

Edvard Grieg

Hall Of The Mountain King



As she continues her search through the great classics, **Bridget Mermikides** discovers a piece that brims with ominous intrigue as trolls, goblins and gnomes abound.

ABILITY RATING



Moderate/Advanced


| INFO | WILL IMPROVE YOUR |
|-------------------------|--|
| KEY: A minor | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bass/melody independence |
| TEMPO: Various | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hinge barre/thumb muting |
| CD: Tracks 56-57 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classical repertoire |

THIS MONTH we'll look at an arrangement of the popular *In The Hall Of The Mountain King* by the Norwegian Composer Edvard Grieg (1843-1907). This piece was originally written for Act II Scene VI of Ibsen's 1876 folkloric play *Peer Gynt* and it depicts a dream-like scene where the hero Peer finds himself in a great hall surrounded by a threatening crowd of trolls, goblins and gnomes, and their furious leader, the Mountain King. I played the character of Peer Gynt when I was 12 in a school play, but I don't like to talk about it!

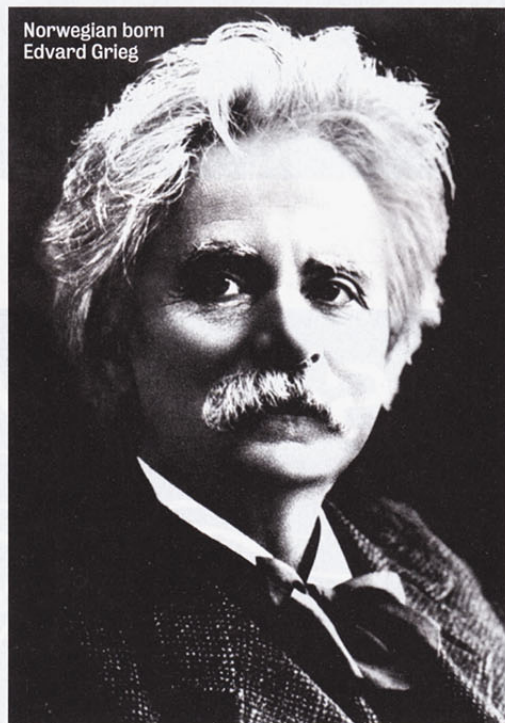
Although just a short piece, Grieg's brilliant blending of 'Western Art' music and Norwegian folk (as he colorfully put it, "reeking of cowpats") is heard in the dramatic scoring of cautious footsteps, chase scenes and grotesque fantastical creatures. *Hall Of The Mountain King* has been performed widely, gaining a popularity beyond its original setting and has become iconic in popular culture and widely recognisable to this day. The piece is so embedded in the culture that it has become almost a cliché in

“The chromatic melody played over a root-5th bass line creates an unsettling and ambiguous harmony”

film, TV, cartoons and video games as a musical depiction of foreboding. It has also been covered by a wide range of musicians such as Ritchie Blackmore, Erasure, Trent Reznor, Rick Wakeman, ELO and Brian Setzer.

I've transposed the piece down a tone from B minor to A minor, and of course made some judicious editing from the full orchestral score. Although it is orchestrated heavily, the core of the piece can be described quite simply: a repeating four-bar melody is underpinned by a clipped 'root-fifth' bass line. The melody itself has an ABAC structure – bars 1 and 3 of the melody are the same – which makes it logical and memorable. It also uses chromatic transposition, the simple motif of E-C-E (bar 1 beats 3 and 4) is immediately repeated, but descending chromatically (D#-B-D#, D-Bb-D). The resulting non-diatonic (outside of the key) notes help create the menacing atmosphere, and it is a technique adopted readily in rock and metal music, which explains the piece's popularity in the idiom. In addition, this chromatic melody played over the root-5th bass-line creates an unsettling ambiguous harmony adding to the ominous mood. It is actually technically challenging to perform the melody and bass line on the guitar, particularly keeping the bass notes the right length, which involves a thumb muting technique explained in the tab captions. This technique needs to be secure to execute the dramatic tempo increases through the piece. As ever, patience and careful practice is the most effective way to learn this arrangement. Be sure to play this every time the cat walks in the room, and have fun! 

Norwegian born Edvard Grieg



TECHNIQUE FOCUS

SITTING POSTURE

An important aspect of technique in classical guitar playing is adopting the correct sitting posture. The guitar is placed on the left thigh (for right handed players), which is raised by placing the foot on a footstool. The left knee should be pointing forwards and the right knee to the side so the guitar rests on the inside of the right thigh. The guitar should be positioned at angle where the neck is pointing slightly upwards, and the right forearm rests on the larger bout of the instrument. This should hold the instrument securely in place and give ease of facility for both hands.



TRACK RECORD Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Herbert von Karajan (Deutsche Grammophon) is a good reference point. Ritchie Blackmore fans may want to hear Deep Purple's live arrangement from the *Live In Stuttgart* album (Sony BMG, 1993) and Trent Reznor's creative electronic rendering for the movie *The Social Network* (Columbia Records, 2010) is also worth a listen.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 57

[General] The opening description, 'alla marcia e molto marcato' means 'the speed of a march very accented'. On first glance the opening theme may look simple, but if you want to articulate the bass line correctly it's a lot more difficult! The indication of 'sempre staccato' in the first bar means play short and clipped throughout. In the bass line this means the notes must be muted right after

plucking. If the bass note is an open string, the note must be muted using the thumb that just plucked it. This has to be done while simultaneously plucking the following melody note, so go slowly at first. When the bass note is a fretted note it can be clipped short by releasing the fretting finger. A combination of both techniques will have to be applied to achieve a consistent staccato bass line.

$\text{♩} = 108$ *Alla marcia e molto marcato*

Am Am/E Am Am/E B/A B/E B \flat /A B \flat /E Am Am/E Am Am/E C C/G C C/G

pp sempre staccato

25 i m i m a i m p a m i m a p p

Am Am/E Am Am/E B/A B/E B \flat /A B \flat /E Am Am/E Am Am/E C C/G C C/G

29

E E/B E E/B Caug Caug/E E E/B E E/B E E/B Caug E E/B

33

E E/B E E/B Caug E E/B E E/B E E/B Caug E E/B

37

Am Am/E Am Am/E B/A B \flat /A Am Am/E Am Am/E C C/G C C/G

41

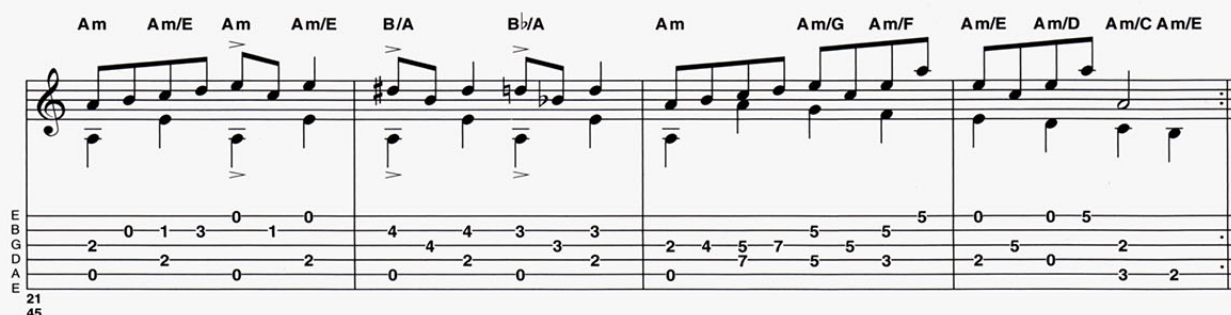
PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 57

[Bars 1-4, **previous page**] The plucking hand fingering should mostly be the first two fingers (i and m) on the melody with the thumb on the bass. Occasionally the third finger 'a' is used and in bars 1 and 4 the fingering suggestions indicate this. [Bars 13-16, **previous page**] In bar 13 the use of a 'hinge' barre comes in very handy. This means your fretting hand first finger is extended straight in a barre

position but the tip of the finger is lifted off the sixth string so the string can be played open. The tip of the finger then presses down to fret the B on beat 2 and lifts off again for beat 3, and so on. The lifting on and off of the tip of the finger while the finger remains in a barre position gives the effect of the finger working as a 'hinge'. The first finger barre can remain throughout the 4 bars: 13 to 16.

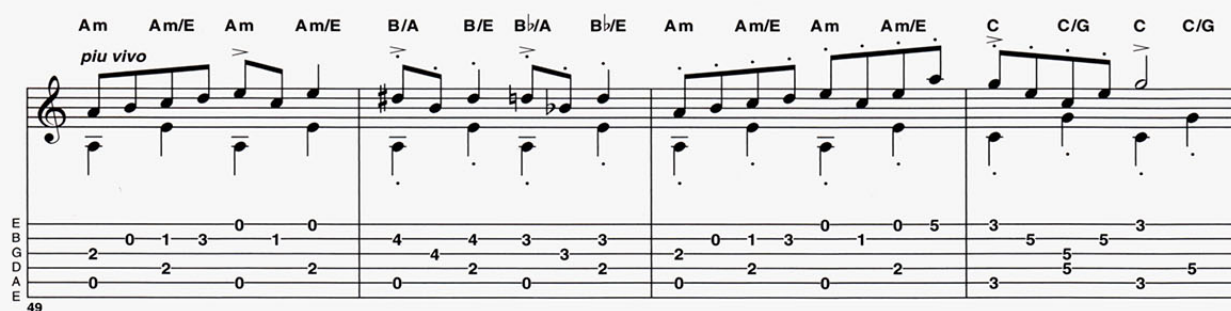
Am Am/E Am Am/E B/A B \flat /A Am Am/G Am/F Am/E Am/D Am/C Am/E



21 45

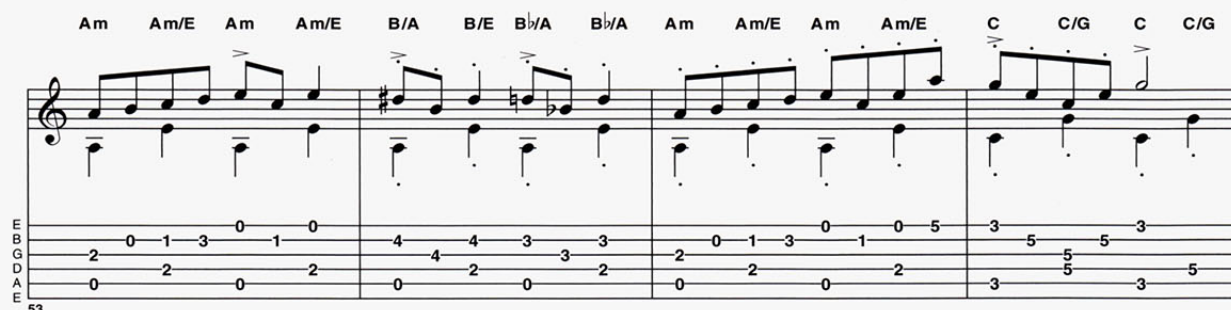
Am Am/E Am Am/E B/A B/E B \flat /A B \flat /E Am Am/E Am Am/E C C/G C C/G

piu vivo



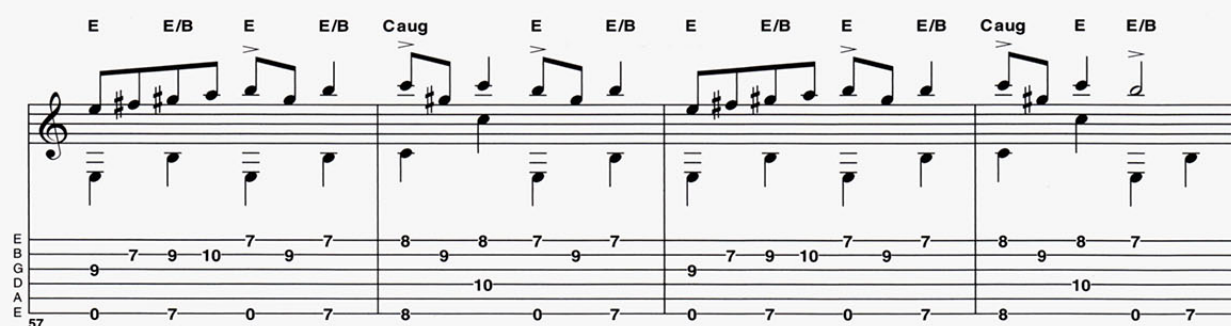
49 61

Am Am/E Am Am/E B/A B/E B \flat /A B \flat /A Am Am/E Am Am/E C C/G C C/G



65 77

E E/B E E/B Caug E E/B E E/B E E/B Caug E E/B



81 93

E E/B E E/B C \sharp m E E/B E E/B E E/B C \sharp m E E/B



97 109

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 57

[Bar 49 to end] At bar 49 after the repeat of the first section the instruction 'più vivo' indicates 'more lively' and consequently the speed begins to increase here. 'you'll need to keep the intensity of the tempo driving forwards until, at bar 65 the final showdown begins! The instruction here - 'stringendo al fine' - means 'getting faster until the end'. The orchestra would generally go pretty wild here

and so I've introduced strumming chords for extra fullness until bar 73, where the short chord stabs occur. The little runs at bars 75/76 and 79/80 should go as quickly as you can manage, before making a big crescendo through 81/82 on the A diminished 7th chords. The final Am chord (bar 85) is played with a hard 'down' strum with the back of the nails. Very exciting!

♩ = 175 *Stringendo al fine*

Am B/A B/A Am C

ff

E 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 4 4 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 3

B 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 4 4 4 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 5 5 5 5 5 5

G 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 5 5 5 5 5 5

D 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 5 5 5 5 5 5

A 0 3 3 3 3 3 3

E 0 3 3 3 3 3 3

65

Am B/A B/A Am

E 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4 4 4 3 3 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 4 4 4 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

G 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

D 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

A 0

E 0

69

Adim7 Am F Am/E E

E 5 4 5 0 5 5 0 0 0 0 4 5 7 5

B 4 4 4 0 5 5 0 0 0 0 5 5 5 5

G 4 4 4 0 5 5 0 0 0 0 2 2 2 2

D 0 4 0 0 7 7 0 0 0 0 3 3 3 3

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

E 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

73

i p i m a p i m i o m p i m i

Adim7 Am F Am/E E Am

E 5 4 5 0 5 5 0 0 0 0 4 5 7 5

B 4 4 4 0 5 5 0 0 0 0 5 5 5 5

G 4 4 4 0 5 5 0 0 0 0 2 2 2 2

D 0 4 0 0 7 7 0 0 0 0 3 3 3 3

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

E 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

77

Adim7 Am

pp *molto* *p* *ff*

E 5 5 5 5 5 5 7 7 5 5 5 5 5 5

B 4 4 4 4 4 4 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

G 4 4 4 4 4 4 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

D 4 4 4 4 4 4 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

E 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

81