

Sons of Norway Presentation of
A Norwegian Legacy, Suite for Violin and Piano,
Part I:

From the music of Edvard Grieg, compiled and arranged by Evangeline Kozitza

I first would like express my personal appreciation to President Erickson and the Cleng Peerson Lodge for once again giving my brother, sister, and I the opportunity to speak about aspects of our Norwegian heritage that have interested us and that we have researched in the past year. This is now our third year to present at this annual youth meeting, and it is something that we have enjoyed and been challenged by each year. We thank you all for passing down to us your love of our unique Norwegian heritage, something that we have come to hold very dear through participation in Sons of Norway, and that we in turn hope to pass down to our own children one day.

One thing about my personality that my family and friends know very well, is that I am a planner. I love to have a plan for everything...my school day, what I'll do with my free time, what projects I'll accomplish, what books I'll read, where I'll go to college in a year, where I'll travel to someday everything. Now, this is not to say that I always use this attitude wisely. Many times, my plans don't work out and I am, I guess you could say, less than pleased. As I grow older, I am continually working towards an attitude of submission to God's will above my own plans; however this trait of planning details is still very much a part of my personality. So...people who know me well probably won't be too surprised to learn that on the way home with my family from last year's youth presentation event, after speaking on my research of the Norwegian resistance during World War II, my mind was already filled with many ideas of what I could possibly present at the next year's meeting. Maybe I would read a book about a Norwegian princess and be able to report details of her life, I thought...orperhaps I could do research on traditional folk costumes, and show pictures of my favorites. Since one of my interests is writing, I could even explore the lives of famous Norwegian authors, and report those to the group.

Little did I know then what direction my life would take in the coming year, and what events God was already putting into place to prepare me for what I am presenting to you today. Since that day a year ago, God has confirmed in my heart one of the paths that I believe He is leading me towards as I graduate from high school next year and move towards college...and that is teaching music.

My siblings and I have been involved in music since we were young children. I have received instruction in piano since I was seven, and I began lessons on the violin the following year. However, it only became clear in the last 2-3 years, and this past year especially, that music would be my focus as I prepare for college and my life as an adult. It is only in the past two years that I have become a part of the Williamson County Symphony Orchestra, have started teaching my own young students in violin and piano, and last summer, attended three music camps at two Texas colleges. Now, music is my passion, my focus, and therefore, consumes much of my time in practicing, performing, and teaching.

Since I have become serious about pursuing a music degree with a focus in violin in college, the first step I have had to take is in choosing the pieces I will play for a violin audition into a school. The college of my choice is Baylor University (although I am considering several others, including St. Olaf in Minnesota and Luther in Iowa), and so I have had to become familiar with the music department there as well as its requirements for an audition.

Here I quote from Baylor's website the requirements for an audition in violin:

“ At Baylor, a violinist pursuing an undergraduate degree in music is required to prepare 1. The first or last movement of a standard concerto including cadenza if applicable, 2. A movement of unaccompanied Bach, and 3. A short piece or etude.”

Three pieces...three pieces that will decide whether or not I am accepted into the music school, and if I am, how much scholarship money I will be offered. Obviously, I wanted to choose the pieces very carefully...I wanted them to be pieces that would not only show well my abilities on the violin, but also portray my personality, who I am as an individual. I wanted the pieces to be unique...to really stand out.

For a couple months my mom and I spent a great deal of time researching various pieces of music and composers to find just the right combination. Fairly early on in the process, we came across a beautiful violin solo which fit the first criteria of the concerto movement. As I listened to it Hilary Hahn play it on Utube for the first time, I fell in love with its lyrical melody and gorgeous, singing tones. It is called The Lark Ascending, by British composer Ralph Vaughn Williams, and it is based off of a poem by George Meredith about a lark's journey over the land, inspiring love and songs in the people who live there. Vaughn Williams expresses this idea so well through the music that you can literally hear the lark's song through the violin....it is an amazing piece of music that I soon decided was a must for my audition.

The second required piece, that of unaccompanied Bach, I chose soon after the Lark Ascending...it is the fast, dramatic Presto movement from Bach's G minor sonata, which is a good contrast with the singing, lyrical melodies of the Lark Ascending, and therefore displays my versatility as a violinist.

However, still yet to be decided was the third piece in the criteria: the short piece or etude. I had the vague idea that I would like this piece to come from a Norwegian composer to reflect my heritage, and that I wanted it to be lively, light, and dance-like. The most obvious composer to look into was Edvard Grieg: after all, he is 1. *the* most famous Norwegian composer in history (and really, lesser-known composers wouldn't be as accepted at a college audition), and 2. I knew that much of his music was based off of Norwegian folk songs and dances. Perfect, right?

Wrong. There was a big problem. I didn't know of any music Grieg had ever composed specifically for the violin. From my limited experience reading about and performing Grieg's compositions, I knew his focus was mainly for the piano or orchestra: not for solo violin. After more research, I did discover that he had written three violin sonatas over the course of his career...but still, these could hardly be considered “short” pieces...being eight to twelve pages long a piece.

It seemed like a dead end and I started to move my attention to researching other composers despite my disappointment that I wouldn't be doing a Norwegian composition...when one of my old violin teachers, Anne Hamman, gave me an inspiring idea. “You've done some arranging in the past,” she told me. “Why don't you try to arrange a few of Grieg's pieces into a short medley for the violin?”

The idea caught my imagination immediately. It was perfect...I had wanted something unique, and how more unique was it to arrange your own piece for an audition? It wouldn't be too hard, or so I thought at the time. And, beyond all that, it seemed like a God-given answer to a perplexing problem. Anne Hamman, who is a very strong Christian with a faith I have looked up to for years, told me that she had actually felt inspired by the idea from God while praying for me one day.

So, backed by faith in God, an enthusiasm for music and Norway, and encouraging family members and teachers, I added the Grieg arrangement idea to my list of the three pieces I would play for audition.

Now, standing here today, about a year since given this idea, I can tell you that the arranging process has not been as easy as I first thought it would be. True, I had arranged a few small things over the years...but nothing really important, nothing for as large-scale an event as a college audition. I spent hours poring over Grieg music on the internet, researching his style and getting ideas for a theme, as well as choosing which pieces I would use for the arrangement. It took me months just to narrow down 5-6 pieces from a library of hundreds. Then to organize the pieces according to a theme that I had chosen, arranging them so that they flowed together well, and adding violinistic touches to music originally meant for piano...it sometimes seemed as if the task was proving too daunting for me, a girl of sixteen with barely any experience in arranging, to accomplish.

However, I can also stand here and tell you that Anne Hamman's original thought that God was behind this endeavor has proven to be correct. He *has* guided this project, and through the invaluable help of my mom, Anne Hamman, and my current violin instructor, Rachel Malone, I am now looking toward completing the final draft of this piece in the next month, beginning work on a piano accompaniment part and completing it this summer, and performing the arrangement for audition this December.

This is what I am here to present to you today. I want to share with you the title and theme of my piece, how I chose the music, how I arranged it, and also play a little bit to give you a taste of what it sounds like.

However, before I do that, I feel that it would be extremely negligent and even disrespectful for me not to spend at least a little time telling you about the amazing life of the man without whose work this idea would never have been born...the original composer of the music you are about to listen to, and a man I feel I have come to know well this past year...Edvard Grieg.

As an introduction to his life and work, I want to quote a couple paragraphs from Milton Cress' Encyclopedia of Great Composers and their music:

It reads, "Grieg is a national hero in Norway, not only because he was its greatest composer, but more especially because he was the musical embodiment of the land and its people. There are nationalist composers of other lands who turned, as Grieg did, to native songs and dances for stimulation and musical materials. But with few composers anywhere was the land and the music so inextricably one as it was with Grieg. Listening to Grieg's music we are suddenly brought into the world of Norwegian geography, sagas, customs, and people. We have in Grieg's works rustic dances and peasant songs, bridal processions and carnivals, pictures of folk life and village scenes, the sounds of church bells and mountain streams.

"When Grieg was a boy, the great Norwegian violinist and composer Ole Bull...said to him, 'Do you see the fjords over there – the lakes and streams, the valleys and forests, and the blue sky over all? They have made my music – not I. Frequently when I am playing, it seems to me as if I merely made mechanical motions and were only a silent listener while the Soul of Norway sings in my soul.' So, too, might Grieg have spoken many years later. It is Norway that made Grieg's music; Grieg was only an instrument. He, too, was the silent listener while 'the Soul of Norway' sang in his soul."

I wanted to read this to you because it says exactly what I have experienced while discovering more of Grieg and his work...that the heart and soul of Norway is depicted so strongly in his music that one can see and feel it while listening. I have never been to Norway personally, but I feel that I almost know what it is like through his music...not only the landscape, but the people as well. And not only one class of people, because Grieg's music spans the elite and prestigious of Norway down to the peasants and farmers. He has been called "The Chopin of the North," because many traits of his music were like that of one of the most prestigious of classical composers...he was bestowed many honors among the elite of Europe, being elected to music academies in Sweden, Holland, and France, given honorary doctorates from Cambridge University and Oxford University, and tributed by the placing of his bust in Gewandhaus, a famous concert hall in Leipzig, Germany. Yet this was the same man who was known to mingle with peasants and attend their country dances and gatherings, whose many short pieces based on folk songs and dances are on the same list of his compositions as the more classically elite *Concerto in A minor* for piano and orchestra, the famous *Peer Gynt Suite*, or the violin sonatas spoken of earlier. Truly it *can* be said that Grieg was "the musical embodiment of the land and its people."

Edvard Hagerup Grieg was born in Bergen, Norway, on June 15, 1843. From the time he was a young child he had a vivid imagination and a geniusly creative mind, full of dreams and ambitions. Much like the great scientist Albert Einstein, Grieg's teachers often complained about and ridiculed him for his wandering attention and seeming disinterest in his studies. When he was six, he started taking lessons on the piano, and at the age of twelve he wrote his first composition, *Variations on a German Theme*. His parents were thrilled; they were both musical themselves, especially his mother, who was an accomplished pianist. When Ole Bull, the famous Norwegian violinist, heard Grieg's composition, he was awed by the young boy's talent and recommended that Edvard be sent to further his music study at the Conservatory at Leipzig in Germany.

At the conservatory Grieg studied the traditions of composition, and learned to imitate the styles of the great German Romantic composers, such as Mendelssohn, Schubert, Brahms, and Wagner, whose compositions dominated the music world at the time. After graduating from the school with honors, he continued to compose and give concerts of his piano pieces in Bergen, but he was not happy with his work. He did not like imitating the styles of other composers, and longed to formulate his own unique style, though he knew not what that style might be. In his quest for discovering it, he went to live in Copenhagen, which was the Scandinavian center of music at that time. While there Grieg became the friend of the Norwegian musician Rikard Nordraak, the composer of the Norwegian national anthem, and the man who probably made the most profound impact on Grieg's life and work.

Here I quote from Cress' Encyclopedia once again, "Nordraak introduced Grieg to a library of Norwegian folk songs and dances which he possessed; more than that, he inflamed Grieg with his own burning ideal to create a Norwegian music touched with the spirit of the Norse race. The two friends solemnly vowed to dedicate their lives toward freeing Norwegian music from its subservience to Germany and toward the creation of authentic Norwegian music based on folk sources. 'It was as if the scales fell from my eyes' Grieg wrote. 'From Nordraak I learned for the first time what the Norwegian folk song was, and learned to know my own nature.'"

Immediately and with new enthusiasm for his work, Grieg went back to Bergen to begin implementing his new ideals. He and Nordraak founded a Nordic music society which helped Norwegian composers in performing their music for the public, and Grieg himself began composing music in a new style...the style he had been searching for...a distinctly Norwegian style.

Also around this time, in 1864, Grieg fell in love with and became engaged to his cousin, Nina Hagerup, whose parents disapproved of Grieg as a potential son-in-law. The couple was engaged for three years, waiting for Grieg's musical career to take off so that he could more fully provide for a wife. During this time Grieg wrote his most famous song, called "I Love You," for Nina, and traveled to Italy, where he met for the first time the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Tragically, while in Rome, Grieg received the devastating news that his good friend Rikard Nordraak had died in Paris. Overcome with grief and disheartenment over the plans they had made together, Grieg collapsed and became very sick. Though his condition was critical, he recovered, and with his restored physical health also returned new fervor for the work he and Nordraak had begun. Grieg determined that as a tribute to his friend, he would continue toward their goal of forming a new movement of Norwegian music, and he began right away by arranging a first-ever concert of Norwegian music, by Norwegian composers only, in Christiania. The concert was an astonishing success, considerably furthering Grieg's career. As a conductor at the Philharmonic Society in Christiania, a teacher of many pupils, and frequent performer of his work, he was now able to marry Nina in 1867.

On the heels of success, however, came the bitterness of defeat as Grieg met oppositions within his country to his cause for Norwegian music and the recognition of Norwegian composers. The tragic death of his first and only child, a thirteen-month old girl, of meningitis, added to Grieg's despair at this point in his life. But he didn't give up in his dreams, and in 1869, a turning point occurred in his career.

Franz Liszt, the noted composer and brilliant pianist, came across Grieg's work and was amazed. He wrote to Grieg, "I could hope that you are finding in your own country the success and encouragement you deserve; you will not fail of them elsewhere." He invited Grieg to visit him, and from then on, was instrumental in establishing Grieg's reputation in Europe and popularizing his music. Finally, because of his growing fame in other European nations, Grieg started to become appreciated in his own country as well – so much so that the government gave him a subsidy which allowed him to focus solely on composing for the rest of his life.

At this point Grieg was asked by Henrik Ibsen to compose what would become his most famous work, the incidental music to Ibsen's play, *Peer Gynt*. Grieg struggled with composing this piece more than any other he had done, but when it was performed, the acclimation throughout Europe of this work was outstanding.

With a nature that preferred the outdoors to city life, in 1885, Grieg built a villa among the woodlands and mountains six miles out of Bergen and overlooking the Hardanger fjord. He called the place *Troldhaugen*, or "Hill of Mountain Men." He and Nina lived there for the rest of his life, and there, built on a rock overlooking the fjord, was a small hut which housed Grieg's piano and where he composed. Admirers from all over the world came to visit him, so much so that he had to place a sign outside his door which read: "Edvard Grieg does not desire to receive callers earlier than four in the afternoon."

Despite his renown, Grieg remained a humble man, casually disregarding honors and staying true to the strong values he had known all his life. During the Dreyfus Affair, a political scandal in France in which a Jewish officer was falsely convicted for treason, Grieg was invited by Colonne to come to Paris to appear with his orchestra. In a courageous letter Grieg adamantly refused, writing that he "could not perform in a country where justice was flouted so flagrantly."

On his way to England to participate in a music festival in 1907, Grieg suffered a heart attack and died

in his sleep a few days later. Before he died, he had asked his wife for a simple funeral...but after his death, that request was ignored. He received a state ceremony, in which fifty-seven representatives of governments and musical organizations around the world placed wreaths near his body, and thousands upon thousands came to pay him tribute. When his ashes were taken to a grotto near his beloved Troidhaugen, over four hundred thousand Norwegians lined the streets of Bergen to watch the procession.

You can imagine what great an honor it has been for me to seek to arrange for violin a small portion of this great man's work. And also what a daunting task...after all, I am no extraordinary musician or skilled composer. How does someone like me take the work of a master and change it slightly to fit a new instrument and flow with a new theme, yet still remain true to the original idea that composer had for the piece in the first place? Even if I could do that, would Grieg himself be pleased with the final result?

Those are two questions I have been forced to encounter while working on this project, and, I hope, am on my way to answering with a piece of music that is uniquely mine, but that Grieg himself would be pleased with as remaining true to his style and ideals for Norwegian music.

And so, with that thought as an opener, I would like to tell you a little bit about my arrangement, a piece that I now call *A Norwegian Legacy*.

When I first started sifting through music to choose for this piece, I knew it had to have a theme...something that would tie the individual pieces together into something more meaningful, something worth sharing. I thought about what I knew about Norway. As I said earlier, I have never been to Norway, and I am not a native-born Norwegian. However, I *am* a Norwegian American...my descendants were Norwegians, and I have grown up listening to stories of them and their beloved homeland. So, I decided, I would tell a story similar to one I have heard all my life...the story of a girl who grows up in Norway and comes to America as a woman with her husband and children. The medley of pieces would be formatted so that each piece would be a separate story that this woman relates to her young American grandchildren about her life in Norway.

With this idea in mind, I chose music that I thought expressed four stages in this woman's life: her girlhood, her marriage, the birth of her first child, and her journey to America. As my list of possibilities grew, I soon discovered that expressing such a big idea in what was supposed to be a "short piece" for a college audition would be an immense challenge. Not only would I have to cut much of the music that I liked out of the piece, but it would literally be like relating the whole of a woman's life in a less than five minute period. The idea and the time restraints just didn't mesh. Still, I didn't feel I should give up on the idea, so I continued with my researching for music that went with the theme, hoping that in the end, I could work it out somehow. Well, about a month ago, when I started to actually put music on paper, my current violin instructor, Rachel Malone, gave me another idea. She suggested a focus on the first two stages – girlhood and the wedding day – for the short piece to be performed this December. "Then," she told me, "while in college you can create a sequel piece with the birth of her first child and coming to America. You could even add a third piece...in which you add American elements and some of your own composition to tell about her life homesteading the farm and what happened as the American generation grew up." What, essentially, she was suggesting, was to create a suite of three pieces...with my audition piece to be the first.

This was exactly the solution I needed to fit my original idea into a manageable musical form. It is also

very Grieg-like. After all, two of his most famous works are in suite form: *Peer Gynt*, and the *Holburg Suite*. So it seemed fitting in that regard as well. The full title then of my arrangement is *A Norwegian Legacy: A Suite for Violin and Piano*, compiled and arranged by Evangeline Kozitza from the music of Edvard Grieg. As I work toward finishing each individual part of the suite, my idea is to give them each subtitles in the Norwegian language.

And now to discuss the music of the arrangement itself. Part 1 (the piece I have been working on and will audition with this December) includes sections from six Grieg pieces. Five of the six pieces are taken from his famous collection of Lyric Pieces for the Piano. The sixth, and I will discuss more of this later, as well, is from the *Peer Gynt Suite*.

The arrangement begins with a simple melody Grieg called *Peasant's Song*, one of his Lyric Pieces. I call this piece my “scene setter” because I believe it portrays so well the setting and landscape of the Norwegian countryside, where my piece takes place. To me, it brings to mind scenes of woodlands and mountains, streams and fjords. Its song is peaceful and serene, exactly as I picture the feeling of this setting to be. To help you see and feel this setting for yourself, I'm going to play a little bit of *Peasant's Song* right now.

PLAY PEASANT'S SONG SELECTION

After *Peasant's Song*, the music picks up and begins the story of the young girl in a series of three dances. These three dances span the whole of her girlhood from early childhood to the brink of adulthood. The first dance, called *Springdances*, also one of the Lyric Pieces, is playful, lively, and just the slight bit mischievous, creating musical pictures of a young child at play. The second dance is a famous one, and probably one you all are familiar with. It is *Anitra's Dance*, from the *Peer Gynt Suite*. It's melody is a bit more complex than the first dance, depicting the girl as she matures into a young teenager. It contrasts with the other two dances in that it evokes a sense of mysteriousness and even melancholy at times. It changes moods easily, going from light, bouncy, spicatto notes, to more emotion drawing chords. The third dance is a *Halling*, a type of Norwegian dance Grieg drew from several times for his pieces. The melody is faster and even more complex than the other two dances, conveying a sense of many busy plans and dreams as the girl approaches adulthood.

And now, to give you an even better sense of what I've been describing, I'll play for you bits and pieces from these three dances, with short pauses in between. For time's sake, I'm not going to play all that is written, but I do want to give you a short taste of what each dance is like...

PLAY SELECTIONS FROM 3 DANCES

Lastly, the arrangement ends with a beautiful piece entitled *Wedding at Trolldhaugen*, a piece set in march style, describing all the joy and solemnity of a wedding procession in Norway. This piece is probably my favorite among all the ones I've chosen, because I think it shows Grieg's genius so clearly. He combines so much of the emotions of wedding days – the joy and lightheartedness, the memories of what has happened up to this point in the couples' lives, and the solemnity of the occasion at hand. To give you an example of what I mean, let me play a little bit of the piece for you...

PLAY FIRST PART OF WEDDING AT TROLDHAUGEN

At this point I was inspired with a little composition of my own, and I decided to add a slower, more dramatic part in the middle of *Wedding at Trolldhaugen* to relate the private thoughts of the girl being married, as she remembers her past and prepares for her new life ahead. This part is full of beauty and emotion, having a much more legato feel than the earlier march tempo. After this part is over, it is as if the girl is jerked out of her private thoughts to the real world of what is going on during the wedding procession as the music returns to the original melody. This is the last part of the piece I will play for you today. I hope that you will similarly envision the emotions and thoughts of this young woman as I have...

PLAY LAST PART OF *WEDDING AT TROLDHAUGEN*

You may have noticed that I have only mentioned 5 Grieg pieces so far, and I told you earlier that this arrangement included six. The sixth piece used in my arrangement is another of Grieg's Lyric Pieces called *Once Upon A Time*. In the arrangement, I use a section of this piece as a "bridge," a short passage that will be played by the piano accompaniment in between each of the pieces to both connect them and signal that a new stage in the life of the girl is about to begin.

Of course, my journey in completing this piece and then performing it is not yet over. There is still much to revise in the piece itself, and actually, I have yet to write a suitable ending for it. Also there is the piano part yet to be written, and of course...the hours of practicing to get it up to performance level. The sections that I played for you today were the simple melodies of the pieces, with out any of the fancy double-stops, scale passages, or other such violinistic touches I have had to add to make the piece more interesting and at the level it needs to be for a college audition. The simple reason why I did not play these additions today is...quite frankly...because they are very difficult, and the practicing required to perform them skillfully has not yet been completed. So, as you can see, there is still much work involved before *A Norwegian Legacy*, part 1, is ready for audition.

But then, after my audition...what then? As I stated earlier, I hope to similarly arrange two more pieces to be included in the *Norwegian Legacy* suite...and I hope to someday give these pieces to my children to treasure and enjoy. As the title implies, our Norwegian heritage is a legacy – a legacy of love, life, hard work, ambition, dreams, determination, and faith...a legacy that I hope will live on through this music.

Thank you very much for listening to me today. I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed learning a little bit more about Edvard Grieg and my humble attempts at arranging and performing his music. May God bless you all.

Evangeline Mendenhall Kozitza
April 19, 2009