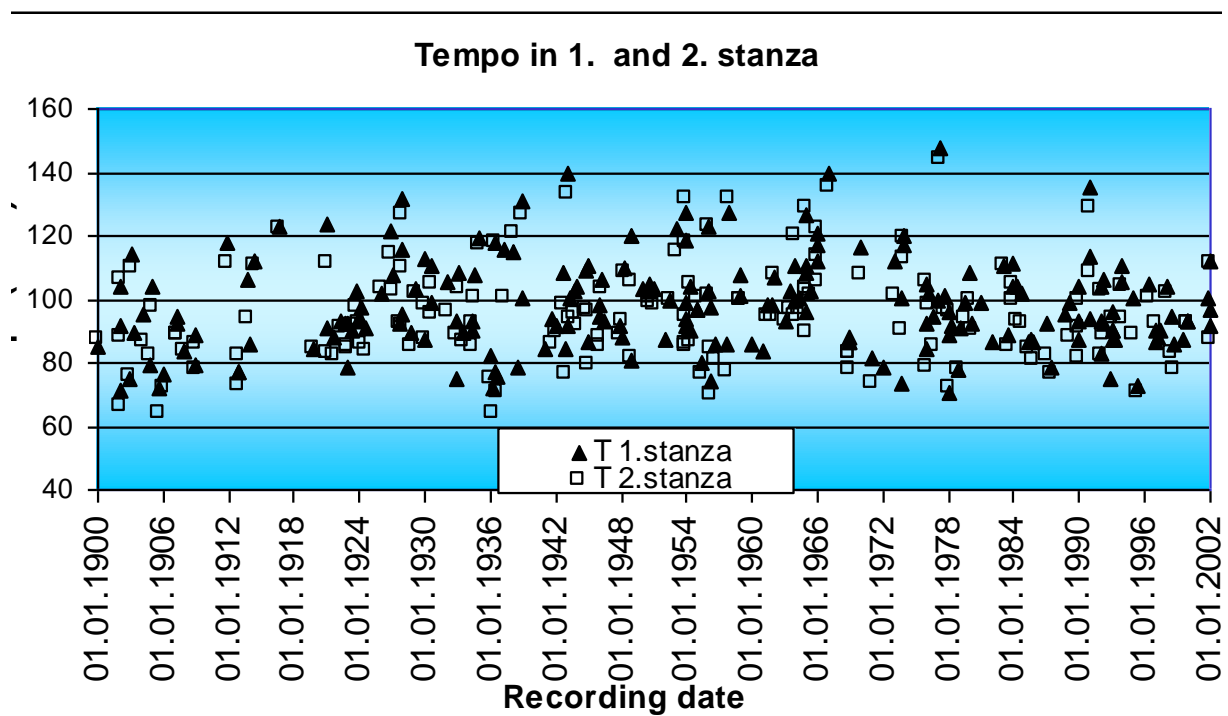
They perform the song twice, a peculiarity I will comment later on.

In spite of these worries, Grieg had Cally Monrad engaged for many concerts.

Today we would certainly make a recording in quite another way. If we skip the technical dimension of today's recording studio and focus on the interpretation, we would wonder about several aspects in her way of performing *Jeg elsker Dig!*

One aspect was the slow tempo: That might not be so odd/strange.

(PP Tempo variations)



This shows that the tempo variation among different recordings is more or less constant during the whole century and there has been no tendency to change the mean tempo.

Her intonation and text elaboration is rather extreme underlining the text and the subtext more than we accept as a natural musical phrasing today. This gives us a hint that the idea of good musicianship might have changed during the last century.

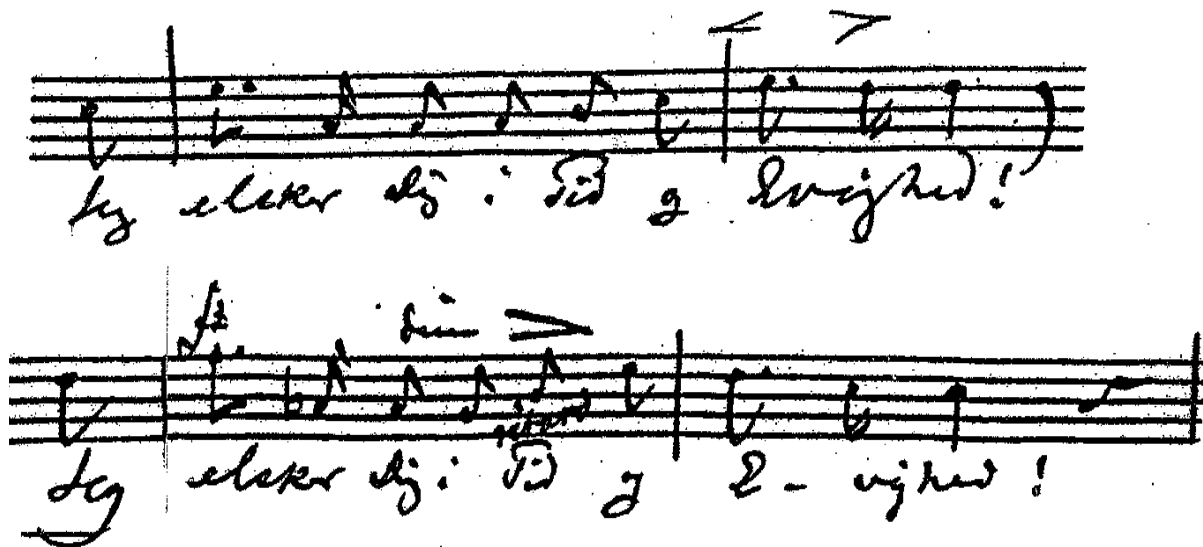
The Work

My first topic is the concept of the musical work; the song *Jeg elsker Dig!* A human is unique; how unique is Grieg's opus 5 no.3. Well, it is the only one with that opus number, at least, so we may say that there is a unique idea

tightened to this work. If we go to the physical representations of this work of art, the uniqueness becomes more problematic.

The manuscript can reveal quite a lot of information that are not transferable to printed versions. Just to show a small detail;

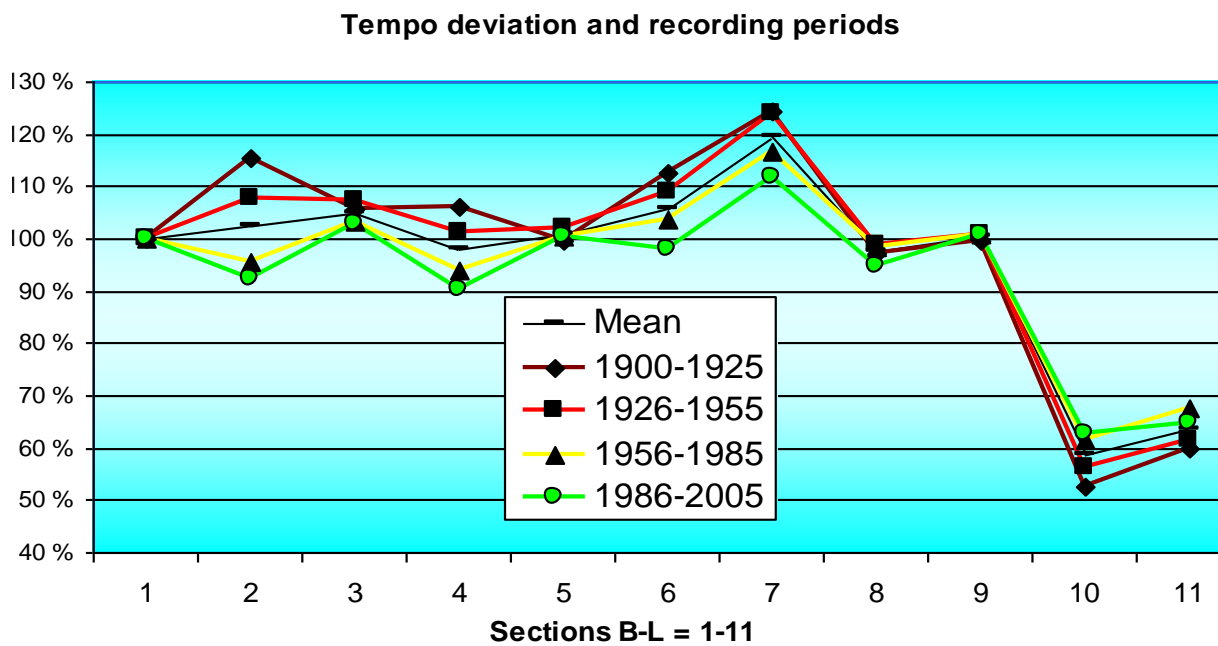
(PP Manuscript details)



Grieg's handwriting is quite fluent and his eight notes are all written with a light flag except in the three last verses all with the text: "Jeg elsker Dig!" where on "elsk.." he makes a firm flag, especially compared to the lightness of *Evig..het*".

In addition, we must always contextualize the practice of articulation, tempo and dynamic signs used, as the notation system is unambiguous only to pitch and tone length. Grieg, educated in Leipzig, followed the midcentury practice with only a few extra instructions of dynamics and tempo. Most of them are rather vague; *crescendo-decrescendo* without maximum level, *ritardando* without a tempo. By comparing my 214 analyzed recordings and defining the first text line as the basic tempo of the performance, I could calculate the mean tempo in each section throughout the whole stanza, you may use the Handout.

(PP Tempo deviations)

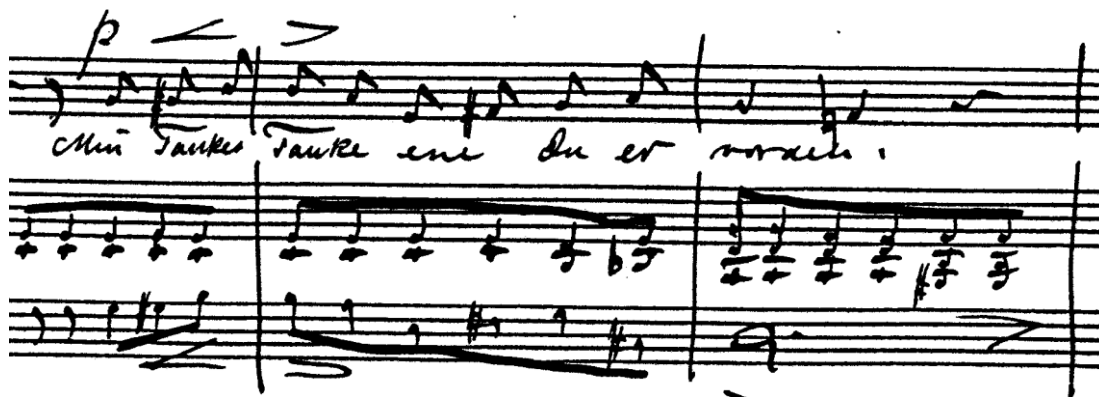


The results in this graph show a rather stable variance of shifts in tempo even if there are some deviations among the epochs of recording technology. However, there is a huge reduction in tempo in the two last sections not indicated in the score.

In Grieg's lifetime four different publications of this song were printed. The complete Opus 5 "*Hjertets Melodier*" was first printed by Chr. Horneman in Copenhagen in April 1865 (platenumber 91). When Wilhelm Hansen bought Horneman in 1879 they used the same Horneman-plate. Hansen started to publish "*Romance og Sange*" in 1880 and here is *Jeg elsker Dig!* as no.9 in the first booklet. However, already in 1875 C. F. Peters in Leipzig started their publications of 12 Grieg songs in an album, and "*Ich liebe dich*" came as no.13 in the second album in September 1875 (platenumber 5782). The next release of Grieg-Album II was in 1888 (platenumber 7277) and this time the song had a second stanza! Written by Franz van der Stücken and with an English text of the two stanzas by E. M. Smyth. It is interesting to notice that recordings of *Jeg elsker Dig!* In Scandinavian languages, repeat the text by H. C. Andersen twice. I think this might illustrate who was setting the norms and standards in the German Lied Tradition.

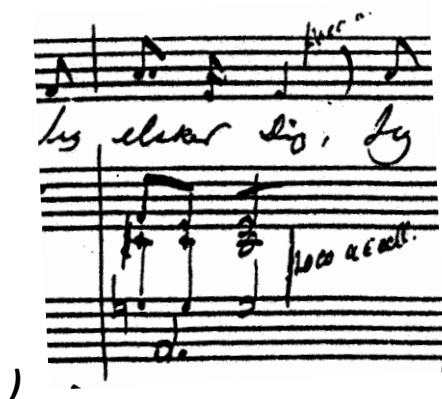
Studying the four printed versions of *Jeg elsker Dig!* Grieg proofread, there are many differences, most of them commented in the Grieg Gesamtausgabe. (GGA: band 10 1990). Having a focus on interpretations of the score some deviations are more important. Just to take a few examples:

(PP Interpretative elements in bar 5: 1 & 2)



In bar 5 the manuscript has a decrescendo. There is nothing in Horneman while Wilhelm Hansen, Peters and GGA have crescendo. In Nina Grieg's own Wilhelm Hansen Album she has corrected the printed crescendo back to a decrescendo in accordance with the manuscript. By this the two first text lines are more closely connected (from the more outspoken "*Min tankes tanke ene du er vorden*" to the more intimate "*Du er mitt Hjertes første Kærlighet*"). A crescendo on the dissonant chord on the third beat in bar 5 result in separating the two texts and the effect is more like a traditional romantic intensifier.

(PP Interpretative elements in bar 13: 1&2)

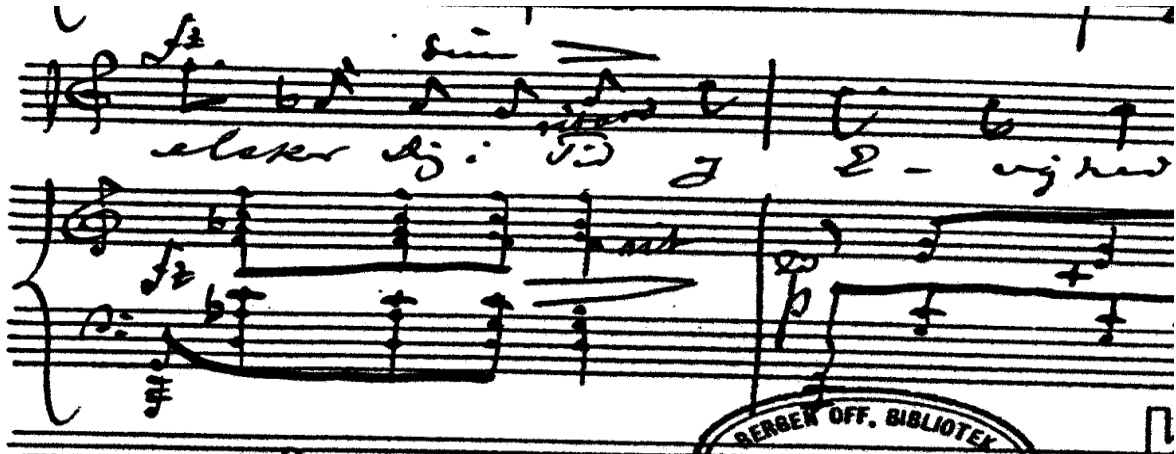


In bar 13 the manuscript, Horneman and Wilhelm Hansen editions have the dissonant predominant chord only in one eighth note, while in Peters and GGA this chord is repeated on the second eighth note as well. This is the first extra text line Grieg put into the song with the text *Jeg elsker Dig* with the chord on "*elsk*". (The Golden Section for the whole song is also at the beginning of bar 13.) Having a single eighth note dissonant chord at this point makes the love utterance a bit more sensuously exited. (Barbara Hendricks is almost saying the text here.)

(PP Interpretative elements in bar 17: 1)

The most significant difference between the manuscript and the printed versions are to be found at the peak of the song; bars 16-17. It is only in the manuscript the top note has a *fz*, all printed versions has a *ff*.

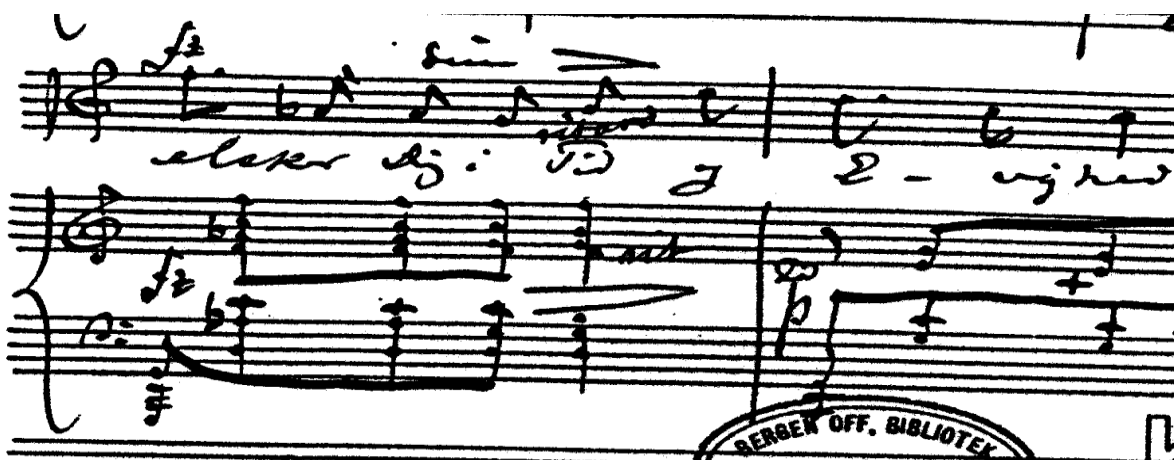
(PP Interpretative elements in bar 17: 2)



Moving the *ritardando* to the beginning of bar 17 instead of at the end, as in the manuscript and Horneman, makes even a stronger focus on the sensuality of "Jeg elsker Dig!" than the moral obligation "I Tid og Evighed". I think this balance is of great importance to the identity of the song.

Edvard Grieg accepted all this editions and I think he had a rather pragmatic relation to proofreading. He was fully aware of the limitations of the music notation system, and also of the great variety of performance practices that could transform the printed music to living experiences. We could illustrate this complexity in this way:

(PP Notation and notion of music)



As a literate system, the music notation is restricted to a logical-mathematical grid. However, our notion of music is based on conventions that are social and cognitive constructs.

The first point could be subsumed under what Kofi Agawu (1999) calls the plane of succession, while point two would be the plane of simultaneity. We could also describe this using Kahneman's dichotomy of cognitive processes in his book *Thinking Fast and Slow* (2008). What he calls System 1 (a parallel to the plane of simultaneity) will take care of all the input we constantly get and organize it into our understanding of the world with as little energy as possible. That would be all elements of sonority, articulation, dynamics, performing practice. We need not to think about them, they just are there. System 2 would be our thinking and comparing of inputs in order to identify the elements of succession in the literate system: melody, rhythm, harmony and form. It is in the combination of these two planes that we make identifications of a work and coin an identity to a performance.

Anyhow, there is no printed version that we could say is the only correct representation of the work, and with so many deviations between manuscript and printed editions, we have no authentic score. This does not mean that we have no idea of the Work that Grieg coined his Opus 5 no.3 "Jeg elsker Dig!". Qualified judgments about a performance are often directly connected to identification of a work in using a work concept as if the work could be regarded as a unique entity. However, even a unique score does not define the identity of the work. We have to accept the performing tradition as a relevant frame to our work concept and by that, we accept the notion of a musical work based on a lot of different physical indicators as well as social and cognitive constructs. That brings me to my second topic: Identity.

Identity

"Jeg elsker Dig!" is the third song in Grieg's opus *Hjertets Melodier* consisting of 4 poems from H. C. Andersen's cycle *Hjertets Melodier* (1830).

(PP Text Andersen Grieg 1).

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. To brune Øyne jeg nylig saae | 1. To brune Øyne |
| 2. Min Tanke er et mægtigt Fjeld | 2. Du fatter ei Bølgenes evige Gang |
| 3. Du gav mig Blomster | 3. Jeg elsker Dig/ Min Tankes Tanke |
| 4. Min Tankes Tanke ene Du er vorden | 4. Min Tanke er et mægtigt Fjeld |
| 5. Henvisned er de Blomster, Du mig gav | |
| 6. Du fatter ei Bølgenes evige Gang | |
| 7. Jeg elsker Dig – Dig som jeg ei tør sige | |
| 8. Man har et Sagn – et Eventyr | |

Grieg uses only four of the eight poems and reorganizes the order giving the story a much more direct and confessing romance.

(PP Text Andersen Grieg 2)

This reorganizing and Grieg's adjustments of the text in *Jeg elsker Dig!* might give us some hints towards an understanding of Grieg's thoughts about the Identity of this song. This was a serious love affair and was given his fiancé Nina as a Christmas present. The handwriting, the enforcement of the text *Jeg elsker dig*, and the balancing between the sensuously apparent and the moral commitment, are elements to be taken care of in the development of an interpreting of this song. As I will show by my examples of recordings in a minute, as long as the melody is recognizable we tend to identify a performance being Grieg's opus 5 no.3, (or not). However, I will argue that some of these performances do not take care of the identity of this work of music. Therefore, there is a need for some clarification between the concepts identification and identity. I will take the listener's perspective and here are some elements from my theoretical platform.

I view the traditional music theory with its focus on lawfulness and ontological definitions as a search for identification of musical works through a denotative perspective. Based on analysis of the score, concepts and theories are only linked to the sounding music through knowledge about performing practice. In this way, the literate dimension becomes the ontological framework of our knowledge in music. It is effective in our communication about music; we can identify elements in the music that we comment. However, analyzing our listening to an interpretation of a performance, we must include the

epistemological dimension. Our appreciation of music is always a result of social and cognitive constructs. The acceptance of individual and social knowledge in music, involves a kind of knowledge that is not at all restricted to the literate knowledge/concepts.

The cognitive process in listening to music could be described in short as follows:

(PP Listening process 1) After sensing the acoustic sound waves, the mechanical oscillations are transformed to nerve impulses in the inner ear.

(PP Listening process 2)

The basic development of any knowledge is the establishing of primary interpretative elements. It is important to notice that it is only required that the interpretative elements being developed by differentiation, not that they need to be identified. Take the expressiveness of the human voice as an example; we do not need to identify the different nuances in the voice in order to get knowledge /understanding/feeling of the content. However, these differentiated elements can/will be grouped (Gestalt principles) and they do contribute to the notion of identity of the music.

(PP Listening process 3)

1. Sensory transition

Mechanical oscillations are transformed to nerve impulses

2. Auditory grouping

Primary interpretative elements through differentiation

3. Formation of signs

Synthesized through the listener's subjective experience
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4. Establishing a meaningful cognitive musical structure
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Identity: When you get aware of the meaningful signs, the ontological content, in the on-going epistemological processes.

The next stage in the cognition process is the development of the sign. By combining and comparing different interpretative elements, the possibility of establishing meaning-bearing signs in the music arises. These signs are synthesized through the listener's subjective experience/knowledge of possible interpretations to form a meaningful cognitive musical structure.

(PP Listening process 4)

At this level, we can identify Identity:

(PP Listening process 5)

Identity is established when you get aware of the meaningful signs, the ontological content, in the on-going epistemological processes. The interpretative elements of *Jeg elsker Dig!* I discussed a moment ago were not only differences from a normal practice, but I took them as meaningful signs to be considered in developing an interpretation. They have an impact on my understanding of the identity of the song. In addition, I gave them an ontological content, that is; identified them, with literate concepts, and that enabled me to present them and argue for their existence.

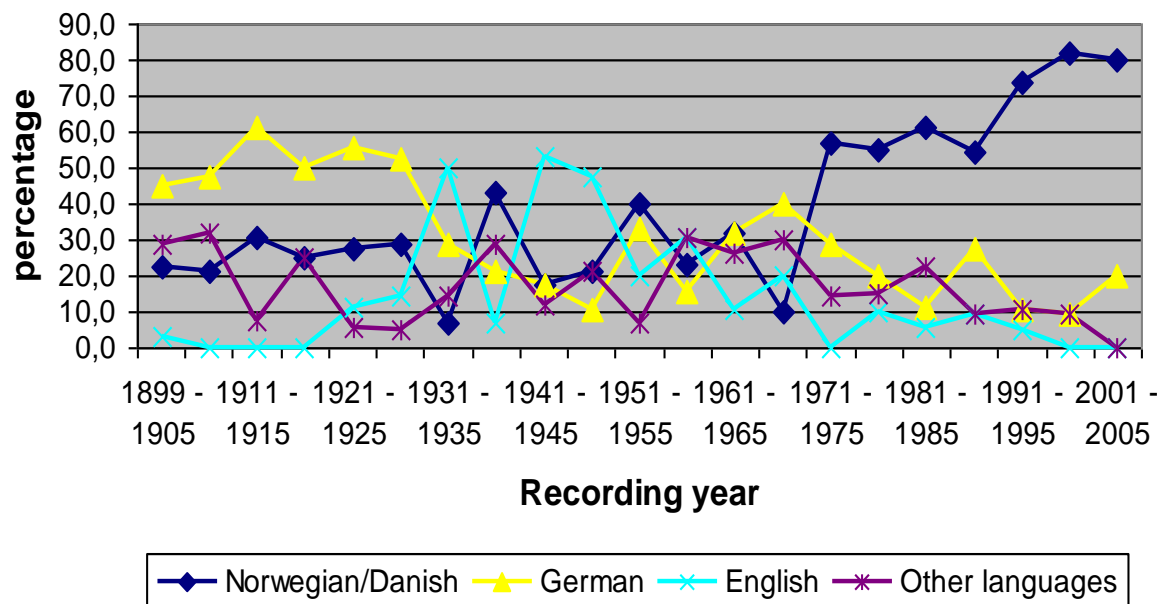
Listeners within a definite music culture share large common areas in their experience of interpretative elements, what Stanley Fish (1976) calls “interpretative communities”. These elements are of subjective and inter-subjective character; they are part of the epistemological basis the listener has acquired participating in musical contexts, and they contribute as social constructs a lot to the identity we use when we judge performances a musical work. Which brings me to my next topic:

Interpretations

To continue the argument of interpretative communities, I will start with some facts about the public history of this song. Edvard Grieg’s *Jeg elsker Dig!* was written as part of the German Lied tradition and this genre’s transfer from the bourgeoisie salon to the concert hall. Being a love-song, it became very popular: in addition to albums by Wilhelm Hansen and Peters, Peters also published the song as sheet music in more than 60.000 copies in Europe between 1883 and 1906. When the gramophone industry was established, this was a very popular song to record; there are more than 50 entries within the first ten years of gramophone history, and for many singers this was the first song they recorded ever. The multitude of musical genres in the gramophone business opened for interpretations of this song directed to other markets than those who wanted a copy of a concert situation.

It began as a German Lied, with German as the dominating language on records up to 1930ies.

(PP Language)

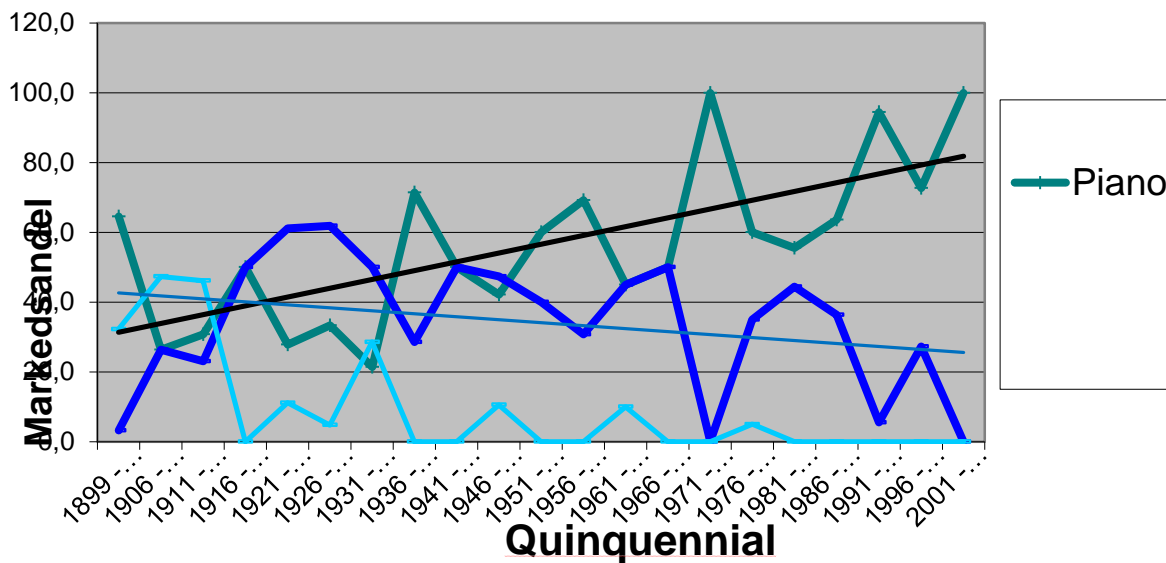


Then English is dominating in a period, except the years 1936-40 where Norwegian/Danish for the first time is most used. It is possible to see this statistical information as indicators to the general political/cultural history of Europe. From 1950-70 no language is dominating, but from 1970 and the rest of the century Norwegian/Danish is definitely taken over the market.

Grieg wrote this song for voice and piano. He made no orchestration of it, as he did with other songs. He made a transcription for solo piano though (op.41.no.3), and in 1914 Max Reger made an orchestration of the song, quite in the style of Grieg's orchestrations.

The piano was preferred in the acoustical era, and then came the orchestra in the electrical period, but back to the piano when the stereophonic technique was established in the mid-1950s, and piano dominates from the 1970s. Maybe there is a connection to the debate about authenticity and the early music movement?

(PP Accompaniment 1)



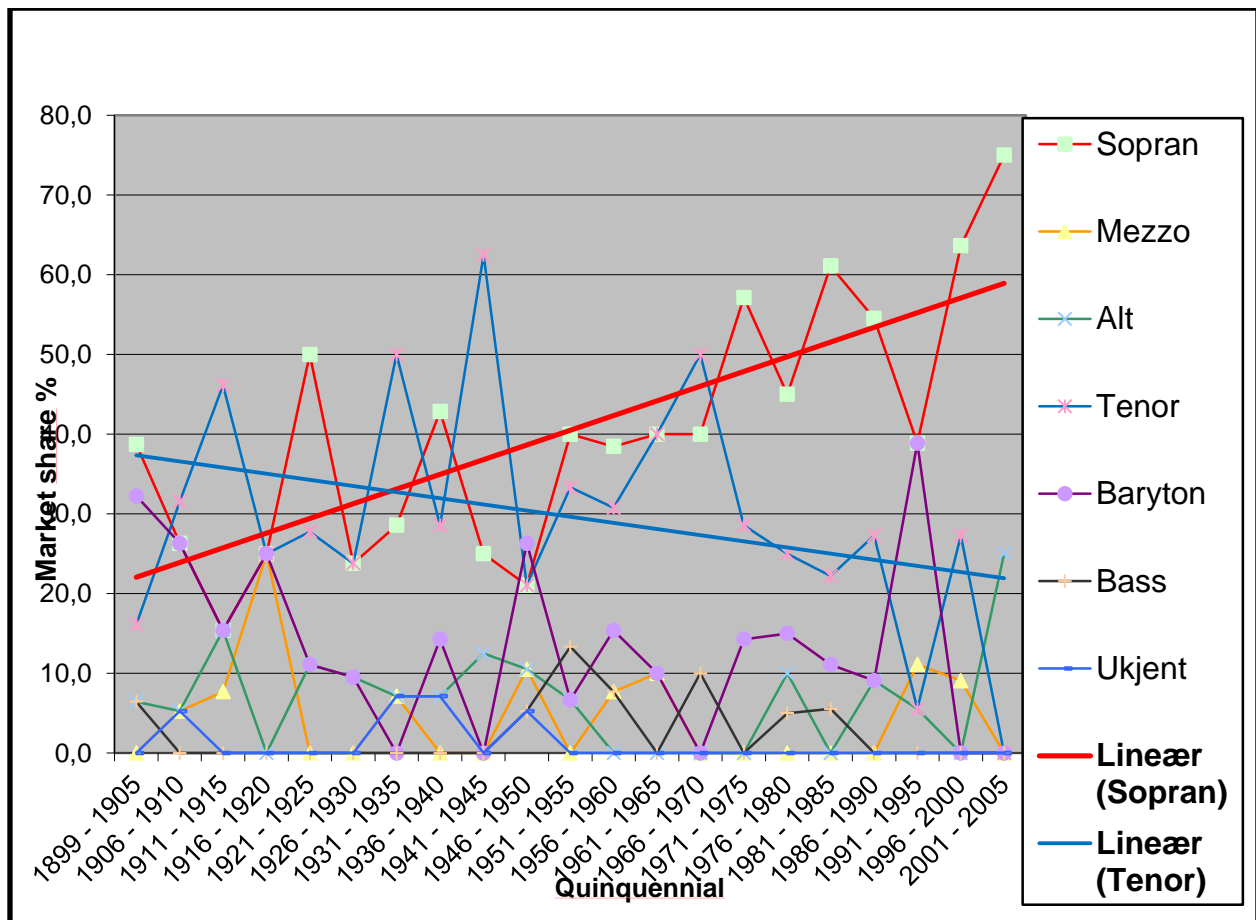
There is a misprint in Peters score and orchestral parts in bar 16 definitely hearable in several recordings.

Play Eks.2 Groh

Herbert Ernst Groh (1905-82): Telefunken/Decca 1953 F 43 283₄₃₉

In many operas, the soprano and tenor have the most loveable roles. Being a love-song Jeg elsker Dig! was for a long time recorded by man and female voices with a dominance of tenors and sopranos.

(PP A love song for all voices?)

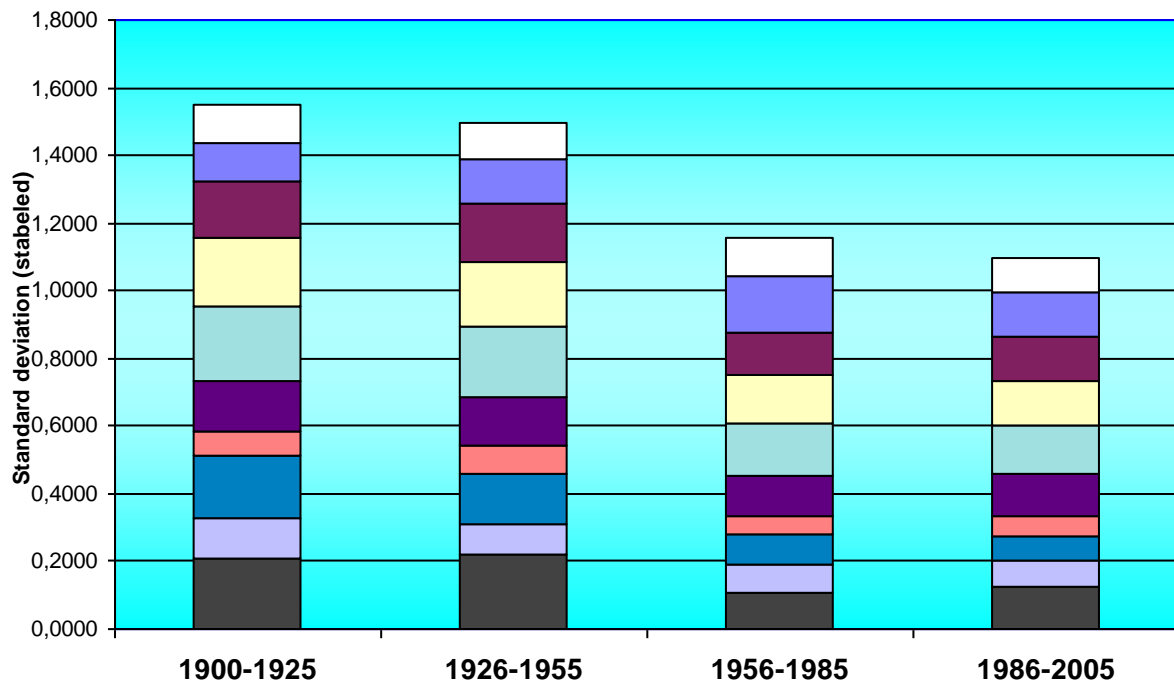


This continued almost half of the century but in the stereophonic and digital era, the sopranos have taken over the marked more and more completely dominating in the last decades. Tenors and baritones where are you??

One of the pioneers in using historical recordings as the study object in musicology was Robert Philip. Based on his research he pointed to a tendency of tidying up performances as a main characteristic of the changes in the performance practice in the 20th century (Philip 1992). The performances were closer to the written notation, and less rubato and other individual preferences. As I have shown, the variations of main tempo in performing Jeg elsker Dig! did not change during the last century. However, I calculated the

standard deviation for each interpretation based on measuring the deviation of tempo in all sections compared to the tempo in the first text-line.

(PP Standardavvik)



Then I could see a result in accordance with Philip's "tidying up performances": When a performer had decided a tempo, the tempo deviations within the song became smaller, especially after 1955. There are several possible explanations to this, I will mention only one illustrating an element of social construct: The increased distribution of records, now LPs, including at the music conservatories, made it possible for a new generation of musicians to compare many different interpretations through listening to records, instead of being restricted to concert performances.

Recordings

As promised, I will end my presentation by demonstrating some recordings where I find the interpretations doing harm to the identity of Jeg elsker Dig!.

In my first example, the soprano Felicia Weathers sings in German and in a typical concert tradition.

(PP Felicia Weathers). It starts with an ordinary string orchestra following Grieg's texture quite stringent. However, at the dynamic top point something happens.

Play example 3 Weathers

Recorded in Prague 13.10.1984. Vaclav Hybs conducting his arrangement.

AMP Musikverlag 3784/K-A464 (mx ED7350/A)

The penetrating fortissimo destroys the identity of this song making it more like a rape than as a humble gift from Edvard to his fiancé Nina.

Only a few of the orchestrated versions use Max Bruch's score. As I mentioned earlier, the soundscape of a record belongs to that part of the impression that usually will be identified by our System 1 without any detailed reflection.

However, if we listen critically we can hear elements that do not belong to the identity of the song, but are used for marketing this recording towards a public that do not go to a liederabend or classical concerts, but wants something "classic". I refer to a recording Peter Schreier did in September 1976, I guess as a guest to get a travel passport from the authorities in Eastern Germany.

Both the harmony and the orchestration are adjusted to please this public, and I find adding the sound of a harpsichord complete out of place.

Play example 4 Schreier opening.

Recorded in September 1977. Berlin Radioorchester Robert Hanell (cond.)

DGG 2536 292 461

Orchestration to reach a niche in the market.

The record industry has created new kinds of listeners.

There are several translations of the text, at least twenty different languages, but I find it interesting that all translations are based on the version with two stanzas in the Peters edition, not translation of H. C. Andersen's original text. Mostly only one in each language, but there are many different versions in English. In addition to several translations in the concert tradition, the musical Song of Norway (1944) had a new text written by Robert Wright, focusing on the sensual embodiment of a love affair. ("I love your lips, I love your laugh, I love the tear that dims your dancing eyes"). This version became very popular

among the crooners, singers with limited radiance of their voice but with great affinity to the microphones ability to catch the expressive elements from the voice.

Play Bing Crosby example 5 excerpt.

Recording from December 11 in 1944 J. Scott Trotters orchestra.

Brunswick 0 3647-B425

"Song of Norway" by Robert Wright and George Forrest based on Edvard Grieg's life and music

The Swedish bass Sven d'Ailly made a recording in 1930 where he, in contrast to most classical singers, took advantage of the new expressivity that a microphone could transmit.

Instead of using intensity (crescendo) as written in the score, he moved the microphone closer and closer getting an increased intimacy to the interpretation.

Play Sven d'Ailly

Recorded Jeg elsker Dig! in the summer of 1930

Ultraphon A 45 101 mx 15111/15

Bass singer using the new microphone technique

I found only one new text in German, but that version had many changes. The orchestration is made for big band, meter is now in 4/4, instead of $\frac{3}{4}$ (Intimate slow dancing), and the last part of the text which originally is "Ich liebe Dich in Zeit und Ewigkeit!" now, in 1987 in the middle of the yuppie era with a strong egocentrism in all aspects of life.

Play Migenes excerpt 7, opening and ending (PP Julia Migenes 2)

Recorded in 1987 with ORT-BIG BAND HEK AC 233556466

New text in line with the yuppies egocentricity

The new text was "Ich liebe Dich so lang ich fühlen kann!" / "I love you as long as I feel for it!" The moral commitment is completely absent!

Jose Carreras was always present in his performances and as the only one of the “Three Tenors” he made a recording of Jeg elsker Dig! in 1990.

Published on a CD with Catalanian folksongs, sung in Catalan and with a big symphony orchestra accompanying him. He used this version at several concert with the Three Tenors, and then the performance took character of a championship in vocal gymnastic: Who could hold the high note longest!

Play Carreras excerpt & ending

Recorded in 1990 Joan Casas Conductor Sony SK 47 177

Presented as Catalan song, sung in Catalan, based on the German two stanzas

Conclusion

I am fully aware of picking some rather eccentric examples to this presentation, but at the same time, I hope they can illustrate several points:

First: Qualified judgments about the interpretation are often directly connected to our own concept of the work, and I wanted to show that this concept is a social/cognitive construct.

Second: the validity of a performance must be related to the actual situation of the performance; that is all my examples may give the listener an idea of Grieg’s Jeg elsker Dig! Time and place, the social context have great impact on our appreciation. On the other hand, and that is the core of this conference;

the reliability of a performance must be related to the tradition of performance practice of the work. In my mind, my examples threatened, broke or substituted the identity of Jeg elsker Dig!

Thank You for listening!

Please accept my ears/airs!