Edvard Grieg’s *Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody, Op.24, for Piano*, and *Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51, for Two Pianos*: An Analytical Overview and Interpretive Study of the Variation Procedure

**D.M.A. Document**

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2009

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Abstract

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), Norway’s greatest composer of the 19th century, is particularly known as a lyrical composer of songs and piano miniatures. The great majority of his piano works are short character pieces influenced by the Romantic tradition (mostly in three-part form), with a large part of them especially characterized by the use of Norwegian folk and folk-like melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. Grieg’s larger works employing the piano (solo or chamber music) and exploring the sonata form include his Piano Sonata in E Minor, Op.7, a number of chamber music compositions (three Sonatas for Violin and Piano and one Sonata for Cello and Piano), and the most familiar Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op.16. Moreover, his larger-scale piano works include two important essays in the variation form: the Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody, Op.24, for piano, and the Old Norwegian Melody (Romance) with Variations, Op.51, for two pianos. The Ballade, op.24 is relatively unknown outside Norway (although among Grieg’s most significant solo piano works), while the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51 is a work that most pianists are not familiar with.

Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction to the formal structures used by Grieg in his original keyboard and chamber-music compositions, concentrating on the variation form and aspects of this form that must have attracted Grieg’s interest. The chapter introduces the two works discussed in the document and concludes with addressing the topic of this document: Grieg’s treatment of the variation procedure (theme and its subsequent variations) in his two keyboard variation sets, both based on Norwegian folk tunes.

Chapters 2 and 3 present the historical background and an analytical overview of the Ballade, Op.24 and Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, discussing structure, harmonic and melodic patterns, keys, texture, rhythm, and tempo. The goal of the analysis is to illustrate Grieg’s variation techniques and to provide a practical, analytical guide as a tool for an informed interpretation.

The final chapter, Chapter 4, discusses the large-scale organization of the two works addressing the similarities between the two compositions, particularly in terms of the theme’s treatment and the overall climactic progression of the variations. The chapter concludes with observations about Grieg’s treatment of the variation form in the context of the piano ballade tradition and its association with narrative and poetic elements, including a comparison with other nineteenth-century piano variation sets.
Dedication

Dedicated to my parents,

Δημήτριος (Dimitrios) and Κωνσταντίνα (Konstantina)
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my advisor and piano professor, Steven Glaser, who was the first to draw my attention to Grieg’s Ballade, Op.24 and supported me in every stage of writing this document. His musicianship has inspired me through the years of my doctoral studies and his thoughtful teaching has been crucial to my growth as a pianist and musician.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the rest of the members of my Document Committee, Dr. Kenneth Williams and Dr. Danielle Fosler-Lussier, for their insightful guidance and detailed comments on this document, and to the members of my D.M.A. Advisory Committee, Dr. Kenneth Williams, Dr. Kia-Hui Tan, and Professor Alan Green, for faithfully attending my recitals.

I am particularly grateful to Dr. Sylvia Eckes who has greatly supported this project from the very beginning, spent a great deal of time with me, and whose resourcefulness has been especially helpful.

I wish to express my most heartfelt acknowledgments to the following dear friends for their unfailing support and encouragement in many ways: Anne and Richard Doerfler, Dorothy Price, Lambis and Vera Vassiliadis, Chien Hui Wong,
Agapi Stefanidou, Ravi Somayajulu, and Neetika Kapani.

And most importantly, I wish to express my deepest gratefulness to my family and to Father Michael for their never ending love; without them I would never have been able to start and complete my graduate studies.
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Chapter 1

Grieg’s Keyboard Compositions:
Formal Structures; A Brief Introduction

1.1 The Shorter Piano Works: Grieg, the Exceptional Miniaturist

Edvard Grieg (born: 1843, Bergen; died: 1907, Bergen), Norway’s greatest composer of the nineteenth century, is particularly known as a lyrical composer of songs and piano miniatures. Most of these smaller works are based on ternary forms, “ABA and especially the extended ABABA, often with varied reprises,” as Nils Grinde writes.\(^1\) They usually appear grouped in larger sets. Their music is particularly characterized by its power to depict a feeling, mood, or impression. In most cases, each piece in the set is accompanied by a descriptive or poetic title. Among these sets are the following: 4 Pieces, Op.1; Poetic Tone-Pictures, Op.3 (6 pieces in total); Humoresques, Op.6 (8 pieces); Album Leaves, Op.28 (4 pieces), and ten sets of Lyric

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*Pieces, Opp. 12, 38, 43, 47, 54, 57, 62, 65, 68, and 71* (66 pieces in total), and *Moods, Op.73* (7 pieces).

The great majority of Grieg’s piano works are short character-pieces influenced by the Romantic tradition (especially by Schumann); many of these pieces feature Norwegian folk and folk-like melodies, rhythms and harmonies, always blended with his unique and highly personal harmonic idiom. National dances such as the *Springar*, the *Halling*, and the *Gangar* formed a direct source of inspiration, and very often Grieg based his compositions on his own arrangements of the original tunes. Among his piano works that particularly evoke a strong national feeling are the following: *25 Norwegian Dances and Folk-Songs, Op.17; Pictures from Folk-Life, Op.19* (3 pieces); *Improvisations on Two Norwegian Folk Songs, Op.29; 4 Norwegian Dances, Op.35* (for piano duet, also arranged by the composer for piano solo); *Symphonic Dances, Op.64* (4 movements, for piano duet; also orchestrated by the composer); *19 Norwegian Folk Songs, Op.66; 17 Norwegian Peasant Dances, Op.72 (Slåtter), and Six Norwegian Mountain Melodies* (published without opus number). Additionally, the two works studied in this document, the *Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody, Op.24*, and the *Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51* belong to the category of Grieg’s piano works influenced by the Norwegian musical heritage, as they are both based on Norwegian folk tunes.
1.2 Compositions based on Larger-Scale Forms Employing the Piano (Solo or Chamber Music)

Outside the piano miniatures, two large-scale forms attracted Grieg’s interest: the sonata form and the variation form. His first larger composition was his Piano Sonata in E Minor, Op.7, consisting of four movements, with the opening and closing movements written in sonata form. Other works employing the piano (solo or chamber music) and exploring the sonata-form include the Sonatas for Violin and Piano: Op.8 in F major, Op.13 in G Major, and Op.45 in C Minor, the Sonata for Cello and Piano in A Minor, Op.36, and the most familiar Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op.16. Moreover, among the large-scale keyboard compositions, there are two important essays in the variation form: the Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody, Op.24 for piano (composed in 1875-76), and the Old Norwegian Melody (Romance) with Variations, Op.51 for two pianos (composed in 1890). The Ballade lasts around eighteen minutes and the Old Norwegian Melody around twenty-four minutes.
1.3 Grieg and the Piano Variation Form: *Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody, Op.24 for Piano, and Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51 for Two Pianos*

The fact that Grieg composed two of his very few larger keyboard works in variation form gives this form a special place among the numerous miniature forms that dominate his piano output. The variation form was particularly suited to Grieg’s skills as an arranger, because the form allows the composer to treat relatively brief material in a variety of ways. It is notable that both variation sets are based on Norwegian folk tunes. Moreover, Grieg’s music has the power to strongly portray a wide range of emotional content in very brief and concise settings, and the small-scale sections of variation form can very successfully embody Grieg’s picturesque miniature-structures. Kathleen Dale finds that variation form allowed Grieg to build miniature-scale ideas into larger-scale forms:

> In style and texture the individual variations are of much the same character as the best of his miniatures, but they have the greater advantage of being unified by a definite theme, so that as they proceed they gather a momentum denied to sets of unrelated pieces.²

The *Ballade, Op.24* and the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* together offer an excellent opportunity for the study of Grieg’s approach to variation form. In his Op.24, Grieg already reveals a unique approach to variation form, as his *Ballade* is

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written in the form of variations, a form that traditionally had not been associated with the piano ballade genre. Moreover, the structural similarities between the Ballade, Op.24 and the Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51 provide further evidence in support of a unique approach to variation form exhibiting specific characteristics. The Ballade, op.24 is relatively unknown outside Norway (although among Grieg’s most significant solo piano works), while the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51 is a work that most pianists are not familiar with.

The following chapters will articulate the procedures of Grieg’s variation techniques through a comparative analysis of the Ballade, Op.24 and the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51. The goal of the analysis is not only to illustrate Grieg’s approach to variation form but also to provide a practical, analytical guide as a tool for an informed interpretation. Both works exhibit a formal structure that combines elements from the folk ballads and the piano ballade tradition into the variation form.
Chapter 2

Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody, Op. 24, for Piano:

An Analytical Overview

2.1 Background Information: Origins of the Work

Grieg started composing the Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody, Op. 24 in 1875,\(^1\) the work was completed in the spring of 1876 and it was, as Grieg said, written “with my life’s blood in days of sorrow and despair.”\(^2\) After his parents’ death in the autumn of 1875, Grieg was in a period of depression which was also caused by problems in his relationship with his wife Nina.\(^3\)

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3 Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, Edvard Grieg, trans. Halverson and Sateren, 199.
As is clear from Grieg’s own statements, the *Ballade* had a special emotional meaning for him. The fact that he never performed the piece in public could be a result of his emotional struggle with the piece. The following incident refers to a private performance of the piece:

In late July, 1876, when passing through Leipzig on his way to the Bayreuth Festival, Grieg played it (the *Ballade*) for Dr. Max Abraham, director of the Peters publishing firm. According to Holter, he put his entire soul into the interpretation; and when he was finished, not only was he so physically exhausted that he was bathed in sweat; he was also agitated and shaken that he could not say a word for a long time.4

The above description of Grieg’s soulful performance of the *Ballade* reveals a strong emotional attachment to this piece.

Although relatively unknown outside Norway, the *Ballade, Op.24* is Grieg’s most significant large-scale solo piano work, exploring the complete resources of the piano. It is written in variation form (theme and fourteen variations). The theme of the *Ballade* is based on the song “Den nordlanske bondestand” (“The Northland Peasantry”) which Grieg took from Ludvig Mathias Lindeman’s collection *Ældre og nyere norske Fjeldmelodier* (*Older and Newer Norwegian Mountain Melodies*); Lindeman (1812-1887, Norwegian composer and organist, best known for his transcriptions of folk melodies) wrote down the song as he heard it sung by Anders Nilsen Perlesteinbakken in Valdres, Norway in 1848.5

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4 Ibid., 200.

5 Ibid., 201.
The lyrics and the tune of the song are the following (see example 2.1):

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.5

Example 2.1. “The Northland Peasantry” from Older and Newer Norwegian Mountain Melodies, compiled by Lindeman.7

5 Ibid.

2.2 Theme - *Andante espressivo*

Grieg treats the tune in a very lyrical and expressive way, especially characterized by a somber and melancholic quality (see example 2.2). The theme has a length of sixteen measures, forming an incipient three-part form (ABA’). It consists of two eight-measure periods; the first period is parallel {aa’}, and the second period is contrasting {ba’}. Like Lindeman’s arrangement, it is written in triple time in the key of G minor. The main tune —the Norwegian melody— uses a rather limited melodic range, and it is especially characterized by its repetitive melodic and rhythmic contour. The long slurs marked by Grieg indicate that the theme should be played *molto legato*.

Example 2.2. *Ballade, Op.24*, Theme - *Andante espressivo*, mm. 1-16.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) All the examples on the *Ballade* are taken from *Grieg: Klavierwerke-Band II* (Frankfurt: C.F. Peters).
A comparison between Grieg’s initial presentation of the theme and Lindeman’s arrangement reveals the following differences (see examples 2.1 and 2.2):

1. As easily observed in the score, Grieg omitted some details in the repetitions of the opening motive (Bb-G-F#) found in Lindeman’s arrangement, so that the simplified main motive is repeated unchanged (see measures 1, 2, 5, and 6 in examples 2.1 and 2.2).

2. The motive Bb-C-D appears each time with slight rhythmic alterations in Grieg’s setting compared with Lindeman’s arrangement (see ex. 2.2, mm. 3, 7, 9 and 15).

3. Grieg harmonized the first two phrases of the right-hand melody with a long descending bass line, especially characterized by its chromatic motion (mm. 1-8).

The strong chromatic element in Grieg’s setting of the theme can also be observed in the middle-part voices. Grieg’s own words reveal his fondness for the chromatic element:

The realm of harmony has always been my dream-world, and the relation between my sense of harmony and Norwegian folk music has always been an enigma to me. I have found that the obscure depth in our folk melodies has its foundation in their
undreamt-of harmonic possibilities. In my arrangements in op.66 and elsewhere I have tried to give expression to my sense of the hidden harmonies in our folk tunes. In so doing I have been rather especially fascinated by the chromatic lines in the harmonic texture. A friend once told me I was ‘born chromatic’.9

And he continues later:

In the use of the chromatic scale, my ideal teachers were names such as Bach, Mozart, and Wagner. I have observed that when these immortal masters gave expression to their deepest and most fervent thoughts they had a marked fondness for chromatic lines, each in his own way. On this basis I quietly evolved little by little my own sense of the importance of the chromatic element. Several of my songs show how I have proceeded, … See also Ballade op.24.10

The chromatic bass line becomes a distinct melodic element, in addition to the actual Norwegian melody; both lines will have an important role in the variation procedure. The use of the chromatic element attaches a deeper emotional content to the simple Norwegian melody.

In general, Grieg’s harmonic setting features a larger variety of chords compared with Lindeman’s arrangement, especially augmented-sixth chords, French-sixth and German-sixth types (see example 2.2). However, as Gregory Martin very aptly observes,

…the vertical sonorities would be more accurately described as polyphonic coincidences, and new lines are systematically added as melodic strands dissolve into the texture. Grieg has reinterpreted the melody not as a single voice but rather as the product of a gradually accruing polyphony. That is, not (fig.1)


10 Ibid.
but rather (fig.2),

In this way, Grieg works chromaticism into not only the harmony, but the melody, as well; or rather, he derives his chromatic harmony from the melody itself!¹¹

The descending chromatic bass line binds the first two four-measure phrases into a long eight-measure phrase. As a result, the overall phrasing creates the structure 8+4+4 (which also illustrates the incipient three-part form ABA’). Additionally, the chromatic bass line enhances a certain feeling of tonal ambiguity that characterizes the first half of the theme, and which is finally relieved with the $V-i$ cadence in measure 8.

4. The last half of the theme in Grieg’s setting (mm. 9-16) is repeated, unlike Lindeman’s arrangement, resulting in an enlarged three-part song form, A II:BA’:II.

5. The middle part B (mm.9-12) creates a contrast with the rest of the theme (which does not happen in Lindeman’s arrangement). It brings a glimmer of brightness, moving briefly to the relative major (Bb major), and marked *poco animato* and *pp*. The descending chromatic bass line has now been replaced by an open 5th accompanying sonority (Bb-F) alternating with an added voice above the melody which forms parallel 5ths or 4ths with the melody at the cadence points (see ex. 2.2).

### 2.3 Variation 1 - *Poco meno Andante, ma molto tranquillo*

Variation 1 is characterized by the use of the chromatic aspect of the theme. It is written in 3/4 time, in the key of G minor; moreover, it has the same length and melancholic character as the theme.

The descending chromatic bass line of the theme is now combined with a triplet pattern of *pp*, and *non legato* chords. The top voice of the right-hand triplet pattern is also dominated by the use of chromatic motion. Starting from measure 3, the left-hand rolled chords follow closely the chord progression used in the corresponding part of the theme (compare example 2.3: mm. 3-8, with ex. 2.2: mm. 3-8), while their top voices reveal very short fragments of the melody which are echoed by the right-hand triplet pattern (see ex. 2.3).

In the middle section of Variation 1 (mm. 9-12), the added voice played by the left hand at the top register in mm. 10 and 12 of the theme has now been expanded to an expressive short phrase replying to the preceding left-hand cadential motive. The repeated left-hand motive (G-F-F#) in mm. 12-14 recalls the repeated motive (Bb-G-F#) of the concluding phrase of the theme, while the variation ends with the characteristic left-hand descending chromatic bass line (see ex. 2.4). The second half of the variation is repeated.
Example 2.4. Ballade, Op.24, Var. 1 - Poco meno Andante, ma molto tranquillo, mm. 9-16.

2.4 Variation 2 - Allegro agitato

The intense and agitated character of Variation 2 creates a contrast with the preceding and following variations (Var. 1: Poco meno Andante, ma molto tranquillo, and Var. 3 Adagio). The second variation is also written in the key of G minor and has the same length as the theme (sixteen measures). The time signature has now changed to 9/8, and the rhythmic motion has been accelerated through the rapid sixteenth-note right-hand figuration.

The arpeggiated right-hand figuration combined with a syncopated effect starting from measure 3 has a strong Schumannesque quality, recalling the character of Florestan who represented Schumann’s passionate and agitated inner personality. The inner voice of the right-hand figuration (circled in example 2.5) outlines tiny fragments of the original melody, while the treble syncopated pattern starting from measure 3 is similar to the triplet pattern of Variation 1 (see examples 2.3: mm. 3-5, and 2.5: mm. 3-5). The left-hand chordal accompaniment (measures 3-8) is derived from the rolled chords in the corresponding section of Variation 1. The dynamic range extends from an agitated $p$ at the beginning to a passionate $ff$ in the end of the first half of the variation.
As in most of the variations, the quiet middle section (mm. 9-12) creates a contrast with the agitated character of the opening and closing sections of the variation. It reflects the framework of the corresponding section of Variation 1 (see examples 2.4: mm. 9-12, and 2.6: mm. 9-12) with the addition of an ascending \textit{dolcissimo} and \textit{pp} pianistic filigree covering a range of three octaves. The second half of the variation is repeated.


### 2.5 Variation 3 - \textit{Adagio}

The slow and intimately expressive third variation brings us back into the melancholic and somber character of the theme, adding also a ‘dark’ quality. Written in 3/4, in the home key of G minor, it has a length of sixteen measures and keeps the basic structure of the theme. The two eight-measure periods of the variation (mm.1-8, and 9-16) unfold in a continuous manner, and for the first time in the piece, the second half of the variation is not repeated.
Variation 3 is dominated by the use of the diatonic melody of the folk song. The inner voices created by the arpeggiated sixteenth-note figurations present the melody in a duet texture,\textsuperscript{12} over a G pedal point in the bass (see example 2.7).

Kathleen Dale writes:

The adagio $\frac{3}{4}$, is a tranquil duo; through a tunnel of semiquavers formed by the extreme parts, the theme threads its quiet way in the tenor part, throwing its reflection upwards a major third into the alto part so that the harmonies of tonic minor and relative major run concurrently for a time - a kind of polytonality Grieg often employed.\textsuperscript{13}


The second phrase of the first period (measures 5-8) transposes the duet a $3^{rd}$ higher, in the key of B\textsubscript{b} minor. In the first phrase of the second period (measures 9-12), Grieg repeats the last two bars of the previous phrase transposed to the key of B\textsubscript{b} major, and then moves back into the home key of G minor.

The closing phrase of the variation is also written in the same duet texture; its first half (mm. 13-14) is especially characterized by the doubling of an \textit{agitato}

\textsuperscript{12} This is similar to R. Schumann’s \textit{Romance, Op.28, No.2, in F\# major}. 

syncopated inner figure which is derived from the ‘closing’ half-step of the main motive Bb-G-[F#-G] (see ex. 2.8).


2.6 Variation 4 - Allegro capriccioso

Variation 4 is also written in the key of G minor, retaining the basic formal and harmonic structure of the theme. The material used in this variation is associated both with the chromatic and diatonic aspects of the theme. Elements of the theme’s melody and accompanying chromatic bass line can be detected in the right-hand writing of the first four measures (see example 2.9, next page). As James Parakilas observes,

in this dance variation the interaction of melody and bass line takes a new step: the melody is hinted at in the course of a
sixteenth-note melody that begins as a falling chromatic scale.\textsuperscript{14}

The fourth variation has a folk-like character, reminiscent of a lively triple-time dance. The folk-like character is expressed through the use of syncopations, various types of articulation (\textit{accent}, \textit{tenuto}, \textit{leggero}, \textit{staccato}, \textit{legato}), drone accompaniments (based on open 4ths, 5ths, and 6ths), pedal points (treble Ds), and repeated rhythmic/melodic patterns (see ex. 2.9). Very characteristic is also the use of the augmented fourth (C\#), adding a Lydian modal quality.\textsuperscript{15} Grieg writes regarding the use of the augmented fourth:

\begin{quote}
This ‘oddity’ that you speak of with respect to the use of G-sharp in D major was the thing that drove me out of my mind in 1871. Naturally I stole it immediately for use in my \textit{Pictures from Folk Life}. This phenomenon is something for the musicologist. The augmented fourth can also be heard in the peasants’ songs.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{15} Grieg used the augmented fourth very often in his music; a very characteristic example can be found in the first movement of his piano concerto.

The first phrase of the second period of the variation (mm. 9-12) moves to the key of the relative major (Bb major). It is based on the same material presented in the previous measures with the left-hand syncopated pattern being replaced by a non-syncopated rhythmical scheme (see ex. 2.10). The variation closes (measures 13-16) with the repetition of the opening phrase in G minor. The entire second half of the variation is repeated.

Example 2.10. Ballade, Op.24, Var. 4 - Allegro capriccioso, mm. 9-10.

2.7 Variation 5 - Più lento

The opening four-measure phrase of Variation 5 consists of two distinct passages: an ascending, unaccompanied, recitative-like figure embodying fragments of descending chromatic motion, followed by an a tempo harmonized cadential figure (see example 2.11). The chromatic aspect of the original theme is evident in the chromatic fragments of the improvisatory/free-flowing line, while the closing three notes of the theme’s melody, (Bb-A-G), are embedded in the harmonized cadential figure.

Grieg expanded the first half of the variation by adding eight more measures (mm.9-16) that form a varied repetition of the opening eight-measure section (see examples 2.11 and 2.12). The opening of Variation 5 brings to mind the introduction to Chopin’s Ballade in G minor, Op.23,17 which—as James Parakilas writes— “has the same structure of a slowly rising line that lingers near its peak (ending on F-E flat-D-D instead of Grieg’s chromatic F-E-E flat-D-D) answered by a cadence phrase.”18


17 The resemblance is even stronger when the opening phrase is repeated with the ascending line played in octaves (See example 3.12)

18 Parakilas, Ballads without Words, 163.
The contrasting, *pp* and *dolce* middle section in B♭ major (mm. 17-20) combines the rising line and the cadential figure into a single passage, as Parakilas observes (see ex. 2.13). The variation ends with the return of the opening phrase in G minor; the second half of the variation (mm. 17-24) is repeated.

![Example 2.13. Ballade, Op. 24, Var. 5 - Piu lento, mm. 17-18.](image)

**2.8 Variation 6 - Allegro scherzando**

Variation 6 is characterized by the constant alternation of the hands which imitate each other in an acciaccatura-like chordal figure (see example 2.14). For the most part, the right hand leads the imitating pattern, with the left hand taking over in measures 5-8 (second phrase of the first period).

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19 Ibid., 164.

Variation 6 resembles an Etude based on the theme’s harmonic framework. The first half is written in G minor, and the second half (measures 9-16) moves to the key of Bb major (measures 9-10) before going back to the home key. The second half of the variation is repeated. However, Grieg does not mark a fermata at the end of this variation (as he did in all the previous ones), leading thus directly into the following Variation 7.

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20 As James Parakilas writes in Ballads without Words, p. 164, “Grieg follows neither the melody nor the bass line of his theme, but only the harmonic progression, and that only loosely.”
2.9 **Variation 7 - (no tempo marking)**

The seventh variation is closely related to the previous one. The acciaccatura chord-pattern of Variation 6 is expanded into *staccato* sixteenths that form two lines in strict canonic imitation (see example 2.15), with a short break in the first half of the second period (measures 9-12). Variation 7 is the only variation which bears no separate tempo marking of its own, further suggesting that it is the mate of the previous one. Both variations are based on roughly the same harmonic and phrase structure. The character of Variation 7 is particularly virtuosic and boisterous.

![Example 2.15. Ballade, Op.24, Var. 7, mm. 1-2.](image)

The less intense and *p* middle section (measures 9-12) is characterized by a brief change in the left-hand writing, and the *legato*, or *portato* articulation. The last phrase, measures 13-16 (same as mm. 1-4), brings back the canonic and *staccato* writing; the variation ends very abruptly on the dominant chord.
2.10 Variation 8 - *Lento*

The eighth variation has the character of a funeral march or a dirge. It is perhaps the most somber variation in the entire set. Finn Benestad and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe write that

> a temporary but altogether unique climax is reached in No.8 -- surprisingly, in pianissimo. Here the melody rises like a mighty cathedral from a tonal foundation that has an impressionistic tinge.

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The original Norwegian melody of the theme is presented in *pp* dense chords while being echoed in bass offbeat eighth-notes. Four measures later, the bass offbeat eighth-notes are doubled in the treble; the melody is heard in five registers.

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simultaneously, evoking a bell-like sound effect (see example 2.16). When the opening phrase returns towards the end of the variation (from the upbeat to measure 13 until the end), the bass and treble single-note echoes become octaves.

The first phrase of the second period (middle section: mm. 9-12) moves to the key of B♭ major. As happened in previous variations, this section of the variation is more quiet and calm; Grieg indicates *pp* and *dolcissimo* starting in measure 9, and *poco sostenuto* and *ppp* towards the end of the phrase. The whispered dynamics combined with a bass and treble pedal on the dominant of B♭ major that sounds like a bell (upper and lower F-octaves) create a special and intimate atmosphere (see ex. 2.17).


Variation 8—as all the previous variations— is shaped after the theme’s formal and tonal structure. Its length is sixteen measures according to the theme’s two periods of eight-measures each, with the second half of the variation being repeated. The next variation (Variation 9) will depart from the theme’s structure.

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22 This bell-like sound effect brings particularly to mind Debussy’s *La Cathédrale engloutie* (*Preludes*, Book 1: No. 10).
2.11 Variation 9 - Un poco Andante

The lyrical Variation 9 is the most expressive and emotional variation, placed roughly in the middle of the piece. It introduces a new melodic pattern in the soprano embodying fragments of chromatic motion. Below this melody, in the alto, we can detect a minor hint of the main motive of the Norwegian melody (see example 2.18, G and F#). As John Horton mentions, the keyboard writing “actually suggests the theme of R. Schumann’s Andante and Variations”23 (see examples 2.18 and 2.19).


Variation 9 signals an important moment in the variation procedure; for the first time in the work, Grieg frees himself from the structural restrictions of the theme. As Kathleen Dale writes,

> the ninth variation, … , is different from all the others in being the only one which, while referring to the theme, transcends its melodic and structural boundaries and is in itself a complete and independent piece of music.25

Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe mention that this variation, “with its 9 + 17 + 17 measures, breaks the symmetrical pattern of the preceding variations and forms a bridge to the much freer and more radical variations in the last part.”26

Starting in measure 5, a *pianissimo* improvisatory, cadenza-like passage based on the Neapolitan chord (Ab 9th) and featuring canonic imitation, suspends the progress of the theme for two measures before the cadence. In the cadence we can detect the cadential motive, (Bb-A-G), of the original melody.

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After a short section that moves to Bb major, the opening section in G minor returns (starting from the upbeat to measure 14). However, this time the texture is thicker and the use of the chromatic element is more prominent, while the cadenza-like dreamy passage on the Neapolitan chord is extended to six measures. The longer second part of the variation (measures 10-26, starting with the section in Bb major) is repeated.27

2.12 Variation 10 - *Un poco Allegro e alla burla*

The tenth variation signals the beginning of the four variations that lead to the eventual climax which subsequently brings back the restatement of the theme that concludes the piece. Variations 10-14, as Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe mention, “carry the *Ballade* forward to the grand display of power with which the piece concludes.”28 The tempo markings of the remaining variations also illustrate the building of the climax towards the finale: *Un poco Allegro e alla burla, Piu Animato, Meno Allegro e maestoso, Allegro furioso, Prestissimo*. Additionally, Variations 10-12 use the same characteristic rhythmic figure: (\(\text{\textsuperscript{\textcircled{}}}\)) throughout.

27 The repetition of the second part concludes the total structure of 9 + 17 + 17 measures that Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe mention above.

Variation 10 is dominated by the use of a lively rhythm, consisting of the \( \begin{array}{c} \frac{\text{1}}{\text{2}} \end{array} \) right-hand figure accompanied by offbeat open fifths (see example 2.20), or by rolled chords later in the variation. The right-hand rhythmic figure recalls the dotted rhythm motive \( \begin{array}{c} \frac{\text{1}}{\text{2}} \end{array} \) of the theme’s melody. Also, the opening of the variation contains the Bb-G-F# principal melodic motive of the theme (see ex. 2.20).


Variation 10, like all the previous variations, is written in the home key of G minor. However, the 3/4 meter of the previous variations changes to 12/8. The phrase structure of the theme has also been distorted. The first period of the theme (being eight measures) is reduced to four measures in Variation 10, measures 1-4, while the second period of the theme (being also eight measures) is extended to eleven measures, measures 5-15. In these two unequal sections of the variation one can still detect some elements of the theme: the short first section (starting in measure 1) is in G minor, while the longer second section (starting in measure 5) moves to Bb major before the return of a ff and dense-chordal version of the first section in G minor (measures 12-15). The concluding section, measures 16-28, starts as a written-
out repeat of the second section (measures 16-21). However, just before the expected return of the opening section, the repeat-scheme is interrupted by a chromatically rising sequence based on unresolved dominant seventh chords (Ab7, Bb7, B7, C7, Db7, D7, Eb7, E7, F7, F#7, G7, Ab7, A7). The sequence proceeds in a *stretto*-like manner, and the variation ends very abruptly; the fermatas over the rests also enhance the feeling of unresolved suspension (see ex. 2.21).


2.13 **Variation 11 - Più animato**

In the most surprising moment of the entire work, the *ffz* dominant of D major which ended the tenth variation ‘jumps’ five octaves below, and becomes a *ppp, una corda* pedal-point on the dominant of Db major at the opening of Variation 11.\(^{29}\) The left-hand pedal point uses the same dotted rhythmic figure from the previous variation. Additionally, it is combined with an augmented version of the theme’s

\(^{29}\) The Db can be translated as the flattened dominant, or as the sharped fourth (C#) in the home key, G Minor.
opening phrase in the right hand (see example 2.22). Grieg uses a 4/4 meter for the right-hand melodic fragments, while the left-hand pedal point continues the 12/8 meter of the previous variation.


The eleventh variation is the first variation in a key other than G minor. It has a transitional character leading through a series of modulations to the next variation in G major. The phrase structure of the theme has been completely distorted. Parakilas articulates precisely the role and the structure of the variation:

This variation … , is a modulating sequence …. based on the first phrase of the theme. As the sequence proceeds, the phrase is reshaped and shortened, the pulse quickens, the volume increases, and all the elements are put in place for the next
variation, which follows without a break.30

The opening phrase in Db major (mm. 2-5) is immediately repeated in the key of E major (measures 6-9) and then it modulates to the key of G major (a third-related key) in measure 10. The following section, measures 10-15 in 4/4, is characterized by a long sixteenth-note pedal point on D (dominant of G major), on top of which the right-hand phrase is reshaped and shortened, leading through a sequence of stepwise related keys to the dominant of D major.31 The concluding section in D major (dominant of the home key) returns to the 12/8 meter and prepares the rhythm of the following variation (see ex. 2.23). It is especially characterized by chromatic vacillations between F-F♯, and B♭-A.


30 Parakilas, Ballads without Words, 166.

31 The sequence consists of G major - A minor - B minor - C major - D major.
2.14 Variation 12 - *Meno Allegro e maestoso*

The eleventh variation leads directly into Variation 12 through a cadential progression $V-I$, while the time signature changes from $12/8$ to $6/8$. The triumphant character of the twelfth variation is a culmination of the tension built up in Variations 10 and 11. The tempo pulls back (*Meno Allegro*) enhancing the majestic *maestoso* character. Variation 12 is the only variation in the set which presents the entire melody of the theme in a major mode, specifically in G major, sweeping away the despair of the previous variations. The melody is heard in **fff** - *con tutta forza* dense chords combined with a pedal point based on the dotted rhythmic motive from the previous variation. The pedal point is presented in double octaves wide apart. Each beat of the original melody takes a full measure. Additionally, the repeated notes have been eliminated in this augmented version of the melody (see example 2.24), while the chord progression has a more diatonic character compared with the dense chromaticism of the original harmonic setting.

The opening of Variation 12 presents only the first phrase of the theme’s melody (being 4 measures in the theme, and 12 measures in the augmented version). Then, we proceed to the second half of the melody which is presented in its entire length. The first phrase of the second half of the melody (from upbeat to measure 14 until measure 24) moves to the relative minor, E minor, and continues the fff, dense-chordal writing of the opening. The return of the opening phrase (starting in measure 25) is marked piu ff. The closing of the phrase is interrupted by two swirling cadenza-like passages based on the progression I 6/4 - V 7 (see ex. 2.25), leaving a feeling of unresolved suspension similar to the end of Variation 10.

2.15 Variation 13 - *Allegro furioso*

The *strepitoso*, cadenza-like, upbeat passage on the dominant that interrupted the end of the twelfth variation leads into Variation 13. The thirteenth variation initiates a final buildup of frenzied tension leading towards a huge climax in the end of Variation 14. Moreover, it returns to the home key (G minor) and the triple meter of the theme (3/4). Its *furioso* wild character is especially expressed by the use of *accents* and *fz*.

The variation opens with an arpeggiated version of the first phrase of the theme (see example 2.26); Kathleen Dale writes: “fury is graphically expressed by spread chords pulling fiercely away from each other in contrary motion.”\(^{32}\) The opening phrase is followed by its repetition one octave higher.


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In measures 9-12, we move another octave higher and we hear a version of the
arpeggiated opening phrase presented in sequences, based on the main melodic
motive: (Bb-G-F#) – (Ab-F-E) – (Gb-Eb-D) - (C#-D-A). This new version of the
opening phrase is followed by its repetition one octave lower.

In the next phrase (measures 17-20), the main motive (Bb-G-F) appears in
bass-register chords with the right hand accompanying in a triplet broken-octave
figuration. The phrase closes with a series of third-related chords which eventually
leads to a raging fight between the chords of F major and D major, between F and F#
(see ex. 2.27). The final fffz dominant chord leads into the next variation.

Variation 14 - Prestissimo, Theme return - Andante espressivo

Variation 14 is also based on the opening phrase of the theme. As happened in the previous variation, the fourteenth variation does not adhere to the overall structure of the theme. By the end of the variation, the elements of the theme will be completely removed through “the repetition, fragmentation, and dissolution of motives from the theme.”33

The opening phrase is presented with ff sempre e furioso chords accompanied by an open-fifth pedal on the tonic (mm.1-4, and 5-8). The accents on the downbeat combined with the open-fifth pedal create a very characteristic Springår dance-rhythm (see example 2.28).


As the variation proceeds, the phrase is restricted to repeated canonc imitations of its closing motive. The motive is progressively shortened leading to a climactic tremolo in the treble (see ex. 2.29). The tremolo cuts off very suddenly

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33 Parakilas, *Ballads without Words*, 166.
with two $\text{fffz}$ chords followed by a crashing low $\text{Eb}$-octave (Neapolitan in the dominant key) which further increases the suspension. After a long $\text{fermata}$, the $\text{Eb}$-octave ‘dissolves’ quietly into the dominant $\text{D}$.


The *Ballade* closes with the return of the first half of the theme (measures 1-8). Grieg indicates that the return of the melody should be specially emphasized, writing in the score “*il canto ben tenuto.*”
Chapter 3

*Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51, for two pianos:*

An Analytical Overview

### 3.1 Background Information: Origins of the Work

Fourteen years after the completion of the *Ballade, Op.24*, Grieg composed another work in variation form, the *Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51 for two pianos*. As mentioned in *Edvard Grieg: The Man and the Artist* by Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, the work had been completed in August, 1890:

In April he was finally home again at ‘Troldhaugen,’ and he remained in western Norway until October. He was working on a large set of variations about which he wrote Delius on August 11: “I have completed a piece for two pianos, and now I am enormously happy to be free of everything called music!”

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The work was published under the German title *Altnorwegische Romanze mit Variationen, Op.51* (Leipzig, 1890). The exact English translation of the title is “Old Norwegian Romance with Variations, Op.51.” However, in most English sources, and also in *Edvard Grieg: Complete Works, Volume 7, Two Pianos, Four Hands; Original Compositions and Arrangements*, edited by Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe (Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, 1981), the work appears under the English title *Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51* (or simply *Old Norwegian Melody Op.51*) which is also used in the present document.

Grieg dedicated the work to the French composer Benjamin Godard (1849-1895), who was a great admirer and promoter of Grieg’s compositions. The *Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51* is often mentioned in the correspondence between Grieg and the German-Dutch pianist and composer Julius Röntgen (1855-1932) who was a longtime friend of Grieg. Patrick Dinslage notes that

The two had met in Leipzig in 1875, and should they have already performed the Grieg arrangements of Mozart sonatas, one can imagine that the idea of a further work for their repertoire would have appealed to them. The work is

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3 However, the work can also be found under the title *Old Norwegian Romance with Variations, Op.51*.


5 *Edvard Grieg und Julius Röntgen Briefwechsel 1883-1907* [Edvard Grieg and Julius Röntgen Correspondence 1883-1907], edited by Finn Benestad and Hanna de Vries Stavland (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1997); See page 537.
frequently mentioned in correspondence between the two friends when the subject of concert repertoire comes up, and they were to perform the work together.\footnote{Patrick Dinslage, “Old Norwegian Melody with Variations, Op.51 - A Forgotten Masterpiece,” \textit{Nordisk musikkforskermøte august 2008} [Nordic Music Research Meeting August 2008] (Accessed July 15, 2009), http://foreninger.uio.no/nmf/NMFL_aug08, 1.}

As the title suggests, the theme of the \textit{Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51} is based on a Norwegian folk-song, the heroic ballad of “Sjugurd og trollbrura” (Sjugurd and the Troll-Bride) from the valley of Hallingdal, Norway; Grieg found the song in L. M. Lindeman’s collection \textit{Ældre og nyere norske Fjeldmelodier (Older and Newer Norwegian Mountain Melodies)}. The meaning of the Norwegian text and the tune of the song are the following (see following page, example 3.1):

\begin{quote}
And the king he stood on the balcony high up under the roof; he could see so far, right out over the green grassy plain. There he saw Sjugurd come riding. Sjugurd risked his life for the maiden.\footnote{The English translation of the original text (translation by Dr. John Bergsagel) is taken from \textit{Edvard Grieg: Complete Works, Volume 3: Arrangements of Norwegian Folk Music}, edited by Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe (Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, 1982), page 156.}
\end{quote}
Grieg had already harmonized the melody of “Sjugurd and the Troll-Bride” as No.4 in his Six Norwegian Mountain Melodies for piano, published in 1886 (see example 3.2). Grieg’s arrangement of the song had initially appeared in the collection Norway’s Melodies, a collection of piano arrangements of 154 Norwegian songs edited by Grieg and published in 1875. Patrick Dinslage mentions that Grieg had come across this melody already in 1874, when he was asked by the Copenhagen Music Shop Eduard Wagner to put together their new collection Norway’s Melodies. Included in the collected edition of 154 songs was Sjugurd and the

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Example 3.1. “Sjugurd and the Troll-Bride” from Older and Newer Norwegian Mountain Melodies, compiled by Lindeman.\(^8\)

Troll-Bride, which Grieg had found among Ludvig Mathias Lindeman’s *Old and New Norwegian Mountain Melodies Collected and Arranged for Pianoforte.*

Example 3.2. “Sjugurd and the Troll-Bride” from *Six Norwegian Mountain Melodies* by Grieg.

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The *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* consists of a short introduction, the theme with fourteen variations, and a lengthy finale. Many of the variations reflect the compositional styles of other composers, among them Schumann, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Brahms, and Saint-Saëns. As John Horton writes, Grieg was familiar with Schumann’s *Andante and Variations, Op. 46, for two pianos* and Saint-Saëns’s *Variations on a Theme of Beethoven, Op.35* also for two pianos. Also, in one of his letters to Röntgen, Grieg referred particularly to the fifth variation of the set as the “Liszt” variation, giving thus further justification for a conscious influence of other composers’ musical idioms:

> It seems very unlikely that I shall get to Amsterdam. To play the ‘Liszt’ variation in the parlour with you would be great! But to appear as a pianist in public is not really my thing.

Grieg orchestrated the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* between 1900 and 1903. However, after the performances of the orchestral version in 1904 under the direction of Johan Halvorsen and in 1905 under Johan Svendsen, many of Grieg’s friends (among them Röntgen, Halvorsen, Svendsen, and his wife Nina) believed the

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12 Edvard Grieg to Julius Röntgen, 9 September 1893, *Edvard Grieg und Julius Röntgen Briefwechsel 1883-1907* [Edvard Grieg and Julius Röntgen Correspondence 1883-1907], ed. Finn Benestad and Hanna de Vries Stavland, 119-120.


work was too long.\textsuperscript{16} Grieg finally agreed with his friends’ advice to make some cuts in the orchestral version; he deleted the tenth variation and replaced the last thirty-six measures of the finale with eight new measures.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
3.2 Introduction - *Poco tranquillo*

The short introduction (twenty-one measures) is based on the opening one-measure melodic motive of the theme (see examples 3.3 and 3.4) and is especially characterized by antiphonal writing between the two pianos. Even though Grieg’s arrangement of the theme is in F major, the Db used in the first statement of the opening motive creates the impression of being in the key of F minor. The two pianos imitate each other in a chromatically rising sequence based on a two-note fragment from the opening motive (see ex. 3.4).

The harmonic framework of the introduction can be reduced to a dominant pedal (C) on top of which the V7 chord of measure 3 moves through a chromatically rising sequence to the V7 chord of measure 20. Very characteristic is the constant alternation between A and Ab through the imitating statements of the two-note fragment; this vacillation between A and Ab is also a characteristic feature of the theme itself (see ex. 3.3).

![Example 3.3. *Old Norwegian Melody, Op. 51*, the theme melody.](image)


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18 All the examples on the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* are taken from Edvard Grieg: *Altnorwegische Romanze mit Variationen für 2 Klaviere zu 4 Händen* (Frankfurt: C. F. Peters).
3.3 Theme - Allegretto espressivo

The ten-measure melody of the folk-song ‘Sjugurd and the Troll-Bride,’ from which Grieg’s theme is derived, includes one eight-measure parallel period in 2/4 (consisting of two similar four-measure phrases) plus a two-measure codetta that shifts briefly to 6/8. As John Horton mentions, “the change of the meter at the end corresponds to the omkvæd, or refrain of the ballad.”\footnote{Horton, *Grieg*, 129.} Each of the two four-measure phrases can be divided in shorter 1 or 2-measure motivic units forming the internal phrasing 1+1+2 (see example 3.5) which was very often used by Grieg in the construction of his own melodies.\footnote{Eleanor Bailie, *The Pianist’s Repertoire: Grieg - A Graded Practical Guide* (London: Valhalla, 1993), 22.} Moreover, the melody has a rather repetitive character built almost entirely on major/minor 2nds and 3rds.\footnote{More specifically, the motive consisting of a falling minor 2\textsuperscript{nd} followed by a falling major 3\textsuperscript{rd} (ex. 4.5, measure 1, 2\textsuperscript{nd}-3\textsuperscript{rd} beats) that is abundant in Norwegian folk music and was also used very often by Grieg in his music, is known as the “Grieg Motive.” A very famous example of the “Grieg Motive” occurs at the opening of Grieg’s piano concerto.}

Both Lindeman and Grieg used a half cadence (on dominant) in the first four-measure phrase (antecedent phrase); the second phrase (consequent phrase) moves to the tonic for its cadence. Lindeman’s arrangement of the song is written in the key of G major, while Grieg transcribed the melody in F major for both his arrangements (see examples 3.2 and 3.5). In his *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* arrangement, Grieg transcribed the melody in a 4/4 meter, and he replaced the repeated-note figure in the opening motive (D-D-F-E-C) with an ascending step (C-D-F-E-C) (see ex. 3.5).
harmonized the original melody using a chordal accompaniment. The drone-fifth pattern he used in the codetta is an element both of traditional folk music and of the pastoral tradition in art music.


Another distinctive feature of the melody of “Sjugurd and the Troll-Bride” is the use of a variable third, an alternation between the major and minor third. Lindeman harmonized the minor thirds found in the second part of each of the two phrases using, respectively, the $iv-m7$ chord borrowed from the tonic minor, and the

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22 Eleanor Bailie mentions in *Grieg: A Graded Practical Guide*, page 29: “In Norwegian folk music the third note of the scale is indeterminately pitched, a feature exploited by Grieg in his frequent shifts between major and minor.”
vii-o7 / V chord borrowed from the dominant’s parallel minor (see ex. 3.1). In both his arrangements, Grieg harmonized the minor thirds using the $N\ 6/4 / V$ (Neapolitan chord in the dominant key), and $IV-m7$ chords respectively (see examples 3.2 and 3.5).

It is also a noteworthy feature that the harmonies chosen by Grieg, especially in the first phrase of the theme, create a certain ambiguity regarding the home tonality. Grieg avoids a strong presentation of the tonic, and the F-major chord in root position is delayed until the end of the second phrase, where it is approached chromatically in a rather weak cadence (see ex. 3.5, measure 8). By contrast Lindeman establishes the tonic from the first measure with the progression $IV-I$ (see ex. 3.1). By avoiding any strong cadence on the tonic before the end of the eight-measure period, Grieg manages to carry forward the momentum of the music. The home key is fully established in the codetta through the tonic-fifth pedal and the repeated $V7-I$ progression (see ex. 3.5).

Moreover, as Patrick Dinslage observes, the chord progression used by Grieg in the theme allows the development of “a contrapuntal compositional style that emerges through the voicing of the individual parts.”23 A typical example of this linear activity occurs in the first phrase where the bass progression C-Bb-Ab-G-C (which will later in the variations become C-Bb-A-Ab-G-C) is combined with a chromatically moving alto-voice (F-E)-D-Db-C-B-C (see ex. 3.5).24 A retrograde version of the bass progression C-Bb-Ab-G can be also found in the introduction (see

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24 Ibid.
ex. 3.4, tenor-voice in Piano-II: G-Ab-Bb-C). Very characteristic is also the bass-line progression in the second phrase of the theme, starting on the bass-C that ended the previous phrase, C-(dominant pedal point) - Cb - Bb - F (suggesting a plagal phrase-ending)\(^{25}\) and combined with ‘chromatic activity’ in the upper voices, (F-E - Bb-A-Ab-G-Bb-A) and (Bb-Bb - F-Eb-D-Db-D-C) (ex. 3.5). Many of the abovementioned progressions —most importantly the bass line, but also the chromatic element in general, and also the tonic-fifth sonority combined with alternating chords of V7 and I in the codetta— are recurring features of the variations which will follow. Moreover, the bass line combined with the use of chromaticism in the upper voices allows a sense of continuous forward motion despite the brevity of the phrases.

All the above-mentioned harmonic details of Grieg’s arrangement exhibit strong similarities with his earlier arrangement of the theme-melody in the *Ballade, Op.24*. Parakilas’s following description of the *Ballade* could also apply to the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51*:

Grieg, rather than arranging his folk song as if he wanted to foster enjoyment of it as a folk song, has reshaped it, as he had reshaped the shorter “Sjugurd” melody, into a single, clearly defined progression. In doing so, he has introduced such strong new elements —notably the chromatic bass line— as to raise from the start the question of whether the subject of his variations is to be simply the Norwegian melody or the whole theme that he has created around the melody.\(^{26}\)

\(^{25}\) As Bailie states in *Grieg: A Graded Practical Guide*, page 30, “Grieg had a particular liking for plagal phrase-endings and often ends a piece with a plagal cadence.”

3.4 Variation 1 - (no tempo marking)

Variation 1 uses the same Allegretto-espressivo tempo marking of the theme. The half note of Variation 1 is roughly equivalent to the quarter value of the theme. Each measure of the theme takes two measures in Variation 1, so that there are twenty measures in total.

The “turning” eighth-note figuration of the variation is derived from the opening motive of the original melody (ascending 3rd followed by stepwise descending motion: C- D-F-E-C). Moreover, there is a striking similarity between the melodic figuration used in this variation and the figuration used in the first variation of Schumann’s Andante and Variations, Op.46 (see examples 3.6 and 3.7).

Example 3.6. Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, Var. 1, mm. 1-5.
Example 3.7. R. Schumann, *Andante and Variations, Op. 46, for two pianos*, Var.1, mm. 1-4.27

The first variation is written in the home key of F major, retaining the formal and harmonic structure of theme. Grieg begins the variation on the IV-6/4 chord (Bb major in second inversion) instead of the ii-7 that he used in the beginning of the theme, sustaining the bass F as a pedal point in the following dominant chord (see ex. 3.6); many of the following variations will begin with the same progression. The chord progression follows the harmonic progression of the theme. As mentioned above, the bass line of the first phrase is slightly altered in the beginning (F-F instead of G-C found in the theme) and more chromatic with the insertion of a passing A between Bb and Ab.28 The writing is especially characterized by a constant antiphonal imitation between the two pianos (see ex. 3.6). In the whispered codetta (mm. 17-20), the drone tonic-fifth is combined with an ascending chromatic line in

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28 Bass line of the first phrase (mm. 1-8): F-F-C-Bb-A-Ab-G-C.
the top voice, and an alternation between the chords of dominant and tonic (see example 3.8).


### 3.5 Variation 2 - *Energico*

The second variation is dominated by the use of a dotted rhythmic motive

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{\large \textit{Eenergico}}
\end{array}
\]  

\[
(\text{\Large \textit{\textit{Eenergico}}})
\]

It is written in the home key of F major beginning on the subdominant six-four chord (Bb 6/4). The energetic 6/8 meter characterized by the use of the dotted rhythm combined with dense f or ff chords creates a contrast with the previous variation.

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29 Grieg used this dotted-rhythm motive also in the *Ballade, Op.24*, Variations 10-12. His *Improvisations on Norwegian Folk Songs, Op.29* is another work that makes use of this rhythm.

30 As mentioned before, 6/8 was also the meter of the codetta in the theme.
Variation 2 is twenty measures long; for each measure of the theme there are two measures in the variation (as with the previous variation). The harmonic progression is again derived from the theme, except for the opening four measures which are more harmonically static compared with the theme, using only the chords of IV-6/4 and ii (see example 3.9).


In the opening phrase (mm. 1-8), the dotted-rhythm parallel chords of Piano-I present a new melodic line characterized by the succession of 2nds and 3rds, embodying also fragments of chromatic motion (see ex. 3.9). As was mentioned
earlier about the theme (ex. 3.5), the 2nds and 3rds are also the constructive intervals of its opening melodic motive (C-D-F-E-C) and of the entire original melody. Piano-II has a mere accompanying role using the \( \text{\textbullet \textbullet} \) dotted-rhythm figure.

In the opening of the second phrase (measures 9-12) the two pianos have more equal roles, imitating each other (see ex. 3.9, measure 9). Moreover, in the second phrase we can detect the characteristic bass line of the theme (C pedal point-Cb-Bb-F) while the second part of the phrase (measures 13-16) outlines the ending of the original melody (F-G-Ab-F-E-G-F). The codetta (measures 17-20) features a short melodic fragment taken from the codetta of the original melody, in a continuous exchange between the two pianos.

3.6 Variation 3 - Allegro leggiero

The third variation is characterized by the constant alternation of the two pianos which imitate each other in a very Schumannesque, mordent-like, broken-chord figure (see example 3.10); the imitation occurs at an octave’s distance and a beat apart. The variation features technical writing that resembles Romantic-style etudes. The leggiero figuration repeated throughout the variation, starting \( pp \) and culminating in \( f \) or \( ff \) in the end of each phrase, gives to the variation a playful and witty character. Variation 3 brings back the original 4/4 meter, staying also in the key of F major. As with the previous variations, it has a length of twenty measures with
each beat of the theme taking two full beats in this variation. Its harmonic progression is also based on the theme, very similarly to Variations 1 and 2, outlining the entire bass line (same as in Var. 1, F-C-Bb-A-Ab-G-C – C-Cb-Bb-F ) and the ending of the melody’s second phrase (F-G-Ab-F-E-G-F, as in Var. 2). The codetta (measures 17-20) uses the same figurative pattern and the $V_7-I-V_7-I$ progression.


3.7 Variation 4 - *Poco Andante*

Variation 4 features also antiphonal imitation between the two pianos. This variation alludes more to the codetta of the theme, being written in 6/8 meter, and featuring a syncopated sixteenth-note figuration (circled in example 3.11) which reminds the dotted-rhythm sixteenth-note motive found in the codetta of the original melody. The syncopated sixteenth-note figuration is presented either in an ascending
stepwise (or chromatic) version, or a descending arpeggiated version, accompanied by an arpeggiated sixteenth-note figure (see ex. 3.11).

The fourth variation is also written in the key of F major. Similarly with the previous variations, each measure of theme is expanded to two measures in the variation. The chord progression is also based on the theme’s harmonic structure with the characteristic bass line as presented in the previous variations.


The opening four measures of the second phrase present an ascending, *p-dolce*, augmented, and non-syncopated version of the characteristic melodic figuration answered by a descending, *f*, triplet variant of the syncopated figuration (see ex. 3.12). The syncopated answer is more emphasized by the accented, chromatically ascending, and syncopated inner-figure (circled in the example).

In the last four measures of the second phrase (measures 13-16), the syncopated sixteenth-note figuration is slightly altered and shortened and the pulse quickens. The codetta (measures 17-20) combines the syncopated rhythmic pattern with the use of chromatic motion, in a similar way to the codetta of Variation 1 (see ex. 3.13).

Example 3.13. *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, Var. 4 - Poco Andante*, m.17, Piano-II.
3.8 Variation 5 - *Maestoso*

As mentioned earlier, Grieg referred to this variation as the “Liszt-variation” in one of his letters to Röntgen. Indeed Liszt’s musical language is particularly illustrated in the use of a parlando, rhapsodic writing emphasized by accented syncopations, dotted-rhythms and non-legato articulation, the *maestoso* character, and especially the *ff* or *fff* double octaves.31

The fifth variation, written in the home key of F major, has a length of twenty-two measures. The opening nine measures correspond to the theme’s eight-measure period, presenting a syncopated and rhythmically altered version of the original melody (circled in example 3.14).

![Example 3.14. Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, Var. 5 - Maestoso, mm. 1-9.](image)


31 Especially the dotted-rhythm accompanying chordal figures bring to mind Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsody No.12 in C Minor*. 
The entire original melody is presented by an unaccompanied voice (circled in ex. 3.14) which is regularly interrupted by a dotted-rhythm accompanying chordal figure. For the first time in the piece, Variation 5 presents a much different harmonic progression than the one presented in the theme, retaining only the dominant in the end of the first four-measure phrase and the tonic in the end of the second phrase (in a cadential scheme $ii (vii-6) - I$, ex. 3.14). Grieg harmonized the major thirds in each phrase, using the chords of the tonic, F major, and the mediant with raised third, A major (see ex. 3.14). The unharmonized minor thirds create the feeling of modulating briefly to the tonic minor (F minor). The opening nine-measure melodic statement is repeated using double octaves, and a more emphatic and thicker chordal version of the dotted-rhythm accompanying figure (measures 10-18). The closing four measures (19-22) outline the codetta of the original melody, combined with a chord progression which is especially characterized by chromatic vacillations between certain tones (E-Eb, Db-D, Ab-A): $[V - bIII / V$ (flattened mediant in the dominant key, ‘appoggiatura-like’ to the following chord) - $bVI$ (borrowed from the tonic minor) - $IV - I$].
3.9 Variation 6 - Allegro scherzando e leggiero

Variation 6 returns to the type of the variations that adhere closely to the theme’s harmonic structure. Each measure of the theme takes two measures in the variation.

The *scherzando e leggiero* character of Variation 6 creates a contrast with the previous *maestoso* character of Variation 5. The variation is characterized by the use of an arpeggiated overall texture combined with the \( \begin{array}{c} \text{C} \\ \text{E} \\ \text{G} \\ \text{C} \end{array} \) rhythmic motive. The melodic intervals used with this rhythmic figure are mostly 2nds and 3rds (frequently forming the so-called “Grieg Motive”). Moreover, the opening melodic motive (A – D-E-F-D, see example 3.15) is very similar to the opening of Variation 2 (F-G-A-F, ex. 3.9).³²


³² This melodic motive was also used by Grieg in the opening of *Poetic Tone Pictures, Op.3, No.5 in F major* (C-D-E-C).
In the opening eight-measure phrase, the chord progression follows precisely the theme’s harmonic structure, outlining also its characteristic bass line. In measures 1-4 one can hear the first and third-beat tones of the original melody’s opening two measures (circled in ex. 3.15). The eight-measure phrase is extended with the addition of two measures based on the closing dominant chord of measure 8: measure 9 repeats the material of the previous measure, and measure 10 introduces a pedal figure (on the dominant) which will be used in the second half of the variation (see ex. 3.16).

The second eight-measure phrase (measures 11-18) is dominated by the use of a left-hand pedal figure on the dominant, tonic, or subdominant, presented simultaneously by both pianos at an octave’s distance. The right-hand parts present the same material at an octave’s distance and a beat apart from each other (see ex. 3.16, mm. 11-12). The chord progression is again derived from the theme. In the closing four measures (codetta) based on the characteristic V7-I-V7-I progression, the two pianos play in unison, one octave apart, creating a double-octave sound effect.

Example 3.16. *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, Var. 6 - Allegro scherzando e leggiero*, mm. 9-12.
3.10  **Variation 7 - *Andante*  

Variation 7 is a slow, solemn funeral march in the key of the tonic minor (F minor). It is the first variation written in a key other than F major. It makes use of a two-measure pattern consisting of the \( \frac{2}{3} \) rhythmic motive answered by sustained chords (see example 3.17). This pattern is repeated throughout the variation and combined with the antiphonal writing between the two pianos creates a very orchestral sound.

The opening eight-measure phrase that moves to a cadence on the dominant minor (C minor, measure 8) corresponds to the opening four-measure phrase of the theme (which reached its cadence on the dominant C-major chord). However, its chord progression is much different from the theme (see ex. 3.17). The first two chords \((\text{ii o7} - \text{V})\) and the bass line (C-Bb-A-Ab-G-C, circled in ex. 3.17) are the only elements of the theme which are retained here.

In the next eight-measure phrase (mm. 9-16) the main two-measure pattern is varied with the use of dotted rhythm in the answering chords (measures 10 and 12), and eventually shortened to a one-measure syncopated scheme (ex. 3.17, measures 13-16). The chord progression is basically derived from the theme’s second phrase. Moreover, the “answering” sustained-chords outline the entire tenor-line found in the second phrase of the theme (F-E-Bb-A-Ab-G-Bb-Ab, circled in ex. 3.17).

In the codetta (measures 17-24), a tonic pedal using the \( \frac{3}{5} \) rhythmic motive is combined with a plagal-cadence \((\text{iv}-\text{i}-\text{iv}-\text{i})\) instead of the perfect cadence
(V7-I-V7-I) found in the theme. Each of the subdominant and tonic chords is approached chromatically and preceded by a diminished seventh chord (see ex. 3.17, mm. 17-20). The codetta is extended by three more measures (25-27) repeating the closing F minor chord.

3.11 Variation 8 - *Andante molto tranquillo*

Variation 8 is dominated by a continuous syncopated chordal pattern accompanying a lyrical melodic line: these features are reminiscent of Schumann’s style. (One example that comes to mind is “Warum?” from *Phantasiestücke, Op.12* for piano.) The melodic writing in this variation has a strong chromatic character.

In the eighth variation, Grieg extends the theme’s eight-measure period (A-A’) to a twenty-four-measure three-part song form (A-B-A’) followed by a repeated four-measure codetta. The opening eight-measure phrase (played only by Piano-I) that cadences to the dominant corresponds to an augmented and melodically altered version of the theme’s opening four-measure phrase. The melody’s phrasing (2+2+4) is also an augmentation of the (1+1+2) internal phrasing pattern used in the theme. Moreover, the melodic line of the closing four measures (5-8) is very similar to the second part of the opening phrase in Variation 2 (example 3.9, mm. 5-8). The bass-line tones (C-A-G)-(C-A♭-G♭)-(B♭-A-G-C) are the only reminiscent of the theme’s harmonic progression (see ex. 3.18).

In the middle eight-measure section (measures 9-16), the melodic line is presented in the bass. It is based on a four-measure, sequentially-repeated melodic fragment (circled in ex. 3.19) that is an abridged and altered version of the opening eight-measure phrase. Its chord progression is characterized by the use of augmented sixths, and shifts between parallel major and minor keys (see ex. 3.19).


The next eight-measure phrase (measures 17-24) is a harmonically-altered version of the opening phrase (with the same 2+2+4 phrasing structure), that now cadences to the tonic, F major. The four-measure codetta is played successively by
the two pianos (measures 25-28: Piano-I, and 29-32: Piano-II), and is based on the original melody’s codetta with a different harmonization.

3.12 Variation 9 - Presto

In the ninth variation, even though the harmonic structure is basically derived from the theme, the phrase structure is rather asymmetrical compared with the theme. It seems that each beat of the theme takes two beats in the variation; however, the rate is not fixed throughout the variation. The first four-measure phrase of the theme takes eight measures in the variation (mm. 1-8) and is followed by its repetition one octave higher (mm. 9-16), while the second phrase takes sixteen measures (mm. 17-32); the closing codetta has a length of four measures (mm. 33-36). In each sixteen-measure section (mm. 1-16 and 17-32), there is a long crescendo leading from $p$ to $ff$, while the codetta stays in $pp$. Variation 9 brings back the characteristic dotted-rhythm motive ($\overbrace{\text{\textfrac{\textsf{\textmu\textmu\textmu\textmu}}{\text{\textmu\textmu}}}}$) of Variation 2. The two pianos alternate every beat, in a continuous sounding of the ($\overbrace{\text{\textfrac{\textsf{\textmu\textmu\textmu\textmu}}{\text{\textmu\textmu}}}$) dotted-rhythm motive (see example 3.20).
Example 3.20. *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, Var. 9 - Presto*, mm. 1-12

The first eight-measure phrase is based on the theme’s harmonic structure, opening however with a dominant-tonic chord progression (see ex. 3.20). Moreover, it outlines the characteristic bass line from the theme; Piano-II: C-Bb-A-Ab-G-C (circled in the example). As mentioned above, the opening phrase is followed by its repetition one octave higher, using a thicker chordal texture (see ex. 3.20, mm. 9-12).

In the following sixteen-measure section (measures 17-32), the chord progression is especially characterized by the use of ninth chords: $V_9$ (mm. 17-20) - $I_9$ (mm. 21-24) - $IV_9$ (mm. 25-26) - $N_9/V$ (mm. 27-28) - $V_7$ (mm. 29-30) - $I$ (mm. 31-32). The closing four measures correspond to the codetta of the theme, based on the $(V_7-I-V_7-I)$ chord progression on top of a tonic-fifth pedal sonority.
3.13 Variation 10 - Andante

Variation 10, like Variation 8, makes use of the three-part song form ABA’. Its texture exhibits a sixteenth-note obligato melody (using arpeggiated and scalar melodic fragments) on top of a long-breathed melodic line (see example 3.21). The use of extended harmonies (eleventh chords which include the seventh and ninth degree) creates the dreamy and impressionistic sound of the variation.

The opening four-measure phrase cadences to the dominant. Its chord progression is derived from the theme’s opening phrase (see ex. 3.21). Moreover, the long melodic line is based on the same tetrachord (F-E-D-C) used by the theme’s opening melodic motive (C-D-F-E-C). The bass line (C-Bb-Ab-G-C) is also derived from the theme (circled in ex. 3.21). The entire four-measure phrase is repeated (measures 5-8) with the obligato melody doubled one octave higher, and the main melody also doubled in octaves, outlined by rolled chords that expand more than three octaves (see ex. 3.21, mm. 5-6).

The middle section (measures 9-12) introduces a new, two-measure, syncopated melodic fragment (which however is based directly on the theme’s opening motive) accompanied by the obligato melody. The new material is initially presented (measures 9-10) in the dominant’s flattened dominant, Gb Major which is also the Neapolitan harmony in the home key ($bV_{11} / V = N$), followed by its transposition (measures 11-12) one tritone higher in the dominant chord, C Major ($V_{11}$).\textsuperscript{33} The following eight-measure section (measures 13-20) repeats the opening eight measures transposed a fifth lower, cadencing thus on the tonic F-Major chord. The two-measure codetta (measures 21-22) is an exact quotation of the theme’s codetta (transcribed in 4/4) accompanied by the obligato melody which also follows the ($V_{7}-I-V_{7}-I$) progression.

\textsuperscript{33} Grieg frequently used the interval of the augmented fourth, which also appears in Norwegian folk music (as discussed in Chapter 2).
3.14 **Variation 11 - Tempo di Menuetto**

In the eleventh variation Grieg adopts a dance topic, the moderate triple meter of a minuet (a French dance, very popular during 17th-18th centuries). The *cantabile* melodic line on top of the rolled chords is characterized by a dotted-rhythm figure and the use of stepwise or arpeggiated motion. Its opening two measures (circled in example 3.22) form an embellished version of the original melody’s opening motive (C-D-F-E-D). Variation 11 is also based on the three-part song form.

The opening four-measure phrase of the theme is extended to an eight-measure period in Variation 11 (measures 1-8). The chord progression (with cadence on the dominant) and the bass-line are directly derived from the theme (see ex. 3.22). The entire eight-measure period is repeated, with all the notes doubled an octave above (measures 9-16).

In the middle section (measures 17-24) the melodic line is presented in bass parallel octaves. The middle section is based on a repeated four-measure phrase which uses motives from the opening period (see ex. 3.23, mm. 17-20). This new phrase is initially presented in the key of F# Major, which is the sharpened tonic #I, or can also be translated as Gb Major, the Neapolitan chord in the home key (see ex. 3.23). The phrase is then transposed one tritone higher to the dominant key, C major.34


The variation closes with the repetition of the opening sixteen-measure section (measures 25-40), transposed a fifth lower (cadencing thus on the tonic F-Major chord), followed by a four-measure codetta (measures 41-44, an augmented version of the theme’s codetta).

34 As in the previous variation.
3.15 **Variation 12 - *Allegro marcato***

The writing of Variation 12 resembles an Etude. The variation is dominated by the use of a continuous dotted-rhythm chordal pattern (bringing to mind Liszt’s piano writing) on top of a sixteenth-note dominant pedal “filling-in” the dotted-rhythm figure (see example 3.24). Each measure of the theme takes two measures in Variation 12, which is also written in the home key of F Major.

The opening sixteen measures outline the original theme-melody in the top voices of the dotted-rhythm chords (circled in ex. 3.24).

The chord progression is not derived directly from the theme, but is rather based on a two-measure sequence (see ex. 3.24); moreover, it is particularly characterized by triads in second inversion.

Grieg harmonized the minor thirds found in the original melody with the Ab Major chord (chromatic-mediant relationship to the tonic). The first eight-measure phrase ends with a half cadence on the dominant (vii-o7 / V - V, measures 7-8), while the second phrase cadences to the tonic minor through a weak cadential progression ii-o6 - i-6 (measure 15-16). The overall harmonic progression illustrates Grieg’s particular liking for third relationships (also a Lisztian feature) and shifts between parallel major and minor keys (shifts between major and minor tonic and dominant, see ex. 3.24).

In the following section, measures 17-32, Grieg repeats the opening sixteen measures, doubled one octave higher, using stronger dynamics (f and ff). The pp codetta (measures 33-36) is based very predictably on the theme. The variation ends with a surprising fermata on a single, mf C-note (which is the dominant degree in the home key), creating a feeling of suspense.
3.16 Variation 13 - *Tempo di Valse*

The thirteenth variation illustrates the use of another dance form. It represents closely a *ländler*, a folkdance in 3/4 meter, very popular in Austria, Germany and German Switzerland, especially during the 18th century. Some of the characteristics of a *ländler* (which are also present in this variation) are the following: major keys; diatonic character; melodies eight or sixteen bars long, being usually repeated; arpeggiated melodic figures. Franz Schubert is particularly known for his *ländler* composed for solo piano.

The variation opens with an eight-measure phrase (presented solo by Piano-I) characterized by its repetitive and arpeggiated melodic contour (see example 3.25, following page). The first note of the melody is a tied C from the previous variation (which ended with a fermata on a single C), creating a syncopated rhythmic motive. The accompaniment uses a broken-chord pattern which is also very common in Schubert’s *ländler*. The chord progression is derived from the theme’s opening phrase, with each measure of the theme taking two measures in the variation (see ex. 3.25). The entire phrase is afterwards repeated by Piano-II (measures 9-16).

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37 Ibid.

The following sixteen-measure section (measures 17-32) is based on a repeated eight-measure phrase which develops motives from the opening melody. The first statement of the phrase is built on the dominant ninth chord (measures 17-24) followed by its repetition a fourth higher, on the tonic ninth chord (measures 25-32).

The next eight-measure section is based on the progression $N-V^7$ presented in the keys of A Major (measures 33-36) and D Major (measures 37-40). Both A-Major and D-Major keys are third-related to the tonic F Major.

The following eight-measure phrase corresponds to the theme’s second phrase that cadences to the tonic, although it consists of a different harmonization compared with the theme. The variation closes with a four-measure codetta (based on the $V^7-I-V^7-I$ chord progression) which is repeated two octaves higher.
3.17 Variation 14 - *Adagio, molto espressivo*

Variation 14 is the second variation written in a minor key, after the Variation 7 which was written in the key of F Minor. However, the twelfth variation is especially characterized by a certain tonal ambiguity. The original melody is presented in bass octaves which are doubled a third or sixth higher (see, example 3.26).

The opening one-measure motivic fragment creates the feeling of being in the key of A Minor (mediant chord in the home key of F major). The next one-measure motivic fragment moves to the key of D Minor (submediant of F Major). Finally, the last two-measure fragment moves to the key of the tonic minor (F Minor) and the first four-measure phrase closes with a half cadence on the dominant. The second four-measure phrase is based on the same key areas, closing with a cadence on the tonic minor (see ex. 3.26, mm.5-8). Grieg repeats the entire eight-measure phrase with the main melody accompanied by chords in a 16th-note triplet rhythmic-scheme (ex. 3.26, m. 9).

Instead of the usual codetta, Grieg extends the variation by adding two measures using the 16th-note triplet scheme, cadencing on the dominant (bVII - bVI - V). The variation closes with a four-measure section marked Più Adagio, characterized by a freer rhythmic pulse and an improvisatory feeling (see ex. 3.27). The descending bass line (circled in ex. 3.27) which is derived from the descending bass in the theme’s opening phrase (C-Bb-Ab-G), acts as an introduction to the long finale which follows attacca after a half cadence on the dominant.

3.18  Finale (1) - *Allegro molto e marcato*

The lengthy Finale can be divided into three distinct parts: Finale-1: *Allegro molto e marcato*, Finale-2: *Pomposo*, and Finale-3: *Prestissimo*.

The first part of the finale has a transitional character, building tension and leading through modulating sequences to the second part of the finale (Finale-2) which constitutes a fifteenth variation. More specifically, it can be divided in sections with the following characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures 1-32</th>
<th>mm. 1-8: Fugato elements, canonic imitations, descending stepwise motion in parallel octaves (derived from theme’s descending bass-line fragment C-Bb-Ab-G)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|               | mm. 8-16: Theme’s chord progression:  
|               |   \( ii_0 - N6/4 / V - V9 / V - V \);  
|               |   Theme’s bass line: Bb-Ab-G-C  
|               | mm. 17-32: Ascending stepwise motion in canonic imitation, followed by chords in opposite motion; Key areas: C Major (dominant), and Eb Major (chromatic mediant of C Major) |

(Table 3.1, continued)

| Measures 33-76 | mm. 33-36: Ascending stepwise motion in canonic imitation; Key: F# Major, dominant of B Minor which will follow (if translated as Gb Major creates a series of third-related chords with the previous C Major and Eb Major chords)

mm. 37-76: Melodic fragment from the theme in the key of B minor, accompanied by broken-octave tremolo figuration, leading to a descending sequence by falling thirds: (key areas) D Major – B Minor - G Major - E Minor - C Major – A Minor (leading to F# Major)

| Measures 77-108 | Syncopated chromatically-ascending pattern of parallel octaves, accompanied by minor thirds in tremolo-like figuration and a bass ostinato octave-figure {G-F#-E#-F#}; Key area: F# Major

| Measures 109-130 | Syncopated chromatically-descending octaves; Accompanied by the ostinato octave-figure {G-F#-E#-F#}, and a tremolo-like figuration based on the tritone {E#-B} resolving into the major-third {F#-A#}; Key area: F# Major

(continued)
(Table 3.1, continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures 131-154</th>
<th>Ostinato figure {G-F#-E#-F#} divided between the two pianos, combined with triplet-rhythm, in an ascending sequence with the starting notes of the segments forming the G Major chord (Neapolitan chord in the key of F# Major)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Measures 155-169 | mm. 155-166: Repeated F# open-octaves and F#-C# open-fifths using a dotted-rhythm motive (key area: F# Major)  
mm. 167-169: Repeated, *sempre piú f*, C Major chords (at a tritone’s distance from the previous F# Major sonorities, which could also be translated as Gb Major, being the Neapolitan chord in the home key) preparing the triumphant return of the tonic F Major |
As mentioned above, the second part of the finale forms a fifteenth variation: it brings back the entire original melody, with each beat of the original theme taking two full measures (in 2/4 meter). The melody is presented by Piano-II in \textit{ff} chords moving in parallel motion; Piano-I accompanies in a dotted-rhythm chordal pattern (see example 3.28). This presentation of the theme is the most triumphant, written in a \textit{pomposo}, grand style.

The chord progression is slightly altered from the theme, being more diatonic in character. Grieg harmonized the minor thirds found in the melody using the chords of $i_7$ and $ii_6 / V$ in the first phrase, and $i_7 - ii_6 / V - N / V$ in the second phrase. Very characteristic is also the descending bass line found in the second phrase of the melody [$Bb$-$A$-$G$-$F$-$Eb$-$D$-$C$-$Cb$-$Bb$-$(G-C)]$. The second phrase ends with a deceptive cadence $V_7 - vi_6$, leading to the codetta (measures 66-77) which features the original melody accompanied by swirling, cadenza-like chordal passages (see ex. 3.29). The codetta uses the chord progression $V_2$-$IV$-$V_2$, without cadencing on the tonic. Instead, it is extended through a series of falling-third related chords leading to a $fff$ swirling passage on the dominant C Major chord, which eventually dies away (measures 78-100: $Bb$ Major - $Gb$ Major - $Eb$ Major - C Major).

Example 3.29. *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51*, Finale (2) - *Pomposo*, mm. 64-70.
3.20 Finale (3) - Prestissimo

The third part of the finale is written in the key of the tonic minor (F Minor). It is a highly energetic Prestissimo in 6/8 meter. Its opening (pp) brings back the main opening motive imitated between the two pianos, leading to a ff statement of the theme’s eight-measure period on top of repeated open-fifth tonic chords (see example 3.30).

The following section (measures 17-40) features a struggle between the chords of Bb Major and Db Major (third-related chords, sharing both a common tone with the tonic F Minor) leading to furious successive statements of the two chords (see ex. 3.31).


The raging battle between the Bb Major and Db Major chords ends with repeated statements of the tonic F Minor chord constantly interrupted by a transposed version of the opening melodic motive (F-G-Bb-Ab-F). The continuous statements of the melodic motive lead to its metrical displacement developing into F Minor scalar passages which cut-off very suddenly with a \textit{fff} vii-\textit{iI} chord in second inversion. With the closing chords of vii-3b and V also in second inversion, both preceded by gaps of silence, the music dies away (see ex. 3.32, following page).
3.21 Theme Return - *Andante molto espressivo*, Coda

The finale ends with the return of the theme (marked *Andante molto espressivo* instead of *Allegretto espressivo*). Grieg indicates that the melodic line should be particularly emphasized (*la melodia ben tenuta*). The harmonization of the melody is altered compared with the first statement of the theme. Dinslage articulates very clearly the main changes in the harmonization (see also example 3.33, following page):

Grieg reduced the harmonic structure to triads. In this way it gets an atmosphere of a great meagreness…. The relationship to the key F-major is loose. The first two bars relate to D-minor. The interrupted cadence with the chord-progression A-major-six-four-chord—B-flat-triad in the first inversion
belongs to D-minor too. And at the end Grieg wrote G-minor-seventh, the same chord as in the beginning of the first theme—the whole work returns to its beginning.\(^{38}\)


Grieg extends the 6/8 codetta to a forty-measure coda. The theme’s codetta (now harmonized with the chord progression \(V 4/3 - ii 7 - V 4/3 - ii 7\)) is extended through sequential repeats of its closing motive, cadencing eventually on the D Major chord (measure 8 of the coda). The Neapolitan chord in the D Major key (Eb Major)

initiates a series of falling-third related chords leading back to the tonic F Major chord (Bb Minor - Gb Minor - Eb Minor - Cb Major - Ab Minor - F Major). The repeated F Major chords lead to a *cresendo* from *pp* to *ff* which brings back a rhythmically-altered version of the opening melodic motive in the key of D Major (circled in ex. 3.34).

After this last reminiscence of the original melody, the D Major chord slides chromatically into the tonic F Major chord in second inversion, and the music dies away through $pp-ppp$ F-Major arpeggios on top of the $I-6/4$ chord, followed by three closing $pp$ statements of the tonic F Major chord in root position (ex. 3.34).
Chapter 4

Overall Organization of the Two Variation Sets:
Formal Characteristics and Peculiarities

4.1 Parameters of Organization

The analytical overviews of the Ballade, Op.24 and the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, presented in the two preceding chapters, elaborate the variation techniques used by Grieg in each variation (or section) of the two sets. The ultimate goal of the analytical overview is to examine the overall organization of the variations in an attempt to reveal the large-scale formal processes within each set. The overall organization can be explored by means of various parameters that reflect the developmental progression of the variations, such as successive modifications in form, harmonic structure, meter, tempo, key signature, texture, and others. Moreover, a comparison between the Ballade, Op.24 and the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51 reveals important similarities regarding the treatment of the theme and the overall progression of the variations, leading also to conclusions about Grieg’s manipulation of the variation form.
4.1.1 Handling of the Theme

As already mentioned in the previous chapters, both the Ballade, Op.24 and the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51 are based on Norwegian tunes. The Ballade is based on a folk song and the Old Norwegian Melody is based on a heroic ballad; both tunes were taken from Lindeman’s collection Older and Newer Norwegian Mountain Melodies. Grieg’s choice to base both of his variation sets (two of his very few large-scale keyboard compositions) on Norwegian folk tunes is in accordance with the dominant role of the Norwegian folk tradition in his compositional output. Regarding the importance of the national element in his art, Grieg himself wrote:

I was educated in the German school. I have studied in Leipzig, and musically speaking am completely German. But then I went to Copenhagen and got acquainted with Gade and Hartman. It then struck me that I could only develop myself further on a national foundation. It was our Norwegian folk tunes that showed me the way. In Germany the critics treated me badly because I didn’t fit into the categories into which composers are commonly placed. In Germany it is often said: ‘Er norwegert!’ [He exaggerates the Norwegianness.] It is true that I create out of the Norwegian folk tunes, but even Mozart and Beethoven would not have become what they did if they had not had the old masters as models. The sublime German folk song was a basis for them, and without such a basis no serious music is possible.1

Grieg employs the traditional theme-and-variations form as a means of embodying and promoting his national musical heritage. The folk song becomes the basis and the inspiration for the composition of a larger and more complex work.

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Moreover, in both works, Grieg harmonizes the original tunes using rich harmonies and linear progressions, especially underlined by the use of chromatic motion and firm bass lines which bind the short melodic motives under a long phrase. These harmonic settings not only reveal the “undreamt-of harmonic possibilities”\(^2\) of the Norwegian folk melodies, but they also provide an additional thematic element — besides the original melody— that plays a constructive role in the variation procedure.

4.1.2 Overview of Musical Parameters in the Variation Process

In both works, the theme is followed by fourteen variations. Additionally, the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51 has a short introduction, a lengthy finale, and a coda which concludes the piece. Grieg avoids numbering the individual variations in the score. The overall organization of the variations can be studied through various musical elements which are retained, modified, or radically changed as the variations proceed. In the following pages a number of these parameters of the large-scale formal plan will be examined.

\(^2\) In Grieg’s words: “I have found that the obscure depth in our folk melodies has its foundation in their undreamt-of harmonic possibilities. In my arrangements in op.66 and elsewhere I have tried to give expression to my sense of the hidden harmonies in our folk tunes.” (see Chapter 2, page 11)
4.1.2.1 Linked Neighboring Variations

As easily observed in the two scores, some of the variations are separated with fermatas between them, while others follow *attacca*. Additionally, some of them are musically linked in various ways (such as obvious similarities in the texture of consecutive variations, unresolved harmonic suspension at the end of a variation leading directly into the following, or variations connected through tied notes). The following tables summarize these relationships using dashes (--) between the variations that follow *attacca* or are linked in any of the abovementioned ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ballade, Op.24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1 2 3 4 5 6--7 8 9 10--11--12--13--14—Theme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro--Theme 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11--12--13 14--Finale(1)--Finale(2)--Finale(3)--Theme--Coda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51*: Linked neighboring variations.
4.1.2.2 Overview of Keys

The majority of the variations adhere to the home tonality established by the theme. A small number of them have a transitional character, and they are based on sequential passages modulating to other key areas. The only other departures from the home key refer to changes in the mode (g-G, F-f; see Table 4.3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme: g</td>
<td>Intro: F (dominant chord)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 1: g</td>
<td>Theme: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 2: g</td>
<td>Var. 1: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 3: g</td>
<td>Var. 2: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 4: g</td>
<td>Var. 3: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 5: g</td>
<td>Var. 4: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 6: g</td>
<td>Var. 5: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 7: g</td>
<td>Var. 6: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 8: g</td>
<td>Var. 7: f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 9: g</td>
<td>Var. 8: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 10: g</td>
<td>Var. 9: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 11: Db-E-G (transitional)</td>
<td>Var. 10: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 12: G</td>
<td>Var. 11: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 13: g</td>
<td>Var. 12: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 14: g</td>
<td>Var. 13: F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme: g</td>
<td>Var. 14: f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finale (1): F, F# (transitional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finale (2): F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finale (3): f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme-Coda: F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2.3 Overall Structural Outlines

Both variation sets include a large number of character variations that alter in various ways the theme’s character and expression. Some of these variations retain a very close affinity to the formal structure of the theme as well as to its overall harmonic structure, while others illustrate certain modifications in the formal and/or the harmonic scheme.

In the Ballade, Op.24, the first nine variations stay very close to the theme’s overall harmonic scheme, with some slight modifications. Moreover, in two of these variations, Variations 3 and 8, the original melody returns in a very clear way.

In the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, the first fourteen variations are also character variations, presenting the theme in various compositional styles and contrasting characters. In a number of these variations, (Variations 8, 10, 11, and 13) the two-part section of the theme (a1-a2 codetta) is enlarged with the insertion of a middle section (A1-B-A2 codetta). As a result of the formal amplification, the overall harmonic scheme is also altered, even though the outward points of similarity to the theme are still detectable. As happened in the Ballade, two variations, nos. 5 and 14, bring back the original melody forthrightly.

As the variations proceed, Grieg loosens his adherence to the structural boundaries of the theme. The turning point in the Ballade occurs in Variations 9-10, whereas in the Old Norwegian Melody considerable modifications in the form start with Variation 8 and proceed with brief breaks until Variation 14. The following sections, Variation 11 in the Ballade and the Finale (1) in the Old Norwegian Melody,
are based on sequences and they do not present any considerable connection to the theme’s formal structure. Instead they have a transitional function, building up tension before the triumphant return of the original melody in Variation 12 and the Finale (2) respectively. Both Variation 12 in the Ballade and the Finale (2) in the Old Norwegian Melody bring back the original melody in ff-fff full chords, combined with a more diatonic harmonic progression.

The next important point of similarity between the two works is the fragmentation and dissolution of melodic motives from the themes in Variation 14 and the Finale (3) respectively (in both cases marked Prestissimo). Variation 14 (in the Ballade) opens with a statement of the original melody’s opening phrase over an open-fifth tonic pedal, while the Finale (3) (in the Old Norwegian Melody) presents the original melody without the codetta, in the key of the tonic minor, also above an open-fifth tonic pedal. The fragmentation and dissolution of the main melodic motives leads to a tremolo in Variation 14, and to obsessive scalar passages in the Finale (3), which in both cases cut off very suddenly on a fffz chord. The sudden break in the music is followed by the return of the theme.

The following tables (Tables 4.4 and 4.5) summarize and explain the above-mentioned structural parameters of the variation processes in the two works (see pages 101 and 102). The goal of this summary is to illustrate and emphasize the large-scale outward points of similarity between the two works. The modifications in the overall harmonic structure of the theme are expressed on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 given to the variations that have the closest affinity to the theme’s harmonic structure. These evaluations are based on very broad harmonic outlines; for more details refer to
Chapters 2 and 3. Also, it is important to emphasize that the scale of 1 to 5 expresses relationships between variations that belong in the same variation set, as the differences between the formal/harmonic structures of the two themes create different harmonic parameters which cannot be evaluated on the same basis.\(^3\) The scale evaluates the affinity of a variation with the theme’s harmonic structure in terms of the overall structural scheme of the harmonic progression and also its “affiliation” with the home tonality. Moreover, the variations that display the original melody in a very transparent way are marked with an asterisk (*). The symbols II: and :II stand for the repeat sign.

\(^3\) For example, the degree (4) of the scale expresses different qualities and levels of similarity with the theme in the Ballade Table than in the Old-Norwegian-Melody Table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ballade, Op.24</strong></th>
<th>Form of the Variation</th>
<th>Structural Proportions (Number of Measures)</th>
<th>Overall Harmonic Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>(a a’) II: b a’ :II</td>
<td>(4+4) II: 4+4 :II</td>
<td>(theme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 1</td>
<td>A II: B A’ :II</td>
<td>8 II: 4+4 :II</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 2</td>
<td>A II: B A’ :II</td>
<td>8 II: 4+4 :II</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(”) Var. 3</td>
<td>a a’ a1 a’’</td>
<td>4+4+4+4</td>
<td>5 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 4</td>
<td>a a’ II: b a’ :II</td>
<td>4+4 II: 4+4 :II</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 5</td>
<td>(a a’) (a a’)’ II: b a’’ :II</td>
<td>(4+4) (4+4) II: 4+4 :II</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 6</td>
<td>a a’ II: b a’ :II</td>
<td>4+4 II: 4+4 :II</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 7</td>
<td>a a’ II: b a’ :II</td>
<td>4+4 II: 4+4 :II</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(”) Var. 8</td>
<td>a a’ II: b a’ :II</td>
<td>4+4 II: 4+4 :II</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 9</td>
<td>A II: B A’ :II</td>
<td>9 II: 4+13 :II</td>
<td>4 (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 10</td>
<td>A B A’ B’</td>
<td>4+7+4+13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 11</td>
<td>free/sequential (melodic motive from the theme, reshaped and abridged)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(”) Var. 12</td>
<td>A B A’</td>
<td>13+11+16</td>
<td>3 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 13</td>
<td>free (successive varied statements of theme’s main melodic motive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 14</td>
<td>free (fragmentation and dissolution of the main melodic motive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>(a a’)</td>
<td>(4+4)</td>
<td>(half-theme)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51</strong></th>
<th><strong>Form of the Variation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Structural-Proportions (Number of Measures)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Overall Harmonic Structure</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>a1 a2 codetta</td>
<td>4+4+{2(+1)}</td>
<td>(theme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 1</td>
<td>A1 A2 codetta</td>
<td>8+8+4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 2</td>
<td>A1 A2 codetta</td>
<td>8+8+4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 3</td>
<td>A1 A2 codetta</td>
<td>8+8+4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 4</td>
<td>A1 A2 codetta</td>
<td>8+8+4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*) Var. 5</td>
<td>(a1 a2) (a1 a2)’ codetta</td>
<td>(4+5) + (4+5) + 4</td>
<td>(essentially melodic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 6</td>
<td>A1 A2 codetta</td>
<td>10+8+4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 7</td>
<td>A1 A2 codetta</td>
<td>8+8+(8+3)</td>
<td>4 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 8</td>
<td>A1 B A2 codetta</td>
<td>8+8+8+8</td>
<td>3 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 9</td>
<td>(A1 A1’) A2’ codetta</td>
<td>(8+8)+16+4</td>
<td>4 (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 10</td>
<td>(a1 a1’) b (a2 a2’) codetta</td>
<td>(4+4)+4+(4+4)+2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 11</td>
<td>(A1 A1’) B (A2 A2’) codetta</td>
<td>(8+8)+8+(8+8)+4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 12</td>
<td>(A1 A2) (A1 A2)’ codetta</td>
<td>(8+8)+(8+8)+4</td>
<td>4 (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 13</td>
<td>(A1 A1) B A2 codetta</td>
<td>(8+8)+24+8+8</td>
<td>3 (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(*) Var. 14</td>
<td>a1 a2 (a1 a2)’ {c-transition}</td>
<td>(4+4)+4+{(4+2)}+4</td>
<td>3 (-), free transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale (1)</td>
<td>free (transitional passagework, including transformed motives from the theme)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(* Finale (2)</td>
<td>A1 A2 codetta</td>
<td>32+33+(12+23)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale (3)</td>
<td>free (brief statement of the original melody, dissolution of its main motive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme - Coda</td>
<td>a1 a2 - Coda (free)</td>
<td>4+4+40</td>
<td>(theme-reharmonized)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2.4 Meters, Tempi, and Dynamics

Grieg begins the piece with structural variations, that is, variations that respect the formal and harmonic properties of the original theme. As the work goes on, however, he respects these properties less and less: in some variations he adds new material, creates less balanced phrase structures, or transforms motives. This process of dissolution leads to a climactic fragmentation and complete destruction of the thematic material. A similar climax is also evident in the succession of tempos and dynamic levels towards the end of both works. The opening structural variations create a mosaic of various, contrasting tempos and characters, which is especially elaborate in the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51. A non-structural transitional section which is marked by a long crescendo, leads to the triumphant, last structural variation which is indicated Meno Allegro e Maestoso in the Ballade, Op.24, and Pomposo in the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51 (both using a ff-fff, heavy chordal writing accentuated by dotted rhythms). The last structural variation is followed by an acceleration in tempo which leads to a complete breakdown before the return of the opening theme. This rhythmic acceleration is also combined with a long cresc. reaching fffz before the p return of the theme. The following tables demonstrate the succession of the various tempi and meters in each variation set. The tables also present the dynamic range of each variation, with emphasis on the climactic increases in the dynamic level (see following pages, Tables 4.6, and 4.7).

Among them are the “funeral-march” variations: Variation 8 in the Ballade, Op.24, and Variation 7 in the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ballade, Op.24</th>
<th>Meter</th>
<th>Tempo Indication</th>
<th>Dynamic Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Andante espressivo</td>
<td>p-pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 1</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Poco meno Andante, ma molto tranquillo</td>
<td>pp-mp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 2</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>Allegro agitato</td>
<td>p-ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 3</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Adagio</td>
<td>pp-mf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 4</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Allegro capriccioso</td>
<td>p-pp, (fp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 5</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Più lento</td>
<td>f-pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 6</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Allegro scherzando</td>
<td>p-ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 7</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>p-ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 8</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Lento</td>
<td>pp-ppp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 9</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Un poco Andante</td>
<td>ppp-ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 10</td>
<td>12/8</td>
<td>Un poco Allegro e alla burla</td>
<td>p-ffz (cresc., cut-off)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 11</td>
<td>4/4 - 12/8</td>
<td>Più animato</td>
<td>ppp-fff (long cresc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 12</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>Meno Allegro e maestoso</td>
<td>fff-ffffz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 13</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Allegro furioso</td>
<td>mf-(p)-fffz (cresc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 14</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Prestissimo</td>
<td>ff-ffffz (cresc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Andante espressivo</td>
<td>p-pp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51</strong></th>
<th>Meter</th>
<th>Tempo Indication</th>
<th>Dynamic Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>2/4, 6/8</td>
<td>Poco tranquillo</td>
<td>pp-ffz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Allegretto espressivo</td>
<td>pp-f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 1</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>p-pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 2</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>Energico</td>
<td>ff-pp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 3</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Allegro leggiero</td>
<td>pp-ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 4</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>Poco Andante</td>
<td>pp-f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 5</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Maestoso</td>
<td>ff-fff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 6</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Allegro scherzando e leggiero</td>
<td>pp-f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 7</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>pp-f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 8</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Andante molto tranquillo</td>
<td>pp-ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 9</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>Presto</td>
<td>pp-ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 10</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>pp-f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 11</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Tempo di Menuetto</td>
<td>pp-ffz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 12</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Allegro Marcato</td>
<td>pp-ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 13</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Tempo di Valse</td>
<td>pp-f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 14</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Adagio, molto espressivo - Piú Adagio</td>
<td>pp-ffz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale (1)</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Allegro molto e marcatto</td>
<td>(f)-ppp-ff (long cresc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale (2)</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Pomposo</td>
<td>ff-fff (dim. to pp in the end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale (3)</td>
<td>6/8</td>
<td>Prestissimo</td>
<td>pp-fffz (long cresc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme-Coda</td>
<td>4/4 - 6/8 - 2/4</td>
<td>Andante molto espressivo</td>
<td>p-(ff)-ppp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 The Variation Form in the Context of the Piano Ballade Tradition

The comparison between the formal models of the *Ballade, Op.24* and the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* revealed some important points of similarity between the two works. Their similar overall constructions emerge out of similar formal and musical processes. Grieg titled the first work as “Ballade in the Form of Variations on a Norwegian Melody” and the second as “Old Norwegian Melody with Variations.” In other words, the first title not only describes the form of the work (variation form) but it also places the work in the piano ballade genre, while the second title reveals the traditional theme-and-variations form placing it among other piano variation sets. Therefore, considering also the formal similarities between the two works, the following questions can be posed: Should one examine Grieg’s formal model in the context of the piano ballade genre or as the traditional theme-and-variations form? Which elements of the two works are associated with the ballade genre and how are these elements presented within the variation form?

Grieg’s friend and fellow composer Julius Röntgen—who also composed a *Ballade on a Norwegian Folk Melody* for orchestra using the variation form (in 1896), had referred to the formal correspondence between Grieg’s *Op.24* and *Op.51*:

Röntgen adds a work catalogue as supplement to his Grieg biography. In the section ‘For Piano’ Röntgen compared the *Old Norwegian Melody* with the *Ballade: ‘For four hands*

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Grieg has written [...] and the Old Norwegian Melody with Variations Op. 51, which formally corresponds to his Ballade.⁶

The formal correspondence between the two works leads to the hypothesis that Grieg’s manipulation of the variation form exhibits associations with the piano ballade genre, not only in Op.24 but also in Op.51. It is worth mentioning that Grieg used the variation form in another, smaller work, which he also entitled as a Ballade, the Ballade, Op.65, No.5, in C Minor (from Lyric Pieces, Op.65). In this piece, an eight-measure phrase is repeated six times, each time slightly varied.⁷ Grieg may have introduced a new formal structure in which the variation form meets the piano ballade tradition. In the process of studying this formal structure it is important to consider its relationship both to other piano variation sets of the nineteenth century and to piano ballades that preceded it. A comparison with other variation sets and ballades (particularly Chopin’s Ballades) reveals specific characteristics of the two works in order to create a more complete picture of their overall structure.


4.2.1 Nineteenth-Century Piano Variation Sets

Both the *Ballade, Op.24* and the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* unfold in a series of character variations which present the thematic material in various contrasting settings. The character variation was the type of variation that was especially developed during the nineteenth century. Robert Nelson writes regarding the relationship between the character variation and its predecessor, the ornamental variation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

The nineteenth-century character variation contrasts strongly with earlier types in general. Whereas previous variations tend to preserve the expression of the theme throughout a series, the separate members of the character variation frequently alter the expression, or ‘character,’ of the theme profoundly. … Another important difference from earlier types is that in place of a purely figural and ornamental treatment we find here, for the first time, an emphasis upon the development of motives from the theme. The character variation is thus not only more dramatic than its predecessors, through its sharp contrasts of mood, but also more organically constructed as well. ⁸


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Another type of variation which appeared in the late nineteenth and early
twentieth century was the free variation. In the free variation, which emerged out of
the character variation, “the basic structure and harmony of the theme are
substantially altered, if not actually abandoned.”

Robert Nelson articulates the characteristics of this type of variation:

The free variation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries is the last important type prior to the contemporary period. It marks a significant departure from all earlier species in that the bond between variations and theme is now frequently a theme motive rather than the theme in its entirety. This means that the structural and harmonic pattern of the theme is often discarded in favor of a free development, and that the free variation approaches, in plan and treatment, forms like the rhapsody and fantasia. As in the character variation, so in the free variation the expression of the theme is altered materially.

As Nelson mentions, the free treatment is opposed to the three structural types of variations which are the cantus firmus (“adhere closely to the melodic subject”), the melodico-harmonic (“simultaneous retention of the melodic subject and the theme harmony”), and the harmonic (“preserve only the general structural and harmonic outlines of the theme”). Character variations that contain incidental use of the free technique include Schumann’s Abegg Variations, Op.1 and Symphonic Etudes, Op.13, Brahms’s Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op.9, and Grieg’s Ballade, Op.24. Grieg’s Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51 can be also classified in the same category.

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9 Nelson, The Technique of Variation, 23.
10 Ibid., 6.
11 Ibid., 10,16,19.
The following paragraphs outline some overall structural characteristics of representative nineteenth-century piano variation sets, illustrating the various tendencies in the use of the form during that period, and also marking some structural differences or similarities with Grieg’s variation sets.

L. V. Beethoven: *Andante* from the *Sonata in E Major, Op.109* (composed in 1820)

The third movement of Beethoven’s Op.109 is an example of variations that adhere to the theme’s general harmonic structure. All six variations are written in the theme’s tonality (E Major) and they alter the theme’s character in various ways using different types of articulation, figuration, and overall texture, as well as various dynamics, meters, tempo indications, and registers. All the variations are individually numbered (unlike Grieg’s variations) and many of them follow *attacca*. The set includes some double variations and also contrapuntal variations. The return of the theme is musically connected with the last variation through an extension of the last measure of the variation, making a *diminuendo* into the *pp* and *cantabile* theme-return. The exact repetition of the theme at the end brings to mind Grieg’s variation sets, which also close in the same way. However, in Grieg’s variation sets, as Gregory Martin describes for the *Ballade, Op.24*, “the effect is quite different, given the sudden rapture of the musical continuum immediately beforehand and the abrupt

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12 A double variation consists of two distinct (sometimes counterposed) parts which are individually varied.
reversal thus created.”

F. Mendelssohn: Variations Sérieuses, Op.54 (composed in 1841)

Mendelssohn’s Variations Sérieuses belong to the category of variations that preserve not only the harmonic outline of the theme but also its melodic material (intact, or embedded in various figurations). Sixteen out of the seventeen variations are written in the home key of D Minor, and only one variation is written in the tonic major (D Major). Moreover, all of them preserve the 2/4 meter of the theme. Almost all variations follow without any break, and most of them are connected through passing scalar or arpeggiated passages. Each variation varies, contrastingly, the expression of the theme. As the variations proceed, the theme’s melody is progressively disembodied and eventually reduced to short motives, while the connection with the theme’s harmonic scheme becomes looser. The structurally freer last variation (17th) features virtuoso figuration and a long climax reaching ff (similarly like the concluding variations in Grieg’s works); it eventually brings back the first half of the theme on top of a tremolo dominant-pedal. However, the return of the theme functions as a transition, especially reinforced by the use of the dominant pedal combined with a long accelerando and crescendo. The return of the theme remains incomplete, interrupted by the sf dominant chord. The closing, fiery Presto-section based on sequences that use motives from the theme, ends with cadenza-like ff passages followed by a few slower moving chords that suddenly diminuendo into the

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closing tonic chord. The special emphasis given to the closing sections and
independent finales is another characteristic tendency of nineteenth-century character
variation-sets.\textsuperscript{14} Grieg’s variation sets are also two representative examples of this
tendency. The built up of tension in the last variation and the climactic ending (in
Mendelssohn’s set) could be compared with Grieg’s variation sets. However, Grieg
resolves the climax with the return of the theme, while Mendelssohn uses the theme
to build up more tension before the last outburst of energy in the coda-like section
(\textit{Presto}).


Schumann’s \textit{Symphonic Etudes} form a set of character variations which
features some structurally freer variations (in this sense, it can be placed in the same
category with Grieg’s works). Moreover, the overall title “XII Symphonic Etudes”
illustrates Schumann’s attempt to combine aspects of the etude into the variations.
The individual etudes—except the third, ninth, and the finale— are additionally
inscribed as variations. Each etude in the set changes drastically the character of the
theme through alterations in texture, figuration, articulation, meter, rhythm,
dynamics, register, and others. Most of them stay in the home key, C\# minor; the
seventh etude moves to the relative major (E Major). The eleventh etude is in the key
of G\# minor, preparing enharmonically the finale (twelfth etude) which is in Db
Major (the G\# Minor changes to Ab Major, the dominant of Db Major). The rondo-

\textsuperscript{14} Nelson, \textit{The Technique of Variation}, 92.
like finale abandons completely the structure of the theme and ends the set in a triumphant way; it is a great example of the special emphasis given to the concluding sections of variation sets, as mentioned earlier. This end-weighting that characterizes several nineteenth-century character variation sets adds a directional dramatic dimension to variation form, which is episodic in nature.

J. Brahms: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 9* (composed in 1854)

The *Schumann Variations, Op. 9*, is another set of character variations that features some significant deviations from the theme’s structure. The set consists of sixteen variations that mostly stay in the home key F# Minor, with the last variation written in the tonic major (the only other keys used are B Minor, D Major, and Gb Major). Very characteristic is the return of the entire original melody in the eighth variation (exactly in the middle of the set), after a series of structurally freer variations. Moreover, the original melody comes back with some alterations (new meter) in the penultimate variation, in the key of Gb Major which has an enharmonic relationship with the tonic major (F# Major). The two returns of the original melody bring to mind Grieg’s *Ballade, Op. 24*, where the original melody comes back in Variation 8 and Variation 12 (in the tonic major). However, Brahms’s variation set does not feature any buildup of tension before or after the final return of the theme melody, while the complete theme never comes back in its original opening version. The last variation is written as a natural continuation of the preceding one, leading to a *ppp* ending.
J. Brahms: *Variations on a Theme by Handel, Op.24* (composed in 1861)

The *Variations on a Theme by Handel, Op.24* is one of Brahms’s most outstanding examples of character variations. Unlike his *Schumann Variations, Op.9* that include some structurally freer variations, in this set Brahms returns to “the more conservative pattern of Beethoven’s Op.109, 120, and 131, in which free influence is completely renounced and the technique is either totally harmonic or predominantly harmonic with melodic-harmonic infusions.”\(^{15}\) All twenty-five variations retain the outward structure of the theme consisting of two individually repeated four-measure phrases. Moreover, most of the variations stay in the home tonality Bb Major, and adhere to the theme’s general harmonic outline (the only other keys used are the tonic minor, and the relative minor). The set includes some double variations and contrapuntal variations. Brahms concludes the set with a majestic fugue paying tribute to Beethoven who very often used fugal finales in his works (among them his *Fifteen Variations and Fugue, Op.35*).\(^{16}\)

Grieg’s variation sets, Op.24 and Op.51, follow the tradition of the nineteenth-century character variations. As in the abovementioned variation sets, most of the individual variations in each set adhere to the home tonality and the theme’s formal and harmonic structure, while altering —often very dramatically— its character. However, the incidental use of the free technique that appeared in a number of

\(^{15}\) Nelson, *The Technique of Variation*, 96.

\(^{16}\) Grieg also used fugato elements in the beginning of the Finale in the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51*. 
nineteenth-century variation sets —among them Schumann’s Op.13 and Brahms’s Op.9— appears in Grieg’s sets in a very systematic way, and not simply inserted among structural variations. Grieg’s use of the free technique is dominated by a directional force, leading over the course of several variations (or a long finale) towards a dramatic climax which ends only with the final reassertion of theme.

4.2.2 The Piano Ballade Tradition

Grieg’s Op.24 bears the title “Ballade in the Form of Variations.” The title informs the performer and the listener that the work belongs to the piano ballade genre. However, the Ballade, Op.24 is written in the form of variations, a form which had not traditionally been associated with the piano ballade genre before Grieg. In the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, Grieg repeated the Ballade’s formal model, even though he did not inscribe the Op.51 as a ‘Ballade’.

The piano ballade genre was born with Chopin’s four piano Ballades, Op.23 in G Minor, Op.38 in F Major, Op.47 in Ab Major, and Op.52 in F Minor. Even though Chopin’s Ballades are not connected by means of a common musical form, they established a musical narrative model with specific characteristics. This narrative model is defined by musical structures that convey the narrative techniques found in the ballad poetic genre.
A ballad is a folk song of narrative content. According to *Grove Music Online*:

Ballad is a term used for a short popular song that may contain a narrative element. Scholars take it to signify a relatively concise composition known throughout Europe since the late Middle Ages: it combines narrative, dramatic dialogue and lyrical passages in stanzaic form sung to a rounded tune, and often includes a recurrent refrain. … As a rule the story is not elaborated through explicit motivation or the description of personae or objects; rather, the singing pushes the story along relentlessly, leaping or lingering, sketching the story line economically and using the device of incremental repetition.  

Chopin used the ballad model not as a specific form but as a narrative genre. His Ballades were not based on a specific ballad or folk song; rather, they translated the narrative structures and techniques of the folk ballad as a genre into a musical composition. On the contrary, Grieg’s *Ballade, Op.24* is built entirely on the tune of a specific folk song which is progressively varied (in a similar way the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* is built on a specific folk ballad). Moreover, by choosing to base his compositions on specific Norwegian songs, Grieg establishes specific poetic and narrative associations as well as nationalistic references.

As already mentioned, the ballads are strophic songs, structured with lines and stanzas. As James Parakilas writes, “in the Nordic tradition, the melody repeats with each stanza of text.” Moreover, structures of contrast, varied repetition, or symmetry that create specific patterns can be found in the arrangement of the lines

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and stanzas.\textsuperscript{19} This “melodico-textural” web of incremental repetitions embodies the
unfolding of the story. In this sense, the variation form (particularly when using as a
theme an original folk-song tune) constitutes a particularly fitting structure for the
representation of ballad singing in the field of instrumental music. Parakilas writes
regarding this equation between the variation form and the strophic folk song:

\begin{quote}
For Grieg, … the variation form may have been tied to the idea
of strophic repetitions in a folk song. But in Grieg’s Ballade
the variations make such a dramatic progression that one
wonders whether to understand the work as a new venture –
within the piano ballade tradition – in suggesting both the form
of the song and the progression of the story.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Even though Parakilas acknowledges the narrative element in Grieg’s Ballade
(the progression of the story, as he writes), he comes to the following conclusion after
analyzing the Ballade:

\begin{quote}
Despite its dramatic ending, Grieg’s Ballade cannot fairly be
called a narrative work. It is a variation set in which some of
the later variations no longer adhere to the structure of the
theme. In that sense Grieg can be said to be following, or
perhaps proving himself against, classic variation models
notably Beethoven’s. To analyze the departure from the
structure of the theme as a narrative event would be to portray
the earlier part of the work —the larger part and much of the
subtlest music— as relatively inert.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

Indeed, the opening larger part of both Grieg’s Op.24 and Op.51 constitutes a series
of character variations. However, the dramatic and climactic ending of the Ballade
transforms and brings new light to the opening series of variations which eventually

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 46-47.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 159.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 167.
is perceived as a single sequence of distinct events that progressively led to the final reckoning. Gregory Martin very appropriately associates the acceleration that follows Variation 9 (of the Ballade) with “a formal shift from what Aristotle called the ‘episodic’ to the tragic.”\(^{22}\) As Martin writes, the first nine variations constitute what Aristotle defined (in his Poetics) as an episodic plot construction, “when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of its episodes.”\(^{23}\) The unexpected climactic progression of Variations 10-14 releases a narrative force which eventually transforms the episodic nature of the work into a unified drama.\(^{24}\) Martin quotes from Aristotle’s Poetics:

> Even matters of chance seem most marvelous if there is an appearance of design as it were in them.\(^{25}\)

The climactic later variations reveal a “design” that adds a dramatic dimension to an overall formal structure that progresses episodically, with no particular logic compelling the order of variations. Grieg uses the static nature of the variation form (the continuously repeated unchanging structure of the theme) as a context for the unexpected dramatic departure from the structure of the theme. This departure from the regular variation procedure is far too dramatic for us to consider Grieg’s work as a


\(^{24}\) The word “drama” is used with its ancient Greek meaning, which is “action.”

simple variation set. Parakilas argues that “despite its dramatic ending, Grieg’s
*Ballade* cannot fairly be called a narrative work.” Indeed, if we project his *Ballade*
against the ballade model established by Chopin, then Grieg’s work cannot fairly be
called a narrative work. However, if we project his variation set against the classical
model of variation form, then Grieg’s work conveys a dramatic quality not inherent in
the traditional variation form. This dramatic and narrative quality is also reflected in
Grieg’s intention to entitle his work as a “Ballade in the Form of Variations,”
revealing a dual compositional conception.

A similar, overall dramatic process is also evident in the *Old Norwegian
Melody, Op.51*. In one of his letters to his friend and conductor Johan Svendsen,
Grieg writes regarding the performance and interpretation of the work,  which as he
says, “is conceived as a kind of drama”:

> It certainly is a difficult piece to make into a well-integrated
> whole. I have conceived of it as a kind of drama, and I wish
> you could share this concept, especially for the latter half of the
> work, for the result is a more subjective and freer handling of
> the tempo. Looked at simply as music, variations can easily
> fall apart in such a composition —but of course a certain Johan
> Svendsen will prevent that from happening.  

Even though Grieg’s words acknowledge the inherent danger in performing the music
as a segmented variation set, they also reveal his conception of the piece as “a well-
integrated whole,” drawing the performer’s attention toward an interpretation that
focuses on the overarching drama of the work.

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26 Grieg refers to the orchestral version of the *Old Norwegian Melody Op.51*.

A comparison of Grieg’s *Ballade* with Chopin’s *Ballades* reveals common narrative/musical structures which justify the *Ballade* as a work following the piano ballade tradition established by Chopin. The same structures can also be found in the *Old Norwegian Melody Op. 51*. Parakilas emphasizes the adherence of Chopin’s *Ballades* to a “single line of action, precipitously developed,” which according to Albert Friedman is an important characteristic feature of the folk ballads.28 Indeed, Chopin’s *Ballades* are through-composed works, not episodic in form. On the other hand, Grieg’s Op.24 and Op.51 are based on the variation form which is an episodic form. However, the climactic progression of the variations in the second halves of both of Grieg’s variation sets creates a “precipitously developed line of action.” This line of action cannot be perceived separately from the opening variations because it shares with them a very important compositional element: the theme itself! The progressively varied theme becomes the “thread” that eventually binds the episodic opening variations with the climactic later variations into a single drama. The idea of a single drama is also evident in the fact that Grieg avoided numbering the individual variations in both works (unlike all the previously mentioned nineteenth-century piano variation sets).

The “precipitously developed action” of the folk ballads appears as an ever-increasing momentum in Chopin’s *Ballades*.29 This ever-increasing momentum is


29 Ibid., 52.
particularly perceived as a continuously increasing pace leading to a climax at the end.\footnote{Ibid., 53-54.} A similar increasing rhythmic momentum leading to a final climax appears in the last four variations of Grieg’s *Ballade, Op.24*, which are linked, and in the Finale of the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* (see Tables 4.8 and 4.9):

**Ballade, Op.24: Variations 9-14:**

(Un poco Andante) - - Un poco Allegro e alla burla $\rightarrow$ Più animato $\rightarrow$

$\rightarrow$Meno Allegro e maestoso$\rightarrow$Allegro furioso$\rightarrow$Prestissimo


**Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51: Variation 14 - Finale (1-3):**

(Adagio, molto espressivo - Piú Adagio) $\sim$ Allegro molto e marcato $\rightarrow$Pomposo $\rightarrow$

$\rightarrow$Prestissimo


As Parakilas mentions,\footnote{Ibid., 46.} a special narrative technique that is used for the “precipitous development of action” in folk ballads is the technique of “leaping and
lingering,”"32 “a tendency to initiate a sudden act and then to linger hypnotically after the event.”33 In Chopin’s *Ballades*, this technique is used in various ways:

(a). Passages or sections “increasing in speed” or “marked as held back.”34

(b). Transitions that “leap” (break off suddenly and move suddenly ahead into the following contrasting section), or “linger” (move smoothly, especially in the form of dominant preparations).35

Examples of “leaping and lingering” of this kind can also be found in the concluding linked variations (Var. 10-14) of the *Ballade, Op.24* and in the Finale (1-3) of the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* (see Tables 4.10 and 4.11):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ballade, Op.24</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 9: <em>Un poco Andante</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 10: <em>Un poco Allegro e alla burla</em></td>
<td>(“increasing in speed”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 11: <em>Piú animato</em></td>
<td>(“increasing in speed”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 12: <em>Meno Allegro e maestoso</em></td>
<td>(“marked as held back”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 13: <em>Allegro furioso</em></td>
<td>(“increasing in speed”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var. 14: <em>Prestissimo</em></td>
<td>(“increasing in speed”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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32 The term was first used by Francis Gummere in his book *The Popular Ballad* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), 90-91.


34 Parakilas, *Ballads without Words*, 52.

35 Ibid., 66.
(Table 4.10, continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(b).</th>
<th>“Leaping” transitions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Var.10 → Var.11,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Var.12 → Var.13,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Var.13 → Var.14,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Var.14 → Theme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Lingering” transitions (dominant preparation):

Var.11 → Var.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var.14: <em>Adagio, molto espressivo</em> -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Piú Adagio</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale (1): <em>Allegro molto e marcato</em> (&quot;increasing in speed&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale (2): <em>Pomposo</em> (&quot;marked as held back&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finale (3): <em>Prestissimo</em> (&quot;increasing in speed&quot;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(b).</th>
<th>“Leaping” transitions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Var.14 <em>(Piú Adagio - attacca)</em> → Finale (1),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finale (2) → Finale (3),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finale (3) → Theme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Lingering” transitions (dominant preparation):

Finale (1) → Finale (2)

Table 4.11. *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51*, Finale (1-3): Technique of “leaping and lingering.”
Another important characteristic of Chopin’s *Ballades* is the existence of distinct, counterposed themes, usually a primary (functioning as the narrator’s voice) and a secondary (representing one of the characters in the story). Through thematic transformation, these themes acquire new characters and they are brought together, forcing the action to a final climax, “to the brink of the final reckoning” as Parakilas describes. Likewise, in Grieg’s works, the climactic transformation of the theme in the later variations (or finale) carries the action to the final reckoning. However, in Grieg’s music, the thematic transformation does not act as an additive force, in the sense that it does not bring together any opposing forces. It rather acts as a destructive force itself, which dramatically transforms the thematic material, leading to its final disintegration. The climactic transformation and disintegration of the theme represents a formal analogue to the “single line of action, precipitously developed” that characterizes the folk ballads.

The fiery energy that is unleashed in Variations 13-14 of the *Ballade, Op.24*, and in the Finale (3) of the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* corresponds to what Parakilas describes as the “final reckoning of the ballad process” in Chopin’s *Ballades*. More specifically, the above mentioned sections of Grieg’s *Ballade* and *Old Norwegian Melody* can be compared with the final *Presto con fuoco* and *Agitato* sections of Chopin’s *Ballades No.1* and *No.2* respectively (see examples 4.1 and 4.2, next page). These sections (in Chopin’s works) arrive after a “lingering” on the

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37 Ibid., 71-72.
dominant chord.\textsuperscript{38}

Example 4.1. F. Chopin, \textit{Ballade No.1 in G Minor, Op.23}, mm. 206-210.\textsuperscript{39}

Example 4.2. F. Chopin, \textit{Ballade No.2 in F Major, Op.38}, mm. 164-170.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{38} In the \textit{Ballade No.2}, the “lingering” comes in the form of long trills that interrupt the sixteenth-notes and move stepwise from the dominant tone to the tonic (in the ending key of A Minor).


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 27-28.
A similar “lingering” effect on the dominant also occurs in Grieg’s works (see examples 4.3 and 4.4).

Example 4.3. Ballade, Op.24, Var.12 (mm. 38-40) - Var.13 (mm. 1-4).

Example 4.4. Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, Finale (2) (mm. 96-100) - Finale (3) (mm. 1-8).

(continued)
The dramatic way in which the music stops before the final return of the theme in both the *Ballade, Op.24* and *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51* brings particularly to mind Chopin’s *Ballade No.2* (example 4.5).

Example 4.5. F. Chopin, *Ballade No.2 in F Major, Op.38*, mm. 192-203.
The restatement of the theme is particularly charged with a strong narrative expression which is enhanced by the preceding abrupt break in the music combined with the *tenuto* indication referring to the return of the original melody (*il canto ben tenuto* in the *Ballade, Op.24*, and *la melodia ben tenuta* in the *Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51*). Moreover, the theme returns with some alterations. In the *Ballade*, it is only the theme’s first half that returns. In the *Old Norwegian Melody* the theme returns with some alterations in its harmonization, while its *codetta* is extended to a larger coda. Additionally, the theme-return is marked *Andante molto espressivo*, instead of the *Allegretto espressivo* that Grieg indicated in the beginning of the work (the *Old Norwegian Melody*). Through these alterations, (in both works) the theme reflects the dramatic action that preceded its return. At the same time, the return of the theme marks a return to the beginning of the work binding thus all the variations under a single narrative, the narrative that emerged out of the dramatic transformation and complete deconstruction of the theme. The return of the theme not only reflects the voice of the narrator but also completes the narrative itself. The theme conveys the narrator’s voice, and the dramatic variational transformation of the theme conveys the narrative. The story-teller and the story are bound together; after all, there is no story without a story-teller, and similarly there is no story-teller without a story. In Grieg’s variation sets, the return of the theme creates a different kind of “framing effect” than the one found in Chopin’s Ballades, as in Grieg’s works the narrator and the characters of the story speak through the same voice which—even though altered and transformed— is always present: the theme. Additionally, the continuously varied theme carries one more voice, the voice of the ballad-singer who sings the
same melody with each stanza of the text. The theme suggests the ever-repeating melody of a ballad, while its variations suggest the different episodes in the ballad’s narrative. In total, Grieg aims to represent not only the narrative structures of the folk ballads but also ballad singing as a musico-narrative performance event.

Conclusion

In the Ballade, Op.24 and the Old Norwegian Melody, Op.51, Grieg proved his remarkable skills in the use of the variation form. Both works reflect Grieg’s exceptional lyrical gifts, exquisite harmonic idiom, and compositional craftsmanship. Moreover, they illustrate a unique manipulation of the variation form characterized by narrative and dramatic dimensions. In the Op.24 and Op.51, the variation procedure becomes a narrative itself. For Grieg, the variation form had a special meaning as a result of its inner structural connection with the stanzaic process of folk ballad-singing. On this common structural basis, he absorbed narrative strategies from the already established piano ballade tradition, creating thus a hybrid form that introduced a new type within the piano ballade tradition and combined the folk tradition and art music through an organic interrelationship. Grieg’s variation sets are the product of a hybrid thinking, a conscious blending of the centuries-old variation form with folk ballad tradition in the broader context of nineteenth-century programmatic and narrative structures.
Bibliography


_____. Edvard Grieg und Julius Röntgen Briefwechsel 1883-1907 [Edvard Grieg and Julius Röntgen Correspondence 1883-1907]. Edited by Finn Benestad and Hanna de Vries Stavland. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis, 1997.


