Grieg & Musical Life in England

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There were, I would propose, four cornerstones in Grieg's relationship with English musical life. The first had been laid long before his work had become familiar to English audiences, and the last was only set in place shortly before his death. My cornerstones are a metaphor for four very diverse and, you might well say, very un-English people: a Bohemian violinist, a Russian violinist, a composer of German parentage, and an Australian pianist. Were we to take a snapshot of May 1906, when Grieg was last in England, we would find Wilma Neruda, Adolf Brodsky and Percy Grainger all established as significant figures in English musical life. Frederick Delius, on the other hand, the only one of this foursome who had actually been born in England, had long since left the country.

These, then, were the four major musical personalities, each having his or her individual and intimate connexion with England, with whom Grieg established lasting friendships. There were, of course, others who comprised – if I may continue and then finally lay to rest my architectural metaphor – major building blocks in the Grieg/England edifice. But this secondary group, people like Francesco Berger, George Augener, Stopford Augustus Brooke, for all their undoubted human charms, were first and foremost representatives of British *institutions* which in their own turn played an important role in Grieg's life: the musical establishment, publishing, and, perhaps unexpectedly religion.

Francesco Berger (1834-1933) was Secretary of the Philharmonic Society between 1884 and 1911, and it was the Philharmonic that had first prevailed upon the mature Grieg to come to London – in May 1888 – and to perform some of his own works in the capital. Grieg had in fact already been invited by the Society to give a concert or concerts in the spring of 1884, but he had been singularly unimpressed by the paltry fee offered, and had pleaded ill health and stayed away. In 1888, however, it was a dif-

ferent matter. Even if the money on offer still was very little, Grieg no doubt saw clearly enough that getting a foot in London's door could be important to him in the future. His letters of the period are peppered with references to '£-sterling' and, as we know, he was chronically short of money after having invested so much in the recent building of Troldhaugen. In the longer term, wealthy England, now richly stocked with admirers of his music, undoubtedly offered opportunies to restore his own material well-being. A letter of acceptance was duly sent off to the Philharmonic Society.

As time went by and the dates of his departure and performance drew nearer, Grieg, as ever, became increasingly nervous and agitated. Although his music – and consequently his reputation – was by now well-established in England (his Piano Concerto had first been played in London by Dannreuther some fourteen years earlier at one of the Crystal Palace Concerts), he had begun to regret having agreed to play the piece himself before an audience in London's principal concert hall – London, then of course by far the largest city in Europe and still lying mightily at the hub of an Empire that was at its apogee. (How wide-eyed the young Grieg must have been when he first visited it, in the company of his father and his brother, at the age of nineteen, some twenty-six years earlier!) He betrayed his nervousness at the outset of this, his second visit, in letters to his friends, particularly to Frants Beyer, to whom he wrote from Leipzig on 12 April: "I've already reported sick once before, so that won't work, and I don't know of any other way out. The Hardangerviddeman [Delius] suggested that I tell them that an old aunt of mine has died! That's just like him!"[1] I can't but think that Delius's suggestion was very tongue-in-cheek, as it was greatly in his own interest that Grieg should fulfil his obligations in London. Plans were, after all, being laid for Grieg to meet the young Delius's father there; and the outcome of that meeting is, I think, fairly well known to you.

Grieg's initial success in London is well documented; and the beginning of his love-affair with English audiences may firmly be dated to 3 May 1888, from the moment when under Frederic Cowen's baton he played the opening notes of his Piano Concerto. The programme-character, too, of his future music-making in England is established in this very first concert: not only does he figure as soloist, but he accompanies on the piano some of his songs and he also conducts the orchestra – on this particular occasion in his two *Elegiac Melodies*. The music given in

public performance will always be his own, and he will figure in these three distinct performing roles – four perhaps, if we also consider him in the piano-duettist mode that he was at times to assume in later tours.

There are, I think, two particular comments further to be made on this first concert in England – a country then popularly known beyond its own shores as 'das Land ohne Musik'. One is that Grieg was clearly astonished by the high quality of the orchestral playing that he secured, and in particular by the extraordinary *pianissimi* he was able to obtain from the nearly sixty-strong string section; this an interesting reaction from a composer who had already heard his works played widely in 'das Land *mit* Musik', Germany. And secondly, he was genuinely surprised and greatly touched by the exceptional warmth and enthusiasm of his first English audience. If, on rare occasions, one or other of our music critics would be cool in regard either to a work or to its performance, the concert-going public had no such inhibitions, and immediately took Grieg to their hearts. And the Philharmonic Society, who knew a good thing when they saw one, extended invitations to him to come over and perform his works at frequent intervals for the rest of his life – indeed on more occasions than he could ever manage to accept. The Society actually tried to commission a second Piano Concerto from Grieg in time for the 1895 season. It fell to George Augener to warn them: "I know that he will not write to order and only composes when he feels quite disposed". He was soon able to confirm Grieg's reluctance: "We have had an answer from Mr. Grieg, and he says that his Pegasus is not always saddled, and that he cannot therefore undertake to write the Concerto."[2]

Mention of Augener brings me to my second institution: the music publishing firm of Augener and co., representing the Peters company in England and in consequence responsible for the distribution of Grieg's published works there. George Augener (?-1915) was then head of the company, which he had founded as long ago as 1853, and he lived in a pleasant home bordering on Clapham Common in south-west London. Here Edvard and Nina Grieg stayed during this first London visit that they undertook together; and with Augener they stayed too in 1889, 1894 and 1897. Augener also had a place on the south coast, at St. Leonards-on-Sea near Hastings, and Grieg stayed here for a few days in 1897, also making just a day trip there in 1906.

In May 1888, though, the seaside excursion from London was undertaken with the boss himself, Max Abraham, Grieg's Leipzig publisher,

who had come over at the same time; and it was to Ventnor, on the Isle of Wight. I have to say that I remain unaware of why this particular spot was chosen, but it was fashionable at the time and enjoyed, as it does now, more sunshine than anywhere else in Britain – a reasonable recommendation.

The third institution I referred to was the Church, in a very particular variation. Grieg, long a religious sceptic, first came into touch with the Unitarian movement when he returned to England a little later in 1888, having accepted two conducting engagements in Birmingham at the end of August. He found the beliefs and practices of the Unitarians he met there both straightforward and refreshingly acceptable, and in the event was to hold to them himself for the rest of his life. Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe have described the impact of the Unitarians on Grieg in their *Edvard Grieg: Mennesket og Kunstneren*, and Finn Benestad and Bjarne Kortsen have in turn presented to us, in recently publishing Grieg's letters to Frants Beyer, a charming picture of Grieg's meeting, in London, with the Brooke family in March 1889. Edvard and Nina were overwhelmed by the Reverend Brooke, family patriarch and leading light of the Unitarian movement. Stopford Brooke (1832-1916), whose London sermons in the 1860s and 1870s have been described as being both rich in thought and graceful in literary form, broke away from the Church of England in 1880. Already one of the best-known preachers in London, he had no longer felt able to believe in miracles, and having accepted the principles of the Unitarians, he continued to preach in the capital, although now from his own proprietary chapel, from that date. His many publications included nine volumes of his own sermons, but his writings widened to take in important studies of English literature and its history, and included individual volumes on Tennyson (1894) and Browning (1902). With his "big, glorious, shining personality, full of fire and vitality", he reminded the Griegs strongly of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson; on leaving his home, Grieg had felt "happy and spiritually enriched."[3]

Having touched upon religion, even if of the less institutional variety, I am reminded of yet another institution: the monarchy. For Grieg was to meet in England the two British monarchs whose reigns taken together outlasted the span of his own life: Queen Victoria and King Edward VII. When, together with Nina and with Johannes Wolff, he was invited to perform for the Queen at Windsor Castle on 7 December 1897, it was – as he happily noted in letters to Frants Beyer, Julius Röntgen and Hans

Lien Braekstad – to a genuine lover of music that he played. The programme was a not insubstantial one and must have lasted the best part of an hour; and the Queen knew most of the music already, telling Grieg how much she admired it. Grieg found her "natural and genuine", even going so far as to describe her to Braekstad as "sweet" – in this context perhaps not the most readily expected of adjectives.

I think it likely that the music hall and the military bandstand delimited the horizons of Edward VII's musical tastes, although I confess that I have not gone to the trouble of seeking any evidence that might extend these boundaries. But there is no doubt that compared to his mother he was a musical illiterate. (Is it Beecham who tells the story of the King's snoring in the Royal Box through a large part of an Ethel Smyth opera at Covent Garden?) At all events, there was no music actually programmed for the audience at Buckingham Palace on the afternoon of 28 May 1906, when the Griegs, in the company of Norway's first ambassador to London, Fridtjof Nansen, met King Edward and Queen Alexandra. However, to the visitors' surprise, music was after all requested, and Grieg decided to play the Alla Menuetto from his Piano Sonata, to the unexpected and undesired accompaniment of the King in loud conversation with Nansen. After appropriate glares and sudden pauses from Grieg, the King took the hint and remained quiet for the rest of the piece. For the Queen, Nina sang 'Jeg elsker dig'. Despite the unwanted interruptions at the outset of this very short recital, Grieg found the royal pair 'elskværdige', and was required by the King personally to convey his greetings to King Haakon and Queen Maud on his return to Norway.

I mention such extra-musical institutions as the Unitarian movement and the monarchy in order to remind you of Grieg's wider links with England. After all, an extraordinary echo of his political stance as regards Norwegian independence came in the summer of 1905 when, with his country seemingly on the brink of war with Sweden, Grieg personally sent a telegram to Edward VII asking him to intervene in the dispute as arbitrator. Such actions can hardly be ignored if we wish to take a rounded look at the man and his relationship with England. And what a relationship! It seems never actually to have been set down in black and white – at least not in the pretty wide literature I have so far read on Grieg – that the adult composer spent over six months of his life in England, ranged over the seven trips that he made to and from our shores in 1888 (twice), 1889, 1897 (twice), 1904 and 1906. Here I am discounting the brief early

visit that he made in 1862, but I *am* taking into account the fact that in 1897 after arriving in England to start a concert tour he fell ill and left again after just a few days for Copenhagen. He stayed there for ten days or so and then returned, this time together with Nina, sufficiently recuperated to undertake an extraordinarily taxing tour which would include the only concert he gave in Britain beyond England's borders, in Edinburgh on 30 November.

I come back at last to my four distinctly un-English musicians. Vilemina (or 'Vilma' and later 'Wilma') Norman Neruda (1839-1911) was from the outset a key factor in Grieg's concert-programming in England. In 1866, when he had plucked up the courage to write to ask her if she would consider performing his first Violin Sonata, she was living in Stockholm and was married to the Swedish composer and conductor Ludwig Norman. By her mid-twenties she had already played in England, Holland, France and Russia, as well as in her native Bohemia, and was considered the most celebrated woman violinist in Europe. In 1869 she separated from Norman and in 1870 moved til England, where her career blossomed further. Eighteen years on – which brings us very nicely again to 1888 – she became Lady Hallé by virtue of marrying Sir Charles, pianist, conductor and founder of the Manchester orchestra that still today bears his name. Grieg was by this time a firm friend, and it is to Neruda that he writes from Leipzig on 6 February 1888, reminding her that some years ago he had asked if she might one day give him the pleasure of playing with her again. "Yes, if you come to London" had been her reply. "Well, I'm coming now", Grieg wrote.[4] Neruda replied to him from Liverpool on 19 February: she would be delighted to perform with him, but counsels him not to come in March, as all the best people go to the country during the Easter Parliamentary recess. Make it later, she recommends. In the event, this suits Grieg well, as his Philharmonic concert is rescheduled from 23 March to 3 May. Grieg intends to spend the whole of May in London and asks Neruda's advice as to how to go about arranging recitals there. He sends her copies of his second and third violin sonatas, tells her that he does not have the courage to give a solo recital, and a date is soon fixed – 16 May – for what is billed as a Chamber Concert. Neruda gives the first Sonata – which is already in her repertoire – again, and then just the last two movements of the third. Perhaps she has had too little time to prepare the whole of it? Grieg accompanies, just as he does for Nina in several songs. And he himself plays a number of piano

pieces. The whole was a great success. »Madame Norman-Neruda bewitched everyone with her prodigious violin-playing«, as Grieg shortly afterwards wrote to Tchaikovsky.

In due course the ground was laid for a major tour of England less than a year later, in 1889, and Wilma Neruda, now Lady Hallé, appears with Grieg in four concerts in London and Manchester. Keeping it in the family, Sir Charles Hallé, as soloist, joins Grieg the conductor in the Piano Concerto on 28 February at the Free Trade Hall. Other artists appearing with Grieg in a total of nine concerts beginning on 23 February and ending on 30 March are the London-domiciled Italian cellist, Alfredo Piatti, and violinists Joseph Joachim and Johannes Wolff. Nina sang at most of the concerts. A London performance of the Piano Concerto, conducted by Grieg, featured Agathe Backer Grøndahl as soloist. Grieg had earlier written about her to Francesco Berger at the Philharmonic Society: "I would like to relinquish my honorarium as I desire to do everything in my power for my outstanding woman compatriot."[5]

Grieg was to play again with Lady Hallé, in London in 1897, as well as in Copenhagen in January 1900, when together they performed all three sonatas. From then on she virtually left the concert platform to dedicate herself to teaching. But the Manchester torch had now been handed on to Grieg's old friend from later Leipzig days, Adolf Brodsky (1851-1929). This distinguished Russian violinist, professor at the Leipzig Conservatory from 1883 to 1891, had made concert appearances in England since the early 1880s. At Leipzig, he had befriended his admired Grieg and had also taken Christian Sinding under his wing in characteristically generous fashion. After some three years of touring in the USA and Canada in the early 90s, he found that Manchester beckoned, and in 1895 he took up the post of Principal of the Royal Manchester College of Music. In rapid succession he became leader of the Hallé Orchestra, conducting it temporarily after Charles Hallé's death later in the year, and he also reconstituted his famous quartet – all in 1895. He was to remain at Manchester until his death in 1929.

Grieg's principal works for violin were in Brodsky's repertoire and once he had settled down in Manchester the new Principal wrote to the composer to suggest that he come over again and give some of his works there, including all three sonatas. Grieg should also, he advised, give a concert in Liverpool. Because of the rather small fee offered for Manchester, Brodsky proposed to supplement it from his own pocket – anything to get

Edvard and Nina over to visit him and his family there. Although the matter of the fee was soon settled, this proposed new tour of England in February 1896 had shortly to be abandoned by Grieg for the usual reason: ill health. The reunion was at last to come about, however, in November 1897, with Grieg sending in the early autumn of that year a special request "that during our stay in Manchester you get the damned 'fog' out of the way! From what I hear, you have such standing that you need only to command! So, please, please!"[6] In the event the concert-tour dates were to be greatly reshuffled at short notice, owing to illness on the part of both Edvard and Nina, but at last, in the middle of the afternoon of 24 November, the Griegs arrived at the Brodskys' home at Bowden, a suburb of Manchester. Grieg was to play in the evening. The stay was, disappointingly for them all, only a short one, as the very next rescheduled concert date for Grieg was in Birmingham on the 26th. But the visit had been worthwhile: "How we think of you every day and talk of the lovely time we spent with you. Too short, but perhaps on that very account all the more precious."[7]

There was to be another meeting, in Germany in 1903, and the entire Brodsky family visited Troldhaugen in the summer of 1906, but Grieg never managed to return again to Manchester, although Brodsky did his best to get him to visit from London in May 1906. In the event, Brodsky had to be content with coming down to the capital to see his old friend there. After Grieg's death, Nina kept up the correspondence with Manchester until 1929, when both Adolf and Anna Brodsky died within just a few months of each other. Nina herself had managed at least two more visits to them in 1909 and 1912.

In a letter to the Brodskys in 1915, Nina touches on another mutual friend: "Edvard thought Delius very gifted and believed in him. Now Fredrik [sic] Delius is one of the first in England. He and his wife came to Troldhaugen last summer."[8] Bradford is only some forty-five kilometres to the north-east of Manchester, but we have no evidence that Delius, on his very sporadic visits to the city of his birth, ever met Brodsky in England. He did know Brodsky, however, during his own Leipzig days, that is in the period from 1886 to 1888, but not particularly closely and mostly, anyway, through his association with Grieg and Sinding. Brodsky was more of a traditionalist and the latest music that he could happily accept and play was that composed by such admired seniors as Grieg and Tchaikovsky, as well as that, for example, written by his junior by just five

years, Christian Sinding. Delius's music was quite out of court for him, as we find in a revealing letter from Anna Brodsky to Nina Grieg, written in the open air at Marienbad while the sound of an orchestra nearby playing a waltz by Johann Strauss was in her ears: "Only a musical genius could bring such music into the world". As for later music: "We – Adolph & I wish we could enjoy some of the modern composers, but so far we haven't succeeded with Debussy, Max Reger & Delius & what we have heard of theirs gives us no desire to hear any more. Write and tell me what you think of Delius as a composer & as a person, he is making a 'carrière' in England, his name is already very well-known."[9]

Having only just published a book setting out what we know of the friendship between Grieg and Delius, I do not wish to repeat myself by lingering on the subject here. But I would nonetheless like to make one or two points. There can be little doubt that Delius (1862-1934) was by far Grieg's closest English friend (and I *will* call Delius English from now on). One of his earliest musical revelations occurred when as a boy he came upon Grieg's *Humoresques*. From then on he was captured by the Norwegian master's music, as a little later he was to be enthralled by Norway itself, in all its human, scenic and artistic manifestations. No English composer has ever been closer to Norway. The friendship with Grieg really thrived from that first meeting late in 1887 until the early nineties; but by the midnineties the letters between them are becoming few and far between. From 1896 until 1903 there is silence, and then the correspondence is once more taken up again, with something of the old warmth, until Grieg's death. It then continues, if with long breaks, with Nina.

But why the unexplained gap of seven years? There must have been reasons for this apparent cooling-off of relations. First of all, I think Delius had by now fallen in with a younger and more controversial Norwegian set, for centre-stage among his friends of the mid-1890s we find Edvard Munch, Gunnar Heiberg and, still from his Leipzig days, that vagabond musical genius Halfdan Jebe. Briefly too, Knut Hamsun. And there were still others. Nor should we forget that in Paris he had become a central figure in the bohemian set around William Molard, rubbing shoulders with Strindberg, Gauguin and an array of often brilliant, often eccentric artists of all types. While all this is going on, slowly his more conservative Norwegian friends, Arve Arvesen, Christian Sinding, Johan Halvorsen, Iver Holter and – dare I say it? – Grieg himself, are receding from the picture. What can Grieg have thought when in 1897 Delius composed a

parody of Rikard Nordraak's 'Ja, vi elsker' for Gunnar Heiberg, who incorporated it, among more of Delius's specially-written incidental music, into the first production of his play, *Folkeraadet*, in Christiania in the autumn of that year? It was Delius's treatment of the tune, rather than Heiberg's subject-matter, that brought about riots both inside and outside the theatre and that ensured a *succès de scandale* for the play. *Folkeraadet* contained a large share of mockery of Norway's aspirations to full independence – attacking the Storting's politicians for their duplicity and self-serving attitudes and the common people for their blind follow-my-leader stance. This would not have been meat for Grieg at the patriotic feast.

I also sense that in more general terms Delius guessed that the kind of music he was seeking to write might well be moving too far ahead of Grieg's own taste. Delius the exotic, breeding in interesting measure his musical lines and harmonies out of his two years among the negroes in the American South, living now in fin-de-siècle Paris, finding his feet slowly but surely among the Montparnasse avant-garde – already this was not the same young man who a few short years earlier had worshipped at the altar of Grieg, Bjørnson and Ibsen and who had consorted with Norwegian musicians who were to become directors of academies, of national orchestras, of theatre orchestras and suchlike. I think too that it is more than likely that Delius found it very difficult to understand quite why Sinding stood so high in Grieg's estimation. To Delius, Sinding's music would have represented the old German traditions simply carried forward: his music was not opening up exciting new paths to the future. What, then, did Grieg really make of Delius's music? He certainly admired some of the early songs, but all we know that he said about the first orchestral work by Delius that he heard – the *Florida* suite, in 1888 – was that he thought it 'scheusslich interessant'. And I think it stayed that way. He always remained *interested* in Delius's music – who knows, perhaps deeply interested. I would go so far as to say that he *did* detect great promise in the early Delius. But time went by and Delius simply wasn't getting his music played – one could count only a handful of isolated performances of any of the orchestral works before the turn of the century – whereas Sinding, to Grieg's obvious delight, was being taken up all over Scandinavia as well as in Germany. Was Delius simply going to be a failure?

Things slowly improved for the Englishman in the early 1900s, when German enthusiasm for his music took root and soon showed a markedly upward curve; but Delius's real breakthrough in the land of his birth was,

ironically, not to happen until a month or so after Grieg's death, with performances in London of the Piano Concerto – and how distinctly that is bred out of Grieg – and *Appalachia*. By the time of his death Grieg could scarcely have known any of Delius's large-scale works, as it was only shortly before that they were even beginning to be published. In August 1907, Percy Grainger took with him one such early publication to Grieg at Troldhaugen: "I showed him Appalachia & played him bits & he studied often in the score, & was *keenly interested.*"[10] 'Keenly interested' – still, then, 'interested', just as he had expressed himself almost twenty years earlier after having heard *Florida*. Not wildly enthusiastic, not in transports of delight, not rhapsodic in his praise, but ever 'interested'. And let's not forget that Grainger was ever hyperbole writ large, so we can probably discard 'keenly' as a qualification for Grieg's interest in 1907.

Underneath, all these things will have been felt by the participants in these friendships: Sinding, as time went by, surely aware that Delius was less friendly to his music than he was to the man; Delius aware that Sinding's music appealed far more to Grieg than did his own; Grieg aware that Delius had perhaps after all just been a youthfully brilliant shooting star. Would he remain in comparative obscurity, or might his music even take the perverse paths that his erstwhile mentor probably felt lay in wait ahead? Grieg was never to know.

But what of Percy Grainger (1882-1961), Australian, but living from the turn of the century until the outbreak of war in London, playing there, on his début in Steinway Hall on 29 October 1901, Grieg's *Ballade*, op. 24? How poignant this last great friendship, established only in May 1906 and comprising on both sides admiration and affection in equal parts. Like Delius, Grainger was in his mid-twenties when he first met Grieg. Grieg was on his final visit to England and was staying in Mayfair as the guest of the wealthy financier and music-lover Edgar Speyer. He asked his host's wife to invite Grainger to dinner on 15 May. Three days after the event, Grainger wrote to Karen Holten, his Danish lover: "Have you seen Grieg and his wife? Can you think of anything more triumphant than the impression of these 2 small people? They are so completely happy together and both so 'loveable' and kind. And she sang for us; and what jubilation and uplift in her and his song and the 2 are just as melted in one when they make music as they are in Life."[11] Grainger played three of the *Slåtter* to Grieg, who was astonished by Grainger's idiomatically accurate and profoundly understanding performance. No Norwegian

pianist could match the young Australian in these pieces, was his later verdict. Grieg's main concert followed at Queen's Hall just two days later. "Never have I experienced anything ½ so moving and uplifting", Grainger wrote to Karen Holten. "You must remember that of all the composers who have ever existed he and Bach are the ones I love most [...] His new [Lyric] Suite is perfectly orchestrated; charming in tone and Miss Stockmarr played his Concerto really splendidly and *reaped* tremendous applause [...] Tomorrow I meet Grieg again. I have received an invitation from Nansen to take lunch with him. I think G conducts excellently with much individuality, and many capital and unusual effects."[12]

Grieg's last recital in England, again at Queen's Hall, took place on 24 May, and Grainger turned the pages for him as he played. "I have met no-one who *understands* me as he does", Grieg confided to his diary at the end of the day. Two days later, together with Johannes Wolff and Johanne Stockmarr, Grainger visited Grieg and played and sang to him English folk-songs in his own harmonisations. "Grainger is remarkable," wrote Grieg, wondering if his work signalled the beginnings of a new English national style. On 29 May came an honorary doctorate at Oxford and on the 30th – his last-ever evening in England – Grieg entertained Grainger, Herman Sandby and Johanne Stockmarr to dinner. They had the Speyers' house to themselves that evening and following the dinner there was music. Grieg's diary tells us once again that there was something very special about it. Grainger and Sandby played the Cello Sonata. "Their performance," wrote Grieg, "was absolutely superb. There were things that Grainger got much more out of than I did myself and altogether it was a good lesson for me. Teaching of that order rarely falls to my lot. My joy at having found and won these two young artists is great."[13] There followed a correspondence between Grieg and Grainger, and finally Grainger spent some two weeks at Troldhaugen, covering the end of July and the beginning of August 1907, rehearsing with Grieg the Piano Concerto which he was to play under the baton of the composer at the Leeds Festival in October. Of course, we all know that that was not to be. In the event, Grainger's performance of the Concerto was to take the form of a memorial to the all-too-short friendship he had enjoyed with Grieg. But it was to be a lasting memorial, Grainger the pianist taking the Concerto to the four corners of the earth during his lifetime.

If I have stayed a little long with Neruda, Brodsky, Delius and Grainger, it is because I believe that for one reason or another these were the

people who ultimately mattered to Grieg most in English musical life. He had established friendships with each of them when they were young, up-and-coming people in their twenties (or in Brodsky's case in his early thirties), and the influence that he exerted on them, both through his personality and through his music, meant that when all four of them became leading figures in their own fields, they would act as propagandists and, in today's jargon, multipliers for him, not just in England but also further afield. But there were others, and the overall perspective of Grieg's relations with English music would be distorted if they were not at least to be mentioned. There were, of course, the grandees of the musical establishment whom he met there: conductors at the Philharmonic Society and the Popular Concerts with whom he worked, like Frederic Cowen, Alexander Mackenzie, Hans Richter and Frederick Bridge. Towards the end of the 1870s, Frederic Cowen had set out on a Scandinavian concert tour: "I was very desirous of meeting Grieg while I was in Bergen, but unluckily he was away from home, so I did not have the pleasure of making his acquaintance until he came to London some ten years later."[14] When the time did come round, Cowen hoped that Grieg might agree to stay on longer in 1888 and to take over in his absence the conducting of the last two Philharmonic Concerts of the season; but Grieg declined, and, offered the engagements at short notice, Johan Svendsen quickly accepted instead.

The two giants of English music at the end of the last century were Charles Villiers Stanford (though it must be admitted that he was Dublin-born) and Hubert Parry, even if by the time the younger quartet of Elgar, Delius, Holst and Vaughan Williams were established, we were to see these two as giants of much-diminished stature. Stanford, who came to lunch with Grieg in London in 1906, and who also attended a reception given in his honour by the Speyers, had been Professor of Music at Cambridge since 1887 and had even earlier taken on the directorship of the University's Musical Society. It had been through him and in celebration of the Musical Society's jubilee that Grieg had been invited to Cambridge for the first of his two English honorary doctorates, actually conferred upon him there in 1894. Hubert Parry saw Grieg conduct at the Birmingham Festival in August 1888, although he *was* at Bayreuth ten years earlier when Grieg was there and one perhaps cannot discount a meeting then. Parry admired Grieg's music, particularly its 'national' flavour, and was impressed by his conducting, even if he thought it "very

funny to look at."[15] At Oxford in May 1906, Parry, Professor of Music there, presented Grieg at the doctoral ceremony, making the customary speech in Latin. Grieg, not understanding a word of it, was suspicious: "English composers generally have the least possible affection for their foreign colleagues. We'll see if I'm right when the speech, of which I do have a copy, is translated."[16] He seems, then, to have been unaware of Parry's considerable respect for his music.

Arthur Sullivan, a year older than Grieg, was a student at the Leipzig Conservatory at the same time as he was, but I have been unsuccessful in finding any reference that the one may have made to the other.

Like Parry, George Grove – a brilliant polymath, but best-known of course for his *Dictionary* – was at that 1888 Birmingham Festival concert when Grieg had conducted the first performance of his concert overture *In Autumn*. "How he managed to inspire the band as he did," he wrote, "and get such nervous thrilling bursts and such charming sentiments out of them I don't know."[17] Grove's admiration of Grieg had been apparent since the first English concert earlier in 1888. On the actual day of the concert he had taken a walk over to Augener's in Clapham to meet the Griegs. Two years later he went on a summer holiday to Norway, hoping to meet Grieg again, this time in Bergen. His biographer does not record whether or not he succeeded.

Of all conductors in England, Grieg was to have the highest regard for Henry Wood, co-founder in 1895 of the Promenade Concerts. But it was not until as late as 13 May 1906 that they actually met. Grieg had just heard Wood conducting Mendelssohn's third symphony at Queen's Hall and Wood came round to the Speyers' afterwards. Grieg found him to be an "elskværdigt og naturligt Menneske."[18] Wood took great pains to help Grieg rehearse the Queen's Hall Orchestra before the concert on 17 May and Grieg was not just touchingly grateful but taken aback at the instantaneous mutual friendship and sympathy that had seemed almost mystically to spring up between them. Wood invited the Griegs to lunch a few days later and Grieg noted that he and his wife displayed a degree of friendliness to them that few others had matched. As a result of their meeting, Grieg 'dared' to ask Wood to orchestrate 'From Monte Pincio' and 'A Dream' for him. Wood, who felt honoured by the request, immediately agreed and in due course sent the scores to Troldhaugen. Another piece of music orchestrated by Wood was Chopin's *Funeral March*, and this he played in tribute to Grieg at a Promenade Concert shortly after Grieg's

death. I have a copy of the programme for the Philharmonic Society's first concert of 1908, and in this Grieg was commemorated, together with Joachim, by the *Funeral March for Rikard Nordraak*, again conducted by Wood.

Then there were the instrumentalists, some of them now all but forgotten, like Stanley Hawley, who studied at the Royal Academy of Music between 1884 and 1892. He had made his début at St James's Hall at the age of twenty, in 1887, with the Piano Concerto. Now, on 2 May 1888, he was to play it again at the Academy, with Alexander Mackenzie conducting the Academy Orchestra. Grieg, who had only just arrived in England, agreed to come, and Hawley himself was despatched to Waterloo Station to meet him off the train from Clapham. They walked across Waterloo Bridge and Hawley found it almost impossible to drag the great man away from the spectacle of the river traffic passing below. Grieg was back in London, after all, for only the first time in 26 years, and the journey to the Academy took an age, with Grieg stopping and staring and marvelling at all the sights on the way. He was just as enthusiastic about Hawley's playing of his Concerto, and promptly decided that the youngster should replace him at the Philharmonic Society's concert the following day. It was quite absurd, he felt, that he should be playing it when Hawley played it so much better. Needless to say, it was also absurd for Grieg to suppose that this convenient solution to his nerves might be acceptable either to the Philharmonic Society or to his paying audience.[19]

Such episodes serve to remind us that the Grieg Concerto was long to remain an early landmark in the careers of many an English musician. Such disparate figures as Billy Mayerl and Vivian Ellis took it aboard while they were young. Another gifted pianist, forgotten now, like Hawley, was Herbert Fryer, who played it at the age of twenty at a student concert at the Royal College of Music in 1897, 'with commendably poetic feeling and highly developed technique'.[20] (I suspect that a similar judgment might have been accorded to young Maurice Ravel, who a little earlier had chosen the Concerto as his test piece while studying at the Paris Conservatoire). I note that Herbert Fryer composed too. I do not know what his music sounds like, but titles of early piano pieces might well give the game away: *Suite in Old Forms, Country-side Suite* and *Country Life Suite.* Another Londoner, only slightly older, was the brilliant pianist Harold Bauer, a friend of both Julius Röntgen and Delius. He first met Grieg at the Röntgens' in Amsterdam, and later took in one of his recitals in Lon-

don, at which both Nina and Johannes Wolff also performed. He was always to remember the Griegs as 'simple and delightful people', a summing-up of their twin personalities that does seem to have applied across the whole spectrum of their British admirers.

As my thoughts gathered towards a few closing remarks for this paper, I feet a whack on the shoulder from a rolled umbrella. Fortunately it was painless and indeed almost sensation-free, since it came from another world from where the redoubtable Dame Ethel Smyth appeared indignantly anxious that her own friendship with the Griegs should not be omitted from this general roll-call. It had been in Leipzig and in Grieg's presence in the spring of 1879 that this very self-possessed young lady student let drop a casually (and at the time fashionably) snide remark about Liszt. Grieg promptly lost his temper: What the devil did 'a two-penny halfpenny whipper-snapper' like her mean by talking in this way about her betters? But another side of Grieg's character is then revealed when we learn that early the following morning he called on young Ethel to apologize for his behaviour[21]. Like Grieg, and indeed like Delius, she was again in Leipzig in the winter of 1887-88, when she got to know the Griegs much better. What she particularly liked about Grieg was his frankness, particularly in response to a comment of her own that she felt that the coda of a movement from an (unfortunately) unnamed work of his seemed 'not quite up to the level of the rest'. "Ah, yes!" he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "At that point inspiration gave out and I had to finish without."[22] Like many others, the Griegs were probably more than a little perplexed by this precocious and most extraordinary woman, whose later involvement in radical politics makes a recent lady Prime Minister of ours seem, by comparison, to be a gentle and harmless soul, full of compassion and tactful diplomacy. But Nina had been astonished to learn in 1893 that Ethel enjoyed the patronage of the Empress Eugenie, Queen Victoria and the Archbishop of Canterbury. "Sonderbar!" she commented to the Brodskys. "Ich kann mich schwerlich denken dass Miss Smyth hoffähig ist." At the same time she asked the Brodskys if they had heard or read anything about Ethel and her 'great success' in London with her *Missa Solemnis.*[23]

Grieg was now spoken of as the most popular musician in the home life of England since Mendelssohn. Many young composers of the day were, too, described by Henry Wood as worshippers of Grieg. I have talked about a number of Englishmen and women, whether British by birth or

by adoption, who knew Grieg and whose lives and music-making were affected for the better by his friendship. But I am more than conscious that I am omitting to speak of successor generations affected by Grieg: composers like Arnold Bax, Havergal Brian, Peter Warlock, C. W. Orr, E. J. Moeran, Ronald Stevenson, Balfour Gardiner, Cyril Scott and Gustav Holst. Holst's daughter, for example, relates to us: "As a schoolboy, Gustav preferred playing Grieg to any other composer", and she tells us of an early orchestral piece, *Winter Idyll*, written at the end of his student years, "where the wintriness is of a Scandinavian variety, borrowed from Grieg".[24]

Holst's – and indeed Delius's – early revelatory experiences are echoed in those of our greatest conductor, Thomas Beecham, taken, as he was, as a child to a piano recital at which 'a series of new pieces by Grieg gave the programme a distinction we find none too frequently in events of this kind nowadays'. Put to bed at the usual early hour that evening, the little boy found himself quite unable to get Grieg's music out of his mind and greatly surprised his parents by coming downstairs and posing the question: "Please may I learn the piano?"[25] We may with some justification say that Grieg and Grieg alone set Beecham on the path to a not-undistinguished musical career. And yet, oddly, he was very seldom to programme or indeed to record Grieg's music, unlike, for example, the eleven-years-older Dan Godfrey, conductor of Bournemouth's orchestra, who during his career as the director of the Winter Symphony Concerts in that town, conducted from 1895 no less than 27 performances of the Piano Concerto, 16 of the two *Elegiac Melodies*, 14 of the *Sigurd Jorsalfar* pieces and 12 of the Lyric Suite, not to mention a large number of *Peer Gynt* suites 1 and 2 and various other pieces.[26] Yet there is not a word about Grieg in Godfrey's autobiography, nor have I found Godfrey mentioned in the Grieg literature. Finally, we must not forget Landon Ronald, who began recording Grieg piano pieces as early as 1900 and who in 1910 conducted an abbreviated recorded performance of the Piano Concerto with Backhaus as soloist. It is believed to be the first concerto of any kind or by any composer to have been recorded.

I have, shamefully, not discussed the various writings on Grieg by distinguished litterateurs and critics like Bernard Shaw and Arnold Bennett, or by composers like Samuel Coleridge Taylor, nor have I mentioned the more fleeting but quite clearly evident instances of Grieg's influence that musicologists have discerned in the works of other com-

posers ads diverse as Butterworth, Elgar, Holbrooke, Hurlstone, Vaughan Williams and no doubt others still. Grieg did not have quite the impact, say, of a Wagner in England. Who did? But I hope it will at least be clear to you that for the English music lover of a hundred years ago, his was a robust and a refreshing voice. Long may it continue to resound across the North Sea. For like the man, its impact was much greater than its seemingly modest dimensions might so far have led us to believe.

Notes

1. Finn Benestad and Bjarne Kortsen: *Edvard Grieg: Brev til Frants Beyer, 1872-1907.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1993. p. 131.
2. Robert Elkin: *Royal Philharmonic: The Annals of the Royal Philharmonic Society.* London: Rider, n.d. p. 90.
3. *Edvard Grieg: Brev til Frants Beyer.* p. 140-41.
4. Ladislav Reznicek: *Edvard Grieg og Tsjekkisk Kultur.* Oslo: Biblioscandia, 1975. Unpaginated.
5. Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe: *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist.* Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988. p. 293.
6. Edvard Grieg to Adolf Brodsky, Troldhaugen, 3 September 1897. ALS in the collection of the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester; courtesy Sir John Manduell.
7. Edvard Grieg to the Brodskys, Amsterdam, 25 December 1897. *Ibid.*
8. Nina Grieg to the Brodskys, Copenhagen, 12 December 1915. *Ibid.*
9. Anna Brodsky to Nina Grieg, Marienbad, 9 August 1911. ALS in Griegsamlingen, Bergen Offentlige Bibliotek.
10. Percy Grainger to Frederick Delius, Svinkløv, Jutland, 9 September 1907. ALS in the Delius Trust Archive, London.
11. Kay Dreyfus: *The Farthest North of Humanness: Letters of Percy Grainger, 1901-14.* Melbourne and London: Macmillan, 1985. p. 64.
12. *Ibid.* p. 64-65.
13. Edvard Grieg: *Dagbøker.* Bergen: Bergen Offentlige Bibliotek, 1993. p. 143.
14. Frederic Cowen: *My Art and My Friends.* London: Arnold, 1913. p. 93.
15. Charles L. Graves: *Hubert Parry: His Life and Works.* London: Macmillan, 1926. I, p. 219.
16. Edvard Grieg: *Dagbøker.* p. 142.
17. Charles L. Graves: *Life of Sir George Grove.* London: Macmillan, 1903. p. 337.
18. Edvard Grieg: *Dagbøker.* p. 134.
19. Eric Coates: *Suite in Four Movements: An Autobiography.* London: Heinemann, 1953. p. 129-30. Hawley was later (1913-15) to become Honorary Secretary to the [Royal] Philharmonic Society, following in the footsteps of Francesco Berger and William Wallace. He died in 1916 at the early age of 49.
20. *The Musical Times,* 1 January 1898.
21. Ethel Smyth: *Impressions That Remained: Memoirs.* London: Longmans Green, 1919. I, p. 271.
22. *Ibid.* II, p. 167.
23. Nina Grieg to the Brodskys, Leipzig, 18 February 1893. ALS in the collection of the Royal Northern College of Music.

24. Imogen Holst: *The Music of Gustav Holst and Holst's Music Reconsidered.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. p. 5 and p. 131.
25. Sir Thomas Beecham: *A Mingled Chime: Leaves from an Autobiography.* London: Hutchinson, 1944. p. 11.
26. Information kindly supplied by Stephen Lloyd.

Resumé
Griegs første ophold i London som 19-årig var kort. Men mellem 1888 og 1906 skulle han komme på en hel række koncerttournéer til mange steder i England og tillige, ganske kort, til Scotland. Han tilbragte faktisk mere end seks måneder af sit liv i Storbritanien. Ejendommeligt nok var de fire mennesker i engelsk musikliv, som nok kom til at betyde mest for ham, i forskelig grad påfaldende uengelske: Wilma Neruda, Adolf Brodsky, Fritz (siden Frederick) Delius og Percy Grainger. Hans forhold til hver af dem var varmt, langvarigt og givende, selvom venskabet med Percy Grainger blev tidligt afbrudt af Griegs død. Af betydelig interesse er endvidere Griegs kontakter med forskellige institutioner i England, fra Philharmonic Society over Unitarerne til selve kongehuset; hans forbindelser med og holdninger til disse institutioner kan fortælle os en hel del om manden. Mens han levede, var Griegs musik umådelig populær i England som også andre steder, og hans indflydelse kan spores i en hel række yngre komponisters værker.
(Overs. Jan Maegaard)