Fain of his Faithful?

Friendship, Hardship and Deception in Percy Grainger and Sparre Olsen’s “Mountain-Norway” Project

Halvor K. Hosar

Halvor K. Hosar is a Ph.D. student of musicology at the University of Auckland. He holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). His thesis is on the sacred works of Johann Baptist Waṅhal (1739–1813). Hosar is the editor-in-chief of the new digital catalogue of the works of Waṅhal, and editor for the sacred music in the new Ignaz Pleyel Gesamtausgabe. In 2018, he was awarded the prize for best student presentation at the conference of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music. He has forthcoming publications on A-R Editions and Brepols. halhosar@gmail.com

Abstract

Percy Grainger’s assistance to composers he deemed worthy is well-known but irregularly documented. Grainger and Sparre Olsen undertook several projects together, the most ambitious being a translation and international publication of the Olav Aukrust song Fjell-Norág (“Mountain-Norway”) for choir and orchestra, which was to be published through a major international publisher.

The project began in 1929, and the years up to 1934 were focused on getting the translation and music ready. After Grainger’s tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1935, where the work was performed frequently, work to find a publisher began. Schott decided to take on the project in 1936, but owing to a number of setbacks the paperwork necessary for publication was not in order when the Second World War began; afterwards the project faded into oblivion.

Olsen did not fully disclose these events in his monograph Percy Grainger (1969). Instead, he presented a narrative where a smaller choral publication appeared to have been the goal, which fitted with a translated arrangement he had published a decade prior. In both sources he omitted any mention of Grainger having made his own arrangement, as well as the last verse Grainger translated, the latter possibly because it was never fully sanctioned by Aukrust’s widow Gudrun Aukrust.

Keywords

Sparre Olsen, Percy Grainger, Mountain-Norway, Schott Musik, Norsk Musikforlag

Introduction

In recent decades there has been a new interest in the biographies of Norwegian composers. Compared with the groundbreaking works of the twentieth century, one finds now that greater care is taken in verifying received wisdom through a broader array of sources. The need for this may have been shown the most acutely in Per Vollestad’s biography of Chris-

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1. The author would like to thank Dr. Sigrid Stokstad and Henning Huseby for aid in acquiring and reviewing material in Oslo, Mari Bryn for help in clarifying matters of intellectual ownership, Barry Ould and Dr. Sarah Kirby for their assistance in finding material in the Grainger Museum and Grainger House, and Prof. Em. Warren Drake for thorough proofreading. A particular debt of gratitude to the Grainger Museum is acknowledged, as the project would not have been possible without their very significant digitisation efforts.
tian Sinding, which questions the validity of the senile composer’s membership in the Norwegian Nazi party Nasjonal Samling, which has tarnished almost every aspect of his posthumous reputation (Vollestad 2005, in particular 237–239).

Perhaps the greatest benefit to be derived from this development, however, comes from a greater scepticism about the subject’s abilities to shape their own biographies, and the abilities of others to put words in their mouths. For instance, the two famous statements about Ole Bull and his influence on the early Grieg – his deciding that Grieg was to be sent to Leipzig, and his freeing of him from the conservatory influence of Niels Gade – have both been questioned in recent publications (Herresthal 2009, 282–287; Herresthal 2011, 39–42; Norheim 2018). The fact that both of the anecdotes regarding Bull are supposed to have originated from Grieg himself – one through a purported interview, and one in his famous autobiographical sketch “My First Success” – shows the dangers of taking even first-person accounts at face value, and the necessity of revising earlier biographies, where the principle of presenting composers “in their own words” was more accepted than it is today. Cases such as these confirm that the continued revaluation of biographical sources remains a necessity even for the most important and most studied Norwegian composers. Against this background, the current article attempts to shed new light on one of the most important episodes in the collaboration and friendship of Carl Gustav Sparre Olsen (1903–1984) and “his Ole Bull”, Percy Grainger.

**Grainger and Olsen: An Expositional Double Entendre**

Grainger’s generosity towards other composers is well known, if somewhat irregularly documented.² Throughout his long life, he attempted to aid the careers of several composers he found deserving of wider attention. His endorsement of Sparre Olsen is a well-known but little-studied case. Their friendship was documented in a monograph Olsen published in Norwegian (Olsen 1969), and an English working translation was made shortly thereafter (Olsen, Vanberg and Manville n.d.).³ Unfortunately, the monograph is an unreliable source: when juxtaposed with the documents pertaining to their friendship in the Grainger Museum in Melbourne (Olsen 1929–1960) and in the Norwegian National Library (Grainger 1929–1960), it becomes obvious that Olsen suppressed important information from publication.⁴ That this has not been discovered earlier is probably a result both of the distance between the sources, and of the problems of language the correspondence presents: in it, the two men and their wives employ four Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian Bokmål, Norwegian Nynorsk and Swedish), with occasional forays into English and German. The material therefore poses a serious challenge to non-Scandinavian readers. The importance of the Grainger-Olsen correspondence has not gone unnoticed: Lewis Foreman (1981, 12) suggests that “the material preserved by Grainger is of fundamental importance in researching the lives and music of his friends and contemporaries – including Grieg, Delius, Cyril Scott, Balfour Gardiner, Sparre Olsen and many American contemporaries”. In the case of Olsen, this does not yet seem to have happened.

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². Most attention has been given to English composers, with Kirby (2017) being an excellent new contribution. Grainger’s activities pertaining to Scandinavian figures, on the other hand, remain but little studied. Grainger’s patronage of Grieg is a natural exception, undoubtedly owing to the latter’s fame.

³. This translation has some deficiencies, and all translations in this article were made by the author.

⁴. All letters to Grainger are found in the Grainger Museum in Melbourne, and all correspondence to Olsen in the Norwegian National Library. Both collections are organised by sender, and detailed references are supplied only where letters have been misplaced.
Table 1: Musical Coöperations undertaken by Olsen and Grainger.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piece</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mountain-Norway (Fjell-Norig)</td>
<td>1929–1940</td>
<td>Translation, arrangement, use on concert tour and international publication through Schott London.</td>
<td>Remains unpublished; used for concert tour of Australia and New Zealand 1935; translation partially reused by Olsen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian folk songs (Norske folketonar)</td>
<td>1936–1940</td>
<td>Publication through Schott Mainz.</td>
<td>Translation and preface by Grainger; publication aborted; later published by Norsk Musikforlag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Yule-tide Comes (Når jøla kjem)</td>
<td>1938–1940</td>
<td>International publication through several publishers.</td>
<td>Published by Schirmer (USA) and Allan (Australia); planned European publication through Schott was never finished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dream-Lay (Draumkvædet)</td>
<td>1938–1954</td>
<td>Performances in USA; publication by Schott.</td>
<td>Performed several times; planned international publication never happened. 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Apart from “Mountain-Norway”, this is the only one of the projects Olsen mentioned in his monograph (Olsen, Percy Grainger, 79). The reception history of this work is highly complex, and is deserving of a study in its own right.

The Grainger-Olsen coöperation encompassed several projects (Table 1). Their first and most intense project circled around the song Fjell-Norig, which was first published as a song for solo voice and piano in 1929 through Norsk Musikforlag in Olsen’s op. 3, Tri Aukrust-songar (“Three Aukrust Songs”) (Olsen 1929), and has remained one of his most popular works in Norway. In Olsen’s monograph, he described the project as follows:

[During the spring of 1929,] Grainger had stopped by [Norsk Musikforlag] and bought some copies of my Seks gamle bygdevisur frå Lom [“Six Old Village Songs from Lom”], op. 2. … During the Christmas of 1929 Grainger wrote to me and asked if it wouldn’t be nice to meet in Lom and walk through Jotunheimen [a mountainous region of Norway]. He had seen some of my Aukrust songs [op. 3] by then, and wanted to see the valley where Olav Aukrust had lived.

One of the songs intrigued him in particular, and in a letter of 1930 he wrote: “I wish to use Fjell-Norig 5 (3 verses of the choir version) for a number of concerts (at universities and colleges) that I shall conduct in America in 1931. Would you be kind enough to let me know if you and Mrs. Aukrust would approve of an English translation of Fjell-Norig consisting of 3 verses, and would you or Mrs. Aukrust select these 3 verses? Then I shall try to translate them into English, and the translation will be sent to Mrs. Aukrust for her approval or protestations.” Grainger tried, but had to give up after much toil: there were so many words in the poem that he needed to have explained in greater detail.

[During a meeting in Norway on 20 June 1932] Grainger asked me if I could find somebody to make a good translation of Fjell-Norig for him. Then he could use my choral and orchestral version in programmes he often held [som han pla halde] in the United States, Canada and Australia. …

Translating Fjell-Norig was no easy task. But Grainger was in a hurry. He was heading for a concert tour of Australia and New Zealand and wanted to include Fjell-Norig in his programmes. Professor Theodore Slette helped me with a draft [in August 1932] … And now Olav O. Aukrust, the son of the poet, wrote a fine analysis and a thorough glossary to the poem. [This material] was sent to Grainger, who was very satisfied. He wrote: “On September 5th, (1933) we sail from Copenhagen … to Australia, and expect to spend 100 days at sea. Now the translation of Fjell-Norig begins in earnest…”

Grainger worked diligently on the translation … and finished it when they arrived in Australia. In a letter from North Adelaide of 10 July 1934 he wrote: “On the occasion of my fifty-second birthday I have taken a three-day holiday, and I’ve used the time to finish the translation.” (Olsen 1952, 38–42)
Olsen then appended three of the four verses Grainger translated; this is shown in Table 2, with Olav Aukrust’s original added for comparison. He did not include the fourth verse; this omission will be discussed below.

Table 2: Fjell-Norig in the the original of Olav Aukrust and the translation of Theodore Slette and Percy Grainger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Grainger’s translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Du salme i skogen, der windsus syng kvar linnvêrs natt, du helsing frå villmark og vêgras og lyng – støtt kjem du at. Frå brisken den beiske og fine og stride, frå fjellheim og vigur og vindheimar vide kjem du, mitt hjarta til sorg og til trœyst, du Fjell-Norigs inste, upphavlege røyst.</td>
<td>You hymn in the forest where night winds sing And softly wail! You greeting from highland and wild grass and ling, You never fail! You come with a message from wide open spaces, Where juniper bitter the wilderness graces. With sorrow and comfort your message is fraught, That speaks Mountain-Norway’s most intimate thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du gufs av det norske, du ånd ifrå fjell - di klage er mi. Um ingen deg høyrer, eg høyrer deg lel, og veit kva du lid. Dei runer som gudgjevne her berre ljomar, dei lengslur som her einast skin og ber blomar ved aurgamal ile som her berre vell – dei er det du syng um, du vindus frå fjell.</td>
<td>You breath of what Norse is, you soul of the crags, I know how you pine! Though others unhear you, my ear never flags; Your sorrow is mine! The echo of god-given runes from the mountain, The deep-welling stream from the gods’ world-old fountain; Of these is your song born, from these come your pow’r To quicken our longings and bring them to flower [sic].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du høyrest av dine ved dag og ved natt, du utesus. Um folket ditt svik deg, kom sterkare att – fyll vårt hus! Å døyp oss i vårdagars dom over døden, til kveik att på nytt av den norrone mjøden, du gufs frå det høge som her vil bli storm; lyft elden vår eigen, i ånd og i form!</td>
<td>Take charge of our spirits and carry them where Our longings hold sway; Where birches are shimm’ring, where meadows are fair With starflowers gay; Where blended are storms and the avalanche-thunder. With mem’ries of childhood and fairy-tale wonder; Where, strengthened by droughts of fore-fathers’ wine, We see in dim blueness far snow-mountains shine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du fengje vårt inste og føre oss dit som lengslune gjeng! Det tindrar av bjørk, og det lyser av kvit skogstjerne-eng – – Det tek som når tora og storskri’u rullar, det meter med barndom og bestemorsullar, med fimleik og svel og urtids vin, - og langleite blanar, og høgfjell skin!</td>
<td>To those who oër Norway’s high honour keep ward Full well you are known; And soon shall all Norsemen, with single accord, Acclaim you their own; Beneath your broad banner their folk-ways [home-ways] recov’ring, the tablets of gold in the green grass discov’ring. And thus Mountain-Norway shall come to his own, Be fain of his faithful and bless their fair home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even when viewed in isolation, Olsen’s story has obvious cracks. Several planned uses are mentioned, but it is not obvious whether the translation was used for anything in the end, and the reason for its being finished remains unmentioned. What is more, the claim that Grainger “was in a hurry”, yet needed two years to finish the translation, seems unreasonable. Despite these problems, Olsen’s description has been allowed to stand unopposed to this day. In John Bird’s Grainger biography, for instance, his account was condensed into the following:

…[having heard in Olsen’s op. 2, _Seks gamle bygdevisur frå Lom_], Grainger wrote to Olsen for permission to make an English translation of one of the songs, _Mountain Norway_, because he wanted to perform it with choirs in America. The translation was made some years later, and this was the beginning of Grainger’s championship of Olsen’s music. (Bird 1999, 235)

This account misidentifies the publication in which the song was found, misspells Grainger’s translated title, and inflates the importance of one event (which never happened) whilst omitting reference to any other. This cannot be called an adequate representation of Olsen’s original narrative, and even less so of the actual events.

The impression painted above stands in stark contrast to Grainger’s two first letters on the matter. Grainger already mentioned the possibility of such a project in his aforementioned Christmas letter of 28 December 1929:

I think _enormously_ well of your Aukrust songs, the first one in particular. … Would you be interested in letting me use _Fjell-Norig_ for orchestra and as a choral number? Would you be interested in letting versions be published in America (1) for orchestra (2) for mixed choir (with 2–3 verses in English translation)?

In the letter quoted in the monograph, which was Grainger’s second letter on the matter (30 June 1930), Olsen changed the order of the quoted portions, and omitted significant information, thus distorting its meaning:

Yesterday I spoke to G. Schirmer’s president, Mr Carl Engel, and showed him _Fjell-Norig_ … He said that he would very much would like to publish the song _for mixed choir_ (the orchestral arrangement we should speak of later) if the text could be 3 verses long …

Would you be kind enough to let me know if you and Mrs Aukrust would let the English translation of _Fjell-Norig_ consist of 3 verses, and would you or Mrs Aukrust select those 3 verses? Then I shall translate them into English, and the translation will be sent to Mrs Aukrust for her approval or protestations.

I shall, of course, strive to get the best possible conditions for you by Schirmer when the choral arrangement is finished. I wish to use _Fjell-Norig_ (as a choral piece) for a number of concerts (at universities and colleges) that I shall conduct in 1931 (in America).

From the very beginning, then, the two composers intended this not only as a work for a concert tour, but as a publication in several different formats. When the order of the bold-faced phrases is inverted, the latter phrase in the original appears to outline the scope of the project. This, however, was not what Grainger intended: instead, it was added almost as an afterthought, to show that getting good conditions from Schirmer would be worthwhile.

The remainder of this article will discuss different aspects of this project, which would change greatly over the ensuing decade, and try to explain Olsen’s later misrepresentation of it. It will account for four aspects in particular: the translation of the project, the performances of the work held in Australia and New Zealand, the aborted publication through
Schott, and Olsen’s choice to omit the final verse from Grainger’s translation in his later publications.

**Musical Sources**

Olsen revisited *Fjell-Nøreg* a number of times. His own arrangements are catalogued satisfactorily in Øystein Gaukstad’s Olsen catalogues (Gaukstad 1953; Gaukstad 1983b). There are, however, two files of relevant material in the Grainger Museum in Melbourne that appear to be unknown to Norwegian scholars (Dreyfus 1978, 183–184).

The first file contains what appears to be an arrangement for four-part choir, even if the amount of divisi writing in the inner parts leaves some doubt about whether they were intended to be written out as two separate parts or not. This version of the piece was called “The Spirit of Norway,” and features an early translation by Grainger (Grainger 1931).

A second file contains a larger, more ambitious project for salon orchestra (piano, flute, Bb trumpet, Eb alto saxophone or horn, first and second violins, cellos and double bass) and seven-part choir (all the vocal types except the alto have two parts), which carries the title “Mountain-Norway,” and uses Grainger’s final translation in full, including the fourth verse in its original form (Grainger 1932). The orchestral parts are dated 17 June 1932, and were obviously prepared for Grainger and Olsen’s meeting that summer (see below). Whilst the vocal parts may theoretically have been written out at the same time, they use a different brand of music paper than the orchestral parts, and as the text was not yet finished when the orchestral parts were dated, one might reasonably assume that the choral parts were written out in their entirety later. That this is Grainger’s own arrangement, and not Olsen’s, as one might assume from the account in the monograph, is suggested by the presence of several ideas found nowhere in Olsen’s arrangements, including a flattened pitch in the melody in the two inner verses and a characteristic chromatic descent in the accompanying voices at certain cadence points (Figures 1 and 2). This suggests that the arrangement was indeed made by Grainger, as has long been assumed in Grainger scholarship (Balough 1975, 145).

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You breathe of what Norse is, yosoul of the crags, I know how you pine!

**Figure 1**

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these comes your pow’r to quick en our longings and bring them to flower.

**Figure 2**

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6. Many of the dates on Grainger’s manuscripts were added long after the fact, and are known to be unreliable. In this case, the dating appears to be reasonable, even if it cannot conclusively be proved.
Two further sources of lesser importance survive. Most interesting is a set of vocal parts that were made during the beginning of Grainger’s tour of Australia and New Zealand of 1934–1935, and were written out between 30 July and 2 August 1934; for the soprano, tenor and bass, the two parts are written divisi on the same staff (Grainger 1934). An undated harmonium part is written on the same sheet as an arrangement of the thirteenth-century piece “Alleluya Psallat” (Grainger n.d.). This is not identical with the piano part used with the orchestral arrangement, but it appears to belong to the aforementioned vocal parts, and was most likely intended as an accompaniment to these.

In addition to the surviving sources, a full score and a set of parts that are all likely to be lost are mentioned in the correspondence. In addition, it would have been necessary to have far more than a single copy of each part for the performances that took place in Australia (see below), but the whereabouts of this material are currently unknown. Whilst it is possible that the parts found in the Grainger Museum represent the final edition of the piece, this cannot be conclusively proved, and, as will be seen below, this copy does not make use of the final version of the poetic text.

Translation and Arrangement

It is necessary to give a short introduction to the history of the Norwegian language, to explain why the translation of the text proved to be so difficult that it delayed the project by several years. In strict terms, Norwegian belongs to the West Nordic languages, which also include Icelandic, Faeroese and the now-extinct North Germanic languages of the British Isles, as opposed to the East Nordic languages of Danish, Swedish and Elfdalian. Mediaeval Norwegian ceased to exist as a written language when Norway came under de facto Danish rule in the fourteenth century, and over time variants of Danish became the preferred language of the upper classes. In addition, the power exerted by the Hanseatic league led to an influx of German words being asymmetrically adopted into the Scandinavian languages.

A Norwegian movement for independence began in earnest in 1814, when Norway was transferred from Danish to Swedish rule as a part of the Cologne Treaty, a historic event that coincided with a growing influence from German nationalist thinkers like Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and the Heidelberg Romantics’ collections of folk literature. Towards the middle of the century, attempts to formulate a standardised Norwegian language distinct from Danish began. Two broad camps quickly assembled: one, believing that the old Norwegian language had died out, wanted to complement the existing Danish language with words that were uniquely Norwegian; the other believed that a descendant of the old Norwegian language had survived in rural dialects, and that these could be codified into a language representative of the entire country. The conflict between the two resulting norms, named Riksmål and Landsmål (both meaning “Nationwide Tongue”), has never been resolved, and the two languages in essence survive in the two modern forms of Norwegian, Bokmål (literally “Book Tongue”) and Nynorsk (“New Norwegian”).

Grainger would come to learn most Scandinavian languages, but he was most comfortable with Danish, which he had learnt at a young age, and he largely corresponded with Norwegians in this language. Aukrust’s Landsmål posed a particular challenge for Grainger: Aukrust’s serious poetry is characterised by a strong mystical bent, and for the desire “to

7. This material probably ended up with Schott (see below), only to be lost during the Second World War. It is not found in the Schott archives today.
8. Linguistically it would be more correct to translate this as ”Modern Norwegian,” in the manner of Early/Middle/Modern English, but this is avoided for political reasons.
formulate a new national and religious program in poetic form" (Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.); his works are considered inaccessible even by many native speakers.

Grainger worked earnestly on his own translation for some time. Olsen sent a long explanation of the poem as well as a dictionary on 27 November 1930.9 This is possibly the explanation mentioned in the monograph, but there is no evidence of Olav O. Aukrust having been involved in writing it, and it was sent much earlier than what was suggested there. At this stage, the project was called "The Spirit of Norway", and no fewer than three translation attempts have survived. These are all in Ella Grainger's hand (Dreyfus 1976, 184), and it appears reasonable that she, a native Scandinavian, would have taken an active part in this work. The Graingers seem to have been more than a little uncertain about these translations, as every verse in every version contains a number of suggested replacement words. One of these translations was seen as final enough that Grainger wrote it out himself, but even here a number of suggested improvements were added. It was nevertheless this version that was used for the earliest arrangement mentioned above.

Grainger finally met Olsen on 20 June 1932, whilst en route to Sweden. It is impossible to know exactly what was said during this meeting, but the archival record gives some indications. On board the cruise ship Bergenfjord, Grainger wrote out not only the parts of a four-part choral score he had arranged the previous year ("The Spirit of Norway"), but also instrumental parts for the salon orchestra arrangement. From a musical perspective, it seems unlikely that these two arrangements were meant to be used together, as for instance, one does not find the change in the melody line shown in Figure 1 in the choral arrangement. Both the translation and the choral arrangement appear to have been scrapped during this meeting. By now it must have been obvious that the Great Depression would prevent an easy publishing deal through Schirmer,10 and that it was necessary to wait for times to get better. It seems likely that they re-conceptualised the project during the meeting, and decided to add choral parts to Grainger's orchestral arrangement, so that these could be used together or separately, as no concrete change of plans in this regard is mentioned in their correspondence.

The need to enlist the help of somebody with a thorough knowledge of both English and Norwegian must also have been discussed. For this, Olsen contacted Theodore Slette (1886–1985), a Norwegian-American who had moved back to Norway to study philology at the University of Oslo, and who later worked as a school teacher in Voss; in time, he would go on to become the author of a Norwegian-English dictionary with a uniquely wide coverage of rural and folkloristic terms (Helleve 2013). Whilst Slette had an unusually strong scholarly background, he might not have been given the task merely for his academic credentials: Slette's parents were born in Skjåk, which neighbours to Aukrust's Lom, and he was the cousin of the poet Tore Ørjasæter, who had known Aukrust as a young man and has remained connected to him in the public consciousness (Helleve 2014). The choice might therefore partly have been made on a perceived geographic and cultural proximity between Aukrust and Slette.

Slette finished his translation by the time school began the following autumn, and Olsen immediately forwarded it to Grainger.11 Grainger reported in a letter of 2 October 1932 that

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9. This letter, uniquely, is split between Grainger (1931) and Grainger (1932). In it, Olsen also mentions that he had included an arrangement. This has been lost, and from Olsen's description of it it is obvious that it is not mirrored in the surviving arrangements.

10. In a letter tentatively dated to September 1935 by scholars, but whose content seems to suggest that it may have been written several months earlier, Grainger states that he, owing to the depressed economy, had not shown any choral works to publishers for three years.
he was satisfied with the general content of Slette’s translation, but had to rewrite it to have it better fit the poetic metre. There is no mention here of Olav O. Aukrust supplying an explanation of the text.

After this, the project tarried for a long time. In a letter of 28 April 1933, Grainger excused himself by writing that the times were so bad that choral societies could not be expected to purchase new music. Finally, he announced in a letter dated 10 July 1934 that he had finished a sketch of the translation (Table 2), and that he now merely wanted Gudrun Aukrust’s approval. It was most likely around this point that Grainger finished the vocal parts for “Mountain-Norway”, thus completing the extant arrangement.

The Performances

The ink on Grainger’s manuscript was barely dry when he began performing the work during his concert tour of Australia and New Zealand of 1934–35. It has not yet been possible to acquire a full overview of performances, and it must here suffice to give an overview of known performance dates and locations (Table 3), and to recite a letter of 23 April 1935, where Grainger most thoroughly delineated how the work was performed:

On 13 April [1935] your Fjell-Norig was performed in Adelaide (choir and orchestra) and it made a great impression, as can be seen from the included press cuttings [these have not survived]. The choir (in Adelaide) only had 16 voices and the orchestra 60 performers. The orchestra was therefore a little too strong for the voices. But of course I wanted to try out the orchestra’s timbre in Fjell-Norig, to see if the orchestral parts were free of error etc. The piece is effective in all of its forms: a cappella, choir and orchestra, choir and strings, orchestra alone, strings alone.

Table 3: Known performances of Mountain-Norway in Australia and New Zealand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 October 1934</td>
<td>Brisbane, Albert Hall</td>
<td>Ould n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 November 1934</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Mercury 1934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 November 1934</td>
<td>Hobart, City Hall</td>
<td>Ould n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 23 April 1935 (possibly the above performance)</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Letter from Grainger, 23 April 1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Melbourne, Perth, Wellington</td>
<td>Letter to Olsen “Sept.? 1935”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 March 1935</td>
<td>Sydney, Conservatorium Hall</td>
<td>Ould n.d. a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 April 1935</td>
<td>Adelaide, Town Hall</td>
<td>Ould n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1935</td>
<td>Sydney (radio)</td>
<td>Letter from Grainger, 21 July 1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 September 1935</td>
<td>Sydney (radio)</td>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald 1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 September 1935  (possibly the same as the above?)</td>
<td>Sydney (radio)</td>
<td>Letter from Grainger, 27 September 1935</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. This performance was given as part of a lecture on the subject of “Development of European Vocal Harmony”.

11. This letter is found in Grainger (1932). In addition to the translation itself, Slette had included a number of explanatory footnotes discussing mythological and folkloristic aspects of the text. For want of space, these will not be discussed further here.
After a letter of 27 September 1935, Grainger did not write again until 6 June 1936, and there he gave no new pertinent information. It is therefore not known to what extent the piece was performed during the later stages of Grainger's concert tour – there is no evidence of the piece having been performed at all in New Zealand, despite Grainger mentioning plans for a performance in Wellington in one letter. The monograph referred to an article printed in The Musical Courier (a more exact citation is not given), where Grainger reported having performed Olsen's works twenty-six times during the tour (Olsen 1963, 45–46).12 Even if the above tally is not complete, there need not have been many more performances, as we also know that Grainger performed other works by Olsen.13 It is therefore very possible that Grainger was most concerned with using the tour as an opportunity to finalise the musical score, and that he only planned to properly promote it once it was available in print.

The Publication, or the Lack Thereof

The plans to publish the work resurfaced in 1935, during Grainger's tour. In an undated letter provisionally dated to September 1935 but most likely written significantly earlier, Grainger wrote that he now found Schirmer to be unsuited as a publisher: “If Schirmer prints the piece it will never be performed in England or Australia, as people are so hostile towards Americans in these places.” Instead, he favoured Oxford University Press, and suggested Schott as a second choice, even if he feared that they would not have sufficient clout in America: although it is never stated, one must assume that Grainger believed the work would be of particular interest to Norwegian Americans. In his next letter, dated 4 September 1935, he suggested that they contact Universal Edition in Vienna; a suggested translation into German on Grainger's part was never made. Oxford University Press appear to have lacked interest entirely;14 on the other hand, when Olsen contacted Universal, who were more interested in publishing an instrumental piece, this resulted in the publication of his Preludio e Fughetta.15 Grainger also reported on 8 June 1936 that he had contacted Peters. This contact was already dealt with in Lawford-Hinrichsen (2000, 204–206),16 and here it will suffice to say that they were not interested.17

Grainger could finally report success on 18 October 1936. After having met Willy Strecker, the head of Schott, he could report that Schott not only wanted to publish the piece, but they would also allow for a separate American publication to be made by Schirmer; there is no evidence of the latter ever having been begun. Whilst the score that was sent to Schott is lost, the final shape of the project can most likely be seen on an undated title page mock-up:

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12. Dramstad (1983, 104) claims that this list accounted for all of Grainger's tours. This is most likely a misreading of Olsen (1963).
13. In a letter of 22 November 1934, Grainger mentions he had plans to perform three of Olsen's Seks gamle bygdevisur frå Lom for a radio performance
14. The relevant correspondence between OUP and the composers is lost, but OUP quickly ceases to be mentioned in the Olsen-Grainger correspondence.
15. Olsen to Grainger, 26 May and 17 October 1935. In a letter to Grainger of 2 September 1948, Olsen lamented that Universal never had printed the orchestral parts for the work, thus preventing European orchestras from performing it. None of the correspondence between Olsen and the publishers seems to have survived.
16. Their claim that Olsen was a student of Grainger is an error of uncertain origin, which nevertheless seems to have permeated much of the secondary literature. This misunderstanding most likely has its origins in Olsen and Grainger's holiday in England in 1936.
17. This publication was brought to my attention very late in the publishing process of this article, and it was therefore not possible to review the source material.
This fits well with the “Mountain-Norway” parts in the Grainger Museum, and one might assume that the surviving material is very close to what would have been found here. The fact that Grainger used the terms “chamber orchestra” and “full orchestra” to designate different ensembles, suggests that the arrangement offered to Schott might have been arranged for an even larger orchestra than the surviving version. Note, however, that Grainger only referred to a version for chamber orchestra in his correspondence with C. F. Peters (Lawford-Hinrichsen 2000, 205).

What follows is a prolonged – and, in hindsight, deeply frustrating – set of delays. A letter from Schott to Grainger dated 26 November 1936 states that Grainger had sent an incomplete set of parts to Schott, and had to send the remainder for the project to begin. After this, rights had to be acquired from Norsk Musikforlag, which previously had published Fjell-Norig. Getting a response from them at all proved difficult, and an exasperated Olsen wrote to Grainger on 2 May 1937 that their demands were so expensive as to spell doom for the project. However, the matter appears to have been finally solved the same autumn: a letter from Norsk Musikforlag to Grainger of 2 October 1937 suggests that one now only needed to establish formal contact between the publishers, which until then had communicated through Grainger.

The whole process was also complicated by other ongoing projects. Simultaneously with “Mountain-Norway”, Olsen and Grainger worked to publish a set of Norwegian folk songs through Schott. What is more, Grainger had Olsen’s piece Når jola kjem (with a text by the Norwegian poet Inge Krokann) published through Allan in Australia and Schirmer in the United States as When Yule-Tide Comes, and wanted to secure a further agreement with Schott for a European publication. This was complicated considerably by the fact that Schirmer wanted to retain global rights to performances in motion pictures (“mechanical synchronisation”), which was a bitter pill to swallow for Schott, and the head of the London department, Max Steffens, voiced his displeasure with the proposed solution in several letters during the summer of 1938. It was Strecker who was head of the company’s Mainz department and the final arbiter, however, and he seems to have been intent on publishing the piece. By 23 November, an agreement had been reached, and Steffens wrote to Grainger

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18. This page is found amongst the letters from Olsen, but it is printed on the back of a confirmation of an order for three striped Turkish towels for Grainger’s summer home in England, “Lilla Vrån”, dated 25 June 1936, which strongly suggests that Grainger only wrote it out for himself.

19. One aspect of this discussion that cannot be discussed here for want of space is the conditions of publishers in Nazi Germany. A preliminary account of the companies’ history in this era, which otherwise seems to be understudied, can be found in McKee (n.d.).

20. These were finally published as Olsen and Grainger (1946).

21. It has not been possible to find any copies of Schirmer’s version, but in a letter from Schirmer to Grainger dated 3 March 1938, it is explicitly stated that Schirmer published the piece on 14 December 1937.
saying that both “When Yule-Tide Comes” and “Mountain-Norway” by now were most likely being printed.

In reality, the paperwork for “Mountain-Norway” was not even finished at this point. On 9 February 1939, Strecker claimed, like Steffens, that “When Yule-Tide Comes” had been published, but expressed his bad conscience that he had not yet sent Olsen a final contract, where the terms of the “Mountain-Norway” publication would certainly have been part of the considerations;22 Grainger passed this on in a letter misdated 15 March 1938 (it was obviously sent in 1939!). On 3 August, Strecker further expressed his bad conscience on this matter, and asked Grainger to apologise on his behalf: the legal matters pertaining to the publication had proven more difficult than expected, and Strecker wished to discuss the matter with Olsen personally. It is uncertain whether the difficulties were caused by Norsk Musikforlag or by the German Nazi regime.

After this, the project was rarely mentioned in the Olsen-Grainger correspondence, which centred instead around performances of Olsen’s oratorio Draumkvædet, which Grainger had translated under the title “The Dream-Lay” in America. Whilst the “Mountain-Norway” project was never formally abandoned, it is likely that both men saw that a publication after the outbreak of the Second World War was unlikely; the Nazi occupation of Norway in 1940 eventually made further communication between the two impossible. It is interesting to see that Grainger wrote an article on what he called “the instrumentally supplemented a cappella choir” in 1942, where he mentioned “Mountain-Norway” as an ideal piece for such ensembles, apparently in the belief that it had already been published (Grainger 1942, 172). Whether he continued to believe so after the war is unknown, but the piece was never again mentioned in their correspondence. The two men continued to coöperate on American performances of “The Dream-Lay” after the war, but their longest-running and most ambitious project had stranded, and with very little for either party to show for it.

The Fourth Verse

To achieve proper closure to this story it is imperative to understand why Olsen did not include Grainger’s fourth verse in the monograph. This was not the only case where this verse was omitted: Olsen also published a small arrangement for four-part choir through Norsk Musikforlag in 1952 with only three of the translated verses (Olsen, Grainger and Slette 1952). The curious omission of the fourth verse is never explained, but can be inferred if one reads the extant letters on the matter.

The question of how many verses were to be translated remained fleeting during the first year of the project. Whilst Grainger’s very first letter suggested two or three verses, and when Olsen first contacted Gudrun Aukrust for her approval of a three-verse translation in the summer of 1930,23 the composers had decided on translating four verses by the end of the year, and this number remained constant thereafter. In a letter of 10 July 1934, when Grainger asked Olsen to write to Gudrun Aukrust and ask for her blessing for the project, he explicitly stated that it was necessary to limit the choral version to four verses; by this time, translating fewer verses does not seem to have been an option.

It is unknown what Olsen communicated to Gudrun either occasion, but her reply to Olsen’s second entreatment is found in a letter to Olsen of 1 (or 7!) September 1934:

22. No Schott edition of When Yule-Tide Comes appears to exist.
23. This is reported in a letter to Grainger of 22 July 1930. No letter to Gudrun seems to have survived, but as Olsen spent much time in Lom around this time, it might be that he spoke to her in person.
I am of course only happy that Fjell-Norig is translated into English, and it is splendid that Mr. Percy Grainger will take care of this. As far as I can understand, the verses are also quite well translated [footnote: “except for the last verse; it is unfortunately entirely misunderstood, and therefore completely wrong. Couldn’t you correct it?”]. I do not understand English, but Olav [O. Aukrust] has translated it for me. I only wish that the penultimate verse [verse 5 in the original] was included, for only they who understand the last lines of that verse have understood Fjell-Norig. But you have to make sure that the corrections in the last verse are made. It is completely meaningless to speak of folkways [folkeveg] there. (Aukrust 1934)

Olsen had good reason to regard this request with scepticism. Neither Gudrun nor Olav O. knew English properly, and one might suspect that they misunderstood this verse. The core of this misunderstanding was probably the difference in use between the English “way” and the Norwegian “veg”. In the Norwegian, the term “heimvegen” [the road home] is used in a spiritual manner, and “folkways” is not a bad attempt at capturing this meaning, even if it is more obvious. The appropriateness of this word is strengthened further by the Norwegian original’s use of the word “folkeånd”, which is usually referred to in English with its German cognate, “Volksgeist”. “Folkways” manages to capture some of the meaning of both of these words. The use of “way” meaning custom or preference, however, is far more common in English than in Norwegian. The Aukrusts, ill-equipped for the task of translating Grainger’s adaptation, probably did not understand the meaning of “folkways”, and as a consequence the entire verse appeared to be nonsense.

It could be argued that this verse, far from misunderstanding the original, highlights Grainger’s efforts to preserve not only the meanings but the associations of the Norwegian original. For a particularly acute example, one might look at the word “fain”, which corresponds with “fagna” (“[to] rejoice in”) in the original. This verb would have been considered archaic even in Aukrust’s day. It was not covered in Falk and Torp’s seminal etymological dictionary of Norwegian and Danish, but if Grainger, whose love of Scandinavian languages is well known, looked up the word “fager” (“fair”) in this tome, he would have found evidence of an etymological relationship between “fagna” and “fain” (1906, volume 1, 145). Even if Grainger made the connexion on his own, this suggests that he worked deeply with the material: his translation manages to catch much of the original meaning here, and uses cognates that were both archaisms in their respective languages.

Olsen never made a serious attempt to have Grainger rewrite the verse. His only suggestion for a change comes in a remarkable letter of 11 September 1934, which also explains the importance he attached to the project. He claims to have lost his work as a musician in Oslo in May 1933, and as a result he had to move to live with his wife Edith’s parents in Bergen.27 Grainger’s plans to publish “Mountain-Norway” therefore came as a respite from Depression-born hopelessness. He went on to say that Gudrun had approved of the translation, but wanted him to change “folk’-ways” [sic] to “home’-ways”.

Olsen’s suggestion obviously was not what Gudrun intended: whilst not delineating how this was to be done, she seems to have hoped that it would be possible to rewrite the verse more or less from scratch. Olsen, however, would have had good reason to avoid this. At

24. Conversation with Ingrid Aukrust, Gudrun Aukrust’s granddaughter. German was the most common second language in Norway before the Second World War, and even this was only taught to a relatively small extent.
25. It is hard to properly argue for this point beyond pointing to the opinions of native speakers. One might, however, mention that this was the last of five meanings enumerated in Ivar Aasen’s first dictionary of Norwegian (Aasen, Kruken and Aarset, 2003), and that it is normally mentioned last in dictionaries to this day.
26. The word was given a separate entry in Torp (1919, 92), but here the etymological relation is not mentioned.
27. In Gaukstad (1983a, 19) Olsen claimed that he quit the job himself and moved to Bergen to teach at the Bergen Music Conservatory in 1932.
this point, the project had finally started moving after years of tarrying, and forcing the final verse to be rewritten would entail even more waiting. Gudrun's statement that the last verse was misunderstood might also put into question the abilities of Theodore Slette, Olsen's chosen expert. All things considered, Olsen had everything to lose, and his desire not to risk further disruptions is understandable.

In a letter of 22 November 1934, Grainger promised to make the minor change suggested by Olsen, but there is no evidence of his actually doing this. There exists a typewritten version of the text with this detail corrected in the correspondence from Grainger, but this appears to be in Olsen's hand; the musical sources in the Grainger Museum all use Grainger's original text. Here, however, one should give Grainger the benefit of doubt, since all material that obviously post-dates Grainger's promise has been lost. What is more, Olsen obviously saw the final score being sent between publishers, and he is likely to have reacted had the change not been made.

**Small Publication, Grand Deceit?**

As mentioned above, in the small arrangement for four-part choir published by Norsk Musikforlag – the only published version of the piece to use Grainger's translation – the final verse is omitted, as in the monograph. That this happened twice seems to indicate that this was not a mistake, but a deliberate omission, and it seems even more so when considering the inaccuracies in the narrative Olsen wanted to present.

Olsen's failure to account for the project properly in his monograph probably stems from disappointment that Grainger's promises came to naught – he may have wanted to avoid public scrutiny on the matter both for his own sake and for the sake of his late friend. With regard to the omission of the fourth verse, Olsen was left in an awkward spot, as he never honoured Gudrun Aukrust's request. He might have hoped to be forgiven for this for a prestigious international publication, where the slowness of communication or deadlines imposed by the publisher could be blamed. This was hardly the case for a small publication in Norway. For want of a sanctioned version of the final verse, he therefore decided to tacitly remove it.

To shape all of this into a coherent narrative that justified the publication of his choral arrangement and left little need for further questions, he therefore cited selected portions of Grainger's second letter discussing the project. This gave the impression that this had been the intended form of the project from the beginning; the mention of specifically three verses in this letter proved particularly convenient. His own publication would then appear merely to give the piece the same form as Grainger had originally intended for his translated version, which finally was the version he wanted to present to the public. By doing this, he may arguably have done both himself and Grainger a disservice, as he denied his audience an engaging drama, and what is probably the clearest example of Grainger's commitment to Olsen's music.

**References**


28. Olsen reports in a letter of 17 October 1935 that he had just sent Grainger's arrangement to Universal some time back.


Ould, Barry. n.d. (Unpublished programme list).