



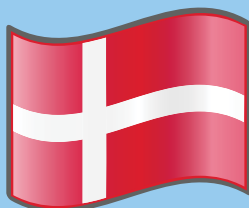
Finland



Norway



Estonia



Denmark



Sweden

Northern Lights

May 22, 2011 | 5:00 pm

Kennedy Center Concert Hall

Scandinavia

Scandinavia is defined as the northern European countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and sometimes includes Finland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. We also include for this concert, Estonia, an independent country across from Finland that was formerly part of the **Soviet Union**. The term Nordic (north) refers to the same countries and territories as Scandinavia.



The Scandinavian countries, no matter how you identify them, have long traditions of excellent choral and vocal music. More than half the population of Sweden participates or has participated in choral groups, either in schools or in their communities. Several fine composers are from these northern European countries: Norwegian Edvard Grieg (pronounced *greeg*) and the Finnish composer Jean (*zhahn*) Sibelius (*sih-BAY-lee-us*) are world-renown. Carl Nielsen of Denmark is also well known.

Living composers Arvo Pärt (Estonia), and Olli Kortekangas (Finland) are still making their marks in the world of modern music.

Americans may not know too much about Scandinavia. These progressive countries are perhaps best known in the United States for the clean, modern styles of their furniture (for instance, SCAN and IKEA brands), the reliability of their cars (like SAAB and Volvo), and their seafood and seafood products. Not only are these countries surrounded by salt water seas, but they are filled with lakes and rivers that produce some of the best fresh water fishing in the world.

Written by Dr. Mary Jane Ayers

Words in bold type are defined in the Glossary on pages 2 and 3.

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Glossary

A cappella – singing without accompanying instruments (originally, singing “in the chapel” where there were no instruments)

Accolades – the awarding of praise

Contemporaries – people who live in the same time period

European Union - an economic and political joining of 27 member countries which are located primarily in Europe

Grand Duchy - a territory whose head of state is a monarch, either a grand duke or grand duchess rather than a king or queen

Indigenous peoples – those born in a particular country or area

Manifesto – a public declaration of political or social policy

Music conservatory – a special school for people who are especially talented in music

NATO alliance – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization - This alliance of 16 sovereign Euro-Atlantic countries is dedicated to maintaining democratic freedom by defending each other from attack

Nazi Germany - or the Third Reich, is the name commonly used to refer to the state of Germany from 1933 to 1945, when it was a totalitarian dictatorship ruled by Adolf Hitler

The areas we now call Scandinavia were settled more than 10,000 years ago. At that time the people were primarily hunters and fishermen, but they were also explorers who took their boats as far as America, long before Christopher Columbus. The Vikings were Scandinavian sailors, pirates and traders who raided and conquered England, Scotland and Ireland, and large parts of France and Germany in the 8th through the 11th centuries. Artifacts from Viking settlements have been found in Iceland, Greenland and the **Orkney and Shetland Islands**.

The Danish and Norwegian languages are similar. Swedish has similar language characteristics, but the language of Finland shares more with Estonia, which is located on the mainland of Europe to the south, across the Gulf of Finland.

Because they are so close together and share a giant peninsula at the top of Europe, the Scandinavian countries and their neighbors have often fought with each other, following kings or emperors who wanted to rule the whole region.

Scandinavia was within reach of the two most aggressive dictatorships of the 20th century: Germany (the aggressor in World Wars I & II), and Russia (the Communist **Soviet Union** gobbled up many smaller countries during its existence from 1922 - 1991). During World War II, Norway tried to stay out of the conflict, but was **occupied** by **Nazi Germany** for five years.

Denmark is the smallest Scandinavian country in land area, but the Kingdom of Denmark was very powerful in its time and ruled the entire region. Denmark is now an independent, prosperous country that is a member of the **NATO alliance** and the **European Union**.

In 1397, Norway was absorbed into Denmark and they remained united for more than 400 years. The rise of nationalism in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries led to Norwegian independence by 1814. This rise to nationalism followed the American Revolutionary War (beginning in 1776), and the French Revolution (beginning in 1789).

Although they were a military power in the 1600's, Sweden has not participated in a war for almost 200 years. It has a strong military force, but remains officially **neutral** from conflicts—it refuses to support either side of opposing arguments or wars. Sweden's location in the center of Norway, Finland and Denmark has probably helped protect its **sovereignty**.

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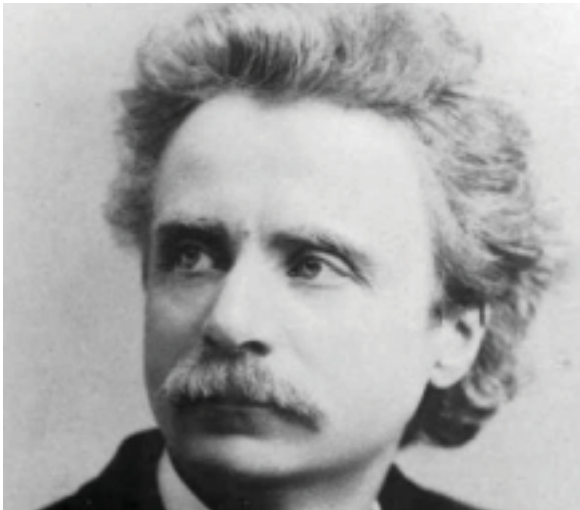
The Music of Scandinavia

Like most **indigenous peoples**, Nordic countries have a long tradition of folk music. Their native music commonly involves singing, fiddle (violin) playing, guitar and other instruments like harmonica and accordion. For more information on traditional musical genres in Scandinavia, Google "Nordic folk music."

If you attend the *Northern Lights* concert, you will hear a new work by Finnish composer Olli Korttekangas that was written especially for The Choral Arts Society of Washington. When you hire an artist to create a new work, it is called a commission.

Edvard Grieg (1843 - 1907)

Edvard Grieg is the most famous and beloved composer Norway has produced. He lived from 1843 until just past the turn of the 20th century, 1907. He was friends with other famous composers of his time, like Johannes (*yo-HAHN-nis*) Brahms from Germany, and the Russian composer Peter Tchaikovsky (*chai-KAHV-ski*). Grieg was so popular



and successful in Norway that the government gave him a pension (money to live on) when he was only twenty-nine. Grieg and his wife were described as "bringing sunshine with them." They were "full of liveliness, enthusiasm and unconventionality, and yet with a simplicity about them that made everyone feel at home."

Grieg was born in Bergen, a small European-like town on the west coast of Norway. He had a brother and three sisters. His father was a successful businessman. His mother was a pianist who had studied at a **music conservatory** in Germany, which was very unusual at that time: conservatories or other institutions of higher learning were reserved for men. The fact that she was accepted at the conservatory indicates that she was a very gifted pianist. From the time he was very young, Grieg would sit at the piano for hours figuring out new melodies rather than practicing the music of his piano lessons.

Grieg went to a school where discipline was very strict, and he hated it. His grades were terrible. He discovered that if you came to school wet on a rainy or snowy day you would be sent home to change. Since he

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Glossary

Neutral – not supporting or helping either side of a conflict or war

Occupied – when a country has been taken over and held by military force

Orkney and Shetland Islands – two small island groups west of Norway and directly north of Scotland

Profoundly – deeply, with great meaning

Rapture – great pleasure or enthusiasm

Recluse – a person living in isolation away from others

Republic – a nation in which supreme power is by the people or their elected representatives

Sovereignty – possessing independent national power

Soviet Union – formally, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 15 countries that were not republics at all, but were annexed (taken over) by a highly centralized state run by the Communist Party from Moscow, Russia. The Soviet Union lasted from 1922-1991

Tyranny – the cruel and senseless use of authority

Virtuoso – a person highly skilled in the technique of a fine art, especially music

Let's Look at the Music

This is a page from Danish composer Carl Nielsen's *Fynsk Forår*, written for soloists, children's chorus, adult chorus and orchestra. On this page, the soloists are singing—notice the entrance of the baritone soloist (Bas-Baryton) in the middle of the page. Notice the difficult key signature: there are seven flats, and at end of the page the key changes to three flats. The time or meter signature changes to 2/4 at the same place. The chorus enters at the bottom of the page (marked Kor). Notice that the chorus is singing only one note, very quickly in 32nd notes, and then has no pitch notated at all for the second entrance. The score indicates they are speaking those words very quickly, at a high pitch. The dynamic marking is *pppp*, which means sing as softly as you can. The language is Danish. Would you have trouble singing this music?

The image shows a page of musical notation for Carl Nielsen's *Fynsk Forår*. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows a vocal line with lyrics: "drys - ser o - ver Vej - en, se Æb - le - blom - ster drys -" and a piano accompaniment. The second system features a "BAS-BARYTON solo" line with lyrics: "ser o-ver Vej - en, se, se, se, se, Æb - leblomster" and "drys - ser, se Æb - le - blom - ster drys - ser" in the bass line. The third system shows a vocal line with lyrics: "drys - ser o-ver Vej - en," and "o - ver Vej - en." Below this, a chorus part labeled "Kor" enters with the lyrics "Nat-ten er vor e - gen, Æbleblomsterdrys-ser (hvisker)" and a dynamic marking of *pppp*. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

Just for Fun

For his latest commission, composer Olli Kortekangas chose as his theme the relationship between man and nature. His work, *Seven Songs for Planet Earth*, has texts he chose from various sources. The Children's Chorus of Washington, which is singing in the concert, supplied the text for one movement, called "The Beat." That text is printed below.

The Beat (collage of quotes by choristers of the Children's Chorus of Washington/trad.)

Listen...

A black bird flies above me,
his feathers keep a beat.
The music, quick, enralls me
and travels through my feet.

Maaemo, emo maa...

...I feel the softness of the sand in the palm of my hand...
...I see white clouds drift over a pine forest...
...I taste the coolness of the water on my tongue...

...I feel the warmth of the fire, and hear the crackling logs...
...I smell the daffodils and newly mowed grass...
...I watch the robin flying, I see the sparrow build its nest...
...I feel the sunshine on my back all through the day...

...I see the green sprouts, breaking free of the ground...
...I hear the birds chirping a melody that they only know...
...I imagine the feel of wind, whipping my face on a mountain-top...

Maaemo, emo maa...

I hear the Earth singing. I listen to its beat. Heartbeat.

After you read the poem, answer these questions:

Why do you think this song is called "The Beat"?

Explain the last line, "I hear the Earth singing..."

In the middle section, all the sentences begin with "I" followed by an action verb relating to sensing or feeling. Can you come up with four more lines for this poem?

I see _____

I taste _____

I imagine _____

I _____

lived out in the country, going home to change took the whole day. He would stand under a rain gutter on the way to school to make sure he was thoroughly wet.

His life was changed by making friends with a relative, Ole Bull, who was a violin **virtuoso** (*ver-chu-OH-zo*). Grieg played some of his piano compositions for him, and he said, "You are going to Leipzig (*LYPE-zig*) (to a German conservatory) to become an artist!" Grieg did that, and it changed everything for him. He studied the music of composers like Mozart and Beethoven and his **contemporaries**, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Wagner (*VAHG-ner*).

Grieg received many **accolades** and honors in his lifetime. His music is familiar to us today because it is programmed regularly on concerts, but is also used in the soundtracks of movies, television and cartoons. Grieg died of chronic exhaustion at the age of 64. He had suffered a collapsed lung from pneumonia as a young man which affected his health during his entire life.



Trolldhaugen

To hear some of Grieg's familiar melodies, go to: www.mnc.net/Norway/EHG.htm

At that site you can hear his music played on the synthesizer, which does not have the best sound quality, but you will recognize:

- "Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen" (Trolldhaugen was the name of the house where the Grieg's lived)
- "Morning" and "In the Hall of the Mountain King" which are part of the *Peer Gynt Suite*

These "greatest hits" can also be found in multiple YouTube videos.

Grieg once wrote:

*"Why not begin by remembering the wonderful, mystical satisfaction of stretching one's arms up to the piano and bringing forth – not a melody. Far from it! No, it had to be a chord. First a third, then a fifth, then a seventh. And finally, both hands helping – Oh joy! – a ninth, the dominant ninth chord. When I had discovered this my **rapture** knew no bounds. That was a success! Nothing since has been able to excite me so **profoundly** as this."*

Carl Nielsen (1865 – 1931)

Danish composer Carl Nielsen was born in 1865 (the same year as Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, see next page) and lived until 1931. Unlike the other composers discussed here, he had a poor, country upbringing. His father was a musician, however, and young Carl learned to play the violin, brass instruments and the piano. He studied at the Copenhagen Conservatory of Music from 1884 to 1886 (Copenhagen is the capital of Denmark), and also studied in Germany, France and Italy.

Nielsen wrote symphonies, operas, choral



works, songs and hymns, as well as chamber music, music written for a small group of instruments.

Jean Sibelius (1865 – 1957)



"Never pay attention to what critics say," [Sibelius] warned a pupil. "Remember, a statue has never been set up in honor of a critic."

Probably the most famous Finnish composer and conductor is Jean Sibelius, who was born in 1865 and died in 1957 at the age of 92. Sibelius's mother and grandmother were both musicians and his father was an army doctor.

Sibelius' Life and Works

Sibelius was a violinist and composer, and wanted to become a **virtuoso** on the violin. He studied in Germany and finally in Vienna, Austria, which was at that time the musical center of Europe and home to many fine musicians and composers. He and his wife had five children.

Sibelius was a part of the nationalist movement in Europe at a time when there was popular uprising against the **tyranny** of kings and emperors. In fact, he wrote what became the unofficial national anthem of Finland, *Finlandia*, which he completed in 1899. At that time, Russia held power over Finland, and Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia, issued a "February Manifesto" to further restrict the freedoms of the **Grand Duchy** of Finland. *Finlandia*, a lengthy orchestral work whose movement titles referred to the proud history of Finland, was intended to inspire protest and hope in the people of Finland; it made him a national hero.

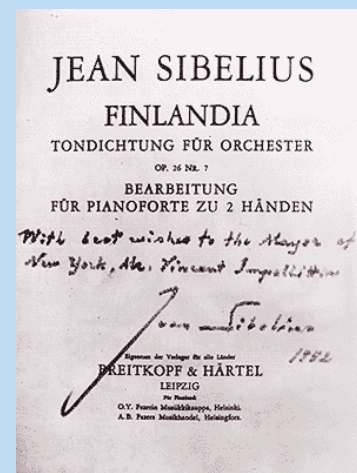
One of the melodies of the orchestral work has become the hymn "Finlandia." If you go to the *Northern Lights* concert, you will hear this work sung **a cappella** by The Choral Arts Chorus.

Oddly, in 1929, at the age of 64, Sibelius suddenly stopped composing and conducting, and spent the rest of his life, 28 more years, as a **recluse**. His last composition was *Tapiola* (referring to the Finnish forest god Tapio), and is considered one of his masterpieces.

"Finlandia" Hymn

*O, Finland, behold, your day is dawning,
The threat of night has been banished away,
And the lark of morning in the brightness sings,
As though the very firmament would sing.
The powers of the night are vanquished by the morning light,
Your day is dawning, O land of birth.*

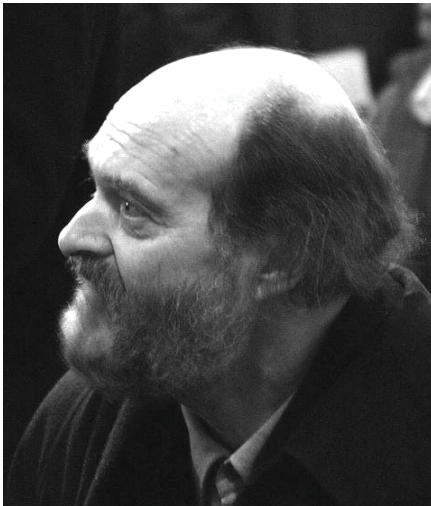
*O, rise, Finland, raise up high
Your head, wreathed with great memories.
O, rise, Finland, you showed to the world
That you drove away the slavery,
And that you did not bend under oppression,
Your day has come, O land of birth.*



To learn more about Jean Sibelius, go to:

<http://www.sibelius.fi/english/>

Arvo Pärt (1935 -)



Composer Arvo Pärt is from a country called Estonia. Estonia is a **republic** located between the Baltic Sea, Latvia and Russia. It was settled in 8500 BC, which is a very long time ago. Estonia is located in the middle of Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Russia and Poland, which means that those countries have spent centuries in wars over control of this territory that is the "gateway" between eastern and western Europe. In the 20th century, Estonia has been **occupied** by Germany (pre-World War I), the Soviet Union (1940), Nazi Germany (1941-1944), and then again by the Soviet Union (1945-1991). When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, Estonia was finally able to become its own country and elect a democratic government.

Arvo Pärt was born in Paide, Estonia, on September 11, 1935. Although he spent all of his early life under the restrictions of the Communist government, he was able to pursue his career as a composer. For nine years he was employed as a recording director and composer for film and television for the music division of Estonian Radio. His early works, written while he was still a student, show the influence of popular Russian composers like Shostakovich (*shah-stuh-KOH-vitch*) and Prokofiev (*pro-KOH-fee-ev*).

The music of Arvo Pärt can be found in multiple examples on YouTube - look him up!

Although he has written much music for voices and choruses, Pärt experimented for years with various compositional styles, searching for his own compositional voice. Since 1976 he has been seeking in his music to understand the "secret and unknowable." He says:

"I have discovered that it is enough when a single note is beautifully played. This one note, or a silent beat, or a moment of silence, comforts me. I work with very few elements - with one voice, with two voices. I build with the most primitive materials - with the triad, with one specific tonality."

Olli Kortekangas (1955 -)



Olli Kortekangas is a Finnish composer born in 1955. He studied music at the Sibelius Academy, the only music university in Finland, which was named after composer Jean Sibelius. After that he studied in West Berlin. Kortekangas has composed over 100 works, including orchestral music, operas and choral works. He especially enjoys writing for the voice and music theatre. He has written five operas.

Kortekangas was commissioned by The Choral Arts Society of Washington to write a major choral work to premiere on the *Northern Lights* concert. Kortekangas has received commissions from Finland, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Canada, Japan, Australia and the United States. Kortekangas' music has been featured in concerts and at festivals around the world, and his works are included in the repertoires of many leading orchestras, choirs and soloists.