

Grieg's Friend

BY JOSEPH SMITH

Grieg would never forget the moment he was introduced to Rikard Nordraak in 1864. Grieg was twenty-one, Nordraak a year older. Nordraak exclaimed: "Well, shall we two great men really meet one another at last!" Nordraak had less than two more years to live, yet his influence transformed Grieg.

As a mutual friend said of the two, "opposites attract." Nordraak elevated dilettantism to the level of artistic principle: he was highly skeptical of traditional training, placing all his faith in inspiration and naturalness, and considered Grieg's study at the conservative Leipzig Conservatory a mark against him. (Without having heard a note of Grieg's music, Nordraak anticipated that it would be "pedantic.") Grieg certainly hated the Conservatory and enjoyed railing against it his entire life. But Grieg's problem was not contempt for craft; rather, he blamed the conservatory for failing to give him the finished technique he had expected to acquire. In other words, he judged himself



Edvard Grieg



Rikard Nordraak

which gave concerts of progressive Scandinavian music in the influential city of Copenhagen, and Grieg published a discerning review of Nordraak's Op. 2 songs. Their relationship instilled in Grieg new confidence and a sense of mission, resulting in three breakthrough works. The *Humoresques* revel in their overt Norwegianism. (On hearing the minuet movement, Nordraak, with the endearing narcissism of the young, exclaimed to Grieg, "Yes, it is as if I

had written it myself!") Next, in his only piano sonata, Grieg attempts to reconcile his style to traditional form, with incomplete success. The first violin sonata follows. With this wonderfully fresh, sunny, and characteristic work, Grieg consolidates his new advances and produces a little masterpiece—youthful in content, mature in execution.

In 1866, Nordraak lay dying of tuberculosis. Grieg had himself suffered an attack of this disease only a few years previously, losing for good the use of one lung. It seems almost certain that it was fear for his own precarious health that prevented him from visiting his friend. But Grieg did not explain himself, leaving Nordraak wounded and bitter. Under these circumstances, the memory of Nordraak would understandably fill Grieg with intensely conflicted feelings. Nevertheless, a chilling phrase recurs through Grieg's writings like an *idée fixe*. "It was good for him that he died so young... Rikard Nordraak had to die... It is good that he died because he was not a real musician, and when all is said and done a composer must be that to win complete victory." Was Nordraak to die merely because he had already served his purpose to Norwegian music, and to Grieg—because he was an incomplete musician?

Continued on page 25

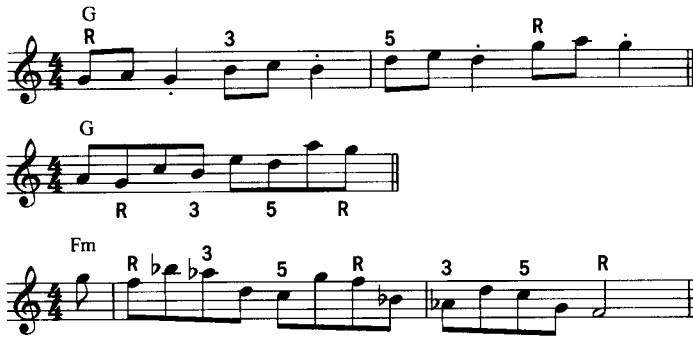
Grieg would never forget the moment he was introduced to Rikard Nordraak in 1864.

by conventional standards and felt inadequate. Nordraak, on the other hand, protected by willful ignorance, enjoyed complete confidence in his powers and a clear sense of mission: he wanted to compose music that was distinctively Norwegian. Photographs confirm the difference between the two: Grieg appears unformed and boyish, where Nordraak clearly knows who he is—or at least who he intends to become.

The two young men became not just friends, but companions in the cause of national music. They founded a society

position of the target note in the scale. Here are some licks using this concept:

Upper Neighbors Only



Combining Upper And Lower Neighbors: Many classic jazz licks are based on this concept, in which each note of the triad is encircled in turn. Here's an easy way to practice this:

Using Both Neighbor Notes



Oscar Peterson uses a similar idea in bar 21 of this third chorus, in sixteenth notes:

Upper Neighbors On The Beat



All these phrases are capable of many variations. Here's another way of encircling:

Target Notes On The Beat



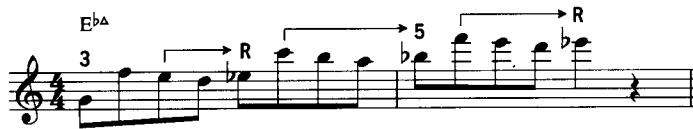
The following elegant version is a favorite of many saxophonists and trumpeters:

Alternating Upper And Lower Neighbors



It is also possible to use two upper neighbors for each target note, a semitone and tone above. This is demonstrated in bars 17-18 of Peterson's second chorus:

Two Upper Neighbors



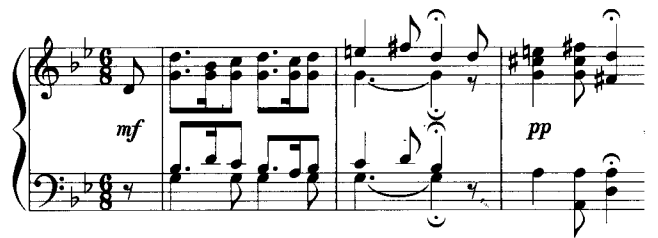
See Oscar Peterson's solo on page 26!

Grieg's Friend, continued from page 6

Grieg's real meaning is better explained by the following: "As for Nordraak, it is now clear to me that he was a brilliant prophet, but would never have become a mature artist in the fullest sense of the word. Thus it is good for him that he passed away before reality surprised him." In other words, Grieg felt that Nordraak died with complete faith in his greatness, whereas if he had lived, he would have ultimately had to face inevitable failure and disillusionment. Thus did Grieg at once console himself for his loss, and mitigate his sense of guilt at having enjoyed a rich, successful career, while the friend who helped him was cheated of his maturity.

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I had long wondered what Nordraak's music was really like. Even knowing how young he had died, I was shocked that two slim folios contained the *complete* songs and the *complete* piano pieces. The songs, which constitute the most celebrated part of his oeuvre, are generally short and strophic, and the accompaniments are modest. The majority are to texts by his cousin, the celebrated author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, and here, the folk character of the poems dictate the simple form. Both the charm and the Norwegian character are evident in the following quotation from "Tonen."



Please note the presence of a pattern that we tend to think of as particularly Griegian: the leading tone (the seventh degree of the major, or the raised seventh degree of the minor) does not make the expected resolution upwards, but instead jumps a down a third to the fifth degree of the scale. His magnum opus for piano is a scherzo with two trios. In this example (see page 47), we can see the imitation of Norwegian country fiddle dances in both the continuous double-stopping, and in the alternation of 6/8 with an implied 3/4. The male chorus "Olaf Trygvason" is distinguished by a dark, modal harmonic pallet.

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The Gentleman And The Lady, continued from page 5

In choosing a piece of written music to offer readers of *Piano Today* in this issue, it was difficult to decide between *The Lady* and *The Gentleman*. I've known them both since the beginning of my career. So, in order to avoid showing favoritism toward one or the other, I'd like to present an entirely different piece by Rodgers and Hammerstein: "People Will Say We're In Love," from *Oklahoma!* [This and other Dick Hyman arrangements are in a new Hal Leonard folio, *Stretching the Standards*.]

Two CD albums, *Dick Hyman Plays Variations on the Great Songs of Rodgers & Hart* (5186052) and *Dick Hyman Plays Variations on the Great Songs of Rodgers & Hammerstein* (5186061) are both available from: Jazz Heritage Society, 1710 Highway 35, Oakhurst, New Jersey 07755, or go to www.musicalheritage.com.

See Dick Hyman's arrangement of "People Will Say We're In Love" on page 32.

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Grieg's assessment of Nordraak is misleading. Nordraak did not really *fail* to become a rounded and sophisticated composer, since he never really tried to become one. Rather, he *succeeded* in becoming his own limited kind of composer. For instance, we Americans do not regard Stephen Foster as a failure because he could not have composed symphonies. Rather, we cherish his ability to compose within the confines of a folkloric style, and in this he can be said to be "great." Nordraak would have fulfilled himself not by expanding his range or technique, but simply by giving us more songs like "Tonene," more choruses like "Olaf Trygvason," and more piano pieces like the present sweetly melancholy Waltz-Caprice.

I would like to thank the office of The Royal Norwegian Consulate General, and in particular Kristin Iglum, Deputy Consul General, for their kind assistance.

See the piece by Rikard Nordraak on page 7.

Letters, continued from page 2

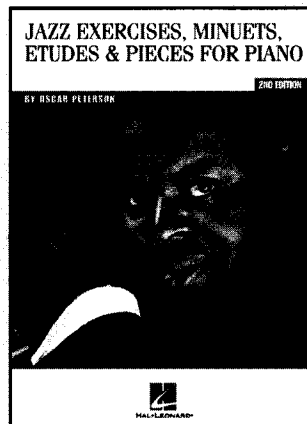
Calderone about "Swinging Chopin" (I have his swing baroque book). The article mentions *Swingified Selections*, but I could not find any reference to this book on Amazon or Google. Can you provide more information on how to obtain that book?

Stephen Soghoian
Charlottesville, VA

Although Mr. Calderone has prepared these volumes for publication, a publishing deal he had in the works fell through. He is currently looking for a way to bring them out to the public.

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WALTZ-CAPRICE

RIKARD NORDRAAK
(1842-1866)

Allegretto

Musical notation for measures 1-6. The piece is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The notation is for a grand piano, with a treble and bass clef. The music features a mix of chords and single notes, with some notes beamed together.

Musical notation for measures 7-12. The notation continues with chords and single notes, maintaining the 3/4 time signature and key signature.

Musical notation for measures 13-18. Measure 13 is marked with *p rit.*. Measure 14 features a melodic line with fingerings: 2, #4, 5, 3, 2, 3, 5. Measure 15 is marked *a tempo*. The notation includes a variety of rhythmic patterns and articulation.

Musical notation for measures 19-24. The notation shows a continuation of the melodic and harmonic themes, with some notes beamed together and a final cadence in measure 24.

Musical notation for measures 25-30. Measure 25 is marked *pp*. Measure 29 is marked *rit.*. The notation includes a variety of rhythmic patterns and articulation, ending with a final cadence in measure 30.

Tempo di Valse.

33

p

3 2 3 5 2 4 1 4 3 1 3 5 1 3 2

This system contains measures 33 through 38. The right hand features a melodic line with a long slur over measures 33-38. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 3, 2, 3, 5, 2, 4, 1, 4, 3, 1, 3, 5, 1, 3, 2. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment. A piano (*p*) dynamic marking is present at the beginning.

39

cresc.

5 1 4 2

This system contains measures 39 through 45. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over measures 39-45. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 5, 1, 4, 2. The left hand continues the accompaniment. A crescendo (*cresc.*) marking is placed between the staves.

46

f

4 2 1 5 2 1

This system contains measures 46 through 51. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over measures 46-51. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 4, 2, 1, 5, 2, 1. The left hand continues the accompaniment. A forte (*f*) dynamic marking is present.

52

This system contains measures 52 through 57. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over measures 52-57. The left hand continues the accompaniment.

58

This system contains measures 58 through 64. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over measures 58-64. The left hand continues the accompaniment.

65

p *cresc.* *f*

This system contains measures 65 through 70. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur over measures 65-70. The left hand continues the accompaniment. Dynamic markings include piano (*p*), crescendo (*cresc.*), and forte (*f*).

72

5 3 1 2 4
5 3 1 2 1
3 2 1
1 2 3 2 1 2

77

3 1 5 1 1 3 2 1

82

3 2 1 2 3 5 4 3 1 2 5 4 3 5
1 2 3 1 2 3 4 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 5

8va
sopra

88

2 1 5 2 3 2 1 3 5

p

93

100