

Summary

The aims of *Le Nouveau Grieg. Tendencje modernistyczne w twórczości Edvarda Griega na przykładzie opp. 54, 66 i 72* [Le Nouveau Grieg. Modernist tendencies in Edvard Grieg's music, taking as examples Opp. 54, 66 and 72] are to identify correlations between melodic, harmonic and rhythmic phenomena in formal terms and to demonstrate that Grieg's works from the period in question (the *Lyric Pieces*, Op. 54, *19 Norske Folkeviser*, Op. 66 and *Slätter*, Op. 72) are indicative of modernist tendencies.

An important factor in the emergence of a new musical language in Grieg's compositions is the peripheral character of Norwegian culture, which is discussed in the opening chapter. The attention paid to cultures of Northern and Eastern Europe at two World Exhibitions in Paris (1867 and 1889) may be treated as manifesting interest in orientalism or 'European exoticism'. Fascination with the cultures of Scandinavian lands grew during the 1870s and 80s. One manifestation of that trend was the incredible popularity of Grieg's music during the 80s and 90s, which saw the start of 'Grieg fever'. In the concerts of Scandinavian music held during the World Expo in Paris in 1889, this composer's works were hailed as symbolic of Norwegianness in music and referred to as 'northern orient' or 'Scandinavian exotic'.

At the start of the 90s, Grieg's musical language began to evolve in the direction of modernism, gradually shedding its romantic tendencies. In 1884, after years of wandering, the composer finally settled in his own home – the Trolldhaugen villa on the outskirts of Bergen. The change in musical language was linked directly to the building of a separate lodge for composing, in 1891, which is discussed in the second chapter.

In this book, I invoke the invariant model of a composer's life devised by Mieczysław Tomaszewski and attempt to match it to the last fifteen years in the Norwegian composer's life, from 1891 to 1906¹. In Grieg, the phase of late output (1891–1901) is linked to a powerful fear of being unable to keep up with innovative European trends and to the accusations made by the German critic Alexander Moszkowski that Grieg wished to be the 'virtual Messiah of Norwegian music'². During this period, the composer began to change his attitude towards issues linked to traditional music, and he ceased to draw on Mathias Ludvig Lindeman's collection of folk melodies. I have divided the phase of late output according to Tomaszewski's classification into two parts.

The first part, falling in the years 1891–1896, opens with the *Lyric Pieces*, Op. 54, which were the first compositions written by Grieg in his composition atelier built near Trolldhaugen. They display a new approach to harmony and musical form, as is discussed in the third chapter. In the second part of the late output, from 1896 to 1901, Grieg returned to Norwegian melodies in the *19 Norske Folkeviser* [19 Norwegian folk songs], Op. 66, but in transcriptions by his close friend Frants Beyer rather than Lindeman. The fourth chapter is devoted to this output. Trips into the Norwegian mountains allowed Grieg to hear traditional music in its natural environment, thanks to which the musical language of Op. 66 began to depart from the style of his earlier settings and veer towards impressionism and expressionism.

In Grieg, the phase of last output, from 1902 to 1906, covers just three opuses, from 72 to 74. The 'freeing of imagination towards new shores'³ opens with *Slåtter* [Norwegian peasant dances], Op. 72, which are the most original settings of instrumental folk music before the work of Béla Bartók. They are distinguished by unusual dissonances, numerous rhythmic and metrical complications and linear writing – procedures that were beyond the comprehension of listeners contemporary to Grieg, as is discussed in the fifth chapter.

The two last chapters are devoted to modernist trends in Opp. 54, 66 and 72 from the angle of elements of Grieg's musical language and in relation to the output of European modernists, particularly Debussy, Ravel, Prokofiev, Bartók and Stravinsky. I discuss also those composers' attitudes towards Grieg and show aesthetic and technical parallels between their work and his music.

¹ Mieczysław Tomaszewski, 'Życia twórcy punkty węzłowe. Rekonesans' [Nodal points in the life of a composer: a reconnaissance], [in:] *Muzyka w dialogu ze słowem* [Music in dialogue with words], Cracow 2003, pp. 35-47.

² Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg. The Man and the Artist*, tr. William H. Halverson and Leland B. Sateren, Lincoln and London 1988, p. 332.

³ Tomaszewski, 'Życia twórcy', p. 39.