

## **The fiddle traditions**

### **The violin comes to Norway**

It is believed that the violin came to Norway in the middle of the 1600s from Italy and Germany. This was probably as a result of upper class music activities in the towns. But, much suggests that fiddle playing was known in the countryside before this. Already around 1600 'farmer fiddles' are described in old sources, and named fiddlers are also often encountered. We know of the Hardanger fiddle from the middle of the 1600s, which implies that a fiddle-making industry was already established in the countryside before the violin was popular in the Norwegian towns. Rural craftsmen in Norway must have acquired knowledge about this new instrument from 1500s Italy and been inspired by it. One can imagine

that violins from this period were brought home by, amongst others, Norwegian soldiers who fought in wars in Europe.



From 1650 onwards, the violin quickly became a popular instrument throughout the whole of the country. We have clear evidence of this in many areas – from Finnmark, the rural areas of the West Coast and from inland mountain and valley districts. The fiddle, as it was also called, was the pop instrument of its day. There exist early descriptions as to how the farming folk amused themselves and danced to fiddle music. In the course of the 1700s, its popularity only increased, and the fiddle was above all used at weddings and festive occasions. Fiddlers were also prominent at the big markets, and here it was possible to find both fiddles and fiddle strings for sale.

## Fiddle makers

It was in Hardanger that the first Hardanger fiddle makers were to be found. The oldest existing Hardanger fiddle is the Jaastad fiddle, from 1651. After that, almost 100 years go by before we encounter the Botnen father and son, who lived in the 1700s. These fiddle makers are the first we know of from written sources. The beautiful fjord area in the West thus gave its name to the instrument – Hardanger violin, Hardanger fiddle, Harding fiddle. The Botnens made both normal European violins and Hardanger fiddles.



*Jaastadfela, 1651*



*Isak N. Botnen(1669–1759)*



*Trond Botnen, build 1756*

As regards the Jaastad fiddle, we know that the last time it was played at a wedding was in 1881, when the fiddler Ola Håstabø married his Guro. Today, it can be seen in a museum in Bergen. Trond Botnen made over 1000 Hardanger fiddles and today there are “Trond fiddles” in playable condition in many places throughout the country.

The Hardanger fiddle underwent a modernisation in the last half of the 1800s – the instruments became bigger, the front and back flatter, and the tone stronger. The Helland family fiddle makers from Bø in Telemark were in the forefront of this. This family had many generations of leading fiddle makers from the 1800s until the 1960s.



*Jon Erikson Helland*  
*Build 1820*



*Erik Johnsen Helland*  
*Build 1850*



*Knut Eriksøn Helland*  
*Build 1873*



*Olaf G Helland*  
*Build 1902*

Today, many fiddle-makers are also actively making both Hardanger fiddles and 'normal' fiddles, and old instruments often pop up which need to be refurbished in order to be playable again.



*Egil Syversbråten, Hemsedal*



CD 1 – 27 Egil Syversbråten, Hardanger fiddle: *Den som rulla ette gølve'*, springar etter Olav Sataslåtten (Hallingdal)

## **Travel routes, markets and meeting places**

Instruments and new musicals ideas spread along the main highways and to important meeting places in the past.

Far inland in Sognefjorden, amongst high mountains, lies Lærdalsøyri. Since medieval times, there was a market town here, which drew folk from far and near, the place being an important centre in Sogn. Trond Botnen came to Lærdal's market from Hardanger and sold his fiddles, and it was here that fiddle players from many areas met each other. There was great amount of traffic, in particular right over the high mountain from Valdres and the great fiddle player, Jørn Hilme, was one of those who taught tunes here. From Gudbrandsdalen came the legendary Fel-Jakup, and tunes swapped hands. The majority of the tunes which are played innermost in Sogn today have roots in Valdres. Also, Voss has long since been a hub and a place where fiddle players have met, and the fiddle tradition has thus been influenced from many directions. In Østlandet, the Kongsberg market has, amongst others, been an important meeting point for fiddlers and dancers.



*Lærdalsøyri, about 1880*

Hallingdal has since time immemorial been a link between Østlandet and Vestlandet, and travel activities have brought music and dance with them. In some places, the contact in the mountains was important, just as in the mountain grazing areas between Valdres and Hemsedal. People met there in summer, and tunes and dance steps were exchanged. In Hemsedal it was therefore tunes of Valdres origin that dominated. Today, now the dairy trade is in decline and the way down to Hallingdal is short, mostly Hallings are played.





*Røros*

The copper mining in Røros from 1644 onwards meant that the place developed to become an important trading centre, with connections to Gudbrandsdalen, Østerdalen, Trondheim, Härjedalen and Dalarna. There was a market from January until well into March, and it is easy to imagine that this area attracted dancers and fiddlers from all sides.



*Åshild Breie Nyhus*



*Sven Nyhus, Røros*



CD 1 – 28 Åshild Breie Nyhus / Sven Nyhus / Peder Nyhus, 'normal' fiddle: *Siste leken som Sulhusgubben spelte* (Røros, Glåmos). Three generations from the Nyhus family playing together

In North Trøndelag, there was a great amount of traffic over the border to Northern Sweden, and it is known that, amongst others, the legendary Swedish fiddler, Lapp-Nils, and his contemporaries early in the 1800s took themselves down to the coastal areas of Trøndelag in order to learn new tunes.



*Einar Olav Larsen and Gjermund Larsen, Verdal*



CD 1 – 29 Einar Olav Larsen / Gjermund Larsen, 'normal' fiddle: *Polsdans etter Ola Suul* (Trøndelag, Verdal)

In the 1700s, new settlers came and settled down in Målselv in Troms. It was people from Østerdalen and Gudbrandsalen who were on the move. They took with them from the South their forestry skills, which they put to use along the meandering Målselva. The Samis, who had wandered through the valley between the mountain and the sea, had no traditions concerning forestry, or clearing the scrub. Now the landscape changed into a fertile agricultural area. The settlers also brought their traditions with them, and the new population from the South mixed little with the coastal population. There therefore developed a completely unique Northern Norwegian valley culture, which still exists through language, food, music and dance.



*Part of Lofoten*

Since the olden days, Lofoten and the Lofot fishing have been a very important point of contact in Northern Norway. At its height, 30,000 men could be active there, and the distinctive island group was an important market area. Tradesmen from Russia, boat builders from Hardanger, fish buyers from Italy, lumber merchants from Sweden, and Scots who taught Norwegians how to make dried cod, all came here. Twice a year, vessels came from Bergen. This enormous amount of traffic also brought with it fiddle players and tunes, which spread over large areas. The Tatars, the travelling folk, left clear traces in many places as bards or players of the Hardanger fiddle or 'normal' fiddle. Such a place is Setesdal.



*Susanne Lundeng, Bodø*

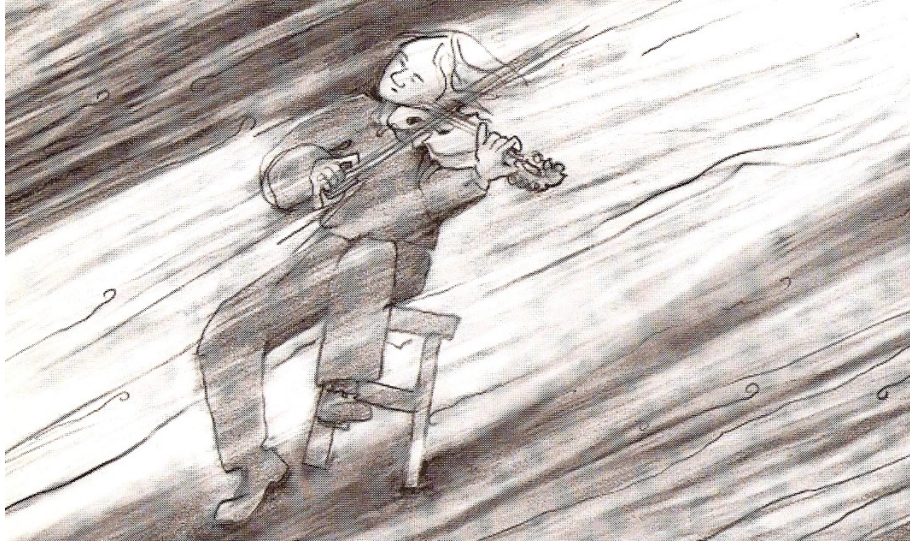


CD 1 – 30 Susanne Lundeng,  
'normal' fiddle: *Havella*, etter  
Lars Hellan (Nordland,  
Lofoten



## Trance and witchcraft

An old saying in Setesdal is “å komme på rammeslåttene” (hitting the strong tune). The closest definition is to enter a trance-like state as a result of one’s own playing, and it tells about fiddle players who could play themselves into this state. The audience and dancers were also known to succumb. In some of the most compelling tunes in Setesdal, the fiddle is tuned in a particular way, the lowest string is tuned extra low, also called *gorrlaus*. The four *gorrlaus* tunes are also called the *ramme slåttene*. The first fiddle players we know of who played them were the Faremo brothers, who were born at the end of the 1700s.



*It was known that when the Faremo lads played rammeslåtter; they could enter a trancelike state and didn't stop playing unless someone took the fiddle and bow away from them!*



*Knut Breivegen, Hovden*



CD 2 – 1 Knut Breivegen,  
Hardanger fiddle: *Gauslåen*,  
etter Hallvard Rysstad  
(Setesdal)



*Torleiv H Bjørgum, Setesdal*



CD 2 – 2 Torleiv H Bjørgum,  
'normal' fiddle: *Nordaffjells*,  
form etter Knut Heddi  
(Setesdal)



*Fanitullen* is a tune which describes a farm wedding in Hallingdal in the olden days. It was not rare for there to be fights on such occasions, and it was the custom for the belts of the combatants to be hooked together and for them to fight with knives. In this story, such a fight started, and the bride's father went down to the cellar to fetch more beer for the fighters.

*He climbed the steep ladder down into the dark cellar with a light in his hand, and for a few moments stood there so as to become accustomed to the darkness. Suddenly, he heard the sound of a fiddle. It was so unbelievably driving and well played that he stood paralysed and listened. This was a tune he had never heard before. After a while he could make out a figure who sat over in the corner and played. He sat on a beer cask and tapped the beat with his foot. But it was no ordinary foot – it was the hoof of a horse! And on his forehead were two horns! He was holding the fiddle back-to-front!*

*It suddenly dawned on the farmer that it was the Devil himself who sat there on the beer cask and played. He took flight and came up into the daylight as fast as possible, but he had committed the fantastic tune to memory. Up above, one of the two fighters had just died.*



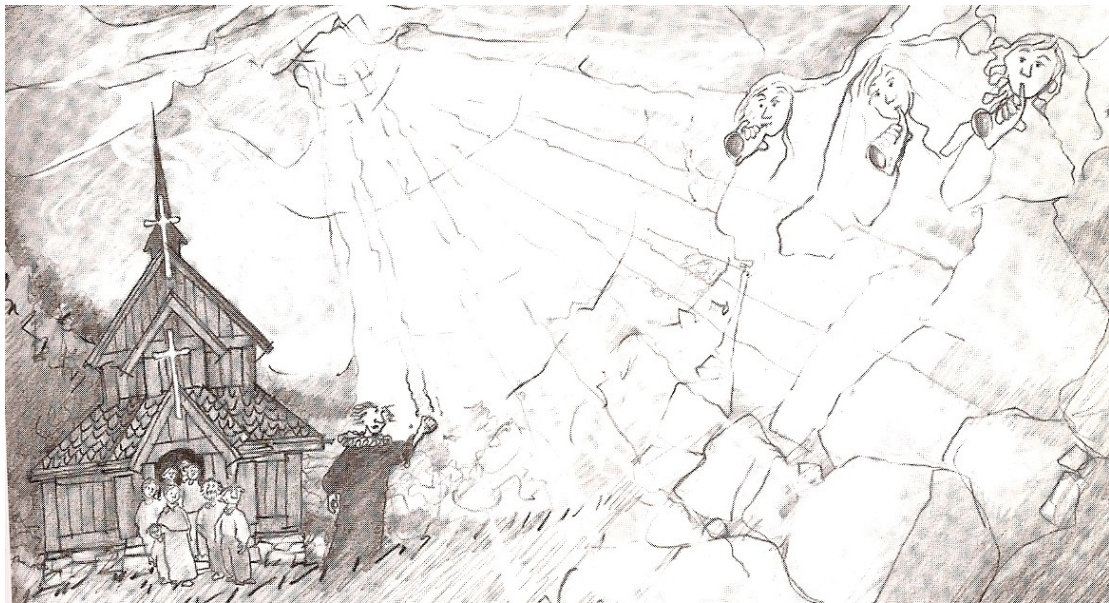
Fanitullen is without doubt the best-known tune nowadays. There are several variations of it from many areas of the tradition, but it was Odd Bakkerud from Nesbyen whose version became famous. In 1968 he won the *Landskappleiken* (National folk arts competition) with this tune. In the hall, amongst others, sat the ballad singer and comedian, Øystein Sunde. His group, "Christiania Fusel & Blaagress", recorded a version of Fanitullen which was in the Norwegian charts for many weeks, and then became the theme tune of the programme.

## Kivlemøyane

There is a story - from the time when the old Norwegian religions encountered the new Christianity - which has given its name to a group of tunes. The majority of these tunes are for Hardanger fiddle, but Eivind Groven also played a variation on seljefløyte (willow flute).

Three beautiful, young shepherdesses lived in Kivledalen, near Seljord, around 1000 years ago. There stood in this valley a little church and, on Sundays, there was a church service. The three girls were little interested in church activity and didn't go in to hear the priest's sermon. But they made for the mountain opposite the church together with their herd of goats and played *bukkehorn* and *lur*, disturbing the sermon. This made the priest really angry, and, to add to it, when the congregation went out to listen to them instead of him, he went out onto the church steps, excommunicated the three and turned them into stone. At the same time, the goat herd was also turned into stone.

Nowadays, three big and many small stones can be seen opposite the place where the old Kivle church stood.



## Pietism

The religious revival in the mid 1800s had a big impact on the development of folk music in Norway. Many people associated fiddle playing and dancing with bad behaviour, and the Hardanger fiddle was seen as the devil's instrument. The fiddle's surge of popularity in the first half of the 1800s took a huge knock. In many places, the fiddle was forbidden in school, and it was long into our time before the Hardanger fiddle was first accepted in church.

In some areas, Hardanger fiddles were burnt, as in Numedal, where Kari Heievekkelsen had a strong authority around 1860. So strong that all the fiddles ended up on the bonfire, and the fiddle was sorely missed by many a fiddler.

This is the reason why the *sjøfløyte* (sea flute) became so popular, because the tunes could, to a certain degree, be transferred onto the sea flute, which wasn't seen as a sinful instrument. Around 1900, there were over twenty named sea flute players in the Flesberg area alone.

But now it was necessary for the Numedal fiddlers to travel over the mountains to Telemark in order to build up the tradition again. Telemark players such as Myllarguten and Knut Luraas had actually collected many of their tunes from Numedal, and now the tunes could be brought back.



CD 2 – 3 Synne Frogner, Hardanger fiddle: *Torstein Bromsdalen*, etter Knut Dahle / Steingrim Haukjem / Sigurd Frogner (Numedal)



*Dancers from Numedal*



## The girls take over

Whilst fiddle players earlier, as a rule, were men (as the names show), at the end of the 1900s this picture underwent a change. Today, there are more and more female fiddle players asserting themselves.

But female fiddlers had also earlier brought attention to themselves, one of them being Kristiane Lund from Telemark. Born in 1889, she was already a “recorded artist” by 1919. The Hardanger fiddle that fiddle player Annbjørg Lien uses most frequently today is the fiddle Kristiane Lund used in her childhood.

Girls and young women dominate the picture, not only where *kveding*, *langeleik* and *fløytespill* are concerned, but also fiddle and Hardanger fiddle.

Kristiane Lund from Bø in Telemark was one of the great female fiddle players in the 1900s.



*Kristiane Lund, Telemark*



*Åse Teigland, Utne in Hardanger*



CD 2 – 4 Åse Teigland, Hardanger fiddle: *Spelar-Guro*, gangar etter Ola Håstabø / Knut Hamre (Hardanger)

## Tradition and new forms

We say that the majority of tunes in the tradition are *etter* ('after') a particular person. That is to say that a tune can be taught onwards for many generations without being notated. It is often an aim that the tune is played exactly as one has learnt it, but it can also be an ideal that one finds one's own form and personal expression, thus forming something new. Irrespective, the tune will undergo an inevitable change when it goes from generation to generation. Something will be forgotten on the way, and new things created.

When a new tune is composed, it is called *nyskaping* ('creating'). In all eras, individual musicians have had the urge to create new music, and actually all tunes have their roots in a creative player far back in history. If we do know the name of the person who has written the tune, we say that the tune is *av* ('by') the person in question.

## Tune types and dance rhythms

Tunes and dances are closely related, and fiddlers and dancers give each other mutual inspiration. The rhythm of the music is replicated in the dancers' movements, and the fiddle player feels intimately connected with what is happening on the dance floor.

The old Norwegian dances are called *bygdedanser* (rural dances). We can roughly divide them into two categories: those which are notated in duple time (2/4 or 6/8) and those in triple time (3/4). *Halling, gangar and rull* are in duple time, whilst *springar, springleik and pols* are in triple time. In the dances which are in duple time, the beats are so evenly emphasised that one could equally describe it as in one-beat time.

We find *springar, gangar and rull* mostly in the Hardanger fiddle-playing areas, whereas *springleik and pols* are connected to the areas where the 'normal' fiddle is played. We find *Halling* again in the majority of traditions.



*In order to learn the dances correctly, it is necessary to start young! Gangar from Valle in Setesdal around 1910. Photo: F. Köhn.*



*Per Sæmund Bjørkum, Oslo/Lalm*



CD 2 – 5 Per Sæmund Bjørkum, 'normal' fiddle: *Gammel-Holin*, springleik etter Pål Skogum (Gudbrandsdalen. Ottadalen)



*The halling dance was a popular form of entertainment at drill grounds, here from Værnes in Trøndelag towards the end of the 1800s.*



## Asymmetrical melodies

In the majority of music we listen to nowadays, the melody is symmetrical. The first part of the tune can be 8 bars, which are repeated, and then there is a new part with 8 bars, which are repeated: 8 + 8, 8 + 8.

The older tunes, on the other hand, are often composed of melody lines of varying lengths, such that a melodic phrase can also go over an irregular number of beats: 3, 5, 7, 9 and so on. The springar in Vestlandet, amongst others in Hardanger and Jølster, often has an irregular number of beats in the melody, such that the music can be said to be in both duple and triple time. It doesn't affect the dance, which proceeds with the same ease. This asymmetrical structure can affect both gangar and springar.



Elisabeth Eikås, Jølster

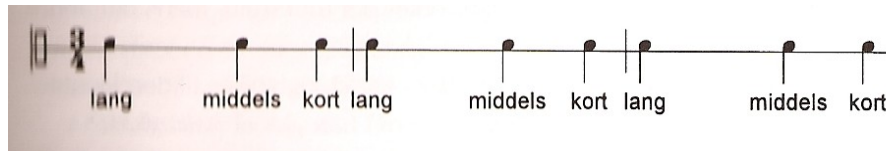


CD 2 – 6 Elisabeth Eikås, Hardanger fiddle: *Springar etter Johannes Holsen* (Sunnfjord, Jølster)

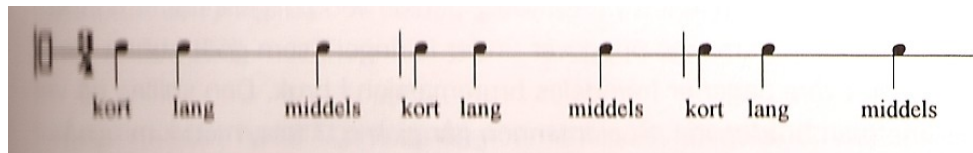
## Asymmetrical rhythm

There are tunes in triple time (springar, springleik, pols), which can have a distinctive character, in that the three beats in the bar are not of equal length. This is a unique rhythmical phenomenon, which we also find in the Swedish polska. This rhythmic time-dislocation is what makes these kinds of tunes difficult to understand, whilst on the other hand it is that which makes the music and dance captivating when one first gets to know it. We call this *asymmetrical rhythm*. One of the three beats is longer than the others, one is medium-long and the other is short.

In Telemark and Numedal, the first beat of the bar is the longest. This repeats itself in each bar:



In Hallingdal, Valdres and in the majority of areas with 'normal' fiddle, the shortest beat is placed first (an exception is parts of Østerdalen, where the longest beat is first):



Precisely how long the beats are in relation to each other varies from district to district, and a little from tune to tune, and from fiddler to fiddler. In Vestlandet, and in individual areas for 'normal' fiddle, the beat is completely or almost completely even.

*Springar*, *springleik* and *springdans* are also some of the names of the rural dances in three. The *springdans* concept can possibly be traced back to 1500s Europe. In Sunnfjord, an early name for *springar* pops up in a dictionary from 1646. There, we find the dance name, "Frampaa". "*Frampaa kaldis en springdantz*", is what is written in this book. Later, the name appears as "*Hoppedans*" and "*Springdans*" in many places throughout the country.

The *pols* is the newest of the rural dances and is not mentioned before the middle of the 1700s. As the name suggests, this dance has its roots in Poland, and came chiefly via Sweden to Norway. The Swedish *polska* is related to our *pols*.



Tore Bolstad, Valdres



CD 2 – 7 Tore Bolstad, Hardanger fiddle: *Sjåheimen*, valdresspringar etter Knut B. Sjåheim (Valdres)

The *springar* is in triple time, or a mixture of triple and duple time, and in Vestlandet the *springar* rhythm is, so to say, completely even. There is, at the same time, no strong emphasis on the first beat, so a Vestland *springar's* triple time feel is almost as light as a feather:

- Try to say: 1 1 1 – 1 1 1 – 1 1 1 – 1 1 1 ...
- Compare with the waltz: **1 2 3 – 1 2 3 – 1 2 3 – 1 2 3 ...** (Say it loudly!)
- Try to “speak” the rhythm with a two-feel whilst you tap the beat lightly with your foot:  
  
||: dei dudi | dam da | sudidudi | du da | dei dudi | dam da | sudidadi | då:||  
... and so on
- Try to “speak” a 6/8 feel (not so quickly):  
  
||: dudeli dadeli | dudeli dei | sudeli sadeli | sudeli sei :|| ... and so forth

### More tune types

The *gangar* is 2/4 or 6/8, likewise the *rudl*, which is a common dance in Vestlandet. In Voss and in Inner Hardanger it is called a *rudl* (*rull*), whilst in other places it is called a *Vossarull*.

The *halling* is the most widespread of the tunes in duple time, and is played for the well-known dance where the boy has to kick a hat off a stick held high by doing a halling leap. The name probably originally means “to dance like a halling” (someone from Hallingdal). Now and again it is difficult to distinguish between a *gangar* and a *halling* from the music. The *halling* is often a little faster, with a marked bow stroke.

Wedding marches (*bruremarsjer*) and wedding tunes (*brureslåtter*) are a group of tunes which are associated with wedding ceremonies. The fiddler was an important person at farmers’ weddings in earlier times. He had many duties during the celebrations, which could well last for several days. Nowadays, wedding marches are still used. They are played on the way to the wedding service, the fiddle leading the bridal couple. The fiddler, as a rule, goes on foot, but can also sit on horseback, in a wagon or in a boat.





*The wedding party on its way from the church to the reception, led by two fiddlers playing a bridal march.*

Some tunes are just for listening to, not for dancing to. They are called listening tunes (*lydarslåtter*). Given that there are often tempo changes, and individual notes are held extra long in these tunes, it is difficult to tap a rhythm to them. This kind of tune is found in many areas, but is particularly widespread in Valdres, where they are called *lydarlåtter*. There are around 40 of them there, and they can be in either 2/4 or 6/8 timing. Such tunes have a narrative character, and are likely to be linked with legends or stories. A well-known listening tune and its story, is *Thomasklokkelåtten*, from Valdres.

Read the story about St. Thomas-klokkene on Filefjell and listen to the music.

*The Thomas church was erected on Filefjell at the end of the 1100s, built in the same style as the Borgund stavekirke (wooden church), but would have been somewhat smaller. The church was dedicated to the saint, St. Thomas av Becket, and used as a gathering place by people from many surrounding valleys. In Smedalen, seven church bells were cast, and they were transported to the church by boat. During the delivery, one of the bells fell and disappeared. A new one was made as a replacement, but the six sister bells continued to call out to the seventh, which was missing.*

*For 600 years, the bells hung in the Thomas church on the mountain. But over the years the church came to be a place for trade, lively discourse and even parties and fun, so in 1808 it was torn down, against the people's will. The legend relates that the bells were moved to Vang in Valdres, but there they rang only like the ding-a-ling of sheep bells. They were then moved further to Øye stave church, where they rang a little better, but for many years people thought they heard bell-ringing from Kyrkjestølen, where the old church had stood.*

Legends like this have always had many variations, and the main source is Ola K. Ødegård, who wrote the book series "*Gamelt fraa Valdres*" almost 100 years ago.



Torleiv Bolstad



CD 2 – 8 Torleiv Bolstad, Hardanger fiddle: *Thomasklukkudn på Filefjell*, in the tradition of Lars M. Krøsshaug (lydarslått from Valdres)



Torgeir Straand



CD 2 – 9 Torgeir Straand, Hardanger fiddle: *Ligangaren*, in the Flatland tradition (gangar from Telemark)



Per Anders Buen Garnås



CD 2 – 10 Per Anders Buen Garnås, Hardanger fiddle: *Fykerud'n*, springar etter Lars Fykerud, via Svein Løndal, Olav S. Løndal, Hauk Buen / Knut Buen (springar from Telemark)

## **The Hardanger fiddle area widens out**

The Hardanger fiddle would have been developed in Hardanger, as the name indicates. But it soon spread over the mountains to the valleys to the east. This increased use didn't happen universally. Today, it is the Hardanger fiddle, not the 'normal' fiddle, we associate most with Setesdal. But, before the 1800s, it was the 'normal' fiddle which, for a 100-year period, had been dominant. If we go even further back in time, to the 1700s, old findings show that the Hardanger fiddle was, at that time, in use in Setesdal.

Also, in Nordfjord, the Hardanger fiddle started to be used as late as 1905. The Nordfjord area surrounding (including Hornindal) is a district rich in tunes, and here the 'normal' fiddle and the Hardanger fiddle are used side by side. It is in fact the 'normal' fiddle that has dominated here throughout the years, but many fiddlers did continue with the Hardanger fiddle. The well-known actor, Alfred Maurstad, was one of them.

Throughout the country, there are 'normal' fiddle players who also acquired a Hardanger fiddle.



*Hauk Buen, Jondalen, Buskerud*



## Kappleik (National Folk Arts Competition)

A truly Norwegian phenomenon is the *kappleik*. Local *kappleiks* are held in country areas, and the National *Kappleik* (*Landskappleik*) is held in a different place each summer. There are competitions for 'normal' fiddle and Hardanger fiddle, for older folk music instruments, vocal folk music and for *bygdedans* dance. Participants are split into two classes, A and B, depending upon how many points they have gained earlier. If someone has once competed in the A-class, that is where he remains. There are also classes for the youngest (C) and the eldest (D).

Bø in Telemark has, for a long time, been a meeting place for folk music and fiddlers, and it was here that the first *kappleik* took place, in 1888. At that time, there was a battle between those who were loyal to the fiddler, Halvor Flatland's Myllarguten-tradition, and those who were followers of Lars Fykerud and his way of playing. On the farm, Grive, a competition was arranged, so it a judge could settle who was best. An "adjudication committee consisting of three local and non-local members" was established, and five prizes were to be awarded. So many came to listen that the occasion had to be moved out to the courtyard. The result was that Fykerud'n won and Flatland was second.

The first *kappleik* for 'normal' fiddle took place in Ålesund in 1902 with 14 participants. Again, so many folk streamed here that the premises were far too small. In 1923, the first National *Kappleik* was held in Bergen, and at the same time fiddle players began to organise themselves into societies.



## **Ownership of tunes**

Musicians were often anxious about their tunes; they didn't want other players to get ahold of them. Leiv Sandalsdalen from Seljord was known for his seven *Kivlemøy* tunes. On one occasion, he was to have a concert, but as soon as he came onto the stage he immediately packed his fiddle away and disappeared. He had seen that the great fiddler, Lars Fykerud, was sitting in the hall.

Also, it is said about the legendary fiddler, Fel-Jakup from Lom, that he would quickly hide his fiddle away if he spotted fiddlers who he didn't want to learn his tunes.

There are stories of how people stole tunes by listening outside house walls and hid themselves in barrels in order to get ahold of other fiddlers' tunes. Tunes were a source of income for many, and it was a great value if the player had a personal repertoire. Individual fiddlers also had their own districts where they had exclusive rights to play for dances and at weddings.

## **Fiddlers must be persuaded – not all like to brag**

Nils Beitoaugen, born in 1863, was known for his sparkling dance playing. He was once in Oslo in order to make a recording.

"Is it you who is the great fiddler from Valdres?", it was asked when he arrived at the recording studio.

Beitoaugen hummed and hawed. "No", he said, "I'm no all that good!"

In the capital city's recording studio, this comment was taken literally. Nils travelled home to Valdres – without having played a note.

## **Sources and lines of tradition**

Folk musicians, either singers or players, concern themselves with where their music comes from. A musician who is in possession of a particular tune or song, and who passes it on by teaching, is called a *kilde* (source). The foremost teachers are not necessarily amongst the foremost musicians. What is most important is that the person passes the melody and text on to next generation. Nowadays, a recording can be a source. In that case, it is important for the person who learns the tune to know who is playing on the recording. A tune can thus continue to be transmitted for several hundred years without ever being written down, and the connection back through time is actually quite visible.

## **Inspiration for classical music and composers**

Many composers in Europe at the end of the 1800s were engaged with the folk music of their home country. In Norway, Edvard Grieg and many of his contemporaries were occupied with folk music and based much of their orchestral work on folk melodies and tunes. The composers, Eivind Groven from Telemark and Geirr Tveitt from Hardanger, grew up surrounded by folk music in the home and reworked it into an orchestral format.

North of the mountain, Gausta, lies Tinn, which is a unique area in the Telemark tradition. The fiddler, Knut Dahle, who was the source of Edvard Grieg's "Slaater – opus 72", lived there. In this collection of piano pieces, Grieg reworks Hardanger fiddle music into a new form based upon Romantic music.

Grieg considered this piece to be one of his most important.



Knut Dahle

### Fiddlers in America

Many Norwegians emigrated to America and many a fiddle case and a fiddler made the long journey over the Atlantic. Many settled down, but some went to do concert tours. Lars Fykerud was one of those who had a big name in "Junaiten". He travelled far and wide and sometimes earned well.

*The fiddler, Knut Dahle - Edvard Grieg's source - was on tour in America in the 1890s. On his journey, he met the master fiddler from Telemark, Lars Fykerud, several times. One day, Dahle went into a barber's shop to get his hair cut and who stood there with comb and scissors? None other than Fykerud! It must have been hard times for Fykerud to have taken such a job. When Lars saw Knut Dale, tears sprang from the corners of both of their eyes. He took an old dusifele down from the wall and played a halling he had learnt from Dahle, whilst the tears ran.*

*Fykerud wanted Dahle to come with him on a tour around the USA – they would become millionaires, he believed. But the old Dahle said 'no thanks' and explained that he had just bought a train ticket. So, nothing ever did come of the tour.*



Lars Fykerud, Telemark

Around 1806, emigration of Norwegians to North America rose considerably. Amongst the emigrants were several good fiddlers who continued with their music after they had settled in their new country. In addition, several performers came on concert tours and travelled throughout the whole of the American continent. In 1912, the first *kappleik* was arranged in Wisconsin and, in 1914, interest was so great that an association of Hardanger fiddle players was formed. At its height, there were around 100 practising members, and *kappleiks* could attract 8000 people. But, recruitment was lacking. The family fiddle was placed in its case in the loft, or hung on the wall as a decoration. Around 1970, the total number of fiddlers in the USA sank to around 20, and two thirds of them were over 70 years old.

Since the early 1980s, there has been a huge resurgence in interest in playing the Hardanger fiddle in North America, both amongst Norwegian-Americans and those from other cultural backgrounds. The *Hardanger Fiddle Association of America* was formed in 1983 by Americans with roots in Valdres. They had grown up in the USA with dance and playing as a vital part of their everyday life. Today, the interest for this Norwegian tradition is rising, courses are arranged and festivals organised, and the Association has hundreds of members throughout many countries.



*The first kappleik (fiddle and dance competition) in North America took place in 1912 in Stoughton, Wisconsin. There was so much interest that in 1914, the original Hardanger Violinist Forbundet af Amerika (The Hardanger Violinist Association of America) was formed. It had a membership of nearly one hundred at its peak, and it sponsored regular fiddling competitions throughout the early years of the twentieth century. Some kappleikar reportedly drew over 8,000 attendees!*



## Folk music and dance as national symbols

Folk music is originally the music of the people from the rural areas. This music has, together with *bygdedans*, been strongly connected with life in the rural areas. The Hardanger fiddle is traditionally played only in limited areas in Norway but, nonetheless, it is seen in many quarters as something of a national instrument.

At the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Lillehammer in 1994, joikers, players of both types of fiddles, and dancers wearing the national costume were important elements. Norwegians wanted to present themselves to the world via something distinctively Norwegian and tell about their old roots and traditions. Whether the 'Olympic-Games-effect' has been important for folk music and folk dance remains to be seen, but it is now thought that most Norwegians have a more open mind towards music and dance, national costume and old Norwegian customs than they had in the middle of the 1900s.

## Famous figures from the past

Individual performers of music and dance have acquired a legendary status. One of the best-known Hardanger fiddle players from Telemark was Torgeir Augundson, better known as Myllarguten. He lived from 1801 to 1872. Myllarguten is the source for many of the *teleslåttene* (tunes from Telemark) which are played nowadays, and which are usually called *myllarslåtter*. He was known for fleshing out simpler tunes he had learnt from older fiddlers, and making them richer and more elaborate. In 1831 in Bergen, he met the violinist, Ole Bull, who was particularly keen on Myllarguten's tune playing. The friendship between the two brought *Myllarguten* and the Telemark tunes (*telemarkslåttene*) to the big towns and the concert halls. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1849, Myllarguten held a legendary concert in Christiania together with "Ola Bøll", as he called him. This was the start of a long chain of concert tours throughout large swathes of the country.

There are stories connected to several of the tunes 'after' Myllaren:

*Once, he was on a journey and met someone who wanted him to come and play and offered him five dollars for it. But, he was not on form, he said, and didn't really want to pick up the fiddle. He was offered ten, but it didn't help. When twenty dollars were put on the table, he picked up the fiddle, played one tune and lay the fiddle back in its case again. That was enough, he thought. This tune came to be known as "Tjugedalaren" ("Twenty dollars").*

*Kari was the name of a girl Myllarguten was engaged to, but who left him and soon after married another. This hurt him very badly. He wrote a tune and, when the bridal procession rode to the church, he sat behind a stone at the side of the road and played the tune as they drove past. Myllarguten cried while he played. It is as if you can hear the tune calling, "Kari, Kari!". It is called "Myllargutens bruremarsj" (Myllarguten's Bridal March).*

Myllarguten, Torgeir Augundson, was one of the legendary fiddlers who created his own style of playing.



*Myllarguten*



CD 2 – 11 Tarjei Romtveit, Hardanger fiddle *Myllargutens bruremarsj* (Telemark) Tarjei is the great-great-grandson of Myllarguten.

Well-known dancers have also made their mark. Knut Andressen Skaga from Gol, or *Rotneims-Knut* as he was also known, was born in 1809. He was a master dancer, but also a fighter, and was obsessed with the thought of being the biggest and strongest in the whole of Hallingdal. And so he was, until a new pastor was appointed in Gol parish. Pastor Kjelstrup was a powerful lad, and Rotneims-Knut dreamt of having a ‘tussel’ with him in order to show that he was the strongest.

But it was not until his own wedding that Knut came into close enough contact with the pastor that he could measure his strength against him. After the ceremony, the whole of the pastor’s family was invited to the wedding party, and Knut tried in different ways to get the priest to fight him. But the pastor was not very interested in fighting. Not even when Knut grabbed the pastor’s little son by the hair and hoisted him high above the floor did he make the pastor angry. Only when Knut threw himself over him, took a stranglehold of him and wanted to floor him did Pastor Kjelstrup get fired up. He grabbed Knut by the back of his trousers and neck and threw him straight through a shut door so that splinters rained down. He landed with a crash among the guests in the neighbouring living room, so it is said.

One of the reasons why we still know of Rotneims-Knut is because of the well-known bragging verse we sing about him. Without doubt, he would have written it himself.



CD 2 – 12 Øyvind Brabant, Hardanger fiddle: *Rotneims-Knut*, from many sources (Hallingdal)

In many village communities there were individuals who took responsibility for the continuation of fiddle traditions which otherwise would have been forgotten. In Målselv, it was Johan Nymo who took responsibility of the extensive work involved in collecting tunes from the spread-out and disorganised fiddlers' environment at the beginning of the 1900s. The popular fiddle playing in Målselv, with roots from Gudbrandsdalen and Østerdalen, was hard hit by Pietism after 1850. Dances were frowned upon and, in schools, the fiddle was forbidden. Around 1900, there were few fiddlers again. Nymo took control of the situation and gathered a large number of tunes and songs from those who still possessed some. In 1949, he started the *Målselv Spelemannslag*. The society was central to that which later developed into a Nordkalott gathering.



CD 2 – 13 Målselv spelmannslag (Målselv Fiddle Society),  
*Målselvhallingen*, etter Wilhelm Taraldsen (Troms)

In Alvdal in Østerdalen was Malena-Knut (1843-1928), one of the most prominent fiddlers of his time. He grew up in the environment around the smelting works in Plassen, Lovises hytte. In this community, where the toil at the smelting works and on their tiny patch of ground consumed the majority of people's time and power, there was also space for a rich cultural life. Old fiddle traditions were carried forth and mixed together with the new impulses which streamed through the country at the end of the 1800s.

From his grandfather, he learnt the old *springlekene*. He sweated his way through the week at the smelting works at Lovises hytte, but when the weekend arrived, he put his fiddle case under his arm and travelled from wedding to wedding. Fiddle players had a particularly important role at such celebrations, and Malena-Knut quickly got a reputation as an even greater fiddler than his grandfather. When the smelting works in Plassen burnt to the ground in 1879, Knut had to live off his small holdings and fished in the mountains, but the fiddle still played a central role in his life. He took his fiddle case everywhere with him and, wherever he was, there was a dance.

As early as 1918, the first tunes were notated exactly as played by Malena-Knut. Later, many tunes were written down as played by other players who have driven the tradition forwards – either they played on the fiddle or the accordion, or quite simply diddled.

Many other good fiddle players have a strong reputation long after their death, such as Lars Fykerud from Telemark, Jørn Hilme from Valdres, and Fel-Jakup from Ottadalen. Fel-Jakup (or Jakup Lom) was to Ottardalen what Myllarguten was to Telemark. He was admired far beyond his own valley and in Vestlandet and the Røros district there were many who learnt tunes from him. But this

didn't happen without good payment, as the tunes were regarded as personal property. It was important to stick to one's own opinion. As soon as Fel-Jakup caught sight of a Vestland fiddler he didn't want to teach, he put the fiddle in its case and disappeared.



CD 2 – 14 Olav Kjernmoen, 'normal' fiddle: *Springlek etter Malena-Knut* (Østerdalen, Alvådal)

Another fiddle player in Ottadalen at that time was Per Kringelhaugen (1830-1907), also known as Per Spelmann. He is the one who swapped his fiddle for a cow.

### **Playing with others**

In contrast to many folk music traditions in Europe and other parts of the world, Norwegian music has mainly been a solo tradition. Players have, as a rule, played or sung alone. Some spontaneous group playing amongst fiddle players has nonetheless taken place, either with the same kind of instrument or with different instruments. In the 1800s, both fiddle and Hardanger fiddle could be heard in combination with other instruments, the clarinet being particularly popular. At the end of the 1800s, the harmonium and piano appeared in folk music circles, and the accordion came in later with full force. The cittern and guitar were also used, particularly alongside song. In the 1900s, the cello or double bass could be heard alongside fiddle playing.

Organised forms of group playing - such the *spelemannslag* and folk music groups - are a relatively recent phenomenon.

The oldest form of playing together is to play in unison, i.e. where several instruments play the same thing. That is normal in many cultures around the world. When instruments with a dissimilar sound play the same melody (for example wind, string and plucked instruments), there arises a rich, complex sound.

In Norway, since the olden days it has been common for two fiddlers to play *grovt og grant*, that is to say that they both play the same thing, but the one plays on the higher strings whilst the other plays on the lower. It is also common for one instrument to play a second voice alongside the melody. This is often heard in Sweden, and has influenced many Norwegian players.





CD 2 – 15 Ingunn Linge Valdal, 'normal' fiddle, and Knut Ivar Bøe, accordion: *Synneshallingen*, by Jens Synnes (Sunnmøre)



CD 2 – 16 Mari Eggen and Helene Høye, 'normal' fiddle: *Kjellerlemmen*, halling etter Johan Hagen (Gudbrandsdalen)

### **Spelemannslag (fiddle-based societies)**

At the same time as the fiddlers organised themselves and formed *Landslaget for Spelemenn (LfS)* (The National Society for Fiddlers) in 1923, there was an increased interest in playing with others, particularly in the areas associated with the 'normal' fiddle. After a while, new *spelemannslag* were established and, in 1957, for the first time they had their own competition at *Landskappleiken* (The National Folk Music Competition). Even though Hardanger fiddler players were more concerned with the traditional solo playing, eventually several Hardanger fiddle *spelemannslag* were also formed.

The reason why the fiddle and Hardanger fiddle are not so readily used in ensemble playing is not just to do with different musical traditions. The Hardanger fiddle is usually tuned a tone higher than the 'normal' fiddle. Within *spelemannslag*, it is possible to differentiate between *spelemannsorkester* (fiddle ensembles), where experienced players work precisely with the form and the bowing of the tune, and 'sessions', where whoever wishes can join. Both of these kinds of societies focus a lot on old tunes and largely consist only of fiddles. In addition, there are *gammeldanslagene* (groups which play for gammeldans), which, alongside fiddles, also use accordion, guitar and bass. Here, it is the *runddansmusikk* which dominates.

The Folldal Spelemannslag is based in the mining community of Folldal. This mountain valley, with its view towards Rondane and Dovrefjell, has a long fiddle tradition. Since the valley was, from the 1600s onwards, populated by people from Gudbrandsdalen from the West and people from Østerdalen from the South, it was also a meeting point for different languages and cultures. It is the *springleik* that is the dominant *bygdedans*. When mining commenced in the 1700s, there was an influx of people, and many fiddlers passed through the valley. In the 1900s, mining was resumed after a long break, and there was a renewed influx of people to the village. Many had instruments with them and new dances were popular. *Folldal Spelemannslag* collects most of its material from the older traditions of Upper Folldal.



CD 2 – 17 Folldal spelemannslag (Folldal Fiddle Society): *Gammel-Husin*, springleik etter Peder P. Hudsom (Folldal)

### **Other forms of playing nowadays**

From the 1970s onwards, there was an increased interest in combining different folk music instruments. Old instruments such as *langeleik*, flutes, harp, *harpleik*, clarinet and pedal organ were played together with fiddle and Hardanger fiddle. Several groups were formed, usually with members from different districts, and groups from many places in the country have, in their own way, contributed to creating new ways of playing together.



CD 2 – 18 Bukkene Bruse: *Stev* etter Ellen Nordstoga and Sondre Bratland, text by Stein Versto.



CD 2 – 19 Chateau Neuf Spelemannslag (Chateau Neuf Fiddle Society): *Hopparen*, etter Ola Mosafinn.

### **Folk music and other styles of music**

In recent years, folk music has been heard in combination with other musical forms. Jazz musicians in particular have engaged with folk music and collaborated with folk musicians. The saxophonist Jan Garbarek's collaborations with folk musicians, amongst others, the *kvedar* Agnes Buen Garnås and the Sami singer Mari Boine, are examples, likewise the bass player Arild Andersen's collaboration with the *kvedar*, Kirsten Bråten Berg. In the 1970s, a large jazz ensemble was formed under the name, "Søyr", who interpreted folk music melodies from Østerdalen.

In the 1990s, the fiddler Håkon Høgemo combined the strains of his fiddle with those of Karl Seglem's saxophone and, with music students in Oslo as the starting point, the *Chateau Neuf Spelemannslag* was formed. They take old tunes and arrange them for Hardanger fiddle, piano, accordion, electric guitar, song, saxophones, clarinets, oboe and bagpipes.

The fiddler, Hallvard T. Bjørgum, has recorded albums with the American singer, Eric Andersen.

Instruments from other countries have also been heard in combination with Norwegian traditional fiddles, and Norwegian folk musicians have collaborated with colleagues from distant shores.

## **Folk music in the cities**

People from the countryside have always settled in the cities and, obviously, fiddles and fiddlers came as well. Already in 1903, a *spelemannslag* was formed in Oslo, and up until the modern day many high-class fiddle players have joined forces to create a dynamic environment in the capital city.

*Laget for folkemusikk* (The Society for Folk Music) in Oslo was, for many years, a centre for this activity and fiddlers and dancers who had migrated to the city from throughout the country have had regular social contact. These days, there are also regular folk music evenings in some places in the capital and the importance the culture club "Club 7" had for folk music and dance in Oslo must not be underestimated.

Fiddlers have also met in Bergen for many years and the fiddle group, *Fjellbekken*, has played a central role. Many young folk musicians continue to study in Bergen, thus creating a strong folk scene there. Because these players come from different traditions, Bergen has become an important melting pot for fiddle playing.