

Sjøfløyte / Trefløyte (Sea flute / Wooden flute)

Sveinung Bamble with an older sea flute. He learnt from his mother, who had learnt from Torbjørg Fykerud. In Telemark, the sea flute was probably a girl's instrument in the 1800s.



CD 1 – 5 Per Midtstigen, sea flute: *Fanitullen*, etter Knut N. Juveli (Numedal)

In the Renaissance and Baroque periods in Middle and Southern Europe, the *blokkfløyte* (recorder) played an important role, both as a solo and an ensemble instrument. Today, recorders are used as a school instrument throughout the world and, as well as the usual size in C, we also use smaller and bigger recorders, which have F or C as their lowest note. The biggest recorder is a couple of metres long.

As early as the 1700s, some of these instruments were taken to Norway, and ended up both in the towns and in the countryside. Many of them were the size of a soprano recorder or a bit smaller. Copies of these baroque flutes were created using lathes by rural Norwegian craftsmen, and used in the folk music of many valleys. Since it was never a matter of mass production, **the flutes** varied as to size, design and tonality. They had many names, such as *prillarfløyte* (**back flute**), *langfløyte* (long flute), *tyskfløyte* (German flute) and *byfløyte* (town flute).

Eventually, the recorder's role decreased in European orchestras, and new instruments took over – such as, for example, the clarinet. But in Germany, production of recorders continued in small family businesses, which made **flutes** for popular use long into the 1800s. These 1800s **flutes / recorders** ???, which were often the size of the alto recorder, also ended up in Norwegian valleys, and were used in parallel with fiddles and *langeleiks*.

Since the recorders came to Norway with sailing ships, they were often called *sjøfløyter* (sea flutes), in particular in the Hardanger fiddle areas. In areas such as Gudbrandsdalen, where the 'normal' fiddle was played, the name *trefløyte* (tree flute) is most often found. In Vestlandet, people spoke in earlier times of the *tsykfløyte* (German flute).

Often, it is women's names which are linked with **flute / recorder playing**. One of the most well-known seaflute players was Torbjørg Fykerud (1828-1920) from Sauherad in Telemark. She was the mother of Lars Fykerud, the great Hardanger fiddle player. Lars often said that his mother's seaflute playing was his biggest inspiration.

In Numedal, each and every Hardanger fiddle was burnt at the end of the 1800s due to religious reasons, and fiddlers had to find themselves another instrument. This could be the reason why there was a large number of recognised seaflute

players in the valley around the turn of the century. The tunes which were played were often fiddle tunes, adapted for the flute.

In the 1960s Tolga in Østerdalen, Eric Storbekken began his production of *tussefløyter* (fairy flutes), which were a standardisation of an older *tre fløyte* (wooden flute) type. This, together with the availability of music and recordings for the *tussefløyte*, was an important step in making the folk flute popular again.