

Edvard Grieg

**String Quartets
1 & 2**

alto

Raphael Quartet with Jet Röling, piano

Edvard Grieg

String Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 27

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|-----|---|-------|
| [1] | Un poco andante - Allegro molto ed agitato | 12:24 |
| [2] | Romanze: Andantino - Allegro agitato | 6:57 |
| [3] | Intermezzo: Allegro molto marcato - Più vivo e scherzando | 6:51 |
| [4] | Finale: Lento - Presto al Saltarello | 9:20 |
| [5] | <i>Fugue in F Minor</i> for string quartet | 3:20 |
| [6] | <i>Andante con moto in C Minor</i> for piano trio | 9:53 |

String Quartet No. 2 in F Major (completed by Julius Röntgen)

- | | | |
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| [7] | Sostenuto - Allegro vivace e grazioso | 9:25 |
| [8] | Allegro scherzando - Più vivo | 6:39 |
| [9] | Adagio (world premiere recording) | 7:34 |
| [10] | Allegro giocoso (world premiere recording) | 6:18 |

Raphael String Quartet

Ronald Hoogeveen & Ramy Koch, *violins*

Zoltán Benyacz, *viola* • Henk Lambooi, *cello*

[6] Jet Röling, *piano*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

When one considers that most of **Edvard Grieg's** (1843–1907) *oeuvre* consists of exquisitely wrought miniatures, it seems surprising that chamber music accounts for such a small proportion of his life's work. He was a student at the Leipzig Conservatory when asked by his teacher Carl Reinecke to compose a String Quartet. This *Quartet in D minor* was performed in Bergen in May 1862 but was subsequently disowned by its composer and only this rarely played *Fugue in F minor* dating from 1861 survives.

Grieg's first numbered *String Quartet* was completed by the summer of 1878 and, acknowledging his inexperience in the *genre* but at the same time his serious intent, he wrote that it was 'not intended to bring trivialities to market. It strives towards breadth, soaring flight and above all resonance for the instruments for which it is written. I needed to write this as a study. Now I want to tackle more chamber music. That is the way I shall find my way again'. Grieg had been complaining of becoming bogged down with occasional works such as *Peer Gynt*, *Sigurd Jorsafar* 'and other horrors'.

This *String Quartet in G minor* was dedicated to the violinist Robert Heckmann whose quartet gave the premiere in Köln in October 1878. In this work Grieg made use in the outside movements of a motif from the first of his op. 25 songs *Spillemaend*. Also notable in these two movements is Grieg's use of double-stopping which gives the quartet an almost symphonic sound, an effect not appreciated at the time by backward-looking critics such as Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904). However Franz Liszt, who had been a friend of Grieg's since they met in Rome in 1870, found the *String Quartet in G minor* intriguing and described it as both 'distinctive and admirable'. Later commentators have remarked that Grieg anticipated Debussy's *String Quartet* of 1893 (both quartets make use of a motto theme) and have stated that Grieg's quartet acts as a bridge between the quartets of Beethoven and the Debussy *Quartet*.

The desire to compose further chamber music was not entirely successful: Grieg began a *Piano Trio* in 1878, but as with the very early *String Quartet in D minor*, only one movement survives. This movement, marked *Andante con moto*, was discovered after Grieg's death by **Julius Röntgen** (1855–1932) who was well-known as an accompanist to numerous musicians and was on friendly terms with a

number of composers, including Grieg, Nielsen and Brahms. Röntgen came from a musical family, his father being leader of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and between 1877 and 1925 he taught at the Amsterdam Conservatory. Röntgen was also a prolific composer whose style evolved from the Romantic to the embracing of bitonality. He had first met Grieg in 1883, when the Norwegian composer visited Amsterdam and the two continued to meet at regular intervals, often going on extensive mountain hikes together. A photograph survives of them together (Röntgen with telescope) on the Lövstakken Mountain near Bergen in 1902.

The *Andante con moto* remained unpublished until 1978, one hundred years after its composition. Röntgen's decision not to publish this movement, even after his initial favourable reaction ('It is beautiful and completely in order....a perfect entity in itself') might have been influenced by Grieg's notation in the manuscript indicating the composer's own dissatisfaction with the work. It received its first performance at a concert organised jointly by Grieg's widow Nina and Röntgen in Copenhagen in January 1908. During this concert two completed movements of another aborted chamber work, Grieg's *String Quartet No.2 in F major*, were also heard in public for the first time.

In January 1891, the Griegs were living in Copenhagen, but Edvard found the urban setting lacking in inspiration: 'Give me peaceful nature instead!' he wrote to his friend Frantz Beyer. The first two movements of the *F major String Quartet* were finished by March but then Grieg moved to Oslo and to other more pressing projects. Thereafter, he lacked the time and motivation to complete the work and only a few sketches of the remaining two movements were among the papers examined by Röntgen after Grieg's death.

After Edvard's death, Nina Grieg instructed Röntgen to prepare several pieces for publication including the completed movements of the *String Quartet No.2*. Röntgen's initial inclination was to leave the work alone as he felt sure that Grieg would have had second thoughts. However, despite these doubts, by the beginning of November 1907 Röntgen had copied out the first two movements and had fallen in love with them. On 17 November 1907 they were given a private performance to an audience consisting solely of Mrs Röntgen, the players being the esteemed pianist Harold Bauer (first violin), Pablo Casals (second violin, but playing with the violin between his legs like

a cello), Röntgen (viola) and Mrs Casals (cello). Having played the unfinished work, Röntgen became convinced that the *Second String Quartet* should be published.

The year before his death Grieg had contemplated finishing the 'accursed' *Quartet* 'which lies unfinished like an old Norwegian cheese' but found himself defeated by the task. 80 bars of the *Adagio* had been completed and this gave Röntgen enough material to finish the slow movement with just a small section being his own invention. Grieg's sketches for the finale on the other hand required considerable guesswork and eventually Röntgen felt he had no option but to return to much earlier sketches Grieg made for his *String Quartet in G minor*. In this 1993 world-premiere recording of Röntgen's completed score, the Raphael Quartet decided themselves to alter Röntgen's ending of the finale.

NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

The **Raphael String Quartet** (Ronald Hoogeveen –violin; Ramy Koch-violin; Zoltan Benyacz –viola; Henk Lambooij-cello) has for many years been known far beyond their native Holland. Founded in the early 1980s, they came to prominence winning four distinctions at the European Broadcasting Union String Quartet Festival in 1983. The recipients of a number of important commissions, they have recorded extensively including works by Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Bruckner, Grieg, Janáček and Shostakovich.

Jet Røling studied at the Amsterdam Conservatory and then with Louis Kentner in London and Erwin László in Switzerland. Among her much-praised recordings are works by Janáček, Grieg and Fauré.

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