

Langeleik



Ola Brenno dedicated his life to the langeleik. In the first half of the 1900s, he played for years in the Valdres farm section of the Norwegian Folk Museum. Photo: Norwegian Folk Museum.

In the Middle Ages, a *monochord* was used to accompany psalm-singing in the monasteries. It was an oblong box with one string. The monochord was probably the starting point for many stringed instruments, amongst others the *cittern*, which appeared early in the 1400s. This led to other variants of stringed instruments being developed, one of them the Norwegian *langeleik*. The oldest preserved *langeleik* we have is dated 1524 and was found in the vicinity of Gjøvik. From the 1600s, there are

dated *langeleiks* from Selbu, Hardanger, Rennebu and Heidal. The instrument became widespread throughout the whole country, and it is found as far up as Finnmark, where it was also used by the Norwegian Sami people.

The *langeleik* flourished in the early 1700s. There exists at least 22 instruments from this period, and the *langeleik* is often mentioned in older sources. But the interest declined in many districts throughout the 1800s, and the violin and Hardanger fiddle became more prominent.

It is mainly women who have played the *langeleik*, and we know of many names of players from the olden days.



These days, Turid Berge from Vang in Valdres is one of many young folk who has learnt the art of playing the langeleik.

Valdres has been a core area for the *langeleik* right from the 1800s, and it is still a popular instrument in the district.

An important event for the development of the *langeleik* took place in Øystre Slidre in 1870. There, the instrument maker, Øystein Rudi, began to mass-produce *langeleiks*. He equipped them with a closed back and normalised the scales.



CD 1 – 2

Ingri Kværne Amundsen, *langeleik: Halling etter Ulrik I Jensestogun*
(Valdres)

