

Norwegian traditional music: An analysis of folk songs from two regions of Norway

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Abstract. Understanding nationalism in music is not only studying your own country's manners. It is essential to understand how it happens in several nations and once it is done, the assimilation of the nationalism development in any country is easier. The ancient origins of Norwegian traditional music and their importance to cultural affirmation during the process of the country's independence are two of the main reasons that made this the main point of this study. Although musical folklore in Norway is already the subject of several studies, there are few studies about the distinct musical aspects of each Norway district or region. This paper investigated the musical differences in Norwegian folk songs from two regions of the country: Valdres and Telemark. A musical analysis of traditional songs collected, arranged and compiled by Ludvig M. Lindeman (1812-87) was made to evaluate the distinctions between traditional aspects of music from both regions. This analysis focused on the whole context of the songs instead of a note-to-note interpretation. It was found that the use of certain elements, considered by other authors as common in Norwegian folklore in general, are rarely encountered in music of specific Norway regions. Furthermore, it was found that there are some regional variations in Norwegian musical aspects.

Keywords. Norwegian folk music, Valdres, Telemarken, Musical analysis; *Ældre og nyere norske fjeldmelodier*; Ludvig M. Lindeman.

1. Introduction

The Norwegian independence process, developed in the nineteenth century and conquered in 1905 [1], made the population turn their eyes upon national culture. Norway's true and pure identity, away from colonisers' (Danish and posteriorly Sweden) influences, was being searched mainly in peasant culture [2]. Collecting folk songs and compiling them in books of scores, sometimes creating arrangements for them too, became popular at that time [3]. One of the most important musicians in this search was Ludvig Mathias Lindeman (1812-87) - composer, organist and teacher. His principal work, regarding this subject, is the compilation of 636 arranged Norwegian folk-songs, *Ældre og nyere norske fjeldmelodier* (old and new Norwegian mountain tunes), published between 1867 and 1907 [4].

Most of the musical aspects known to be part of traditional Norwegian songs are inherited from the way ancient national instruments used to sound.

One of them, being *lur* and its similars. The *lur* is a wind instrument, which seems like a trumpet. It dates back to 1500-500 B.C, making it the oldest Norwegian instrument found [5]. The sound of several newer national instruments were made based on the sound produced by *lur*. One of these instruments, which is the main instrument used nowadays in Norway traditional music, is the *hardingfele*, also called hardanger Fiddle. *Hardingfele* resembles a violin, despite having a drone sound due to the four added strings which run under the bridge below the upper strings and vibrate by sympathy [6].

Aksdal, a researcher involved in *hardingfele* history search, affirms this instrument is older than violin arrival in Norway. According to his theory, mediaeval rebec developed to a Norwegian *bygedefe*, or *bondefele* (peasant violin), which became *hardingfele* with the addition of sympathetic strings. He also points out the existence of a Telemarken variation of the *bondefele*, which is smaller and rounder [7]. Traditional Norwegian music practices differ from region to region, just like the one cited

above, and cases like this had been identified during the literature review process. Dickenson implies that Norway folk music presents many variations of dialect, both textual and musical. Besides the musical styles that are found solely in one specific Norway region, as Sami music, which is encountered in the north of the country, he also talks about the distinction among both *springars* and *pols* from different regions [8]. Grimley asserts that national folk music from Christiania (the current region of Oslo) and Gudbrandsdal neighbourhood, as well as from cities next to Sweden borders, were dominated by recent musical aspects which did not belong to Norway pure culture. Because of that, the search for the original identity was made in rural areas, such as Telemarken and Hallingdal [2]. Regionalism, therefore, seems to play an important role in Norwegian culture and the musical variance among folk songs from different Norway regions is not as much explored as it could be. That is the fact which boosts this search for the uniqueness of musical aspects from two different Norway regions: Valdres and Telemarken.

2. Research methods

This research was mainly based in musical analysis. The scores were collected and arranged by Ludvig M. Lindeman. The compilation used in this work, *Ældre og nyere norske fjeldmelodier*, is his main compilation of Norway's traditional songs, published between 1867 and 1907 [9]. Sixty scores had been analysed, half from Valdres and half from Telemarken. The analysis focused on the basic structure of the songs, such as tonality, mode, cadences, melodic and harmonic chromatisms, as well as other musical aspects known to be used to refer to Norwegian folk music in the context of nationalism, such as augmented fourths, plagal cadences and drone notes. In other words, this analysis was an overview of the scores, which focused on the whole context of the song instead of a note-to-note interpretation.

3. Results

During the analysis period, a lot of differences between musical aspects of Valdres' and Telemarken's songs were found. The first difference appears in the recurrence of the harmonic minor scale in Telemarken's songs. Out of thirty songs analysed, fifteen were written in this mode. Thirteen were written in major and two in natural minor scale. Valdres' songs, on the other hand, are barely written in the harmonic minor scale, in fact, that is the mode which less appears in this location. Only three out of the thirty Valdres' songs analysed were written in the harmonic minor scale, while twenty-one were written in major mode. Skones affirms that most of Norwegian musical folklore is in

minor mode [10], although it does not seem to apply to Valdres' songs.

There was also a distinction found in the time signature. Most of Valdres' songs are 2/4- eighteen out of thirty, to be exact. On the other hand, Telemarken's songs are more often 6/8 and ¾. The research has shown Moderato as the most often tempo marking used in Valdres, happening in twelve songs out of thirty. The second more recurrent tempo marking is Allegretto. Telemarken's songs, in contrast, had only four Moderato tempo markings. In fact, Telemarken's practices seem to be more variable in this aspect: there were nine different types of tempo markings, while in Valdres' songs there were only six.

The third difference is related to chromaticism appliance and uncommon harmonies- compared with a western point of view - usually found in Norwegian folk music. Jordan cites that some of the chromatic alterations often used in traditional Norwegian music include the Dorian major sixth and the Phrygian minor second [11]. Vollness affirms that the augmented fourth is very present in this type of music [12]. During the analysis process, several chromatic alterations have been found, mainly in songs collected in Telemarken. The only alterations found in music collected in Valdres were augmented fourths, used always as ornaments. While there were five Valdres' songs with these modifications, Telemarken presents it in twelve songs - nine contemplated with augmented fourth and three with augmented sixth, in contexts of ornamentations and main melody notes. No Phrygian minor second was found in this analysis.

Most of Telemarken's folk songs were found in other localities, such as N°257 *Bufarsvein*, which was collected at Bø too. There are only eleven songs in the collection that are Telemarken exclusive. In the collection. On the other hand, there are many more Valdres' songs in the book, and most of them are Valdres exclusive. There are in total nineteen songs that share other locations of origin with Telemarken and the region which most appears is Hitterdal, with six cases. The graphic below shows the exact quantity of shared songs per region. The first column represents each region that shares songs with Telemarken and the second column represents the quantity of shared songs found in this analysis per region.

REGION	QTD.
Mö	2
Bø	3
Sohum	1
Sillejord	3
Hitterdal	6
Hjerdal	1
Hjertdal	1
Sauland	1
Tudal	1

Tab. 1 - Regions that share songs with Telemarken.

This information brings up a question: If the songs were collected in two localities, where did the musical aspects come from? This question will be discussed in the next section.

The last results are related to the cadences. Both Valdres' and Telemarken's songs were almost always finished with dominant-tonic cadences, while authors cite the plagal cadence as a main pattern in Norway traditional music [13]. Plagal appeared in Valdres' songs in internal cadences of the songs, but never as the final one. Valdres' songs had a lot of internal cadences that end up with a dominant chord instead of a tonic one. Valdres' final cadences are usually simple, there being twenty eight out of thirty songs that finish in a dominant-tonic progression. The other two end up in a mediant-tonic progression. Telemarken's songs also had more dominant-tonic cadences, but as the final one. The table below presents Telemarken's types of final cadences and the number of songs per type.

TYPES OF CADENCES	QTD.
Dominant- Tonic	20
End up in the fifth	6
Subdominant- Tonic	1
Seventh- Tonic	2
Supertonic- Tonic	1

Tab. 4 - Number of Telemarken songs per music cadence.

Six songs finished in a dominant chord, which can be a sign either of modal counterpoint or simply a different musical point of view related with other aspects of Norwegian traditional music, which were not found in literature review. Two of these six songs ended up with a tonic-dominant progression, which seems to be a reverse dominant- tonic cadence. The plagal cadence only appears once in the finishing of a song. Telemarken's songs were less provided with internal cadences.

4. Discussion

The subsections below discuss each result separately.

4.1 The major seventh and harmonic

minor recurrency

Foster cites the use of the major seventh as a recurrent aspect in Norway's musical folklore - happening both at the harmonic field and at the melodic development. This feature, according to her, is inherited from the *lur* tuning. Twenty-five Valdres' songs were provided with this aspect, even though most of them, twenty-two, to be exact, were written in major mode, in which the seventh is naturally major. The songs in minor mode were mostly in natural minor. The table below shows the exact number of songs in each mode:

MODE	QTD.
Major	22
Natural minor	5
Harmonic minor	3

Tab. 2 - Number of Valdres' songs per music mode.

The analysis seems to show a preference for natural minor rather than the harmonic minor. This apparent preference, however, is conditioned to a difference from only two songs, so a second analysis with more songs involved would be necessary to be sure about it.

Telemarken's statistics, otherwise, presents much more major sevenths than minor ones, which is demonstrated by the graphic below:

MODE	QTD
Major	13
Natural minor	2
Harmonic minor	15

Tab. 3 - Number of Telemarken's songs per music mode.

In this case, there are many more songs in the harmonic minor scale than the natural minor, so, there is no need to justify a new analysis.

The final conclusion about this topic is that the major seventh is a very common aspect in both regions, either in major or minor modes.

4.2 Time signature and tempo markings

There are many Norwegian dances, such as *gangar*, *springar*, *halling*, and so on. The *gangar* is often 2/4 or 6/8 and has a moderate pace. *Springar* songs are usually 3/4 and a little bit faster. *Halling* songs are binary dances, usually 2/4 [14]. Comparing this information with the analysis' statistics provided by this search, it can be implied that Valdres' most popular dance is *gangar*, which is both a moderate paced and binary. Following this logic with Telemarken's statistics, it could be implied that the most popular dances in this locality are *gangar* and *springar*, respectively, since the most used tempo markings in Telemarken are Andante and Allegretto, and the most used time signatures are 6/8 and 3/4. However, this assertion can not be applied to all situations. Gaver states that Norwegian triple meter dances vary. According to her, while some of these

dances are composed of three equal beats, others are composed of three asymmetrical beats [15]. She does not discuss enough about this aspect related to binary meter dances, such as *gangar*, and neither does the other authors in the literature review made for this paper. Thus, this aspect exceeds the scope of this work and needs to be more explored in another moment.

4.3 Augmented fourth, sixth and other chromatic alterations

As it has been cited before, there are several aspects in Norway folk music attached to musical instruments, such as *lur* [5].

Instead of being divided by semitones, the *lur* sound is divided by three-quarter intervals, creating a peculiar sound. This peculiar sound is primarily distinguished by a subtly increased fourth and an almost major seventh. The specific intervals of Norwegian folk music were called Natural notes and represented by Eivind Groven as in the graphic below:

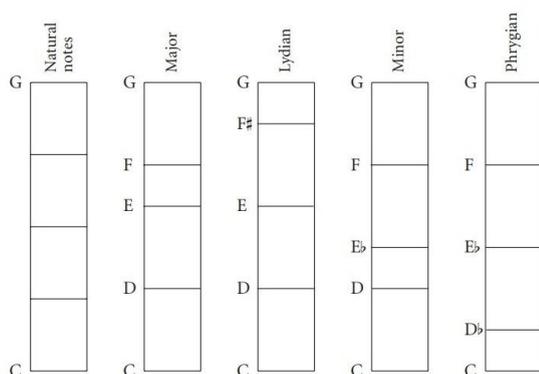


Fig. 1 - Eivind Groven representation of the natural notes [1].

Groven made this representation dividing the distance between the tonic and the fifth into four equal intervals and placed the graphic side-by-side to major, minor, lydian and phrygian scales. The diagram clarifies the real distance between a perfect fourth and the *lur* fourth, which are, in fact, both very distant from the sharpened fourth. The representation of the natural notes' fourth by the sharpened fourth is used by Grieg (1843 - 1907), Bull (1810- 80), and other composers [16]. This is the way they found to illustrate how Norwegian folk instruments sound while using orchestral instruments, in order to present it for foreigners. The graphic also shows an alteration in the second degree, which sounds subtly below the major second. The third is also a little bit flattened.

The research presented many examples of chromatic alterations. The most easily encountered was the sharpened fourth. The sharpened sixth was rarely found, and the other alterations such as minor second from phrygian were not present in the songs analysed at all. The question is: why were they not found? The hypothesis presented in this paper

refers to the arrangement. Unfortunately, the Norwegian collectors used to arrange the songs too and one of the problems it brings is the possible mitigation and subversion of the original implied harmony of the melody. A chromatic melody can be diatonized by a harmony that tries to imply a western practice to it. Johansson affirms that Norwegian traditional and original harmonies are usually ambiguous [17] and, if this statement fits, it would be easier to turn a complex harmony into a simple one and apply western interpretation to it. Grimley criticises Lindeman for neutralising some of the chromatisms [18], which reinforces the hypothesis presented before.

4.4 Telemarken's and other districts' common songs

While Valdres' songs were all exclusively from this location, there were only eleven out of thirty Telemarken's exclusive songs. The remaining ones were commonly found also in other districts, as mentioned and represented at table 1. Although, if the songs were collected in two different regions, where did they really come from originally? Regarding this matter, Dickenson says that the melodies' presences in different regions and in varied forms are evidence of the earlier movements of population. The word "earlier" is very important in his assertion, since Norway's territory has always been full of mountains and it was not easy to explore. He also states that: "the very isolation of many outlying districts has been the saving grace for much of the indigenous cultural history" [19]. Regarding the topic of this discussion, it seems that the sparsity of the regions was not an obstacle capable of restraining the sharing of those songs. It would be logical to say that the songs had spread from Telemarken to other regions, rather than the opposite, since there are several common musical aspects in the songs and the only common region that is present in all of them is Telemarken.

4.5 Cadences

According to Grimley, the plagal and deceptive cadences are often used as references to Norwegian folklore [13]. During the analysis process, several uncommon cadences were found, both in Telemarken's and Valdres' songs. Many different endings were found, few of them being plagal cadences. Many of the songs ended up in the dominant, instead of the tonic. Telemarken's songs present another important detail: some of them end up in the fifth, which is unexpected and could be either a sign of a modal counterpoint, or a reference to another Norwegian musical aspect that was not found during the literature review process. Jordan affirms that several aspects of Norwegian folk music are heritages from church modes, which had been brought to Norway in the Middle Ages [11]. McClary, on the other hand, says it is an error to consider musical alterations of Norwegian traditions as church modes reference [22]. The internal cadences

in Valdres' songs were closer to the information found in literature review, presenting several plagal endings.

5. Conclusion

Facing what was presented and discussed by the authors - as well as by the actual composers - regarding the "translation" of the original traditional melodies to a sort of western-equal-temperament-friendly version of the pieces, through Lindeman's transcription to score, it is hard to define how much of the songs was preserved, how much was subverted, or how much was reinterpreted. Regarding this matter, Grieg said in a letter to a friend: "This augmented fourth can also be heard in folk song. It is a ghost from one or other ancient scale(...) At present I feel it would be like a sin to arrange the peasant dances for piano." [23]. The composer points out that the transcription of the folk song's augmented fourth to the piano would not be appropriate, probably because he was aware of how peasant dances' augmented fourth was far from the western augmented fourth.

Given that the natural note scale's fourth degree was originally very subtly augmented when compared to a modern perfect fourth, and still in Lindeman's collection it could have been many times transcribed as a fully sharpened fourth, which, in fact, ends up distancing it even further from the original temperament instead of approaching it, there is no safe way to measure if Lindeman's transcription choices were applied with the intention of replicating the original songs as accurately as possible or if they were applied with the intention of caricaturing the original melodic profile by exaggerating the peculiar intervals to sound exotic while still respecting the western equal temperament. However, there is something that can still be observed about Telemarken's and Valdres' songs, which is: despite the possible interpretative distortions or the possible effort to respect the originality with minimal modifications made just to suit the western temperament - which still would result in slight distortions -, the songs from both regions still present a pattern of certain differences between each other. Out of thirty Telemarken songs analysed, fifteen presented a melodic profile that was similar to the western harmonic minor scale, according to Lindeman's transcription; thirteen were closer to the western major scale and two were closer to the natural minor scale. Regarding Valdres' songs, on the other hand, out of thirty songs analysed, twenty two followed a melodic profile similar to the western major mode, according to Lindeman's transcription; five were closer to the natural minor scale and three were closer to the harmonic minor scale. Therefore, it can be understood that, despite Lindeman's possible transcription distortions, Valdres' songs possibly tended to sound, in general, "softer" and "happier" in

comparison to the way Telemarken's songs sounded, once they were closer to the western major scale, in contrast with Telemarken's harmonic minor-related sounding.

6. List of analysed songs

6.1 Valdres' songs

1. N°9 Halling
2. N°10 Der stander et Slot i Østerrige
3. N°11 Dæ va eigøng ein Kung'e
4. N°12 Veslø Gjenta
5. N°13 Den Ti e va ein liten Gut
6. N°14 Der gjik tvæ Systa
7. N°15 Baadn - Laatt
8. N°16 Baadn - Laatt
9. N°17 Baadn - Laatt
10. N°19 Lua - Laatt
11. N°20 Dyreparten
12. N°57 Springdands
13. N°58 Duva sættø se paa Liljankvist
14. N°59 Der stander et Slot i Østerrige
15. N°62 Baadn - Laatt
16. N°63 Den Ti e va liten
17. N°64 Bondin o Reven
18. N°67 Let hendte sig i Sommer
19. N°101 (No name)
20. N°107 E stuta ein Stut
21. N°108 Lua - Laatt
22. N°109 St. Thaamas - Klukke - Laatten
23. N°110 Brura - Laatt
24. N°111 Munkön
25. N°112 Friarn benno Olia
26. N°255 Baadn - Laatt
27. N°280 Ak Herre from
28. N°281 Gud Fader udi Himmerig
29. N°282 Fader vor udi Himmerig
30. N°283 Guds Godhed ville vi prise

6.2 Telemarken's songs

31. N°36 Aksel og Valborg
32. N°38 Bejarblakkin
33. N°83 Skomageren er en fattig Mand
34. N°84 Aksel og Valborg
35. N°85 Ridder Valivan
36. N°93 Den store hvide Flok
37. N°92 Springdands
38. N°98 Springdands
39. N°197 Springdands
40. N°210 Kan eg nu slet inkje di skjöne Dotter faa
41. N°217 Kongen aa Dronningen sidde ved Bord
42. N°257 Bufarsvein
43. N°259 Den store Kraaka
44. N°405 Draumkvæe

45. N°558 Skjæmteviser
46. N°561 Stev
47. N°562 Aa eg ska føre deg paa de Land
48. N°563 Aa eg ska føre deg paa dæ Land
49. N°564 Aa jeg monne nu grue
50. N°565 Stev
51. N°567 Aase Urbø
52. N°602 Ljaaen ligger i Enga
53. N°609 Tordyvelen og Flugta
54. N°610 Be te Lag
55. N°612 Skjæmteviser
56. N°614 Hei huskom ihei!
57. N°621 Gjøetersang
58. N°622 I Hallingdal
59. N°632 Søndagsmorgon
60. N°635 Draumkvæde

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