ARTIKKELIT 3/2024

Sebastian Silén

Nordic Influences in Violin Sonatas by Edvard Grieg, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Jean Sibelius, and Christian Sinding

Musikmag., violinisten och forskaren Sebastian Silén (sebastian.silen@uniarts.fi) är doktorand vid Sibelius Akademin vid Konstuniversitetet. Hans konstnärliga doktorsarbete utforskar den nordiska musikaliska kontext som omger Jean Sibelius verk för violin och piano. Han har varit redaktör för en kritisk samlingsutgåva av Robert Kajanus violinmusik som publiserades av Fennica Gehrman. Som violinist har Sebastian spelat i flera av Finlands ledande orkestrar och har vunnit priser i nationella och internationella tävlingar. Hans konstnärliga fokus har under de senaste åren legat på sällan uppförd musik från de nordiska länderna.

DOI: 10.51816/musiikki.148478

Abstrakt

Denna artikel utforskar hur musikaliska element som associerats med Norden framträder i violinsonater av Edvard Grieg, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Jean Sibelius och Christian Sinding. Nordisk musik under det långa 1800-talet präglades av en balansgång mellan två historiska trender. Å ena sidan var den nordiska klassiska musiken starkt bunden till en centraleuropeisk tradition, men å andra sidan var det de lokala, regionala, folkloristiska eller de från en centraleuropeisk förebild avvikande inslagen som kraftigast kom att förknippas med just det nordiska. Artikeln visar hur dessa element framträder i de analyserade violinsonaterna. Samtidigt argumenterar jag för värdet av ett nordiskt perspektiv, till skillnad från ett rent nationellt eller internationellt. Artikeln kombinerar traditionell musikvetenskaplig forskning med praktikbaserade metoder och utgår från mitt eget konstnärliga arbete, som har styrt mina forskningsfrågor.

Nordic Influences in Violin Sonatas by Edvard Grieg, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Jean Sibelius, and Christian Sinding

Sebastian Silén

Nordic violin sonatas from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries highlight an interesting dichotomy that lies at the core of the Nordic musical landscape. This dichotomy lies in the attempt to find balance between mainstream classical culture and the local Nordic culture (Ling 1992, 56).[1] The very elements that make the music sound Nordic need to differ from the expectations of mainstream classical music for the music to be identifiable as Nordic. These differences can interact with expectations of musical form and thematic development in interesting ways. In sonatas, due to their strong Central European tradition, we often end up in a situation where the more the music embraces the traditional expectations of a sonata, the less it sounds Nordic, and the more it incorporates Nordic elements the less it sounds like a traditional sonata. This article explores how selected Nordic composers navigated the tension between these two musical landscapes.

The topic of this article begs the question of whether the concepts "traditional sonata" and "classical mainstream" are meaningful with regards to violin sonatas from the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The violin sonata as a musical form gradually changed and evolved over time, to the point where many of the traditional expectations of the sonata form were regularly broken. Therefore, comparing Nordic violin sonatas to some imaginary idea of what a sonata should be presents its own challenges. Furthermore, Dahlhaus (1989a, 90) argues that the tradition of identifying a national musical character as distinct from the pan-European tradition was itself a pan-European phenomenon. Nonetheless, the juxtaposition of Nordic and Central European violin sonatas does highlight details of interest despite these difficulties.

1 The context for Jan Ling's observation refers specifically to Nordic music as pan-national phenomenon.

The article is built around my experience of practicing and performing these works. The style of my analysis therefore includes an element of artistic research, where the artistic work and process plays a central role. The analysis of these selected sonatas should not be expected to all-inclusive, but should rather be seen as a practice-led process that has resulted in a collection of examples that together offer insight into the suggested thesis.

Key concepts, researcher perspectives, and research questions

The framing of this article requires clarification of a few key concepts. The first issue concerns what constitutes "Nordic influences" in classical music. Nordic classical music is a loosely defined subcategory of western classical music. At its most rudimentary level, Nordic classical music is simply a geographical category, i.e. music composed within the Nordic countries or by composers from the Nordic countries.[2] This geographical definition of Nordic music provides a relatively clear demarcation between Nordic and non-Nordic music, but it fails to tell us anything about the music itself.[3]

For that reason, looser definitions that deal with musical characteristics often associated with Nordic music are more interesting for this article. Arguably, Nordic music is a super-category (or umbrella category) of music embracing the individual Nordic countries. Nordic music with a strong national style therefore takes on more local characteristics than the name may suggest. For this article I am also limiting my inquiry into music that can be argued to belong to the Romantic era of the long nineteenth century.[4]

The issue is further complicated by the fact that the word "Nordic" was sometimes used interchangeably with the name of the individual countries. For example, Grieg's *25 Folk Songs and Dances,* op. 17 were called *norske folkeviser og danser* (C. F. Peters 1982) by Grieg's biographer Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, but had previously been published under the title *Nordische Tänze und Volksweisen* (C. F. Peters ca. 1895). G. Schirmer (1902)

2 That is Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands.

3 Even here there is some room for discussion. For example, is the music by Fredrik Pacius Finnish, or should it be considered German? On the other hand, Friedrich Kuhlau is considered one of the most important Danish composers of the Danish Golden Age, despite originally being from Germany.

4 The long nineteenth century was defined by the British historian Eric Hobsbawm as the period between the French Revolution in 1789 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

called the collection *Twenty-five Northern Dances and Folk-tunes*. Note the use of the word "northern" rather "Nordic", which highlights the fact that the German word "Nordisch" has a double meaning and can mean either Nordic or northern. Explorations of Nordic music also show some overlap with the use of "North" as an ideal, or as a hermeneutic window through which art can be investigated (Mantere 2010; Torvinen 2010).

Despite these complications, Nordic music has garnered considerable attention internationally. Already during the 1840s German critics had identified characteristics of Nordic music after performances of Gade's overture *Echoes of Ossian* in 1842 and Symphony No. 1 in 1843 (Fjeldsøe and Groth 2019, 5). Nordic music has also received attention in the Anglosphere, as well as obviously within the Nordic countries themselves.[5] The general notion was that Nordic music captures something of the identity, landscape, or character of the Nordic countries, which were perceived as different from the European norm.

While most Nordic music is arguably more strongly connected to the individual composers' home countries, the Nordic countries share many traits that provide an argument for grouping them together. Each Nordic country is unique, but their histories are intertwined. The Scandinavian countries belong to a common language group, which allowed for an exchange of literature and created transnational social networks, and their language may also have affected the region's music.[6] Most of the folk music traditions of the Nordic countries have similar roots, although they developed in different directions as they spread across the Nordic countries (the primary exception for this is the Runic singing found in Eastern Finland and Karelia). The Nordic countries also shared an interest in mythology, and many social and political structures in society were built on a common set of values and ideas. Additionally, the Nordic countries

5 For overviews of Nordic music see for instance John Horton's (1963) *Scandinavian Music: A Short History*, Frederick Key Smith's (2002) *Nordic Art Music: From the Middle Ages to the Third Millennium*, John Yoell's (1974) *The Nordic Sound, Explorations into the Music of Denmark, Norway, Sweden*, or *Musik i Norden* (1997), which was edited Greger Andersson.

6 Finnish does not belong to the same language group, but for the topic of this article it is good to remember that Sibelius spoke Swedish as his mother tongue and was generally deeply affected by Nordic literature (Smith 2000, 346). Sampsa Konttinen (2013) has explored whether the language Sibelius used for his songs influenced his composition style. He concludes that differences can be identified, and that Swedish and German texts tend to encourage a larger vocal range and larger intervals than Finnish texts (Konttinen 2013, 245–248).

also show similarities when it comes to their flora and fauna and seasons, despite a varied geography.

Specific Nordic musical traits are more difficult to pin down, but features commonly associated with Nordic music will be explored throughout this article. For instance, folklore constitutes an important part of this tradition, but the characteristics associated with Nordic music are not limited to quotations or imitations of folk music. They can vary from the lyricism of Nordic romances to evocations of nature or landscapes, but can also be contemplative or introspective. In other words, Nordic elements in classical music are features, characteristics, or details that scholars, musicians, or listeners have come to associate with Nordic music.

The other central pillar of this article are the broader expectations associated with violin sonatas. I am interested in how Nordic musical elements are infused into violin sonatas and how they affect the music. For this reason, I will give a brief overview of the general structure of sonatas.

Sonatas were originally merely a name for instrumental works, as opposed to something sung such as a cantata (Mangsen, et al. 2001). Gradually, sonatas came to be associated with works in multiple movements, where at least one movement would be expected to be in sonata form. Rosen (1988, 3) has noted that the earliest attempts to define sonata form, such as Antonin Reicha in of his *Traite de haute composition musicale* (1826), Adolph Bernhard Marx in *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, Vol. Ill (1845), or Carl Czerny, in the *School of Practical Composition* (1848), were less concerned with explaining the existing music than to provide a model for new compositions. For that reason, many famous works differ from the format described by Reicha, Marx, or Czerny (Rosen 1988, 5).

A work in sonata form has three parts: exposition, development, and recapitulation. In the exposition, four key areas are commonly found: a primary-theme zone, which establishes the tonic of the work; a transition, which drives the music toward the dominant key (or less commonly another key); a secondary-theme zone, which is most often played in the dominant key (V) if the work is in major, or in the mediant (III) or dominant (V) if the work is in minor; and a closing zone. The exposition has two primary tasks: first, to establish harmonic tension between the primary and secondary themes, and second, to serve what James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy (2006, 16) describe as a ”rhetorical” function, providing a ”referential arrangement or layout of specialized themes and textures against which the events of the two subsequent spaces – development and recapitulation – are to be measured and understood.” The development section is typically more active and restless, often revisiting one or more

ideas from the exposition (ibid., 19). The development is more varied in both structure and harmony than both the exposition and the recapitulation. In the recapitulation, the music returns to the material presented in the exposition but resolves the tonal tension by restating material that was previously in a non-tonic key in the tonic. This general structure is what Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, 344) describes as a "Type 3 Sonata".

The form outlined above is typically used in one or more movements in a sonata. As a whole, a sonata typically consists of two, three, of four movements in contrasting tempos and characters. As will be seen in the sonatas explored in this article, a common way of creating unity between multiple movements of a sonata was to use interrelated themes (Newman 1983, 141). Within this general framework, composers found lots of room for experimentation. It should not be assumed that composers were limited by any form of "textbook" structure. This general outline is, however, useful as a schema against which compositions can be compared.

As this article is the result of combining scholarly and artistic work, a few words about the challenge of bringing these two approaches together feels warranted, as they highlight a stark contrast between the aims and goals of the two processes. Frayling's (1993, 5) seminal article "Research in Art and Design" outlines three primary approaches to art research, which he describes as "research into art", "research through art", and "research for art". My article is primarily concerned with the first category (research into art), which is the traditional form of historical or theoretical research into existing works of art, in this case existing compositions. This knowledge can interact with the practical and embodied knowledge gained by practicing the music in a process related to Frayling's "research through art". These two approaches can then combine into the third category, "research for art", "where the end product is an artefact – where the thinking is, so to speak embodied in the artefact", in this case in a performance (ibid.). This form of research is often not communicable verbally.[7]

The challenge of combining these approaches is that whereas the knowledge gained from scholarly research should be replicable and well rooted in facts and sources, musical artistic work, which has the aim of performing the music, is primarily embodied and is therefore inaccessible to other researchers. Performing a piece of music obviously requires a form of knowledge, but communicating this knowledge in writing is often problematic. I may, for instance, know what it feels like to perform a piece

7 For a broader and more up to date overview of arts based research methods, see for instance Elo (2022) or Wilson and van Ruiten (2013).

of music and what I need to listen for and react to during a performance, but this does not necessarily translate into formal knowledge.

Additionally, from a musician's perspective, an interpretational tool or idea does not need to be true in order to be useful. Uses of imagination and/or narratives that improve the final performance are valuable, even in cases where they are fictional, fragmentary, illogical, or based on unverifiable information. For this reason, presenting scholarly and artistic work alongside each other often feels difficult, as the aims and goals of the two approaches can be so different.

The options involved in forming an interpretation of a work can also be contradictory. For example, in the repertoire discussed in this article we often find folk-inspired motives and melodies, but there is no obvious answer to how these elements should be approached. One option is to interpret the score based on the current twenty-first-century playing style (whatever that may mean to any particular musician). Another option is to draw inspiration from folk-music and infuse the music with a playing style inspired by folk-musicians. A third valid option may be to place the music within its historical context and performance practice. All of these three approaches are valid, but they may not always be compatible with each other. Nonetheless, all three approaches present valid musical options and opportunities for developing an interpretation. They do not, however, present any firm answers to the correctness of any specific decision.

Viewed through this hermeneutic window that combines a musician's perspective with a specific interest in Nordic music, the aim of this article is to show how musical elements that have been associated with Nordic music can be found in selected violin sonatas by Grieg, Stenhammar, Sibelius, and Sinding. The goal is therefore to explore what observations of interest can be made by applying this framing to this repertoire. The process has been guided by my artistic work.

The historical context

Violin sonatas held a central position in Nordic chamber music during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This prominence can be partly attributed to the economic feasibility of such performances, as sonatas only require two musicians while still offering rich tonal variability (Edling 1992, 413–414). Sonatas also had the added benefit of appearing both as "concert sonatas" as well as sonatas "intended for private use" (Dahlhaus 1989b, 36). This versatility meant that sonatas could be per-

formed on almost any occasion were music was desired, and could encompass musical elements similar to character pieces while still representing the classical music tradition and its formal expectations (Edling 1992, 414). Sonatas could therefore appear in many different forms and could be performed in a wide variety of contexts.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, many different cultural forces came together to create a golden age of Nordic music. The nineteenth century also saw a strong rise in nationalism. For classical music this meant that there was increased pride in the uniqueness of the local culture. This coincided with an effort to collect folk music, which provided material and inspiration for many classical composers. While folk music was seen to possess a "spirit of the people" or "spirit of the nation", Dahlhaus (1989a, 95) argues that the actual folk music was in reality "regional or even local in its character and coloring", while "traits which were felt to be specifically national in the nineteenth century actually stretched far across national boundaries."

Folklorism in music was a common topic during the nineteenth century. Dahlhaus (1989b, 304–305) argues that exotism and folklorism in music has many commonly used musical elements which are found across different cultures. It is therefore typically not the individual elements that gives the music a national flavour but how these elements are combined. For example, bagpipe drones and sharpened fourths appear Polish in Chopin's compositions, while in Grieg's hands they sound Norwegian (Dahlhaus 1989a, 95). The mere inclusion of such elements does not necessarily suffice to create a national musical character (Dahlhaus 1989b, 38). Instead, diverse elements come together to form an 'intonation' that carries musical character or expression. These factors came together in the new trend of National Romanticism, which created both an interest in and compositional tools for expressing national topics in music.[8]

In order for music to come across as exotic it needs to differ from established expectations in some meaningful way. These deviations from the norm can either be additive or subtractive, i.e. either adding something unexpected or leaving out something expected. Additive elements can include the use of modal scales and harmonies, drone fifths, pedal points,

8 Nordic folklore, and most importantly Nordic mythology, had served as inspiration – especially for Danish composers – already during the eighteenth century, but these works lack many of the characteristics most often associated with Nordic music. This is hardly surprising, considering that National Romanticism, which provided many tools for expressing folklorism and mysticism, came to the fore only during the middle of the nineteenth century.

ostinatos, and the incorporation of local folk music (Dahlhaus 1989b, 306). Subtractive elements can include the disruption of the teleological progression that is a core element of western art music (ibid., 307). In short, by disrupting the flow of the music on, for example, a harmonical level, while keeping it moving on a rhythmical one, the composer can step outside of the "temporal linearity of everyday experience" (Torvinen and Välimäki 2020, 178). This technique is commonly used to create allusions of nature or landscapes (Dahlhaus 1989b, 307). Dahlhaus (ibid.) calls this phenomenon *Klangfläche*, but the technique has been described with other terms as well. Torvinen and Välimäki (2020) specifically link these static textures to the Nordic countries, and call the technique the "Nordic drone".

This negatively defined approach to depicting nature in music – which is "excluded from the imperative of organic development" – creates an internal tension within musical forms that rely heavily on musical development and structure (Dahlhaus 1989b, 307). As structure and development lie at the very core of classical sonatas, the use of techniques such as the ones described above creates a tension between two different approaches to music. This tension can be seen in many Nordic violin sonatas.

It bears mentioning that an exact characterisation of Nordic musical elements is hard to find in the literature. The German musicologist Friedhelm Krummacher (1982, 164) even argues that the difficulty of identifying Nordic characteristics is in itself part of the "Nordic tone". In other words, the lack of clearly definable musical features is part of the discussion surrounding Nordic music. Nonetheless, the lack of clear definitions does not prevent us from exploring the ways in which the musical elements that have come to be associated with Nordic music by scholars, reviewers, and musicians found their way into the sonatas that are discussed in this article.

Two historic perspectives on Nordic music

There were historically two primary perspectives on Nordic music. From a German perspective, Nordic music and Nordic culture was seen as an exotic borderland, whereas within the Nordic countries Nordic music was generally not seen as strange, exotic, or different, but an integral part of the culture (Ling 1992, 56). Arguably, within the Nordic countries the national and local cultural forces generally took precedence over the broader concept of "Nordic" (Tarasti 2016, 55). This does not, however, mean that a broader Nordic perspective was absent. For example, the Swedish folklorist Richard Dybeck arranged folk-music concerts in Stockholm

during the nineteenth century that were presented as Nordic, not Swedish (Ling 1992, 49–50). From a Nordic perspective, the integration of the local music into classical compositions was obvious, especially during a time of increasing nationalism and interest in the uniqueness of the local culture. An important question within the Nordic countries became how the Nordic and the Germanic elements should be balanced (ibid., 56).

How the local culture was approached differed, ranging from Ole Bull's opinion that Norwegian culture stood ready and waiting upon the mountains and only had to be brought down, to Edvard Grieg's and Johan Halvorsen's approach, where they reworked folk tunes into a style more suitable for classical performance (Herresthal 1993, 150; Grimley 2006, 38). In Finland, Jean Sibelius was greatly affected by Finnish folksongs and folk music but in an interview with Alberto Gasco of *La Tribuna* in 1923 Sibelius adamantly stated that he never used folk music in his compositions (Barnett 2007, 302). Instead, he applied the mood and the style of Finnish folk music, rather than the specific melodies.

For the topic of this article, it is also important to note that a majority of the most influential Nordic composers and musicians during the nineteenth century were educated in Germany. Indeed, all the sonatas discussed in greater detail in this article were written by composers who either lived and/or studied in Germany. Some Nordic composers even held prominent positions there. For example, the Danish composer Niels Gade shared leadership of the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig together with Felix Mendelssohn, and led the orchestra after Mendelssohn's death. Gade also taught at the Leipzig Conservatory. Christian Sinding lived much of his life in Germany and was regarded as a composer who could carry on Richard Wagner's legacy (Vollestad 2005, 82). Sinding had also composed Peters Verlag's best-selling single work, while Edvard Grieg at times held the honour of being their best-selling composer overall (Holth 2014, 46). These examples highlight the deep integration of Nordic musicians within German musical life.

Johann Peter Emilius Hartmann – who the German-American musicologist Alfred Einstein (1947, 317–318) called "the real founder of the Romantic movement in Denmark and even in all of Scandinavia" – and Niels Gade, who was the first to introduce a "Nordic tone" to the German public, both composed three violin sonatas each. It is, however, notable that while both composers were pioneers in using stylistically Nordic elements in their music, folklorism is mostly absent in their violin sonatas. Instead, these sonatas have been praised for their lyricism. While lyricism is a common characteristic of Romantic music, it is interesting to ponder

whether the lyricism found in the sonatas by Hartmann and Gade can be described as "Nordic". The term "Nordic lyricism" is commonly used to describe Nordic classical music, but its definition is allusive at best.

A possible explanation for this lyricism is that Nordic music has a strong foundation in the sung tradition. The Swedish cultural figure Gunnar Wennerberg spoke highly of the Nordic songs' "natural" and "naïve" character, which he associated with ternary form (also called song form) (Tegen and Jonsson 1992, 48). In a similar vein, the Swedish critic and composer Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (*Dagens Nyheter,* February 23, 1898) argued that Nordic music is intrinsically song-like in nature and therefore ill-suited to musical development.[9] Tegen and Jonsson (1992, 49), in their chapter on national romantic music in Sweden, concludes their remarks on this subject by arguing that Peterson-Berger thought Nordic music was incompatible with higher musical forms, although I would argue that Peterson-Berger's original text does not go quite as far.

Despite Peterson-Berger's aversion to combining Nordic music with musical development, he considered Emil Sjögren's Violin Sonatas as prime examples of how this tension could be resolved. Peterson-Berger approvingly described them as songs without words, but which nonetheless often longed for the word. The whole section is interesting, and reads:

> [...] the two Sjögren violin sonatas are essentially merely the highly developed Swedish romance's fertilization of instrumental forms that in themselves lack national life. They are bundles of resonant songs without words, but often longing for words, skilfully tied together in the arbitrarily chosen form of the traditional sonata, which could just as well have been that of the freer suite or fantasy cycle. In these sonatas, it is the melodies and their lyrical emotional content that are the main focus; the thematic intellectual work and the entire dramatic progression of the form come in second place (*Dagens Nyheter,* February 23, 1898).[10]

9 It bears mentioning that Peterson-Berger was a very controversial critic. His highly opinionated reviews, which also included antisemitic and racist comments, should be approached with caution. Nevertheless, his influential position can offer insight into the prevalent thoughts and discussions in Sweden at the time.

10 "[...] detvenne Sjögrenska violinsonaterna äro egentligen blott ett den högt utvecklade svenska romansens befruktande af instrumentalformer, som i sig sjelfva sakna nationelt lif. De äro knippen af klingande visor utan ord, men ofta längtande efter ordet, skickligt sammanknutna i den häfdvunna sonatens godtyckligt valda vand, hvilka like gerna kunnat vara den friare suitens eller fantasi-cykelns. Det är i dessa sonater melodierna och deras lyriska känsloinnehåll som äro hufvudsak; det tematiska tankearbetets och hela formgifningens dramatiska förlopp kommer först i andra rummet." (*Dagens Nyheter,* February 23, 1898)

Peterson-Berger considers the sonatas national, where their outward expression was shaped by the country's inner circumstances and national character (ibid.) Following Grieg's and Sjögren's examples, Peterson-Berger composed two early violin sonatas in 1887 and 1887–1891, and a third sonata in 1910.

These discussions about the challenge of balancing Nordic and Central European cultural trends were not limited to Sweden, but my sense is that the Swedes were quicker to question the assumptions found in Central European music than their Nordic counterparts, even though a national Swedish style never gained the same importance as in the other Nordic countries (Tarasti 2016, 55) . The Swedes also appear to have been more inclined to view the Nordic countries as a unified area, whereas national sentiments were more pronounced in Finland and Norway as both countries were at the time striving for independence. For these reasons, Tarasti (2016, 55, 65) has questioned the existence of a unified Nordic view on Nordic music; arguably, every Nordic country has their own cultural identity and a unique relationship to the broader Nordic culture.

Finnish music of the nineteenth century was strongly linked to the German tradition, both due to German musicians holding key positions in Finland as well as because most influential Finnish musicians had received their education in Germany. German culture also strongly influenced Norwegian music, with Leipzig becoming an important cultural hub for Norwegian – as well as more generally for Nordic – musicians (Holth 2014, 45). Nonetheless, the Norwegian poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1900), in his "En Tale om Maalsagen" questions whether it is reasonable that Grieg's music is considered more Norwegian when it uses dialects or local language in favour of newer motives and higher forms.[11] This raises the question of whether a national musical style is created by the composers working within the tradition or whether there is something "deeper" or more "fundamental" at the core.

In order to highlight the interplay between the Nordic and the Germanic, I will explore violin sonatas by Edvard Grieg, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Jean Sibelius, and Christian Sinding. These four composers take different approaches to the central question of this article. Grieg's three violin sonatas set an example for other Nordic composers on how classical forms can be combined with a national tonal language. Stenhammar's so-

11 "Tonerne er det mest umiddelbare Udtryk ogsaa for det nationale. Er nu Edv. Grieg mere norsk, naar han lægger en Melodi over en Maaltekst? Er han mindre norsk, naar han bruger nyere Motiver og Musikens høiere Former? Er han da mindre norsk?" (Bjørnson 1900)

nata in A minor is lyrical and expansive, and a good example of a Nordic composer following the German tradition. Sibelius' Sonatine follows the structural expectations of a sonata but fills the general structure with music unlike what would generally be expected in a sonata.[12] Sinding's *Sonate im alten Stil* diverges considerably from the expectations of a sonata, to the point that we can question whether the work is a sonata at all.

Nordic Violin Sonatas

The following exploration of Nordic elements in the sonatas by Grieg, Stenhammar, Sibelius, and Sinding does not include a full analysis of the four works. Instead, I aim to highlight details that are specifically relevant for the topic of this article. For a more general overview of the four sonatas, please refer to, for example, Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe (1993, 42–61) for a dive into Grieg's Second Violin Sonata and Wallner's (1991, 614–641) thorough exploration of Stenhammar's Violin Sonata. The discussions about Sibelius' Sonatine in the biographies of Sibelius are limited in scope, but general information can be found in Tawastsjerna (1996, 87–90), Furuhjelm (1916, 221), or Barnett's (2007, 249). The work is also discussed in the Introduction to the JSW Critical Edition, Serie IV, Band 6 (JSW IV/6 2018). Sinding's *Sonate im alten Stil* has sadly received even less attention. It is mentioned in Cobbett (1963, 421–422), Newman (1983, 629), and Rugstad (1979, 183–184), but the discussion of the work is very limited.

Grieg's Violin Sonata No. 2 op. 13

Edvard Grieg's three violin sonatas from 1865, 1867, and 1887 are arguably the most influential Nordic violin sonatas from the nineteenth century. They were widely performed, and set an example for subsequent Nordic sonatas. Grieg himself described the three sonatas in the following way: "the first naive, reflecting many antecedents; the second national; and the third with its wider horizons" (Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe 1988, 73).

Benestad (ibid., 124) notes that Grieg's songs and chamber music appear to have been composed for a more local audience than, for example, his Piano Concerto op. 16, which is more international in style. The local

12 The Sonatine op. 80 was originally composed as a Sonata. The decision to relabel it as a Sonatina was made shortly before publication (Dahlström 2003, 349).

qualities of Grieg's chamber music were viewed with some suspicion. In a letter to his Norwegian biographer, Gerhard Schjelderup, dated May 11, 1905, Grieg described Gade's worry about the strong national character of Grieg's Violin Sonata No. 2 in G Major. Gade, who had greatly enjoyed Grieg's Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Major, expressed concern about the new direction of Grieg's music. He decried: "No, Grieg, the next sonata you must not make so Norwegian." To which Grieg adamantly responded: "On the contrary, Professor, the next one is going to be even worse" (ibid., 42).

In his own words, Grieg composed the second sonata in just three weeks, "in the euphoria of my honeymoon" (ibid.). The sonata is openly folkloristic in style and features more Norwegian characteristics than any of his other works of chamber music. It accomplishes this by using many techniques commonly associated with Nordic, and most especially Norwegian, folk music. Many of the sonata's themes and motives bring to mind Norwegian folk music. Interestingly the sonata does not really have a slow movement, although it includes a calm middle section. Instead, all three movements present dance-like rhythms and characters. Another interesting feature is that, except for the slow introduction of the first movement, the time signature of the whole sonata is 3/4, which is the most common time signature found in Norwegian (and Swedish) folk dances.

What makes these folk-inspired elements interesting is that they appear to affect the musical content in multiple ways. The general structure is fairly typical for a sonata of the time. The first movement begins with a slow nineteen-bar introduction that is linked by a short six-bar phrase, marked *Poco allegro,* to the main part of the movement. The main section of the first movement is marked *Allegro vivace* and is in sonata form. The middle movement is in ternary form (also called ABA-form), while Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe (1993, 43) describes the last movement as sonata-rondo.

To name a few examples of elements commonly associated with Nordic music, I can mention the regular use of long pedal points; modal scales and harmonies (specifically Phrygian and Aeolian); drone fifths (including the typically Griegian dominant seventh chord over a tonic fifth pedal point); allusions to Norwegian folk dances*;* rhythms commonly found in Norwegian folk music; the fiddle-like use of the open strings on the violin; and alternations between major and minor modes of the same key. The alternation between major and minor modes is a feature that German critics already during the 1840s recognised as typically Nordic (Fjeldsøe and Groth 2019, 17). However, the most important folk-inspired element is the incessant use of the so-called "Grieg formula". The "Grieg formula" consists of a descending second followed by a descending third.

The formula often uses the Lydian fourth, which is a common feature in music played on the Hardanger-fiddle.[13]

Grieg was well aware of the folk-roots of his formula. In a 36-page letter to his American biographer Henry. T. Finck, dated July 17, 1900, Grieg writes: "There is one characteristic of our folk music that I have always liked: the treatment of the leading tone, especially when the note following the leading tone is the dominant" (quoted in Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe 1988, 49). Another letter, this one written to the Norwegian violinist, composer, and conductor Johan Halvorsen, who at Grieg's request had been transcribing folk melodies played by the Norwegian folk fiddler Knut Dahle, provides more information about Grieg's fascination with the motive. In a letter dated December 6, 1901, Grieg writes:

> But to the point: This "strange" thing that you point out regarding G sharp in D major was what made me go wild and crazy in the year 1871. I naturally at once stole it in my "Pictures from Folk-life" [Op. 19]. This is something for the researcher. The augmented fourth can also be heard in the songs of the farmer. It is the relics of some old scale. But which one?[14]

The Norwegian musicologist Utne-Reitan Bjørnar (2021, 78) argues that it is unlikely that Grieg truly did not recognize the sharp fourth as a Lydian mode. However, he also speculates that Grieg may have considered the raised fourth in Norwegian folk music as something "conceptually different from the church modes" (ibid., 79).

The importance of the "Grieg formula" in Grieg's Second Violin Sonata cannot be overstated. The motive, which includes the interval of a second followed by a third, appears in different guises and rhythms. It appears both in the major version (a descending small second followed by a descending major third) and the minor version (a descending major second followed by a descending minor third). The minor one is sometimes called the "modal form". The motive also appears inverted, i.e.

13 The most famous example of the "Grieg formula" appears at the beginning of Grieg's Piano Concerto in a Minor, op. 16. Here the "formula" is heard in its most iconic form, using the notes A, G-sharp, E. However, other versions of the "formula" (including modal ones) are found throughout Grieg's music.

14 Men til Sagen: Dette "mærkelige" som Du siger med G in the translation: G sharp! i D dur var det som gjorde mig vild og gal i Året 1871. Jeg gjæt den naturligvis fik i mine "Folkelivsbilleder" til. Denne Tone er Noget for Forskeren. Den forstorrede Kvart kan også høres i Bondens Sang. Det er Gjengangere fra en eller anden gammel Skala. Men hvilken? (Benestad 1998, 372). The English translation is by Utne-Reitan (2021, 78).

with ascending rather than descending intervals, and sometimes a fourth note is added within the motive (see Figures 1, 2, and 3) (Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe 1993, 43). To these versions highlighted by Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe I would add a reversed version where the interval of a third appears first and is then followed by a second. If we ignore the condition that the formula needs to include both a major and a minor interval (in either order), the motive is found even more often, sometimes overlapping with other versions of the motive.

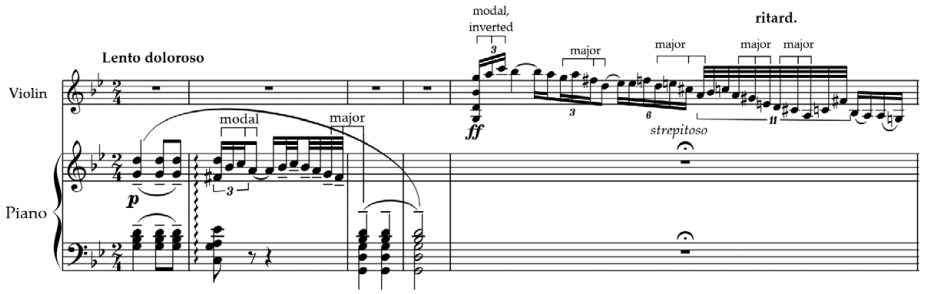

Figure 1. Examples of the Grieg formula in the opening of the first movement.

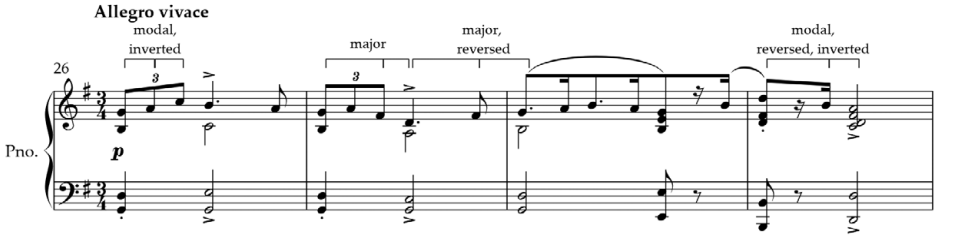

Figure 2. The Grieg formula in the first theme of the Allegro vivace section.

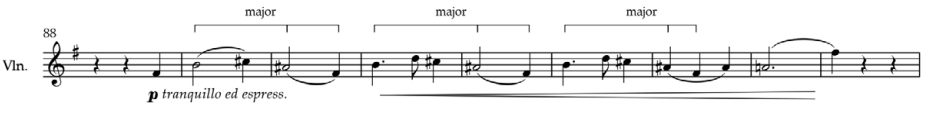

Figure 3. The Grieg formula in the second theme of the first movement.

This three-note motive permeates the whole sonata. Strangely, after drawing a lot of attention to the Grieg formula in the first movement, Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe (1993, 51) argue that the formula "is much less conspicuous" in the second movement. However, if we allow for the variations of the three-note motive outlined above, which include the inversion of the motive and the insertion of an extra note, the Grieg formula appears no less than seven times in the first eight bars of the second movement (see Figure 4). This trend continues in much of the second movement.

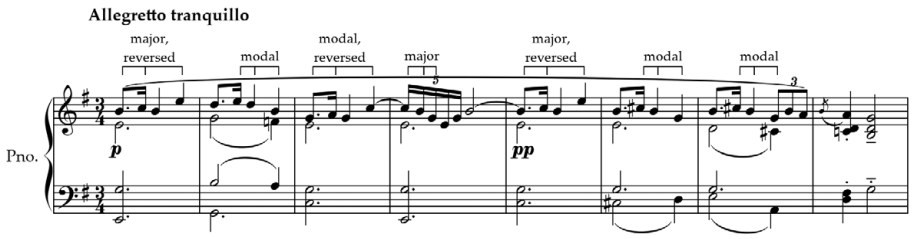

Figure 4. The use of the Grieg formula in the opening to the second movement.

The last movement is once again in the spirit of a lively folk dance. The main theme shows a motivic and rhythmic similarity to the main theme of the first movement, even though the Grieg formula has been altered slightly by inverting it and expanding the first interval to a fourth. In the following virtuosic triplets, the Grieg formula is again present (see Figure 5).

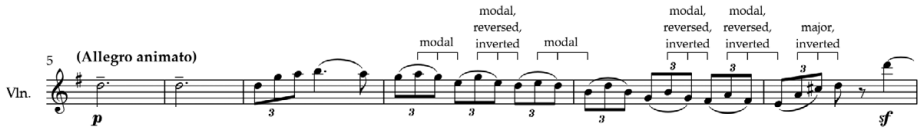

Figure 5. The main theme of the third movement. Note the strong rhythmic similarity between the theme of the last movement and the main theme of the first movement.

One consequence of the folk-inspired musical material is that the sonata is built out of relatively short motives rather than long themes. This means that the development of the material happens primarily on a mo-

tivic and harmonic level, rather than on a longer thematic one. Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe (1988, 67) see this technique – which they describe as "[t]he use of motives with small, concise "buds" that in subsequent variations are constantly sending out new 'shoots'" – as a characteristic associated with music played on the Hardanger-fiddle.

Without going too deeply into harmonic analysis, it is interesting that Dahlhaus (1989a, 97) has argued that the integration of folk music into the context of nineteenth-century harmonic writing was a driving force behind the invention of new harmonies. His explanation for this is that the folk melodies were often monodic and "resisted assimilation into the well-worn formulas of major-minor tonality" (ibid.). This forced composers to look for unconventional solutions to these new compositional challenges. Dahlhaus (ibid.) gives the example of Grieg's *Slåtter,* op. 72 with its "modally based harmonic style and with a chromaticism determined primarily by melodic, contrapuntal features", which Dahlhaus considers was at odds with the "predominant musical tendency, as represented by Wagner." Sibelius also highlighted the importance of the harmonic potential of folk melodies in his trial lecture for a teaching position at the Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki (Oramo 2020). Sibelius (2011 [1896], 322) argues that the foundational tones of Finnish runic melodies "D E F G A [B]" can be interpreted "as an upper pentachord resting on a similar lower one, with G as its point of departure. Hence we are dealing with a non-chordal[15] series as the harmonic basis for melodies of this type."

In his writings about Grieg's *Fjeldmelodier,* which is part of *Norwegian Folk Tunes*, Op. 66, Dahlhaus (1989b, 310) sees a historical dialectic between the archaism of the old folk material and the modernist techniques used to harmonize them. Grimley (2006, 101), however, does not see this as a result of Grieg assimilating Austro-German practices, but rather that it is "the distance or remoteness from the mainstream that is responsible for the more radical or advanced aspects of his musical style." Grimley supports his opinion by quoting a letter dated August 22, 1896, from Grieg to Julius Röntgen. It reads:

> Life is just as strange as folk songs; one doesn't know whether they were conceived in major or minor ... I spent the afternoons in my room where I harmonized the many folk melodies which Frants [Beyer] had sent me.[16] It was

15 The translation by Margareta Martin includes a footnote that mentions that the original Swedish term is *non Akord*. This Swedish term is used to describe ninth chords, which can be assumed to be the original intention.

16 Frants Beyer was one of Grieg's closest friends.

> truly festive . . . Some of them are incredibly beautiful. In any case, I have set some hair-raising chord combinations on paper. But, by way of excuse, let me say that they weren't created at the piano but in my head. When one has the Voring Falls nearby, one feels more independent and is more daring than down in the valley. (Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe 1988, 335)

This brief exploration of the Nordic elements in Grieg's Second Violin Sonata aims to highlight how Grieg's use of material inspired by Nordic folk music came to influence almost every aspect of the composition. These include, but are not limited to, melodies inspired by motives found in folk music, rhythms inspired by folk dances such as the Norwegian *springar*, harmonies that adapt to the unique quality of the melodic material, and the heavy focus on short motives. Interestingly, Grieg manages to combine all of these elements within a structure that is broadly in line with the expectations of sonatas from the second half of the nineteenth century.

Stenhammar's Violin Sonata in A minor op. 19

Stenhammar's Violin Sonata in A minor, op. 19, presents a strongly contrasting perspective on what a Nordic violin sonata entails. Stenhammar composed the first movement to his Violin Sonata in the summer of 1899 on the island Särö, and the rest of the sonata the following summer in Bergvik, Ingarö. The sonata by Stenhammar was therefore composed over thirty years after Grieg composed his second Violin Sonata. The way Stenhammar approaches the sonata as a musical form differs markedly from the folklorism found in Grieg's sonata.

A few observations can help us understand the musical journey that led Stenhammar to compose his violin sonata. Stenhammar's musical education had a strong German focus. His piano teacher, Richard Andersson, with whom he began studying in 1887, had himself numbered among his teachers Clara Schumann and Heinrich Barth (Haglund 2019, 39). Barth frequently performed with the violinist Joseph Joachim and was part of Johannes Brahms' inner circle (ibid., 57). On Andersson's recommendation, Stenhammar himself sought the tutelage of Barth when he moved to Berlin in 1892 to further his education. Despite only studying in Berlin for seven months, the experience left a strong impression on Stenhammar.

During his time in Berlin, Stenhammar was introduced to the two major currents of German classical music of the time. Wallner (1991, 301) describes Stenhammar's existence in Berlin as one where he played Brahms

during the days, but the evenings were dedicated to Wagner. Both influences make themselves felt in Stenhammar's compositions from the period (Haglund 2019, 58).

By 1896 the Brahmsian influence had already became a target of criticism for Stenhammar. A critical review written pseudonymously by Peterson-Berger saw Stenhammar as the Swedish Brahms, who followed in the footsteps of Beethoven (Wallner 1991, 504). Peterson-Berger wrote that it was "embarrassing to see a brooding youth completely devoid of naivety, but that is the image we saw yesterday" (*Dagens Nyheter,* November 14, 1896).[17]

Another important factor for understanding the background of Stenhammar's Violin Sonata was his active performance career. Stenhammar cooperatated with Sweden's leading string quartet, the Aulin Quartet, and additionally performed extensively with the quartet's first violinist Tor Aulin (Wallner 1991, 616–617). In the years leading up to Stenhammar composing his Violin Sonata, Stenhammar and Aulin performed at least the following sonatas in public: 3 Violin Sonatas by Johannes Brahms, César Franck's Violin Sonata (including likely the first performance of the work in Sweden), Emil Sjögren's First, Second, and Third Violin Sonatas,[18] Edvard Grieg's Third Violin Sonata, Hugo Alfvén's Violin Sonata, Ludwig van Beethoven's Third Violin Sonata, and possibly Robert Schumann's First Violin Sonata. Other major works for violin and piano included Franz Berwald's *Duo,* Peter Lange-Müller's *Three Fantasy Pieces,* Tor Aulin's *Fyra akvareller,* and possibly Christian Sinding's *Suite im alten Stil* (ibid., 616, 627). In addition to these public concerts, Stenhammar also performed at musical salons, but the repertoire that was performed in the salons is sadly unknown. Stenhammar was therefore well-versed in the duo repertoire from the nineteenth century. Swedish and Nordic composers played a significant part in his repertoire, but major central European composers were equally important.

While Nordic music played a central role in Stenhammar's repertoire, his interaction with the Nordic culture and with folklorism differed from many of his colleagues. His style was in many ways classical and reserved, and he avoided overt nationalism and patriotism. For example, his choral work *Sverige* from 1905, which was composed to an openly nationalistic

17 "Det är pinsamt att se en grubblande och på all naivitet blottad ungdom, men den bilden sågo vi i går." (Review by Peterson-Berger under the pseudonym "-t-" in *Dagens Nyheter*, November 14, 1896)

18 The performance of Sjögren's Third Violin Sonata took place on the 4th of April 1900, after Stenhammar had composed the first movement of his Violin Sonata but not the other movements.

poem called *Ett folk* by Verner von Heidenstam, carefully avoids all sense of patriotic grandeur. Haglund (2019, 27–28) hears in the work a criticism of nationalism. Additionally, Stenhammar was a strong proponent of Norwegian independence and the dissolution of the union between Sweden and Norway (ibid., 22). Stenhammar's music would later take on more Nordic characteristics after getting to know Jean Sibelius and his music in 1904. Stenhammar even incorporated folk music into his work *Midvinter* from 1907, but this stylistic development was still in the future when Stenhammar composed his Violin Sonata.

There is yet another factor to Stenhammar's active performance career that I think makes itself felt in his Violin Sonata; the changing musical landscape and the gradual disappearance of musical salons in Sweden. Stenhammar belonged to a generation of musicians whose career began just as the importance of the salons began to fade (Wallner 1991, 615). This gradual decline of salon concerts was not seen entirely as a positive development. While performances can be given in venues of any size, the intimacy and social closeness of a salon concert differed from concerts given in larger, more formal venues. Something about the immediacy and directness of the experience was lost as the performance moved to larger halls where the performers were often separated from the audience by a podium in front of straight lines of chairs. Stenhammar's music retained something of the intimate, sometimes even fragile quality, which may be better suited to the intimacy of a home rather than the grandeur of a large concert hall.

With this context in mind, we can now explore how these elements come together in Stenhammar's Violin Sonata. When I first began studying Stenhammar's Violin Sonata in 2019 for a few concerts, I kept asking myself if there was anything identifiably Swedish or Nordic about the sonata. My initial impression was that the objective answer to the question was "not really", but the longer I worked on the music the more I felt that there is something unique about Stenhammar's way of composing that suggests a Nordic influence in his tonal language. The actual examples of these "Nordic" elements are not nearly as obvious as in Grieg's sonata, but I am now convinced that they are present.

The violin opens the sonata alone with an expansive ascending minor sixth, which is immediately answered by the piano. Wallner (ibid., 629) sees the gesture as reminiscent of the opening of Brahms' Violin Sonata in d Minor, but whereas Brahms' sonata is filled with tension, Stenhammar introduces a calmly rocking motive in 6/8 that brings the phrase to rest (see Figure 6). The time signature of the first movement has been loosely associated with Nordic music. The Dane Andreas Berggreen –

who collected a large number of folk songs that he published in 11 volumes – provided a basic "recipe" for how to compose a Nordic melody that included "an even flow in the melodies", "often associated with the 6/8 metre" (Fjeldsøe and Groth 2019, 6).

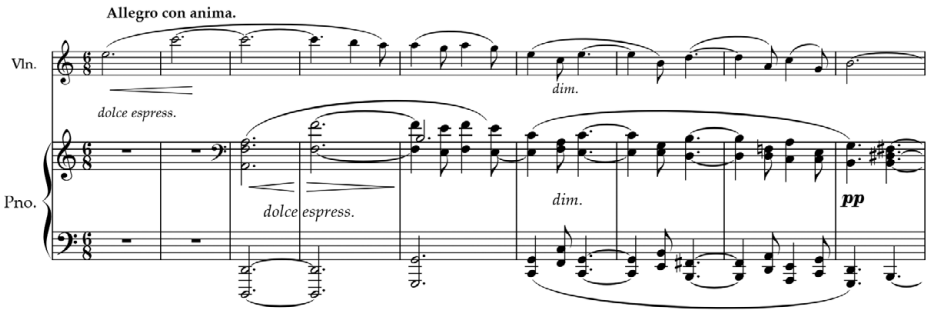

Figure 6. The opening bars of Stenhammar's Violin Sonata.

Much of the first movement becomes an interplay between these two motives, the passionate ascending minor sixth and the calm, rocking descending figure. After a brief playful dialogue between the violin and the piano – in which Wallner (1991, 629) sees a slight nod to Berwald – and a bridge-passage that uses an interplay and diminution of the two opening motives, the first movement reaches its second-theme zone. Instead of presenting a new theme, the "second theme" consists of the exact same motives as the first theme: the rising sixth and the rocking motive. The gently rocking motive has here turned into a discreet accompaniment. The second theme is therefore in essence a development of the opening theme.

A consequence of this motivic cohesion is that it blurs the lines between the primary and secondary theme zones, as well as between the exposition, development, and recapitulation. For example, Stenhammar repeats the complete first theme at the end of the exposition but takes a surprising turn and transposes the playful dialogue described above from C Major to C-sharp minor, which in hindsight raises the question of whether the repeat of the main theme was the end of the exposition or the beginning of the development section. Similarly, the development leads directly into the recapitulation but leaves out the material which was heard at the beginning of the exposition. Interestingly it is the opening theme, which unexpectedly reappeared at the end of the exposition, and

the following playful dialogue that led the music into the development section, which are missing from the recapitulation. Due to these missing elements, it becomes clear that the development truly is over only when the second-theme zone is reached in the recapitulation.

While the first movement includes few (if any) elements that are commonly associated with Nordic music, the following two movements include aspects that hint at a Nordic influence. The second movement is lyrical in style, and the first theme has a song-like, although fragmentary, quality. The opening of the movement, marked *Andantino,* with the added instruction *con intimissimo sentimento* for the violin, gives an initially hesitant impression but gradually grows into longer melodies. Cobbett's *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* (1963, 456) describes the second movement as being "in the lyrical vein of a national folk-song".

Stenhammar himself undoubtedly also saw the potential of the melody's vocal quality. Some years after composing the sonata, in 1907, he composed a work for piano and voice called *Hemmarschen* (1907–1912), where the same motive appears (see Figures 7 and 8). In this work, the text from the poem *Hemmet* by Heidenstam begins "I long for the forest back home. There is a path in the grass. There is a house on the isthmus".[19] This begs the question of whether the second movement of the sonata can be considered an example of what Peterson-Berger described as "songs without words, but often longing for words." While the argument definitely can be made, there is something in the way the movement develops as a whole that is far from typical late-Romantic atmospheric character pieces.

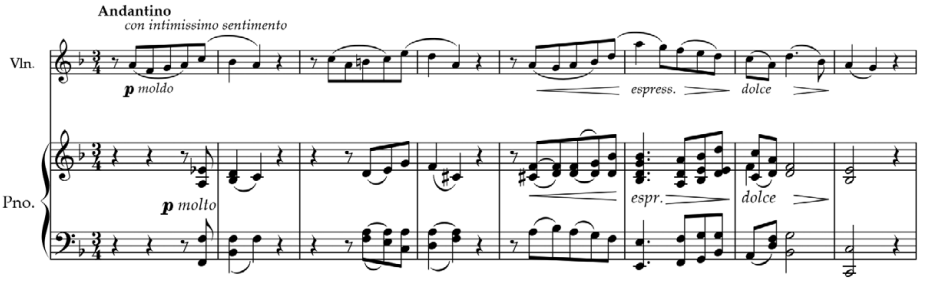

Figure 7. The opening of the second movement, presenting a hesitant, song-like melody.

19 "Jag längtar hem till skogen. Där finns en stig i gräset. Där står ett hus på näset."

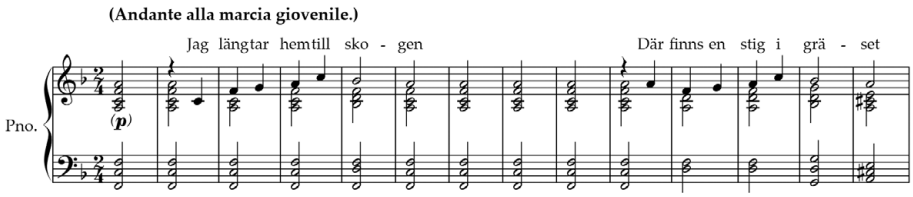

Figure 8. The middle section of Stenhammar's Hemmarschen, op. 27.

The middle of the movement includes a section that suddenly brings to mind the fading salon-tradition. The section is initiated by a beautiful and unexpected transposition from F Major to D-flat Major. Wallner (1991, 635) describes the moment as if Stenhammar, for the first time in the movement, turns to the audience with melodic charm and romantic harmony. It is as if Stenhammar for a brief moment lets go of his disciplined and intellectual approach and lets the music flow freely and without concern. I have asked myself if the music presented in this section may not have been just as important a part of Stenhammar's own musical path and his personal experience of Swedish musical life as folk songs or modal harmonies.

The opening theme of the last movement has a folk-like simplicity and flair to its character (see Figure 9). It is built of repeating dactyl rhythms that form a gradually ascending musical line which shows similarity to an earlier piano work by Stenhammar called *Intermezzo* (1898; Wallner 1991, 636). Tawaststjerna (1965, 106) has noted that the use of the dactyl rhythm is a common feature in folk music all across the Nordic countries, but the use of dactyls is so common in classical music that its significance is limited. Professor Vincent Oddo, writing for *Edition Silvertrust,* describes the movement as having "folkloristic roots", but while the theme is folk-like, I have been unable to locate a folk dance or song that actually shows a strong melodic similarity to Stenhammar's theme.

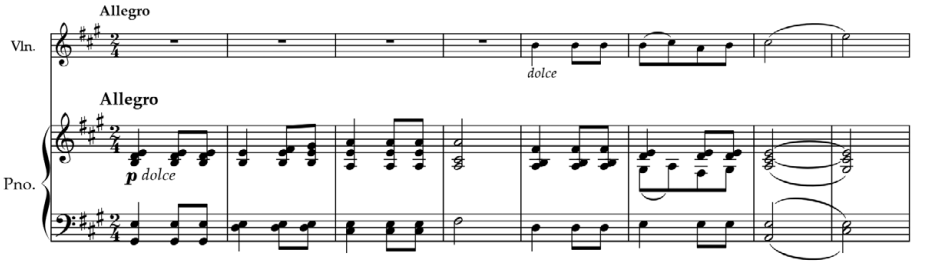

Figure 9. The folk-like opening to the third movement of Stenhammar's Violin Sonata.

Despite the simple theme, the music quickly develops, suggesting a broader scope. The last movement is presented in sonata form with an extensive coda. While many of the movement's melodies are simple and folk-like in style, the movement as a whole resists classification as folkloristic. This has to do with how the music deals with melody, harmony, and structure. The movement is in sonata form and often avoids perfect authentic cadences, which causes the melodies to take on an expansive quality. Also, the large and idiomatically written piano part brings to mind central European composers such as Beethoven and Brahms (Wallner 1991, 638–639).

An interesting aspect of the last movement is that the ascending sixth, which played such a prominent role in the first movement, returns at both the end of the exposition and the recapitulation, now in its major form. The importance of the return of this interval is only fully understood at the end of the coda, where the first movement's main theme returns triumphantly, revealing the sonata's cyclic form.

Wallner (ibid.) goes out of his way to emphasise that Stenhammar's Violin Sonata is not an example of national Romantic instrumental style, even calling it the Nordic violin sonata that least adheres to Peterson-Berger's ideal of "songs without words, skilfully tied together in the arbitrarily chosen form of the traditional sonata." Wallner (ibid.) nonetheless simultaneously argues that the sonata is "permeated by Nordic Romantic tone." While I largely agree with Wallner's assessment, it raises the question of whether the lack of commonly used Nordic musical characteristics – such as folklorism, harmonic drones, modalism, or drone fifths – automatically disqualifies works from being interpreted as sounding Nordic. Stenhammar's position within Nordic musical life was unlike many of his colleagues, and his music in many ways reflects this difference. Arguably,

the Violin Sonata may well be more representative of the part of Nordic musical life that Stenhammar himself lived and worked within than many other more overtly folkloristic or nationalistic works.

Sibelius' Sonatine in E Major, op. 80

Sibelius' Sonatine in E Major, op. 80 provides yet another perspective on the violin sonata. The Sonatine was composed during 1914 and 1915 during a time of great societal upheaval. The First World War had interrupted Sibelius' usual income streams from publishers in central Europe, and Sibelius expressed his frustration with having to compose smaller works to feed his family (Dahlström 2005, 192, 236).

The Sonatine is in many ways a contradictory work, but I would argue that it is exactly within these unresolved contradictions that we can find its most interesting features. Sibelius' diary presents a picture of a turbulent time when Sibelius' mood seems to have fluctuated wildly. Similarly, his own view of the Sonatine changed from day to day. For example, on the 23rd of February 1915 Sibelius wrote: "Worked on the third movement. I have high hopes for this sonatina."[20] The very next day the only entrance in the diary reads: "Worked on and wrote the Sonatine, but it is not good."[21]

In his diary the work is interchangeably called either "Sonat" or "Sonatine", but the final decision to go for the latter title was only made after proofreading the material before publication in November 1921, years after completing the work (Dahlström 2003, 349). The change of the title was accompanied by a comment by Sibelius stating that "as such it will have considerable success."[22] The choice of the title brings up the first question about the Sonatine's character. Grove Music Online (2001) describes a Sonatine as a "short, easy or otherwise 'light' Sonata", but while Sibelius' Sonatine is relatively short, it is not particularly easy. While there is no rule stating that a Sonatine cannot be technically challenging, the name nonetheless brings to mind minor works for children or beginners.

There are other aspects of the work that link the Sonatine to Sibelius' childhood and youth. On December 25, 1914 he wrote in his diary about how he has planned a sonata and mentions that he has had the idea ever

20 "Arbetat på tredje satsen. Jag hoppas bra af denne sonatina." (Dahlström 2005, 219)
21 "Arbetade och skref Sonatinen men – den är ej bra." (ibid.)
22 "Som sådan kommer den att ha betydande framgång". (Dahlström 2003, 349)

since he composed two sonatas in the 1880s (Dahlström 2005, 209).[23] On February 14, 1915 Sibelius wrote in his diary: "[Worked on] the first movement of the Sonatine. Dreamed that I was 12 years and a virtuoso. Childhood sky and stars – many stars."[24] Another link to Sibelius' youth is that he told Erik Furuhjelm in an interview "that the Sonatine actually should be performed by a sixteen-year-old girl."[25]

The mention of the starry sky is also noteworthy, because astronomy was an interest that Sibelius shared with his uncle Pehr, who became something of a father-figure for Sibelius after he lost his father (Goss 2009, 53–55). This interest found its way into Sibelius' Violin Sonata in F Major JS 178 from 1889, where the last movement depicts the arrival of a meteor during midsummer. Sibelius described the narrative in a letter to his uncle dated July 6, 1889 (Goss 1996, 105). It is surprising to see that the topic reappears in the Sonatine more than a quarter of a century later. These examples show that there are numerous clues that suggest an association between the Sonatine and Sibelius' youth, during which Sibelius composed a large amount of chamber music.

We can only speculate about the reason for these extra-musical connections. While there clearly was a strong connection between Sibelius' youth, the violin, and the dream of becoming a violin virtuoso, these associations are not as clear in many of his other works for the instrument. However, my experience of performing Sibelius' compositions from the period from about 1914–1918 has made me aware of a sense of underlying longing and nostalgia. Considering the financial and emotional hardship that Sibelius was experiencing at the time, these violin pieces and the dreams of his childhood may have served as a momentary escape from the surrounding reality.

While a child-like simplicity permeates many of the Sonatine's motives, they are combined with a mature, almost fifty-year-old composer's deep understanding of music.[26] The whole Sonatine is built around a dense core of musical motives, most of which can be deduced from the Sonatine's opening bar. The first movement opens with a slow introduc-

23 The sonatas he is referring to are the Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Minor, JS 177 from 1884 and the Sonata for Violin and Piano in F Major, JS 178 from 1889 (Dahlström 2003, 608–611).

24 "På sonatinens 1sta sats. Drömt mig vara 12 år och virtuos. Barndomshimmel och stjärnor – mycket stjärnor." (Dahlström 2005, 218)

25 "Min violinsonat borde egentligen spelas af en sextonårig flicka." (*Dagens Press*, 07.12.1915)

26 It is worth remembering that Sibelius worked on the Sonatine at the same time as he worked on his 5th and 6th Symphonies. The Sonatine features material which was originally intended for his Sixth Symphony (Lehtonen 2022; JSW IV/6 2018, 289).

tion marked *Lento,* where a short one bar motive in thirds is introduced by the piano, then repeated two octaves higher by the violin, before being passed back to the piano (see Figure 10). This seemingly nondescript and harmonically ambiguous motive contains the seeds for the main material for all three movements of the Sonatina. The opening motive consists of a rising fourth, followed by a descending second, which in turn is followed by an ascending fifth, and ends with a descending second.

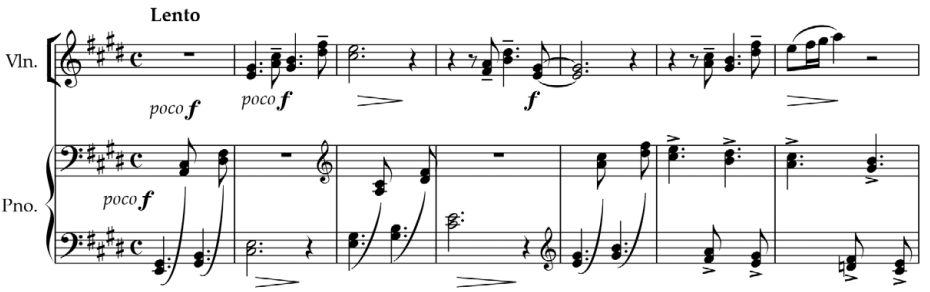

Figure 10. The opening to Sibelius' Sonatine. It contains the main motivic components that are used throughout the work.

If we compare the main motives of all three movements of the Sonatine, we notice that they all begin with a scale-wise motion that fits within the interval of a fourth (see Figure 11). This fourth is outlined by the very first interval of the introduction. A scale-wise motion can also be found hidden between the upper and the lower voice, if we follow the line g-sharp, a, b-natural, (d-sharp), c-sharp. In the *Allegro* section of the first movement and the *Allegretto* section of the third movement this motive uses the upper tetrachord of the E major scale, whereas it uses the upper tetrachord of natural E minor in the introduction to the third movement. In the second movement the motive is inverted. Additionally, the major sixth in combination with a dotted rhythm, which can be found between the lower voice of the first note and the upper note of the second note, is another central motive of the first movement. This density of material in such a short motive causes certain challenges from a performance per-

spective, because it is unclear which lines are the most important ones and should be emphasized.

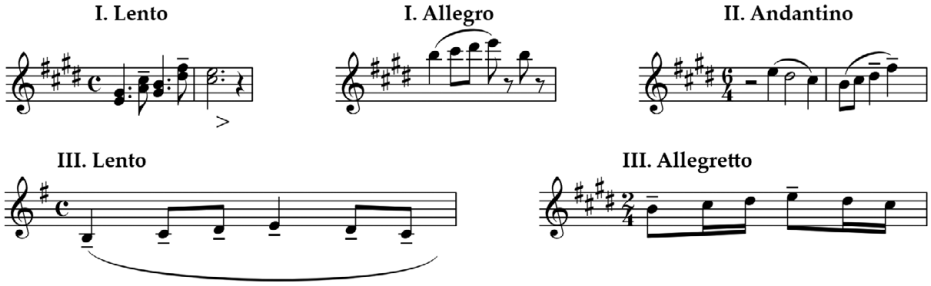

Figure 11. The main themes of all the major sections of the three movements are all built around a perfect fourth. In the second movement the motive is inverted. Note the strong similarities between main motives of the different movements.

Interestingly, these motivic details have also found their way into the work's harmonies. As the *Allegro* section of the first movement begins, the theme is accompanied by a repeated harmony consisting of an open fifth followed by an open fourth. These are the exact intervals found between the first and second, and the third and fourth notes of the opening bar. Arguably more interestingly, this harmony is repeated for no less than fifteen bars (see Figure 12).

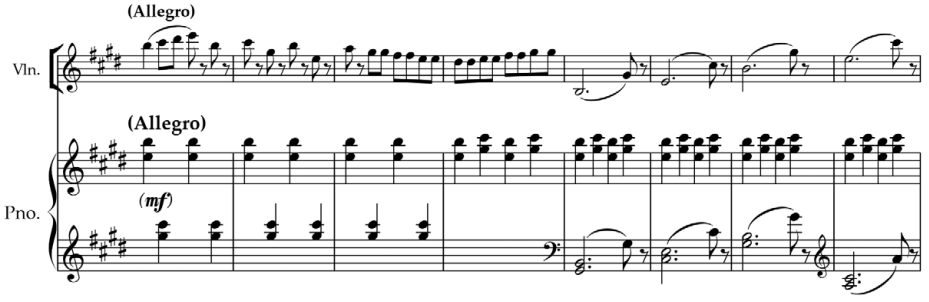

Figure 12. The main theme of the first movement. Notice how every aspect of this phrase has a connection to the opening Lento (see Figure 11).

The extensive use of static textures, such as the one described above, is one of the most fascinating aspects of the Sonatina. This breakdown of what Dahlhaus (1989b, 307) called the "imperative of organic development [...] as well as its harmonic schemes" creates a unique atmosphere where the melodies can be seen as moving within a harmonic landscape rather than dictating its every turn. These harmonic landscapes, which are harmonically static while providing a constant rhythmical motion, break down the convention of having the music guided by harmonic direction. What makes the textures in the outer movements Sibelius' Sonatine especially interesting is that while static textures often are associated with "hushed, muted and often dark timbres", the static textures found in the Sonatine are almost the exact opposite (Torvinen and Välimäki 2020, 173). They are bright, open, and effectively conjure an image of a starry sky rather than a traditional physical landscape.

I have personally found that the interpretation of the harmonically static opening to the *Allegro section* to be surprisingly challenging. This is due to the lack of both harmonic direction and performance instructions. The section is marked *mezzoforte* but includes no other dynamics, hairpins, or articulations (although the rests in the violin part can be indicative of the desired articulation). This means that there are very few hints in the score about how Sibelius wanted the music to be shaped.

For example, should the violin and the piano present the same character, or is the violin's melodic line a contrasting element? In a similar vein, there is a question about how the music should be phrased. The phrase clearly consists of 4+4 bars, but is it a good idea to phrase towards the fifth bar? The melodic contour does not provide a definite answer, although the repeated eight-notes in the third and fourth bar could be suggestive of musical direction. However, if this solution is adopted, can the phrase be shown using agogics, or does the static harmony suggest that the tempo should remain absolutely steady? I could also make an argument for performing the melody like a dance by emphasising the first beats of the bars. This would bring the theme closer in style to the *Allegretto* section of the last movement (see Figure 13). Evaluating the pros and cons of these choices is not easy.

In my opinion there are no obvious answers to these questions, but they highlight the challenge of interpreting the score. A mental image that I found useful was to imagine this section as a mature man's recollection of a happier time, perhaps of his childhood. This metaphor allows the melody to embody both a personal intimacy and a sense of distance, reflecting the passage of time. Such contradicting feelings are interesting

to explore through artistic works, but it is less clear if such an interpretation can effectively be conveyed to the audience.

There is something impressionistic about Sibelius' use of these static textures. In 1942 Sibelius himself claimed that the Sonatina is "purely French, not German",[27] but the work also contains many elements associated with Finnish and Nordic music. This shows the complexity of exploring national or regional influences. Clearly, Sibelius with his statement wanted to differentiate his Sonatine from the German canon of violin sonatas, but it is unclear if Sibelius is referring to anything in particular when calling it French.

In addition to the use of static textures, the Sonatina also uses other musical elements associated with Nordic music. The work includes an abundance of dactyl rhythms, which Tawaststjerna associated with Nordic music as I mentioned with regard to Stenhammar's Violin Sonata. There is also an interesting Finnish connection in the main motive itself. While the similarity may be coincidental, the notes of the violin part in the opening bar of the Allegro section of the third movement are identical to the opening of the Karelian folk melody "Lintuselle" (Collan 1875, 7) (see Figure 13). Considering the strong motivic cohesion between the movements, this suggests that the thematic material that permeates the whole Sonatine shows similarities to Finnish folk music.

27 "Viulusonatiinin ote on puhtaasti ranskalainen, ei saksalainen" (Jalas 1942).

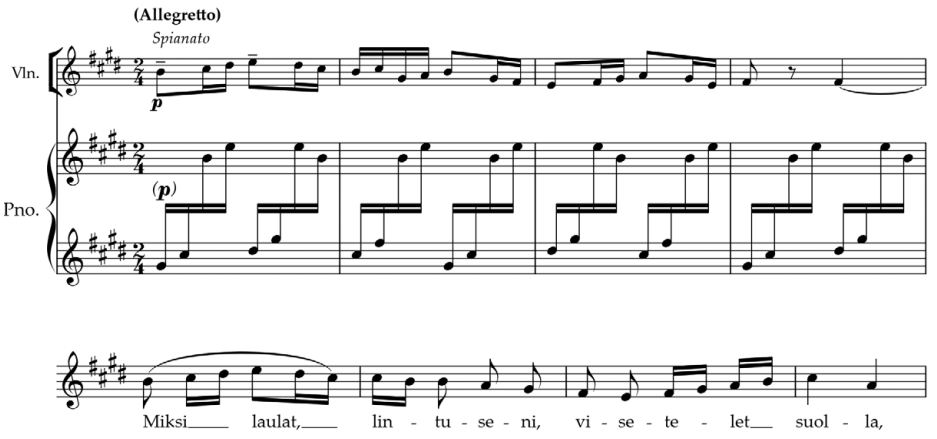

Figure 13. The theme in the Allegretto section of the third movement compared to the folk song "Lintuselle". Also, note the rhythmically active but harmonically static accompaniment.[28]

In the second movement, the Sonatina includes elements that I have come to associate with mysticism or folklorism. On three occasions the flow of the music is interrupted by moments where the piano's steady accompaniment lands on a held note or fermata and the violin plays a short cadenza. These cadenzas present a clear contrast to the movement's otherwise calm character. The first two interruptions are short and can be seen as improvisatory transitions, but the last one is more dramatic. It begins with a leap of an octave and a minor seventh by the violin, whereas the piano stops on a single pitch, c natural, which is arpeggiated over four octaves in the low register. This moment creates a strong contrast to the rest of the piano's texture.

These moments, which are unlike anything I have encountered in other violin sonatas, beg the question of what (if anything) the music is representing. The tranquil and almost magical musical landscape created by the slow movement's piano part invite the imagination to come up with

28 The first four bars are repeated in the folk song, with the only difference being that that the last quarter note is b natural instead of a natural in the repeat.

explanations for these sudden interruptions. If we presume that the music depicts either nature or a physical landscape, these moments suggest some kind of disturbance, perhaps a distraction, by something residing within this landscape. Nordic folklore is filled with stories and creatures that could fit the bill.

One reason why I have come to associate these moments that seem to lie outside of the expectations of classical sonatas with folklorism is that Sibelius, in the introduction to the last movement of the Sonatine, uses musical material that shows a similarity to his earlier orchestral work *Pohjola's Daughter* (see Figure 14).[29] This orchestral work is based on a story from the Finnish National epic *Kalevala*.

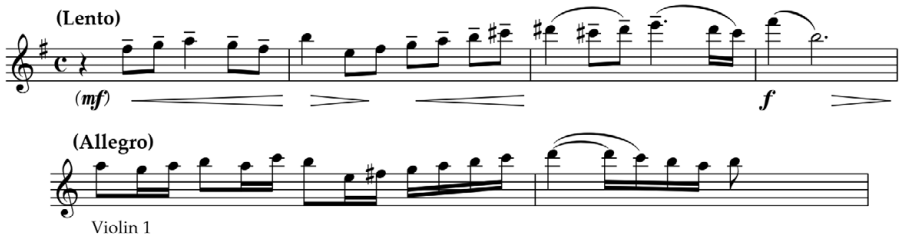

Figure 14. The opening Lento in the third movement shows a similarity to Sibelius' Pohjola's Daughter, Op. 49.

Somewhat similar cadenza-like moments can be found in many of Sibelius' works for violin and piano. The earliest notable example appears already in his Suite in E Major, JS 188 from 1888, where the violin plays short sections without piano in bars 118–135 and 372–379. They may well have been a nod towards the virtuoso tradition of the nineteenth century, but finding such moments in a sonata is uncommon.

In the last movement's *Allegretto* section the piano again provides a harmonically static but rhythmically active environment within which the violin can move. While the time signature of the movement is 2/4 the

29 The motive first appears in rehearsal mark A, divided between English horn and clarinet. The motive reappears three bars after the rehearsal mark "J" in the first violins (Sibelius, Pohjola's Daughter, Op. 49 1962 [1906]).

piano's figure repeats over 3 beats, which provides a degree of independence to the piano part (see Figure 13). It also creates the illusion of a static musical landscape over which the violin can play its melodies. This figure is repeated unchanged twelve times over eighteen bars. While the piano's texture may initially suggest a degree of independence between the two instruments, in reality one of the challenges of performing this movement is to stay synchronised.

With regards to the thesis of this article, despite elements that can be seen to have a Nordic or local quality, the first movement broadly speaking follows the structural expectations of a movement in sonata form. The first movement opens with a nine-bar introduction marked *Lento*, after which we reach the primary-theme zone. This is followed by a short transition (although it is unclear where the primary-zone ends and where the transition begins) which in traditional fashion modulates the music to the key of the dominant (V) in bar 39. The secondary-theme zone does not introduce a new theme, but instead largely builds on previous material by prolonging the scale-wise motion into longer runs in the violin part. In my experience this secondary-theme zone feels more like transition than a second theme. Instead, Sibelius introduces a new theme in the closing zone, which leads into the development section in G major. The development section and the recapitulation generally follow the expected form.

Putting all of these elements together, the end result is something of an enigma. The Sonatine is simultaneously both childlike and mature, with strict sense of motivic cohesion and development; the melodies are often naively simple, while all three movements include technical challenges (both individual as well as for the ensemble); the music is mostly happy, but somehow hollow, as if the happiness was not experienced but only viewed at a distance (either physical or temporal); and, while the music feels deeply personal, there is something strangely objective about the work as a whole. I have as a performer found it challenging to inject my own personality into my performances, because I have often felt that the music is not telling my story and I should not get in the way of the music's own narrative.

Perhaps these contradictions help explain the strongly contrasting views of the work. After its premiere, which was part of a concert celebrating Sibelius' 50th birthday, Furuhjelm (1916, 221) called the Sonatine "possibly the most sanguinely idyllic work Sibelius ever produced."[30] Peter-

30 The original Swedish text reads: "[...] måhända mest sangviniskt idylliska Sibelius producerat".

son-Berger, on the other hand, was less enthusiastic, and called the piece "internationally ambiguous" in a critical review where he also wrote that the work is not a sonata in the contemporary sense (*Dagens Nyheter* February 23, 1916). A few years later, Karl Westermeyer (1924, 1942) saw the work as "distinctly Nordic". Barnett (2007, 249) calls the work predominantly emotionally "cool, even detached: even in the dance-like sections of the outer movements, the harmonies are often quite austere", while Layton (1965, 141) calls it "modest both in aim and achievement". Murtomäki (2004, 146) sees in it an example "of Sibelius' creative spring offering 'pure water' instead of the 'many-coloured cocktails' of his contemporaries" which was a product of his deepening classicism. Such widely differing opinions seem fitting for a work which seems to simultaneously present two different realities, one simple and childlike, the other mature and thoughtful.

Sinding's Sonate im alten Stil*, op. 99*

The Norwegian composer Christian Sinding's *Sonate im alten Stil* from 1909 presents an even starker departure from the expectations of a traditional sonata than the other sonatas explored in this article. It was one of Sinding's most popular works (Cobbett 1963, 421). It is a work in five short movements, in either D minor or D major, where no single movement is in sonata form. This begs the question of why the work is called a Sonata to begin with.

There are a few potential explanations for this apparent disconnect. As we recall, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a 'Sonata' was merely a term for instrumental works (Mangsen, et al. 2001). It is possible that the mention of "old style" in the work's title could be associated with musical works that existed before the emergence of the sonata form. The musical style, however, does not evoke such ancient associations, even though the music appears to present an early twentieth-century perspective on the Baroque era.

Cobbett (1963, 421–422) argues that the work shows "strong national characteristics". As was mentioned above, Wennerberg saw Nordic music as rooted in the sung tradition, which he associated with the ternary form. While I do not know Sinding's personal views on the subject, the traditional use of the word "sonata" in combination with the national musical style may explain Sinding's decision to opt for simpler musical forms.

It may also be that Sinding wanted to differentiate his *Sonate im alten Stil* op. 99 from his earlier work, the popular *Suite im alten Stil,* op. 10. Yet

another potential explanation is that Sinding wanted to challenge the existing expectations of a sonata. Sinding was known for having a disdain for an exceedingly academic approach to music (Vollestad 2005, 17–18). It is possible that Sinding wanted to explore the possibility of creating a work in multiple movements which, when viewed as a whole, would fulfil at least some of the expectations of a sonata.

While the work structurally does not follow the framework of a sonata, the motivic development of the melodic material brings to mind what Dahlhaus (1989b, 307) called the "imperative of organic development which, at least in the mainstream of compositional history, dominated the thematic and motivic structure of nineteenth-century music as well as its harmonic schemes." Instead of developing the material within a development section of a single sonata movement, Sinding explores it across all five movements.

The reference to "old style" begs the question of whether the reference to the past has any geographical implications. With regards to Sinding's earlier and more commonly performed *Suite in Old Style*, op. 10, Rugstad (1979, 181) notes that Grieg had commented on how Sinding's Suite showed influence from Bach, whereas Grieg's *From Holberg's Time (Fra Holbergs tid)*, which also was a "Suite in olden Style", showed more of a French influence. Sinding's *Sonate im alten Stil,* on the other hand, shows a more national style.

Cobbett (1963, 421) describes the difference between the two composers in the following way:

> Grieg's style was a combination of national melody with Schumann technique. Sinding's style became a combination of national melody and Wagnerian technique. His music is optimistic, virile, and of epic strength and breadth. Whilst Grieg's music was an echo from the mountains, their mournful moods and poetic idylls, Sinding's is an echo from the sea that dashes against the rocks. In his music are heard the storm, the thunder of the waves, and the daring of the Vikings.

It is notable that many works which were composed in the Nordic countries include a reference to the past. These include Grieg's *Fra Holbergs tid* (Suite in Old Style), Halvorsen's *Suite ancien*, Sindings Suite, and Sonata, which both bear the title "im alten Stil", Kajanus' *Menuet Ancien* and *Menuet rococo*, etc. An intriguing possibility is that these pieces in old style partly sought to compensate for the lack of a strong classical music tradition in both Finland and Norway. Lindskog (2013, 44) has noted that the absence of an existing ancient tradition in Norway led to a situation where the landscape and folklore came to replace the traditional institutions in the creation of a cultural identity. I would argue that Finland in

many ways saw a similar development, where the *Kalevala* came to be just as important as real history in the creation of a Finnish cultural identity. The opening statement of the first movement, *Maestoso,* presents a serious, baroque-like theme played entirely in double stops by the violin.[31] Rather than presenting music that would sound authentically baroque-like to a modern listener, Sinding's writing highlights the seriousness with which old music was approached during the early twentieth century. The main motive outlines a d minor chord, by beginning from the tonic d'', rising a fifth to a'', before passing through g'' on the way to f'' (see Figure 15). The whole phrase consists of a gradually falling line from the a'' back down to the tonic d''. These two elements make up the essential building blocks of the whole work. The movement, which is in ternary form (ABA+coda), has a contrasting lyrical middle section in A major. The melodic gesture of the opening to this middle section is an inversion of the falling line of the main theme, i.e. an embellished scale-wise motion from e'' to a'', which is supported by a syncopated accompaniment. The end of the movement is in d minor until the coda of the first movement, which brings the movement to a dramatic conclusion that ends with a Picardy third. This may be a feature that Sinding associated with "old style", since all five movements end in D major.

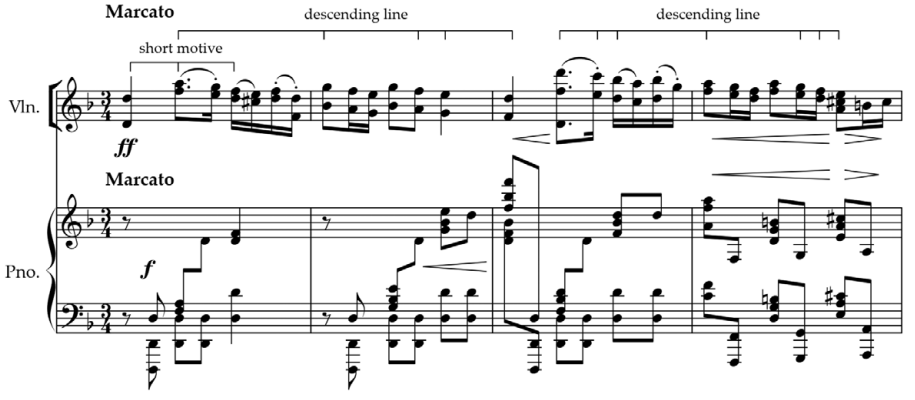

Figure 15. The opening to Sinding's Sonate im alten Stil. The opening bars contains both a short motive and a longer descending line.

31 With the regards to broader similarities between Nordic music, I have found it interesting how similar the opening of Sinding's *Sonate im alten Stil*, op. 99 is to the opening of Sibelius' *Tempo di Menuetto*, op. 79, no. 3.

In the second movement in 3/2 time, the rising fifth turns into a static accompaniment, against which the violin plays a lament that consists of a falling scale (see Figure 16). The static feeling is emphasized by long pedal points in the beginning and the end of the movement. A middle section that begins in C Major brings back the motive that was presented in the opening of the first movement.

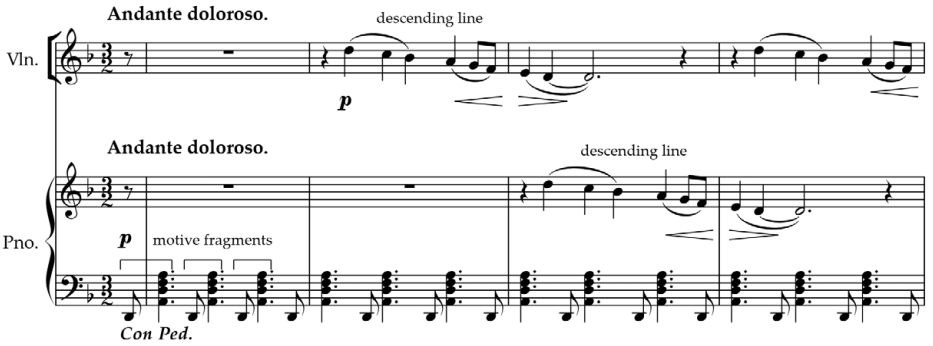

Figure 16. Opening of the second movement, which includes the same basic components.

In the third movement, *Menuet*, the music turns to D Major, and the order of the main motive is changed to a', f-sharp', d'. The falling line has been turned into a bass line (see Figure 17). Rugstad (1979, 183–184) uses this movement to illustrate the point that while the five movements use musical forms found in the baroque, the melodies primarily reveal a nineteenth-century influence.

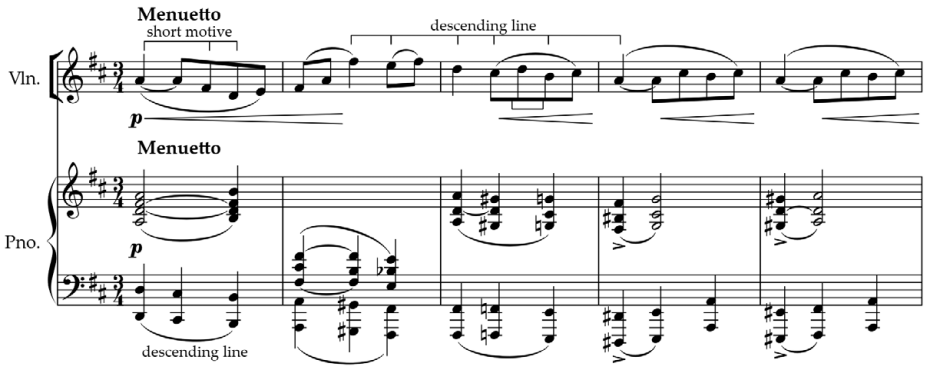

Figure 17. Opening of the third movement features a reordered version of the short motive and a longer descending line.

The fourth movement in d minor, which begins in 5/4 time, opens with the same notes as the first movement (d', a', g', f'). The time signature of the middle section of this movement is 7/4. The movement often features a heavy piano part with big chords in a relatively low register. In order for the violin to compete with these dense chords when the dynamic reaches *forte* or *fortissimo,* the violin part in the loud parts is scored almost entirely in double stops.

Considering Sinding's and Sibelius' friendship, especially during the year Sibelius spent in Berlin (1889–1890), it is interesting to speculate whether the use of 5/4 time may be the result of a Nordic (or even Finnish) influence. A theme in 5/4 time, where the melody initially stays within the interval of a fifth, brings to mind the ancient Finnish tradition of runic singing, which regularly uses 5/4 time. While we do not have records of the topics these two composers may have discussed, Sibelius' strong focus on the *Kalevala* as he worked on *Kullervo,* op. 7 the following year in Vienna at least suggests the possibility that Sinding may have been aware of this musical tradition.

The final movement returns to D Major, and changes the motive to d''', a'', f-sharp'', in a folk-inspired tune that brings to mind Norwegian Harding-fiddling. The scale-wise motion appears towards the end of the phrase and has been inverted into an ascending line (see Figure 18). The opening phrase of the movement is played by the violin alone, without the piano, and features idiomatic writing that includes a large amount of double and triple stops.

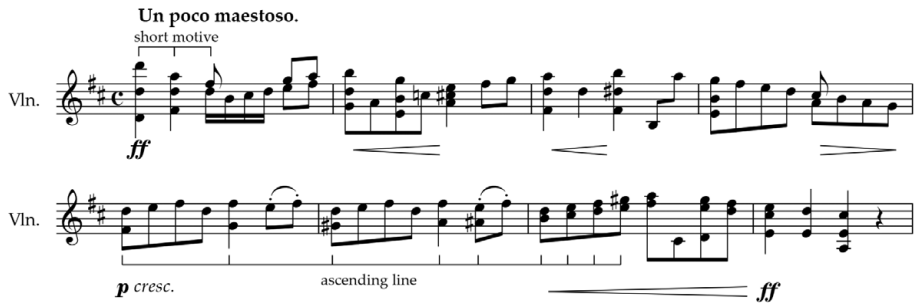

Figure 18. The opening of the last movement features a folk-like introduction that is played by the violin alone, without the piano.

As a whole, the *Sonate im alten Stil* feels more like a Romantic reimagining of a Baroque Suite than a typical violin sonata. The violin part also differs from most other violin sonatas, which tend to approach the violin as a monophonic melody instrument. Sinding's writing for the violin feels more like a work for solo violin with accompaniment than a typical sonata, but simultaneously the piano part is so rich that it definitely serves as an equal partner to the violin. This equality between the instruments may also be an argument for calling the work a sonata rather than a suite, which may suggest a solo voice with an accompaniment.

As we have seen, all five movements of the work build on the same core elements, which are altered and manipulated in different ways. If we consider the development – or in this case the exploration of the possibilities – of motivic elements as a central part of a sonata, perhaps this work as a whole does show some kinship with nineteenth and early twentieth-century sonatas.

Conclusion

This article has explored violin sonatas by Grieg, Stenhammar, Sibelius, and Sinding with regards to the Nordic qualities and characteristics that can be found in their music. What is immediately obvious, based on these four works, is that there was no unified "Nordic" approach to violin sonatas. Instead, external or internal factors – such as cultural trends or the composers' subjective experiences – influenced each composition in a unique way. Grieg's Second Violin Sonata provides the strongest exam-

ple of how folklorism can be incorporated into the structure of a classical sonata. Stenhammar's Violin Sonata follows the tradition of the German masters but does include elements that can be associated with either folk-music or Nordic lyricism. The Nordic elements in Sibelius' Sonatine are primarily found in the static textures that provide the music with a harmonic landscape, as well as in the work's main motives, which are reminiscent of Finnish folk-music. Sinding departs from the sonata form altogether – which in itself can be associated with the song-like roots of Nordic music – and instead builds a five-movement work around a few core ideas and motives.

The strongest commonality between these four sonatas is the heavy reliance on motivic, rather than thematic development. This raises the question of whether this is a typical feature of Nordic music more broadly. As was mentioned above, Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe associated this type of musical development with folk music, and specifically with the Hardanger-fiddle; a similar association can be made with Finnish folk music. The technique of organically growing major works out of small motivic components was a hallmark of Sibelius' composition technique. The topic of wether motivic development is a central aspect of Nordic music could warrant future research. While the technique is often associated with Grieg and Sibelius, the German musicologist Heinrich Schwab (1982, 153) has noted in his article "Das lyrische Klavierstück und der nordische Ton" that when Schumann alluded to a Nordic style in his his small piano piece *Nordische Lied*, the very first bar serves as the "cell" out of which the whole piece grows. Interestingly, this cell consists of the notes G, A, D, E, spelling out the name of the Danish composer.

Another consequence of adding Nordic elements to the structure of a sonata is that the music often takes on extra-musical associations. This is noteworthy, as Newman (1959, 7) argues that sonatas historically consisted primarily of "absolute" music (although there were notable exceptions).[32] In his later book, Newman (1983, 45) shows that this concept had lost much of its meaning by the nineteenth century, but I find it noteworthy that Nordic music manages to suggest extra-musical associations without the use of programmatic titles.

While it is possible to find some common musical features as well as musical elements that can be associated with Nordic music, it is clear that Nordic music relies heavily on perceived rather than inherent qualities. There is, for example, nothing inherently Nordic about harmonically stat-

32 Newman makes this comment in reference to sonatas from the baroque era.

ic textures, but they take on a Nordic quality when a performer or listener associates them with Nordic landscapes or environments. Such musical elements only take on meaning when they are perceived to have said meaning. This means that there is a level of learned associations which are part of the perception of music sounding Nordic.

Additionally, many of the so-called Nordic elements in the music are either more local or more global than the term "Nordic" suggests. Whereas I would argue that the Nordic elements in Grieg's Second Violin Sonata primarily are Norwegian (and even linked to specific regions of Norway), other features associated with Nordic music are used far outside of the Nordic countries. Nordic National Romanticism can therefore equally well be seen as part of a broader pan-European tradition, even though it includes local elements.

It would be interesting to know if any of the four composers featured in this article actually considered themselves Nordic in other ways than geographically. No matter their personal views, their Nordic networks and friendships assured an exchange of both music and ideas. For example, in the case of Sibelius we can say with some certainty that Grieg's F Major Violin sonata influenced Sibelius' early Violin Sonata in F Major JS 178; Sinding's Piano Quintet inspired Sibelius to compose a piano quintet of his own; whereas Sibelius' tonal language has been seen as a major influence on Stenhammar's mature style. These examples show that the influence of these composers reached beyond the borders of their respective countries.

It was primarily the success of composers such as the ones featured in this article that made Nordic music internationally recognizable. The musical style of Grieg and Sibelius became strongly associated with the Nordic countries. This happened independently of the composers' original intentions, whether they were more local or more international. The huge role of a small number of Nordic composers also raises a question of causality. For example, is Grieg's music Norwegian, or is Norwegian music Griegian? The same question can be posed concerning Sibelius and Finland and Nielsen and Denmark.

There may be yet another factor that can explain part of the stylistic difference between German and Nordic sonatas. Most German violin sonatas from the nineteenth century that have retained their popularity were composed by pianists. These include sonatas by, for example, Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. In contrast, many of the most prominent Nordic composers during the nineteenth century were initially trained as violinists. These include, for example, Jean Sibelius, Carl Nielsen, J. P. E. Hartmann (who made his debut as a violinist but also

worked as an organist), Christian Sinding, Johan Svendsen, Niels Gade, Fini Henriques, Franz Berwald, Ole Bull, Fredrik Pacius, Tor Aulin, Hugo Alvén, Amanda Röntgen-Maier, Toivo Kuula, Robert Kajanus, and Filip von Schantz. Notable exceptions were Edvard Grieg, Emil Sjögren, and Wilhelm Stenhammar, who were pianists. This observation does not by itself have much explanatory power, but as a violinist myself I often sense a difference in how violinists and pianists approach melody and harmony. Many of the composers listed above were capable musicians on multiple instruments, but using the sonatas explored in this article as examples, it can at least be argued that Stenhammar's writing for both the violin and the piano differs markedly from Sibelius' and Sinding's. This begs the question of whether some part of Nordic music can be explained by the instrument that the composers were initially trained on.

This brings the topic back to the question of whether there is such a thing as a "Nordic tone" in music. The question has been discussed since the nineteenth century, and the answer largely depends on what we mean by it. For this reason, the answer has ranged from the identification of specific musical elements to the rejection of the whole concept (Fjeldsøe and Groth 2019, 3; Bucht 2017, 115). To my knowledge no one has been able to suggest a clear definition of what the Nordic tone is or how it can be identified, but considering that the Nordic framing has been applied to repertoire ranging from Gade's orchestral music from the 1840s to contemporary electroacoustic music, popular music, and jazz, the absence of an overarching "Nordicness" is to be expected. However, when applied to specific composers or time periods, the search for a Nordic tone can provide a framing and a perspective through which the music can be explored. This hermeneutic window may lead the inquiry in other directions than a purely national, folkloristic, or National Romantic perspective. As such, the search for a Nordic tone can be useful, even when inconclusive. The Swedish composer and musicologist Gunnar Bucht (2017, 120), who has explored this question with regards to Sibelius, Nielsen, and Stenhammar, concludes his final chapter about the Nordic tone with the noncommittal observation that "the Nordic tone can thus manifest itself in many forms."[33]

Bucht's opinion resonates with the observations made in this article. The four sonatas do not present any common approach to either the sonata genre or to the inclusion of local, regional, or folkloristic elements. Nonetheless, all four sonatas can be interpreted as including elements

33 "Den nordiska tonen kan således uppenbara sig i många skepnader [- -]."

commonly associated with Nordic music, even if we can argue about whether the music truly expresses Nordic, rather than national, regional, or local qualities. The Nordic framing, however, provides a perspective that encourages us to look for connections at a transnational level that differs from the national or the more broadly international.

This article only scratches the surface of the fascinating world of Nordic music. Numerous counter-examples could paint a markedly different picture, and using a small number of works as representative examples of the Nordic musical landscape is bound to be an oversimplification. Nonetheless, what this article has aimed to highlight is how these individual composers were affected by the culture that surrounded them, which could lead their music in interesting directions.

Sources

Newspaper sources:

Dagens Nyheter 1896, 1898, 1916

Dagens Press 1915

Sheet Music

Collan, Karl. 1875. *Valituita Suomalaisia Kansan-Lauluja*. Kolmas painos. Helsinki: G. W. Edlund.

Grieg, Edvard. 1871. *Sonate für Pianoforte und Violine*, Op.13. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.

Grieg, Edvard. 1895. *25 Nordische Tänze und Volksweisen*, Op. 17. Leipzig: C. F. Peters.

—. 1902. *Twenty-five Northern Dances and Folk-tunes, Op. 17.* New York: G Schirmer.

—. 1982. *25 norske folkeviser og danser, Op. 17.* Frankfurt: C.F. Peters.

Sibelius, Jean. 1921. *Sonatina in E Major, Op. 80.* Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen.

—. 1962 [1906]. *Pohjola's Daughter, Op. 49.* New York: E. F. Kalmus.

Sinding, Christian. 1909. S*onate im alten Stil für Violine mit Klavier, Op. 99.* Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.

Stenhammar, Wilhelm. 1907–1912. *Hemmarchen*. Levande Musikarv/Swedish Musical Heritage.

—. 1898. *Intermezzo*. Levande Musikarv/Swedish Musical Heritage.

—. 1900. *Sonate for Violin og Pianoforte*. Kjöbenhavn: Nordisk Musikforlag.

Research literature:

Andersson, Greger. 1997. *Musik i Norden*. Stockholm: Kungl. Musikaliska akademin.

Barnett, Andrew. 2007. *Sibelius*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Benestad, Finn. 1998. *Edvard Grieg, brev i utvalg, 1862–1907, Bind 1, Til norske mottagere.* Oslo: Aschehoug & Co.

Benestad, Finn, and Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe. 1993. *Edvard Grieg, Chamber music, Nationalism — Universality, Individuality.* Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

—. 1988 [1980]. *Edvard Grieg, The Man and the Artist.* Translated by William H. Halverson and Leland B. Sateren. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.

Bjørnson, Bjørnstjerne. 1900. "Tale af Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson om Maalsagen." *Norsk Rigsmaalsforenings smaaskrifter (*Landsbladets Trykkeri.) (4). https://no.wikisource.org/wiki/En_Tale_om_Maalsagen.

Bucht, Gunnar. 2017. *Nielsen - Sibelius - Stenhammar, Mellan Norden och Europa.* Örlinge: Gidlunds förlag.

Cobbett, Walter Willson. 1963 [1929]. *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music, Volume II, I-Z.* Second Edition. London: Oxford University Press.

Dahlhaus, Carl. 1989a [1980]. "Nationalism in Music." In *Between Romanticism and Modernism*, by Carl Dahlhaus, translated by Mary Whittall, 79-102. Berkley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.

—. 1989b [1980]. *Nineteenth-Century Music.* Translated by J. Bradford Robinson. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Dahlström, Fabian. 2005. *Jean Sibelius, Dagbok 1909–1944.* Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

—. 2003. *Sibelius Werkverzeichnis.* Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden.

Edling, Anders. 1992. "Del 3. Musikproduktionen 1870-1920 ." in *Musiken i Sverige*, by Leif Jonsson och Martin Tegen, 413-430. Stockholm: Bokförlaget T. Fischer & Co and Kungl. Musikaliska akademien.

Einstein, Alfred. 1947. *Music in the Romantic Era.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, inc.

Elo, Mika. 2022. "Taiteellisen tutkimuksen kolme vaihetta." *Ruukku.* Accessed August 29, 2024. http://ruukku-journal.fi/issues/18/voices/mika-elo.

Fjeldsøe, Michael, and Sanne Krogh Groth. 2019. "'Nordicness' in Scandinavian Music: A Complex Question." in *The Nature of Nordic Music*, by Tim Howell, 3-19. New York: Routledge. doi: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315462851.

Frayling, Christopher. 1993. "Research in Art and Design." *Royal College of Art Research Papers* 1-5.

Furuhjelm, Erik. 1916. *Jean Sibelius, Hans tondiktning och drag ur hans liv.* Borgå: Holger Schildts Förlag.

Goss, Glenda Dawn. 2009. S*ibelius, A composer's life and the awakening of Finland.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

—. 1996. *The Hämeenlinna Letters, Scenes from a Musical Life 1874 - 1895, Jean Sibelius ungdomsbrev.* Esbo: Schildts Förlags Ab.

Grimley, Daniel M. 2006. G*rieg, Music, Landscape and Norwegian Identity*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.

Haglund, Magnus. 2019. *Wilhelm Stenhammar*. Möklinta: Gidlunds förlag AB.

Hepokoski, James, and Darcy Warren. 2006. *Elements of Sonata Theory, Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Herresthal, Harald. 1993. *Med Spark i Gulvet og Quinter i Bassen, Musikaliske og politiske bilder fra nasjonalromantikkens gjennombrudd i Norge*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget AS.

Holth, Berit. 2014. "German influences in the development of the Norwegian classical music tradition." *Fontes Artis Musicae* 42-47.

Horton, John. 1963. *Scandinavian Music: A Short History*. London: Faber and Faber.

Jalas, Jussi. 1942. *Notes from conversation with Jean Sibelius 28.7.1942*. Finnish National Archive, Sibelius Family Archive, Folder 1.

JSW IV/6. 2018. *Sibelius, Jean. Works Vol. IV/6, Works for Violin or Cello and Piano*. Edited by Anna Pulkkis. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel.

Konttinen, Sampsa. 2013. A*ndere Sprache – anderer Klang? Vergleich zwischen finnisch-, schwedisch- und deutschsprachigen Liedern von Jean Sibelius, Oskar Merikanto, Erkki Melartin und Yrjö Kilpinen*. Wien: Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien.

Krummacher, Friedhelm. 1982. "Gattung und Werk – Zu Streichquartetten von Gade und Berwald." in *Gattung und Werk in der Musikgeschichte Norddeutschlands und Skandinaviens*, by Friedhelm Krummacher and Heinrich Schwab, 154–175. Kassel, Basel, London: Bärenreiter.

Layton, Robert. 1965. *Sibelius*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.

Lehtonen, Lasse. 2022. "Jean Sibelius Works uses archival research to probe the creative process." *Finnish Music Quarterly*. Accessed June 24, 2024. *https://fmq.fi/articles/jean-sibelius-works*.

Lindskog, Annika. 2013. "Composing landscapes: musical memories from nineteenth-century Norwegian mountain-scapes." *Landscape History* 34 (2): 43-60. doi:DOI: 10.1080/01433768.2013.855395.

Ling, Jan. 1992. "Gibt es ein "nordischen Ton?" in *Weltteater - Die Künste im 19. Jahrhundert*, by Peter Andraschke und Edelgard Spaude, 49-57. Freiburg: Rombach Verlag.

Mangsen, Sandra, John Irving, Rink, John, and Paul Griffiths. 2001. "Sonata." *Grove Music Online*. Accessed June 22, 2024. *https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.uniarts.fi/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026191*.

Mantere, Markus. 2010. "The North in Music: Issues of Geography, Aesthetics, and Ideology." *Musiikki* 2: 41-52.

Murtomäki, Veijo. 2004. "Sibelius and the miniature." in *Cambridge Companion to Sibelius*, by Daniel Grimley, 137-156. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Newman, William S. 1959. *The Sonata in the Baroque Era.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

—. 1983 [1972]. *The Sonata Since Beethoven.* Third edition. New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company.

Niemann, Walter. 1906. *Die Musik Skandinaviens.* Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.

Oddo, Vincent. u.d. "Wilhelm Stenhammar, Violin Sonata in a minor, Op.19." *Edition Silvertrust.* Accessed June 24 2024. *https://www.editionsilvertrust.com/stenhammar-vln-sonata.htm*.

Online, Grove Music. 2001. *Sonatina.* Accessed June 20, 2024. *https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026198.*

Oramo, Ilkka. 2020 [1980]. K*ansanmusiikin vaikutuksesta taidemusiikkiin [1].* Published 15.05.1980, updated 13.12.2020. Accessed January 17, 2024. *https://muhi.uniarts.fi/sibeliuksen-akateeminen-koeluento-vuodelta-1896/.*

Rosen, Charles. 1988 [1980]. S*onata Forms (Revised edition).* New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Rugstad, Gunnar. 1979. *Christian Sinding, En biografisk og stilistisk studie.* Oslo: J. W. Cappelens forlag.

Schwab, Heinrich. 1982. "Das Lyrische Klavierstück und der nordische Tone." in *Gattung und Werk in der Musikgeschichte Norddeutschlands und Skandinaviens*, by Friedhelm Krummacher and Heinrich Schwab, 136–153. Kassel, Basel, London: Bärenreiter.

Sibelius, Jean. 2011 [1896]. "Some Viewpoints Concerning Folk Music and Its Influence on the Musical Arts." in J*ean Sibelius and his World*, by Daniel M. Grimley, translated by Margareta Martin, 315–325. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Smith, Frederick K. 2002. *Nordic art music: from the Middle Ages to the third millennium.* Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Smith, Frederick K. 2000. "The Influence of Literature on Sibelius." in *Sibelius Forum II: Proceedings from the Third Jean Sibelius Conference.* Edited by Matti Huttunen, Kari Kilpeläinen and Veijo Murtomäki. 338–346. Helsinki: Sibelius Academy.

Stenhammar, Wilhelm. 1907–1912. *Hemmarchen.* Levande Musikarv/Swedish Musical Heritage.

—. 1898. *Intermezzo.* Levande Musikarv/Swedish Musical Heritage.

—. 1900. *Sonate for Violin og Pianoforte.* Kjöbenhavn: Nordisk Musikforlag.

Tarasti, Eero. 2016. "Mikä on pohjoinen musiikki ." *Synteesi* (4): 55–65.

Tawaststjerna, Erik. 1965. *Jean Sibelius, 1.* Translated by Tuomas Anhava in cooperation with the author. Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Otava.

—. 1996. *Jean Sibelius, åren 1914–1919.* Helsingfors: Söderströms & Co förlags AB .

Tegen, Martin, och Leif Jonsson. 1992. ”Del 1. Musikodlingen 1810-1920. 1. Musiken, kulturen, och samhället en översikt i decennier.” in *Musiken i Sverige, Den nationella identiteten*, edited by Leif Jonsson & Martin Tegen, 17-52. Stockholm: Bokförlaget T. Fischer & Co and Kungl. Musikaliska akademien.

Torvinen, Juha. 2010. ”The Tone of the North.” F*innish Music Quarterly* 3: 14–19.

Torvinen, Juha, och Susanna Välimäki. 2020. ”Nordic drone: Pedal points and static textures as musical imagery of the northerly environment.” in *The Nature of Nordic Music*, by Tim Howell, 173-192. New York: Routledge.

Utne-Reitan, Bjørnar. 2021. ”Edvard Grieg and Music Theory.” Edited by Patrick Dinslage und Stefan Keym. In *Edvard Grieg und seine skandinavischen Kollegen in ihren Beziehungen zu Leipzig: 8. Deutscher Edvard Grieg-Kongress vom 15. bis 17. Oktober 2020 in Leipzig*. Leipzig: Gudrun Schröder Verlag. 73–84.

Vollestad, Per. 2005. *Christian Sinding*. Oslo: Solum Forlag.

Wallner, Bo. 1991. *Wilhelm Stenhammar och hans tid, del 1.* Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag.

Westermeyer, Karl. 1924. ”Neue Literatur.” *Signale für die musikalische Welt*. Leipzig: Verlag der Signale.

Wilson, Mick, and Schelte van Ruiten. 2013. *Share Handbook for Artistic Research Education*. Amsterdam: ELIA.

Yoell, John H. 1974. T*he Nordic sound: explorations into the music of Denmark, Norway, Sweden*. Boston: Crescendo Publishing company.