

Edvard Grieg - Piano Sonata No 7

Grieg wrote his only piano sonata in 1865. He had just become engaged to his future wife Nina and the piece reflects this joy in its character. The compositional techniques used pay tribute to Grieg's friend Nordraak (a fellow composer - he wrote the current Norwegian national anthem), and Danish composers Gade and J.P.E. Hartmann. The piano sonata is dedicated to Gade. A wax recording exists today of Grieg playing the sonata. The sonata summarises many features of Grieg's compositional style, including 2 or 4 bar phrases, pedal points (said to imitate Norwegian drone folk instruments), alternating pulses and time signatures (typical of Norwegian folksongs and dances). Grieg and Nordraak had the goal of making Norwegian music and Norwegian composers known to the world. To do this, they helped create a style known today as Norwegian Romanticism, consisting of nationalistic idioms that refer to Norwegian folksongs and dances. This sonata is classical in its structure, but many of its harmonic characteristics point towards romanticism, for example, implication of several keys in rapid succession, foreign modulation, nonfunctional harmony, chromaticism, augmented chords, and increased dissonance.

Four movements:	<i>Allegro moderato</i>	E minor 2/4 time
	<i>Andante molto</i>	C major Common time
	<i>Alla Menuetto, ma poco piu lento</i>	E minor 3/4 time
	Finale: <i>Molto allegro</i>	E minor 6/8 time

1st Movement - *Allegro moderato*

Many of the movement's themes are based on a four-chord progression consisting of: Em, Em 1st inversion, F# diminished 7th, B 7th.

Sonata form

- Bars 1-12: Opening - Theme 1 Group A E minor
Establishes the main theme motive.
The opening theme has a classical nature because of construction from E minor triad. However, Patrick Dinslage suggests that the use of the notes E B G are a partial anagram of the maiden name of Grieg's mother, Hagerup. The opening theme is similar to Gade's *Piano Sonata* (Em). These first 12 bars can be divided into 3 groups of 4 bars.
- Bars 1-4 feature Alberti bass with drone on E.
 - Bars 5-8 move from V, through tonic major, ending on ii^o in 2nd inversion.
 - Bars 9-12 move from iv 6th, to a German 6th chord with diminished 3rd, then to the tonic chord (i 6/4), a suspension chord on B, then finally to the dominant chord.
- Bars 13-36: Theme 1 Group B E minor
- Bars 13-16 use imitation based fleetingly on Group A. Ends on implied F#7th.
 - Bars 17-20 based on F#7th (major subdominant chord of Em, but also dominant 7th chord of Bm, thus implying a tonality of Bm). With added ninth.
 - Bars 21-24 a sequence of Bars 17-20, but based on B7th with added 9th, implying tonality of Em.
 - Bars 25-36 homophonic chords. New chordal motive begins in Am, with octaves on F#, reflecting harmony of bar 9. Sequence begins on A#, related to bar 10 context, but contains a C#, making the triad F#7, leading the ear to a B minor tonality. It is never reached, but moved through chromatically on the way to G major (bar 33, relative major of Em), stepping down to B7 (dominant of Em) to prepare for new section.
- Bars 37-49: Transition E minor to G major - 1st modulation
- Bars 37-44 moving around Eminor, with dominant drone.
 - Bars 45-49 begins with abrupt chords on German 6th chord based on C#, leading the ear to a tonic 6/4 chord.
- Bars 50-65: Theme 2 Group A G major (relative major of Em)

- This is based on the "halling", a popular Norwegian dance (like a reel) in 2/4 time. Similar to Opus 71 No 5 "Halling Dance". Features a drone on the dominant. Repeats the new theme in Bm, then moves through a series of augmented 6th chords and their resolutions to reach dominant chord of G major, leading to next section.
- Bars 66-73: Theme 2 Group B G major
- Contains elements of original theme, including alberti bass and descending chromatic melodic shape. First 4 bar phrase ends in E7, 1st inversion to lead to 2nd 4 bar phrase, which begins in Am and ends on D7, 2nd inversion, reinforcing the G major tonality.
- Bars 74-81: Codetta G major to E major - 2nd modulation
- Based on thematic material in bars 5 and 6, with broken chord accompaniment. Sustained line in treble (minims and crotchets) descend over an octave range. Codetta finishes on B7 chord.
- Bars 82-129: Development Moves through many keys
- Bars 82-93 based on Theme 1 Group A. First stated in tonic major, then dominant minor, then subdominant minor. Rhythm moves from a 2/4 pulse to a 6/8 pulse with the introduction of triplets.
 - Bars 94-105 based on bars 88-89. 6/8 pulse is reinforced with change of time signature. Imitation is used by treble. First stated in Ab minor, then Cb major, then Db major. This tonality quickly changes to Db minor with a homophonic chordal section, ending in Eb minor.
 - Bars 106-117 is a repeat of bars 94-105, but in different tonalities. Begins in E minor, then moves to G major, then to A major, which quickly becomes A minor on a similar chordal patterning as at bar 102. Finishes on F# dim, which implies a resolution to the dominant of Em.
 - Bars 118- 125 Retransition to lead back to the recapitulation. Based on B semiquaver pedal point and B major tonality (dominant function). Bar 122 on, the treble is based on the chordal motive found at bar 102.
 - Bars 126-129 continuation and climax of retransition. Steen-Nokleberg likened this to the wind howling around the house and rattling the windows. Reinforces B to Em relationship and ends on B7 chord.
- Bars 130-190: Recapitulation E minor
- Bars 130-139, like the opening, except bar 136 is a Neapolitan 6th arpeggiated chord. Theme 1 Group A is reinstated *piano*, but in 6/8 time. Bars 140 and 141 use abrupt chords to lead to Group B, and the changed time signature helps the agitation.
 - Bars 142-161 based on Theme 2 Group B. Bars 154-157 are a reduction of the original statement. An augmented 6th chord at bar 160 leads to an E major chord in bar 161, acting as a dominant.
 - Bars 162-174. The transition is in Am (subdominant of Em), ending on a F# diminished chord, implying a return to Em (through dominant B).
 - Bars 175-190, return of Theme 1 Group A, but in tonic key with dominant drone. Finishes on B7 chord at bar 190.
- Bars 191-end: Coda
- Based on Theme 2 Group B, but marked with *Allegro molto*. Moves through keys such as D major and C major (descending in shape), but always returning to B. Bar 209 features return of Theme 1 Group 1 in bass. This section contains a lot of chromaticism and diminished chords. Bars 224-225 contains French 6th chord, leading to tonic minor at bar 227 (2nd inversion), dominant 7th, then final chord on E minor.

2nd Movement - *Andante molto*

This movement foreshadows the piano concerto.

- Bars 1-8 Section A C major
- States the theme in a very simple way. Use of Lydian 4th at bar 4, typical of Norwegian folk melodies. Cadence bar 4-5 of V to I. Bar 7 chord progression is vi, iii (1st inversion), ii (with a 6th), I (1st inversion) and I7. Bar 8 progression is VI (new dominant of Dm), ii, V.
- Bars 9-16 Section B C major to E minor
- New time signature and melody with Aeolian lowered 7th (another feature of Norwegian folk music), creating rocking between C major and G minor tonalities. Pulse is still in 4 beats but divided into triplets. The texture is fuller, and able to be divided into 3 voices - melody, bass sustained notes and triplet inner voice. This is interrupted with abrupt chords that move the harmonies to different places. *ff* at bar 12 on C# diminished 7th makes the tonality swing between D major and A minor. Bar 16 *ff* is on B7, 2nd inversion.
- Bars 17-25 Section C E minor to C major
- New motive based on folk-like semiquaver melody. Bar 17 is repeated in bar 18 but with a dorian twist (C#, D natural). Bar 19 is based on Bdim7th, leading to bar 20 dominant 7th (with a 6th) that cadences to G major. Bars 21 to 23 have the characteristics of a folkdance, moving through the keys of G major, B major and D major. Two bars at 24 and 25 build up to the climax that is to come. These bars are based on G7 chord which will cadence back to C major. Again the 9th is prominent (A).
- Bars 26-33 Repetition of Section A C major to C minor
- Bars 26-29 reinstate the original theme, but with thicker texture, use of arpeggiated accompaniment, *ff* dynamic on C pedal point. This section is similar to the cadenza in the piano concerto. Chromatic scalar passages in the accompaniment provide a type of ornamentation. At bar 29, an inner voice is introduced. In the first edition of the piano sonata, Grieg had marked this *fff*. Bars 30 to beat 3 in bar 31 have the same melody as bars 5 to 6. A sudden change in tonality occurs under the melodic G on beat 3 - Eb major (upper mediant key). The tonalities move through Fm, Abmaj7, Ddim7th (in 2nd inversion) to a Fm chord suspended over pedal point G. This finally resolves to a G7 chord cadencing to Cm in the next bar.
- Bars 34-39 Transition C minor to C major
- A cadenza like passage, featuring sustained C's, chromatic runs and rippling 3rds. At bar 36, the tonalities implied are Am, Fm, Cm (2nd inversion), Fm, Cm, Fm7. At bar 38 a G pedal is introduced, with the harmony moving to a perfect cadence at bars 39-40.
- Bars 40-48 Repetition of Section B C major
- The texture and melody of Section B is reinstated, except the progression is through different tonalities. The interrupting chords have been removed. Tonalities used are C major, G major, Bb major, F major, Am to Em. At bar 43, the bass and inner voice move chromatically to a G7 chord. Bars 44-47, the melody is placed in the bass. The melody is a repetition of bars 40-42. Bar 47, a continuation of the melodic sequence leads the harmony to Dm at bar 48. A perfect cadence at bar 48-49 reinforces the C major key and begins the coda.
- Bars 49-end Coda C major
- A sequence of mezzo staccato chords begin the coda - I, III, IV7 (3rd inversion), III7 (3rd inversion), IV (2nd inversion), vi7, ii7, V7, I. Bars 53 and 54 use the triplets from Section B and feature an Italian 6th chord over 2 beats (beats 2 and 3) resolving to tonic chord in 3rd inversion. The piece ends on tonic major chord *pp*.

3rd Movement - *Alla Menuetto, ma poco piu lento*

This has been described as an idio-syncratic minuet that justifies its title only by dint of its time signature (Joachim Dorfmuller). It has an old Norse character with glimpses at ancient drama. It is similar to Grieg's *Humoresques* Op 6 no 2. These both were written at the same time. It is also akin to Hartmann's *Vikingefruens Drøm*.

Minuet (ABA loosely) and Trio (ABA)

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| Bars 1-16 | <u>Minuet - Section A1</u> | E minor |
| - | The opening of the minuet begins <i>p</i> and the first beat is emphasized more by the staccato, rather than a stress (traditional minuet style). A perfect cadence leads to a repetition of the theme, this time <i>ff</i> . A continuum of descending sequence triplet chords lead to another perfect cadence which ends the opening section. | |
| Bars 17-28 | <u>Minuet - Section B</u> | G major to E major |
| - | This section is in G major (relative major) for 3 bars then moves immediately to E minor through the dominant 7th in 2nd inversion. The melody, harmonised in 3rds, has longer phrases with <i>legato</i> but the triplet character still remains. The combination of triplets with duple rhythm is Norwegian folk characteristic. A transition based on ascending sequences of triplet chords begins in bar 24 to lead back to a repetition of Section A. | |
| Bars 29-39 | <u>Minuet - Section A2</u> | A minor to E minor |
| - | This begins with a perfect cadence over bars 27 to 28. Immediately the harmony changes as the tonic major chord of E major is used as the dominant for Am. However the dominant of Em is found in bar 30, leading back to Em tonality. A minor is reintroduced at bars 36 and 37 through a perfect cadence over bars 35-36. The section ends with a chord progression of iv, vi (with major 7th), ii min 7, V7 then i. Although Section A1 is not repeated in its entirety here, as it would be in a traditional minuet, the characteristics used, such as texture, rhythm and dynamic reflect that of Section A1 and gives the effect of returning to the beginning to finish the first minuet. | |
| Bars 40-55 | <u>Trio - Section A</u> | E major |
| - | The trio is based on the rhythm and articulations of Section A1 of the minuet, but in the tonic major key and in a higher condensed range. Bars 40-47 state the theme of the trio and then it is repeated at a softer dynamic, down an octave in bars 48-55. | |
| Bars 56-63 | <u>Trio - Section B</u> | G# minor to B major |
| - | Similar to Section B of the minuet, Section B of the trio is immediately in a different tonality - up a 3rd to G# minor. It is in a new time signature 9/8 and features a mixture of duple and triple rhythms also. It then moves to its relative major (dominant of tonic key E) B major. | |
| Bars 64-71 | <u>Trio - Section A</u> | E major |
| - | Bars 48-51 are repeated here, then bars 44-47 are repeated to make up the reintroduction of Section A. Again, although this section is not repeated exactly, the material it is based on and its characteristics means that it implies that it is a return to the original trio theme. | |
| Bars 72-80 | <u>Minuet - Section A1</u> | E minor |
| - | Section A1 is repeated <i>p</i> with a crescendo to the return of bars 28-39. | |
| Bars 81-end | <u>Minuet - Section A2</u> | A minor to E minor |
| - | Section A2 bars 28-39 are repeated here exactly to finish the minuet. | |

4th Movement - *Finale - Molto allegro*

Sonata Form

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| Bars 1-6 | <u>Introduction</u> | B tonality, leading to end on B7 |
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- The introduction is based on the dominant key of B major. The character of the finale is hinted at by the octaves. The chord progression that leads to B7 in bar 6 is C# dim with a B, then the diminished 7th of B (A#, C#, E, G).
- Bars 7-47 Group A E minor
- Bars 7 to 14. The first theme is stated, accompanied by inverted chords in the bass. Bars 11 and 12 are in Am. At bars 15 to 18, a motive is introduced that the 2nd theme will be based on. Bars 19-22 climax through repeated chords based on B7 and B dim 7 tonalities.
 - Bars 23-26 contain the material that is the second theme, accompanied by a trill in the bass with a tonic drone. The persistent dotted 1st beat rhythm is further developed in bars 27 to 35 to lead to new material in bar 36. The key is still Em.
 - Bars 36-39 *con fuoco* can be classed as a 3rd theme or 3rd theme material/motives. It consists of semiquaver sequences climbing higher and higher, culminating in a rapid descending scalar passage.
 - Bars 40-47 feature the closing section of Group A, using the dotted rhythm motive, reinforcing Em and calming down after the fiery 2nd and 3rd themes, so that a breath can be taken before moving into the next section.
- Bars 47-121 Group B C major
- A hymnlike section is introduced in the submediant key of C major. The character of this is contrasted to Group A through longer legato phrases with chordal texture. This is interrupted by reminiscences of Group A in bars 54 to 57 and bars 64 to 67 (in E major).
 - Bars 67 to 81 contain the 2nd theme of Group B, played in octaves with an inner voice. At bar 76, material is introduced that could be classed as belonging to a new group, as found in bar 82. This section in G major could be labelled as a 3rd theme. This section, up to bar 94 is used to reinforce the relative major, through the use of G drone. The alternating F and F# is a Norwegian characteristic that gives this section a modal feel.
 - Bars 94 to 97 use a chromatic scale over G pedal point that links the 3rd theme to the repetition of the 1st theme of Group B.
 - Bars 97 to 109 repeat the 1st theme, then chords over a rhythmic G pedal point reinforces the new key of C major. These four bars have a similar purpose to the introduction of this movement.
 - Bars 114 to 121 close the Group B section, using the dotted rhythm from Group A, but in C major.
- Bars 122-205 Development Begins Ab/Cm, ends E minor
- The development begins *pp* using the Group A dotted rhythm as its material. Immediately the tonality has moved to Cm, but this is placed against Ab major when the motive is imitated in the bass. Moving from a high range to a low range, the imitation ends with 3 sustained chords - subdominant and tonic of Ab major, then to the new dominant (of G minor). Bars 122-129 is used again (as a sequence) in G minor against Eb major.
 - Bars 138-145 further develops the dotted rhythm through the use of diminution and moves through several tonalities in a descending direction, ending in Cm at bar 146. A little semiquaver pattern that sounds like bird whistles is then used in Eb major over 4 bars. Bars 146 to 149 is then repeated in Fm to Ab major.
 - Bars 154 to 161 use the rhythmic motive of the 1st theme Group A against chromatic rising and falling scales and the semiquaver pattern found in bar 152. This leads to a climax at bar 162, perfect cadence.
 - Bar 162 to 165 states the 1st theme Group A in G minor. It is then followed by a development of the bar 152 semiquaver pattern. Again bars 162 to 169 are repeated in A minor. At bar 178, the rhythmic motive is used over drones of B, and at bars 180-181, drones of B and A#. The dotted rhythmic motive is then repeated in the bass, culminating in a series of descending bar 152 patterns (bars 186 to 202). A chromatic scale with diminution leads to the recapitulation at bar 206.
- Bars 206-246 Recapitulation of Group A E minor

- Group A is reintroduced exactly as found in the exposition.

- Bars 246-313 Recapitulation of Group B E major
- Theme 1, Group B is now stated in the tonic major key. Theme 2 is also in E major (bars 267 - 280). Theme 3 is based on the dominant drone of E major. Again a chromatic scale links to the repetition of Theme 1, in E major. Bars 304-308 contrast rhythmically with bars 106-108 because of the duple feel. A link at bars 309 to 313, based on the dominant, lead to the Coda.
- Bars 314-end Coda E major
- Bars 314 to 325 are based on Theme 1 from Group B. It provides a majestic finish to the Group B section. At bar 326, the original theme 1 Group A dotted rhythmic motive is stated in the *grandioso* style, but finishes *Presto*, in E major, descending in range with low E octaves. A big ending is given in bars 330 to 334.