

Artist/Title/Composer

# Grieg Revisited

Ballade, Bergliot & F-Major Quartet

Oslo String Quartet

Lise Fjeldstad, narrator

Label



FBRCD-06

## Grieg revisited

With a repertoire consisting of all the Beethoven quartets and a vast number of other classical, romantic and contemporary works, the Oslo String Quartet has certainly not lacked music to perform at our many concerts at home and abroad since the start in 1991. Nevertheless, we have made it a habit to broaden our musical horizons by having music arranged from virtually every genre imaginable, including classical, opera, pop, jazz, salsa, samba, film music, etc. So when Edvard Grieg's death was commemorated in 2007 we decided it was time to presumptuously add to our national composer's rather small oeuvre for string quartet.

Of course his G-minor Quartet had been with us since we started, as had the two existing movements from the unfinished quartet in F major. The question was which among Grieg's other works we could 'steal' for our own greedy purposes. The melodrama Bergliot soon sprang to mind, not least because it gave us the opportunity to collaborate with celebrated actor Lise Fjeldstad. Likewise, the great Ballade in G-minor was an obvious choice, although it would be very demanding for both the arranger and the performers, as well as having the potential to enrage a few dogmatic pianists along the way. But as the self-appointed arranger of our group I boldly accepted the challenge.

However, I found the prospect of completing Grieg's unfinished quartet in F major both thrilling and terrifying, as I entertained a strong suspicion that imitating another composer (albeit a composer whose music virtually flows through the veins of every Norwegian) is no mean task. It soon became clear that the main challenge was to create inspired music from themes that Grieg himself had effectively discarded as uninspiring. The last movement, especially, needed some quite fresh ideas to complement the few existing bars. Eventually, I derived those ideas mainly from the rest of the quartet as well as from other works by Grieg in order to create a feeling of authenticity and coherence. I did this with a clear conscience, knowing that Grieg himself often borrowed heavily from his own music.

In retrospect, I really enjoyed working on this somewhat crazy project, yet I am thankful that my contribution has finally come to an end through this present release; otherwise I would have been working and reworking it forever. For the Oslo String Quartet, however, it is just the beginning of a Grieg revisit.

*Øystein Sonstad, May 2010*

We are very much indebted to Levon Chilingirian

for preparing a printed version of the unfinished F-major Quartet that presents Grieg's intentions as authentically as possible.

## Lise Fjeldstad

Lise Fjeldstad is one of Norway's leading actors, and has gained a reputation as an extremely versatile performer through countless roles on stage, film, television and radio. The position she holds in the Norwegian theatre world is substantiated not least by her long list of roles in Ibsen's plays.

Lise Fjeldstad has performed the role of Bjørnson and Grieg's Bergliot several times with symphony orchestras in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger. The first time she presented this role was with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra at the farewell concert of her father, conductor Øivin Fjeldstad, in 1983.

Lise Fjeldstad has received a number of awards, including the Norwegian Critics Prize, the Amanda Award (film), the Hedda Award (theatre), the Ibsen Centennial Award and the City of Oslo Cultural Award. She has also been appointed Knight First Class of the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav.

# Edvard Grieg

## Ballade op. 24

## Bergliot op. 42

## String Quartet in F major EG 117 (completed)

### Ballade in G-minor, op. 24

Grieg lost both of his parents in autumn 1875, and soon thereafter experienced a deep personal crisis. He tried to work his way through this crisis by throwing himself into intense compositional activity. The first composition reflecting this struggle is the great piano work *Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody* op. 24, commonly called the *Ballade in G-minor*. It was completed in spring 1876, and Grieg himself considered it some of the finest music he ever created, written as it was "with my heart's blood in days of sorrow and despair." Throughout his life he felt a very special relationship to the piece, and it appears that the feelings he had here expressed in music affected him so deeply that he never performed it in public. In late July, 1876, en route to the Wagner festival in Bayreuth, he visited the C. F. Peters Music Publishing Company in Leipzig. While there he played his brand-new work for Max Abraham, director of the firm. He put his entire soul into the interpretation, and when he was finished he was so emotionally shaken that for a long time he could not say a word. As far as we know, this is the only time he played the piece for anyone else. C. F. Peters published the work in September of that year.

The very demanding technical challenges and powerful emotional content of the Ballade make it one of the most profound works of its kind—theme and variations for piano—of the nineteenth century. It has been recorded numerous times, from old 78-rpm recordings to the newest CD's, from Arthur Schnabel to Leif Ove Andsnes.

Grieg took the melody that constitutes the theme from L. M. Lindeman's collection *Ældre og nyere*

*norske Fjeldmelodier* (Older and Newer Norwegian Mountain Melodies), vol. 2, no. 14; in the single-volume edition, no. 337. The folk-tune, which has the title "The Northland Peasantry," was written down by Lindeman in 1848 during a trip through the Valdres region of eastern Norway taken for the purpose of collecting folk music. The melody has a clean-cut simplicity, and its mournful character was consistent with Grieg's state of mind in 1875–76. Intuitively he also empathized with the text associated with the tune, which reflected his own creative mission: to show that people of the far north, too, could make valuable contributions to the great world chorus:

### *The Northland Peasantry*

I know so many a lovely song  
Of beautiful lands elsewhere,  
But ne'er have I heard a single song  
Of my home in the north so fair.  
So now I'm going to try my skill  
To write a song so that people will  
See that life up north can be happy  
and gay—  
No matter what folks down south  
might say.

We do not know why Grieg never orchestrated the Ballade. Maybe the reason was his strongly emotional attitude to the piece? He certainly did orchestrate many of his piano works. One can mention, for example, the *Holberg Suite* op. 40 for string orchestra (originally for piano) and the *Old Norwegian Melody with Variations* op. 51 for symphony orchestra (originally for two pianos), the latter of which in many ways reflects the formal structure of the

Ballade. Norwegian composer Geirr Tveitt was the first person to orchestrate the Ballade for symphony orchestra, an arrangement which has also been recorded on CD.

The latest branch on the *Ballade* tree is Øystein Sonstad's arrangement for string quartet. This is an exciting project, in which a significant region of Grieg's musical universe is arranged for four strings in a sometimes highly virtuosic adaptation. One might ask if it is possible to preserve Grieg's intentions with such instrumentation? The answer is an unqualified yes! The folk melody sounds infinitely beautiful in this version. The chromatic lines in the piano setting are extremely well suited for the strings. The same holds true for the melancholy and sombre variations (nos. 1, 3, 5 and 8), which alternate with others that are sometimes intense (nos. 2, 6 and 7), sometimes folk- and dance-like (nos. 4 and 10). A unique climax is reached in no. 8—in *pianissimo*! Here the melody rises like a mighty cathedral. The slow, lingering ninth variation, with its 9 + 17 + 17 bars, breaks the symmetrical pattern of the preceding variations and forms a bridge to the much freer and more radical variations in the last part of the Ballade. But even in the passages calling for great outbursts of sound the string-quartet idiom reflects very effectively the piano sonority. In such cases Sonstad often employs double stops to create the desired effect. Not infrequently the string parts, in true chamber-music fashion, interact with each other in various skilful ways. The rhythmic variety and the harmonic boldness in the last variations are decisively expressed through exquisite instrumental subtleties. At the end of the tenth variation, which is characterized by bouncy dance rhythms, the composer initiates a passage of mounting suspense through the use of twelve dissonant dominant-seventh chords in the second inversion that ascend chromatically until they reach the chord on A. The instrumentation here is really deft. The eleventh variation is the first one to begin in a key other than G-minor, namely in D-flat major, which—after five bars—is succeeded by a transition to E major, and four measures later to G major. There is a temporary release of tension in the twelfth variation (in G major), where sonorous chords present a version of the theme in tripled note values.

The last two variations, marked *Allegro* and *Prestissimo*, are once again in G-minor. Their *springar* rhythms and powerful accents give them an absolutely frenetic character leading to a climax of such bold intensity that it seems almost to anticipate the "barbaric" style of the twentieth century. Even this passage is taken well care of in Sonstad's

instrumentation. The culminating point comes when the cello, on a long fermata, strikes a deep E-flat, finally resolving to D. Then comes the conclusion: the first eight measures of the folk melody in a soft four-part string setting. Thus, after a hard struggle, the Ballade ends in the same mood in which it began—in quiet resignation.

We have Grieg's own comments on this ending in a letter of March 27, 1898, to Frants Beyer. The German pianist Eugène d'Albert had played the composition in the Gewandhaus in Leipzig so brilliantly that it took the audience by storm. "He had virtually *all* the requirements: with both refinement and grand style he played that mighty passage that increases in intensity until it breaks out in sheer fury. And then after that you should have heard the daringly long fermata on that low E-flat. I think he held it for half a minute. But the effect was colossal. And then he completed that old, sad song so slowly, quietly, and simply that I myself was completely enchanted." (In a later recording, d'Albert actually held that low E-flat for seven seconds. For comparison: the cellist in the Oslo String Quartet holds it for nine seconds.)

#### **Bergliot, op. 42**

The Norwegian writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832–1910), who became a Nobel Laureate in literature in 1903, played a significant role in Grieg's life. The collaboration between them got seriously under way in 1870, when Grieg, following a stay in Italy financed by a government grant, returned to Christiania (now Oslo). He quickly set several of Bjørnson's poems, and in 1871 they began working together on plans to wed music and drama. The first result of this collaboration was *Before a Southern Convent*, Op. 20, which could almost be described as a compact dramatic scene from an opera. The composition was dedicated to Franz Liszt, with whom Grieg had had close contact during his stay in Italy. Encouraged by Bjørnson's enthusiasm for the composition, Grieg immediately went to work on a new project, the melodrama *Bergliot*. The music was completed in a piano version by that summer.

Grieg discussed briefly in a letter of February 14, 1886, to Danish composer Niels Ravnkilde, his reason for choosing melodrama as a compositional form: "I would be the last one to defend the melodrama as an art form; but if this poem *Bergliot* is going to be set at all, it just *has* to be melodramatic. There is no other choice."

Grieg's idea was to create a colourful orchestral work with recitation. Initially the idea was realized in a version for piano and recitation. It was not until

fourteen years later—in autumn, 1885—that Grieg returned to the work, revising and arranging it for symphony orchestra. The first performance—on November 3, 1885, at the Christiania Theatre—was a huge success. The Norwegian actress Laura Gundersen, the *prima donna* in Norwegian Theatre, was the soloist, and the composer was on the podium. *Bergliot*, Op. 42, was published in 1887 by C. F. Peters—both the piano version and the orchestral score. It was dedicated to Laura Gundersen.

Bjørnson's poem (1861), which is regarded as one of his finest achievements as an author, is a sharply chiseled portrait of Bergliot, the wife of Einar Tambarskjelve, whose story is told in the sagas. The poem first presents her despairing over the fact that King Harald Hardråde (Harald the Ruthless) had lured her husband and their son Eindride into a trap and treacherously arranged for them to be murdered. In a series of powerful pictures, Bjørnson depicts Bergliot's flaming wrath and shows her urging her cowardly relatives to seek revenge for the atrocity. The concluding stanzas are powerfully moving, with heavy rhythms, like a funeral march in poetic form. The thought of revenge has had to be abandoned. The revenge will not be hers: "The new god in Gimle, the awesome one, who took everything—let him also take the revenge, for that he understands!"

This epic poem stimulated Grieg's imaginative powers and unleashed his artistic skills much more strongly than *Before a Southern Convent* had managed to do. The poet's visions are transferred to the composer's palette, and with deft musical strokes Grieg paints an intense picture of the saga's austere and harsh world. The music sounds almost de-romanticised in the direction of a harsh realism, with sharp dissonances and a weakening of the major/minor tonality—achieved, in part, through the liberal use of chromaticism and modal harmonies. These characteristics are especially striking in the two great funeral marches, which constitute two of the high points in the work. The first of these (*Andante molto*) comes after Bergliot realises that her beloved has been murdered. The second one (*Tempo di Marcia funèbre*) constitutes the closing scene, where Bergliot, in bitter resignation, drives off with the two dead bodies: "Drive slowly, for we will soon enough get home." Regarding the closing march, Bjørnson wrote to Grieg on October 13, 1889, that he found it so moving that in fact "one cannot listen to it sitting down."

The Oslo String Quartet, which ranks among the very finest Norwegian chamber-music ensembles, has chosen an arrangement for string quartet of Grieg's orchestral version for this CD-recording.

The arrangement is by the quartet's cellist, Øystein Sonstad. The soloist is one of Norway's leading actresses, Lise Fjeldstad. She recites Bjørnson's text in Norwegian. The text is also given below in an English translation.

What would Grieg himself have said about this undertaking—using a string quartet instead of a symphony orchestra? That we do not know, but he himself was no stranger to arranging others'—and his own—works for new combinations of instruments. On one occasion, after hearing a military orchestra play a portion of the Peer Gynt music, he said with a twinkle in his eye, "Well, next time I suppose we will hear 'Åse's Death' in an arrangement for piccolo and tuba!"

Sonstad's meticulous arrangement, in any case, is consistent with Grieg's view as expressed in a letter of December 9, 1888, to Frederick Delius: "*First and foremost* it is essential that the listeners must be totally able to understand the text spontaneously and without difficulty. The struggle between the *speaking voice* and the *music* is an extraordinarily delicate problem. And how exceedingly little it takes before the voice gets drowned out!"

Sonstad's instrumentation draws on both Grieg's piano version and his orchestral version. With a string quartet as the instrumental background, there is every possibility for Bjørnson's text to be heard, and the "delicate problem" has found a secure, alternative solution without the arranger having compromised the distinctive features of Grieg's unique musical style.

#### **String Quartet No. 2 in F major, EG 117<sup>1</sup>**

Grieg stayed in Copenhagen from November 1890 until April 1891. He didn't accomplish much, and he felt that his thoughts and ideas never really came together. On February 9, 1891, he wrote to his Bergen friend Frants Beyer: "The music that I come up with one day I tear out of my heart the next—because it isn't genuine. My ideas are bloodless, just like me, and I am beginning to lose faith in myself." On March 26, however, he was able to report: "I have written two movements of a *string quartet*. Needless to say, it was supposed to have been completely finished down here. But! Now I am going to Christiania [Oslo] in April..."

The interruption of progress on the string quartet which occurred at this time proved to be momentous. Grieg produced some sketches for two additional movements, but they became torsos, for

<sup>1</sup>) In *Edvard Grieg: Complete Works*, vol. 20, compositions to which Grieg did not assign opus numbers have been catalogued from EG 101 to EG 183.



he never managed to finish them. On December 25, 1895, he wrote to the Russian-English violinist Adolph Brodsky about “that damned string quartet that constantly lies there unfinished like an old Norwegian cheese.” In a letter of January 7, 1903, to Henri Hinrichsen, the new Director of C. F. Peters Music Publishing Company in Leipzig: “Perhaps you remember my mentioning an unfinished string quartet? I had also intended to get it done. But these last years have brought so much misery, both physically and spiritually, that I wasn’t in the mood to proceed with this cheerful work—which is quite the opposite of Opus 27 [String Quartet No. 1]. But I hope to find the long-sought tranquillity and inclination this summer.” Grieg found neither tranquillity nor inclination, however, and as late as February 20, 1906, he told Brodsky: “If only I could at least finish the string quartet for you!”

After Grieg’s death in 1907, Nina Grieg sent a number of her late husband’s manuscripts to his close friend, Dutch composer Julius Röntgen. Among these were two nearly finished quartet movements and the above-mentioned sketches for the other two movements. At first Röntgen had his doubts about the completed movements, but after closer scrutiny he changed his opinion. On October 30 he wrote to Nina: “I have studied the first movement of the quartet very thoroughly. I am quite enchanted with it. (...) Why has Edvard never shown this to us—then we surely would have gotten him to finish it!” Röntgen made a few revisions in the two movements, and C. F. Peters published them in 1908. The first performance took place on January 22 of that year at a memorial concert for Grieg in Copenhagen.

In the F-major quartet Grieg harks back to the light, optimistic outlook that he had experienced in 1865—the year of his engagement to Nina—when he wrote the Violin Sonata No. 1 in F major, Op. 8. It is especially in the first movement of the F-major quartet that one notes the retrospective gaze. If one compares the first movements of the two compositions, it is not only the key and the time signature that are identical. Many of the modulations are the same in both works, even to the point of employing the characteristically Griegian turn to G-flat major. The first movement is in sonata form, *Sostenuto – Allegro vivace e grazioso*, with a series of accented chords in the opening bars. The introduction creates a harmonic tension that is released in the movement’s principal theme in F major. A capricious secondary theme appears in A minor and a calmer, chromatically-tinged epilogue theme in C major, just as in the violin sonata. In both the sonata and the quartet Grieg created rhythmic

tension in some passages by introducing distinct cross-rhythms: 3/4 rhythms in a predominately 6/8 metre. This movement also contains a remarkable example of self-quotation: A motif used in the second movement of the *Piano Concerto in A minor*, op. 16 (1868), appears not just once but three times!

The second movement, which has a folk-music tinge, is a lengthy *Allegro scherzando* in ABA form. The A-sections are in D minor, the B-section in D major. In the B-section, Grieg on several occasions again shakes up the rhythmic stability by employing cross-rhythms: 2/4 rhythms in 3/4 metre.

As Röntgen was working with Grieg’s F-major quartet, he was not content just to prepare the two nearly finished movements for performance and publication. He also created two new movements based on the sketches that Nina had sent him. These movements were not printed, but in 1993 they were recorded on a CD by the Dutch Raphael Quartet. They are ably crafted, but they sometimes sound more like Röntgen than like Grieg.

In 1998 the English Chilingirian Quartet resolved to perform the F-major quartet in as authentically Griegian a version as possible. To that end, the quartet’s first violinist, Levon Chilingirian, removed most of Röntgen’s revisions from the first two movements. The Chilingirian performance also included Grieg’s sketches for the two uncompleted movements in a cautious revision. All of this material has been printed. The sequence of movements is the same as in Röntgen’s version: 1. *Sostenuto – Allegro vivace e grazioso*. 2. *Allegro scherzando*. 3. *Adagio*. 4. *Allegro giocoso*.

When the Oslo String Quartet decided to make a new recording of the F-major quartet, the Quartet’s cellist, Øystein Sonstad, was given the task of expanding the uncompleted movements based on Grieg’s sketches and in accordance with Grieg’s characteristic style. Needless to say, it was a risky undertaking for Sonstad, but he managed to produce an excellent result. The slow movement, *Adagio*, is the second movement in Sonstad’s arrangement, and Grieg’s completed *Allegro scherzando* is the third. Then follows Sonstad’s substantially revised and enlarged *Finale – Allegro giocoso*. As a matter of fact, this sequence is consistent with what Grieg used in his first string quartet.

Grieg’s sketches for the *Adagio* movement comprise 76 bars, and Grieg clearly had in mind an ABA form. Sonstad follows Grieg’s manuscript in the melodious A-section (B-flat major). The more dramatic B-section (starting in B-flat minor) is greatly expanded, both in texture and in harmony. In the repetition of the A-section, the cello states

the theme, the accompanying instruments having got off-beats. From bar 77 and on Sonstad takes full command, combining several of Grieg’s motivic ideas. In the conclusion the instruments move upward into a higher register, and the beautiful movement comes to a close in a very quiet and lovely way.

In the *Finale – Allegro giocoso* in 2/4 metre – Grieg has written out the quartet score for approximately a hundred bars. In the succeeding bars he has here and there sketched in passages for one or another of the instruments, but after bar 131 there is nothing. Sonstad follows Grieg’s score note for note up to bar 35. There the two composers part ways, and Sonstad has created an extended movement with a playing time of nearly ten minutes. It has the dramatic features characteristic of the sonata-form pattern, in which two contrasting themes are vying for supremacy. The principal theme is in F major, the secondary theme starting in A minor. However, the movement also contains a number of rondo elements. This is especially evident in that the core of the bouncy principal theme returns again and again in varying forms and in various keys. One particularly interesting feature of Sonstad’s writing is that at several places he integrates the accented broad chords used by Grieg in the first movement. Actually, Grieg had followed a similar procedure in the last movement of his G-minor quartet, albeit more extensively. As a specimen of string-quartet music, the *Finale* is composed at a high professional level, giving the musicians many nuts to crack. It has also—to a remarkable degree—retained a distinctly Griegian cast.

Has Grieg’s G-minor quartet finally gotten a worthy sister in Sonstad’s now-completed F-major quartet? Time will tell. Sonstad’s intention and his ability to make highly interesting chamber music out of Grieg’s two incomplete movements have in any case gotten off to a flying start in the Oslo String Quartet’s new CD.

*Finn Benestad*

*English translation: William H. Halverson*





# Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson

## Bergliot

**Bergliot**  
Bjørnson innleder diktet med de følgende ordene:  
*Harald Hardrådes saga, kapittel 45 mot slutten lyder: «Da Einar Tambarskjelves hustru Bergliot, som satt tilbake i herberget i byen, spurte mannens og sønnens fall, gikk hun straks opp i kongsgården, hvor bondehæren var, og opphisset den meget til slag. Men i samme øyeblikk rodde kongen ut etter elven. Da sa Bergliot: 'Nå savner vi her min frende Håkon Ivarson; ikke skulle Einars banemann ro ut etter elven, om Håkon stod her på elvebakken'.»*

*(I herberget)*  
I dag kong Harald får give tingfred;  
ti Einar fulgte fem hundre bønder.  
  
Eindride, sønnen slår vakt om huset,  
imens den gamle går inn til kongen.  
  
Så minnes Harald måske, at Einar  
har tvenne konger i Norge kåret, —  
  
og giver fred og forlik på loven;  
hans løfte var det, og folket lenges. —  
  
Hvor sanden fyker nedover veien,  
og støy der stiger! — Se ut, min skosvenn!  
  
— Kanskje blott vinden! Ti her er veirhardt;  
den åpne fjord og de lave fjelle.

Jeg minnes byen ifra min barndom;  
hit vinden hisser de vrede hunder.  
  
— Men støy der tennes av tusen stemmer?  
Og stål den farger med kamprød flamme.

Ja, det er skjoldgny! Og se hva sand-gov:  
spydbølger hvelve om Tambarskjelve!

1) *Tingfred* var i gammel norsk rettspraksis en beskyttelse for den som var på vei til rettsmøter og lignende, oppholdt seg der eller var på hjemreise derfra. Angrep på personer under tingfred førte til fredløshet for angriperen.

Han er i trengsel! — Troløse Harald;  
likravne løfter seg av din tingfred!  
  
Kjør frem med karmen! Jeg må til kampen!  
Nu sitte hjemme, det gjaldt jo livet!  
  
*(På veien)*  
Å, bønder, berg ham, slå krets omkring ham!  
Eindride, verg nu din gamle fader!

Bygg ham en skjoldborg og gi ham buen;  
ti døden pløyer med Einars piler!  
  
Og du, Sankt Olav! Å, for din sønns skyld!  
Gi du ham gagn-ord i Gimles<sup>2</sup> saler!

*(Nærmere)*  
Flokken der sprenger ...  
og kjemper ei lenger ...  
i bølger  
de følger  
hverandre mot elven:  
Hva er der vel hendt?  
Hva spør denne skjelven?  
Har lykken seg vendt?  
Hva er det? Hvi stanser  
nu bøndenes skare?...  
Med nedstukne lanser  
to døde de kranser,  
og Harald får fare! —  
Hva trengsel der er  
ved tingstuens port!...  
Stille all hær  
vender seg bort. —  
*Hvor er Eindride...!*  
Sorgfulle blikke  
flykter til side,  
frykter mitt møte...  
så kan jeg vite:  
de to er døde! —  
— — Rom! Jeg må se:  
Ja, det er dem! —  
Kunne det skje...?  
Jo, det er dem!

2) *Gimle*, i norrøn mytologi det himmelske hjem for de rettferdige.

Fallen er herligste høvding i Norden;  
Norriges beste bue brusten.  
  
Fallen er Einar Tambarskjelve, —  
sønnen ved side, Eindride!

Myrdet i mørke,  
han som var Magnus  
mer enn fader,  
kong Knut den rikes  
kårede sønne-råd!

Fallen for snikmord, skytten fra Svolder,  
løven som sprang over Lyrskogheden!  
  
Slaktet i bakhold, bøndenes høvding,  
trøndernes heder, Tambarskjelve!

Hvithåret, hedret, henslengt for hundene, — sønnen ved side, — Eindride!  
  
Opp, opp bondemenn, han er fallen;  
men han som felte ham, lever!  
Kjenner I meg ikke? Bergliot,  
datter av Håkon fra Hjørungavåg ...  
Nu er jeg Tambarskjelves enke.

Jeg roper på eder, hær bønder;  
min gamle husbond er fallen.  
Se, se, her er blod på hans bleke hår,  
eders hoveder kommer det over;  
ti det bliver koldt uten hevn.

Opp, opp, hærmenn! Eders høvding er fallen,  
eders ære, eders fader, eders børns glede,  
hele dalens eventyr, hele landets helt, —  
her er han fallen, og I skulle ikke hevne?

Myrdet i mørke, i kongens stue,  
i tingstuen, lovstuen er han myrdet,  
myrdet av lovens første mann, —  
å, lyn vil falle fra himlen på landet,  
hvis det ikke lutres i hevners lue!

Skyt langskibe fra land!  
Einars ni langskibe ligger her,  
la dem bære hevnen til Harald!

Å, stod han her, Håkon Ivarson,  
stod han her på bakken, min frende,  
da fant Einars bane ikke fjorden,  
og eder, feige, slapp jeg bede!

Å bønder, hør meg, min husbond er fallen,  
mine tankers høysete i halvhundre år!  
Veltet er det, og ved dets høyre side  
vår eneste sønn, å, all vår fremtid!  
Tomt er det nu innen mine to armer;  
kan jeg vel mer få dem opp til bønn?  
Eller hvor hen skal jeg vende meg på jorden?  
Går jeg bort til fremmede steder,  
akk, så savner jeg dem, hvor vi levde sammen.  
Men vender jeg meg *derhen*, —  
akk, så savner jeg dem selv!

Odin i Valhall tør jeg ikke finne;  
ti ham forlot jeg i min barndom.  
Men den nye gud i Gimle...?  
Han tok jo alt jeg hadde!

Hevn? — Hvem nevner hevn? —  
Kan hevnen vekke mine døde,  
eller dekke over meg for kulden?  
Finnes i den et tilstengt enkesete,  
eller trøst for en barnløs mor?

Gå med eders hevn, la meg være!  
Legg ham på karmen, ham og sønnen,  
kom, vi vil følge dem hjem!  
Den nye gud i Gimle,  
den fryktelige, som tok alt,  
la ham også ta hevnen; ti den forstår han!  
Kjør langsomt! Ti sådan kjørte Einar alltid;  
— og vi kommer tidsnok hjem.

Hundene vil ikke møte med glade hopp,  
men hyle og henge med halen.  
Og gårdens heste vil spise øren,  
vrinske glade mot stalldøren  
og vente Eindrides stemme.

Men den lyder ikke lenger, —  
ei heller Einars skritt i svalen,  
som ropte inn, at nu måtte alle reise seg,  
for nu kom høvdingen!

De store stuer vil jeg stenge;  
folkene vil jeg sende bort;  
kveg og hester vil jeg selge,  
flytte ut og leve ene.  
  
Kjør langsomt!  
Ti vi kommer tidsnok hjem.

### [Translation]

#### Bergliot

Björnson introduces the poem in the following words:  
*In Harald Hardrådes saga, near the end of chapter 45, we read: “When Einar Tambarskjelve’s wife Bergliot, who remained in her lodgings in the town, learned about her husband’s and her son’s deaths, she went immediately up to the royal palace, where the peasant army was, and urged them strongly to take up arms. But at that moment the king rowed down the river. Then said Bergliot: ‘Now we miss my kinsman Håkon Ivarson; Einar’s slayer would not have rowed down the river if Håkon stood here on the riverbank!’”*

#### (In her lodgings)

Today King Harald will have to give tingfred;  
for Einar is accompanied by five hundred peasants.

Eindride, the son, sets a guard around the house,  
while the old man goes in to the king.

Then perhaps Harald will remember that Einar  
has crowned two kings in Norway,

and will give peace and conciliation based on the law;  
this was his promise, and the people’s desire. —

How the sand is swirling over the roadway,  
and the noise is growing louder! Look, my servant!

Maybe it is just the wind! For the weather here is severe,  
with the open fjord and the low mountains.

I remember the town from my childhood;  
the wind therefrom stirs up the snarling dogs.

But noise kindled by a thousand voices?  
And steel stained with battle-red flame.

Yes, there is a clamour of shields! And see, what a sand-  
cloud:  
ranks of spears arch around Tambarskjelve!

He is in distress! Faithless Harald;  
the raven of death rises from your tingfred!

Go! Fetch the wagon! I must join the fight!  
To stay at home now? It is a matter of life and death!

3) In the Old Norse legal system, a *tingfred* promised protection for one who was en route to a legal proceeding or the like, while at that proceeding, or en route home thereafter. An attack on people protected by a *tingfred* led to outlawry for the attacker.

#### (On the way)

O, peasants, protect him! Form a circle around him!  
Eindride, defend now your old father!

Build him a fortress of shields and give him the bow;  
for death rends the air with Einar’s arrows!

And you, Saint Olav! O, for your son’s sake!  
Give him your blessing in Gimle’s halls!

#### (Closer)

The crowd breaks up...  
and fights no more;  
in waves  
they follow  
each other toward the river:  
What could have happened?  
What bodes this trembling?  
Has fortune turned?  
What is it? Why stops  
now the horde of peasants?...  
With lowered lances  
two dead men they encircle,  
and Harald can escape! —  
What disturbance there is  
at the courtroom entrance!...  
Silently all the warriors  
turn away.  
*Where is Eindride...!*  
Sorrowful glances,  
averting their eyes,  
fearing to meet me...  
thus can I know:  
those two are dead!  
Make way! I must see:  
Yes, it is them! —  
Could it happen? ...  
Yes, it is them!

Fallen is the greatest chieftain in Norden,  
Norway’s best bow broken.

Fallen is Einar Tambarskjelve, —  
the son by his side, Eindride!

Murdered in darkness,  
he who to Magnus  
was more than a father,  
King Knut the Great’s  
chosen counsellor for his sons!

4) *Gimle*, in Norse mythology, is the heavenly home of the righteous.

Victim of assassins, marksman from Svolder,  
the lion who leaped on the Lyrskog heath!

Slaughtered in ambush, the peasants’ chieftain,  
the pride of Trøndelag, Tambarskjelve!

White-haired, honoured, thrown to the dogs,  
the son beside him—Eindride!

Up, up ye peasants, he is fallen,  
but he who felled him lives on!  
Do you not know me? Bergliot,  
daughter of Håkon from Hjørungavåg ...  
Now I am Tambarskjelve’s widow.

I appeal to you, peasant warriors,  
my aged husband is fallen.  
Look, look, here is blood on his white hair;  
it will also cover your heads,  
for without revenge it will turn cold.

Up, up, warriors! Your chieftain is fallen,  
your honour, your father, the joy of your children,  
a legend throughout the valley, the whole country’s hero,  
here he is fallen, and you will not avenge him?

Murdered in darkness, in the king’s quarters,  
in the ting hall, in the hall of justice is he murdered,  
murdered by the law’s first man. —  
O, lightning will fall from heaven upon the land,  
if it is not purged in flames of vengeance!

Launch the longboats!  
Einar’s nine longboats lie here at anchor,  
let them wreak vengeance on Harald!

O, if he were here, Håkon Ivarson,  
if he stood here on the hill, my kinsman,  
then Einar’s slayer would not find the fjord,  
and you, cowards, I would not have to beg!

O peasants, hear me, my husband is fallen,  
throne of my thoughts for half a hundred years!  
Topped is that throne, and at its right side  
our only son, O! our entire future!  
Empty is it now between my two arms;  
can I ever again lift them up in prayer?  
Or whither shall I now turn on this earth?  
If I go to foreign parts,  
O, then I would miss the places where we lived together.  
But if I turn *thither*,  
O, then I would miss *them*!

Odin in Valhalla I dare not beseech,

for him I forsook in my childhood.  
But the new god in Gimle...?  
He took everything I had!

Vengeance? Who speaks of vengeance?  
Can vengeance wake my dead ones?  
Or provide cover for me against the cold?  
Does it contain a closed dowager seat,  
or consolation for a childless mother?

Away with your vengeance, leave me alone!  
Lay him on the wagon, him and the son,  
come, we will follow them home!  
The new god in Gimle,  
the awesome one, who took everything,  
let him also take the revenge, for that he understands!  
Drive slowly! For thus drove Einar always;  
—and we will soon enough get home.

The dogs will not meet us with joyful hopping,  
but will howl and hang their tails.  
And the manor’s horses will prick up their ears,  
neigh happily toward the stable door,  
expecting to hear Eindride’s voice.

But nevermore will it sound,  
nor will Einar’s steps in the hallway,  
which used to announce that all should rise,  
for now came the chieftain!

The large rooms I will close;  
the workmen I will send away;  
cattle and horses I will sell,  
move out and live alone.

Drive slowly!  
For we will soon enough get home.

English translation: William H. Halverson

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)

1. Ballade, opus 24 . . . . . 19:04  
Transcription: Øystein Sonstad
2. Bergliot, opus 42 . . . . . 18:15  
Text: Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson  
Transcription: Øystein Sonstad  
Lise Fjeldstad, narrator

Edvard Grieg and Øystein Sonstad\* (1970)

String Quartet no. 2 in F-major EG 117 (completed)

3. I. Sostenuto - Allegro vivace e grazioso. . . 11:49
4. II. Adagio\* . . . . . 7:41
5. III. Allegro scherzando . . . . . 6:39
6. IV. Finale\* . . . . . 10:02
- 73:47

Lise Fjeldstad, narrator

Oslo String Quartet:

Geir Inge Lotsberg, violin

Liv Hilde Klokke, violin

Are Sandbakken, viola

Øystein Sonstad, cello

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