

# Letters from Scandinavia

Joanna Harries  
Sholto Kynoch



## Foreword

There is a well-trodden route for classical works to become ‘hits’ and enjoy renewed relevance in contemporary culture: through use in film and commercials. Think Gounod’s *Ave Maria*, Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Bizet’s *Habanera*. These pieces, alongside a growing hall of fame, have reached well beyond the often rigid confines of those who celebrate the genre, inspiring creatives and their end listeners many a time through the relatable stories the music tells. We who are in the business of releasing classical recordings that might delight as broad an audience as possible should take note of this ‘film effect’, especially when we are looking at the little-known corners of the further reaches of Western classical music, including turning our gaze away from central Europe and northwards. This effect encourages us to think boldly and ensure that the ‘hitherto neglected’, including by Bizet and Gounod’s Nordic contemporaries, is not relegated to mere historical curiosity, gazed at through the museum glass. There is the opportunity to do so much more...

In an era where we think we have ‘seen’ and ‘heard’ it all, we find it hard to countenance the possibility of real discovery of people, places and their music. Travel is (relatively) democratised. And for those of us unable or unwilling to get on a plane, there is ample opportunity to ‘visit’ places through travel series on streaming services or social media content. So extensive are the travel possibilities that one exasperated recent traveller on the Japan travel subreddit even lamented that, having watched many a YouTube video of the sunrise over Mount Fuji and the cherry blossoms, they were rather disappointed on being faced with the real thing. Meanwhile, it is thought that most of the ‘good’ music has now been recorded. What remains for artists building their discographies is to rework repertoire, reinterpret the well-known, or, of course, record new compositions.

All these avenues for recording are valid and are pathways we as a label are traversing. But they are complemented by the additional and no less critical route between us, our artists and our listeners: the artfully (re)discovered and recontextualised, a route taken from the ‘film effect’ playbook. This is where we find imagination unleashed to bring art that is fresh and exciting (and timeless) to the turntable.

May *Letters from Scandinavia* prove the naysayers of twenty-first-century discovery and the relevance of classical music wrong. It is a stroke of storytelling genius on Joanna’s behalf to have taken nineteenth-century song – including that by women composers which, as ever, has been woefully neglected until now – and to leverage it alongside commissioned, artfully underscored narrations to enable travel. When we first discussed the programme, my interest was piqued as a former researcher of historical European travel. Little did I realise, however, propelled by the haunting soundscapes created by Peter Facer in collaboration with Joanna, just how captivating the result would be.

I am yet to make it to the Nordic lands. But, for now, I listen to this programme sat on the edge of my armchair, enchanted by magical visions of the northern lights and other cultural encounters, eager to embark on the next leg of the journey. Any eventual travel has very high expectations to meet.

If there were ever an ode to an album experience that gets us to enjoy classical music in the ‘here and now’ whilst seamlessly slipping to the ‘there and then’, then this is it.

Emma Pouncefort *Director*

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## A Letter

*...Prepare to follow us bodily, sharing our hardships and our pleasures, first laying in an immense stock of health, spirits, and good temper; but should you be wanting in any of these, merely follow us in imagination, and from a comfortable fire-side chair, indulgently participate in what we shall endeavour to describe, without the trouble of travelling.*

*Unprotected Females in Norway, or The Pleasantest Way of Travelling There, passing through Denmark and Sweden* – Helen Emily Lowe (1857)

*Letters from Scandinavia* is, I hope, an adventure.



It certainly has been for me in creating it. It began with a chance stumbling on Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway & Denmark*, written on the cusp of the nineteenth century, at a time when most of the rest of Europe was almost entirely ignorant of the 'wild north'. I soon discovered a treasure trove of historic travel writing about Scandinavia, which I duly devoured – from Selina Bunbury's *Life in Sweden* to Helen Emily Lowe's wonderfully titled *Unprotected Females in Norway*.

Ladies on Horseback, 'Unprotected Females', p. 221

These writers' awestruck impressions of Nordic landscapes and culture, and their excitement at discovering for themselves something so special that they simply *must* write home about it, reminded me of my own first encounters with Swedish and Norwegian song. Scandinavian song has to be the most unjustly underperformed of the song repertoire – but once discovered, it is difficult not to evangelise to everyone you meet about what they might be missing out on. It set me off on my own journey; I devoured all the travel writing I could find, poured over historic maps, and raided the archives of Nordic composers, both well-known and little-performed.

It has grown into something between a song recital and a historical audio travel guide, I suppose. A weaving together of music and text as it follows in the footsteps of women journeying to nineteenth-century Nordic countries for the first time. The music is drawn from a rich vein of song by composers including Agathe Backer Grøndahl, Edvard Grieg, Helena Munkteell, Laura Netzel, Jean Sibelius and Wilhelm Stenhammar, and interwoven between the songs are new texts inspired by colourful and evocative nineteenth-century travel writing. I've had the huge pleasure of working with composer Peter Facer to bring these texts to life with new music to underscore the spoken word.

This period is truly a golden age of Scandinavian song, with a repertoire full of (often undeservedly neglected) gems that are hugely rewarding to perform for both singer and pianist. I'm grateful that my fellow traveller is pianist Sholto Kynoch, who first introduced me to Backer Grøndahl's works a few years ago, and who plays this repertoire so beautifully.

*Letters from Scandinavia* is above all a love letter to all things Nordic. I very much hope you enjoy it. (Best served with a cinnamon bun...)

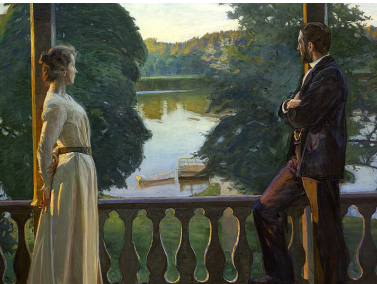


## Travel Writing

*Nothing, in fact, can equal the beauty of the northern summer's evening and night, if night it may be called... for I could write at midnight very well without a candle.*

*Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway & Denmark*  
– Mary Wollstonecraft (1796)

The Nordic countries hold a particular fascination. I am an unashamed Scandophile, loving everything from herring to *hygge* and the Hardanger fiddle. And I'm not the only one – as a society we binge-watch Scandi Noir television, and enjoy meatballs and flatpack furniture from IKEA.



Nordisk sommarkväll  
(Nordic Summer Evening)  
Richard Bergh (1858–1919)  
Gothenberg Museum of Art

But the 'wild north' of Europe has not always been a top travel destination. In the eighteenth century, the popular travel route for young (wealthy, male) British travellers was the 'Grand Tour' of France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Germany. Perhaps Spain, Holland or Greece might be on the cards, but most of Scandinavia (certainly anything north of Copenhagen) was an unknown entity: a frozen wilderness on the edge of nowhere. All this changed during the nineteenth century when increased mobility for the middle classes, a Romantic hankering for sublime and awe-inducing nature, and the wildly popular 'Viking Revival' sparked an insatiable fascination with Old Norse culture and the Nordic countries.



At the same time, travel writing had become phenomenally popular. Travel writing of this period is not the bland magazine listicles of today but an unabashedly literary prose that does not shy away from emotional highs and lows. Writers freely mixed poetic rhapsodising on nature, impassioned social commentary and witty asides with practical advice on exchange rates, what clothes to pack and the standard rates for hiring horses.

This is also an era when, for the first time, some (middle-class, educated) women are able to travel, and without a male escort. 'The only use of a man in travelling is to look after the luggage,' Helen Emily Lowe tells us in *Unprotected Females in Norway*, in which she drags her mother dauntlessly across Norwegian glaciers and reports on it all with infectious, unalloyed enthusiasm. (The reader is told we are not allowed to know her mother's age, though the Norwegians continuously ask, as her truly Victorian mother has quite properly never revealed this highly personal information even to her own daughter). Selina Bunbury's multiple volumes of *Life in Sweden* and *A Summer in Northern Europe* are full of detailed observations and fascinating anecdotes from the year she spends living in Stockholm and a summer roving around Sweden and Finland. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway & Denmark* is the result of a trip taken with her one-year-old daughter and maid to sort out some bad business with a lost ship on behalf of her fickle lover George Imlay. Wollstonecraft is travelling in the wake of the French Revolution and in between suicide attempts, and her writing is infused with a raw emotional awe and an avid social conscience.

For these women, Scandinavia is wild, Romantic, full of majestic vistas; a land of the midnight sun, relics of Viking pasts and mysterious elves, trolls and hulder – but also wolves, bears and harsh weather. It is very far from the tame 'garden-like' England they know. Like many twenty-first-century travellers, they complain about uncomfortable beds, bad food and other British tourists ruining it for everybody.



Nineteenth-century Scandinavia was an unknown world to most British travellers, but it is also quite an unknown world to modern Scandinavians today. And so I hope that this little adventure is illuminating in some way for all travellers, wherever you are in the globe.

## The Songs

We begin our adventure with **Edvard Grieg's** (1843-1907) own love letter to Norway: **Til Norge (Op. 58, No. 2)**. It was composed not in Norway, but in Copenhagen, where the Griegs often stayed during the winter months, and premiered there in 1894 by his wife, the soprano Nina Hagerup. Rather than the bombastic, nationalist tones one might expect from such a title, the understated and intimate lyricism of this little song is instead a very personal homage to his homeland, with the lyrics by John Olaf Paulsen comparing Norway to a mother: *'You are my mother. I love you. With that, everything is said.'*

Writing to author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Grieg declared his aim was 'to paint Norwegian nature, Norwegian history, and the life and poetry of our people in musical form'. He perhaps comes closest to this in his only song cycle: **Haugtussa (Op. 67)**, from which **Møte** and **Ved Gjætle-Bekken** are taken. The poems are from Arne Garborg's verse novel about the young mountain herder Veslemøy and her first love affair, and are written in Nynorsk (or Landsmål as it was then known). Grieg was immediately taken with the innate musicality of the language, which he described as 'a world of unborn music', and declared **Haugtussa** 'a truly a brilliant book where the music is actually already composed. One just has to write it down.' Landscape and emotion are inextricably intertwined in Grieg's exquisite music throughout the cycle: in **Møte** the yearning opening phrases build to explosive, climatic outbursts as the young lovers meet on the mountain pastures, whilst in the final song **Ved Gjætle-**

**Bekken** (At the Brook) the murmuring piano figure and shifting, blurring harmonies are a watery reflection of Veslemøy's sadness. The first full performance of the cycle took place with Grieg's friend and fellow composer Agathe Backer Grøndahl at the piano.

Grieg's astonishing attention to detail as a miniaturist is also seen in the Debussy-like, delicate piano shimmers of **Forårsregn (Op. 49, No. 6)**, in which he perfectly captures the pattering spring rain amongst the little elves (*'a cascade of pearly tones'*). And one can hardly imagine a more perfect evocation of winter chill than the cold, bare harmonies and hauntingly spare vocal line of **På Norges nøgne fjelde (Op. 59, No. 2)**. A setting of German poet Heinrich Heine in translation, this was a well-known poem set by countless composers (including Liszt, Rimsky-Korsakov, Delius, and Grieg's fellow Scandinavian composers Stenhammar and Backer Grøndahl) and is quoted by Helen Emily Lowe in **Unprotected Females in Norway**.

Acclaimed by George Bernard Shaw as 'the true heiress of Clara Schumann', **Agathe Backer Grøndahl** (1847-1907) was a virtuoso pianist as well as a prolific composer of song and piano music. Despite opposition from her own family and her first teacher (who advised her to 'follow the common path of a woman, if God grants you it: take your art with you as a delectable ornament... but do not leave the common way in order to become a concert pianist'), she pursued studies in France and later as pupil of Franz Liszt. Her debut in Norway was under the baton of a 26-year-old Edvard Grieg and she went on to make his *Piano Concerto* famous by including it in her international performances across Europe. Throughout her life, she remained good friends with both Edvard and his wife Nina, who was Backer Grøndahl's first-choice soprano to perform her songs.

**Sildig (Op. 17, No. 7)** is dedicated to Edvard Grieg and showcases the kind of sinuous melody passing between voice and piano that Grieg was perhaps thinking of when he wrote upon Backer Grøndahl's death: 'No artistic soul has wandered purer

roads... If a mimosa could sing, sound would stream forth from it as from Agathe's most beautiful, most intimate melodies.'

**Til mit Hjertes Dronning (Op. 1, No. 3)** is dedicated to Nina Grieg and combines a sense of German Romanticism with an indisputably Nordic tone. Her skill as a pianist is clear in her imaginative piano writing, especially the shimmering middle section, where the piano glitters in the higher register against the warm mid-range of the vocal line. It is interesting that Backer Grøndahl chooses to set an English poem by (or attributed to) Percy Bysshe Shelley (husband of Mary Shelley, the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft) in a Danish translation by Christian 'Caralis' Preetzmann. Somehow, she makes it sound quite at home in Norway.

Backer Grøndahl's output was prolific (she wrote over 400 works) and, unusually for the period, many were published in her lifetime. The year following her death, she even had a piece programmed at the 1908 Proms in London. Her compositional voice is as malleable and wide-ranging as it is vast, and in her songs she is often led strongly by the text – as in the cheeky **Skjærer (Op. 52, No. 6)** about a pair of squabbling magpies from a poem by Andreas Grimelund Jynge, which flits between sing-song, strutting and squawking with perfect comic timing.

**Wilhelm Stenhammar** (1871-1927) remains by far Sweden's most famous composer. He wrote several large-scale orchestral works, including two symphonies, several concertos, and an opera with a libretto by Henrik Ibsen – but his finest works are perhaps his more intimate string quartets and his many songs. A renowned pianist of his day, his detailed piano parts result in songs that are very much duets for voice and piano, whilst the texts he chooses reflect the flowering of excellent Swedish poetry during his lifetime.

One such poet is Verner von Heidenstam, a poet and novelist with a fascination for Scandinavian history who went on to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. His

**Jutta kommer till Folkungarna (Op. 37, No. 1)** is a ballad-like tale of the Medieval Danish princess Jutta, who travels from Roskilde in Denmark to visit her sister, wife of the King of Sweden. King Valdemar falls in love with her and begins an affair, but, when her sister finds out, she is banished back to the nunnery in Roskilde. Stenhammar reflects the ballad-like verse in his melancholic, folksong-like refrain '*Lindelöv, lindelöv*' (*linden leaf, linden leaf*), but there is also an unsettling darkness to the constantly shifting semiquavers of the piano. The cyclical nature of the final unresolved E minor chord in first inversion takes us bleakly back to exactly where we began.

Bo Bergman's texts were a major inspiration for Stenhammar (as well as other Swedish composers such as Ture Rangström and Wilhelm Peterson-Berger) and the following two songs are excellent examples of just why. **Jungfru Blond och jungfru Brunett (Op. 26, No. 4)** is surely one of Stenhammar's finest songs: a dramatic tale of two maidens hurrying home in the autumn evening to escape the clutches of the lurking 'troll' of the darkness. A breathless staccato from the piano punctuates the dancing vocal line as the girls laugh and whirl in the autumn air, and a falling star is heard tinkling down the keyboard. But the sense of menace builds with an ostinato of whistling wind and tiptoeing darkness, chasing them home to their mother at the fireside. At the end, we hear the darkness taunting that it will get them next time...

A melancholic nostalgia pervades **Vid fönstret (Op. 20, No. 2)**, matching Bergman's taut lyrics where the narrator has seen their beloved's first wrinkle '*as if carved by a needle into the corner of your eye*'. Gazing from the window, we hear the bells ringing out the hour and for a moment the dreaming of a group of teenagers lifts us into a glorious, pealing A major. But ultimately, we dissolve back into a bleak wistfulness as the narrator mournfully reminds his love that '*nothing turns out as you think*'.





Unlike Stenhammar, **Laura Netzel** (1839-1927) is virtually unknown today. She studied in Stockholm and then in France with Charles-Marie Widor but, after a promising debut as a pianist, she married gynaecologist Nils Wilhelm Netzel and retired from public performance. Her second musical life as a composer (mainly of songs, piano music and chamber works) began somewhat later in life. She published under the pen name 'N. Lago', presumably in a bid to stave off the kind of misogyny that being a female composer attracted, and it was not until 1891, when she was in her fifties, that her true identity was revealed.

The score for the chirpy **Säg mig, du lilla fogel** (Tell me, you little bird) only exists, as far as I know, in a handwritten manuscript in the Swedish Musical Heritage archives. Although she moved to Sweden as a young girl, Netzel was immensely proud of her Finnish heritage, and so it is perhaps no surprise that she set several texts by the celebrated Finnish poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg. The sprightly and charming melody of **Säg mig, du lilla fogel** is more Schubertian than many of the other songs in this programme, occasionally embellished with florid piano interludes, and ending with a suprisingly virtuosic flourish for the singer.

Born in Dalarna in Sweden, the youngest of nine children, **Helena Munktell** (1852-1919) studied at the Stockholm Conservatory and in Vienna. Like Netzel, she pursued studies in France and gained more professional recognition there than in her native Sweden. After being invited to join the Société Nationale de Musique, she was able to have several of her compositions premiered in their prestigious Paris concert series, including the premiere of her *Violin Concerto* by one of the most famous violinists of the time, George Enescu. It is no surprise, then, that she also wrote a number of songs in French.

Munktell wrote an almost identical version of **Fjerran på enslig stig** in a French translation as part of her *Dix Mélodies*. This setting is of the original Swedish poem

by Daniel Fallström, in which Munktell weaves fluid, French harmonies around a hauntingly translucent melodic line. The repeated call 'Åhå' perhaps recalls the distant call of a Scandinavian lur horn. Fallström was also the librettist for her opera *I Firenze*, which premiered at the Royal Opera in Stockholm in May 1889. Munktell would go on to become a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music in 1915, and, three years later, co-founded the Swedish Society of Composers (the only woman amongst its thirty-eight founders).

Whilst it is his symphonies and orchestral works that secured **Jean Sibelius** (1865-1957) international fame, the hundred or so songs he wrote offer a glimpse into his development of a national musical idiom. His songs often draw on Finnish landscapes and mythology in their texts – a conscious political choice in the face of mounting pressure to conform to Russian rule.

**Norden (Op. 90, No. 1)** is a short but remarkable song, conjuring up the slowly freezing winter lakes in a syncopated piano figure, above which the translucent vocal line glides like the migrating swans of Runeberg's text. The harmony never quite settles, but hovers over one long, unrelenting B $\flat$  pedal for almost the entire song in a slowly building crescendo, making the final, inexorable arrival at a pure B $\flat$  major all the more euphoric.

Whilst most of Sibelius' songs are settings of Swedish-language poems, he also sought out Finnish-language (Suomi) texts to set. Like Sibelius, the Finnish poet Larin-Kyösti (born Karl Gustaf Larson), was born into a Swedish-speaking family, at a time when Swedish and Russian were still the dominant cultural forces in Finland. But both Sibelius and Larin-Kyösti attended the Hämeenlinna Lyceum, the first Finnish-language school in the country, immersing them in the Finnish language and helping to elevate its status to a language of literature and culture.





Sibelius turned down the offer to compose music for several of Larin-Kyösti's plays, but he did set *Kaiutar* (Op. 72, No. 4) in what is probably his most ambitious Finnish-language song. Sibelius is at his most impressionistic here, with a dancing folk tune weaving in and out of diaphanous semiquavers, like the nymph Kaiutar herself darting amongst the trees. The sparkling texture grows more agitated until, in high, declamatory outbursts, Kaiutar calls, listens, weeps and shouts for her lover 'until she has no voice left'. The skipping folk melody returns, but with added bite: abandoned by her lover, she will have her revenge by leading travellers astray, whispering to lure them deep into the forest...

## Writing the 'Letters'

Spoken word with music is, fittingly, a very nineteenth-century phenomenon. Now largely forgotten, spoken 'melodramas' with musical accompaniment were hugely popular in both public concert halls and domestic salon concerts – some of the most famous are by Liszt, but Grieg also wrote his very successful epic *Bergliot* (Op.42) for spoken voice and piano (later arranging it for orchestra).

These *Letters* are not a history lesson or an exact replication of any one writer's journey. I have freely combined places, ideas and observations into a personal, artistic interpretation. My hope is that it takes the listener on a journey, from their fireside armchair (or twenty-first-century equivalent) and transports them, as I have been transported by these books and songs.

Joanna Harries, London, 2024



When underscoring the spoken word interludes, my aim was to create a piano accompaniment that would support rather than overwhelm. Thus, it has taken the form of either short musical 'punctuation marks' or a more constant soundscape of rhythmic *ostinati* with evolving harmonies; using too many distinctive melodies might distract the ear away from the spoken text! Instead of melody, I have explored the idea of *leitmotiv* and created three small motivic fragments (one each for Norway, Sweden and Finland, and themselves derived from the songs) and teased them out in different directions in each interlude.

One challenge was to maintain my own compositional voice whilst writing in a style which would complement the songs. I wanted the songs and interludes to sound like they belonged together, without attempting to pastiche the styles of Grieg, Sibelius et al. So, I have kept nineteenth-century musical idioms as the basis, but with modernist dustings of gnarl, soup and rhythmic mischief.

Another of the great thrills of this project was coming up with musical segues from my interludes into the songs which are (hopefully) so seamless that in some instances it will be very difficult to discern where my music ends, and the next song begins.

Peter Facer, London, 2024

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## A Note on Geography and Language



What do we mean by 'Scandinavia'? Technically, Scandinavia refers to Denmark, Sweden and Norway (or sometimes the Scandinavian peninsula – Norway, Sweden and a small part of northern Finland). So, I am taking liberties by including Finland in my imaginary travels... A more accurate term is probably the 'Nordic countries', which also includes the autonomous Åland Islands, which we visit on our travels here, as well as Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. But the histories, cultures and languages of all these countries are so inextricably linked, particularly throughout the nineteenth century, that I feel justified in taking a little bit of artistic license.

The complicated political history of these countries has a bearing on the music and poetry featured in this album. Until 1814, Norway was part of the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway, ruled from Copenhagen – but after Denmark's defeat in the Napoleonic wars, it became part of the Swedish Kingdom, until its independence in 1905. Once considered a dialect of Danish, over the course of the nineteenth century Norwegians sought to formalise Norwegian as its own national language. There was a split between those promoting Riksmål and those supporting Landsmål, which developed into the modern dialects of Bokmål and Nynorsk and exist alongside several Sámi languages in the north. But Norway remained inextricably intertwined with Danish culture and language, and many of the texts set by Norwegian composers even well into the late nineteenth century are by Danish writers. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, written Danish and Riksmål are almost identical, although spoken pronunciation differed. Grieg and Backer Grøndahl set texts in both Danish and Riksmål, and Grieg also sets Landsmål texts in his most famous song cycle **Haugtussa**.

Meanwhile, Finland had been a part of the Kingdom of Sweden since the fourteenth century, but in 1809 it came under the rule of the Russian Empire until its independence after the 1917 Russian revolution. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Swedish was the predominant language of administration, education and the upper and middle classes, whilst Finnish (Suomi) was considered a language of the peasantry. But with a growing Finnish national movement, and in defiance of the threat of Russification, the Finnish language grew in recognition and popularity. Jean Sibelius grew up in a Swedish-speaking household, but later attended the first official Finnish-speaking secondary school in the country and married a Finnish-speaking wife, although he remained never quite as comfortable expressing himself in Finnish as in Swedish for the rest of his life.

For the modern performer, this raises some questions. Do I sing the Danish texts by Norwegian composers more like Danish or Norwegian? Do I sing Stenhammar's songs with the inflections of modern spoken Swedish, or attempt a more traditional, nineteenth-century pronunciation? Do I sing the Swedish language songs by Finnish composer Sibelius with a different pronunciation? Like our travelling authors, I have ventured in wide-eyed and ignorant, attempted my best and undoubtedly failed someone, somewhere. In general, I have sung the Danish texts by Grieg and Backer Grøndahl as if Norwegian, and in Swedish I have erred on the side of a more traditional pronunciation unless it impedes understanding.

Joanna Harries, London, 2024





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Praised for her 'stylish' singing (*Opera Magazine*) and the 'emotional force' (*The Times*) of her performances, **Joanna Harries** was born in New Zealand and raised in Wales, and recently finished as a young artist at the National Opera Studio in London.

Last season she made her debut with Opera Rara and the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, with the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican as mezzo soloist for Paul Rissmann's *Through the Looking Glass* suite, and with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at Cadogan Hall as mezzo soloist for Mozart's *Requiem*.

A keen recitalist, Joanna is a City Music Foundation artist and a Making Music Selected Artist. She was previously a Britten Pears Young Artist, Opera Prelude Young Artist and Handel House Talent artist. Recent performances include at the Elgar Concert Hall, Birmingham, a lunchtime recital at the Royal Opera House, at Pushkin House, and English song at Snape Maltings as a Britten Pears Young Artist alongside Sarah Connolly and Joseph Middleton. She has also brought SongPath, which weaves together music, nature and mental health, to festivals such as Oxford International Song Festival, Leeds Lieder, Ulverston International Music Festival and Beverley Early Music Festival with fellow singer Jess Dandy.

Her discography includes recordings with Opera Rara (*La Princesse de Trébizonde*) and the London Symphony Orchestra (*Wonderland*). **Letters from Scandinavia** is her debut song album. She is currently working on her second album *Nightingale* with pianist Jong Sun Woo and composer Alex Groves.

[www.joannaharries.com](http://www.joannaharries.com)

**Sholto Kynoch** is a sought-after pianist who specialises in song and chamber music. He is the founder and Artistic Director of the Oxford International Song Festival (formerly Oxford Lieder), which won a prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society Award in 2015, cited for its 'breadth, depth and audacity' of programming. In July 2018, Sholto was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in the RAM Honours.

Working with many of today's leading singers, recent recitals have taken him to Wigmore Hall, Heidelberger Frühling, Beethovenfest Bonn, the Zeist International Lied Festival in the Netherlands, the LIFE Victoria festival and Palau de la Música in Barcelona, the Fundación Juan March in Madrid, the Opéra de Lille, Opernhaus Zürich, Maison Symphonique de Montréal, Queensland Art Song Festival in Australia, and many other leading venues and festivals nationally and internationally.

His extensive discography includes the first complete edition of the songs of Hugo Wolf, recorded live at the Oxford International Song Festival, the final volume of which was released in January 2023. He has also recorded the complete songs of John Ireland and Havergal Brian, as well as recital discs of Schubert and Schumann songs. Sholto is also the pianist of the Phoenix Piano Trio, with violinist Jonathan Stone and cellist Christian Elliott.



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## Texts and translations

All translations are by Joanna Harries  
unless otherwise indicated

### Edvard Grieg – Til Norge

Text: John Olaf Paulsen

Du er min mor, jeg elsker dig,  
dermed er alting sagt!  
Du fødte mig, du plejed mig,  
holdt om min barndom vagt.  
Du er min mor, jeg elsker dig,  
dermed er alting sagt!

### To the Motherland

*You are my mother, I love you  
And with that, all is said!  
You bore me, you nurtured me,  
Watched over me in my childhood.  
You are my mother, I love you  
And with that, all is said!*



### Wilhelm Stenhammar – Jutta kommer till Folkungarna

Text: Verner von Heidenstam

Det red en jungfru från Danemark,  
en ängel från himmelen ljusa;  
men glädjen är skör och sorgen är stark.  
Lindelöv, lindelöv, susa!

Stig in, stig in, jungfru Lindelöv,  
i borgen, där harporna brusa!  
Så talade kungen, och jungfrun blev röd.  
Lindelöv, lindelöv, susa!

Och jungfrun blev hälsad och jungfrun  
blev kysst,  
och stjärnorna tindra över hallen.  
Nu gråter lilla jungfrun så bittert och  
tyst.  
Lindelöv, lindelöv, fallen!

### There came a maiden from Denmark

*There came a maiden from Denmark  
an angel from heaven's light,  
but happiness is fragile and sadness is  
strong.  
Lindenleaf, Lindenleaf, sighing!*

*Come in, come, maiden Lindenleaf,  
inside the castle, the harps are resounding!  
So spoke the king, and the maiden blushed  
red.  
Linden leaf, Linden leaf, sighing.*

*And the maiden was greeted and the  
maiden was kissed,  
and stars twinkled over the hall.  
Now the little maiden cries, so bitterly and  
silently.  
Lindenleaf, Lindenleaf, falling.*

## Agathe Backer Grøndahl – Sildig

Text: Holger Henrik Herholdt  
Drachmann

Nu, da de Alle sover,  
Og Fiskerlejet er tyst,  
Og Vinden er vendt og staar over  
Imod den fremmede Kyst;  
Nu, da de trællende Vover  
Har Ro, til det atter blir lyst,  
Nu vil jeg lette ved Havets  
Strande mit fulde Bryst.

Ak, Elskede, Du som sover  
Langt borte paa Pudens tyst,  
Og aner ej, hvilke Vover  
Der slumrer paa denne Kyst,  
Du rækker i Drømme over,  
Vil hælde Dig op til mit Bryst, --  
Du véd ej, at Freden er borte,  
Saa saare det atter blir lyst.



## Late

*Now, whilst they all sleep,  
And the fishing huts are silent,  
And the wind has turned and is blowing  
Toward a distant shore;  
Now, when the roaring waves  
Are peaceful, until it becomes light again,  
Now I will ease my full breast  
By the shores of the sea.*

*Alas, beloved, you who sleep  
Far away on a silent pillow,  
And have no idea of the waves  
Which slumber on this shore,  
You reach over in your dream,  
I would hold you close to my breast -  
You don't know, that peace will be gone,  
As soon as it grows light.*



## Edvard Grieg – Møte

Text: Arne Garborg

Ho sit ein Sundag lengtande i Li;  
det strøymar på med desse søte Tankar,  
og Hjerta fullt og tungt i Barmen bankar,  
og Draumen vaknar, bivrande og blid.  
Då gjeng det som ei Hildring yver Nuten;  
ho raudner heit; der kjem den vene Guten.

Burt vil ho gøyma seg i Ørska brå,  
men stoggar tryllt og Augo mot han vender;  
dei tek einannan i dei varme Hender  
og stend so der og veit seg inkje Råd.  
Då bryt ho ut i dette Undringsord:  
»Men snille deg då ... at du er så stor!«

Og som det lid til svale Kveldings Stund,  
alt meir og meir i Lengd dei saman søkjer,  
og brådt um Hals den unge Arm seg krøkjer  
og øre skjelv dei saman Munn mot Munn.  
Alt svimrar burt. Og der i Kvelden varm  
i heite Sæle søv ho i hans Arm.

## Meeting

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*On Sunday she sits on the hill –  
Her head filled with wonderful thoughts,  
Her heart beating noisily in her breast,  
And a dream seems to wake shyly within her.  
Suddenly, like an apparition on the  
mountainside,  
She blushes; the handsome boy appears.*

*She wants to hide in her confusion,  
But bewitched, she turns her gaze towards him;  
They grasp each other's warm hands  
And simply stand, not knowing what to do.  
Then, she bursts out in wonder  
'But you've grown so tall!'*

*And as the cool evening approaches,  
Ever more longingly they reach for each other,  
Their young arms embracing  
And trembling, mouth meets mouth.  
Everything fades away. And in the warm  
evening  
She sleeps – in pure bliss – in his arms.*

## Agathe Backer Grøndahl – Til mit Hjertes Dronning

Text: P.B. Shelley, trans. Caralis

Skal vi vandre en Stund  
I den dæmrende Lund,  
Mens Fuldmaanen hist holder Vagt,  
Jeg vil hviske, min Skat,  
I den kølige Nat,  
Hvad jeg aldrig ved Dagen fik sagt.  
Jeg ved Stjernerens Skjær,  
Skal betro Dig en Hær  
Af Tanker, som aldrig fik Ord,  
Imens Nathimlens Glands,  
Som en straalende Krands,  
Om din luftige Skjønhed sig snor.  
Og naar Maanen fra Sky  
Over Marker og By  
Udgyder sin sølverne Flod,  
Vil mig fængsle dens Skin  
Paa din Pande, din Kind,  
Vil jeg knæle iløn ved din Fod.



## To the queen of my heart

Text: Percy Bysshe Shelley

*Shall we roam, my love,  
To the twilight grove,  
When the moon is rising bright?  
Oh, I'll whisper there,  
In the cool night air,  
What I dare not in broad daylight!  
I'll tell thee a part  
Of the thoughts that start  
To being when thou art nigh;  
And thy beauty, more bright  
Than the stars' soft light,  
Shall seem as a weft from the sky.  
When the pale moon beam  
On tower and stream  
Sheds a flood of silver sheen,  
How I love to gaze  
As the cold ray strays  
O'er thy face, my heart's throned queen!*

## Agathe Backer Grøndahl – Skjærer

Text: Andreas Grimelund Jynge

En skjære paa Gjære  
i Hvidt og i Sort,  
Som svanset og danset,  
Og husj! Fløi hun  
bort til Kirsebærtræet.

I Svingen hun Vingen  
Mod Grenene strøg  
Og smeldret og gneldret  
Saa Blomsterne fæg  
Af Kirsebærtraeet.

“Forresten her næsten  
Jo staseligt er”  
Hun skratter: “Kom Fatter!  
Saa bygger vi her  
I Kirsebærtræet!”

Han skragget og flagget  
Og Stjerten stod stiv,  
Tog Svingen slog Vingen  
omkring hendes Liv  
i Kirsebærtræet.

## The Magpies

*A swaggering magpie,  
white and black,  
flicked her tail and danced,  
and whoosh! She flew  
away into the cherry tree.*

*She turned her wing  
and stroked it against the branches  
and flapped and squawked  
so that the flowers flew  
from the cherry tree.*

*“Well, here it's  
almost a palace”,  
she laughed: “Come on Dad!  
We'll build here  
in the cherry tree!”*

*He fluttered and preened  
and his tail stood stiff,  
and turned and wrapped his wing  
around her waist  
in the cherry tree.*



Hun ventet, han hentet  
Blot sølete Mos.  
Hun smeldte, han skjældte,  
De kaglet og slos  
I Kirsebaertraet.

Hun hakket, han takket,  
Han vingerne strøg,  
Hun deiset, han seiset,  
Saa Fjærene føg  
I Kirsebaertraet.

*She waited, and he picked up  
wet, muddy moss.  
She smacked, he scolded,  
they cackled and fought  
in the cherry tree.*

*She pecked, he thanked,  
he stroked his wings,  
she sighed, he cried,  
and feathers flew  
in the cherry tree.*



## Edvard Grieg – Foraarsregn

Text: Holger Henrik Herholdt Drachmann

Det klinger som fra fine Instrumenter,  
Og bøjer du det grønne Blad til Side,  
Så ser du Parkens Alfer, hvor de glide  
Med spæde Hænder over Strængelegen.

O Strængeleg! min Ungdoms dyre Minde!  
Da gik jeg som berust af Vårens Bad  
Og sang hen for mig selv så sjæleglad,  
Og lyttende stod Busk og Blomst og Blad  
Mens Fuglen flagred til sin Elskerinde.

Det klinger nu, som da, fra fine Strænge,  
Det suser sagte gennem spæde Blade;  
Se, Busken ryster sig og en Kaskade  
Af Perletoner triller over Gruset:  
Jeg følger Tårer selv til Regnens Toner!  
Kom, kom hver Alf, som skjuler sig bag Blad,  
Den Forårsregn gør sund, gør sjæleglad,  
Om end en Vemod dirrer i det Kvad,  
Som Træet nikker til med tunge Kroner!

## Spring rain

*Listen: delicate instruments are ringing out,  
And if you bend the tender green leaf aside,  
You will see the park's elves,  
whose tiny hands glide over the strings.*

*Oh sounds! dear memory of my youth!  
Then I went, as if drunk from the spring shower,  
And sang to myself with a soul full of joy,  
And every bush and flower and leaf stood  
listening  
While the bird fluttered to his lover.*

*Listen: now, as then, the delicate strings sound,  
Their music whispering through the young  
leaves;  
See, the foliage quivers and a cascade  
Of pearly tones rolls over the pebbles.  
I add my tears to the raindrops  
Come, come you elves, who hide behind the  
leaves,  
The spring rain makes the soul glad and whole,  
Even though a sadness trembles in the song,  
To which the trees nod their heavy crowns.*

## Edvard Grieg - På Norges nøgne fjelde

Text: John Olaf Paulsen after Heine

På Norges nøgne fjelde  
en gran så ensom står.  
Den slumrer; et snehvidt lagen  
omkring den Vinteren slår.

Den drømmer om en palme,  
der fjernt i morgenland  
sørger forladt og stille  
i ørkenens hede sand.

## The Pine Tree

*On Norway's bare mountains  
A lonely fir tree stands.  
It slumbers; winter wraps it about  
In a snow white sheet.*

*It dreams of a palm tree,  
Far away in Eastern lands,  
Which mourns alone and silently  
in the desert's hot sands.*



## Wilhelm Stenhammar - Jungfru Blond och jungfru Brunett

Text: Bo Bergman

Jungfru Blond och jungfru Brunett  
dansa med fingret på kjolen.  
Så höstklar är luften och lätt, lätt, lätt,  
lätt som de svingande  
jungfrurnas klingande  
glädje i solen.

Se på.  
Nu höja de sig,  
nu böja de sig,  
och ögonen lysa och flätorna slå  
och kinden har heta fläckar –  
men längst öfver ängens gulnade vall  
står rymden kall,  
och nakna stå träd och häckar.

O jungfrur, hvi dansen I än  
och sjungen och skratten?  
Det faller en stjärna igen,  
och snart kommer natten.  
Den kommer som tjufven  
när ingen ser, och ingen ber.  
Som en roffågelssvärm slår den ner  
och förmörkar vägar och vatten.

## The Blonde and Brunette Maidens

*The blonde and brunette maidens dance with  
fingers at their skirts.  
So autumn-ready the air is and light, light, light,  
light as the swinging  
maids' resounding  
joy in the sun.*

*Watch.  
Now they rise,  
now they bow,  
and their eyes shine and their braids flap  
and their cheeks are stained with heat –  
but far above the yellowed grass of the meadow,  
the sky is cold,  
and trees and hedgerows stand bare.*

*Oh maidens, do you still dance  
and sing and laugh?  
Another shooting star falls again  
and soon the night will come.  
It comes like a thief,  
that no-one sees, at no-one's behest.  
It strikes like a swarm of birds of prey,  
and darkens roads and water.*



Jungfru Blond och jungfru Brunett  
stanna förskrämda i dansen.  
Hur hemskt blef allting med ett  
i den sista döende glansen.  
Det hvisslar i vinden och smyger på tå  
och skrattar i ris och dungar.  
De stackars jungfrurna små  
skälfva som fogelungar.

Och hvita i kinden,  
med flätor som slå, slå, slå  
rusa de hemåt båda.  
Här ute är villor och våda,  
men hemma är världen en spiselvrå  
och mor den enda i världen.  
Hon sitter så tyst  
och tvinnar och snor  
och stirrar frysande  
in i de lysande  
glöden på härden.

De gömma sitt hjärta hos mor  
och kyssa den gamlas händer.  
Och timmarna rinna och kvällen blir stor,  
det rasslar i brasans bränder.  
Men ute som troll på tå  
det mumlande mörkret skrider:  
Ni käraste jungfrur små,  
jag tar er väl hvad det lider...

*The blonde and brunette maidens  
stop dancing, frightened.  
How awful everything has become all at once  
in the last dying glow of light.  
The wind whistles, and sneaks on tiptoe  
and laughs in the bushes and groves.  
The poor little maidens  
tremble like baby birds.*

*And with white cheeks,  
and braids that fly, fly, fly  
they both rush home.  
Out here are dangers and perils,  
but at home the world is a fireplace  
and mother is the only one in the world.  
She sits so quietly  
and twists and spins her thread  
and stares freezing  
into the glowing  
embers of the hearth.*

*They hide their hearts in mother  
and kiss her old hands.  
And the hours run on and the evening grows  
late,  
And the flames rattle in the fire.  
But outside, like a troll  
the murmuring darkness tiptoes:  
You dearest little maidens,  
I will take you one day...*

### Laura Netzel - Säg mig, du lilla fogel

Text: Johan Runeberg

Säg mig, du lilla fogel,  
Der mellan almens blad,  
Hur kan du ständigt sjunga  
Och ständigt vara glad?  
Jag hör din röst hvar morgon,  
Jag hör den hvarje qväll,  
Och lika ren är stämman  
Och tonen lika så.

Nej, sjung du, lilla fogel,  
Om njutning hvarje gång,  
Och aldrig skall jag blanda  
En klagan med din sång.  
Kom, bygg ditt bo hvar sommar  
Invid mitt tjäll ännu,  
Och lär mig qväll och morgon  
Att vara säll som du.

### Tell me, you little bird

*Tell me, you little bird,  
There between the elm tree's leaves,  
How can you constantly sing  
And always be happy?  
I hear your voice every morning,  
I hear it every night,  
And the voice and the tone  
Are as pure as ever.*

*No, you sing, little bird,  
About joy every time,  
And I shall never blend  
A lament with your song.  
Come, build your home every summer  
In my eaves still,  
And teach me night and day  
To be happy like you.*



**Helena Munktell - Fjerran på enslig stig**

Text: Daniel Fallström

Fjerran på en enslig stig  
skall du få söka mig,  
fjerran der vägen går  
fram genom gröna snår!  
Åhå!

Ingen har hittat den,  
ingen den känner än  
trasten i skogen blott  
känner den vägen godt.  
Åhå!

Kan du så finna mig,  
aldrig jag sviker dig!  
Djupt in i skogens ro  
bygga vi två vårt bo.  
Åhå! Åhå!

**Far Away on a Lonely Path**

*Far away on a lonely path  
You shall seek me,  
far away where the road leads,  
onward through green thickets!  
Oho!*

*No one has found it,  
no one has known it yet,  
only the thrust in the forest  
knows that road well.  
Oho!*

*If you can you find me,  
I will never let you down!  
Deep in the peace of the forest  
the two of us will build our nest.  
Oho! Oho!*



**Wilhelm Stenhammar - Vid fönstret At the window**

Text: Bo Bergman

I dag har jag sett din första rynka  
som rispad med nål i ögats vrå,  
och dina kära händer ha tagit  
från min tinning ett grånadt strå,

där vi sutto vid det öppna fönstret  
och tänkte på en gammal sak,  
medan aftonrodnan låg stilla  
öfyer småstadens täppor och tak.

En klocka ringde borta i grönskan,  
och kvällen var djup och allvarsam,  
och öfyer kyrkogården kom långsamt  
en skara flickor gatan fram.

De hade hvita blommor i håret  
och psalmbok och näsduk i hand;  
deras långa klädningar slogo,  
då blåsten tog dem ibland.

*Today I saw your first wrinkle  
as if carved by a needle into the corner of  
your eye,  
and your loving hands plucked  
from my temple a greying strand.*

*There we sat by the open window  
and thought about old times,  
while the evening's blush lay still  
over the village glades and rooftops.*

*A clock rang out far away in the foliage,  
and the evening was deep and solemn,  
and across the churchyard slowly  
a group of girls walked down the street.*

*They had white flowers in their hair  
and psalmbooks and handkerchiefs in their  
hands;  
their long dresses flapped  
when the wind pulled them now and then.*

På bleka kinder stod ännu gråten  
och läpparna läste en bön,  
men i ögonen speglades världen,  
och världen var stor och skön.

Och femtonårsdrömmarna lyfte  
mot skogens rökiga rand.  
Där det strimmade blankt efter solen  
låg livets förlofvade land.

Men vi sutto vid det öppna fönstret,  
din panna var sorgsen och sänkt,  
och jag kysste ditt finger och sade,  
att ingenting blir som man tänkt.

*Tears still clung to their pale cheeks  
and their lips recited a prayer –  
but their eyes mirrored the world,  
and the world was big and beautiful.*

*And fifteen-year-olds' dreaming lifted  
to the woods' hazy horizon.  
There in the shafts of sunlight  
lay life's promised land.*

*But we sat by the open window,  
your forehead was sad and drooping,  
and I kissed your finger and said,  
that nothing turns out as you think.*



## Jean Sibelius – Norden

Text: Johan Runeberg

Löfven de falla,  
Sjöarna frysa...  
Flyttande svanor,  
Seglen, o seglen  
Sorgsna till södern,  
Söken dess nödspis,  
Längtande åter;  
Plöjen dess sjöar,  
Saknande våra!  
Då skall ett öga  
Se er från palmens  
Skugga och tala:  
"Tynande Svanor,  
Hvilken förtrollning  
Hvilar på norden?  
Den som från södern  
Längtar, hans längtan  
Söker en himmel!"

## The North

(Maria Forsström)

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*The leaves are falling,  
The lakes are freezing ...  
Moving swans,  
Sail, o sail  
Sorrowful to the South  
Looking for its meagre fare,  
Longing back,  
Plowing its lakes,  
Missing ours!  
Then shall an eye  
See you from the palm's  
Shadow and speak:  
"Swans, languishing away,  
What enchantment  
Lies upon the North?  
He, who from the South  
Is longing, his longing  
Seeks a heaven."*



## Jean Sibelius – Kaiutar

Text: Karl Gustaf Larson ("Larin-Kyösti")

Kaiutar, korea neito  
Astui illalla ahoa,  
Kaihoissansa kankahalla,  
Huusi yksin huoliansa.  
Tullut ei suloinen sulho,  
Vaikka vannoi valallansa  
Kihlaavansa kaunokaisen.  
Ennen astuivat ahoa  
Kankahalla kuherrellen  
Kilvan kyyhkyjen kisoissa  
Kesäpäivän paistaessa,  
Illan kuun kumottaessa.  
Meni sulho sanoinensa  
Impi jäi sydäminensä.  
Etsii impi ihanainen  
Kullaistansa kankahalta,  
Huhuilevi i kuuntelevi,  
Kirkuvi kimahutellen  
Äänen pienoisen pilalle,

## The Nymph Echo

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*Echo, the lovely nymph,  
Wanders in the evening  
Through meadow and moor,  
Lamenting her sorrows alone.  
Her beloved never came,  
Although he swore he would  
Marry the lovely maiden.  
Earlier they would walk together  
Over meadow and moor  
Cooing like turtle-doves  
In the heat of a summer day  
In the cool of a moonlit night.  
Then her beloved left with his fine words,  
He left her alone with her aching heart.  
The fair maiden searches the heath  
For her beloved;  
She calls, she listens,  
She weeps and shouts  
Until she has no voice left*

Jähmettyvi, jäykästyvi,  
Kaatuissansa kauhistuvi  
Mustan metsän pimeyttä.  
Aamulla herättyänsä  
Kulkee kuje mielessänsä,  
Eksyttävi erämiehen  
Matkien ja mairitellen,  
Niin kuin ennen eksytteli,  
Sulho suurilla sanoilla,  
Tuulen turhilla taruilla.

*And grows stiff and cold,  
Stumbling and afraid,  
Through dark woods.  
Waking up in the morning,  
She has an idea:  
To lead travellers astray  
By mimicking and mocking,  
Just as her beloved led her astray before  
With his fine words,  
With his windy fables.*



**Edvard Grieg – Ved Gjøtøle-Bekken  
(Haugtussa)**

Text: Arne Garborg

Du surlande Bekk, du kurlande Bekk,  
her ligg du og kosar deg varm og klår.  
Og sprytar deg rein og glid yver Stein,  
og sullar så godt og mullar så smått,  
og glitrar i Soli med mjuke Bår'.  
Å, her vil eg kvila, kvila.

Du tiklande Bekk, du siklande Bekk,  
her gjeng du så glad i den ljose Li.  
Med Klunk og med Klukk, med Song og med  
Sukk,  
med Sus og med Dus gjennom lauvbygd Hus,  
med underlegt Svall og med Svæving blid.  
Å, her vil eg drøyma, drøyma.

Du hullande bekk, du sullande bekk,  
her fekk du seng under mosen mjuk.  
Her drøymer du kurt og gløymer deg burt  
og kviskrar og kved i den store fred,  
med sving for hugsott og lengting sjuk.  
Å, her vil eg minnast, minnast.

**At the Brook**

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*You chattering brook, you gurgling brook  
Here you are, lying warm and clear,  
You wash yourself clean and you run over stones  
You take life easy, softly humming  
And shining in the sunlight with gentle ripples.  
Oh, here will I rest.*

*You tickling brook, you trickling brook,  
You wander so joyfully on the hillside.  
With clunking and clinking, with singing and  
sighing,  
With rustling and murmuring through your leafy  
house,  
With a wondrous surge and a restful sleep.  
Oh, here will I dream.*

*You whispering brook, you humming brook,  
Here is your bed, beneath the soft moss.  
Here, your dreams are short and so you can  
forget  
And can whisper and sing full of peace –  
A balm for heartache and sickly longing.  
Oh, here will I remember.*

Du vildrande Bekk, du sildrande Bekk,  
kva tenkte du alt på din lange Veg?  
Gjennom aude Rom? millom Busk og Blom?  
Når i Jord du smatt, når du fann deg att?  
Tru nokon du såg so eismal som eg?  
Å, her vil eg gløyma, gløyma.

Du tislande Bekk, du rislande Bekk,  
du leikar i Lund, du sullar i Ro.  
Og smiler mot Sol og lær i dit Skjol  
og vandrar so langt og lærer so mangt ...  
å syng kje um det, som eg tenkjer no.  
Å, lat meg få blunda, blunda!

*You scurrying brook, you swirling brook  
What did you think about on your long journey?  
Through barren places? Through bushes and  
blooms?  
When you hid below ground? When you  
reappeared?  
Has anyone been so alone as me?  
Oh, here will I forget.*

*You wandering brook, you foaming brook,  
You play in the meadow, you laze in peace.  
And smile at the sun and laugh in your solitude  
And wander so far and learn so much.  
Oh, do not sing of what I'm thinking now –  
Oh, let me shut my eyes.*



## LETTERS FROM SCANDINAVIA – Letters texts

### Roskilde

To the real traveller an unexplored country has the most enticing charms, and very few have any idea what a place like Scandinavia is.

It is not a place for the faint hearted - but we ladies, having gone before, show how practicable the journey can be - though we will maintain that ladies get on in travelling much better alone than with gentlemen. Ladies set about things in a quieter manner; while men are sure to go into passions and make rows. The only use of a gentleman in travelling is to look after the luggage, and we take care to have no luggage.

Indeed, one should never go beyond one portable carpetbag. This, if properly managed, will contain two waterproof bags with straps, a straw hat, thin mosquito veils, two solid plaid shirts, woollen stockings, sturdy hobnail shoes, a light hooded waterproof cloak and a fishing-rod.

Now prepare to follow us as we leave for the wildest parts of Scandinavia. We shall set off by express train from London, take the boat to Calais, and then on to Ghent, Hanover, Hamburg, and so into Denmark.

Steaming through Zealand in a padded armchair of a second-class railway-carriage, we can see the fine woods and little whitewashed cottages passing by. And here come the towers of Roskilde Cathedral, burial-place of the Danish kings and queens, where the traveller can visit the crypt below, full of splendid marble sarcophagi and black velvet coffins.



### The Skagerrak

We are stopped at a miserable inn. The beds here are particularly disagreeable to me - they are a sort of box, and it seems to me that I am sinking into a grave. I fully expect to be suffocated by morning. My solace is the Night Watchman's song, a curious drawling sort of chant sung by an old man with a lantern and staff.

We shall need someone to watch over us for this morning we are to encounter the Skagerrak - that dangerous stretch of water whose bristling name has prepared us for very rough treatment on its waves.

At Six AM we set out from Copenhagen - sailing past Hamlet's Elsinore, surrounded by windmills, past the "Paternoster" rocks where the Swedish sailors begin to say their prayers, and past the dagger-like point of Jutland known as the Skaw. Not a breath of wind curls the water, and we glide along with it all so calm and tame, that one can hardly imagine this to be the land where the Viking Sea Kings had their nests.

But now - up rises the storm spirit from its bed in the Skagerrak! Down rushes a wave from the open fanlight. Washed over and over by the waves, past stranded wrecks and sunken rocks, we cling on, realising the angry horrors of a Scandinavian tempest!

What a change! A quarter of an hour ago we were tossing miserably on angry waters, but now we are in a peaceful harbour on the Norwegian coast. Pine-clad rocks sprinkle the quiet water at Sandø Sund, and a clear, calm moon shines over the still sea.

The other passengers have gone, and all is quite silent. Just moonlight and water,

and great high rocks. At last, there is a sound. It is a quiet Norse song. A sailor is sitting at the bow, with his arm round the neck of another, who seems to listen to the words more than to the music.

## Gudbrandsdalen

You will begin to wonder how we managed with the language - indeed, we have stayed more than a week at Christiania on purpose to pick up the principal words and try to catch how the natives string them together.

But now we must put what we have learnt into practice - and so we are flying along the high road to Trondheim, along the great thoroughfare of the country - the Gudbrandsdal, a golden vale. That is not a flourish of the pen - we are truly flying at full gallop, bouncing high from our seats and swinging side to side, thanks to the Norse method of driving. The little carioles one rides here have absolutely no springs - and yet their horses are exceedingly fast and the roads exceedingly bad - "skrekkelig" as they say here. The wild beauty of the scenery, however, more than makes up for it. Mountains, ravines, fine waterfalls and tumbling cascades.

Now, traveller, before continuing with us, you must consult your map. The usual route for the English is to continue straight on to Trondheim and take the steamer back round the coast to Christiania - quite plain sailing, but you will have no real idea what Norway is. Whereas if you take the westward course with us, you will be penetrating into the wilds where English ladies have never been heard of - to the throne of the grandest Scandinavian mountains, the "Sognefjell".

Up here on the mountain pastures the peasant girls and boys graze their cattle, and on Saturday and Sunday evenings they often send for a fiddler in order to have a dance. To the tunes of the Hardanger fiddle, the young



lads and lasses turn round a lively dance, whilst the cattle form a circle round them to listen. Even the 'Hulder', that mysterious being from the woods, is said to sometimes join in the fun. Then all the young fellows are eager to dance with this handsome, strange girl - so long as they don't discover the cow-tail hanging down underneath her skirts...

All this has found a lasting expression in the beautiful songs that live in the mouths of these people, composed in a language which is almost pure old Norske.

## Sognefjellet

However early one wakes, Norwegians always seem to have the head start. Our guides, Ole and Elias, are anxious to leave early to secure the fine weather for the dangerous mountain-pass.



Two little ponies with bags fastened tightly to their saddles are ready with extra clothing and provisions. They have had new shoes for such an undertaking. Our guides say their farewells - the wife of one of them is in tears; they are preparing for the worst. But wrapped up like mummies in flannel sleeves, wadded coats and long horsehair stockings, we set off along the stony road.

The air is filled with mist and a large black cloud hangs over the snowy masses of the Fjeld. Silently we make our way along a vale of granite rocks, the bowling-green of the mountain giants. The mist turns to rain, and a howling wind rushes through the chasm. After three hours tough march we come across the skeleton of a horse picked remarkably clean by the wolves.

"There is still time to return before you freeze," says Ole, our guide.





But we press on. The rain changes to sleet and then to snow. We must travel on foot now, rocks sometimes forcing us to plunge across frozen streams. Boundless alps and glaciers rise above the freezing waters of the fjord below. The only sound is a low distant howl; to remain still is death. Only in Scandinavia could such a combination of savage loneliness and nature's most glorious panoramas exist.

Finally, blades of grass begin to appear through the snow - the spell is broken. Never was there a more welcome sight than the thin line of smoke rising in the air from a little turf-roofed cottage. The crackle of the fire is almost too friendly.

Outside, the long northern twilight is deepening into night, veiling the rocks and water and sky in its mystic influence, and all horrors of the day are quite forgotten. Nothing, in fact, can equal the beauty of a northern summer's evening, when the moon bursts forth in all her glory.

## Hallingdal

This morning is our last in Bergen, Queen of the North, with her quaint coloured houses and bustling markets. I have bought some scarlet flannel from the market to make a pair of "indispensables" - quite indispensable for all who intend following us in this next expedition. They can be of any colour you fancy, only red looks very pretty amongst the trees - and it frightens the wolves.

Now we are to see the last of Norway's three glories - the Fjord, the Fjeld, and finally: the forest.

Down the Hallingdal valley we ride, where the labourers are working in the fields. There are quite wonderful specimens of men here - hardy mountaineers who wear bright coloured jackets and white knitted stockings that show their fine calves.

They are used to hardships of every kind here, and in winter you may see them with their hairy breast bare and full of icicles!

And they most certainly know how to dance. That evening in the frosty twilight air, as we sit sipping Negus with the peasants around a blazing fire, suddenly up jumps on and gives a specimen of their national dance, the "Halling". Light as a feather he jumps, turning in the air and descending balanced on one leg, his jacket whirling like a bell around him, electrifying the whole circle. Before we know it, we are merrily joining the other peasant ladies, dancing with joy.

But it's time to leave the high-road and branch into the mighty "Telemark" forests. Here lies one of the most celebrated game districts, although seemingly quite unknown to English sportsmen, as there is thankfully not a trace of one to be seen. Indeed, no traveller of any kind had been heard of here for at least six months.

You will certainly find fine game here, wolves and bears too, and the birds are most audacious and independent.

I must admit, it is becoming very hard work to keep soul and body together with only porridge, with wild fowl flying about in the most provoking manner, that could be had for the shooting. I have vowed I will never set foot in Norway again without a gun, nor should any lady do so.

Ah! Here are two of those audacious birds now...a pair quarrelling magpies...



## Telemark Forests

We are entering our first real Norwegian forest - a splendid pine forest.

The beautiful lilac branches of the firs, fringed with a delicate green, bear tiny bright cones that sparkle with drops of oozing sap. They stand, like sires of the forest - not nymphs, but philosophers, seem to inhabit them.

I am sure there are elves here too. And when a light rain shower falls, the juniper, the underwood of the forest, exhales a wild perfume, mixed with a thousand nameless things. Listen...

## Fredrikstad

"You had better make haste, for these woods swarm with bears and wolves!"

The peasants have vowed that no wolf would attack a human in summer - but who knows if they might make an exception for English ladies? We hasten south.

When we set out by boat from Fredrikstad in the afternoon we expect to reach the Swedish coast before night closes in; but by now the wind has died away, so that our tiny boat scarcely makes any perceptible advances. The night steals on and there is reason to fear that we have lost our way amidst the labyrinth of rocks.

Luckily the night is calm and mild and, wrapped in my tartan cloak, I lie down on some sails at the bottom of the boat. Under the stars, the refreshing odour of the



pine woods has become more perceptible. I fancy I see that one majestic pine which someone - was it Schiller or Heine? - called "A noble fir tree in that far, far north..."

## Strömstad

We have finally alighted at Strömstad on the Swedish coast, a famed watering place. Here you may visit the baths and pay about ninepence to be rubbed with warm, soft, slimy, black mud from the bottom of the sea. It is reckoned very good for rheumatism.

I almost forgot to tell you that I did not leave Norway without making some inquiries after the monsters said to have been spotted in the northern sea - but though I conversed with several captains, I didn't meet a single one who had ever heard any description of them.

Nevertheless, we've had enough of boats for now, so we'll take the road to Gothenburg. The harvest season has come, and we pass little carts loaded with rye, the people busy in the fields, cutting down the ripening corn or binding up the sheaves.

At the village of Kviström, but we can barely pass for the men, horses, carts, cows and pigs huddled together in the road. It seems there is a fair in the neighbourhood, and the clouds of tobacco and fumes of brandy give an infernal appearance to the scene. Drunken men have fallen by the roadside, and a party of young men and women are drinking, smoking and laughing around a fire.

But darkness is falling. Is this not the witching time of night?

## Göta Canal

I am in misery.

We are traversing the great Göta Canal - 370 English miles long and quite unlike any other canal I have seen. Slicing through enormous granite hills, moving us up waterfalls via ingenious systems of gated locks, and connecting together splendid rivers and lakes – it really is a most beautiful water highway. But it cannot keep us from dwelling on the gloomy interior the interior of the boat. It is in an awful state of over-population, with all the Swedes returning to Stockholm from the baths at Strömstad and Marstrand.

And then there are the flies. What the autumn flies are in Sweden I cannot express, but by reference to a plague. My face and hands are sore; my paper is black; I swat my pen at them, try to dash ink over them; attempt to ensnare them into delicious compounds of sticky matter – but to no avail.

I ask our Captain which hotel I should take when we finally reach Stockholm. "It is no matter which: they are all equally bad."

Ah, if I could only get a good breakfast; I might be in a better humour. A French breakfast will put you in a pleasant temper - even an English breakfast would be comforting now; but a Swedish one! Everything is raw: salmon, ham, herring-fish – all unspoiled by Swedish cookery. And sugar and spices are put into everything – which is presumably why the people here have such terrible teeth. The men smoke too much to be interesting, a truly detestable nuisance in Scandinavia. They begin in the morning and are rarely without their pipe till they go to bed. They tell me that even some of the ladies are guilty of committing it!



But must take what we can get and be thankful. I wish I could be more joyful, like the birds, who have long been twittering to hail the dawning day.

## Norrland

A Swedish mile is nearly seven English miles, but I have ceased to count the miles we have travelled now, up to the far North of Sweden.

The midnight sun of a northern summer's night is quite something to behold - a spirit land, a dreamy, imaginative, softened type of day. But now in autumn it is no less exquisite. Sometimes the night skies light up in colours – first a flaming glow, then a green and an orange hue blended with it – and suddenly it will blaze up, dancing and glittering, making a festival in the midnight skies. These are the Northern Lights - the Aurora Borealis.

In the solitude of the mountain pastures, we find a young peasant maid of the North. Barefoot, because she finds herself freer in what she expressively calls her "sole leather", she is recalling her straying cows with the sound of her lur.

As we advance further north, nature becomes more sterile and savage. In the great forests here, there is solemn silence. The birch boughs, the elk, the reindeer herds, the great anthills, the quaint fungi, the wolf-traps, the foxes – all silent. As their native poet says: "Det är så tyst i skogen" - "it is so silent in the forests".



## Stockholm

Let no one, I say, come to Stockholm in autumn. The bustle here almost bewilders me. The busy month of October has come and the Stockholmers' preparations for winter might lead one to imagine the town was in danger of a siege. All imports are being hurried in before the waters freeze over. Carts drive helter-skelter. Housewives are preparing their winter stores, pickling meat and fish. The streets are covered with wood carts and heaps of logs - never did I see so much wood for firing.

Our ever-bustling landlady has come to have the double windows put in for the winter. White cotton wool is laid in the space between the two windows and thin strips of paper are pasted around the crevices, so that the room will be rendered almost air-tight, each heated by an immense white porcelain stove. These stoves may be economical, but I prefer a proper English fire.

The summer cafes are all shut now, but there are plenty of grand social events here in the Venice of the North. We have been to a Royal Literary Society event, where the entertainment began with songs from an English opera singer, who styles herself Signora Normani and who looked much better than she sang. We have been to the palace, in order to catch a glimpse of King Oscar. We positioned ourselves at the "Lion's Staircase" in order to have a good view of his gracious Majesty, but a crowd got in front of us, and we only saw a tall plume of yellow feathers nodding down the stairs and away. Now it is provoking only to see a feather when one wants to see a king.

I had dressed in my best lilac gown for the occasion, which quite confounded my Swedish escort, for black is the state dress of ladies here. This fashion of making black the "best dress", even for



weddings, gives a sort of funeral aspect to all Swedish pleasure-taking. On Sundays, I watch from the window as the streets are filled with women looking terribly mournful in black dress, white handkerchiefs tied over their heads and psalm-books in their hands.

## Åland Islands

There are over eighty Åland Isles in number, although some are only bare rock. To get here we must navigate the curious skärgård. The channel is marked out by poles and sticks, and sometimes by whitening the half sunken rocks. Our passage is slow and cautious. On deck the air is cold, and drifts of ice float past. A Finn aboard the boat offers me a share of his wolf-skin wrapper, which I gladly accept.



The swans are already leaving for winter and soon the boats will be ice-bound. In true winter the very daring travellers sledge here over the frozen sea. Have you ever seen a frozen sea? The falling snow congeals the waves into little mountains, jagged and spray-like. Icy stalactites and fantastic pinnacles rise over the frozen waters. Near to land the ice is generally smooth, but further out it is disjointed - a scene of strange disorder, wild and savage.

All sound is ice-bound. If your sledge stops its motion, you hear only the movement of the wind and the occasionally cracking of the ice - by no means a pleasing sound, when you know you are travelling over make-believe solid ground.

## Finnish Forests

It is winter and in the immense Finnish forests, the trees are loaded with ice-ornaments which shine like glittering diamonds. Overhead the dark pines lift up their heads like solemn giants and all of nature lies entombed underneath in deep snow.

The old beliefs, which wise people term superstitions, are not yet quite worn out of this world. The Lapland Witch and her sister-spirits of Finland are not dead here. The Näkki play their fiddles and silver harps in the waters, and the hills are full of little mountain men with untold treasures stored up in subterranean halls. The Forest-spirit is the most dangerous. Sometimes disguised as a bird, she entraps the luckless hunter or woodcutter, enticing him to follow her deeper and deeper into the forest, never to return...



## Farewell

The spring of the North is almost instantaneous. It is really nothing but the death-struggle of winter, the Frost-King. The snow melts off, and greenness and flowers and summer brightness appear, fully blooming, underneath. We have been watching and waiting for the waters to open – and now that the ice has quite broken up, there is nothing left but for us to return home.

At the sight of the Dover cliffs, I wonder how anybody could term them grand; they appear so insignificant, after those we have seen in Sweden and Norway. The look of everything in England is so tiny and garden-like.

Close my eyes, and I could be a thousand miles away, clambering over rocks piled by a giant's hand, escaping into fir groves, wandering by the margins of a beautiful lake, reclining in the moss by a prattling brook on a mountainside.

Let me close my eyes...



1. Grieg **Til Norge (Op. 58, No. 2)**  
2. Facer – Roskilde
3. Stenhammar **Jutta kommer till Folkungarna (Op. 37, No. 1)**  
4. Facer – The Skagerrak
5. Backer Grøndahl **Sildig (Op. 17, No. 7)**  
6. Facer – Gudbrandsdalen
7. Grieg **Møte (Op. 67, No. 4)**  
8. Facer – Sognefjellet
9. Backer Grøndahl **Til mit Hjertes Dronning (Op. 1, No. 3)**  
10. Facer – Hallingdal
11. Backer Grøndahl **Skjærer (Op. 52, No. 6)**  
12. Facer – Telemark Forests
13. Grieg **Foraarsregn (Op. 49, No. 6)**  
14. Facer – Fredrikstad
15. Grieg **På Norges nøgne fjelde (Op. 59, No. 2)**  
16. Facer – Strömstad
17. Stenhammar **Jungfru Blond och jungfru Brunett (Op. 26, No. 4)**  
18. Facer – Göta Canal
19. Netzel **Säg mig, du lilla fogel**  
20. Facer – Norrland
21. Munkteall **Fjerran på enslig stig**  
22. Facer – Stockholm
23. Stenhammar **Vid fönstret (Op. 20, No. 2)**  
24. Facer – Åland Islands
25. Sibelius **Norden (Op. 90, No. 1)**  
26. Facer – Finnish Forests
27. Sibelius **Kaiutar (Op. 72, No. 4)**  
28. Facer – Farewell
29. Grieg **Ved Gjøttle-Bekken (Op. 67, No. 8)**

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