

## **Bukkehorn – Billy Goat's Horn**



CD 1 – 8

Geir Egil Larsen, bukkehorn: *Bukkehornpols* by Trond Larsen (Trøndelag)

As the name implies, this instrument is made out of billy goat's horn. The *bukkehorn* is also originally connected to life on the mountain summer pastures and shepherding. Bears and wolves posed a threat to livestock, and an instrument such as the *bukkehorn* were perhaps first and foremost used as a scaring or signal instrument.

But after a while - perhaps as early as the Bronze Age - finger holes were bored in the horn, thus producing more notes and meaning that a tune could be played. The oldest horns have just two to three finger holes, whereas the newer horns can have up to eight. This kind of horn with finger holes was often called a *prillarhorn*, and the legendary Prillar-Guri from Gudbrandsdalen got her name from this instrument.



*Jørn Simenstad and Eilif Gundersen with bukkehorn.*

## The Battle of Kringen



A known event, which describes the use of *prillarhorn*, or *bukkehorn*, was the Battle of Kringen in 1612. During the Kalmar War, the Swedes hired a Scottish army that was to go ashore in Norway, then go East into Sweden. The Scots, led by Captain Sinclair, made their way up through Romsdal and over the mountains. But when the army came down into Kringen, in Northern Gudbrandsdalen, the farmers had prepared themselves. They lay waiting up on the mountainside with lots of logs. In order to know when the Scottish army was in the right place, they had positioned a girl, Prillar-Guri, who played the *bukkehorn* or *lur*, on a high spot with a good view. When the notes from the *prillar-honnet* (*bukkehorn*) filled the valley, the farmers rolled the logs down the mountains and stopped the march. Prillar-Guri played until the River Lågen was red with blood. When all was quiet, she went down and threw the *bukkehorn* into the river and cried, it is said.





This dramatic event has been the inspiration for a lot of music throughout history. The fiddle was a rarity in Gudbrandsdalen at the beginning of the 1600s, but both 'Guri tunes' and 'Sinclair tunes' were probably first composed and played on *bukkehorn* and Jew's Harp, and later transferred to the fiddle.

The most common way to produce sound on the *bukkehorn* is to blow into it as one would a trumpet. The narrow end of the horn is formed like a trumpet mouthpiece, and the note is formed by pressing the lips against the mouthpiece and blowing. There is also a tradition for making *bukkehorn* with a reed, as with a clarinet. The instrument is called a *tungehorn* (*tongue horn*) and was probably inspired by the 1700s clarinets. Playing horns have generally been made from billy goat horn, but also horn from ox, cow and ram have been used.