National Nordic Museum

2003 004 044 D5061 Interview with Mats Berglund tape 1 of 2

Mats Berglund: This Lomjansgutens is probably one of the most popular or well-known fiddlers in Sweden. You want me to tell about him?

Mary Mohler: Yes, please do.

Mats: He was born 1816, as it says, and he died 1875. He was from Gräsmark. Why he became so famous, he was one of the fiddlers who early started to learn classical music. He, as many from the western part of Värmland, was walking to Christiania, Oslo, and took lessons in how to play the violin.

He was a fiddler, but he was interested to play the classical music. There are many tales about this fiddler, Lomjansgutens. What we know is that he, for a while, maybe two or three years, was a member of the Theatre Orchestra in Oslo. The tales say that he took lessons from Ole Bull, who was the great violinist at this time.

There are lots of stories about this Lomjansgutens and every of these stories says that he was a great musician. When he come back to Värmland, he started to be a music teacher. All around the county, he had music schools, maybe the first music school in Värmland. They paid him not so much money, but they paid him, he get food and he get clothes, and maybe some stronger alcohol.

[laughter]

Mats: He teach all fiddler to play off the notes. He were composing a lot of waltzes, and that's why, Värmland, have the reputation to be the county of the Swedish waltzes.

Mary: I'll be darned.

Mats: He was playing around on these upper-class homes, we call "herrgård." He played for the people who live there. He had been to Christiania. He had played in the Theatrer Orchestra, so they were very happy to have him playing. He was also teaching.

Mary: He wasn't bringing always only the folk tunes.

Mats: No.

Mary: What probably the upper-class thought of as less refined. He was bringing both the refined art music and...

Mats: Yeah. He was an innovator. Everybody who innovate things in a living tradition became stars. Nowadays, if you try to innovate, then some conservative people think that's awful.

[laughter]

Mats: That's what happened with the folk music, the contemporary folk music today. The living tradition back home in Sweden makes all the time fusion with other continents and other instruments. Some people think still that the older, the better, [laughs] some thinks.

I think it's good that some are playing genuine tradition and some play contemporary and make innovations in music. It's a proof that the folk music is still living.

Mary: That would probably be almost a definition of a living tradition, wouldn't it? That it's evolving.

Mats: If it's not evolving, then it's dying, I think.

Mary: Yeah, yeah.

Mats: Lomjansgutens, there are many stories about him saying this as he stays in Sweden. In the very beginning when he was young, his master, his teacher was Metbäcken. He was a [non-English] , very great fiddler in the beginning of the 1800s. He was from Västerdalarna, [inaudible 6:11]. He come to Värmland, settled down. Metbäcken, Östmark is north of Gräsmark where Lomjansgutens was born.

There is fantastic story about Lomjansgutens . At that time, they thought that if they picked, which is awful...After the master the great fiddler had died and he had been buried for one year or so, you should try to get a bone from the master and it's...

Mary: Ribs, certain ribs?

Mats: Ribs, yeah, you could make a string holder where they put the strings. I don't know what you say.

Mary: You mean on a fiddle?

Mats: On a fiddle, yeah. Downstairs.

Mary: At the base?

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: At the base of the fiddle. Was this supposed to bring the fiddler who had that bone especially good skill or good luck?

Mats: Yeah. It's somehow power from the fiddler. Many people I interviewed in the 1970s were telling me this story.

Then somebody told me that one of the Lomjansgutens' fiddle violins, he had many violins, but one of them, were hanging on mantel in Arvika at the Såguddens Museum. It's a local historical museum and "Why don't you go and take a look at her?"

I went to this museum and an old man, a volunteer was sitting in the office. I asked for, "I want to see Lomjansgutens' fiddle." "Oh, yeah." I follow him into a small room and in the corner there

was a mantel with glass and inside it was a very interesting fiddle. He took it out so I can look at it.

Mary: Let you hold this?

Mats: Yeah and I asked him, I was looking at this, I don't know where you put the strings downstairs, and I said, "What's that?" He said, "It looks like to be a bone of something."

[laughter]

Mats: It was really a bone. This story maybe have some...

Mary: Did you discover this or actually see this fiddle before you had heard the stories or after you heard the stories?

Mats: After I heard the stories.

Mary: That verified the stories I guess, didn't it?

Mats: Yes. All this because we are reading about [non-English] recording.

Mary: I should interject here that we're at Nordic Heritage Museum on Wednesday, April 25th. I'm Mary Mohler with Gordon Ekvall Tracie Music Library speaking with Mats Berglund. I should have you pronounce your name correctly.

Mats: Mats Berglund.

Mary: Berglund. You live in Arvika, is that correct?

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: You'll have to fill us in, when we have a chance to get off this topic, fill us in on what you do too, but we can come back to that.

Mats: Lomjansgutens he played one of his tunes. He also play a tune, one cut, from [non-English] . It's what do you call, the protocol, or what do you call this?

Mary: Yes, I suppose that would be called a protocol, but this is actually just a printout of the database material that we have on that particular tape.

Mats: Oh, yes. It tells us that John Oscar was a musical director of the [inaudible 10:47] regiment. He was a military musician and he also composed music. I'm sure that both of these cuts, all these tunes, I think it's one or two, three, they are compositions and published into notebooks.

It was Ragnar Turesson, and he was a brother of Gunnar Turesson. Still alive, Gunnar Turesson. He's famous because he have collect music in Värmland in the 1950s, '60s and he had published, I think it's eight or nine books called, " [non-English] ."

Very interesting stuff. It's about old folk life and especially music. He writes a lot about the Finnish immigration to Sweden. He wrote down songs and tunes in notes and they are published in this book collection, [non-English] . I think it's 9 or 10. One of the books I have as a [non-English], the county of Arnö. We were giving out some books and I was an editor of one of these books.

That's the music from Selma Lagerlöf and Mårbacka. Music around Mårbacka, the home where Selma Lagerlöf was staying. Oscar, John Oscar, he was from Östra Emterwik the same village as Mårbacka. This Oscar, he was a musician who had played a lot at Selma Lagerlöf's home in Mårbacka and [inaudible 13:25] , in the 1920s, I think he published two notebooks.

Mary: Notebooks.

Mats: Notebooks, yeah.

Mary: Notebooks, yeah, smaller, than.

Mats: Smaller than notebooks, yeah. I have them both at the museum, so I could make copies, if you're interested.

Mary: Oh, yes, very definitely.

Mats: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mary: Yes, so many of these titles and authors, we don't know the details about them and how to get these things.

Mats: The style of these works was [inaudible 14:08] . In the beginning, I was not so interested the first time I saw them but when I'm...You know better when you're older.

[laughter]

Mats: I have studied these compositions a lot and now I'm quite sure that they were composing music who was for the teaching. You could see it's different levels and some of them you would play in [non-English] and different on the violin, the third, what do you call it, when you play higher up on the finger board.

Mary: Yes. More difficult, presumably.

Mats: Yeah. Yeah.

Mary: Were you aware of this before you became a teacher yourself?

Mats: No, I don't know. You think different after a while. I think different of the first recordings I did in the 1970s when I were interested for the local music. Back then I thought, "I only were looking for the very old one, the polskas and the halling. There were a few people that really played these old tunes, but they had an old way to play the music, and they play contemporary music.

One of the most interesting fiddlers I had recorded, his name was [inaudible 16:16] he played two or three polskas and waltzes and often it was old recordings he had heard on the 78, gramophone.

Mary: The stone-cake, the steinkaka.

Mats: Gramophone. Yeah, the steinkaka, gramophone.

Mary: Yes.

Mats: The titles of the tunes were [non-English] , it was, "Old Hawaii Songs." They were very popular in Sweden. We have an English [inaudible 17:09] and he played a Hawaiian guitar. [music sounds]

[laughter]

Mats: When I listen to it 10 years later, I was listening in the way how he played, it was in a very old tradition, his notes and his way to use the bow, and everything. Maybe this [non-English] is one of the oldest tradition, oldest way to play music in that environment, but the music was composed in the 1930s.

Mary: The tradition didn't come with that particular set of music, but with the musician.

Mats: Yeah. He was just playing in this small village. He didn't play chromatic, for example, when you [hums] , that's not usual in Swedish folk music. In some of these modern music, for example, there was an accordionist, Calle Jularbo, very famous.

Mary: Very famous.

Mats: He did recordings in the States, as well as other countries in Europe. I think he recorded 1,500 records. Here he play [inaudible 18:53] . In Värmland, he wasn't well known, he were a big star in Dalarna when he was living with the old accordionists he met and he composed music at [inaudible 19:03], for example, that's him.

Mary: Oh, yes.

Mats: He met the woman he called Elin in [inaudible 19:19] , and he composed a waltz, "Drömmen Om Elin." This Drömmen Om Elin goes [hums music]. This chromatic, was very usual at the '40s and the '50s.

[inaudible 19:42] , he didn't play it like this, he played [hums music], because he hadn't heard, he didn't play these chromatic things.

He played with a drone, he plays double stops, but I haven't heard it because it [inaudible 20:08] and fiddlers don't play that. You understand what I mean?

Mary: A tune that's just no longer played. You have heard a...

[crosstalk]

Mats: He played in an old way, but it was a modern tune, less accomplished.

Mary: You recorded him, you said.

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: You caught that before it disappeared.

Mats: I also got recordings from his son, because at this time when I recorded shortly before he died, I think he was 84 years, this was 1982, and five years before that, he was on the hospital, he was very ill. They thought that he should die, so they recorded him.

He was sitting at the hospital in his bed and playing and playing and playing because they wanted to have his music. He played 50 or 60 tunes and maybe that's why he become better.

Mary: That's remarkable if you're in your sickbed. I'm surprised the hospital personnel didn't come in and say, "Stop." [laughs]

Mats: The music cured him.

Mary: Really?

Mats: Yeah. He was living for about six or seven more years. [laughs] I met him in 1982. He died in 1984. It was great.

Mary: [laughs] That was quite some story. Music has many values, doesn't it? How did you happen to be doing these recordings in the '70s?

Mats: In the 1970s, it was a folk music wave as well as a part of a green wave interest for it. It comes from the city. It started earlier in the States in the end of the 1960s, these folk songs.

Mary: Mm-hmm, in the 1960s, that's right.

Mats: "Partridge," and all of these folk songs and they learn. In Sweden, we call it "folk music vogue," and from the beginning it was in the town. It was the reaction to this urban society and people wanted to know their roots in the music, in the dancing, the way to live, to eat, and everything.

In Europe, it started in Hungary with Budapest. Have you heard about the [inaudible 23:18] group, young musicians who went out to the country, and interviewed, and reconstructed old traditions in Hungary?

They took it back to the city and built up dance places. They're called "danzhaus." This come to Sweden. In the cities, danzhaus, dance house, a place where people can meet to make music and dance were common. Almost every big city in Sweden have a danzhaus in the '70s. Many of them are still arranging music and dance.

Mary: That's good to know. [laughs]

Mats: Yeah. At that time, at the 1960s, there were only two counties, landskap, that were known as folk music counties. That was Dalarna and Hälsingland. That's because they have an almost unbroken tradition from the early, how they play in the pre-industrial society.

Mary: That's amazing isn't it, to have an unbroken tradition or at least pieces of it?

Mats: Oh, yeah. They have it. That's why it's so strong today. That's why they built up this folk music you see as an ethic. That's because the music and dance is still very strong. Polskas have been a common music and dance all the time.

In other places in Sweden, it is a broken tradition. In Värmland, for example, we had to reconstruct it. Some started to make research, to start to look in archive all over the country, in Sweden and Gothenburg, and were studying old transcriptions and would listen to old recordings to try to reconstruct the old way to play the polska.

The first revival in the beginning of the 1900s when Andersson, it started 1906 at the [inaudible 26:17] , Andersson, he were walking around in the forest and he couldn't hear the old cattle calls. He couldn't hear the old cow horn, so he asked, "What is happening?"

At that time, the spelmanslag, as we say, were started. The folk music were getting organized. That's when [inaudible 26:54] were founded and started. It was the head of all the county, landskaps, organizations, spelmanslag.

Every county in Sweden have spelmanslag. Värmland Spelmanslag started 1929. The first head of this, the boss of the organization, what is it?

Mary: Well, a president or a chairman?

Mats: President. The president of this, his name was [inaudible 27:43] . Maybe you have heard it. He was the face of the music from Värmland.

Mary: Hold on just a second here. We can keep talking. [laughs] Thanks George.

Mats: He also recorded records earlier. He was one of the official names in Sweden, in Swedish folk music. He played in a very classical way. He had also learned to be an artist in classical music in Rothenberg. He was collecting music. He wrote it down in notes and have a very big collection of music from Sweden.

He were traveling around most parts of Sweden and he had lectures. He talked about. Is it lectures?

Mary: Yes.

Mats: About this and he played. He was a professional folk musician. Every landskap county had their official name, fiddler. They were having concerts, but they never ever were playing to dance music. [inaudible 29:27] , he became little bit later, one of these officials, persons who were having concerts and lectures about local folk music.

In Värmland, when I were interested in the 1970s, I started to play in 1963 in the music school in first grade and my first teacher was [inaudible 29:59] from Jämtland. We played classical music. When I was tired of that, he says, "Now we leave the book. Now we leave the notes. Now we'll just play folk music for fun."

He learned me by some of the old tunes that he had learned from his grandpa who was the pupil to [inaudible 30:31] , who was a very famous Jämtland spelman. I was playing traditional folk music from the beginning, but I didn't know anything about what it was at that time because I was too young.

In the 1970s, when these folk music waves, folk music was popular. You could hear it on the radio. Many and me started to asking us, "Why don't we have these old music and dance music in Värmland?" The fiddlers at that time, they played so fast, so you couldn't dance to it because it was concert music. They were playing on the [inaudible 31:39] we called them. They were playing on the scene.

Mary: On the stage?

Mats: Yeah, on the stage. They were stage musicians, not dance musicians. Also, the old polska dance were written down and described and there was also one old film from the western part, [inaudible 32:13] polska.

When we started this reconstruction of the Värmland folk music and dance, then we compared the contemporary music with old archived stuff, recordings and videos, and the notes, old notebooks. It was the tool to reconstruct it. That have been my work for about 20, 25 years.

Mary: Ever since.

Mats: Ever since, yeah.

Mary: Did you find in these comparisons that in the music, some of the tunes existed, but the manner of playing them had changed or the musicians had forgotten them?

Mats: Yeah. These fiddlers that were well now and official fiddlers in Värmland at the time, when I started in the 1970s, they were playing in a literary tradition.

[laughter]

Mats: They have learned everything from notes and they have no idea of what the dance was. These notes were written down in the end of 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s. The old fiddlers at that time, they had played folk dance when they were young, in the middle of the 1800s.

Mary: Already at the turn of that century, the dance attached to music had diminished.

Mats: In the middle of the1800s, were many new modern music come to Sweden. It was popular music from the continents. It was waltz and schottische, polka, mazurka, and the accordion, one, two rows accordion come. It was lots of influences. People were playing and dancing.

That was a real tradition. It was a living tradition, because people love new things. That's why tradition is progressing. They want to learn something new. Sweden also became a more and more industrial country. From the beginning, the most people were living in small villages. They didn't know so much about what's around them, so they're conserving.

Mary: The urbanization was a very significant feature then in the change in the music, because you can get the imported ideas [inaudible 35:43] here?

Mats: Yeah. One thing, probably the most things that they were learning to play the notes. Every population and culture who are going from...

Mary: An oral tradition.

Mats: ...an oral tradition to a literacy tradition, that is a big change. That's what happened.

Mary: Yesterday when we were talking, you had a definition of what is regarded as traditional or folk music that you accept. Maybe you could talk a little about that.

Mats: You could define folk music in at least two ways. One way, a very common way, that is the music from a local place that were learned by ear and so on. That's the folk music. You dance local, and it's local variance of different songs and dance music. That's a common definition of folk music.

You could also look at the word "folk music" as that's the music in a community, who the majority of the people use, listen to and dance. If we should use this definition today in Sweden, then I think it should be the [inaudible 37:45] , if you say.

[laughter]

Mats: Popular music with the roots in rock and roll and the Swedish hambo dance and swing, because in the 1950s, you can hear dance music in the country. People still had accordion and violin as the most dominating instruments.

In the villages what we call, samhallerk, where industrials were settling down, the people wanted to hear the dance orchestra. It could be horns, playing by horns. In the 1930s, the jazz come to Sweden, around then, recordings. It was big band music.

In the 1950s, you can hear a lot of styles in Sweden. Some play the hambo dance with accordion, [non-English] and some play fiddle, the old tunes, schottische and polska. Some played with German [inaudible 39:28] , [hums beat].

1956, and some also play the contemporary jazz from in the States. Bebop, for example. I have recordings from Karlstad. You could buy notebooks where you could learn how to play the bebop, and that's interesting.

Mary: When that style made it to Sweden, were the instruments used local or the instruments that were available?

Mats: Yeah. Accordion, for example. Accordion was a very popular jazz instrument in Sweden, and that was because the folk roots. It was a dominating instrument in the early 1900s.Today, we're talking about, in Sweden, we talk about mångkulturell, [non-English] , when many...

Mary: Popular culture. Would that be?

Mats: Yes. You have it in California, many cultures, mass cultures.

Mary: Yes. "Diversity," I guess is the code word right now, but a lot of different cultures together.

Mats: Yeah, you have Swedish, you have the German tradition, you have the Anglo-Saxons, and you have the American just in one. In this mess of...

[laughter]

Mats: ...genres, music styles, the rock and roll came to the villages with Bill Haley and the cinema. They could look at it, they could listen to it, and they started to play it.

In 1958, I think, they had a competition for the Värmland Rock-and-Roll King and his name was Sven-Erik Magnusson. He played clarinet. They called him "Slottsbron's Benny Goodman," because he played swing.

Mary: He must have been pretty good.

Mats: Oh, yeah. He was pretty good. He played together with Ingvar Karlsson, who was maybe [inaudible 42:23] , very good. He played swing with an accordion. He played hambo dance. In this time, if you play dance music, you had to have a drummer, so they played on clarinet, accordion and drums.

Then Elvis came to town and they must have an electric guitar and an electric bass. They started Sven-Ingvars, the first name of the clarinetist and the accordionist, Sven, and Ingvar, that was Sven-Ingvars. They were a quartet in the start, and they are still playing.

This spring they have played in a restaurant in Gothenburg since February, middle of February, to the middle of May, and they have played from Wednesday to Saturday every week, and the place is full. They are going to play also from August to November. It's 90 percent, they have sold tickets to 90 percent. They are very, very famous and popular in Sweden.

Mary: The music that they play, is it danceable music? They dance to it too.

Mats: Yeah, because at first they played real rock and roll, traditional rock and roll. It was" Jailhouse Rock," and...

[crosstalk]

Mary: "Rock Around the Clock."

Mats: ...Rock Around the Clock, and all that stuff. Then people want to dance. They want to dance foxtrot, and they wanted to dance jitterbug, and they started to play. They played to dance,

and then they had to play for three hours, maybe and they haven't sold many hits from the USA yet. They had to play the common music. They started to play the old Swedish music in rock-and-roll way.

[phone rings]

Mary: Excuse me.

We're back here at Nordic Heritage Museum. Today is Thursday, the 26th of April, and once again we have Mats Berglund [laughs] chatting, and we're just yakking away here. We'll pick up where we left off yesterday, we hope.

Mats: Yeah. We talked about this group Sven-Ingvars, who I work nowadays in the project to build exhibition about this group in their hometown of Slottsbron, in [non-English] , the place where the people in olden time during the 1900s have parties and they also have danced.

When they started in the 1950s, they were playing swing music, they were playing hambo dance music and they were playing some of...Well, Elvis came into town and many young musicians started to play rock and roll.

[inaudible 46:21] , they started to play dance music. The dance music, you could say, is a mixture of rock and roll, Swedish folk music and folk music and dance and swing. They started to play the Swedish old tunes for the [inaudible 46:46] and they did it in rock and roll with electric instruments. This was in the beginning of the 1960s.

Today we have a word for it, "dansband," dansbandsmusik, and you have big famous groups like Vikingarna. They are real big in Sweden. Those who started this kind of dance music, it was Sven-Ingvars. They are still playing. As I said they have a show down in Gothenburg all this year. That's interesting.

Mary: This is the one that's been sold out.

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: [laughs] They have a new folk music there.

Mats: Yeah. It's interesting to compare this music with the old traditional music because you can see many things that are almost the same. It's the most people in a society who listen to this music and they dance to it, and the musicians are playing by ear. If you should compare a contemporary dance music with the old traditional dance would be this dansbandsmusik.

Mary: Where in all of this development, we're talking about fairly recent times, where did the, well what I've called "folk fusion," and maybe that is the term that you're using, groups like this and hitting on that, what was the development that led to that?

Mats: It started in this folk music vogue I mentioned. In about 1970s, many people were starting to make research and one of those people who started to dive in the old art or archives was Leif Stinnerbom. He's a friend of mine and he's also father to Magnus Stinnerbom, who is a member of Hedningarna who had a concert.

Mary: Whose picture is out in the hall there. [laughs]

Mats: Yeah. Leif Stinnerbom, at that time, his name was Leif Olsson, he started to study in Gothenburg University. He had a special work about [inaudible 50:11] , for example.

At that time, some of these young people who started to research, they also have a special opinion that you must, and maybe it's a special way to look at the word "tradition," they thought that if a tradition should be alive, you had to develop it. You understand?

Mary: Yes, let it evolve.

Mats: Yeah, so they invited new instruments. I think Leif Stinnerbom, he was one of the first who started this, what you call "fusion music." He invited two musicians, one jazz, who played jazz guitar, and one who played flute and bass clarinet. [inaudible 51:26] played the second violin and they called the group, Groupa.

Mary: Oh, yes.

Mats: Groupa and they started, I think, in 1977 or something.

Mary: They've been around a while.

Mats: Oh, yeah. They have changed members. Nowadays, Leif, he is not a member of the group anymore. Leif is working with theater.

Mary: That's a change. [laughs]

Mats: He runs a theater. He makes theater with the telling tradition, and with the costumes and the folk music and the dance.

Mary: Oh, that's not such a change.

Mats: I worked with him and he have a lot of different projects with Selma Lagerlöf, old stories from Selma Lagerlöf. " [inaudible 52:43] ," for example. He had built up a theater in [inaudible 52:50], which is not so far from Mårbacka, where Selma Lagerlöf is living.

He also play some and his son, Magnus, is a professional folk musician today. In the 1980s, several groups started to play and in the end of 1980s, [inaudible 53:20] was started. In the beginning of the '90s, [inaudible 53:32] , and now it's many groups that are almost professional between the place and they make tours all over the world. It's a big interest for the Swedish fusion folk music.

Mary: What do you call that in Sweden? What do you call that genre?

Mats: We ain't got no special name for it.

Mary: There is no name for it. [laughs]

Mats: No, no.

Mary: I'm trying to think how it's been described around here. "Folk rock," was one of the things and one of the terms.

Mats: No terms are common. Here, in one record I have seen, I saw that they called it...What the heck was it? I don't remember now, but we got no special name for it.

Mary: Yeah, Northside publishes recordings from a lot of these groups. They sponsor festivals that they call "Nordic Roots Festivals," with that.

Mats: It was last weekend?

Mary: There was one in Minneapolis very recently, yes. That poster that's in the hallway was during one of the other tours that was earlier this year. Not all of the groups made it out here, but there were four or five groups in the Minneapolis. "Nordic Roots," I was wondering if that might have been one of the recordings you're thinking of.

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: Well, where do you fit in all of this? What do you do?

Mats: As I told you, about the spelmanslag and the organized spelmanslags was [inaudible 55:51] and all those landskap spelman, and besides that you got the folk dancers. They didn't cooperate, but they had the same ideology. Beside these two groups, young people started to ask themselves, "Are this really old tradition of what we see they all are playing in this classical way?" We started to research.

These people were organized in what we call [non-English] and you could say some of us [laughs] are not conservative but we want to play in the traditional way. Some try to make experimentell...What's that in...?

Peter Michaelsen: Experimental?

Mary: Experimental music?

Mats: Experimental, yes. This group project was from the beginning experimental, and many of those experiments they didn't work.

[laughter]

Mats: Some worked very well. Those experiments that wants to create dance music, they have the best chances to be lucky, to make success.

Mary: They have a ready audience.

Mats: My decision, I want to make music, play music, traditional music. I like to meet other [inaudible 58:12] , but I don't want to make a fusion of it. I don't want to make a new genre, because many of the folk musicians that they want to meet the jazz musicians in some form of improvisation, but they can't do it well.

I don't make improvisation because there's so many that do it much better than me. It's interesting to meet other genres and sometimes, it works, and sometimes, it don't work.

[laughter]

Mats: Now, I play with a trio with not traditional folk musical instruments, cello, and the soprano sax, and violin.

Mary: What will be the name of this trio?

Mats: From the beginning, it was the last name of it, but the other guys are two students, so they thought that we should call it "Mats Berglund's Trio," so that's the name of it. I have a demo of this. We can listen to it if you like on CD. That'd be interesting. [laughs]

Mary: This has not yet been published?

Mats: No, it will be, I hope a record on September on Giga Company.

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Mary: Have you published something with this trio before at all?

Mats: No, we have been to a television program festival in Italy last May. That's why this trio was created.

[music begins 60:23]

Mats: This is a halling from Finn school.

Mary: Is this the halling that you learned by any chance? No?

[background conversation]

Mats: This halling we make a medley with a polska, very special polska from Finn school. We call it [non-English] , a very special three-beat, where the accent is on the first and second part.

Mary: Is that on this?

Mats: Yeah. It comes now after this. Here it is. Maybe, you know Sverre Halbakken?

Mary: By name.

Mats: Yeah. He had danced this polska. He was in Mendocino in the beginning of the 18th, so people in Los Angeles who have been on his course, they danced to this polska, so I played it in Los Angeles.

Mary: This should be a hit.

Mats: It's interesting, because no one dance it in our group, no longer.

[laughter]

Mary: [inaudible 62:53]

Mats: They're very good musicians. It's not easy to play a cello folk music.

Mary: For this, yeah.

Mats: He plays cello, just like that. I play the violin. [laughs]

Mary: There's a whole lot more space to move around isn't there?

Mats: Oh, yeah.

Mary: That's lovely.

[music ends 63:37]

Mary: Do you want to play a little more? Just put it on hold there. That was cello?

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: You were on fiol.

Mats: Fiol, yeah. Cello or soprano saxophone.

Mary: I couldn't even detect the sax in there.

Peter: It was mostly [inaudible 63:57] .

Mary: I should mention that Peter Michaelsen is here too, clicking away on the computer over there and putting in a word here and there. This will be issued soon?

Mats: In September, I think it could be recording.

Mary: You had another recording with you. You mentioned that you have only one copy left.

Mats: Left, yeah.

Mary: Which one is this?

Mats: "Gränslandslåtar" is the name of it. It's together with three other fiddlers from the western part of [inaudible 64:41] I think?

Peter: Yes.

Mats: As a teacher. I play solo and do it together with these friends of mine that I have played the last five, six years together with. They're very good fiddlers. This is Göran Håkansson and Fredrik Lundberg. This is Anders Nordlöf. He's also a very good dancer. He's a dancer from the beginning.

Mary: Do you find that if musicians are dancers also that they make better dance musicians?

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: That would certainly make sense.

Mats: Oh yeah, I think so. My opinion is that those who play the best dance music, almost all of them are good dancers.

Mary: That's true around here too, wouldn't you say, Peter? Most of all the musicians also...

Mats: "What is good dance music?" is the next question.

[laughter]

Mats: There are many opinions about what is good dance music.

Mary: What is your opinion?

[laughter]

Mats: Well, my opinion is that if the dance you are dancing works with the music, then it's good dance music. That depends on what kind of dance it is. Now we are almost in the discussion about this polska dance music. What is real good polska dance?

In Sweden, we have a very few dances that you can say is in an unbroken tradition. "Rättvik's Polska" is one of them. All the other is compositions. They have wrote them down on paper. After that, then some people are of the opinion that you can't do it in any other ways.

Mary: Than the way it's written down?

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: If this information goes public, that's going to burst a lot of bubbles. [laughs]

Mats: Oh, yeah.

Mary: There are that few. Rättvik's Polska, you mentioned. I can't think of others that are an unbroken tradition.

Mats: Yeah. I don't know any more, because the polskas environment, they are written down on paper in the beginning of the '80s. Both [inaudible 68:00] Polska and [inaudible 68:02] Polska is only one informant. They were women both. They were both over 80 years when they did this [inaudible 68:16] . If you talk about it, the nearest you can get living tradition is this [inaudible 68:29] Polska.

Mary: I was hoping you would lead to that. Tell us a little about that.

Mats: I have a film. I have a video. It was filmed in 1927. Then, when they did this film, the [inaudible 68:48] invited folk dancer to come and dance for the camera. These [inaudible 68:59] the folk dancer, they started in the middle of the 1920s. They were traveling around Värmland, the western part of Värmland and they interviewed all the persons about the dance.

They danced different parts of it. When they come to Stockholm, the first question was, "Now we had to make this in one way so we can see what is happening." Then they gave instructions that everybody should do the same thing at the same time, because if they don't, they couldn't see what's happening.

In the instructions that the people have given these people who were interviewing was that everyone who dances, they do it with their own body, in their own way. All these parts, you shouldn't put them in one special order.

Mary: You do it as the spirit moves you?

Mats: Yeah. That's interesting, because there are many places, I've heard many who say, "In the old time, there was a word for a very good dancer. They call it "stor dansare," big dancer. It could be two couple or one couple, but when a stor dansare was dancing, then all the other made space, so he could show his dance. The special for stor dansare was that he never were doing the same dance twice.

Mary: The same way.

Mats: The same way, because he should improvise. The tradition have, what we say "ramar."

Peter: Frames.

Mats: Yeah, frames, and between the frames they have a lot of things they could use, but not in a special way.

Mary: In that case there must be a lot of interaction between the dancers and the musicians.

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: Is there one or the other that leads in this case? Is it the musician that determines when he moves to the B part, the C part...

Mats: No.

Mary: ...or is it what the dancers do that inspire that?

Mats: I don't know. I play a lot to dance and I think it's, very important to have contact with a dancer. If the dancers are good, you have a dialogue. The dancers can inspire me as a musician and I can inspire the dancer to do things that they don't even know they can do.

[laughter]

Mats: This I think is common for all dance music all over the world, this communication, because music is communication and dance music is even more communication than other music. When you listen it's one-way communication...

Mary: True.

Mats: ...but you have a dialogue when it's live.

Mary: One of the things I was wondering about is if, when you play for this particular dance, if the way you play is similar to the way a Norwegian springar would be played, where they'll play five times through a little cell, and then as the spirit moves, then move on to a different cell, do you have that kind of freedom in the tunes that you play with that?

Mats: I have the freedom because I'm not a note musician.

Mary: A note musician. [laughs]

Mats: I don't think that these notes, transcriptions, are a Holy Bible, because, I don't know if we talked about it, note is...I think we talked about it. You can't describe the music.

Mary: With notes and with notations?

Mats: It's just to remember the melody. You can't try to explain things. You can compare it with language, you can't write down a local dialect with the letters.

Mary: You gave an example of something like this when we were talking yesterday. You were humming a tune that is now done with a slightly different phrase ending.

Mats: Yeah, because the music notes is like a stair with steps, but the old traditions, old folk music traditions, they have another scale. We call it blue notes.

Mary: Blue notes in there.

Mats: The notes, symbols are only chromatic half-steps, would you say?

Mary: Mm-hmm.

Mats: You can only write down...

Peter: That's right. You have to resort to some funny symbol like an up arrow or a down arrow if you want to indicate one of the blue notes in between the classical [inaudible 76:20] .

Mats: Yeah, but you could never make a sharp [knocks twice] . You can't describe a blue note in there. Just as you could sign it, if it's a little bit higher, you make an arrow up or down. That's why I think that nowadays we don't have the problem because we can record, make recordings.

Mary: What a difference, and for dancers, not only the music, the visual.

Mats: Many wants to have it in notes because it's one way to...They write down the beginnings, for example so they can remember.

Mary: Remember a tune.

Mats: Remember a tune, but you shouldn't play the whole melody.

Mary: I've often encountered something of this sort when I've asked musicians to, "Listen to this tune and tell me what the name of this tune is." [laughs] A lot of musicians don't know the tune names any more than I do. Well, certainly, more than I do. You, as a musician, do you

frequently know a tune by remembering not the name but remembering a start? If somebody said to you, "Play..."

Mats: We ain't got so many names on the old tunes. They are all mostly pols. Some of them, you have a [inaudible 78:02] name.

Mary: You rely on the humming-a-few-bars routine? [laughs]

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: Interesting. [laughs]

Mats: I don't know how many tunes I know but it must be many hundreds.

Mary: You've been playing, you said, since 1963?

Mats: Yeah. I started first degree in 1963. I had classical lessons on this Music Gymnasium College in May, of the 1970s, after that I had played folk music as more, in the beginning, as a half-professional to say and since '90, professional musician and teacher.

Mary: Yes. While we're on this, tell us a little bit, what you are doing or what you've been doing since the beginning of the '90s.

Mats: My ordinary job is as a curator at Nordic Museum. Work at a music archive.

Mary: Is it specifically a folk music archive?

Mats: Yeah, that's how you define the [laughs] words "folk music," but...

[laughter]

Mary: That's right.

Mats: ...the most part of it is traditional folk music with roots in the pre-industrial society, you can say. The music learned by...

Mary: Specifically, Värmland.

Mats: Yeah. While the music don't think about borders, and probably kings and political decisions [laughs] , and not even the people in the borderline does it, so, I can't put my finger on [inaudible 80:13], because that's so big and you've got different areas that have their own.

Mary: The borders shift, the cultures shift.

Mats: "Tradition areas," we can say it, culture area. Do you have any words for it?

Mary: Well, pretty much that cultural zone, cultural area.

Mats: If you can see an area that have a special dialect in their way, too.

Mary: Even those dialects probably overlap at some point. Moving into the next dialect, there's going to be some areas where...

Mats: Oh, yeah. When you look at Scandinavia, Scandinavian folk music, you can see. You look at transcriptions and you listen to the recordings and compare it, you can define one big area in this borderline world and was special for its triplets in the polska. Triplet means three notes at one [thumps] beat.

This is a big area, almost 60, 70 Swedish miles is about 700 kilometers from south to north. It's many common things in this area. We're the same polska, triplet polska. Halling is a common dance. Also the language, on the Swedish side you have many Norwegian words in the language. Also in the way how to build houses.

You got more Norwegian way to do it in the western part of Dalarna than you've got in the eastern part of Dalarna, for example. In the middle of [inaudible 82:54] and you have very much together with Västerdalarna. That's why they have [inaudible 83:04] , little barns up in the forest, and they let cattle, they have the cattle in the forest during the summer.

Mary: That's still going on?

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: For those people who still have farms.

Peter: They call it...?

Mats: [83:20]

Peter: It's Norwegian.

Mats: It's Norwegian, yeah. Many people met on this [inaudible 83:31] . Then it was [inaudible 83:34] and it transformed from the Värmland side, the corridor.

Mary: You touched on something you had mentioned a couple of days ago about the different terms for many of the dances...

Mats: Yeah.

Mary: ...that are more generally known in Sweden under more generic terms.

Mats: You know the famous Linnaeus who traveled around Sweden and make...?

Mary: The botanist.

Mats: Yeah, the botanist. He makes families and gave the flowers Latin names, and he put [inaudible 84:21] on everything. Yes, that's the same. I think it's this tradition that spelmanslag or folk dancers, and they should put [inaudible 84:32] . It's Linnaeus tradition...

[laughter]

Mats: ...to put [inaudible 84:39] and provenance to every music and every dance. Every little small village should have their own variant of polska.

Mary: You were indicating that they don't always even call it polska.

Mats: No. Polska was a common name in the beginning of 1900s, but local they said, "springar," or "springdans," [inaudible 85:16] , pols dance. Lots of...

Mary: These all refer to basically the same body of dance material.

Mats: Oh, yeah.

Mary: Just different names.

Mats: Different names and also different variants.

Mary: We encounter in eastern Norway the same notion, different names for...

Mats: Oh, yeah. In one small area, Ingarö, they have three names. Polska dance, [inaudible 85:47] , or springdans. They have three different names in a very small area.

Mary: Were there any of the old tunes, old dance old tunes perhaps, but old dances that were in a duple meter? Anything that was in two-four, or four-four...

Mats: No.

Mary: ...that were in the old traditions?

Mats: Yeah, but this is very old, and we got some reminiscences of it in the transcripted material. That's in the wedding ceremony, because music and dance was very important in the wedding ceremony and in, Värmland, for example, the first dance, couple dance, the bride should dance, and she should do it with a preacher.

On the Norwegian side, [inaudible 87:02] , for example, the food were more important. The chef, the man who were boss for the kitchen should dance, [inaudible 87:18], as they say.

Mary: Oh, more important than the preacher. [laughs]

Mats: Yeah. He should have the first dance with the bride.

Mary: What is that dance?

Mats: It's two-beat. What do you call it?

Mary: Duple meter, or two-four or three-four.

Mats: Duple meter. Yeah, it's two-four. Before the dance was started, they were dancing something they called [non-English] . Then, everybody who was on this party.

Mary: At the wedding party, mm-hmm.

Mats: At the wedding party, they were walking in from the polonaise in two-beat into the dance hall, and they played a special melody. I should have my fiddles, I could play. [hums]

They walked, and they walked, and they raised their hands. In the finish of the tune, the people were standing around the room, and they gave space for the bride to do the first dance. Then this polonaise in two-beat went over to three beats like [hums] , and so on. This was very old, in the beginning of the 1800s. In several places, we got the same information.

Mary: That same historical transition from the duple to a triple meter that then ended up being just one meter, triple meter for the whole thing. You do the promenade in triple meter.

Mats: Yeah, because when the Polish dance, the verse tells as it comes from Poland, come to Sweden first to the upper-class and then with two parts, one in two-beat and one in three-beat, so that's why. In the beginning, it was part of the wedding ceremony. Well, I think it was used in many places.

Mary: That's an interesting development of a folk dance that trickled down from the upper classes instead of from the folk going to the upper classes like a lot of central European dances do.

Mats: Yeah. They call it [non-English] .

Mary: [laughs] We are approaching the end of this tape. If you want to chat more, we can put another tape in, or we can wrap this up in three minutes or so?

Mats: Is it any more you want to know? [laughs]

Mary: It's been fascinating hearing all of this, and I know there are about 17 days more [laughs] of information that you carry around with you. Maybe, 87 days. This has been a wonderful addition, particularly, what I guess inspired some of this was the Värmland fiddler that is on one of these tapes here. You've given us wonderful stories about the tunes and the...

Mats: Yeah. There are a lot to tell, I think. I'm very interested to look at these recordings. Especially the recordings if it's something that I know, so, yeah.

Mary: Well, we can set up some trades and some copies of things for you, as you've volunteered some copies of things that you have. It occurs to me that one of the things you need to do is to sit down and write a book.

Mats: Yeah.

[laughter]

Mary: Well, with that, let me thank you very much for spending the time.

Mats: Yeah, thank you very much.

Mary: Boy, you've kept me just enthralled here.

Mats: I hope we can go on with this sometimes.

Mary: I hope so. Well, you must come back again. Certainly, if Peter has anything to say about it, you probably will. I think Peter has a lot to say about it. [laughs] Well, thank you, both of you.

Mats: Yeah, thank you.

Peter: Sure.

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