

## GRIEG'S FAVORITE GRIEG SONGS

William H Halverson

(Paper presented at the Florida Grieg Festival January 9, 2009)

Composers are notoriously poor judges of the relative merits of their own compositions, and there is no reason to think that Grieg was an exception to this rule. Like most composers, he tended to think that his most recent work was his best.

Only rarely did Grieg make explicitly negative comments about his compositions, and when he did so the comments were nearly always directed at his youthful compositions. In his autobiographical essay "My First Success" he reports, for example, that as a schoolboy he had been flattered by the praise of a musically knowledgeable young lieutenant for whom he had made copies of several of his compositions. "Fortunately," Grieg wrote, "I was later able to get the copies back from him in order to consign them to the wastebasket, where they belonged."<sup>1</sup> In the same essay he reports that upon his graduation from the Leipzig Conservatory he was honored to be one of the few students selected to perform some of his own piano compositions in the Gewandhaus at the public examination concert. "God knows they were the fumbling products of a green Conservatory student," Grieg wrote, "and I still blush to think that they were printed and figure as my Opus 1."<sup>2</sup>

Today I want to focus specifically on Grieg's assessment of his own *songs*. I make no claim that identifying Grieg's favorite Grieg songs would enable us to decide once and for all which are in fact his *best* songs. I don't think he was an infallible judge of the relative merits of his own songs. Still, I think it is a matter of historical interest to know which of his many songs he considered among his best.

Grieg was certainly aware that of his 179 songs, some were better than others. Moreover, he said and did a number of things during his career that allow us to conclude with some degree of certainty *which* songs he favored.

There are five lines of evidence that would seem to be relevant to our topic. They are:

1. Grieg's opus list
2. Selections made for the *Albums* of 1875–85
3. Selections made for his own public concerts
4. Selections made for arrangements with orchestra
5. Song-related comments made by Grieg in his letters and diaries

---

<sup>1</sup> See Finn Benestad and William H Halverson, eds., *Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, Speeches* (EGDAS) (Columbus, Peer Gynt Press, 2001), p. 71. "My First Success" was written in 1903.

<sup>2</sup> Benestad, & Halverson, EGDAS, p. 89.

### A. Grieg's Opus List

Grieg's opus list was developed throughout the course of his career, and along the way he included some songs in the list and excluded others. To be more precise: Of the 179 songs, 131 were assigned opus numbers while 48 were not.

It would be very convenient for our purposes if we could say, "Aha! He assigned opus numbers to what he considered his best songs and left the others without opus numbers"—but of course the situation isn't quite that simple. Opus numbers were assigned upon publication, and many—38 of the 48 songs without opus numbers—were not published until after Grieg's death. To make the quality argument on the basis of the assignment or non-assignment of opus numbers, therefore, you would have to say that the most likely reason that Grieg chose not to *publish* this or that song, thereby excluding it from his opus list, was that he considered it inferior to those he did allow to be published. This seems like a reasonable argument in the case of the three Vinje songs that Grieg chose not to include in Op. 33 and the twelve Garborg songs not included in the "Haugtussa" song cycle Op. 67, but to assign the same reason for the non-publication of the remaining ten songs in this category is a matter of conjecture.

There are other reasons not to put too much weight on the opus-number/non-opus-number distinction as an indicator of Grieg's preferences among his own songs, but perhaps the biggest reason is that even if the distinction were weightier than it appears to be it really would not be very helpful for our purposes. 131 songs comprise nearly three-fourths of his total output in this genre and cannot be seriously put forward as a list of his "favorites."

### B. Selections Made for the *Albums* of 1875–85

As a composer of songs most of whose texts were written in Norwegian or Danish, Grieg realized early in his career that he had to get those texts translated into other languages if he was to have any hope of reaching a wider audience. In 1875, therefore, he arranged with the distinguished Leipzig music publisher C. F. Peters to publish a German edition of some of his songs. Most of the songs selected for this edition were settings of Norwegian or Danish texts that had been published in Copenhagen by several different Danish publishing companies.<sup>3</sup> The result was five Albums, each containing 12 songs, published during the years 1875–1885.<sup>4</sup> In 1889 C. F. Peters became Grieg's principal publisher, and the Album series was not extended to include songs composed after that date.

In making his selections for the five Albums, Grieg omitted 16 songs to which he had previously assigned opus numbers. There is little reason to doubt that in most cases these 16 songs were omitted from the Album series because he considered them inferior to the songs he chose to include. Indeed, Grieg states explicitly in a letter to his friend August Winding (April 5,

---

<sup>3</sup> The only exceptions were the six songs in Op. 4, which had original texts in German.

<sup>4</sup> Albums I and II were published in 1875, Albums III, IV and V in 1879, 1882, and 1885 respectively. Albums I–V contained a total of sixty songs from opp. 1–39 plus two songs without opus numbers. See the excellent discussions of the publishing history of Grieg's songs in *Edvard Grieg: Complete Works*, [C. F. Peters, Frankfurt, Leipzig, London, New York] vol. XIV (1990) ed. Dan Fog and Nils Grinde, pp. 296–98, and *Edvard Grieg: Thematisch-Bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis*, ed. Dan Fog, Kirsti Grinde and Øivind Norheim [Henry Litolff's Verlag/C. F. Peters, Frankfurt/M., Leipzig, London, New York 2008], pp. 475–95.

1875) that he was “collecting all of [his] best songs” for the Album series. The omitted songs include, for example, the four songs of Op. 2, which were composed at about the same time as the piano pieces of Op. 1 that he characterized as “the fumbling products of a green Conservatory student.” Also omitted were the four songs of Op. 10, which is widely regarded as Grieg’s weakest song opus.<sup>5</sup>

The Album series also included two songs to which opus numbers had not been assigned, namely “The Princess” and “The Odalisque.”

The selections made by Grieg for the Album series, therefore, yield a net reduction of just 14 songs. We still have much too long a list to claim that we have identified Grieg’s favorite songs.

### C. Selections Made by Grieg for His Own Public Concerts

Let us look at a third line of evidence, namely the selections that Grieg made for his own public concerts. As a world-famous composer, Grieg was often invited to conduct public concerts featuring his own compositions. Such concerts often included both orchestral works and songs, and in the performance of the songs Grieg often served as the piano accompanist.

Admittedly, considerations other than Grieg’s personal preferences among his own songs undoubtedly played a role in planning these concert programs. We know, for example, that he considered some of his songs unsuitable for concert use.<sup>6</sup> It also seems likely that he based his selections partly on which songs he thought were best suited to the voice of the soloist available to him for this or that concert, or which songs he considered most suitable for a particular audience. Still, when Grieg repeatedly selected the same songs—for different soloists and different audiences—it seems likely that he did so in large part because he considered them among his *best* compositions in this genre.

Fortunately, Grieg kept copies of the printed programs for many of his public concerts. Those programs are now preserved at the Bergen Public Library (*Bergensoffentlige bibliotek*) in Bergen, Norway, and are available for study online. This valuable collection comprises over 70 such programs covering the years 1862–1906. Of those 70-plus programs, 39 included one or more sets of songs. So: What do these programs tell us about Grieg’s preferences among his own songs?

The first thing we learn when we tally the contents of these programs is that Grieg apparently liked quite a few of his songs, for the programs include no less than 81 different songs that were performed at least once. 22 of the 81, however, were performed *just* once at these concerts, 18 were performed just twice, and 25 were performed just three times. Thus, of the 81 different

---

<sup>5</sup> The other eight songs omitted from the Album series are: “The Cottage” (*Hytten*) Op. 18 no. 7, “Serenade to Welhaven” (*Serenade til Welhaven*) Op. 18 no. 9, “Northland Folk” (*Norrøna folket*) Op. 22 no. 4, “The King’s Song” (*Kongekvadet*) Op. 22 no. 8, “Peer Gynt’s Serenade” (*Peer Gynts Serenade*) Op. 23 no. 17, “A Bird-song” (*En fuglevise*) Op. 25 no. 6, “You Whispered That You Loved Me” (*Den ærgjerrige*) Op. 26 no. 3, and “The First Primrose” (*Med en Primula veris*) Op. 26 no. 4.

<sup>6</sup> One example: In a letter to Bjørn Bjørnson of March 14, 1895, he wrote “...the reason ‘Hymn of the Fatherland’ [Op. 61, no. 7] is unsuitable for concert use is not that it is a children’s song but that it is a school song. You can see that from the fact that the many stanzas stand side by side [and are sung in succession] without any interlude. This would inevitably sound boring in a concert.”

songs selected by Grieg for these concerts, only 16 were selected four or more times. Two songs appeared in no less than 11 of these programs, namely “Moonlit Forest” (*Vandring i skoven*) Op. 18, no. 1, and “Good Morning” (*God morgen*) Op. 21, no. 2.

The sixteen songs that were performed four or more times at these concerts appear in List I ranked according to the number of times they were selected. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of times each song was performed at these concerts.

LIST I  
SONGS SELECTED MOST FREQUENTLY FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

1. “Moonlit Forest” (*Vandring i skoven*) Op. 18, no. 1 (11)
1. “Good Morning” (*God morgen*) Op. 21, no. 2 (11)
3. “The First Meeting” (*Det første møde*) Op. 21, no. 1 (9)
4. “Hope” (*Et Håb*) Op. 26, no. 1 (8)
5. “The Mountain Thrall” (*Den Bergtekne*) Op. 32 (7)
6. “Ragna” (*Ragna*) Op. 44, no. 5 (6)
6. “Kind Greetings, Fair Ladies” (*Vær hilset, I damer*) Op. 49, no. 3 (6)
8. “I Love But Thee” (*Jeg elsker dig*) Op. 5, no. 3 (5)
8. “A Swan” (*En Svane*) Op. 25, no. 2 (5)
8. “I Walked One Balmy Summer Eve” (*Jeg reiste en deilig Sommerkveld*) Op. 26, no. 2 (5)
8. “Ragnhild” (*Ragnhild*) Op. 44, no. 3 (5)
12. “Two Brown Eyes” (*To brune Øyne*) Op. 5, no. 1 (4)
12. “With a Water Lily” (*Med en vandlilje*) Op. 25, no. 4 (4)
12. “Departed” (*Borte!*) Op. 25, no. 5 (4)
12. “Prologue” (*Prolog*) Op. 44, no. 1 (4)
12. “Kidlings’ Dance” (*Killingdans*) Op. 67, no. 6 (4)

Sixteen may seem like an arbitrary number, but my reason for terminating the list at this point is that no fewer than 25 songs were performed at three of these 39 concerts. Adding them to our list would give us a total of 41 songs, which seem a little long for what claims to be a list of Grieg’s favorite songs. Any number that we choose will be somewhat arbitrary, so I’m going to make an arbitrary decision. For now, I’m going to stop at 16. I think that fits the dictionary definition of “favorite” as “[something] regarded with particular favor or preference”<sup>7</sup>

Grieg’s program choices as reflected in this short list are surprising primarily, I think, for what they do not include. Of the 12 Vinje songs of Op. 33, for example, none was performed more than three times and thus does not appear on this list. “At Rondane” (Op. 33, no. 9), which today is widely considered one of Grieg’s finest songs, was performed only twice at these concerts. Six of the twelve songs in Op. 33—including, of all things, “Last Spring” (*Våren*)—were *never* selected by Grieg for performance at these concerts. Similarly, the “Haugtussa” song cycle Op. 67 is represented on this list by just one song. The cycle was performed in its entirety just once at these concerts, and only four of the eight songs in the cycle were selected for more than that one performance. Other well-known songs that are notable for their absence from this list are “Solveig’s Song” (*Solveigs sang*) and “Solveig’s Cradle Song” (*Solveigs Vuggevis*) from

---

<sup>7</sup> *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (New York, Random House, 1967).

“Peer Gynt” Op. 23, “Fiddlers” (*Spillemand*) from Op. 25, and “From Monte Pincio” (*Fra Monte Pincio*) from Op. 39—to name but a few.

Our purpose today, however, is not to quarrel with Grieg’s programming choices but rather to ask what relevance those choices have for determining which of his songs he valued most highly.

Interesting as these raw data are, it is evident upon a moment’s reflection that they cannot be used without further analysis to create a ranking of Grieg’s preferences among his songs. The reason is that the earlier a song was composed, the more numerous were the opportunities for it to be chosen for public performance. A song composed in 1865, for example, was a candidate for selection in all 39 concerts; a song composed in 1898, on the other hand, was available for selection in just 17 concerts. To adjust for this important difference, we must calculate the frequency of selection for each song as a percentage of the number of times it *could* have been selected, i.e., the number of times it was selected divided by the number of concerts remaining at the time the song in question was composed. To take a hypothetical example: 18 of the 39 concerts included in our survey were given during the years 1893 to 1906. If a song composed in 1893 were selected for performance at six of these 18 concerts, it would receive a “score,” so to speak, of 33.3%.

I have calculated the frequency-of-choice scores for all 81 songs included in these 39 concerts, and I think the results are quite interesting. The scores range from a high of 35.5% to a low of just 2.6%. The top twenty songs in descending order according to this scale are identified in List II.

## LIST II SONGS LISTED BY FREQUENCY-OF-CHOICE SCORES

1. “Good Morning” ( <i>God morgen</i> ) Op. 21, no. 2 (11/31)	35.5%
2. “Hope” ( <i>Et Håb</i> ) Op. 26, no. 1 (8/27)	29.6%
3. “The First Meeting” ( <i>Det første møde</i> ) Op. 21, no. 1 (7/31)	29.0%
4. “Moonlit Forest” ( <i>Vandring i skoven</i> ) Op. 18, no. 2 (11/38)	28.9%
5. “Ragna” ( <i>Ragna</i> ) Op. 44, no. 5 (6/23)	26.1%
6. “Kind Greetings, Fair Ladies” ( <i>Vær hilset, I damer</i> ) Op. 49, no. 3 (6/23)	26.1%
7. “The Mountain Thrall” ( <i>Den Bergtekne</i> ) Op. 32 (7/27)	25.9%
8. “Kidlings’ Dance” ( <i>Killingdans</i> ) Op. 67, no. 6 (4/17)	23.5%
9. “Ragnhild” ( <i>Ragnhild</i> ) Op. 44, no. 3 (5/23)	21.7%
10. “A Swan” ( <i>En Svane</i> ) Op. 25, no. 2 (5/27)	18.5%
10. ”I Walked One Balmy Summer Eve” ( <i>Jeg reiste en deilig Sommerkveld</i> ) 26,2 (5/27)	18.5%
12. “Henrik Wergeland” ( <i>Henrik Wergeland</i> ) Op. 58, no. 3 (3/17)	17.6%
12. “On the Water” ( <i>Mens jeg venter</i> ) Op. 60, no. 3 (3/17)	17.6%
12. “Farmyard Song” ( <i>Lok</i> ) Op. 61, no. 3 (3/17)	17.6%
12. “Fisherman’s Song” ( <i>Fiskervise</i> ) Op. 61, no. 4 (3/17)	17.6%
12. “Good-night Song for Dobbin” ( <i>Kveldsang for Blakken</i> ) Op. 61, no. 5 (3/17)	17.6%
12. “The Norwegian Mountains” ( <i>De norske fjelde</i> ) Op. 61, no. 6 (3/17)	17.6%
12. “Blueberry Slope” ( <i>Blåbær-Li</i> ) Op. 67, no. 3 (3/17)	17.6%
12. “The Tryst” ( <i>Møte</i> ) Op. 67, no. 4 (3/17)	17.6%
12. “Hurtful Day” ( <i>Vond Dag</i> ) Op. 67, no. 7 (3/17)	17.6%

I have included 20 songs on this list because numbers 12–20 have identical frequency-of-choice scores of 17.6%. The fractions in parentheses show the number of times the song in question was actually selected over the number of concerts at which it could have been selected.

The differences between List I and List II are fairly substantial. Despite the greater length of the second list, five songs from the first list failed to make the second: “I Love But Thee,” “Two Brown Eyes,” “With a Water Lily,” “Departed,” and “Prologue.” Of the nine songs on the second list that did not appear on the first, four are children’s songs from Op. 61 and three are songs from “Haugtussa” Op. 67. The other two are “Henrik Wergeland” from Op. 58 and “On the Water” from Op. 60.

Another fact worthy of note, I think, is that *all nine* of the songs that appear on List II but not List I were composed late in Grieg’s career, i.e., 1893 or later.

Because List II corrects for the advantage that Grieg’s earlier songs would otherwise have over his later ones, I think we must say that List II is a more valid measure of Grieg’s preferences than List I.

Can we claim, then, to have identified Grieg’s favorite Grieg songs? I think that at the very least we are justified in concluding from this analysis that the 20 songs on our second list certainly are *among* Grieg’s favorite Grieg songs. All were, so to speak, on his “short list.” Even the songs at the bottom of the list were selected nearly one time out of five that they were available for selection, and the highest-ranking song on the list—the lovely “Good Morning,” to a charming text by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson—was selected more than one time out of three. The question is: Is there any evidence to indicate that this list should be extended?

Since the decision to limit our list to 20 songs is admittedly arbitrary, we could of course incrementally add to the list using our frequency-of-selection scores until we come to some other arbitrary number with which we are comfortable. For now, however, I suggest that we stay with our list of 20 songs and ask whether there is any evidence beyond the selections made by Grieg for his public concerts that might induce us to extend it.

#### D. Selections Made for Arrangements With Orchestra

One further indication of Grieg’s preferences among his songs might be the adaptations he made for orchestra or for voice and orchestra. In the same year that he published the twelve Vinje songs of Op. 33 (1880) Grieg also published an arrangement for string orchestra of two of the songs—“The Wounded Heart” (no. 3) and “Last Spring” (no. 2)—under the title “Two Elegiac Melodies” Op. 34. In 1890 he made arrangements for string orchestra of two more songs: “The Goal” Op. 33, no. 12, and “The First Meeting” Op. 21, no. 1. These arrangements were published the following year as Op. 53, “Two Melodies for String Orchestra.” Lastly, in 1894–95 he arranged six songs for voice and orchestra: “Solveig’s Song” and “Solveig’s Cradle Song” from Op. 23, “A Swan” (Op. 25, no. 2), “Last Spring” (Op. 33, no. 2), “From Monte Pincio” (Op. 39, no. 1), and “Henrik Wergeland” (Op. 58, no. 3).

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the extent to which these arrangements reflect Grieg’s preferences among his songs. The arrangements for string orchestra of the songs from Opp. 33 and 21, for example, might have been made primarily because he considered those melodies particularly suitable for such an arrangement. The arrangements for voice and orchestra, however, are another story. Grieg had to be aware that creating such arrangements would make these songs available for performance in venues where songs for voice and piano would be unlikely to be performed. Surely Grieg would have thought long and hard about which

songs he wanted to be immortalized in this way. That he chose these six would appear, therefore, to constitute strong evidence in support of the view that he considered them some of his best.

If we accept this argument, as I do, our list of Grieg's favorite songs increases by four, since two of the six—"A Swan" and "Henrik Wergeland"—were already on our earlier list. These four songs are identified in List III.

### LIST III

#### SONGS SELECTED FOR ARRANGEMENTS FOR VOICE AND ORCHESTRA

1. "Solveig's Song" (*Solveigs Sang*) Op. 23, no. 19
2. "Solveig's Cradle Song" (*Solveigs Vuggevisse*) Op. 23, no. 26
3. "Last Spring" (*Våren*) Op. 33, no. 2
4. "From Monte Pincio" (*Fra Monte Pincio*) Op. 39, no. 1

#### E. Song-related Comments Made by Grieg in His Letters and Diaries

There is one last body of evidence that I would like to examine with you today, and that is comments made by Grieg about his songs in his letters and diaries.

Thanks primarily to the efforts of Professor Finn Benestad, we now have available for our perusal over 3,000 letters written by Grieg to various recipients throughout his adult life.<sup>8</sup> These letters include many comments about his compositions, including his songs. Let us see what relevance some of these comments may have with respect to our topic.

Not surprisingly, there is nothing in these letters that would, so to speak, dislodge any of the 24 pieces that we have now identified as our tentative list of Grieg's favorite songs. Grieg has a lot to say about bad *performances* of his songs, but nothing negative about the songs themselves.

There are, in fact, only a few passages in his letters where Grieg makes statements singling out this or that song or group of songs as standing out in some way from the rest of his works in this genre. His most detailed discussion of the songs occurs in a long letter to his American biographer, Henry T. Finck, dated July 17, 1900.<sup>9</sup> In this letter, Grieg makes the tantalizing statement, "Many of my songs—especially the best ones—are closely related to experiences of an intimate personal nature." Why is this tantalizing? Because, with one exception, Grieg unfortunately does not go on to say *which* songs are among his best by virtue of being closely related to his personal experiences. Indeed, he explicitly declines to do so, stating "My inner life is my mighty fortress." Translation: It's none of your business! The one exception is "Prologue" (Op. 44, no. 1). Regarding Op. 44 Grieg writes, "The songs *Reminiscences from Mountain and Fjord* call for a special explanation. Everything here was experienced by me personally. In the

---

<sup>8</sup> This entire collection of letters has been published in five volumes: Benestad, Finn, and Bjarne Kortsen, eds., *Edvard Grieg. Brev til Frants Beyer 1872–1907* (Oslo, 1993); Benestad, Finn, and Hella Brock, eds., *Edvard Grieg. Briefwechsel mit dem Musikverlag C. F. Peters 1863–1907* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997); Benestad, Finn and Hanna de Vries Stavland, eds., *Edvard Grieg und Julius Röntgen. Briefwechsel 1883–1907* (Amsterdam, 1997); and Benestad, Finn, ed., *Edvard Grieg: Brev i utvalg 1862–1907* vols. I-II (Oslo, 1998). Approximately 500 of the letters have also been published in English translations by William H. Halverson in Benestad, Finn, ed., *Edvard Grieg. Letters to Colleagues and Friends* (Columbus, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> See Benestad, Finn, ed., *Edvard Grieg. Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, (EGLCAF) pp. 225–239.

summer of 1886 I took a trip to the mountains with the poet Holger Drachmann, who was visiting me in Norway. During the trip we met some charming young women who inspired both of us to write songs. I regard ‘Prologue’ as one of my best inspirations.” In view of this statement, I think we must add this song to our list of Grieg’s favorites. (Note that two other songs from this opus—“Ragna” and “Ragnhild”—are among the highest-ranking songs on List II.)

Grieg also states in this letter that *The Mountain Thrall* “has had a special significance in [his] creative work”—a statement that reinforces the view that he considered this one of his best songs but does not further extend our list.

There are two passages in which Grieg makes it clear that his “Haugtussa” songs held a special place in his affections. In a letter to Thorvald Lammers dated March 10, 1898,<sup>10</sup> Grieg wrote, “The best songs I have written will be published this fall. They are from [Arne] Garborg’s *Mountain Maid*.” And in a letter to German pianist and composer Oscar Meyer he wrote in a letter dated June 7, 1898,<sup>11</sup> “It’s a pity that you can’t understand Garborg’s beautiful, versified story, *Haugtussa*, from which the song texts are taken. It is a masterwork, full of originality, simplicity and depth, and possessing a quite indescribable richness of color. Therefore, it will not escape your fine expert eye that these songs are profoundly different from my earlier ones.”

Grieg actually composed no fewer than twenty songs to texts taken from Garborg’s beautiful poem, and it took him a full three years to decide which of the twenty were most worthy of publication. That he chose well in selecting the eight songs that comprise his Op. 67 is evident from the worldwide acclaim that these songs have received. They are indeed, as he said, “the best songs [he] has written,” so we clearly must add the four “Haugtussa” songs not already on our list to our roster of Grieg’s favorite songs.

Finally, there is a passage in Grieg’s diary that I think requires us to add one more song to our list. On May 28, 1906, Grieg made a long entry in his diary describing his and Nina’s visit to Buckingham Palace at the invitation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.”Both the king and queen wanted to have some music,” he wrote. First he gave them some piano music, but that was not enough: “The queen wanted to have a song,” he wrote further. “Which song? Of course: ‘I Love But Thee,’ which sounded good in that large room.” I don’t know why Grieg did not schedule that song more frequently in the 39 concerts that we looked at earlier. Perhaps he saved it to use as an encore, as a result of which it did not appear on the printed program. Nonetheless, that “Of course” suggests that there was no question about which of his many songs he should choose for this extemporaneous performance. It is as if this was his signature piece, a song that he could be sure his royal host and hostess would recognize and appreciate.

Our survey of Grieg’s letters and diaries, then, requires us to add to our list the six songs identified in List IV.

---

<sup>10</sup> Benestad, Finn, EGLCAF, p. 464.

<sup>11</sup> Benestad, Finn, EGLCAF, pp. 527–528.

LIST IV  
SONGS SINGLED OUT BY GRIEG IN HIS LETTERS AND DIARIES

1. "Prologue" (*Prolog*) Op. 44, no. 1
2. "The Enticement" (*Det syng*) Op. 67, no. 1
3. "Veslemøy, The Young Maiden" (*Veslemøy*) Op. 67, no. 2
4. "Love" (*Elsk*) Op. 67, no. 5
5. "At the Brook" (*Ved Gjætle-Bekken*) Op. 67, no. 8
6. "I Love But Thee" (*Jeg elsker dig*) Op. 5, no. 3

If we combine Lists II, III, and IV, we arrive at a list of 30 songs each of which can in one way or another lay claim to being among "Grieg's Favorite Grieg Songs." List V presents these 30 songs arranged by opus number, which is approximately identical to their order of composition.

LIST V  
GRIEG'S FAVORITE GRIEG SONGS

1. "I Love But Thee" (*Jeg elsker dig*) Op. 5, no. 3
2. "Moonlit Forest" (*Vandring i skoven*) Op. 18, no. 2
3. "The First Meeting" (*Det første møde*) Op. 21, no. 1
4. "Good Morning" (*God morgen*) Op. 21, no. 2
5. "Solveig's Song" (*Solveigs sang*) Op. 23, no. 19
6. "Solveig's Cradle Song" (*Solveigs vuggevise*) Op. 23, no. 26
7. "A Swan" (*En Svane*) Op. 25, no. 2
8. "Hope" (*Et Håb*) Op. 26, no. 1
9. "I Walked One Balmy Summer Eve" (*Jeg reiste en deilig Sommerkveld*) Op. 26, no. 2
10. "The Mountain Thrall" (*Den Bergtekne*) Op. 32
11. "Last Spring" (*Våren*) Op. 33, no. 2
12. "From Monte Pincio" (*Fra Monte Pincio*) Op. 39, no. 1
13. "Prologue" (*Prolog*) Op. 44, no. 1
14. "Ragnhild" (*Ragnhild*) Op. 44, no. 3
15. "Ragna" (*Ragna*) Op. 44, no. 5
16. "Kind Greetings, Fair Ladies" (*Vær hilset, I damer*) Op. 49, no. 3
17. "Henrik Wergeland" (*Henrik Wergeland*) Op. 58, no. 3
18. "On the Water" (*Mens jeg venter*) Op. 60, no. 3
19. "Farmyard Song" (*Lok*) Op. 61, no. 3
20. "Fisherman's Song" (*Fiskervise*) Op. 61, no. 4
21. "Goodnight Song for Dobbin" (*Kveldsang for Blakken*) Op. 61, no. 5
22. "The Norwegian Mountains" (*De norske fjelde*) Op. 61, no. 6
23. "The Enticement" (*Det syng*) Op. 67, no. 1
24. "Veslemøy, The Young Maiden" (*Veslemøy*) Op. 67, no. 2
25. "Blueberry Slope" (*Blåbær-Li*) Op. 67, no. 3
26. "The Tryst" (*Møte*) Op. 67, no. 4
27. "Love" (*Elsk*) Op. 67, no. 5
28. "Kidlings' Dance" (*Killingdans*) Op. 67, no. 6

29. “Hurtful Day” (*Vond Dag*) Op. 67, no. 7  
30. “At the Brook” (*Ved Gjøttele-Bekken*) Op. 67, no. 8

\*\*\*\*\*

Are the 30 songs on List V really Grieg’s favorite Grieg songs? It is of course impossible to make such a claim with absolute certainty. On the evidence, they appear to be—but the evidence, though persuasive, is by no means conclusive. The 39 concert programs that provide much of the evidence for our study constitute only about 25% or so of the total number of Grieg programs at which songs were performed.<sup>12</sup> Are these 39 programs representative of the whole? It is impossible to say. If they are indeed a random sample of the longer list, they certainly constitute a large enough sample to justify conclusions about the whole. I can think of no reason why they should *not* be regarded as a random sample, but neither can I prove that they do constitute such a sample. Certainly a caveat is in order here.

I find it interesting, however, that our analysis yields a list that includes songs written at various times throughout Grieg’s career from 1865 to 1898. It is *as if* Grieg was indeed surveying the whole spectrum of his compositions in this genre when he planned the concerts that would be given in such diverse places as Amsterdam and Leipzig and London and Prague and Warsaw and in all the major concert venues in Scandinavia.

There is a beautiful passage in Grieg’s autobiographical sketch cited earlier in which he talks about some of the experiences that contributed to his success as an artist. “When I rummage through my brain among the memories from days long vanished,” he writes, “. . . I am suddenly in the midst of childhood, when life and its many possibilities for the future lay before me as a single, great success. . . . A miscellaneous assortment of figures, longings and hopes presses forward, each one whispering, ‘Here am I—and I—and I.’ All insist on being included. . . . And if I try to emphasize one . . . at the expense of another, I hear a sound like the distant sobbing of a child: ‘And will you disown me—and me—and me? You cannot be so heartless!’”<sup>13</sup>

I suspect that Grieg must often have agonized in a similar fashion as he was making song selections for his concerts year after year throughout his career. As the years passed, the list of beautiful songs available for performance grew longer and longer. Those songs, like the memories about which he wrote, must have swarmed about him whispering, “Choose me, choose me! Will you disown me? You cannot be so heartless!” But choices had to be made, and he made them, and those choices are reflected in the list of what we have dared to call “Grieg’s Favorite Grieg Songs.”

---

<sup>12</sup> We know from various sources of nearly 300 concerts given by Grieg during the years 1861–1907. See Finn Benestad and William H Halverson, eds., op. cit., pp. 399–422.

<sup>13</sup> Finn Benestad and William H Halverson, eds., *Edvard Grieg: Diaries, Articles, Speeches* (Columbus, Peer Gynt Press, 2001), pp. 68–69.