

## Life's Celebrations – and Everyday life



*The bridal porridge is brought in and a porridge tune is played, from Jølster in Sogn.*



CD 1 – 1

Tron Steffen Westberg and Magne Eggen Haugom, 'normal' fiddle: *Stabbmarsj*, etter Henning Trøen (Røros, Brekken)

Throughout the whole country, beautiful and proud bridal marches can be found, which are still played in connection with marriage. In earlier times, fiddlers were irreplaceable at weddings in the rural areas. Summer was a hectic time for the most sought-after fiddlers, as it was at this time that most weddings took place. For individual fiddlers, summer could seem like one long wedding celebration. The fiddler was present throughout the whole process, from going to the church until the guests went home. With his experience, he was often the one who knew the local wedding customs best, and knew what should be played at the different ceremonies. The fiddlers' first task was to go at the head of the wedding party and lead the way for everyone. He could go on foot whilst he played, or he could sit in a wagon or boat.

The wedding celebration could last for several days. The welcome on the farm after the church ceremony was usually followed by a quiet *brureslåt* (wedding tune), and when the porridge later came to the table, in many places in Vestlandet a *grautaslåt* (porridge tune) would be played. During the psalm before the food, the fiddler could follow the melody of the psalm with his fiddle. After the food was the serving of the punch, and in some areas the fiddler played "Når ponsen kjem".



*Dreyer: St. Hansfest in Bergen. Here both the fiddler and the beer barrel are in place.*

Dancing was a central feature of any wedding celebration. Often, there would be two fiddlers, either to take it in turns to play for the dancing, or one would take care of the dancing and the other would entertain with *lydarslåtter* (listening tunes). Long into the night, the fiddler could play the bride and groom to the bridal loft by playing "*Storasengslåtten*" (the big bed tune) and, already early in the morning, he had to get underway with *grålysningsslåtter* (cold grey light of the morning tunes).

Vocal folk music also had its place at weddings. The master of ceremonies attended to the regular ceremonial songs, and when there was a break in the dance music, it was usual in many places for *kveding* to be an important part of the social assemblage. Here, good singers had the opportunity to showcase their talents with a good snatch of a song, a *slåttestev* or a *skjemtevis*.



There was also a fiddler at funerals. Wakes lasting several days were normal in Europe, and this custom was in practice in Norway country until the late 1800s. On such an occasion, there would be eating and drinking, and not infrequently dance music had to be provided. It could get pretty wild at such occasions, which led to King Christian IV introducing a ban against wakes in 1603. But the custom remained, and in 1663 a new ban came into being – against eating and drinking during wakes.

In connection with celebrations such as Christmas and Easter, song played a major part, with an emphasis on folk songs. There were also specific songs in connection with Martinmas and Midsummer. “Jonsokverset” (‘The Midsummer Verse’) was used when people went round the fields and sang to ensure a good crop.

The big markets throughout the whole country were important meeting places for fiddlers, singers and dancers. People came to these festivals not just to buy and sell, but also to watch and participate in everyday life. The best-known markets took place at different times of the year, so that traders, musicians and others could travel from place to place.

Music related to life on the mountain pasture had special functions. Music was given supernatural powers, and it could both attract forest birds and scare away predators and evil powers. The *lur* and *bukkehorn* in particular were used as scaring-instruments.