

Øivin Fjeldstad (2 May 1903 – 16 October 1983) was a Norwegian conductor and violinist who led the Oslo Philharmonic from 1962 to 1969.

A native of Oslo, Øivin Fjeldstad debuted as a violinist in 1921 following musical instruction in the conservatories of Oslo and Leipzig. Ten years later, having studied with Clemens Krauss in Berlin, he began his conducting career in Oslo and, after the end of World War II and the founding of the Norwegian Radio Orchestra (Kringkastingssorkestret) in 1946, he became its head conductor. Between 1958 and 1960, the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet had Kirsten Flagstad as its general manager and Øivin Fjeldstad as its first artistic director. In 1962 he, along with Herbert Blomstedt, succeeded Odd Gruner-Hegge as head conductor of Oslo Philharmonic, the nation's leading orchestra, becoming one of the most influential figures in his country's postwar musical history. He was awarded the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav, which is bestowed for remarkable accomplishments on behalf of native land and humanity.

Øivin Fjeldstad died in Oslo at the age of 80. His daughter, Lise Fjeldstad, is a well-known actress while his son Øivin Skappel Fjeldstad is a banker and politician.



Grieg

# PEER GYNT

INCIDENTAL MUSIC

Øivin Fjeldstad  
The London Symphony Orchestra

Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) wrote his five-act allegorical drama *Peer Gynt* in 1867 while living in Italy. It tells the story of the downfall and subsequent redemption of a Norwegian peasant anti-hero. Unlike Ibsen's previous dramas, it was written in verse and wasn't originally intended for stage performance. However, in 1874, Ibsen changed his mind and wrote to his friend and compatriot Edvard Grieg to ask if he would compose the music for a production of the play. Flattered to have received the invitation, Grieg agreed at once, but doubt soon set in.

Much as he admired the drama as a literary work, Grieg found composing for it a difficult task.

"*Peer Gynt* progresses slowly," he wrote to a friend in August 1874, "and there is no possibility of having it finished by autumn. It is a terribly unmanageable subject."

As work continued, Grieg began to be drawn into the drama and, as his wife noted, "the more he saturated his mind with the powerful poem, the more clearly he saw that he was the right man for a work of such witchery and so permeated with the Norwegian spirit".

The music was completed in the autumn of 1875, and the play's lavishly staged premiere took place on February 24, 1876 in the Møllergaden Theatre, Christiania (now Oslo), with

the orchestra conducted by Grieg himself.

Though a triumphant success, the performance prompted the composer to complain bitterly that the Swedish management of the theatre had given him specifications as to the duration of each number and its order: "I was thus compelled to do patch-work... In no case had I opportunity to write as I wanted...

Hence the brevity of the pieces," he said.

When *Peer Gynt* was revived in Copenhagen in 1885, Grieg took the opportunity to re-orchestrate much of the music. For both this and a subsequent revival in 1902, he added new pieces.

The score was published in 1908, a year after Grieg died, with 23 individual numbers lasting a total of nearly 90 minutes. Not surprisingly, given the length of both drama and incidental music, full-scale productions are rarely mounted and the original score with soloists, chorus and melodrama is far less well known than the two suites that Grieg assembled in 1888 and 1893.

Second to Grieg's Piano Concerto, the *Peer Gynt Suite No.1* is the composer's most popular work, and of its four movements *Morning* and *In The Hall Of The Mountain King* are among the most loved of all short orchestral compositions.

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1. Prelude, Op. 23 No. 1 6:15
2. Morning Mood, Op. 23 No. 13 4:35
3. The Death Of Ase, Op. 23 No. 12 4:30
4. Anitra's Dance, Op. 23 No. 16 3:30
5. In The Hall Of The Mountain King, Op. 23 No. 7 2:35
6. Ingrid's Abduction And Lament, Op. 23 No. 4 4:00
7. Arab Dance, Op. 23 No. 15 4:35
8. Peer Gynt's Homecoming, Op. 23 No. 19 2:40
9. Solvejg's Song, Op. 23 No. 11 5:45
10. Dance Of The Mountain King's Daughter, Op. 23 No. 8 1:45

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