

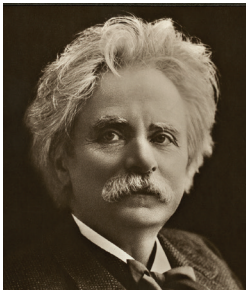
## #326: EDVARD GRIEG



Image: Edvard and Nina Grieg with composers, Percy Grainger and Julius Röntgen at Trolldhaugen in 1907.

Photo credit: National Library of Norway, [www.nb.no](http://www.nb.no), photographer E. Hoenisch (Leipzig)

*"Artists like Bach and Beethoven erected churches and temples on the heights. I only wanted...to build dwellings for men in which they might feel happy and at home."* - Edvard Grieg



Edvard Grieg, 1890. National Library of Norway, [www.nb.no](http://www.nb.no), Karl Anderson (photographer)

Every year on June 15, music lovers all over the world celebrate the birthday of Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg. Born in Bergen in 1843, Edvard Hagerup Grieg is one of

Norway's most influential musicians and is considered the founder of the Norwegian nationalist school of music. Grieg's greatest talent was his ability to create music that depicted Norway's stories, people and landscapes.

Edvard Grieg was raised in a musical environment, receiving his first piano lessons at the age of six from his mother. When he was

15 his musical ability was recognized by the famous Norwegian violin virtuoso Ole Bull, a family friend. Bull persuaded Grieg's parents to enroll him in the Leipzig Conservatory. During his musical studies in Germany, where he concentrated on the piano, Grieg learned the basics of German Romanticism and made his first attempts at composing. Also, during this time he fell severely ill and ended up permanently losing the use of one of his lungs.

In 1863, Grieg moved to Copenhagen where he met and married his cousin Nina. This was also where his music began to take on its Norwegian flair. Inspired and influenced by Norwegian nationalist composer Rikard Nordraak (composer of the Norwegian national anthem), Edvard Grieg began to use traits and melodies from Norwegian folk music in his pieces. Soon audiences were fascinated by the combination of folk music and his own bold, personal touch.

Grieg had a great talent at transposing his own perceptions of Norway into music that audiences across Europe could enjoy. Except for his extremely popular orchestral piece "Piano Concerto in A Minor," Grieg seldom used the larger musical forms and instead wrote numerous smaller lyrical pieces for piano. His "Symphony in C Minor," written in his youth, remained in manuscript form with the written

instruction, "Must never be performed," until the late 1970s when a series of events led to the world premiere of this work.

It is difficult to define exactly what gives Grieg's music a Norwegian national character. Grieg was often inspired by folk tunes as well as folk stories and Norwegian poetry. One of his more well-known works, the "Peer Gynt Suite," is perhaps an ideal representation about how his music both influenced and was influenced by Norwegian nationalism. Written as incidental music to accompany the play "Peer Gynt" by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, the play and accompaniment told the story of folk tale character Peer Gynt while satirizing and examining Norwegian culture.

Grieg eventually found his way back to Norway, living first in Christiania (now Oslo) before building his home Trolldhaugen, of "Troll Hill," near Bergen. He died in the late summer of 1907, at age 64, after a long illness. He was cremated, and his ashes were entombed in a mountain crypt near his house.

Today, Trolldhaugen is open to visitors who wish to learn more about Edvard Grieg's life or who want to listen to his music in a place where the composer once lived.

