

Franz Schubert: Piano Trio No. 2 in E-flat major, D. 929
(1827, 43 minutes)

The second of Franz Schubert's two piano trios, the Trio in E-flat major is another of that remarkable series of works that Schubert produced at almost superhuman speed during the last couple of years of his short life. Among the works he created were the present trio as well as the earlier Trio in B-flat major, his last three piano sonatas, the great String Quintet, and the beginnings of a tenth symphony. Interestingly, though, Schubert was never one to seek out the praise of the general music loving public. Only occasionally were there public performances of his works, as he was apparently content to enjoy the appreciation of his friends and close acquaintances.

Written towards the end of 1827, the Trio in E-flat major was given its first performance in December of that year and also featured prominently in the one and only concert during Schubert's lifetime that was dedicated solely to his music, on March 26, 1828. Unlike the melodically generous and emotionally carefree B-flat major Trio that Schubert had written just months before, the Trio in E-flat major is an adventuresome and complex work that explores a variety of moods and styles.

The opening Allegro features three themes: the first assertive yet graceful, the second a charming little tune over a repeating rhythm, and the third an extension of the opening idea that becomes the basis of the ensuing development. Apparently inspired by a Swedish folk singer, the unusual slow movement, with its subtle funeral march-like rhythm, builds to a passionate climax – this distinctive movement became a prominent part of the score for Stanley Kubrick's 1975 film *Barry Lyndon*. The energetic third movement features much imitation of phrases from instrument to instrument. Opening with an almost innocuous theme, the Finale soon moves into darker territory, and also alludes back to the second movement in the course of its complex development, leading to a decisive conclusion.

Edvard Grieg: 19 Norwegian Folk Tunes, Op. 66
(1896-97, 2 minutes each)

As Grieg was establishing himself as a composer, he came under the influence of Rikard Nordraak, who, along with his enthusiasm for Grieg's music, believed that the path forward for music in Norway was the embrace of nationalism. So many other countries had followed a similar path, as composers (and artists in other media) turned to folk songs and tales, mythology, history, and legends for inspiration. This path proved fruitful for Grieg, and by the 1870s, he was well-known as both a composer and pianist. Although larger works like his Piano Concerto in A minor were and remain famous, Grieg's talents are just as fully realized, if not more so, in shorter forms. He composed an abundance of short piano pieces, among them the sixty-plus Lyric Pieces he published between 1867 and 1901. Also prominent in his output are arrangements of folk songs.

Some of those folk song settings are quite straightforward and comparatively simple, designed for amateurs to perform at home. But others, including the 19 Norwegian Folk Tunes, are more complex and harmonically adventuresome. Grieg admitted this to his friend, Dutch composer Julius Röntgen: "I have put some hair-raising chromatic chords on paper. The excuse is that they originated not on the piano but in my mind. If one has the Vøring waterfall beneath one's feet, one feels more free and daring than down in the valley." A few of the nineteen pieces derive from "cattle calls," used by farmers to bring their cattle back to the fold. Others are drawn from traditional songs and lullabies. However humble the origins of the tunes, though, Grieg's settings are expansive. As he wrote on another occasion, "The realm of harmony has always been my dream-world, and my relationship, to this harmonious way of feeling and the Norwegian folk-songs, has been a mystery even for me. I have

understood that the secret depth one finds in our folk-songs, is basically owing to the richness of their untold harmonic possibilities. In my reworking of the folk-songs Op. 66, but also otherwise, I have attempted to express my interpretation, of the hidden harmonies, in our folk-songs.”

Edvard Grieg: Intermezzo in A minor
(1866, 4 minutes)

Grieg, perhaps the most popular of all Scandinavian composers, received his early musical education in Norway, but was inspired by the then-famous Norwegian violinist Ole Bull to continue his studies in Leipzig. After his time in Germany, Grieg spent a couple of years in Norway and Copenhagen before a brief composing and performing tour in Europe. Right around the time that he returned to Norway from that tour, Grieg composed his Intermezzo in A minor, one of only two works, along with the Op. 36 Sonata, that he wrote for the combination of cello and piano (there may have been a third, a short Mazurka, that is now lost). This lovely, melancholy, song-like Intermezzo, much in the style of Grieg's Lyric Pieces for piano. was apparently intended to be the first movement of a suite for cello and piano that Grieg never completed.

Edvard Grieg: Lyric Pieces, Volume III, Op. 43
(1886, 2-4 minutes each)

As is mentioned elsewhere in these notes, early in his career, Grieg met fellow composer Rikard Nordraak (who, by the way, wrote the Norwegian National Anthem). “From Nordraak,” wrote Grieg, “I learned for the first time to know the nature of Norwegian folk tunes and my own nature ... a mist fell from my eyes, and suddenly I knew the way I had to take.” One of the results of those reflections was the Lyric Pieces. Grieg composed some sixty-six Lyric Pieces, published in ten volumes over the years 1867 to 1901. The first two volumes, Op. 12 (1866-67) and Op. 38 (1883), were so popular that Grieg really wanted to publish the Op. 43 third volume as “Spring Songs,” so as to separate them from their predecessors. His publisher, however, wanted to maintain the very successful “Lyric Pieces” brand name. Grieg eventually agreed, and the Op. 43 was published to equally great success in 1886, selling, as his publisher put it, “like hotcakes.”

The Op 43 begins with Sommerfugl (Butterfly), one of Grieg's most-played piano pieces, an evocation of a butterfly flitting gracefully from flower to flower. Ensom vandrer (Solitary traveler, or Lonely wanderer) is somber and in a minor key, and I hjemmet (In my homeland) is another pretty piece inspired by Grieg's love of the Norwegian countryside. Småfugl (Little bird) brings to mind the chirping of birds, and Erotikk (Erotikon) might well have been Grieg's tribute to his wife Nina. The set concludes with one of the greatest of the Lyric Pieces, Til våren (To spring), which features both impassioned and quiet, lyrical moments.

Percy Grainger: Scandinavian Suite
(1902, 15 minutes)

Born in Melbourne, Australia, Percy Grainger spent much time in the years before World War I traveling around Scandinavia, playing concerts and collecting folk songs. However, the five melodies featured in his Scandinavian Suite – two of them Swedish, two Norwegian, and one Danish – didn't result from his own collecting of folk songs, which came later. These tunes were actually given to Grainger by the Danish cellist Herman Sandby while he and Grainger were attending the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. In subsequent years, during tours over the years 1902 through 1906, Sandby and Grainger played a number of Grainger's arrangements of Scandinavian folk songs in concert. Five

of those were ultimately collected and published in 1903 as *La Scandinavie*, or the *Scandinavian Suite*.

The suite opens with a Swedish Air and Dance, the pensive air interrupted in the middle by a lively dance. The soulful second movement, *Song of Varmeland*, later became well-known as a jazz standard, “Dear Old Stockholm,” recorded by the likes of Stan Getz, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane. After a lighthearted, rather comical Norwegian Polka comes the fourth movement, *Danish Melody*, which is in fact the Danish National Anthem, *Der er et yndigt land* (There is a lovely country), composed by Hans Ernst Krøyer in 1835. The *Scandinavian Suite* concludes with an Air and Finale on Norwegian Dances that combines a more wistful melody with a bright and lively Norwegian spring dance.

Jean Sibelius: 5 Pieces for violin and piano, Op. 81
(1915-18, 16 minutes)

Jean Sibelius studied the violin from his youth – at age ten he was given his first violin by his uncle, and he played trios in his teens with his sister Linda playing piano and brother Christian the cello – and hoped to become a violin soloist and virtuoso. But his compositional skill soon exceeded his instrumental prowess, and he gave up the violin in his twenties. While his Violin Concerto is the most famous of his compositions featuring the violin, he wrote quite a number of other shorter pieces for the instrument.

To help keep his finances healthy during the pain and disruptions of World War I, Sibelius produced quite a number of shorter pieces for publication and home performance, including these 5 Pieces. Despite their being composed during the war years, there isn't really a hint of the war to be heard in them. The opening Mazurka, probably the most challenging to perform of the set with its double-stops and large leaps in the melodic line, was composed first, in 1915. Written in 1917, the Rondino is written in a faux-Baroque style. From that same year, the Valse is relaxed and beguiling. The remaining two pieces date from 1918: the Aubade (the title means “morning song”) is delicate and lyrical, with playful piano figures, and the concluding Menuetto, like the Rondino, evokes the music of the past.

Edvard Grieg: Cello Sonata in A minor, Op. 36
(1882-83, 28 minutes)

After a period of illness and conducting duties in the late 1870s and early 1880s, Grieg was, as he described it in a letter, “spiritually and bodily unwell,” and thought he might give up composing altogether “because I satisfy myself less and less.” Grieg's Sonata, his only major work for cello and piano, emerged from this period. In it one hears reminiscences of his Piano Concerto in A minor; around the time of this Sonata, Grieg was trying, unsuccessfully, to write a second piano concerto, and perhaps the Sonata, in the same key as his famous Concerto, was something of a return to familiar ground for him. Dedicated to his brother John, an amateur cellist, the Sonata was premiered by cellist Julius Klengel (teacher of John Grieg as well as, later, famous cellists like Emanuel Feuermann and Gregor Piatigorsky), accompanied by Grieg, in Leipzig on October 27, 1883.

One commentator refers aptly to the Sonata's “urgent and energetic dramatic thrust, as well as voluptuous, satiny songfulness.” The first movement features two contrasting melodies, one dramatic and agitated, one warm and serene. Just at the end of the development of these themes, the cello has a short solo cadenza before the movement's ominous conclusion. An innocently pretty melody opens the second movement, although the mood turns much darker as the music progresses. Grieg here makes reference to an earlier composition, a march from his incidental music for Sigurd Jorsalfar. Toward the end that opening theme returns, builds to a climax, and then calms again as the cello concludes with a

quiet arpeggiated pizzicato chord. After a short introduction for the cello, the final movement launches into a lively, rustic Norwegian dance. Those dance rhythms pervade the movement, with short contrasting episodes by turns songful and passionate. At the end the tempo increases as the cello ascends, holding its final note and the piano plays its concluding scales and chords.

Program Notes by Chris Morrison