

PICTURES
PÅL EIDE

"A fantastic Mussorgsky,
and on Grieg's own piano"
Fanfare

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PICTURES
PÅL EIDE
Recorded on Grieg's piano in his site at Edward Grieg Museum, Trondheim

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Recording on Grieg's Piano

BY PÅL EIDE

An important moment

My album *Grey Clouds* featuring Liszt, Ravel, Debussy, and Stravinsky had caught international attention, and I was invited to give a recital on Grieg's piano at his home located at my birth town of Bergen. A winter storm was raging outside and the temperature was 12 degrees below zero. Grieg's old house was creaking. I waited downstairs with blankets to keep warm, holding my fingers in hot water every 10th minute. Outside the audience was freezing, impatiently waiting to come inside. My first performance in Bergen for many years felt important, as I was performing for a Norwegian audience for the first time after an unusually late breakthrough. I knew it might have changed people's way of listening, perhaps being more curious and open minded, and with greater expectations. It was my first time playing the great Norwegian composer's instrument. Since my childhood, Grieg's music has been particularly dear to me; no other music touches me like that, within seconds.

In Grieg's living room the audience sits very close to the piano—there is not much space. It is really cold. You can feel the wind inside. I play the first five tones from "To Spring" extremely softly, as out of nothing. The optimistic sound of singing birds, and then, a beautiful melody. Grieg has a unique ability to bring back moods of a particular memory. He speaks directly to our hearts. Suddenly it does not feel cold anymore. The music fills our minds with pictures of springtime. At this moment I feel closer to Grieg than ever before.

Hill of the Trolls

This experience made me dream of recording my next album, *Pictures*, on Grieg's 1892 Steinway. Trolldhaugen has always been one of my favorite places—the atmosphere is rare. Grieg had the house built in 1885 on a wooden hill by a lake and called it Trolldhaugen or, "Hill of the

Trolls.” He lived there with his Danish-Norwegian wife Nina for the last 22 summers of their life. The house is Norwegian with elements of Swiss style, and has a certain eccentricity to it, with ornaments and a tower. He built it thinking more about acoustics than keeping warm. Grieg’s furniture is kept in his living room, full of personal items and pictures and drawings, some of them gifts to the famous composer. Into the hill a bigger concert hall, “Trolsalen,” was built in the 1980s. I gave some recitals there in my younger years, the first at the 1998 Bergen International Festival. From the audience you can see the lake, and in the foreground, a little red composer cottage where Grieg could work undisturbed. He was easily distracted; a boat sailing on the lake could break his concentration. Outside the concert hall is a full-size statue of him. He was a great man of a short stature, only 152 cm of height. The ashes of Edvard and Nina are kept in a little mountain crypt down by the lake. They were among the first people in Norway to be cremated. Grieg was a modern man, and this influenced his music.

Getting closer, my sound producer Helmut Burk arrived from Hamburg with his equipment the day before. He uses a glass connection to project the sound, and this had to go all the way from the living room and upstairs to Grieg’s old bedroom, where Helmut could set up his equipment, making a recording booth. We had to be extra careful not to damage things, and the cable had to be stuck to the wall using a special tape, keeping it completely still and not leaving marks. If you bend this wire too much, it will break. If there is not enough space and you close a door, or a slight movement in the night, the alarm will go off.

I met my sound producer at a concert at the Louisiana Museum in Denmark many years ago. Later, he recorded my first album, *Listen!*, and *Grey Clouds*, both in Friedrich-Ebert-Halle, Hamburg. Helmut is a calm and modest man who has won two Grammy awards and has been working for Deutsche Grammophon, recording many of the great pianists like Krystian Zimerman, Claudio Arrau, and Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli.

Recording on Grieg’s piano

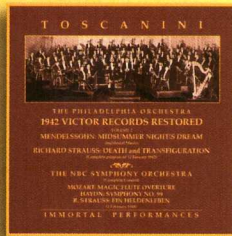
Grieg’s piano is a Steinway bought in Hamburg in 1892, given to him by friends. They managed to get it into his house without his knowledge, which cannot have been an easy task. It is kept in superb condition and has a unique and beautiful sound that has more of a mellow wooden and less metallic quality than newer instruments. You can hear it is old, but in a positive way; the upper register has a bell-like sound with a nostalgic touch. Grieg himself played and practiced on these keys. Any musician has a strong connection to his or her instrument, our door into the world of music. After all, we tend to spend more time with our instrument than with the people in our life. Grieg was a great pianist, often touring Europe, playing his own and other composers’ music, but was always longing for the Norwegian nature and for Trolldhaugen. He called it “my best opus so far.”

The next day we began recording. Grieg’s Steinway is sensitive. The touch of the keys does not require much weight, making it possible to play extremely softly. This is important to me. The mechanisms work well, but are also sensitive to small changes, making it more difficult to control than a new instrument. At the same time, the possibilities of expression are wide. From the first note I am caught by the beautiful sound. I feel a deep connection to the music through this instrument and immerse in it, sometimes unaware of the outside world.

Background noises

But as always when recording, there are disturbing sounds. The chair, a shoe, the floor, humming (I personally enjoy Glenn Gould’s), ventilators, a lamp, birds, a barking dog, people outside—the sounds are everywhere. Sometimes you start to notice noise that normally would not be a problem. But Helmut’s microphones are very sensitive. And people are going to listen with headphones, which make every detail audible. In the control room it can be difficult to decide what is acceptable, because you sometimes don’t know if what you hear is on the recorded sound or from outside. There was road construction work by the lake involving heavy stones. If you listen carefully to the record, you might notice one small beep from a car in reversal, but it is hard to hear, as it is in the right key. The first day there was quite a loud wood-knocking sound from the pedal. This noise was there each time I was slowly lifting the weight on the right pedal, and we had to try to get rid of it. Luckily, we had the piano technician Richard Brekne to help us. He is responsible for maintaining the instrument,

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and was tuning it twice a day. We made him come and examine the pedal. He was going back and forth to another recording on a historical piano from the 1830s with Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. So, in this case, Grieg's instrument was the modern one. Richard was on his back under the instrument doing his best, and after a while the sound from the pedal was hardly audible. With a 127-year-old handmade instrument mostly made of wood, you have to deal with what you have. Richard told me the instrument's sound changes with the weather. In the museum opening hours, tourists come into the house all through the year, and it is not possible to avoid temperature and humidity changes. With this in mind, the instrument is in a fantastic condition. According to Richard, the sound of the instrument was particularly beautiful on the days of our recording.

Another storm

During the daytime groups of tourists came to visit. A few of them had a startled moment when, entering the living room, they found a middle-aged man with long gray hair at the piano. They soon realized that it could not be Edvard, though. There was no mustache. We had a few hours after closing time to make longer sessions. I always prefer to record long passages, sometimes the whole program in one long take to really get into the music, as if in a concert. Modern recordings are sometimes made of hundreds of small cuts. It may sound perfect, but there remains a sense that something is missing.

A strong wind makes me worry. The house is old and not well insulated. The wind may be heard easily and will most likely be picked up by a sensitive microphone. But it might also give the recording an extra dimension. After all, I am in Grieg's house, playing his piano like he did himself in many cold and windy evenings. If you turn the volume up, you may be able to hear the sound of the wind.

Edvard Grieg – The pioneer

Liszt was mostly known for his virtuosity, and with *Grey Clouds* I focused on Liszt's influence on the Impressionists Debussy and Ravel, and modern composers like Stravinsky. *Pictures* will emphasize Grieg's impact on modern music. He was far ahead of his time—a side of him not always recognized. Grieg used harmonies as colors, and not always in theoretical relation to each other. His

harmonic style was a direct inspiration for the Debussy and Ravel and may later have influenced jazz music. His most extreme work was “Bell Ringing” (1891) .It is easy to recognize the parallel to Debussy’s, “The Submerged Cathedral” composed almost 20 years later, but it goes even further. The highly original structure based on parallel fifths and an absence of harmonic functional meaning has been an important inspiration to modern composers. The strong direct expression of Grieg’s music may be the most important explanation of why it is so popular. He was closely connected to the nature of Norway; he loved to walk in the mountains and could express pictures in music, like very few other composers. When he wandered around in the countryside, he studied folk culture. He listened to the melodies, harmonies, and rhythms and almost instinctively and in an original way integrated them into his works. He wanted to prove the universal meaning of folk music. Grieg combined steady rhythms and simple harmonies from folk music with extreme energy in classical music, and this may have inspired later popular music and rock. When you closely experience a performance where a classical musician “gives everything,” it can be highly powerful.

I understand Grieg’s close relationship to nature; from an early age I used to walking the mountains and woods of Norway with my parents, and later with my Danish wife and our daughters, like Norwegians often do. I grew up listening to folk music. My father’s family were farmers from a small village in the western part of Norway, and have played folk music for several generations. My mother’s family, Lindtner, in Bergen, is a family of several actors and singers.

Pictures

I have selected musical pictures by Grieg, Sæverud, and Johansen, plus Jesper Koch’s *The Mirror of the Mind* written for me, and put them together with one of the most important works of piano literature, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, written by Mussorgsky shortly after Grieg’s *Pictures from Folk Life*. I try to find a musical and historical connection between the pieces, and look for harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic similarities. Even when there is a change from one composer to the next, I look for a natural “flow,” but also seek contrasts, like a composer often trying to create a work with contrasting movements. Hopefully, you may experience the album as a whole. In concerts, I have sometimes asked the audience not to applaud between pieces. In this way you don’t break the flow of the music. By putting composers together in a non-traditional way, I hope to enable the listener to hear the music with a fresh view. I want to give the listener a sense of how the composers influence each other, and by developing their own personal style, create innovation.

Music film and documentary

The last two days of recording, film photographer and director Per Dreyer from Denmark participated, filming from different angles. We plan a music film and documentary on the recording and Grieg’s influence on modern music. Per Dreyer has produced numerous films, including the award-winning *Father* (2012), and music videos with rock musicians. He recently made his debut as a writer with the trilogy *Murderer – Lover – Son* that is scheduled for release by the publisher Griffle.

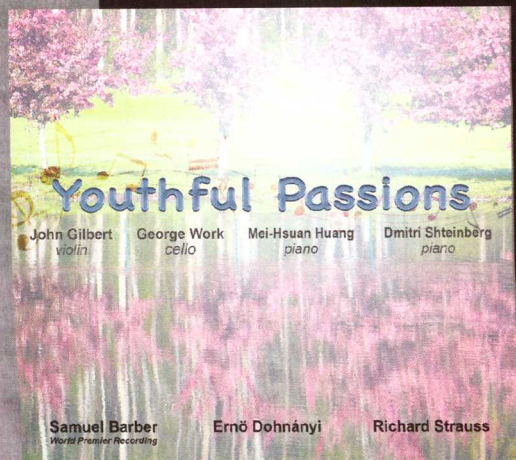
Suddenly the cameras are changing the situation. I have played on television before, but to make a recording for many hours on camera is new to me. At first, I am aware of the cameras and conscious of my movements. I can’t completely relax, a situation that makes it more difficult to concentrate. But Per has been a great inspiration to me; “Grieg’s spirit is in the room, and he is happy—I can feel it,” he says with a big smile, meaning it. Not much later, I forget about the cameras and get back into Grieg.

Mussorgsky and Grieg

The Norwegian composer Arne Norheim’s only piece for solo piano was the title track on my album *Listen!*. Sometimes in history artists get the same thoughts and ideas almost simultaneously, without knowledge of each other’s work. Norheim once demonstrated this kind of influence to me. He had made a recorded tape with three orchestral works played at the same time. Norheim and Dane Per Nørgård had composed two of them in the same period, but without any contact. Dane Rued Langgaard composed the third piece several decades earlier, but it was not known to Norheim and Nørgård at the time of their own compositions. Played simultaneously on tape, the three pieces sounded like one.

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"...all magnificently performed.
Urgently recommended."—*Fanfare*

I don't know whether Mussorgsky and Grieg had listened to each other's music, but I know that artists from the Nordic countries and Russia have inspired each other. There are similarities between them: They were both masters in describing moods and pictures in music. They both tried to integrate national music and develop their own style, and influenced modern composers. Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) belonged to a group of five Russian composers, known as "The Five," composing national Romantic music. He was not educated as a composer, but his gifts made him the most significant Russian classical song composer. He was a rebel, had a hard life, and suffered from alcoholism. Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) was born in Bergen. His mother, an educated pianist and singer, noticed Edvard's musical gifts early and made him take piano lessons. At 15 he went to Leipzig to study, and completed his education there. He later went to Copenhagen, where he married the Norwegian/Danish singer and pianist Nina, his cousin. One of his friends was the Norwegian composer Richard Nordraak, who encouraged him to integrate folk music style into his music. In Copenhagen he wrote his Piano Concerto in A Minor, op. 16 (1868), which even today is one of the most performed piano concertos in the world. Early on Grieg became famous in Europe both as a composer and as a pianist.

The music and the composers

Pictures from Folk Life, op. 19 (1871), is among Grieg's best piano works, in a clear folk-music style. "Mountain Dance" has typical folk-music dance rhythms. The changes in character give it a powerful expression. "Bridal Procession" depicts a wedding procession in a Norwegian village, and "From the Carnival" is a Romantic picture describing a carnival in Rome, a city Grieg often visited. The 10 volumes of *Lyric Pieces* give a wide perspective on Grieg's life-work and gave him his main income. "Butterfly" and "To Spring" from op. 43 (1886) and "March of the Trolls" from op. 54 (1891) are among his most popular pieces. "Bell Ringing" (op. 54) is one of his most significant works, with elements pointing into the future. It consists of fifths with a tonality that sets the harmonic functional meaning aside and gives an impression of hearing bell ringing.

Harald Sæverud (1897–1992) was one of Norway’s most original composers, creating his own style, like Grieg with folk music elements. This can be heard in the fifths of the beginning of his most famous piece “Kjempeviseslåten” (The Ballad of Revolt, 1943) from *Tunes and Dances from Siljustøl*, op. 22, dedicated to the resistance movement and composed in anger of the German occupation. In Norway everybody knows the piece, but when I perform it abroad, the audience is struck by its emotional power.

David Monrad Johansen (1888–1974) was educated in Norway, Germany, and France. His *Pictures from the North*, op. 5 (1919), is clearly inspired by Norwegian folk music, but also by French impressionism. “Profile of a Woman” describes the temperament of a woman he met, and in “The Little Stone God” we are attending a prayer meeting in the far rural north of Norway. Seeing a reindeer herd run over the steps inspired him to compose “Reindeer,” while “Towards the Mountains of my Forefathers” describes the feeling of looking down at a farm from a high mountain top.

Danish composer Jesper Koch (b. 1967) has written numerous works for Danish symphony orchestras. His piano piece *Images of Lorca* (1996) is recorded on my album *Listen!. The Mirror of the Mind* (2007), written for me, reflects a fairytale, *The Snow Queen* by Danish writer H. C. Andersen.

Mussorgsky’s genius shines in his grand piano piece *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874). There is a famous orchestral version by Maurice Ravel (1875–1937). When Mussorgsky’s friend, the artist and architect Victor Hartmann, passed away, Mussorgsky went to an exhibition of his drawings and paintings. This inspired him to write one of the most original works of the entire repertoire of piano music. Walking between the pictures, the music describes his changes of mood in the different “Promenades.” Some of the pictures require a short description: “Tuileries” is a picture of children playing in the Tuileries, a park in Paris, and “Limoges” depicts a market place in Limoges. In “Catacombs” we are in the grave chambers under Paris, and “The Hut on Chicken Feet” is a picture of a hut of the Russian fable witch Baba-Yaga.

Becoming part of Trolldhaugen

When Sigurd Sverdrup Sandmo and Thomas Heimstad at Trolldhaugen heard my album *Grey Clouds*, they invited me to give my first recital on Grieg’s piano. The staff at EGMT has been wonderful. A unique experience was the event “Grieg minute-by-minute” in 2018, when more than 600 musicians participated in live performances of all Grieg’s opuses in a 30-hour direct transmission on Norwegian national television, celebrating his 175th birthday. The coordination of this event was impressive and the atmosphere euphoric. I had the honor of performing some of his most famous works, op. 43 and op. 9, with singer Astrid Nordstad. We later gave a recital in Troldsalen, and last summer I gave 25 solo recitals as “Pianist of the Week” before traveling to Russia to play Grieg’s Piano Concerto. During the days of our recording of *Pictures* we were welcomed under the best possible conditions. I am deeply grateful to have such a relation to Trolldhaugen. Performing Grieg’s music has become an important aspect of my life.

The wind is still raging, and the sound of the last note of Grieg’s *Leik* (Cattle Call, 1869) is fading. Grieg heard a young woman sing this song on one of his hikes in the countryside, and could never forget it. For me, it reminds me of my childhood, and I find it to be a calming encore, a perfect example of Grieg’s genius on a small scale. The recording sessions in the home of one of my favorite composers are over. The piano and the house were welcoming hosts. When I entered the control room upstairs one day, the door opened by itself. You may think what you like about that, but some of the memorable moments of our days at Trolldhaugen are now captured. I hope you will enjoy them.

PICTURES • Pål Eide (pn) • DANACORD 847 (78:11)

GRIEG *Mountain Dance*, op. 19/1. *Wedding Procession*, op. 19/2. *From the Carnival*, op. 19/3. *Lyric Pieces: Butterfly*, op. 43/1; *To Spring*, op. 43/6; *March of the Trolls*, op. 54/3; *Bell Ringing*, op. 54/6. **NORWEGIAN FOLK SONGS AND DANCES**, op. 17/2: *Cattle Call*. **SÆVERUD** *The Ballad of Revolt*, op. 27/5. **DAVID MONRAD JOHANSEN** *Pictures from the North: Profile of a Woman*, op. 5/1; *The Little Stone God*, op. 5/2; *Reindeer*, op. 5/3 *Towards the Mountain of my Forefathers*, op. 5/4. **KOCH** *The Mirror of the Mind*. **MUSSORGSKY** *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Well, I have Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exposition* performed on innumerable makes of pianos, including a manufacturer that Mussorgsky himself knew and played on, but now I also have a

recording of the work on a piano formerly belonging to Edvard Grieg. I will have to get busy and look for recordings of the work on pianos once belonging to Stockhausen and Cage to have a really good overview of instruments. The recording has interest beyond the fact that it was recorded on Grieg's 1892 Hamburg Steinway, as Pål Eide has a very personal approach to the works—both well- and un-known—he has chosen to present here.

It is quite appropriate, of course, that Eide would open (and close) his recital with several of Grieg's own pieces (and he is hardly the first pianist to record Grieg's music on his own piano: among others, Leif Ove Andsnes has done so). Eide's approach often seems rather gentle and refined; for instance, he downplays the accents on the second beats of the opening "Mountain Dance" from the *Pictures from Folk Life*, op. 19, although he does work up to an impressive climax at the end of its first section. The same observation can be made of the accents at the beginning of the second piece in the set as well. An individual touch comes at the beginning of "Mountain"'s second section in A Major, where Eide sounds as if he's playing the alto voice as a diad instead of Grieg's notated dotted eighth-16th-note figures. It's quite a charming effect. Another distinctive to Eide's Grieg is his use of pedal, which is employed more than other pianists I've heard in these works. Most of the time this approach works well, but in a few spots, such as the passage beginning at 5:14 in the third movement, I would have preferred less. Here, the rests in the syncopated rhythms in the right hand are obscured, such that the passage comes off sounding as though Grieg had written a series of dotted 16th notes followed by 32nds. Nevertheless, his playing of these miniature masterworks is exquisite, and he very capably captures the capricious spirit that Grieg wrote into these works, especially including "Papillons," the first of his opus 43 *Lyric Pieces*, and one of his best-known works for solo piano. Incidentally, the "Bell Ringing" movement of the opus 54 *Lyric Pieces*, even though I've heard it previously, reminded me that like Mussorgsky, Grieg was sometimes quite ahead of his time. The work is built upon a strikingly dissonant (for that era) series of parallel fifths.

Mussorgsky's *Pictures*, the major work in the recital, is quite "mainstream" in its approach to this warhorse of warhorses. There is nothing too far away from the performance tradition of the work, in fact, except Eide's use of pedal, which he, as in the other pieces, applies generously. In many places, this works well in Mussorgsky, too—certainly in "Gnomus," "Catacombs," "Great Gate," and other places, but I find it less attractive in "Bydło" where the cattle are straining to be sure, but also sound as though they're trying to pull their carts through mud, and in "Baba-Yaga" where the quickly moving bass lines in its outer sections also become too muddy. But Eide does a good job in playing musically, making superb phrasing in the First Promenade, which many pianists just plough through since it's not one of the *pictures*, after all. I especially like the way he hesitates between the repeated phrases in the "Schmuyle" section of "Goldenberg," as if to suggest timidity in the begging of the former. His skill in bringing out the melody in "Tuileries" from amongst all the notes is admirable. Eide also has some other individual touches to note. In the repeated section of "Gnomus" (beginning at m. 19), he makes the first chord in the right hand almost a grace note. Many pianists shorten this chord, but none that I can recall to this extent; I did find it effective. Also, I like Eide's pause before he plunges into the Fifth Promenade, effectively creating a palate cleanser before he begins the last large section which that Promenade introduces. (The omission of the piece by some pianists, imitating Ravel, obliterates Mussorgsky's formal balance in the work.) So, while this reading won't make it into my top 10 of the work (which I haven't even tried to identify), it is worth hearing, along with the other works covered in the recital.

The disc is filled out by works by three much less well-known composers, all Scandinavian, and all very talented. The best-known of these lesser-knowns is Harald Sæverud (1897–1992), who tried to update Grieg by writing his own incidental music to Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. *The Ballad of Revolt*, if I recall correctly, also exists in an orchestral version, and I believe this is the first time I've heard the piano version, although it is one of Sæverud's best-known pieces. The piece begins with a simple solo folk-like line (akin to *Pictures*, in fact!) from which point the composer builds interest and excitement over a repeated D. David Monrad Johansen (1888–1974) received musical training in Norway, Germany, and France. His *Pictures from the North* comprises four movements, and forms an interesting synthesis of Norwegian folk music and French Impressionism. The work is an impressive portray-

al of scenes from Norwegian life, including those of reindeer (perhaps the Norwegian equivalent of Mussorgsky's "Ballet of Unhatched Chicks"), mountain views, and worship in the far North. The one composer new to me is the Dane Jesper Koch (b. 1967); his *The Mirror of the Mind* was written in 2007 for Eide, providing a nice contrast in the recital with its more contemporary stylistic leanings.

Even if you are saturated with recordings of Mussorgsky's masterpiece, this generously filled CD is well worth picking up for the other works contained in it, to all of which Eide brings a sure pianistic approach that will offer many rewards. Recommended all around. **David DeBoor Canfield**

* * *

Like Edvard Grieg, Norwegian pianist Pål Eide was born (1970) in Bergen. In the liner notes for his new Danacord CD, *Pictures*, Eide describes his lifelong admiration and affection for Grieg and his music. *Pictures* is a labor of love, and a dream come true for Eide. In this recording, Eide performs on Grieg's own piano, situated in the living room of the composer/pianist's home (now the Edvard Grieg Museum) in Troidhaugen. The piano is a Hamburg Steinway, purchased in 1892 by Grieg's friends. Grieg played this Steinway frequently during the final 15 years of his life.

The repertoire comprises programmatic works. It's no surprise that the music of Grieg predominates among the numerous miniatures included here. But Harald Saeverud's moving *The Ballad of Revolt*, a protest against the Nazi occupation of Norway, is a welcome addition, as are David Monrad Johansen's Impressionistic *Pictures from the North*, and Danish composer Jesper Koch's *The Mirror of the Mind*, the latter written for Eide. In all of these works, Eide demonstrates a patrician elegance and poetic sensibility. Eide takes advantage of the piano's capacity to reproduce tones in the softest manner, and to magical effect. The condition of Grieg's piano, as well as the intimate space in which this recording was made, certainly dictated Eide's approach, at least to a degree. But I never had the impression that Eide was compromising his views of the music to adjust to the conditions at hand.

In the context of the aforementioned works, and the circumstances under which this recording was made, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* might seem an odd choice. It is after all a work with the potential to be a barn-burner, and that is how it is most often played, especially in large concert halls. But Mussorgsky's *Pictures* is also a composition that gives the pianist marvelous opportunities to create musical portraits, even intimate ones. Eide embraces that potential to deliver one of the most beautiful and poetic accounts of this work I have ever heard. For all who believe that the writing for the piano in *Pictures at an Exhibition* is unidiomatic, even unattractive on occasion, I urge you to listen to this recording. Eide's tone is unfailingly gorgeous throughout, and once again the hushed dynamics are positively magical. I also love how Eide embraces the expressive and dramatic potential for moments of silence between various episodes. I want to emphasize that Eide lacks nothing in the required virtuoso technique to play this great work. But that virtuoso technique is at the service of an interpretation notable for its beauty, imaginative phrasing, and poetic sensibilities. I'll always return with gratitude to Sviatoslav Richter's hair-raising 1958 Sofia concert performance of this work (Philips), but Eide's rendition made me listen to Mussorgsky's *Pictures* in a new and unforgettable way. Eide's beautiful liner notes capture the wonder and joy he experienced making this recording (I would have liked a few more pictures of Grieg's piano!). A quite wonderful achievement. **Ken Meltzer**

* * *

The Norwegian pianist Pål Eide wrote a fascinating article for *Fanfare* 40:6 in which he described his artistic and specific pianistic philosophies. One quote in particular seems especially appropriate for this new recital; "I try to make every tone sound beautiful, no matter how softly or strongly it is played. The technical secret to do this is very simple—the maximum amount of relaxation in and between the attack of the keyboard." Eide certainly draws a beautiful tone out of this keyboard, which happens to be a very special instrument, the 1892 Hamburg Steinway owned by Grieg. This is essentially a modern piano, but the color palette is especially rich, and the tonality is subtly layered. Interestingly, the Danacord engineers have opted to record Eide with an unusual abundance of acoustical space, as if one were sitting towards the back of a small hall. It is lovely ef-

fect, especially when the volume is tweaked upward, and a refreshing antidote to over-miked, up close piano recordings that make the instrument sound ten feet tall.

Of course there is a healthy dose of delicately rendered Grieg here, as well as lesser known (albeit quite engrossing) music from his younger compatriots Harald Sæverud and David Monrad Johansen, both writing in the Grieg tradition of folk-inspired lyricism. Contemporary Danish composer Jesper Koch wrote his Hans Christian Anderson-inspired piece *The Mirror of the Mind* expressly for Eide.

This album of musical “pictures” concludes with the most celebrated work with that theme. This is a remarkable and singular reading of Mussorgsky’s magnificent stroll through an art gallery. The fluidity of his phrasing is remarkable, resulting from a synergy, it seems, of his technical skills and this remarkable piano. Eide does not storm the heavens in the “Great Gate of Kiev” finale, but mines greater details in the score, favoring beauty over bluster. And yet he does a wonderful job of drawing broad dramatic strokes to represent the clumsy oxcart in “Bydło” or the chattering exchange of “Samuel Goldberg and Schmuyle,” to cite two examples.

Pål Eide is a unique artist, an extremely refreshing voice in a musical environment that seems to crank out perfectly formed, but not especially distinctive voices by the day. This well assembled recital is an ideal showcase for his special talents. **Peter Burwasser**

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In a previously reviewed program of works by Liszt, Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky, performed by Pål Eide, I characterized the pianist as “a tremendously gifted graphic artist who traces his designs on the keyboard in the medium of music.” That album, reviewed in 40:6, was titled *Grey Clouds*, and my description of Eide as a “graphic artist” turned out to be remarkably prescient and predictive of what Eide would do next.

His latest release, titled *Pictures*, is a celebration of “representative” music—i.e., a category or subset of program music in general, the intent of which is not to be a surrogate for the action of a dramatic narrative (something music is sort of good at through its unfolding in the motion/time continuum), but rather to evoke the experiential essence of visual ideation (something music is less good at, since there are no established equivalencies between aural and visual stimuli—unless, like Scriabin, one is afflicted with synesthesia—and therefore individual listeners are bound to “see” different images in response to the same musical sounds).

What Eide has assembled here is a collection of musical portraits and picture postcards, not one of which would likely conjure the intended imagery, if not for our being told its title in advance of hearing it. But that has never deterred composers from writing such pieces or listeners from enjoying them. There are one or two oddities, however, in Eide’s gathering together of the country folk, flora and fauna, gnomes and trolls, and assorted characters from Norse legend that populate his album.

Of the five composers represented on the disc, four are Scandinavian, three of them, specifically, Norwegian: Grieg (1867–1907) of course, David Monrad Johansen (1888–1974), and Harald Sæverud (1897–1992). The non-Norwegian Scandinavian is Jesper Koch (b. 1967), about whom I’ll have more to say later. He is Danish. That leaves Mussorgsky (1839–1881), the odd man out in this fivesome of composers, who, the last time I checked was still Russian. Mussorgsky, in fact, is the only composer of the bunch that didn’t live to see the turn of the 20th-century, while all of the others, by dint of their dates, are 20th-century composers, and to a greater or lesser degree, men of Modernist methods and modalities.

Like Thomas Beecham who, when allegedly asked if he’d ever heard anything by Stockhausen, replied, “No, but I think I’ve stepped in some,” I have to say that I’d never before heard a single note of Sæverud’s music, but may accidentally have tracked some in on my shoes. Paul Snook, who had a much higher tolerance for the avant-garde than I have, described a disc of the composer’s works thusly in a 20:2 review: “The music of Harald Sæverud (1897–1992) is totally *sui generis* almost to the limits of eccentricity ... the distinctive traits of his manner became fixed: chiseled themes usually derived from—but never directly quoting—Norwegian folk melos; a highly charged, freely dissonant, and often contrapuntal harmonic texture; emphatic meters, frequently in ostinato form, whose

repetitive insistence sometimes reaches near-obsessive levels; a drastically unsentimental forthrightness bordering on the hard-boiled; and a generally acerbic, rebarbative humor approaching the grotesque, even the macabre.”

Sæverud is represented on Eide’s program by just one number, *The Ballad of Revolt*, which was also on the disc Snook reviewed. It lasts for only three and a half minutes, and is not at all off-putting, as I was expecting it to be. It begins with a simple repetitive motive that has a folk-song-y character to it, and sounds rather like the beginning of a student exercise from one of the earlier volumes of Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos*. Dating from the 1940s, the *Ballad* is a protest piece against the Nazi occupation of Sæverud’s homeland. In terms of the composer’s applied technique, the piece is pretty easy to explain, follow, and understand; it’s a precursor to musical Minimalism. The initiating motive or cell is repeated, ostinato-like, over and over again, to which ever-increasing, mostly dissonant harmonies are piled on, as the dynamic level gets louder and the tempo gets faster. Strangely and unexpectedly, though, some unseen force of gravity grips Sæverud and his *Ballad* in a tonal vise from which there is no escape. The piece becomes more and more Romantic sounding as it circles closer and closer to its tonal sun, until finally vaporizing on a cadential minor chord. I wonder if this is what Snook meant by “humor approaching the grotesque, even the macabre.”

Three other Johansens hold sway in the *Fanfare* Archive, but none of them is David Monrad Johansen. If you like Debussy at his most Impressionistic and advanced—say, for example, in Book II of his *Préludes*—you’re sure to like Johansen’s three pieces from his piano suite *Pictures from the North*. Not without cause has he been called a Norwegian Impressionist. His study of the style while in France assured that tone clusters, high-order chords, often with indeterminate roots, and modal and whole-tone scales would feature prominently in his music from the 1920s until the early 1930s, at which point he abandoned that path in favor of a Stravinsky-influenced Neoclassicism.

Unlike his Norwegian compatriot, Sæverud, who joined the resistance movement against the Nazis, Johansen embraced them with open arms, joining the Fascist party and becoming a member of the Nazi-appointed Kulturting (Cultural Council). After the war, Johansen was tried and convicted of treason, and spent four years in a forced labor camp, getting at least a tiny taste of what life was like for the prisoners of the Nazi concentration camps. The stain of having been a Nazi collaborator doesn’t wash out easily, which probably explains why Johansen’s music has been largely ignored, though I notice that there is a Simax recording of two of his piano concertos, performed by Håvard Gimse and the Oslo Philharmonic. Perhaps it’s an indication that Johansen has begun his posthumous reintegration into civilized society.

There is only one entry in the *Fanfare* Archive for Jesper Koch, and it is mine. The year was 2004, the issue 28:2. I was still a rookie reviewer at the time when the magazine’s Commander-in-Chief, as yet unaware of my abiding antipathy to the musical avant-garde, sent me four discs of works by contemporary Danish composers. Not unexpectedly, some of the content was godawful beyond imagination, like the percussion pieces by Niels Rosing-Schow that could make mush of your brain faster than mad cow disease. And then there was the disc devoted in its entirety to Jørgen Plaetner and his efforts to train vacuum tubes to sing—aka, electronic (?)music(?). But one of those four discs, containing a collection of compositions by Jesper Koch, came as a welcome relief. Mind you, it wasn’t Mozart, but it was such a respite from the tinnitus-inducing banging and buzzing of Rosing-Schow and Plaetner that Koch’s “modern” idiom struck me as “symphonic in sweep and richly Romantic in gesture and expression.” It was like an oasis in the desert.

Koch’s *The Mirror of the Mind* is a short piece of just over three minutes, composed in 2007, expressly for pianist Pål Eide. I wish I could say the piece is in the same vein as Koch’s *Alice-in-Wonderland*-inspired numbers I reviewed on that album back in 2004, but *The Mirror of the Mind* sounds rather mindless to me. It evokes an eerie uneasiness of distant, detached disembodiment, as of a plasmodial presence in the room that’s not quite “there, there,” to invoke Gertrude Stein. Considering the title of the piece, it wouldn’t surprise me to learn that Koch is playing around with mirrored musical cells, but in the end, what we respond to and what moves us in listening to music is what he hear, and this sort of random-sounding, vacant doodling on the keyboard holds little emotional appeal.

As a familiar staple of the repertoire, in both Ravel’s orchestration and Mussorgsky’s original score

for solo piano, *Pictures at an Exhibition* needs no comment. Neither, for that matter, do the selections from Grieg's *Lyric Pieces*, which are well known. What does warrant addressing, however, is the instrument that is heard here on Pål Eide's *Pictures* album. The piano is Grieg's 1892 Steinway, recorded at the Grieg Trolhaugen (Troll Hill) residence in Bergen. The instrument has a lovely sound, a bit mellower and more velvet in tone perhaps than Steinway's more recent models, but clearly suitable and appropriate for Grieg's own music, as well as for the Mussorgsky, which was composed in 1874.

One does wonder, though, if the Sæverud and Johansen pieces from the 1940s, and the even later Koch from 2004 might have benefitted from Steinway's later innovations and improvements. In 1932, for example, American pianist Josef Hofmann challenged Steinway to come up with a faster, more sensitive action. The company's response was the "Steinway Accelerated Action," proven by laboratory tests to "repeat 13% more quickly than any other piano." Perhaps that particular improvement is of no consequence in the pieces on Eide's disc, although I'd bet that Mussorgsky would have appreciated it for the "Ballet of Unhatched Chicks" in his *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

Still, as noted above, the Mussorgsky predates Grieg's Steinway, so the work, technically difficult as it is, is completely playable on Grieg's 1892 piano. The question only arises if and when later-composed works make technical demands on the instrument that it wasn't designed to handle, or at least not as effectively as one might like. I don't know whether that's the case here or not. What I can and will say is that the instrument enables Eide to bring an intimacy, delicacy, and singing quality to some movements, such as "The Old Castle" and "The Tuileries Gardens" that one doesn't usually hear on today's modern pianos. Needless to say, of course, the piano doesn't play itself; it's the artist, Eide, at the keyboard who works with the instrument to bring out the beauties of its voice.

I have to admit that at first I was skeptical, but the more I listened to Eide's Mussorgsky the more I came to be persuaded, not just by Eide's technical abilities, but by his interpretive ideas. Once again, as in his previous *Grey Clouds* album, Eide proves himself a graphic artist who paints in music. An unexpected pause here, a flip-off of a cadence there, an unusual phrasing, voicing, or weighting of chords, and all of a sudden, the "picture" comes alive, and you can see, almost literally, the subject of the painting.

I can't say in all honesty that Eide sold me on the Sæverud, Johansen, or Koch items, but it's not Eide's fault if I just don't care for the music. On the other hand, he made me fall in love all over again with Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and that is more than enough. **Jerry Dubins**

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Pål Eide is a Norwegian-born pianist living in Denmark. The present recording is in part a tribute to Norway's greatest composer, Edvard Grieg, as it is played on Grieg's 1892 Steinway in his home. This is a rather different instrument than the modern Steinway. The sound is more woody than ringing, with great variation in touch and sonority. Eide has played this piano previously in recital, and his identification with its attributes is complete. Eide is a marvelous writer. I have read his haunting and inspired program notes twice. Mostly the notes are devoted to describing the very special atmosphere of Grieg's home at Trolhaugen. Although the main work on the album is Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Eide is an exceptionally persuasive advocate for the works by Norwegian composers, including Grieg, on this disc.

What kind of pianist is Eide? He can do many things well. The technical ability is all there, with virtuoso moments like Mussorgsky's "The Great Gate of Kiev" and Grieg's "March of the Trolls" receiving thrilling expositions in size and sonority. But Eide also is a highly sensitive player. In Grieg's "Bell Ringing," Eide finds just the right atmosphere to let the sounds float in the air, illustrating the exceptionally avant-garde characteristics of a work that influenced Debussy and others. The one quality Eide has that means the most to me is his consciousness of the gritty humanity behind all this music. Particularly in the Mussorgsky, Eide grapples with the thorny aspects of human existence, creating a dramatic context which inspires me to feel that the music possesses a Shakespearean dimension.

I should mention that Eide prefers to record in long takes, sometimes of even the entire program at once. He feels that this gives the recording a dramatic lucidity, absent from sliced together albums.

I agree with him. *Pictures at an Exhibition* in particular gains from a sense of ebb and flow along with dramatic contrast that I've rarely experienced from a pianist on records. I have heard three Russian pianists give excellent accounts of the Mussorgsky in concert: Lazar Berman, Alexander Toradze, and Mark Zeltser. I would place Eide's version in their league. The only downside to recording this CD in Grieg's home is that the acoustic is not as favorable as a concert hall might have been. When Thomas Frost recorded Vladimir Horowitz's final CD in Horowitz's home, he placed open umbrellas all along the ceiling to give liveliness to the sound. I wish something like this could have been done at Trolldhaugen, although the image of Grieg's piano on the recording is full and natural, just somewhat dim.

I would like to note a few of the compositions that moved me. Grieg's "From the Carnival" is a recollection of the carnivals in Rome, a city the composer visited frequently. Eide gives it a truly Latin feeling, although perhaps it's not my imagination that a Norwegian character bursts through at times. You could say that this is Grieg's version of Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, except it is a Norwegian in Rome. I am pleased that Eide has provided an encore after the Mussorgsky, namely Grieg's "Cattle Call." The music simply appears out of nothingness and then fades away, an encapsulation of the dreamlike atmosphere of the entire recital. Another magical moment is David Monrad Johansen's "Reindeer," where you can hear the reindeer leaving its tracks in the snow with little flicks of its hooves. Pål Eide has delivered an enchanting recording that engages the mind as well as the ear. Highly recommended. **Dave Saemann**

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Sometimes, it is nice to have impressions confirmed. In *Fanfare* 40:6, I praised Pål Eide's programming and fine pianism on his disc *Grey Clouds*; now, he provides another recital of intelligence and high musicality. The two albums are inextricably linked in a very important way: Eide was invited to play and record on Grieg's own piano at Trolldhaugen specifically because of a fortuitous hearing of *Grey Clouds* by the powers that be there.

The journey to the *Pictures* we all know and love starts with Grieg, as well it might, for there is another aspect that raises this disc from the norm: It is recorded on Grieg's own 1892 Hamburg Steinway at the Edvard Grieg Museum at Trolldhaugen. Starting with music by Grieg himself was probably a bit of a no-brainer, therefore. Eide selects three pieces from the op. 19 *Scenes of Country Life* (1871) before a set of four *Lyric Pieces* (the little "Cattle Call" acts as an encore).

Here, Eide sets out to explore Grieg's impact on contemporary music. Although frequently thought of as conservative, there are some corners of Grieg's output that show a more Modernist perspective, and as Eide states in his extensive notes (the booklet is monolingual, which allows for extra space), Grieg "was far ahead of his time." Listen to the manic "March of the Trolls": Eide is bent on showing just how progressive the gestures of this music are. He also emphasizes the primal elements in Grieg's music. The inclusion of "Bell Ringing," op. 54/6, means we have one of Grieg's most complex, forward-looking pieces, a Scandic piece of misty Impressionism. Eide, himself steeped in Norwegian folk music, plays with fire and sensitivity; and laudably, he begins not with the more familiar *Lyric Pieces* but with three of the more extended *Pictures from Life in the Country*, beautifully crafted gems. Grieg's piano sounds magnificent, shown in the very best light via Danacord's recording: Everything seems clear, the more interior moments simply beautiful, yet the instrument is capable of power. It is not inappropriate for this music that this power is more primal, barer, than a modern Steinway,

The brief *The Ballad of Revolt* by Harald Sæverud is a gritty miniature that contrasts well with the first of David Monrad Johansen's *Pictures from the North* ("Profile of a Woman"), but perhaps it is in the mysterious fragmentations of the second piece we hear, "The Little Stone God," that one can really appreciate the flighty, phantasmagorical nature of Johansen's imagination. The shadow of Impressionism is in the air, allied perfectly to Norwegian soil. Charmingly, a herd of reindeer running inspired the tip-toe opening of the movement actually called "Reindeer" before the infinitely touching "Towards the Mountains of my Forefathers."

Written for Eide, Danish composer Jesper Koch's *The Mirror of the Mind* is an inventive re-

sponse to Andersen's fairytale *The Snow Queen*. But it is to Mussorgsky's almighty masterpiece that the recital as a whole heads. Here one really appreciates the flexibility of Grieg's Steinway in terms of color resources, from the lowest dynamic to the most sculpted grandeur. Eide's intelligence is everywhere apparent: listen to the voice-leading in "The Old Castle" as an example. The lightness of touch for "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks" is remarkable; one feels this is an aspect of piano playing that Grieg's Steinway supports quiet playing beautifully (similarly the repeated notes in the very next movement), and one can hear how much Eide can control. This is vital as the piece moves towards "The Great Gate"; there is a sense of suspense (as well as suspension of time) in Eide's reading that is most effective. The clarity of texture in "The Hut on Fowl's Legs" is remarkable, while "The Great Gate" is perfectly scaled. This is a wonderful account of *Pictures*, level-headed, eminently musical and, often, revelatory in its intelligence.

There is an encore of sorts: Grieg's "Cattle Call" from the op. 17 *Norwegian Songs and Dances*, restrained and glowing with warmth. The mid-to-upper reaches of Grieg's piano sound just perfect here, with a slight bell-like edge, and the music's fade into a sunset is perfectly judged.

Extensive booklet notes complement an important release. So much time and thought has gone into this well-filled disc, and the results are extraordinary. **Colin Clarke**

Within Any Ensemble There Must Be Mutual Trust: An Interview with Violinist John Fadial and Pianist Andrew Harley

BY JACQUELINE KHAROUF

Chamber musicians are members of an ensemble. They oftentimes play in a small room (ahem, chamber) to a small group of people. So, there is a kind of intimacy between chamber musicians, a degree of partnership and collaboration that can only succeed if it is built on a certain recognition. For chamber musicians Andrew Harley and John Fadial that recognition is built on trust, respect, and a shared understanding of the kind of music they want to put out into the world. And while this album of Brahms sonatas for violin and piano is not their first collaboration (and certainly not their last), it is their first release of chamber music that they created together, a snapshot, as John Fadial said, "of where we were 10 years ago."

Pianist Andrew Harley is currently Director of Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music degree programs at the Eastman School of Music. He has previously taught at the Juilliard School, the University of Southern California, the University of North Carolina, as well as masterclasses, guest artist residencies, and various summer affiliations. When he is not teaching, he performs internationally and collaborates with recital partners such as opera singers, members of quartets, concertmasters and principal players of international symphonies and orchestras. A specialist in instrumental chamber music and song literature, Harley began his piano studies at Chetham's School of Music and continued his education at Oxford, Royal Northern College of Music, and the University of Southern California.

Violinist John Fadial is currently Professor of Violin at the University of Wyoming, Laramie. He is an internationally renowned chamber musician, soloist, and teacher, who has been concertmaster for various symphonies and festivals, offered masterclasses, and served at various residencies as visiting guest artist. Fadial studied at the North Carolina School of the Arts, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Maryland. As a collaborator with many renowned musicians, Fadial previously collaborated with Andrew Harley on an album of the chamber music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

For this current project, I asked them about their collaborative relationship, and the struggles and joys of recording, as well as their advice to future chamber musicians.

To start, I'd like to ask about how you met and how you decided to collaborate on this current album of Brahms's violin sonatas. For my research, I learned that you also recorded Samuel