



## GLENN GOULD'S FIRST RECORDINGS OF GRIEG AND BIZET

Side 1  
GRIEG: SONATA IN E MINOR, OP. 7

I—Allegro moderato (3:38)  
II—Andante molto (5:46)  
III—Alia Meneueto ma poco più lento (5:42)  
IV—Finale: Molto Allegro (7:41)

Side 2  
BIZET: PREMIER NOCTURNE (4:44)  
BIZET: VARIATIONS CHROMATIQUES (14:14)

The selections are in the public domain.

Edvard Grieg's Piano Sonata was written in 1865; Bizet's Nocturne and Variations Chromatiques three years later. For those who subscribe to the theory that recording is an inherently archival, as opposed to miscellany-gathering, activity, our text on this occasion will be drawn from Century 19, Decade 7, Part 3.

Unfortunately for the undersigned, the text, as opposed to the theory above-mentioned or, indeed, the music at hand, is unconvincing. If I were to deal with it explicitly, invoking appropriate parallels, stressing pertinent contradictions—acknowledging, in effect, the "compare and contrast" commandment of academia—I would be required to emphasize that both composers operated within a milieu that, according to all subsequent wisdom, was dominated by the very fact of that most uphaval-inducing phenomenon of the "romantic" age—Tristan and Isolde.

Now, as it happens, I love *Tristan*. I was 15 when I heard it first, and wept. These days, needless to say, the tear ducts are out of practice—the psychologically medicos, and medically unsound, prohibitions respecting approved melodic patterns for the Occidental naïve have seen to that. Yet, given a hard day, a late night, and a sequence or two from the "Liebestod," the spine tingles and the throat is seized by a catch that no other music, this side of Orlando Gibbons' canon, can elicit with equivalent intensity and predictability.

The trouble is, as Toynbee would have it, that knowledge *Tristan* without qualification—to ascribe to it more than subjective impressions—lacks sagacity because that knowledge as well as what I should like to call the "Platonic Peak and Precipice" concept of history. Oh, no one else calls it that; but, however unwittingly, most folk either accept accreditation, and *Tristan*, for the century at least, has been the concept as *Tristan* is. Another servant of the concept and, by no coincidence whatever, worshipper of *Tristan*—the one Arnold Schoenberg—was a gentleman persuaded that his own evolution was

possessed of Danelinian inexorability (which it may well have been), that *Tristan* provided the incentive for that climate of ambiguity that eventually led to his personal rejection of tonal orientation (which is quite probably the case), and that, by inference, his relationship to Wagner, and any other older masters you'd care to weigh into the bargain, was one of mantle-to-mantle-or. Most devout Schoenbargians reasoned similarly, and the list of inchpins grew accordingly—Mozart's *Ötztal*, Beethoven's *Kurfürst der Fuge* or any half-dozen Stamitz symphonies (select one only, or move directly to jail; do not pass 'Go' and do not collect 200 florins). The converted patriarch, Igor Stravinsky, nominated Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, and, in perhaps the most memorable of all inchpin pronouncements, Ernst Křenek avowed that Gussak's chromaticism might, but for the inconsiderate intervention of three centuries, have led directly to Wagner. This latter statement, to be fair, and if judged according to the lights of its own Zeitgeist standards (it was issued, after all, some thirty years ago when Gussak's crimes and times were less exposed to public scrutiny), contained a real measure of insight. It did, however, like all such proclamations, impose long-range linear goals as ultimate criteria and, however inadvertently, convey the impression that God is on the side of enharmonic relationships.

Needless to say, such relationships abound in each of the works included in this album, with Bizet's self-advertising Variations undeniably taking a commanding lead in the "accidental" sweepstakes. None of these works, however, achieves or, more to the point, strives for, that state of ecstatic prolongation that the true legacy of *Tristan* demands, and to judge any of them according to such criteria would be akin to the demand that Sibelius' Fifth Symphony (1914) abandon its suave, romantically cultivated, syntax in favor of the motoric punctuation of *Le Sacre* (1913), or that *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1918) relinquish its amiable evocation of the rococo past in order to sample the expressionist "present" of Pierrot Lunaire (1912). The calendar, after all, is a tyrant; submission to its relentless linearity, a compromise with creativity; the artist's prime responsibility, a quest for that spirit of detachment and anonymity that neutralizes and transcends the competitive, intimidatory, inhumanity.

In any event, whatever the expectations, the facts are as follows. Grieg's Op. 7 is a secure, smoothly articulated, post-graduate exercise in which chromatic embellishments enliven an occasionally complacent paragraphic symmetry. The composer's confidence with large-scale forms—in later years, always the effective minimalist, he became nervous of the sonata concept per se—was weak early in his career and, indeed, the celebrated Piano Concerto

(1868) was a product of his 25th year. Like the latter work, the E Minor Sonata best conveys its author's geographic distinction—i.e., independence from Austro-German symphonic tradition—by frequent, though entirely non-violent, resistance to the proclivities of the leading-tone and appropriate amendments to the motivic concepts involved. Whatever the mood prevailing in these early works, the motivic content—the quirk quotient, to re-coïn one of my own phrase—was introduced, much as in the case of Dvořák, with beguilingly unassertive good humor.

Bizet's *Variations Chromatiques* is, in my opinion, one of the very few masterpieces for solo piano to emerge from the third quarter of the 19th century; its almost total neglect is a phenomenon for which I can offer no reasonable explanation. Like every opus by this extraordinary composer that posthumously discovered teen-age gem—the *Symphony in C*—wards, the *Variations Chromatiques* is a work that, harmonically, never puts a wrong foot forward. And the harmonic path chosen (one suspects primarily as an experiment, since Bizet could utilize with equal effect, idioms of relatively unencumbered diatonicism) is a trail strewn with chromatic deliriums, and on which the possibility of landslide is an ever-present threat. That all such roadblocks are deftly circumvented is a tribute not only to the composer's supremely efficient technique but also to his imaginative, and picturesque, route that he charts and follows throughout.

Even when divorced from the music it maps out, this route is a logician's delight. The "theme"—in essence, a chaconne motif—is simplicity itself. Two chromatic scales of octaves upward-bound, the other inverted, punctuated by open octaves delineating the tonic triad of C minor. The first seven variations—there are fourteen in all—explores the minor mode, and in a gesture befitting the even-handed disposition of the theme, the remaining seven adhere to the major. A coda ensues, apparently intent upon lending support to the C major set; then, almost absent-mindedly at first, but, subsequently, with increasing emphasis and conviction, E-flats and A-flats are added to the texture; in due course, D-flats and G-flats tip the balance unequivocally, moody remnants of the "theme" reappear, and the work has come full circle to C minor. The D Major Nocturne, though a less adventuresome conception, is no less sophisticated. Chiefly concerned with frustrating the accidental inclinations of a melody of Methodism, its openness, and coyly telegraphing this intention by an introductory four-bars' worth of preargued diminished-sevenths, it achieves its aim—no one can say with exemplary directness, since exemplary directness is the very quality Bizet sought to deny the work with, let's try it on its own terms, exemplary incisiveness.

—Glenn Gould

### A Confidential Citation to Critics

Gentlemen: For many of you, this disc may well constitute a first exposure to the first recordings of Bizet's music, and I share with you the joy of discovery. This repertoire, however, lacks representation in the Schwann catalog and, although I do not stress recitals—turn up, if possible, a guess, infrequently, if at all, on concert programs. You may, consequently, be at a loss for a yardstick with which to evaluate the performances contained herein.

For those of you who greet the release with enthusiasm, therefore, I should like to propose a phrase such as "vivacity and forcefulness, as only a first reading can, it partakes of that freshness, innocence and freedom from tradition that, as the late Artur Schnabel is told, is but a "collection of bad habits." On the other hand, for those in doubt as to the validity of the interpretations involved, I would like to recommend a specific such as "—regrettably, a performance that has not as yet jelled; an interpretation that is still in search of an architectural overview." And, of course, for those who prefer to remain, so to speak, on the fence, a structure along the lines of "—though, regrettably, a performance that has not as yet jelled, this is, nonetheless, an interpretation that partakes of that freshness, innocence and freedom from tradition of which the late Artur Schnabel so deftly—" etc., should serve.

comments of those inclined to a genuinely enthusiastic response, I look forward to such encomiums as "the very stuff of history," "a truly legendary encounter," or, perhaps, "never, in the annals of recording, has the generation gap been bridged with such unquestionable authority, such incontrovertible authenticity."

Well, I can dream, can't I? Happy to be of help.

Yours respectfully,

Engineering: Kent Warden, Frank Dean Dandowitz  
Library of Congress catalog card numbers 72-70368, 72-70369 and 72-70368

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## Glenn Gould's First Recordings of Grieg and Bizet

**Edvard Grieg** 1843–1907

### Piano Sonata in E minor op. 7

e-Moll · en *mi* mineur

1	I. Allegro moderato	6:42
2	II. Andante molto	5:59
3	III. Alla Menuetto, ma poco più lento	5:45
4	IV. Finale. Molto allegro	7:44

**Georges Bizet** 1838–1875

### 5 Nocturne in D major

D-Dur · en *ré* majeur

4:42

### Variations chromatiques (de concert) op. 3

6	Thème. Moderato maestoso	1:07
7	Var. 1. Un pochissimo più allegretto	0:53
8	Var. 2. a tempo rubato	0:45
9	Var. 3. a tempo risoluto	0:38
10	Var. 4. Con fuoco	0:31
11	Var. 5	0:44
12	Var. 6. Agitato	0:49

13	Var. 7	0:51
14	Var. 8. Con espressione	0:47
15	Var. 9. Un peu plus vite	0:34
16	Var. 10. Alla Polacca	0:33
17	Var. 11. Andante	0:56
18	Var. 12. Plus animé	0:40
19	Var. 13. Mouvement. des Ires Variations	0:48
20	Var. 14. appassionato	0:44
21	Coda. semplice – Un peu plus lent – Quasi recitativo – a tempo	2:48

Total Time 45:20

**Glenn Gould** piano

**Original LP: M 32040** · Released March 2, 1973

Recording: Eaton Auditorium, Toronto,

March 13/14, 1971 [1–4]; December 13, 1972 [5]; May 2/3, 1971 [6–21]

Producer: Andrew Kazdin · Recording Engineers: Kent Warden & Frank Dean Dennowitz

Cover Design: Henrietta Condak · Cover Art: Robert Andrew Parker

Liner Notes: Glenn Gould · LP Matrix: AL 32040 [1–4], BL 32040 [5–21]

*The original LP release erroneously billed Bizet's Nocturne in D major as his Premier Nocturne on front and back covers.*

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Edvard Grieg's Piano Sonata was written in 1865; Bizet's *Nocturne* and *Variations chromatiques* three years later. For those who subscribe to the theory that recording is an inherently archival, as opposed to miscellany-gathering, activity, our text on this occasion will be drawn from Century 19, Decade 7, Part 3.

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The trouble is: to acknowledge *Tristan* without qualification – to ascribe to it more than subjective impressions – tacitly suggests that one acknowledges as well what I should like to call the “Plateau, Peak, and Precipice” concept of history. Oh, no one else calls it that; but, however unwittingly, most

folk offer it accreditation, and *Tristan*, for this century at least, has served the concept as linchpin.

Another servant of the concept and, by no coincidence whatever, worshipper of *Tristan*, was one Arnold Schoenberg – a gentleman persuaded that his own evolution was possessed of Darwinian inexorability (which it may well have been), that *Tristan* provided the incentive for that climate of ambiguity that eventually led to his personal rejection of tonal orientation (which is quite probably the case), and that, by inference, his relationship to Wagner, and any other elder masters you'd care to weigh into the bargain, was one of mantle-ee to mantle-or. Most devout Schoenbergians reasoned similarly, and the list of linchpins grew accordingly – Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, Bach's *Kunst der Fuge* or any half-dozen Stamitz symphonies (select one only, or move directly to jail; do not pass "Go" and do not collect 200 florins). The converted patriarch, Igor Stravinsky, nominated Beethoven's *Große Fuge*, and, in perhaps the most memorable of all linchpin pronouncements, Ernst Krenk avowed that Gesualdo's chromaticism might, but for the inconsiderate intervention of three centuries, have led directly to Wagner. This latter statement, to be fair, and if judged according to the lights of its own *Zeitgeistlich* standards (it was issued, after all, some thirty years ago, when Gesualdo's crimes and times were less exposed to public scrutiny), contained a real measure of insight. It did, however, like all such proclamations, impose long-range linear goals as ultimate criteria and, however inadvertently, convey the impression that God is on the side of enharmonic relationships.

Needless to say, such relationships abound in each of the works included in this album, with Bizet's self-advertising *Variations* understandably taking

a commanding lead in the "accidentals" sweepstakes. None of these works, however, achieves or, more to the point, strives for, that state of ecstatic prolongation that is the true legacy of *Tristan*, and to judge any of them according to such criteria would be akin to the demand that Sibelius' Fifth Symphony (1914) abandon its suave, romantically cultivated, syntax in favor of the motoric punctuation of *Le Sacre* (1913), or that *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1918) relinquish its amiable evocation of the rococo past in order to sample the expressionist "present" of *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912). The calendar, after all, is a tyrant; submission to its relentless linearity, a compromise with creativity; the artist's prime responsibility, a quest for that spirit of detachment and anonymity that neutralizes and transcends the competitive intimidation of chronology.

In any event, whatever the expectations, the facts are as follows: Grieg's Op. 7 is a secure, smoothly articulated, post-graduate exercise in which chromatic embellishments enliven an occasionally complacent paragraphic symmetry. The composer's confidence with large-scale forms – in later years, always the effective miniaturist, he became estranged from the sonata concept per se – peaked early in his career and, indeed, the celebrated Piano Concerto (1868) was a product of his twenty-fifth year. Like the latter work, the E minor Sonata best conveys its author's geographic distinction – i.e. independence from Austro-German symphonic tradition – by frequent, though entirely non-violent, resistance to the proclivities of the leading-tone and appropriate amendments to the motivic conceits involved. Whatever the mood prevailing in these early works, the innovatory content – the quirk quotient, to re-coin one of my own pet phrases – is introduced, much as in the



case of Dvořák, with beguilingly unassertive good humor.

Bizet's *Variations chromatiques* is, in my opinion, one of the very few masterpieces for solo piano to emerge from the third quarter of the nineteenth century; its almost total neglect is a phenomenon for which I can offer no reasonable explanation. Like every opus by this extraordinary composer, from that posthumously discovered teenage gem – the Symphony in C – onwards, the *Variations chromatiques* is a work that, harmonically, never puts a wrong foot forward. And the harmonic path chosen (one suspects primarily as an experiment, since Bizet could utilize, with equal effect, idioms of relatively unencumbered diatonicism) is a trail strewn with chromatic detours, and on which the possibility of landslide is an ever-present threat. That all such roadblocks are deftly circumvented is a tribute not only to the composer's supremely efficient technique but also to the imaginative, and picturesque, route that he charts and follows throughout.

Even when divorced from the music it maps out, this route is a logician's delight. The "theme" – in essence, a chaconne motif – is simplicity itself: two chromatic scales – one upward-bound, the other inverted – are punctuated cadentially by open octaves delineating the tonic triad of C minor. The first seven variations – there are fourteen in all – uphold the minor mode, and, in a gesture befitting the even-handed disposition of the theme, the remaining seven adhere to the major. A coda ensues, apparently intent upon lending support to the C major set; then, almost absent-mindedly at first, but, subsequently, with increasing emphasis and conviction, E-flats and A-flats are added to the texture; in due course, D-flats and G-flats tip the balance unequivocally, moody remnants of the "theme" reappear, and the work has

come full circle to C minor. The D major *Nocturne*, though a less adventuresome concoction, is no less sophisticated. Chiefly concerned with frustrating the cadential inclinations of a melody of Methodistic primness, and coyly telegraphing this intention by an introductory four-bars' worth of arpeggiated diminished sevenths, it achieves its aim – one can't say with exemplary directness, since exemplary directness is the very quality Bizet seeks to deny the work – with, let's try it on its own terms, exemplary indecisiveness.

GLENN GOULD

### A Confidential Caution to Critics

Gentlemen:

For many of you, this disc may well constitute a first exposure to the piano works of Bizet; it did for me, and I share with you the joy of discovery. This repertoire, however, lacks representation in the Schwann catalog and – although I do not attend recitals – turns up, I should guess, infrequently, if at all, on concert programs. You may, consequently, be at a loss for a yardstick with which to evaluate the performances contained herein.

For those of you who greet the release with enthusiasm, therefore, I should like to propose a phrase such as " – vividly and forcefully, as only a first reading can, it partakes of that freshness, innocence and freedom from tradition that, as the late Artur Schnabel so deftly remarked, is but a 'collection of bad habits.' " On the other hand, for those in doubt as to the validity

of the interpretations involved, I venture to recommend a conceit such as ” – regrettably, a performance that has not as yet jelled; an interpretation that is still in search of an architectural overview.” And, of course, for those who prefer to remain, so to speak, on the fence, a structure along the lines of ” – though, regrettably, a performance that has not as yet jelled, this is, nonetheless, an interpretation that partakes of that freshness, innocence and freedom from tradition of which the late Artur Schnabel so deftly – etc.,” should serve.

The burden of this memorandum, however, is to direct your attention to one aspect of the relatively more familiar music contained on Side 1 that may well have escaped your notice and that could, potentially, lead to an embarrassing incident: Edvard Grieg was a cousin of my maternal great-grandfather. My mother, née Florence Greig, maintained, as did all the Scotch branch of the clan, the “ei” configuration, while Grieg’s great-grandfather, one John Greig, crossed the North Sea in the 1740s, settled in Bergen, and inverted the vowels so as to afford a more appropriately Nordic ring to the family name. As will be readily apparent, any intemperate critical discussion of the performance at hand, therefore – especially along the lines adopted by the Bizet disparagement (see Phrase Sample 2 above) – would be tantamount to a suggestion that Clara Schumann was misinformed about the inner workings of the worthy Robert’s A minor Concerto.

The Sonata, of course, though hardly a repertoire staple, is played and recorded from time to time, and some of you may well feel that my response to it is at almost perverse pains to underline those dour, curiously dispassionate qualities of Ibsenesque gloom that I feel to be on predominant display in even the earliest works of cousin Edvard. Consequently, for those who would

espouse a more up-tempo, quasi-Lisztian rendition of the work, such epithets as “presumably authentic” or “nonetheless, unquestionably authoritative,” will suffice; and, needless to say, in the comments of those inclined to a genuinely enthusiastic response, I look forward to such encomiums as “the very stuff of history,” “a truly legendary encounter,” or, perhaps, “never, in the annals of recording, has the generation gap been bridged with such unquestionable authority, such incontrovertible authenticity.”

Well, I can dream, can’t I? Happy to be of help.

Yours respectfully,

*GLENN GOULD*