

Edvard Hagerup Grieg
(1843 – 1907)

PEER GYNT

We are shaped by those we meet

SYNOPSIS OF THE BALLET

Act I

Peer, Incorrigible: The story opens in Peer's home, suggested by a wall of white sheets. There, Peer battles imaginary phantoms while his mother Ase tends to the laundry and pleads for his help. Instead, he retreats behind the sheets into his world of fantasy and fear. As the sheet-wall lifts, Peer's imaginations emerge into reality, including a veiled bride and her bridesmaids. Amid wedding preparations filled with tension, Peer weaves among the guests, observing.

Peer Between Lovers: Peer seduces the bride, even as he meets Solveig—his soulmate and the bride's devoted friend—who drags a washing machine behind her, a symbol of lifelong care and sacrifice. Though captivated by Solveig, Peer continues to pursue the bride, creating chaos. The celebration unravels into a frenzied chase, ending with Peer's brazen abduction of the bride. He leaves behind Solveig, the groom, and the wedding guests.

Peer, the Abductor: A snowstorm reveals a mountainous landscape formed from wedding gowns as the bride is abducted. Soon, Peer grows bored and dismissive. Shaken and anxious over Peer's impertinence, the bride is left abandoned in the snow.

Peer, Trolled: Peer encounters the creature wrapped in veils. He helps dress her in a bridal gown, only to find himself thrust into the realm of trolls. The Troll King demands that Peer marry his daughter, but Peer refuses, resisting the weight of commitment once more. Trolls surround him, and only Solveig's arrival—with the tolling of great bells—saves him.

Peer in Love: Peer is enchanted by Solveig's devotion. Yet the moment of peace is brief: news arrives of mother Ase's death, exhausted by a life of care and concern for Peer. *Peer, the Stranger:* Fragmented versions of Peer gather around Ase's body. A mature Peer bids her farewell and turns to Solveig for comfort, choosing to carry on.

Act II

Peer, Seduced: Peer departs to explore the world and himself, leaving Solveig behind. In the distant Orient, he is lured by mysterious women, and ultimately by the enchanting Anitra, who seduces, robs, and leaves him in the end. Peer is left naked and lost.

Haunted by Solveig's song, Peer follows its echo into a nightmare. Phantoms of Solveig turn into Peers, and Peers into Solveigs. Their identities collide, exposing Solveig's repressed anger instead of her patience and devotion. While Peer takes on the forms of all the characters he has encountered, Solveig reflects the many sides of Peer she has come to know over the course of his life. Peer watches the phantoms in terror, darting between them in an attempt to understand their meaning. He is forced to confront the consequences of his reckless life.

Peer returns home, not to illusions, but to himself. In his final days, with nowhere left to run, he faces his past fully. He is reunited with Solveig—still forgiving, still steadfast. Old and

exhausted, he collapses into her arms. Solveig now trades her lifelong burden—the washing machine—for Peer himself, who becomes the weight she must bear. A memory of their youthful selves flickers in the background.

As Peer approaches death, he finds peace. At last, Solveig releases him—cutting her hair, casting off her burden, and Peer with it. Though free, she cannot help but look back. But she knows she must go forward, forcing herself not to look back anymore: *“What lies ahead is far better than what we leave behind.”*