

Arts & Entertainment

Distinguished piano professor to present concert

By Kris Saalfeld

Audun Ravnan, a professor of piano at UNL, will present a concert of solo piano music by renowned composer Edvard Grieg Sunday at 3 p.m. in Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

Ravnan's concert is the first of six to be presented in the Lincoln area this year.

According to Bob Sheldon, assistant director of university information, the concerts are a celebration of Ravnan's 25 years of outstanding musical performance and instruction at UNL.

To Ravnan, a native of Norway, the concerts celebrate more. "1982 also marks 35 years since I came to America and 75 years since Grieg died," he said. Grieg, Norway's foremost composer, and Ravnan are natives of the same city, Bergen.

As a young child, Ravnan began his piano studies, as he described it, "sort of by no choice.

"I was the first child born in a landlady's house. She lived upstairs, was a piano teacher and was positive I was a pianist from birth. At the age of 7, I began my lessons. We met every day. In addition, I'd have to practice. She'd sit upstairs and listen. If I didn't play my scales 35 times, she'd knock on the floor with a cane."

In hiding

At the age of 10, Ravnan enrolled in the Bergen Conservatory of Music. However, during World War II, Ravnan's studies were interrupted while he spent a year hiding in the mountains from the Germans.

"My father and brother went to England to join the Norwegian troops. The Germans had occupied Norway and decided to take me as a hostage in retaliation," he said. "A policeman called to find out if I was home, which alerted me. I left immediately for hiding and didn't come back till the war ended."

Following World War II, many scholarships were available to help Norwegian students get out of the country to study, Ravnan said. He received the International Institute of Education scholarship for music study at Northwestern University.

"I arrived in the United States on Labor Day, 1947. When I came, I didn't know English," he said. Although Ravnan never attended high school in Norway, he graduated from Northwestern summa cum laude.

In addition to his Bachelor of Music degree, Ravnan holds a Master of Music in piano from Northwestern, and has studied at the Berkshire Music Center, Eastman School of Music and the University of North Carolina.

Honors

In addition to his role as a piano professor at UNL, Ravnan has performed many solos, has been featured with numerous orchestras and has appeared often on television. A recipient of the university's "Distinguished Teaching Award," Ravnan also holds the Governor's Arts Award "for significant contributions to the cultured life of Nebraska."

In his performance Sunday, two original Grieg pieces will be presented — Sonata in E Minor, Opus 7 and Ballade, Opus 24. Ballade is a melancholy piece, written to lament what Grieg saw as a lack of appreciation inherent in the Norwegians of his day, Ravnan said.

Lyric Pieces, Opus 43, his third selection, represents their descriptive titles: Butterfly, Lonesome Wanderer, In The Home, Little Birdling, Erotic and To Spring.

His final selection, Norwegian Folk Melodies, Opus 66, is an arrangement of 11 folk melodies that Grieg and a friend collected while walking in the mountains of Norway.



Photo courtesy of University Information

Audun Ravnan

Smiling Joe

The music filled the room with long and short gusty breaths that rose above and below the steady roll of the dance crowd. Hanging above the varnished bar, a wagon wheel decorated with lamps shivered slightly with each slamming of the entrance door as children rushed in from outside.

At one table, a grandma remarked to her daughter how good the fish was this week. The accordion breathed a sour note from its corner, and someone said, "Maybe Smiling Joe should be given a rest, a red beer and lessons for another polka." With a

Original Work

smile, Joe agreed and walked over to the bar and sat on a stool — his accordion sighed slightly as it settled on the bar in front of him.

After a taste of his beer, Smiling Joe turned, smiled at me and asked "It's nice here, no?"

I replied, "Very nice," and added his music was very good. "Do you play often?"

"Yes, yes, often and very good, yes?"

I nodded.

Above the bar mirror, a baseball bat stained with turpentine recorded with notches the wins and losses of a rivalry between town teams baseball. Next to the bat, a photograph capturing Bob Cerv's World Series swing rested on the wall with a short memo in the corner telling the people of Weston he'll never forget them. Hanging below Cerv, a smaller picture showed the first graduating class of the town's only Catholic school.

From his overalls, Joe pulled out a flat box and asked if "maybe you'd like to play." I asked what

type of game it was, and he held up the box for me to examine.

On the metal box, a wheel showed the name of a state and its capital. By moving the wheel and changing states, one guessed the name of the capital.

From the end of the counter, the bartender hurried over to our stools.

"Joe, leave him alone. He just wants to drink in peace".

"No, that's all right."

"He's not bothering you?"

"No, we're fine."

He wiped the oak grain of the table.

"Joe's kind of a simpleton," he said. "Once in a while, he gets on your nerves."

"It's all right, really. He's not bothering me."

Joe smiled, took the box and, looking at it intensely, asked me the capital of South Dakota.

After a pause, he turned the wheel and asked me another state.

"Joe, have you forgotten about the dance?" a heavy woman said as she walked by us.

Excusing himself, Joe stood up and returned the leather straps of the accordion to his shoulders. He then thanked me, said we'd finish the game another time and drank the rest of his tomato beer. In a few moments he was back in the corner, and again the heavy tones of the accordion filled the room.

Couples gathered to dance, and an old man poised himself next to the music and began singing.

I drank the rest of my beer, glanced up at the swinging figure of Bob Cerv and walked towards the door. As I opened the door and turned, Joe tipped his accordion towards me — simultaneous with a dip in the music — and gave me a smile and a nod as the cool night air flowing through the doorway glazed my face and neck.

John Koranda

They Just Left

It was well worth walking over the bumpy tractor tracks and the stickers in the sickled grass.

Because yes, Mrs. Love agrees.

Certainly this one is a dinosaur egg and this, part of a comet's interior — absolutely what an interesting stone this is so friendly.

How comfortably it sits in the palm of my hand

Look here, next to my toe

not just a plain rock

but an ancient elephant's tooth

... today's first.

John Koranda

The prose and poetry of John Koranda is part of the weekly feature Original Work. UNL students interested in submitting prose, poetry, art or photography should contact David Wood at the Daily Nebraskan.