

Stev



Ingvill Marit Garnås, Telemark

The *stev* is a four-line, lyrical verse, as opposed to the long, narrative medieval ballads. See the chapter about ballads on page 32.

We differentiate between *gammelstev* and *nystev* (old stev and new stev), which have slightly different verse rhythms, but both rhyme at the end. Firstly, we will have a little look at the *gammelstev* and its origins.

The first knowledge we have about the *stev* form in Old Norse areas, we find in the Sturlunga saga, an Icelandic story from the 1100s and 1200s. From the year 1119, we hear of *danzleikar*. A seven-day celebration is described, where there were events of many kinds - wrestling, telling of legends, humorous elements and, finally, *danzleikar*. This was a new kind of poetry that came from France, and was recited while dancing. A branch of this tradition was quite simply mocking poetry, where one made fun of other people. Here is an example from Iceland, where the chieftan, Bjørn Torvaldsson, made fun of Lopt Pálsson (from 1220).

Loptr er i Eyjum
bitr lunda-bein:
Sæmundr er á heiðum,
etr berin ein

Even though this activity with dancing was not viewed in a favourable light by the church authorities, the name used for 'stev' was originally '*danzar*'. Later came the word 'stef', which translates as 'verse' or 'refrain'. Later came the word *stef*, which meant a verse or refrain.



CD 1 – 17 Ingvill Marit Garnås, kveding: *Gamlestev*, fritt etter Agnes Buen Garnås (Telemark)

There is one particular melody (see below) which is used for the *gammelstev*, at the same time being the first of four songs in the well-known folk song, *Draumkvedet*. Its text is an old sacred *stev*.



More gammelstev verses to sing, using the same melody and rhyme structure:

Fiskjen uti fagre vatnet	Liten er no hesten min	Og vil du bukkjen, bera meg
og ikonn uppi tre	og lite er han verd	Uppivi desse bakkar
den som vil have dottir mi	sakte ber han sjave meg	så sko eg lata gylle deg
må eige gull og fe	og så mitt gode sverd	imillom honn og nakkar

In *gammelstev*, lines two and four rhyme.

In *nystev*, the first and second lines rhyme, and then the third and fourth. The *nystev*'s appearance in the 17-1800s is a bit similar to young people's use of music as a symbol these days. Musically, the *nystev* had influences from abroad. The text spoke of a new era, with more personal freedom and outspoken content. The youth felt more at home with *nystev*, which had a more open attitude towards, amongst other things, love life and young people's problems. One of the most popular *nystev* tunes from Setesdal goes like this:

trad.

Eg ten-kjer på deg fysst so - li da - lar, eg kvisk-rar
nam-net ditt nær eg ta - lar. Eg ten-kjer på deg fysst so - li
renn, og ditt namn på lip - pa mi jam-leg heng.

One must often adapt the rhythm of the melody when it concerns both *gammelstev* and *nystev*. The number of syllables can vary somewhat, and there are not clear rules either when it came to rhyming.

Listen to the song and the *kveding* (singer) on the CD. Try to imitate the style of singing.

In some areas, for example in Setesdal, one talks about "*å stevjast*", which is to 'throw' a *stev* at each other. In such *stevjing*, there are two people who know large amount of good, somewhat sarcastic *stev*, and take it in turns to *kvede* (sing) a *stev* text to each other. They generally try to make a fool of their partner. Some times it ends up in pure improvisation. The *kvedar* (singer) who has a rich repertoire with high-quality poetic content, where universal themes such as love, nature and the course of life are central, is certainly the most valued.



Kirsten Bråten Berg



Hallvard T Bjørgum



CD 1 – 18 Kirsten Bråten Berg and Hallvard Bjørgum, kveding: *Stevjing* (nystev) (Setesdal)

Create your own lyrics and melodies:

- Just as it is normal to make new *limericks*, one can just as easily make a new *stev*. Base it on the *gammel-* or *nystev* rhythm and rhyme.
- Make up a text in the *gammelstev* form. It can be about anything in daily life. Imagine that it will contain words of wisdom or advice to others.
- Make up three texts, each with the rhyme and rhythm of the *nystev*. The texts can contain humorous comments about your friends.
- Then make up your own *stev* melody for the verses they have written.

Here is a *nystev* you can vary:

trad.

