1957

Five Norwegian folk songs, arranged for mixed voices

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FIVE NORWEGIAN FOLK SONGS
Arranged for Mixed Voices

by

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Music Education

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
1957

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Dean, Graduate School

[Date] 1957
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to Justin Gray, Lloyd C. Oakland, and Herbert M. Cecil, members of the School of Music faculty, Montana State University, for their numerous suggestions and wise counsel in preparing this work.

The writer is also indebted to Olga Granmo for assistance in obtaining pertinent information from Norwegian sources.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the past eight years the writer has scanned the catalogues of most major publishers of choral music in a search for Norwegian folk songs arranged for mixed voices. This has been followed up by examination of selected scores in a desire to find arrangements which have retained the folk tune character in the choral setting. Such arrangements do exist but not in abundance. The available publications represent only a minute part of the vast store of folk tunes wherein lies Norway's greatest musical heritage.

The availability of suitable folk song literature to which the writer refers would certainly enhance the music program in our public schools today. Any well balanced program of music education in the elementary and secondary schools will include a unit of listening to and singing of folk music from other lands. Good choral recordings of Norwegian folk songs for listening purposes are almost nonexistent in America. The lack of recordings may be attributed directly to the lack of suitable choral arrangements. All of this has resulted directly in undertaking this present work of arranging five varied Norwegian folk songs for mixed voices and to provide them with suitable texts.

When our fathers immigrated to America it was quite
natural for them, in their gratitude, to cast aside the heritage of their own past and become a part of this new land of opportunity. They were anxious to act, talk, and live like all Americans. National languages were forbidden or neglected in the home. National customs, dress, and folklore were quickly forgotten.

It is quite easy to understand this attitude of our forefathers but at the same time it is regrettable. The knowledge of foreign languages and of national traditions that was within easy grasp of this generation was lost because of our fathers' desire to be true Americans.

America has experienced in recent years a strong desire to reclaim this lost heritage, particularly in the fields of folk music and other forms of folklore. Many concerned musicologists and musicians have conscientiously collected the folk music of America and recorded it for all future generations to know. Folk music of other nationalities is becoming more prominent in the publishers' catalogs.

The writer's ancestry is Norwegian on both sides as far back as is traceable. His father came from Norway as a young man. This, together with one other factor, has stimulated his interest in Norwegian folk music and indirectly led to this present work. The other factor referred to is the paternal grandmother. Having come to this country as an elderly lady, she was reluctant to leave her former ways of
life behind. Consequently, Norwegian customs prevailed in her home. Her native language was always used in her presence. She loved music and the occasion was rare that one visited her without hearing some Norwegian folk songs or hymns. The memory of these songs has remained vividly with the writer although he was but a young lad while his grandmother still lived.

The arrangements of Norwegian folk songs in this paper are for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices with divided parts only where such division is necessary in portraying the character of the folk tune.

In using folk songs for which an English translation is available, the translator has been duly recognized. Those songs which require a present translation are provided with free rather than literal translations. The original Norwegian texts are included in the appendix for those groups which feel equipped and inclined to use them. Providing an English text presents many obstacles as the language of the Norwegian folk song is invariably a dialect. Many, many dialects exist in Norway. A traveler in that country might be inclined to think that a new and entirely different language exists every few miles. He would not be far from the truth. If one were to attempt to translate by the use of a standard "book language" dictionary, it would not be surprising if one failed to find one single word of
the folk song in the dictionary.

In the following chapter, as far as possible, the reader will be provided with a glimpse of the portion of Norway from which each of the five folk songs comes and any pertinent information which might be of interest and assistance to the performer or listener as well as a brief note on the harmonization of the folk tune.

The folk tunes used in these arrangements are taken from various collections which the writer has been able to secure. Some of these collections are recent publications of the Norsk Musikforlag, Oslo, Norway; some have been made available by the writer's father; still others have been provided by the writer's wife who visited Norway on a concert tour with the Concordia Choir in 1949.
CHAPTER II

ABOUT THE FOLK SONGS

As most folk songs are conceived as linear melodies, it is doubtful that their conception recognized harmony as a primary positive element. Of course, each note and each phrase lends itself to a multitude of harmonies. Providing a harmonic sequence which impressively carries out the mood of the text is the most difficult task of the arranger. Harmony can deal with mood but in doing so it takes on a colouring which has definition to it. This colouring must be molded with discretion so as not to detract from the charm of the folk melody and yet add interest to the arrangement.

I. OH, I WANT TO MARRY, THAT I DO, SIR

The Setesdale Valley which extends from the southern-most part into the interior is one of the more interesting sections of Norway in terms of folk lore and music. National customs and traditions are probably better preserved here than in any other part of the country because the valley has been sealed for centuries from the rest of the world by rugged mountain ranges. It has only been in recent years, with the construction of a road which had to be blasted out of the side of the mountain, that this forgotten country was
opened up to the rest of Norway and the world.¹

From Bygland, in the Setesdale, comes the delightful folk tune "Je sku' au ha løst a gifte mei, san² (Oh, I Want To Marry, That I Do, Sir)". The three-four time and the accent of the Norwegian words suggest that the tune comes from the Norwegian springar or spring dance. The spring dance is similar to the Swedish polska which Apel says is akin to the Polish mazurka with the accent frequently falling on the second or third pulse of the measure.³ In rendering a performance of this folk tune, careful observance of the occasionally accented second beat will do much to illuminate the true character of the springar.

Much of the folk music of Norway is in a minor mode but never does it give the impression of a depressed people. Quite often we find the raised leading tone of the harmonic minor scale lending an air of brightness to the minor feeling. The raised leading tone found in the melody of this folk song has been utilized in the arrangement to give it a


sonority in keeping with the mood of the text.

The English lyrics for this arrangement have been adapted from a translation by Christopher Norman.4

II. AN OLD SONG FROM LOM

From Lom in the mighty Gudbrandsdale, the great valley which cuts through the very heart of Norway, comes a folk song entitled "Gamal vise fra Lom" (Old Song From Lom). This song tells the unpleasant plight of Old Joe attempting to make off with a stolen sheep. In his haste he becomes weighed down with the heavy load as fleas from the sheep run down his face. The melodic mode reflects the unenvied position of Old Joe while the over all text suggests a situation which is really quite amusing to the observer, of course, at the sad expense of Old Joe.

In attempting to capture the sad humor of this charming melody the arranger has set the melody in parallel fourths against a one measure harmonic ground which finds its own relief in the final chord.

The English translation is by Christopher Norman.6 Only the title has been changed from Mr. Norman's translation in which the lyrics of the first phrase were adapted as

4Norge Synger, op. cit., p. 41.
5Ibid., p. 59. 6Ibid.
III. LULLABY

Two of the most enjoyable types of Norwegian folk songs are the lullaby and the children's songs. Their keen and mocking humor reveals a glimpse of the inner spirit of comedy of the hardy people of this north country. One song tells of father who bridles his boots, saddles his sword, buckles his old mare to his side, and rides away to the battle of the kittens where he lay on the ground and fell down, and dreamed in the night. This topsy turvy song was designed to amuse the children. There are songs which are merely a play on words which are meaningless but witty in their rhythmic feeling. Songs of this nature do not translate effectively into English.

Since the immediate objective of the lullaby is to send a child to sleep, the words are not of prime importance. A soothing melody with a peculiar lilt is the essence of a good lullaby. "Vuggetrall7 (Lullaby)" from the country around Oslo, called Aker, is one such song. The only lyrics traditional with this lullaby are the invitation to sleep sung at the beginning and end of the melody. The rest of

7Ibid., p. 51.
the song flows caressingly on a hum or soft vowel. From the music of the child's world, the writer has selected this lullaby for presentation in the arrangements.

The interchangeable use of parallel major and minor modes is a significant feature of the Norwegian melodies. This device, which became a harmonic cliche of the romantic period of music, is evidenced in Norwegian melodies of great age. The arranger has borrowed this Romantic technique to give the lullaby a characteristic sound and add interest to the harmonies.

The few words of the lyrics are retained in the Norwegian tongue.

IV. ASTRI, MY ASTRI

Hans Hanson\textsuperscript{8} was an Oslo boy with a decided taste for Latin verse who, while traveling in Telemark, became interested in the folk lore and dialect of that section of Norway. This led to his very free translation of Horace's "Ode to Lydia" in the vernacular and character of the Telemark countryside. The words were set to a common folk melody. Thus, the folk song "Astri, mi Astri\textsuperscript{9} (Astri, My Astri)" links the

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., p. 36.
culture of Rome with the peasant songs of the north.

The lyrics are an adaptation and combination of two different translations, one by A. Forestier$^{10}$ and the other by Frederick Wick.$^{11}$

The generally accepted harmonies of this well-known melody have been basically retained in the arrangement with the addition of the augmented sixth chord in certain of the cadential formulae.

V. FAREWELL TO HØVRINGEN

Needless to say, each folk song is the product of some one person. The so-called spontaneous origin of a folk song must be rejected. What then constitutes a folk song? According to Willi Apel "Folk song may be defined as the musical repertory and tradition of communities."$^{12}$

"Avskil med Høvringen$^{13}$ (Farewell to Høvringen)" is a song which has certainly become tradition of communities. The acceptance it has received from the past several generations gives this song a treasured spot in the folk litera-

$^{10}$Norwegian Synger, op. cit., p. 37.


$^{12}$Apel, op. cit., p. 274.

$^{13}$Norwegian Synger, op. cit., p. 56.
ture of all Norwegians. It is the story of a young man who says good-by to the girl he cannot marry because of social reasons. The words and music are by Embret Hougen (1826-1891).

The harmonization of this folk melody follows the general harmonic colour of the original setting by Hougen. The interchangeable use of parallel major and minor scale degrees is the chief melodic and harmonic characteristic.

The English text is an adaptation of a translation by Christopher Norman.\textsuperscript{14}

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 57.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this work has been to present five Norwegian folk melodies in settings suitable for performance by mixed voices. The concern of the writer has been to provide a vehicle of expression capable of arousing in the American performer and public consumer an awareness and interest in Norway's greatest musical heritage.

Study and performance of folk music offers to the student an insight into the customs, traditions, and temperaments of the people for these elements are so often reflected in the character of the music itself. The use of the native language provides a contact, however slight, with the forgotten tongue of our fathers.

Translations have been obtained for four of the five folk melodies presented. Adaptations of these translations have been utilized in providing English texts for the arrangements.

In the case of each folk song, the writer has endeavored to: (1) portray the section of Norway from which it comes, (2) present, where possible, the origin of the melody, (3) note the harmonic procedure used in the setting, and (4) provide the performer and/or listener with information designed to stimulate their interest in the arrangement.
Great opportunities remain for willing hands in the area of this present work. Thousands upon thousands of inspiring folk melodies are available to those who would utilize them in one form or another.

Correspondence with Mr. Arne Bjorndal of Bergen, one of Norway's foremost contemporary authorities on folk music, has revealed invaluable sources of material for the student of Norwegian folk music interested in making future contributions in the area of this present work. A reproduction of his suggested references has been included in Appendix B.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

NORWEGIAN LYRICS

JE SKU' AU HA LØST A GIFTE MEI, SAN

Je sku' au ha løst a gifte mei, san,
nar je traff ei jente rektig grei, san,
slik ho ente ville
late vent og ille,
anten sa je drekker heller ei, san.
Skjenken dram, san!
Fa mei skam, san!
ta'r di mange slike gutter fram, san.

Den som je skal ta, ma vaera rar, san;
for je sjøl er en aparta kar, san!
Ho ska' kunne gjøre
ha det kommer fører,
a sa tar je ei som pæing har, san.
Skjenk en dram, san!
Fa mei skam, san!
tar di mange slike gutter fram, san.

Hør du Mari, je vi' fri te dei, san,
dersom du vi' ha enkar som je, san.
   Je har kuer, sauer,
gryte, fat og trauer,
du ma tru je ern' te bare lei, san.
   Je er'n kar, san:
   bytter merr, san,
derfor gifter je mei som en kar, san.

Jamen huen er du kar i kveld, san!
Men je vi' sa aldri ha dei lell, san!
   Du er grum t'a kyte
   og kan rektig skryte,
men je blaser a det heile swael, san.
   Fy da Mass, san!
Det er fjas, san!
Ga ifra mei med ditt frieras, san.
GAMAL VISE FRA LOM

Eg eivise no vil sjunge
um' n Blaut Jo stal eit lamb.
Hain vart staand' sa reiint fortusta
at'n fekk ikkje føten' fram.
Hain sto' og klo seg uppmed øyrom
sa at luse' ronde ne'.
Detta skjedde nora' Sota
trast burt for ei litor kve.

AVSKIL MED HØVRINGEN

Sja sole pa Anaripigg!
No gjeng ho dit som ho om natti ligg;
men fyrst ho me
og stein og tre
og alle te
forgylle lyt.
Budeia skvattar fra sitt sel:
A ma tru kui kjem no ta seg sjøl?
Hurulilu! Lihulihu!
Mi søte ku er grumast stott.
Bjøllun' dumt bakom haugom tonar,
klunken rart atti bergom ljomar,
bekkjen sillar som taror stilt,
eg er hugilt!

Kal her i verdi eg inkje fa
ho Marit som eg held sa mykje ta?
Men kvifor sa
skull' eg da fa
mitt auga pa
min kjæraste?
Ho var fornem, men inkje grum,
den fyrste gjenta som eg drøymde om.
I dag ho sa sa mykje bra,
med grat meg bad a hugsa se'.
Ja, du gjer'e meg blaut i sinnet,
nar alt anna glett utor minnet.
Men a fa deg, det slepp eg snilt,
eg er hugilt.
Astri, mi Astri som eine heldt 'ta meg
den tid du var meg so inderled god,
den tid du gret kvar en gong eg gjekk fra deg,
som var kvar laurdagskveld; minst du let no?
Da var i bygdi eg saelaste gut,
ingje eg bytte med prest eller fut.

Den tid du heldt utav Astri aleine,
da inkje Svanaug var venar' for deg;
den tid du var no so snøgg'e pa beini,
da du kvar laurdagskveld ila til meg;
ingje med skrivarens dotter ha' eg
den gongen byta, skuld' eg missa deg.

Heretter berre til Svanaug eg belar,
ho som er alltid so godsleg og blid,
ho som so gildsleg pa langleiken spelar,
Svanaug den vene skal no vera mi;
gjerne so wilde eg tvo gonger døy,
nar eg kund' gleda mi venøygde møy.

Men um eg skulde no Svanaug forlat,
og um eg kom ho 'kje meire i hug,
og um eg skulde til deg koma atter,
og um eg til Astri igjen skuld' fa hug;
um eg no trygda at eg vart deg tru,
Astri, mi Astri! kva svara da du?

Venar enn soli som glar bakum fjellet,
det er han Torgrim, kan eg seia deg;
og du er argar enn villaste trollet,
falskar enn skumet pa vatnet mot meg;
men eg er likvel di trugnaste møy,
berre med deg eg vil leva og døy.
APPENDIX B

A SUGGESTED REFERENCE BY ARNE BJORNDAL

The following list of suggested references is reproduced as given by Arne Bjorndal, Norway's leading authority on folk music, in a letter to the writer dated at Bergen, Norway, January 21, 1957.


Catharinus Elling: Vore Folkemelodier. Jacob Dybwad, Oslo.

Catharinus Elling: Vore Slaatter. Jacob Dybwad, Oslo.


Arne Bjorndal: The Hardanger fiddle. The tradition, music forms and style. (Journal of the International Folk Music Council, 1956, Volume VIII.)
APPENDIX C

THE MUSIC
OH, I WANT TO MARRY, THAT I DO, SIR

1. Oh, I want to marry that I do, sir, that I do, sir, If I
3. I declare you're very sweet to-day, lad, sweet to-day, lad, And yet
meet a lad both kind and true, sir, one who dearly loves his work, who'll
I don't love you any-way, lad. You're the biggest liar in the

* May be sung by a small group of select voices.
never sulk or shirk his duty to his wife and kin, sir. Fill you're whole damned shire and I never trust a word you say, lad. Fill you're

never sulk or shirk his duty to his wife and kin, sir. Wholedam't shire and I never trust a word you say, lad.

never sulk or shirk his duty to his wife and kin, sir. Wholedam'd shire and I never trust a word you say, lad.

glass, sir! Let it pass, sir! Oh, I'd make my wife a happy

glass, sir! Pass, sir! happy, happy

glass, sir! pass, sir! hap - py, hap - py
Verse 2.

Lass, sir! Happy lass, sir!

Listen I should like a wife like you, lass, wife like you, lass.

Do you think a man like me would you, lass.
do, lass? I've got land and cattle, pots and pans to rattle; I'm the
sort of fellow who'd be true, lass.

sort of fellow who'd be true, lass. Fill you're glass, sir! Let it
glass, sir!
pass, sir! happy, happy lass, sir! Happy

pass, sir! happy, happy lass, sir! Happy

pass, sir! Oh, I'd make my wife a happy lass, sir! Happy

lass, Sir! Fill you're glass, sir! Let it

lass, Sir! glass, sir!

lass, Sir! Fill you're glass, sir! Let it
pass, sir! Oh I'd make my wife a happy lass, sir!
AN OLD SONG FROM LOM

Adagio

Let me sing you a merry
(hum) --

(bal-lad of) Old Joe who stole a sheep.
Poor old Joe could no more get forward, he was stuck all in a heap. He could just scratch his face and
pon-der, while the fleas ran down his face.

All this hap-pen'd o-ver yon-der, 'Tis
So- ta they call the place.
LULLABY

Sostenuto molto

By - a, by - a, li - ten gutt. (Hum or sing on soft vowel)
(By - a, by - a, lee-ten güte.)

(Hum or sing on soft vowel)

(Hum or sing on soft vowel)
By-a, by-a, baa-ne.
Baritone solo mf

Ast-ri! My Ast-ri! Your heart was mine on-ly,

Soprano

Alto
In those old days of our joy and delight!
I knew not then what it was to be lonely.
For we did meet each Saturday night.
Then 'twas my heart you stole from me, Happier I was than

Princes can be. Then 'twas my heart you stole from me,
Hap-pier I was than prin-ces can be. Out of the past, now when shad-ows are fall-ing, soft-ly re-sound hap-py mem-"ries of you.
Often in dreams I can hear someone calling whispering softly: "I love you, I do." "Twas then my heart Ast-ri you stole from me, love you, I do." "Twas then my heart Ast-ri you stole from me, love you, I do." "Twas then my heart Ast-ri you stole from me,
Hap-pier I was than prin-ces can be. 'Twas then my heart Ast-ri
you stole from me, Hap-pier I was then prin-ces can be.

you stole from me, Hap-pier I was then prin-ces can be.
FAREWELL TO HØVRINGEN

Embret Hougen

Andante

ff

ff

ff

Behold the sun's last dazzling ray.

Behold!

Behold!

Behold!
Be - hold the sun's last dazzling

Sun's last ray. Sun's last

ray lights up the mountain peak at close of day. But first on

ray lights up the mountain peak at close of day. But first on

ray light up the mountain peak at close of day. But first on

ray up the mountain at close of day.
me and rock and tree It shines, and we are turned to

First on me, rock and tree It shines, and we are turned to

fire. The milk-maid dallies at the

fire. milk-maid dallies at the

fire. milk-maid dallies at the

fire.
I wonder if the cows will come to harm—Hu-ru-li-
farm; I wonder if the cows will come to harm—Hu-ru-li-
lu! the milk-maid cry—Or will they reach alone the

I wonder if the cows will come to harm—Hu-ru-li-
farm; I wonder if the cows will come to harm—Hu-ru-li-
lu! the milk-maid cry—Or will they reach alone the

I wonder if the cows will come to harm—Hu-ru-li-
farm; I wonder if the cows will come to harm—Hu-ru-li-
lu! the milk-maid cry—Or will they reach alone the

I wonder if the cows will come to harm—Hu-ru-li-
farm; I wonder if the cows will come to harm—Hu-ru-li-
lu! the milk-maid cry—Or will they reach alone the
byre?

Near-by their bells do faint-ly

Bells do

ring, Far off I hear the maid- - en sing, Hu-ru-li
S i l e n t f l o w s - - - - t h e
l u.

burn. Oh, how I yearn!

burn. Oh, how I yearn!