

# Ernst von Dohnányi's Concerts in Kristiania<sup>1</sup>

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(Received: March 2017; accepted: May 2017)

**Abstract:** Ernst von Dohnányi visited Kristiania, nowadays Oslo, the first time in 1906. Receiving very good reviews, he became a frequent guest in the city playing usually for full concert halls. He came to the city numerous times as a soloist performing music of the leading European composers of the nineteenth century and Beethoven's and Bach's works as well. He appeared on the stages in Kristiania also as a chamber music performer. Besides, his music was played there being prized high. He was considered a permanent and very wanted guest in the city and became an artist recommended as a piano teacher to the young Norwegian students by for example Edvard Grieg. His name was also used by the Norwegian piano factory's owners together with the names of other famous artists such as Leschetizky, Paderewski, Carreño and others in the commercials of the instruments for many years. Eventually, his music was played there not only by the artist. This article's aim is to show all the aspects of presence and reception of Dohnányi's art in Kristiania in the period the artist used to show up in the city's musical life.

**Keywords:** Dohnányi, Norway, Kristiania, music life, piano music, reception

## 1. The concerts

Ernst von Dohnányi first went to Kristiania to give recitals and concerts in the autumn of 1906. (Christiania – from 1877 spelled as Kristiania – was the name of Norway's capital city until 1925.) Dohnányi had been invited by Peter Vogt Fischer, an impresario active in the city at the time, whose career began to make

1. The present study is the written version of my paper held on the 2017 Budapest Dohnányi Day.

strides after 1906.<sup>2</sup> Dohnányi as a pianist played at the Hals Brothers concert hall, for the first time on 8 October. Press reports say the hall was filled with a large audience. One article notes that he played again there three days later on 11 October.<sup>3</sup> In addition he played three more concerts in Kristiania in large concert halls on 13, 16 and 18 October:<sup>4</sup> the first two in the old Loge and the last in the Calmeyer Street Mission House (*Calmeyergadens missionshus*), the largest venue in the city, holding up to 5000 people.<sup>5</sup>

For some years thereafter Dohnányi would visit Kristiania regularly each autumn and sometimes in winter. He appeared on 17, 19, 24<sup>6</sup> and 27 October 1907 (the 24 being a *folkekonsert* with cheaper tickets). He played in the city four times in October and November 1908 (on 22, 24 and 27 October and 1 November) and five times in October 1909 (on the 21, 23, 28, 30 and 31).<sup>7</sup>

In 1911 came his last visit to Kristiania in this period: a single concert on 14 January.<sup>8</sup> It would be several years before he appeared again. Though engaged as a soloist for a concert at the local Music Society (*Musikforeningen*) in March 1916, he failed to get a permit to leave Hungary, according to the press.<sup>9</sup> Not until 1919 was he invited, again by Fischer, and gave three concerts on 13, 20 and 24 September. Surviving sources indicate these were the last appearances in Norway in his lifetime.

## 2. The repertoire

Dohnányi the pianist gave mainly solo recitals in Kristiania, but on each visit between 1907 and 1911 he played at least once (in 1908 and 1909 twice on consecutive days) with the National Theatre Orchestra led by Johan Halvorsen, a respected Norwegian violinist and composer of the day. These appearances were on 27 October 1907, 31 October and 1 November 1908, 30 and 31 October 1909<sup>10</sup> and 14

2. See the concert program in Ulrik Mørk's collection, Section for Music, National Library of Norway (hereafter NLN). I would like to express gratitude to Anne Jorunn Kydland of the Section for Music for her help in finding materials for this article.

3. *Aftenposten* 47/597 (8 October 1906), 3.

4. These five concerts were noted by László Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő művészeti tevékenységének sajtóreceptiója. IV. rész: Az 1905–1909-es berlini évek" [The press reception of Ernst von Dohnányi's performing activity. Part 4: The Berlin years, 1905–1909], in *Dohnányi Évkönyv* 2006/7, ed. Márta Sz. Farkas and László Gombos (Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 2007), 91 and 149–56.

5. *Norges Musikkhistorie*, vol. 3: 1870–1910, ed. Arvid Vollsnes (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1999), 155.

6. One of these concerts was noted by László Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő," IV, 204.

7. Some of these concerts were noted by László Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő művészeti tevékenységének sajtóreceptiója. V. rész: Az 1909–1912-es berlini évek" [Part 5: The Berlin years, 1909–1912], in *Dohnányi-tanulmányok*, ed. Veronika Kusz and András Ránki (Budapest: MTA BTK Zenetudományi Intézet, 2017), 22–24.

8. Three other chamber concerts are to be discussed later. For the advertisement for the 14 January concert, see *Aftenposten* 52/26 (13 November 1911), 2.

9. *Dagbladet* 48/93 (18 March 1916), 3.

10. For the advertisement for the concerts, see *Aftenposten* 49/625 (30 October 1909), 2.

January 1911.<sup>11</sup> Usually Dohnányi would play one of Beethoven's piano concertos (the E-flat Major in 1907, the C Major in 1908 and the B-flat Major on 30 October 1909). At the concert on 31 October 1909 he performed Liszt's first piano concerto in E-flat Major. In 1911 he played his own piano concerto in E Minor op. 5.

The offerings consisted mainly of works by 19th-century composers, but sometimes earlier works as well. Dohnányi's choices had not changed since his early performing career.<sup>12</sup> He was the most willing to play Chopin's works, doing so at all his concerts in the years 1906–1909. For some he chose smaller-scale pieces, usually two or three (e. g. in the concert on 13 October 1907), and for others he worked up larger-scale works: scherzos, ballades, sonatas or impromptus. Dohnányi's first concert in Kristiania was dominated by Chopin: he played all of five of his works, including the Scherzo in C-sharp Minor op. 39. Although he repeated some of these in Kristiania in the following year, he otherwise prepared a new repertoire for each journey: in 1907 ten preludes from op. 28, and in 1909 Chopin's Sonata in B Minor op. 58, the Variations op. 12 and four études from the series op. 10 and 25.

Dohnányi was equally willing to include works by Liszt, as he did at all his Kristiania concerts in 1906 and at one each in 1907 and 1908. His piano repertoire featured Liszt's *Fantasie and Fugue on the B-A-C-H theme*, *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 13*, the two *Legends*, the *Valse Impromptu*, the *Ballade No. 2 in B minor*, the *Tarantella*, and the *Rakóczi March*. Moreover, he frequently played Schumann as a pianist in Kristiania, among others his *Symphonic Etudes* op. 13 (on 13 October 1906 and 13 September 1919), *Romance in F-sharp Major* op. 28 no. 2 (on 18 October 1906), *Carnaval* op. 9 (on 24 October 1907, 28 October 1909 and 24 September 1919), *Sonata in F-sharp Minor* op. 11 (on 24 October 1908) and *Kinderszenen* op. 15 (on 14 January 1911).

The Brahms pieces Dohnányi included were the *Sonata in F Minor* op. 5 (on 8 October 1906 and 23 October 1909) and *Variations and Fugue on a theme by George Frideric Händel* op. 24 (on 17 October 1907). Sometimes he played pieces by Schubert, for example his *Sonata in A Minor* op. 42 (on 8 October 1906) and three impromptus from op. 142 (on 28 October 1909 and 20 September 1919). Somewhat rarely in Kristiania, he included a work by Mendelssohn: one of his preludes and fugues op. 35 no. 1 on 16 October 1906. He made a timely nod to Norwegian listeners by working up a piece by Edvard Grieg at the concert on 27 October 1908 – his *Ballade in G Minor* op. 24.<sup>13</sup>

11. *Musikbladet* 4/3 (18 January 1911), 22.

12. Compare his repertoire with that of his earlier years noted in Gombos, "The reception of the young Ernő Dohnányi," *Studia Musicologica* 46/3–4 (2005), 339.

13. This work was also performed by Dohnányi earlier, on 13 October 1907 in the Norwegian city of Bergen. See the concert programs at the NLN.

As for other composers, Dohnányi often included works by Beethoven in his programmes.<sup>14</sup> One Kristiania concert was wholly devoted to his music (on 22 October 1908).<sup>15</sup> In 1906 and 1908, he played among others Beethoven's 32 Variations in C Minor. Quite often he prepared his sonatas: C Major op. 53 (28 October 1909), F Minor op. 57 (13 October 1906), E-flat Major op. 31 no. 3 (for example on 18 October 1906), C Major op. 2 no. 3 (24 October 1907), C-sharp Minor op. 27 no. 2 (27 October 1908) and A-flat Major op. 110 (20 September 1919). He also included Beethoven's rondo *Für Elise* (on 13 September 1919). Another composer to feature was Haydn – his Variations in F Minor (on 11 October 1906 and 18 September 1909). In 1919 he presented Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue the first time to a Norwegian audience.

Last but not least, Dohnányi included his own works in his Norwegian concerts: two of his Rhapsodies op. 11 – no. 2 in F-sharp Minor and no. 3 C Major (on 30 October 1909) – *Winterreigen* op. 13 (on 27 October 1908), the *Naila Waltz* based on the Delibes ballet *La Source, ou Naila* (17 October 1907) and Concert Etude op. 28 (E Major and F Minor, 20 September 1919).<sup>16</sup>

### 3. The critics

When Dohnányi first came to Kristiania he was still only 29 years old. He was little known in Norway at the time, few having heard of him at all. Peter Vogt Fischer took care to advertise his appearances effectively. In the first announcements two weeks before the first concert in 1906, the pianist was described as a “piano virtuoso”. Some reviews published in the Danish press were attached, describing him as a “sound poet” and a “brilliant pianist”.<sup>17</sup>

Dohnányi won Norwegian audiences over at once. The magazine *Nordisk Musik-Revue* pointed out in 1906 that all seats had been taken for the last three appearances at the big concert halls. The newspaper *Aftenposten* reported before the last concert in 1906 that people were unsurprisingly queuing to buy tickets: “We seldom have a chance to hear such a virtuoso,” the reporter remarked.<sup>18</sup> This reception pleased Dohnányi immensely. In the interview for the newspaper *Øre-bladet*, he said, “This time I will not be giving concerts in cities other than Kris-

14. Based on European and American reviews of Dohnányi concerts early in his career, Gombos states that he was often seen as an ideal Beethoven player, see Gombos, “The Reception,” 337.

15. “Stop., Professor Emil [sic] v. Dohnányi,” *Morgenposten* (23 October 1908), 1.

16. Concert programmes show him playing his Passacaglia op. 6 at concerts elsewhere in Norway as well.

17. For the advertisement for the concert, see *Aftenposten* 47/577 (29 September 1906), 3.

18. Otto Winter-Hjelm, “Dohnányi,” *Aftenposten* 47/616 (17 October 1906), [2]. This was republished in Hungarian: See Gombos, “Dohnányi Ernő,” IV, 155.

tiania, but as I was so splendidly received here, I will be very willing to do so in the years to come".<sup>19</sup>

The warm reception continued in subsequent years. The magazine *Norsk Tonekunst* noted that "the piano virtuoso Dohnányi ... in Kristiania at present, is filling up the hall with an audience far from tired of listening to his masterly art."<sup>20</sup> A piece in the periodical *Musikbladet* briefly mentions Dohnányi's season concerts in 1909, saying they were played to full houses.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, his piano performances were not widely reviewed, mainly because Norwegian music critics were less than knowledgeable at the time. Papers usually confined themselves to the bald occurrence of musical events. However, it is possible to gauge the main features of his performances based on the opinions that were preserved.

The critics underlined first of all the beauty and high technical skills of his performances, which some called "transcendental." Though his technique was exceptional, Dohnányi did not rely on technical effects to charm his audience. A reviewer of a concert in 1907 writes that Dohnányi's art "is in every inch free from show, quite the opposite – it is so full of poetry that one listens to his sounds with great unmixed pleasure."<sup>22</sup> Similar views are voiced in another review a year later: the pianist was said to give his listeners art in its noblest shape. He could do so because "he has everything: a cold head and a warm heart, the best musical intelligence and the warmest artistic devotion, and at the same time a form of technical skill without which everything else could not find its expression."<sup>23</sup> Another critic added that "the special way the pianist performs the first notes of motives – so light, clear and natural – is meaningful for the whole of his artistic personality."<sup>24</sup> He saw this style of opening phrase as reminiscent of the lightness of bel canto intonation.<sup>25</sup> Contributors also noticed how Dohnányi grasped every detail in the works, so that both outstanding masters' works and less important ones came over well in his piano interpretation, both lyrical ones and those emphasizing technical skills.<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned before, audience appreciation in Norway was gained at once, along with a high reputation. By 1907, the Norwegian Hals' Brothers piano factory were including a recommendation from him in their advertising, presumably by agreement.<sup>27</sup> Later Dohnányi's name was used similarly in instrument advertising

19. Claire, "Hos Dohnányi," *Ørebladet* 16/236 (10 October 1906), 1. This was republished in Hungarian: see Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő," IV, 150–151.

20. "Konserter," *Norsk Tonekunst* 10 (1 October 1907), 78.

21. *Musikbladet* 2/38 (27 October 1909), 273.

22. "Konserter," *Norsk Tonekunst* 10 (1 October 1907), 78.

23. "Om Dohnányi," *Fredriksstad Tilskuer* 42/250 (24 October 1908), [2].

24. Winter-Hjelm, "Dohnányi," [2].

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid. This was republished in Hungarian: See Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő," IV, 156.

27. "Dohnányi," *Stavanger Aftenblad* 15/278 (17 October 1907), [2].

by such firms as Zeitter & Winkelmann<sup>28</sup> and Steinway & Sons,<sup>29</sup> alongside musical figures like Busoni, Carreño, Leschetizky, Nikisch, Pugno, Saint-Saëns and Strauss (see *Plate 1*).<sup>30</sup>

PLATE 1 *Aftenposten* 57/157 (24 March 1916), 3.

**Steinway & Sons**

**Elektr. Reproduktions**  
**:: Flygler & Pianoer ::**

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Den mest fuldkomne gjengivelse av kunstnerspil.

Reproduktioner av verdens første pianister som: d'Albert, Busoni, Carreno, Dohnányi, Friedberg, Grieg, Lamond, Leschetizky, Nikisch, Pugno, Reisenauer, Ripper, Saint-Saëns, Schnabel, Strauss m. fl.

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Kan tilknyttes enhver elektrisk lysledning.

Spil og nuancering er helt selvvirkende.

---

Ser ut som et almindeligt instrument altid færdig til haandspil.

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Forespilles interesserede hver dag mellem kl. 1—1½ form.

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**Grøndahl**

Øvre Slotsgt. 10.

**Landets største Klaverforretning**

By the second decade of the 20th century, Dohnányi as a pianist was clearly well-known in Norway. The newspaper *Fremtiden* related Dohnányi's story of "two musical Scots" without feeling a need to say in detail who he was.<sup>31</sup> Grieg himself was enchanted, having heard him at his first performance in Kristiania

28. *Aftenposten* 50/51 (26 January 1910), [3].

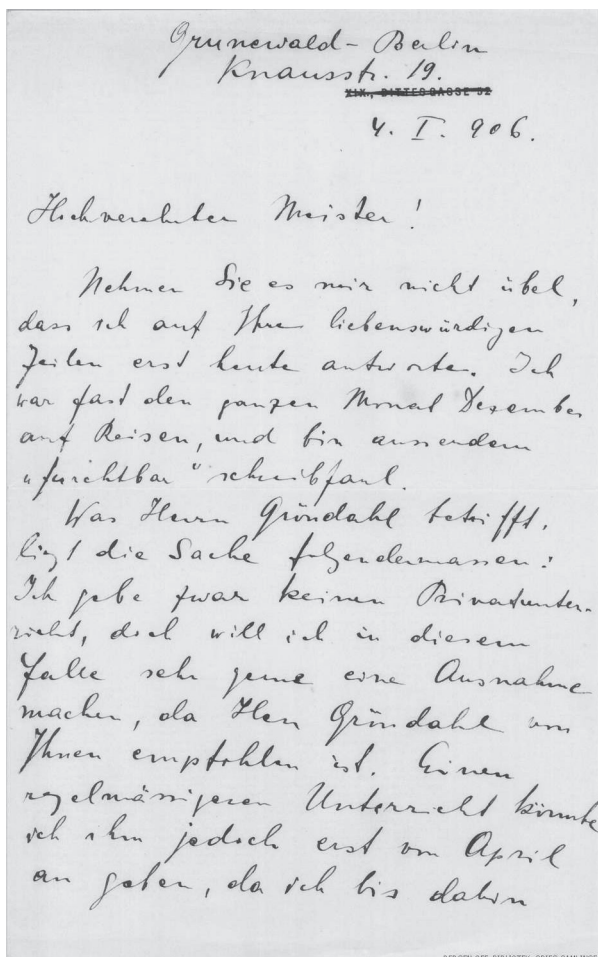
29. *Aftenposten* 57/157 (24 March 1916), [3].

30. For an advertisement, see *Aftenposten* 57/157 (24 March 1916), 3.

31. "De musikalske skotter," *Fremtiden* 10/172 (21 July 1914), 2. The story Dohnányi told was of two Scots playing together a piece for two pianos. The first time they did not manage it, as one finished a bit earlier than the other. Next time, however, they managed to finish together. While marking this achievement, one of them



PLATE 2 Dohnányi's consent letter to Edvard Grieg  
(Bergen Offentlige Bibliotek)



and also earlier in Copenhagen.<sup>32</sup> In one letter to a young pianist, Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl, son of a well-known Norwegian composer Agathe Backer Grøndahl, Grieg wrote that he respected Dohnányi as an artist as much as Agathe Backer Grøndahl,<sup>33</sup> while in a letter to the latter he called Dohnányi one of the few great

proposed playing one more piece, as the first one had gone so well. "But my dear, I have just played a second piece," answered the other musician.

32. Letter from Grieg to Agathe Backer Grøndahl of 12 November 1905, in *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, ed. Finn Benestad, transl. William H. Halverson (Columbus: Peer Gynt Press, 2000), 296.

33. Letter from Grieg to Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl from 1 June 1907, in Benestad (ed.), *Edvard Grieg: Letters*, 14.

## PLATE 2 (Continuation)

so viel auf Reisen bin, dass ich  
 die wenigen Stunden, die ich  
 an der Hochschule hier geben kann,  
 auch schon als Last empfinden  
 muss. Gibt sich Herr G. damit  
 zufrieden, dass er bis April im  
 ganzen bloß 2-3 Stunden erhält,  
 so möge er immerhin schon jetzt  
 kommen. Ein Honorar für die  
 Stunden nehme ich selbstverständlich  
 nicht.  
 In der Hoffnung, dass ich heute  
 wieder folgenwillig haben werde, mit  
 Ihnen und Ihrer verehrten Frau  
 Gemahlin beisammen sein zu können  
 — ich spiele einmal in Kopenhagen,  
 vielleicht auch in Kristiania —  
 verbleibe ich mit den herzlichsten  
 Grüßen Ihrer  
 verehrten Gattin  
 E. Grieg

pianists of the time.<sup>34</sup> It was Grieg who encouraged Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl to pursue piano studies in Berlin with the Hungarian. In fact, the old master made this possible by requesting Dohnányi in a letter to give the young pianist private lessons, which he agreed to do from spring 1906.<sup>35</sup>

34. Letter from Edvard Grieg to Agathe Backer Grøndahl from 12 November 1905, *Edvard Grieg: Letters*, 296.

35. See a letter from Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl to Edvard Grieg of 30 May 1907, <http://www.bergen.folkebibl.no/cgi-bin/websok-grieg?mode=p&tnr=214078&dok=0&pf=kort&side=0> (accessed on 3 July 2018); a letter from Dohnányi to Grieg of 4 January 1906, <http://www.bergen.folkebibl.no/cgi-bin/websok-grieg?tnr=214316&kolo> (accessed on 29 November 2017); a letter from Grieg to Dohnányi in *Edvard Grieg. Brev i utvalg. 1862–1907*, vol. 2, ed. Finn Benestad (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1998), 538. This fact is also mentioned in Gombos, “Dohnányi Ernő,” IV, 72.



Further correspondence from Backer Grøndahl to Grieg shows the former to be very grateful for this advice and assistance.<sup>36</sup> Incidentally, Grieg's opinion of Dohnányi and friendship with the impresario Peter Voigt Fischer may have led to the pianist being invited for his first concerts in Kristiania. Still, it is clear that Grieg heard of Dohnányi's possible concerts in Kristiania from Dohnányi.<sup>37</sup> Grieg's diary tells how he and Dohnányi met in person during Dohnányi's first Kristiania visit. On 9 October 1906, Grieg mentions a "dinner at Fischer's with Dohnányi".<sup>38</sup> Some days later they met again and Grieg noted in his diary that Dohnányi "is as simple and unassuming as a person as he is great as an artist."<sup>39</sup>

Dohnányi's last concert in Kristiania in 1919 received comments similar to earlier ones.<sup>40</sup> A different resonance can be found only in a review by the Norwegian pianist and composer Edvard Sylou-Kreutz. He appreciated his talent – "[Dohnányi] is a comprehensive musician, an important composer and as a chamber music player he creates art of high range" – but adds that as a soloist, Dohnányi "does not reach so high." He faults him for his interpretation and articulation contingency: "Bach requires ... clear lines; they were not there. I do not subscribe to the opinion that Bach and Beethoven should be played to a metronome with a dry, knocking tone, but Bach's fugue will not take ... so much use of pedal and dimming of a subject. The *Fantasy* ... cannot be lent the features of Chopin's interpretation," he argued.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, not all tickets were sold for 13 September in Kristiania, as they had been at his earlier concerts there.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. As a chamber musician

Alongside his solo recitals, Dohnányi brought to Kristiania chamber performances with the violinist Henri Marteau and the cellist Hugo Becker. They made two such journeys to Norway, in 1910 and 1911. On 7 and 9 February 1910 they gave two *folkekonserter* in the big hall of the old Loga.<sup>43</sup> A year later, in January, they played three more times (on 9, 11 and 12 January): twice in the old Loga and once (on 12 January) in the Mission House.<sup>44</sup> The programmes of these resembled

36. For this letter, see Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl to Grieg of 30 May 1907, Benestad (ed.), *Edvard Grieg. Brev i utvalg*, 538.

37. See the letter from Grieg to Dohnányi of 8 January 1906, in Benestad, *Edvard Grieg. Brev i utvalg*, 538.

38. See Finn Benestad and William Halverson (eds.), *Edvard Grieg. Diaries, Articles, Speeches* (Columbus, Ohio: Peer Gynt Press, 2001), 148.

39. *Ibid.*, 148.

40. See for example the review in the magazine *Musikbladet* 12/38 (24 September 1919), 279 or R. M., "Konsert," *Dagbladet* 51/231 (15 September 1919), 4.

41. See for example the review in the magazine *Musikbladet* 12/38 (24 September 1919), 279.

42. "Klaveraften," *Morgenbladet* 11/467 (15 September 1919), 3.

43. See the concert programmes in the NLN. An article concerning this concert was republished in Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő," V, 58–59.

44. See the concert programmes in the NLN.

PLATE 3 Programme of a chamber music concert in Kristiania in 1911  
(Concert programme collection, Music Section, National Library of Norway)

KONCERT-DIREKTION P. VOGT FISCHER  
SÆSON 1910–1911

**PROGRAM**

ved

**1ste Koncert**

Mandag 9de Januar 1911 Kl. 8

i Logens store Sal.

1. <b>Beethoven:</b>	Op. 1. No. 2. G-Dur. Trio for Piano, Violin og Cel <sup>lo</sup> . Adagio. Allegro vivace. Largo con espressione. Scherzo. Allegro. Finale. Presto.
2. <b>Rich. Strauss:</b>	Op. 18. Es-Dur. Sonate for Violin og Piano. Allegro ma non troppo. Improvisation. Andante cantabile. Finale. Andante-Allegro.
3. <b>Schumann:</b>	Op. 63. D-Moll. Trio for Piano, Violin og Cello. Mit Energie und Leidenschaft. Lebhaft, doch nicht zu rasch. Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung. Mit Feuer.

Flygel af Ibach med Clutsam-Klaviatur  
fra Grøndahls Pianolager, Karl Johansgd.

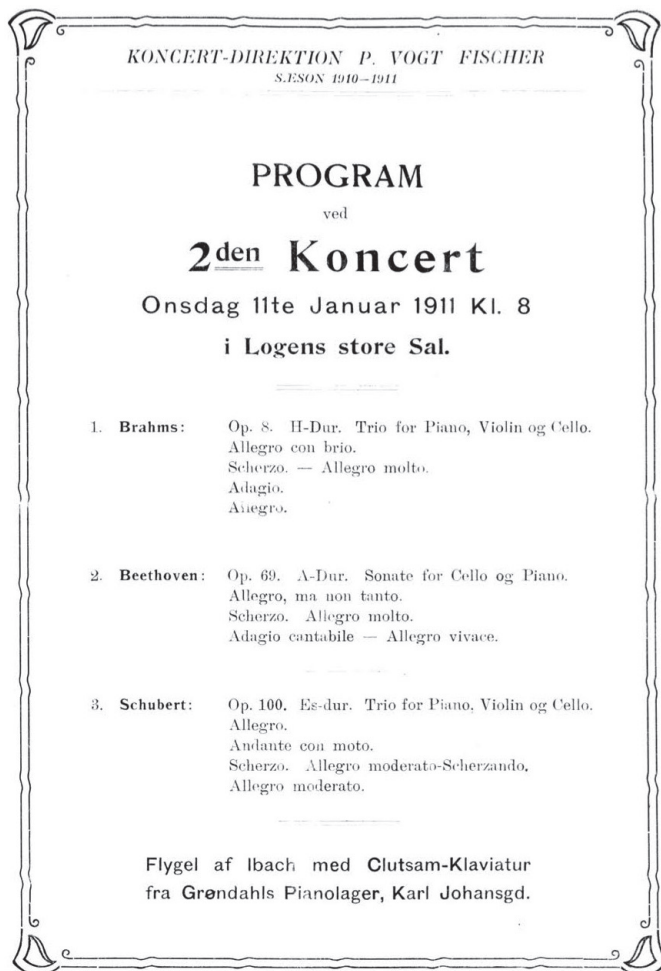
Obs! 2den Koncert Onsdag Kl. 8.

the solo recitals by including several works by Beethoven and by such composers as Schubert, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms. They performed works for all three instruments and sonatas for violin and piano or cello and piano. They included a piece by Edvard Grieg, his Sonata in A minor for Cello and Piano op. 36.<sup>45</sup>

As with Dohnányi's solo evenings, there were few reviews of chamber performances, but he was highly appreciated in Kristiania as a chamber musician, not

45. See also "Marteau – Becker – Dohnányi," *Aftenposten* 52/22 (11 January 1911), 2.

PLATE 4 Programme of another chamber music concert in Kristiania in 1911  
(Concert programme collection, Music Section, National Library of Norway)



just a pianist. The magazine *Musikbladet* after the concerts in 1910 made it clear that the concert hall was full again. However, the reviewer was dissatisfied with how the pieces sounded. For this he blamed the impresario, not the musicians, for holding the concerts in too big a hall.<sup>46</sup> The audience applauded, we are told, despite having little previous experience of listening to chamber music.<sup>47</sup> A year

46. *Musikbladet* 3/7 (16 February 1910), 52.

47. Otto Winter-Hjelm, "Kammermusik Koncert," *Aftenposten* 50/77 (8 February 1910), 2. This was re-published in Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő," V, 59–60.

PLATE 5 Programme of a *Folkekoncert* in Kristiania in 1911  
(Concert programme collection, Music Section, National Library of Norway)



later Dohnányi and his colleagues were praised again for interpretations of “the highest range” and perfect musicianship.<sup>48</sup>

### 5. Dohnányi’s works in Kristiania

As mentioned before, Dohnányi included works of his own only in certain concerts he gave in Kristiania, usually in no more than one a year. His music was infrequently commented on by journalists, until a pantomime performance to his music was held at the National Theatre in 1910 and he performed his Piano Concerto op. 5 in 1911. By 25 May 1910, the play *Brudesløret* (i. e. *Die Schleier der Pierrette* by Arthur Schnitzler) to music by Ernst von Dohnányi<sup>49</sup> was received

48. *Musikbladet* 4/3 (18 January 1911), 22.

49. On this see Daniel-Frédéric Lebon, “Musical Speech Analogy in Ernő Dohnányi’s *Der Schleier der Pierrette*,” *Studia Musicologica* 56/1 (March 2015), 71–90.

enthusiastically.<sup>50</sup> In a review of the performance, the magazine *Musikbladet* wrote, "Dohnányi's instrumentation is fierce (*voldsomt*). The composition is written in the most modern style, both in respect of harmony and a form."<sup>51</sup> There is no evidence that Dohnányi took part in the preparations for this production.

Dohnányi's own piano concerto, performed in the city in 1914, was judged rather critically. Otto Winter-Hjelm, a leading Norwegian music critic and composer, considered it written "in a style which one cannot believe has a future."<sup>52</sup> However, another critic, after a Music Society concert on 6 December 1913 at which Dohnányi's Suite for Orchestra (*orkestersuite*, probably the Suite in F-sharp major op. 19) was performed, found it "spirited and funny" and its instrumentation "brilliant and masterful."<sup>53</sup> Among those to play Dohnányi's piano music in Norway were Johanne Margrethe Sømme of Stavanger, a pupil of his, and Thora Bratt, a Norwegian-American pianist born in Kristiania who was a student of Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl in Copenhagen and of Dohnányi in Berlin.<sup>54</sup>

Their repertoires were mainly confined to Dohnányi's rhapsodies and humoresques, but his chamber pieces were played on occasions. One of his string quartets was performed by the Brussels String Quartet (*Brüsseler-kvartetten*),<sup>55</sup> as was his Sonata for Violin and Piano in C-sharp Minor op. 21 at a concert of the Young Sound Artists Association (*Unge tonekunstneres samfund*).<sup>56</sup>

## 6. Summary

Ernst von Dohnányi was a factor in Norwegian music life over a period of thirteen years, as a soloist and a chamber-music player. He came to Kristiania almost unknown, but became integral part to the city's music life. This paper confines itself to the capital city, but in gathering materials for it the author found evidence of Dohnányi appearing in other Norwegian cities, some of which are indicated in the text.<sup>57</sup> Audiences in Kristiania had chances to hear Dohnányi's works performed by himself, but then and in later years, after he no longer came to Norway, he was played there by other musicians, mainly Norwegian and pupils of his.

There are many documents to show a continuing presence of Dohnányi's music in Norway after his last visit. It was performed at concerts or broadcast often

50. This was mentioned in a piece published after one of Dohnányi's final concerts in Kristiania. See R. M., "Konsert," *Dagbladet* 51/231 (15 September 1919), 4.

51. *Musikbladet* 3/21 (25 May 1910), 164.

52. Otto Winter-Hjelm, "Koncert," *Aftenposten* 52/32 (15 January 1911), 2. This was quoted in Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő," V, 125–126.

53. R. M., "Musikforeningen," *Dagbladet* 45/384 (7 December 1913), 1.

54. "Pianistinden Thora Bratt," *Morgenbladet* 97/164 (3 April 1915), 4.

55. Karl Nissen, "Brüsseler-kvartetten," *Aftenposten* 54/64 (5 February 1913), 3.

56. See "Unge tonekunstneres samfund," *Arbeiderbladet* 40 (9 November 1923), 10.

57. Gombos also found allusions to this: Gombos, "Dohnányi Ernő," IV, 92 and 202–204; V, 3–11 and 20–21.

enough to keep up his memory. So a review of a concert of Hungarian music played by the Philharmonic Orchestra in Oslo in November 1935 includes the remark that Ernst von Dohnányi is said to be “well known here both as a pianist and a composer.”<sup>58</sup>

58. P. R., “Filharmonisk konsert,” *Arbeiderbladet* 52/269 (8 November 1935), 2.