

Edvard Grieg and Music Theory

1. Introduction

What was Edvard Grieg's relation to music theory? As a student at Leipzig Conservatory, Grieg received an education dominated by two subjects: piano and music theory (i.e. harmony and counterpoint). It is well known that in his later years, Grieg regularly complained that he had learned nothing from his conservatory training in Leipzig.¹ Grieg experts have, however, claimed for almost 100 years that Grieg underestimated the value of these studies – that he lied about Leipzig.² While the theory education he received at Leipzig Conservatory is thus much discussed in the literature, little has been written about Grieg's relation to music theory more generally.

In this paper, I present a first attempt at taking a broader look at Grieg's relation to music theory. As mentioned, Grieg's theory studies in Leipzig have been commented on regularly throughout the history of Grieg research. Particularly valuable contributions include Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe's monograph published in 1964 and several articles by Patrick Dinslage published in the 1990s and early 2000s.³ Standing on the shoulders of Schjelderup-Ebbe and Dinslage, I conducted a close study of Grieg's theory exercises, which was completed in 2018.⁴ This

¹ Finn Benestad / Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg: Mennesket og kunstneren*, Oslo ³2007, pp. 41–46.

² Erlend Hovland, "The Decline of Music History: A Case Study of the Grieg Research", in: *Studia Musicologica Norvegica* 43 (2017), pp. 31–57, see pp. 38–41.

³ Dag Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg 1858–1867: With Special Reference to the Evolution of His Harmonic Style*, Oslo 1964 (Publications of the Institute for Musicology 5); Patrick Dinslage, "Edvard Griegs Jugendwerke im Spiegel seiner Leipziger Studentjahre", in: *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning* 78 (1996), pp. 96–103; *idem*, "The Young Grieg", in: *Edvard Grieg i kulturbyen*, ed. by Monica Jangaard, Paradis 2000, pp. 96–103; Patrick Dinslage, "Edvard Griegs Unterricht in Musiktheorie während seines Studiums am Leipziger Konservatorium, dargestellt an seinen eigenen Aufzeichnungen", in: 3. *Deutscher Edvard-Grieg-Kongress 2000 in Lengerich*, ed. by Ekkehard Krefit, Altenmedingen 2001, pp. 94–105; Patrick Dinslage, "Edvard Griegs Lehrjahre", in *Edvard Grieg*, ed. by Ulrich Tadday, Munich 2005 (Musik-Konzepte: Neue Folge 127), pp. 45–65. For other valuable contributions to scholarly discourse on Grieg's theory studies, see Joachim Reisaus, *Grieg und das Leipziger Konservatorium: Untersuchungen zur Persönlichkeit des norwegischen Komponisten Edvard Grieg unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Leipziger Studienjahre*, PhD diss., Leipzig 1988; Joachim Dorfmueller, "Edvard Grieg und die Fuge", in: *Studia Musicologica Norvegica* 25 (1999), pp. 144–156; Bjørn Morten Christophersen, *Panoramic Constraints: A Study of Johan Svendsen's Musical Sketches and Exercises*, PhD diss., Oslo 2016.

⁴ Bjørnar Utne-Reitan, *Edvard Griegs studier i musikkteori: Kontrapunktøvelser som grobunn for innovativ harmonikk*, Master's thesis, Oslo 2018; *idem*, "Edvard Griegs øvelser i harmonilære og kontrapunkt", in: *Studia Musicologica Norvegica* 44 (2018), pp. 57–78.

paper picks up the thread of that project and is intended to complement the existing scholarly discourse on Grieg and music theory by adding perspectives other than those relating to Grieg's Leipzig studies.

The paper is structured in three parts: (1) I present an overview of the theory-related books found in Grieg's book collection; (2) I examine some examples of comments on music-theoretical issues in Grieg's writings; (3) I comment on relations between Grieg and certain prominent contemporaneous music theorists and musicologists. The latter, and most extensive, part also includes those music scholars' thoughts on Grieg and his music. As Grieg's theory education is well covered in the above-mentioned literature, I do not repeat what we now know about his harmony and counterpoint exercises.⁵

2. Music theory-related books in Grieg's book collection

Grieg built up quite an extensive collection of sheet music and books during his lifetime. When Nina Grieg sold Trolldhaugen in 1919, it was given to the city's public library. In Grieg's will of 1906, it was stated that the material should be available to the general public.⁶ Thus, the scores and books were lent out to the public for many years. That the library lent out Grieg's book collection for a long period of time makes these books problematic as primary sources. It is very hard to know for sure if the different pencil lines in Grieg's theory books stem from Grieg himself or if they are the markings of someone who borrowed the book in the twentieth century.⁷ What we do know, however, is which books stem from Grieg's collection.

Table 1 is an outline of music theory-related books stemming from Grieg's collection.⁸ The inscriptions on the covers, as recorded by the library, are listed in the "Notes" column. This information gives hints regarding the history of the books. For example, it is evident from the dedications that several books (Goodrich, Locher, Saint-Paul, Södling, and Woolhouse) were gifts to Grieg from the authors. Georg Capellen's letters to Grieg also prove that this was the case for

⁵ For a concise discussion of Grieg's exercises, see Utne-Reitan, "Edvard Griegs øvelser".

⁶ Karen Falch Johannessen, "[...] tilgjengelig for Bergens Almenhed": Griegsamlingen, Bergen offentlige bibliotek", in: *Din Grieg*, ed. by Peter Andreas Kjeldsberg, Bergen 1993, pp. 112–117; Trine Kolderup Flaten, "Griegsamlingen i Bergen offentlige bibliotek", in: *Studia Musicologica Norvegica* 25 (1999), pp. 45–58.

⁷ There are comments in the margins of some of the books (e.g. Goodrich). Whether these stem from Grieg or not must be assessed by someone with a higher expertise in the analysis of handwriting than the present author.

⁸ Table 1 is a corrected version of a table printed in Utne-Reitan, *Edvard Griegs studier*, pp. 29f. "Music-theoretical matters" is understood in a broad sense. It is important to emphasise that even the corrected version might be incomplete. It is based on Bergen Public Library's list of books and scores stemming from Grieg's collection, e-mailed to the author on 21 Oct. 2016. Edvard and/or Nina Grieg may have lost, sold or given away books before the collection was given to the library.

his work.⁹ Given that Grieg and Ebenezer Prout knew each other (an acquaintance I discuss below), it is also natural to assume that the books by him were gifts.

In other books (Gassner, Marx, and Richter), only Grieg’s name is written, indicating that he acquired these books himself. Grieg acquired the books by Ferdinand Simon Gassner and Adolf Bernhard Marx during his time as a student at the Leipzig Conservatory, whereas the book by his former theory teacher, Ernst Friedrich Richter, was published ten years after he graduated. It is intriguing that Grieg chose to acquire a counterpoint textbook by Richter so many years after leaving the Conservatory. Grieg also owned Moritz Hauptmann’s *magnum opus*, which he received from “Kirchners” (probably referring to Hermann Theodor Kirchner)¹⁰ the same year that he started his theory studies with Hauptmann at the Conservatory.¹¹ Berlioz’s treatise on instrumentation was also acquired by Grieg himself. From his diary, we know that he bought the oldest edition of the two versions in his library in Berlin on 8 May 1866.¹² Inscriptions in other books indicate that Grieg inherited these books from his friends and family: one from his older composer colleague Halfdan Kjerulf (Muth-Rasmussen) and one from his brother John (Riehl).

Table 1: Music theory–related books in Grieg’s book collection

Author	Title	Year	Notes
Berlioz, Hector	<i>Instrumentationslehre: Ein vollständiges Lehrbuch</i>	1864	
Berlioz, Hector; Strauss, Richard	<i>Intrumentationslehre – Ergänzt und revidiert</i>	1905	“.....”

⁹ Correspondence from Georg Capellen to Edvard Grieg, 24 Sept. and 26 Nov. 1904, Grieg Archives, Bergen Public Library. Bergen Public Library’s copy of Capellen’s book is, however, probably not the one that Capellen sent to Grieg in 1904. According to Jorunn Eckhoff Færden, e-mail message to the author, 8 Sept. 2020, this copy seems to have arrived at the library much later.

¹⁰ A Leipzig bookseller who later also would organise money transactions for Grieg when he was travelling. See Edvard Grieg, *Brev i utvalg: 1862–1907*, ed. by Finn Benestad, Oslo 1998, vol. I, p. 201.

¹¹ I have previously claimed that there are no indications of Hauptmann’s book being used as a textbook when Grieg studied at the Conservatory. See Utne-Reitan, “Edvard Griegs øvelser”, p. 71. At that time, I was not aware that Grieg had acquired a copy of this book as a student. This was one of the flaws I corrected in the table (see note 8 above). However, Grieg’s exercises for Hauptmann do not indicate that his teaching was centred around his book. There are some traces of Hauptmannian theory in the margins of Grieg’s exercise books (e.g. mapping out keys following Hauptmann’s example, i.e. “F–a–C–e–G–b–D”), but that is all. Grieg’s studies with Hauptmann – as evidenced by Grieg’s many exercises – were mainly focused on practical training in counterpoint. However, the fact that Grieg owned this book at this time nevertheless suggests that he may have read it as a student and that it may have been part of his theory training at the Conservatory in some way or another.

¹² Edvard Grieg, *Dagbøker*, ed. by Finn Benestad, Bergen 1993, p. 91.

Capellen, Georg	<i>Die Freiheit oder Unfreiheit der Töne und Intervalle als Kriterium der Stimmführung: Nebst einem Anhang: Grieg-Analysen als Bestätigungsnachweis und Wegweiser der neuen Musiktheorie</i>	1904	
M. Charles [Chop, Max]	<i>Zeitgenössische Tondichter: Studien und Skizzen</i>	1888	
Gassner, Ferdinand Simon	<i>Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst: neue Hand-Ausgabe in einem Bande</i>	1849	“Edvard Grieg. Leipzig 1858”
Goodrich, Alfred John	<i>Complete musical analysis: a system designed to cultivate the art of analysing and criticising and to assist in the performance and understanding of the works of the great composers of different epochs</i>	1889	“To Edvard Grieg, with profound regards of A. J. Goodrich. – Box 976, Chicago, Ill.”
Hauptmann, Moritz	<i>Die Natur der Harmonik und der Metrik. Zur Theorie der Musik</i>	1853	“Edvard Grieg, Leipzig 1861. Fra Kirchners”
Locher, Carl	<i>Erklärung der Orgel-Register und ihrer Klangfarben</i>	1896	“Als Freund des lieben Meisters Gottfred Matthison Hansen gestattet sich der unterzeichnete Organist, dem Künstler von Gottes Gnaden Herrn Edward Grieg das bescheidene Resultat von dreissig Jahr Studien über die Orgel Klangfarben als eine ganz kleine Aufmerksamkeit und Gruss aus der Schweiz zu übersenden. Bern, Schweiz, 2. Juli 1901. Carl Locher, Organist u. Orgelexperte”
Marx, Adolf Bernhard	<i>Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition: praktisch theoretisch. Vierter Theil. Fortsetzung der angewandten Kompositionslehre</i>	1860 [3. Aufl.]	“Edvard Grieg, Leipzig 1861”

Muth-Rasmussen, Paul Diderich	<i>Theoretisk-praktik musikalsk Grammatik: en Haandbog især for Seminarister og vordende Organister, samt Andre, der ville skaffe sig en Oversigt over den musikalske Theorie</i>	1841	“Halfdan Kjerulf, 1841”
Prout, Ebenezer	<i>Harmony: its theory and practice</i>	[1889]	
	<i>Counterpoint: strict and free</i>	[1890]	
	<i>Double counterpoint and canon</i>	[1891]	
	<i>Fugue</i>	[1891]	
	<i>Fugal analyses: a companion to “Fugue”: being a collection of fugues of various styles put into scores and analyzed</i>	[1892]	
	<i>Musical form</i>	[1893]	
	<i>Additional exercises to “Harmony: its theory and practice”</i>	[1890]	
	<i>Applied forms: a sequel to “Musical form”</i>	[1895]	
Richter, Ernst Friedrich	<i>Lehrbuch des einfachen und doppelten Contrapunkts. Praktische Anleitung zu dem Studium desselben zunächst für das Conservatorium der Musik zu Leipzig</i>	1872	“Edvard Grieg”
Riehl, Wilhelm Heinrich	<i>Musikalische Charakterköpfe. Ein kunstgeschichtliches Skizzenbuch</i>	1853	“John Grieg”
de Saint-Paul, Charles Ducup	<i>Les Gammes. Note I. Création naturelle du système musical par consonances parfaites exclusivement</i>	1906	“à Monsieur E. Grieg. Hommage de l’auteur CDdeS.Paul. Paris le 12 Mars 1907”
Spencer, Herbert	<i>Musikkens vorden og virken: afhandling efter det engelske</i>	1882	
Södling, Carl Erik	<i>Tonologi: naturtonernas uppkomst och betydelse för tonkonsten och deklamationen</i>	1859	“Edv. Grieg Christiania av Förf.”
Woolhouse, Wesley	<i>Treatise on musical intervals, temperament, and the elementary principles of music</i>	1888	“Edvard Grieg Esq, with the author’s best regards and admiration of his musical genius.”

3. Music-theoretical comments in Grieg's writings

A well-known example of Grieg commenting on music-theoretical matters is found in a letter to composer Johan Halvorsen, who was transcribing folk tunes for Grieg in 1901. Knut Dahle taught a collection of traditional Norwegian fiddle tunes to Halvorsen in Kristiania (now Oslo), and Halvorsen sent his transcriptions of these to Grieg in Bergen.¹³ This would result in some of Grieg's most radical arrangements of folk tunes: *Slåtter* Op. 72. When working on this project, Halvorsen remarked that it was fascinating how G sharp was almost always used at the beginning of pieces in D major.¹⁴ Grieg replied as follows:

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?¹⁵

We could draw the simple conclusion that Grieg did not know about the Lydian mode. This, however, seems somewhat unlikely. As mentioned, Grieg obtained the counterpoint textbook by his former teacher, Richter, which includes an introduction to the "so-called church modes" (*die sogenannten Kirchentonarten*).¹⁶ If he had not learned of them when studying with Richter in Leipzig, it is thus likely that he read about them in Richter's book.¹⁷ The church modes were also part of the general music-theoretical discourse in Norway, presented in textbooks on elementary music theory and musical dictionaries that circulated widely in the latter part of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ Thus, the church modes were not unknown, and even teacher students and the general public with an interest in music would know of them. While it is perfectly possible that Grieg forgot about their existence – or

¹³ For a detailed account of the surroundings of this event, see Øyvind Dybsand, *Johan Halvorsen (1864–1935): En undersøkelse av hans kunstneriske virke og en stilistisk gjennomgang av hans komposisjoner*, PhD diss., Oslo 2016, pp. 541–548.

¹⁴ Letter from Johan Halvorsen to Edvard Grieg, 3 Dec. 1901, Grieg Archives, Bergen Public Library.

¹⁵ Grieg, *Brev i utvalg*, vol. I, p. 372. "Dette 'mærkelige' som Du siger med Gis i D Dur var det som gjorde mig vild og gal i Året 1871. Jeg stjal den naturligvis fluks i mine 'Folkelivsbilleder'. Denne Tone er Noget for Forskeren. Den forstørrede Kvart kan også høres i Bondens Sang. Det er Gjengangere fra en eller anden gammel Skala. Men hvilken?". All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

¹⁶ Ernst Friedrich Richter, *Lehrbuch des einfachen und doppelten Contrapunkts*, Leipzig 1872 (Die Praktischen Studien zur Theorie der Musik 2), pp. 54–58. They are also listed in the German music encyclopaedia found in Grieg's book collection. See Ferdinand Simon Gassner, *Universal-Lexikon der Tonkunst: neue Hand-Ausgabe in einem Bande*, Stuttgart 1849, s.vv. "Kirchentöne", "Lydisch".

¹⁷ The church modes were an important part of the theory education Grieg received in Leipzig. He did, however, harmonise a phrygian melody, specifying the mode of the melody in his workbook. There thus exist some clues that indicate that the teachers at least introduced the students to the existence of the church modes as concepts. See Utne-Reitan, "Edvard Griegs øvelser", p. 72.

¹⁸ Otto Winter-Hjelm, *Musikalsk Real-Ordbog: Indeholdende de vigtigste kortfattede Forklaringer af de i Noter og musikalske Afhandlinger forekommende Ord*, Christiania 1880, s.v. "Kirketonarterne"; Jacob N. Kobbestad, *Elementær musikkære: Nærmest til brug for seminarier og lærerskoler samt ved selvundervisning*, Christiania 1881, p. 13.

did not care to look them up – when answering Halvorsen, it is also possible that he thought that this was something conceptually different from the church modes. This is perhaps not so far-fetched given that the sound of Norwegian folk music is very different from the archaic church music associated with these modes. The Lydian mode's "harshness" is toned down when used in traditional church music, often resulting in music that is instead similar to the later Ionian mode. This is not the case in much Norwegian folk music, where the tritone caused by the raised fourth degree is emphasised.

Another interesting music-theoretical comment in Grieg's writings is found in a letter to Julius Röntgen of 21 January 1906. In this letter, Grieg presents his negative view on the music of Max Reger, of which he cannot understand Röntgen's enjoyment.¹⁹ Grieg makes it clear that he finds Reger's music to be too polyphonic, so much so that he cannot digest it. He follows up with an interesting remark that tells us a lot about his view of the relationship between homophony and polyphony and, by implication, harmony and counterpoint: "I have always considered polyphony to be a *means*, not an *end*. That is the case with the great masters. There, the relationship between polyphony and homophony is that of the most beautiful harmony. That is my ideal, and it will always remain so."²⁰ In a much-cited letter to Henry T. Finck – where he provides several interesting comments on his musical style – Grieg emphasises how important linearity, especially chromatic voice leading, is for his harmonic "dreamworld" (*Traumwelt*).²¹ This is also how I read Grieg's remark to Röntgen: polyphony (i.e. counterpoint) was not important for Grieg in itself, but it was essential for Grieg as a means of his harmonic style. This is intriguing, as Grieg's theory training in Leipzig focused heavily on counterpoint.

In the early part of his career, Grieg also worked as a pedagogue. There are many indications that he gave lessons in harmony in addition to piano. For example, in 1867, he founded a short-lived music academy in Christiania together with Otto Winter-Hjelm. Both the founders taught harmony at the academy, and in an article from December 1866, signed by them both and published in *Morgenbladet*, they emphasise the importance of harmony courses in music education.²² Later, in the autumn of 1875, Grieg advertised for private lessons in piano as well as

¹⁹ Reger, on the other hand, had a much more positive view of Grieg. See Øyvind Dybsand, "Traces of Delicate Lyricism among 'Sausages, Kohlrabi Stew and Plum Pudding'? On possible Grieg-influences in Max Reger's Chamber music", paper presented at the International Edvard Grieg Society Conference, Berlin, 13 May 2009.

²⁰ Edvard Grieg / Julius Röntgen, *Briefwechsel. 1883–1907*, ed. by Finn Benestad and Hanna de Vries Stavland, Amsterdam 1997 (Bouwstenen voor een geschiedenis der toonkunst in de Nederlanden 7), p. 421. "Ich habe immer Polyfonie als *Mittel* nicht als *Zweck* aufgefasst. So ist es bei den grossen Meistern. Da steht immer Polyfonie und Homofonie in schönster Harmonie. Das ist mein Ideal und wird es immer bleiben."

²¹ Edvard Grieg, *Artikler og taler*, ed. by Øystein Gaukstad, Oslo 1957, pp. 48–62.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 221–226.

harmony in several newspapers.²³ Unfortunately, we do not have much detailed knowledge of Grieg's pedagogical practice.

4. Contemporaneous music theorists and Grieg

Ebenezer Prout was one of Great Britain's most prominent music theorists of the nineteenth century. He was also very fond of Norway and visited the country on many occasions, even learning to write Norwegian.²⁴ In addition to teaching music theory and being a composer, Prout also worked as a music critic, and in August 1874, he published an article on Grieg's compositions. At this time, many of Grieg's compositions were hard to come by in Great Britain. Thus, Prout presents his views on only five of Grieg's works: *Humoresker* Op. 6, *Piano Sonata in E minor* Op. 7, *Violin Sonata in F major* Op. 8, *Violin Sonata in G major* Op. 13 and *Piano Concerto in A minor* Op. 16. Nevertheless, he asserts that these works offer enough proof of Grieg's abilities to call him a genius. He opens his article by stating his premise for this assertion: "Modern composers may be divided into two classes – those whose style is founded more or less directly on some one or more of their predecessors and those who have a distinct individuality of their own." To be a genius by Prout's standards, one has to belong to the latter category. After commenting on the above-mentioned compositions, Prout presents his conclusion:

We have a very high opinion of Grieg as a composer. He is a man of very great originality of idea, and of sufficient acquirements to be able to use his ideas to the best advantage. That he deserves the title of "genius" there can be little doubt; at the same time, it should be distinctly understood that he is not, if one may use the expression, a musical cosmos like Beethoven or Mozart. His genius is rather of a nature which moves within a somewhat limited circle.²⁵

This testifies to Prout's early admiration for Grieg's music, even though he (like many others) emphasises that Grieg is a composer in a more "limited" domain than that of the great symphonic composers. Later, Grieg would visit and perform in Great Britain multiple times. As Lionel Carley writes, Grieg would get to know many musicians on his trips. He mentions Prout as an example.²⁶ On several of his trips to Norway, Prout also attempted to visit Grieg at Trolldhaugen, which

²³ Grieg first advertised in Christiania on 5 September (in *Morgenbladet*), and then only a month later in Bergen on 15 October (in *Bergens Tidende*). The sudden change of location is tied to the fact that Grieg lost both of his parents this very autumn: His father died 13 September, his mother 23 October.

²⁴ Letter from Ebenezer Prout to Edvard Grieg, 20 July 1890 and 9 June 1895, Grieg Archives, Bergen Public Library. The letters are written in Norwegian.

²⁵ Ebenezer Prout, "Compositions by Edvard Grieg", in: *The Academy*, 29 August 1874, pp. 251f. He furthermore characterises Grieg's music in the following way: "Some of the music is, indeed, so excessively original that its beauty hardly strikes one on a first hearing. Its great individuality arises from its strong northern character, and the ear requires to be somewhat accustomed to the unusual melodic progressions and strange rhythms before they can be fully appreciated". A Norwegian translation of Prout's article was printed in *Bergens Tidende* on 21 September 1874.

²⁶ Lionel Carley, *Edvard Grieg in England*, Woodbridge 2006, p. 433.

turned out to be easier said than done.²⁷ Given this connection between them, it is very much possible – and even highly likely – that the books by Prout in Grieg’s library were gifts from the author.

When it comes to German music theorists, it is natural to look to Leipzig. In the second half of the nineteenth century, its Conservatory was considered to be one of the leading institutions of higher music education in Europe. Although it was criticised by many, Grieg included, the Leipzig model proved to be hugely influential for later developments in music education in Europe and elsewhere.²⁸ It is thus not surprising that the writings of the Leipzig music theorists also proved to be hugely influential. This was especially the case with regard to Richter’s harmony textbook²⁹ and its many translations, which disseminated Gottfried Weber’s Roman numeral analysis, making this the standard system for harmonic analysis in many parts of the world.³⁰ Grieg attended Richter’s classes during all the years he was enrolled at the Conservatory. In addition to the Conservatory diploma and testimonies from the teachers to Grieg, there are also greetings from both Richter and Hauptmann in Grieg’s album from his time as a student in Leipzig in the Grieg Archives – both of which include a puzzle canon for the student to solve.³¹ However, it does not seem that Grieg kept in touch with his theory teachers after leaving Leipzig in 1862.

The most prominent German music theorist in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, Hugo Riemann, was also tied to the Leipzigian tradition. Like Grieg before him, he had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory and would later teach at the University of Leipzig. I do not know whether they met, but we do know what Riemann thought about Grieg’s music. In Riemann’s *Musiklexikon*, it is regretted that Grieg limited himself to using national characteristics akin to a “local dialect” (“einen lokalen Dialekt”) rather than writing in the (implicitly German) “musical world language” (“der musikalischen Weltsprache”).³² This does not mean, however, that Riemann did not admire Grieg and his works. In his account of music in the nineteenth century,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 197f.

²⁸ Yvonne Wasserloos, *Das Leipziger Konservatorium der Musik im 19. Jahrhundert. Anziehung- und Ausstrahlungskraft eines musikpädagogischen Modells auf das internationale Musikleben*, Hildesheim 2004.

²⁹ Ernst Friedrich Richter, *Lehrbuch der Harmonie*, Leipzig 1853.

³⁰ Robert W. Wason, “*Musica practica*. Music theory as pedagogy”, in: *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. by Thomas Christensen, Cambridge 2002 (The Cambridge History of Music), pp. 46–77, see p. 64; Ludwig Holtmeier, “Stufen und Funktionen. Gedanken zur praktischen Harmonielehre im 19. Jahrhundert”, in: *Musiktheorie*, ed. by Helga de la Motte-Haber and Oliver Schwab-Felisch, Laaber 2005 (Handbuch der Systematischen Musikwissenschaft 2), pp. 224–229, see pp. 227ff.

³¹ These are written in Grieg’s “Minnebok”, Grieg Archives, Bergen Public Library. See also Utne-Reitan, *Edvard Griegs studier*, p. 142.

³² Hugo Riemann, *Musik-Lexikon*, Leipzig ⁵1900, s.v. “Grieg”. For a discussion of the claim to universality in late nineteenth-century German music theory, see Alexander Rehding, *Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought*, Cambridge 2003 (New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism 11), pp. 127–138.

Riemann claims that Grieg is “without doubt the most important of the Scandinavian composers after Gade”.³³ His comparison of Grieg’s second opus – a collection of songs set to German poetry – with some of Schubert’s best is also regularly mentioned in the Grieg literature, although often with some reservation with respect to Riemann’s over-exaggerated assessment of these songs.³⁴

According to Arthur M. Abell, the Leipzig music theorist Salomon Jadassohn had the same opinion of Grieg’s music as Riemann. He supposedly accused Grieg of being “caged” by writing in a national rather than international (i.e. German) stylistic idiom. In a 1907 interview with Abell, Grieg allegedly defended himself against this criticism from Jadassohn.³⁵ However, the credibility of this source has been questioned by many Grieg researchers as well as by experts on other composers whom Abell supposedly interviewed.³⁶ It is possible, perhaps even probable, that the interview never took place. Thus, this might have been Abell’s way of *staging* a discussion of nationality, where Grieg plays the role of a progressive composer from the European periphery, while Jadassohn is portrayed as a conservative German music theorist. Due to the uncertainties regarding the credibility of this particular source, we cannot rely on it. It probably tells us more about Abell’s views of Grieg and Jadassohn than of Grieg’s and Jadassohn’s opinions of each other.

One of the fiercest critics of Riemann’s theoretical works, especially his reliance on harmonic dualism, was Georg Capellen.³⁷ His alternative, harmonic monism, privileged major over minor and granted the dominant ninth chord status as a *Naturklang*.³⁸ What is interesting for our purposes is that he published a set of analyses of the first four volumes of Grieg’s *Lyric Pieces* to support his theoretical theses.³⁹ That Capellen held Grieg’s music in very high regard is evident from his justification for using Grieg’s music as a case study for his theory:

³³ Hugo Riemann, *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven (1800–1900)*, Berlin 1901, p. 543: “ohne Zweifel den bedeutendsten der skandinavischen Komponisten nach Gade”.

³⁴ David Monrad Johansen, *Edvard Grieg*, Oslo ³1956, pp. 53f.; Beryl Foster, *The Songs of Edvard Grieg*, Aldershot 1990, p. 28; Benestad and Schjelderup-Ebbe, p. 45.

³⁵ Arthur M. Abell, *Talks with Great Composers*, New York ³1994, pp. 153–167

³⁶ Øyvind Norheim, “Arthur M. Abell’s Interview with Grieg as Published in his *Talks with Great Composers*. Fact or Fiction?”, in: *Edvard Grieg, sein Umfeld, seine Nachfolge – Neue Forschungen*, ed. by Helmut Loos and Patrick Dinslage, Leipzig 2018, pp. 189–196.

³⁷ Ludwig Holtmeier, “The Reception of Hugo Riemann’s Music Theory”, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Riemannian Music Theories*, ed. by Edward Gollin and Alexander Rehding, Oxford 2011, pp. 3–54, see p. 6.

³⁸ For an introduction to Capellen’s theory, see David W. Bernstein, “Georg Capellen’s Theory of Reduction: Radical Harmonic Theory at the Turn of the Twentieth Century”, in: *Journal of Music Theory* 37 (Spring 1993), pp. 85–116.

³⁹ Georg Capellen, *Die Freiheit oder Unfreiheit der Töne und Intervalle als Kriterium der Stimmführung. Nebst einem Anhang: Grieg-Analysen als Bestätigungsnachweis und Wegweiser der neuen Musiktheorie*, Leipzig 1904, pp. 41–66. See also Benedict Taylor, *Towards a Harmonic Grammar of Grieg’s Late Piano Music: Nature and Nationalism*, London 2016 (Royal Musical Association Monographs 29), pp. 32f.

Grieg is recognised far beyond his native country as one of the few masters who have enriched music with new means of harmonic and melodic expression, and created an admirable home-art distinguished by poetic feeling and the charm of many moods (*Stimmungsreiz*). For this reason the study of his “Lyrical Pieces” for piano, in particular, cannot be too highly commended to music lovers, were it only to make it clear to them that the one-sided, narrow theoretical rules, as usually taught, too often fail in face of this lovely art, without its losing thereby any of its charm.⁴⁰

In his letters to Grieg, Capellen also asks what the composer thought about his analyses.⁴¹ However, I have not managed to ascertain whether Grieg’s response to this question exists or whether he actually responded to Capellen at all.

Another prominent German music academic, Hermann Kretzschmar (often called the founder of musical hermeneutics), was very positive towards Grieg’s works. For example, he claimed that “Grieg is one of today’s richest and most peculiar virtuosos of harmony” and wrote positively about Grieg’s *String Quartet in G minor* Op. 27 in 1884,⁴² a work that had earlier been met with harsh criticism from German music critics.⁴³ Grieg and Kretzschmar knew each other.⁴⁴ The latter would edit an edition of the complete *Lyric Pieces* published by C. F. Peters in 1902, and Grieg would dedicate his *Slätter* Op. 72 to him the following year. In a 1902 letter to his publisher, Grieg writes that Kretzschmar’s preface to the above-mentioned edition of the *Lyric Pieces* proves a deep understanding of his work.⁴⁵ When considering the dedication of *Slätter*, he argues that Kretzschmar would be someone who would see the value of this work.⁴⁶ In his preface to *Slätter*, Grieg infamously claims that his “object in arranging the music for the piano was to raise these works of the people to an artistic level”, but he follows up by claiming that all his modifications could “easily be found, on comparing my arrangement with the original, written down by Johan Halvorsen, in a manner reliable even for research-work, and published by the same firm [Peters]”.⁴⁷ Thus, in addition to being one of Grieg’s musically most progressive works, it was also a contribution to contemporaneous music research. The director of Peters, Henri Hinrichsen, was really quite reluctant to publish Halvorsen’s transcriptions, but

⁴⁰ Capellen, *Die Freiheit oder Unfreiheit der Töne*, p. 41, translated in Henry T. Finck, *Edvard Grieg*, London 1906, p. 85.

⁴¹ Letter from Georg Capellen to Edvard Grieg, 24 Sept. and Nov. 26 1904, Grieg Archives, Bergen Public Library.

⁴² Hermann Kretzschmar, “Neue Compositionen von Edvard Grieg”, in: *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, 9 and 16 Oct. 1884, pp. 511–513 and 522f. “Grieg ist heute einer der reichsten und eigenthümlichsten Harmonievirtuososen”. A Norwegian translation of Kretzschmar’s article was printed in *Nordisk Musik-Tidende*’s Oct. and Nov. issues of 1884.

⁴³ Benestad / Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Edvard Grieg*, pp. 223f.

⁴⁴ See also Hella Brock, “Grieg und Hermann Kretzschmar”, in: *Edvard Grieg – Weltbild und Werk*, ed. by Hella Brock, Altenmedingen 2005, pp. 98–110.

⁴⁵ Edvard Grieg, *Briefwechsel mit dem Musikverlag C. F. Peters: 1867–1907*, ed. by Finn Benestad and Hella Brock, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, pp. 480f.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 496f.

⁴⁷ Edvard Grieg, “Preface”, in: *Norwegische Bauertänze (Slätter)*, Leipzig 1903.

Grieg pushed this through. This at least proves that Grieg was not completely unsympathetic towards musical scholarship.

5. Concluding remarks

As mentioned in the introduction, Grieg's many negative assessments of his formal training in Leipzig are well known. Ludwig Holtmeier has claimed that it was common for nineteenth-century composers to either not talk about their formal training at all or downplay its role in their success as composers, suggesting a possible connection with the prevailing romantic *Genieästhetik* and its positive valuing of autodidacticism.⁴⁸ This should be taken into account when considering not only Grieg's negative assessment of his Leipzig studies in particular but also his relation to music theory more generally.

The discussions in this paper – intended to complement the existing, and by now extensive, literature on Grieg's music theory education – indicate that Grieg had knowledge of, but only to a limited extent took part in, the contemporaneous music-theoretical discourse. I would like to emphasise that these discussions are not exhaustive. There are probably many sources that may shed more light on Grieg and music theory. However, there appears to be no reason to over-exaggerate Grieg's personal interest in music-theoretical matters. Seen in light of his remarks about the Conservatory and the general tenets of the *Genieästhetik*, this is not a surprising conclusion. While Grieg's interest in music theory was rather limited, music theory certainly was interested in Grieg. Studies of various contemporaneous music scholars' interest in Grieg and his music may be a compelling field for future research into early Grieg reception, of which I have only been able to scratch the surface in this paper.

⁴⁸ Ludwig Holtmeier, "Feindliche Übernahme: Gottfried Weber, Adolf Bernhard Marx und die bürgerliche Harmonielehre des 19. Jahrhunderts", in: *Musik & Ästhetik* 16 (2012), pp. 5–25, see p. 10.