

# Performing Norwegian American

## The Construction of Identity through Performances of *Bygdedans* and Norwegian-American Old-Time Music in the Upper Midwest, 1900–1970



Laura Ellestad



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Cover image: Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling,  
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## Abstract

This comparative study examines the music culture of the Norwegian-American communities in five states of the American Upper Midwest (Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) between 1900 and 1970, investigating the shifting ways in which performances of the two music genres of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music functioned to construct heterogeneous Norwegian-American identities during a period of major social, cultural, technological, political, and economic change in the United States. Through case studies of two historical performers, Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus, the study examines a selection of performance contexts for each genre, analyzing the musical expression of diverse layers of identity through these contexts. The study also investigates how a combination of global and local flows and forces contributed to processes of musical change and exchange in the Norwegian-American music culture, and furthermore, how these processes reflect diverse processes of identity construction.

This qualitative, interdisciplinary study draws on theory and methodology from a range of humanities and social science disciplines, including ethnomusicology, anthropology, sociology, migration studies, cultural studies, performance studies, folklore studies, and media studies. The approach towards the study of the musical performance of Norwegian-American identity is grounded on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework centred on concepts of social identity (particularly ethnic and diasporic identity), performance, and globalization theories as connected to ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin's framework for the study of subcultural musics (Slobin, 1993). The strategy of inquiry combines historical research and case study research. Data collection was accomplished through archival research, qualitative interviews, fieldwork, and the collection of qualitative documents, audiovisual materials, and artifacts. Data management and analysis involved the use of a relational database, spreadsheets, and computer-assisted data analysis software. As a supplemental tool, I have also learned and performed music from the repertoires of several historical performers investigated in this study.

Through analyses of multiple examples of musical interplay drawn from the collected data, the study found that Norwegian-American musicians interacted with global and local cultural flows and forces through three broad processes of interplay: intersubcultural interaction (i.e. interactions with musicians of various ethnic groups settled in the region); the use of supercultural materials (interplay with various popular music genres transmitted through a diversity of channels and media, including travelling entertainment, sheet music, phonograph recordings, and radio); and interplay via the diasporic interculture (direct and disembodied interactions between Norwegian-American musicians and Norwegian musicians). Further, these processes of interplay were found to reflect two main dynamics of Norwegian-American

identity construction: plasticity, permeability, and ethnic boundary negotiation; and positioning and mythmaking processes. Through case studies of performers Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus, performance contexts were found to have served important functions related to identity construction, including the reconstruction of idealized notions of Norwegian national and regional culture; the display of compatibility between ethnic cultural practices and American ideals; and the affirmation of loyalty to Norwegian homeland cultural traditions. The investigation has also shown that performances functioned as outlets, or frameworks, for the reflexive regulation of emotions and self-worth, and as intermediaries for immigrants facing complex issues of adaptation to American society.



# Sammendrag

Denne komparative studien gransker musikkulturen i norsk-amerikanske samfunn fra 1900 til 1970 i fem delstater i det amerikanske øvre Midtvesten (Iowa, Minnesota, Nord-Dakota, Sør-Dakota og Wisconsin) i perioden fra 1900 til 1970. Studien undersøker hvordan framføringsformer av de to musikksjangrene bygdedans og norsk-amerikansk *old-time music* på ulike måter bidro til å skape mangfoldige norsk-amerikanske identiteter i en periode med store sosiale, kulturelle, teknologiske, politiske og økonomiske endringer i USA. Ved casestudier av to historiske utøvere, Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling og Daniel Aakhus, blir et utvalg av framføringskontekster tilknyttet hver sjanger undersøkt. Studien undersøker også hvordan globale og lokale strømninger og krefter bidro til endringer og utvekslinger i den norsk-amerikanske musikkulturen og videre hvordan disse prosessene avspeiler ulike prosesser bak identitetskonstruksjon.

Studien er kvalitativ og tverrfaglig og bruker teori og metoder fra en rekke humanistiske og samfunnsvitenskapelige disipliner, inkludert etnomusikologi, antropologi, sosiologi, migrasjonsstudier, kulturstudier, performance-studier, folkloristikk og mediastudier. Arbeidet tar utgangspunkt i begreper om sosial, etnisk og diasporisk identitet, samt *performance* og globaliseringsteorier knyttet til etnomusikologen Mark Slobin's rammeverk for studier av subkulturell musikk (Slobin, 1993). Studien anvender både historisk basert forskning og case-studieforskning. Data er hentet fra arkiver, kvalitative intervjuer, feltarbeid, samt dokumenter, audiovisuelt materiale og annet tilgjengelig materiale. I analysedelen har relasjonsdatabase, regneark og datamaskinassistert kvalitativ dataanalyse (CAQDAS) blitt benyttet. Som et supplement i arbeidet har jeg også innstudert og fremført musikk fra repertoaret til flere av de historiske utøverne som er forsket på i studien.

Et funn i forskningsarbeidet er at norsk-amerikanske musikere interagerer med lokale og globale strømninger gjennom tre typer prosesser: *intersubcultural interaction* (interaksjon med musikere fra ulike etniske grupper bosatt i regionen), bruk av *supercultural* materiale (interaksjon med forskjellige populærmusikksjangre formidlet gjennom ulike kanaler og medier, inkludert omreisende underholdningsmusikere, noter, grammofonplater og radio) og samspill via *the diasporic interculture* (direkte og indirekte interaksjoner mellom norsk-amerikanske og norske musikere). Disse samspillprosessene reflekterer på sin side to dynamiske forløp ved norsk-amerikansk identitetskonstruksjon: formbarhet, permeabilitet og etnisk grenseforhandling på den ene siden og posisjonerings- og myteskapingsprosesser på den andre. Casestudier av de to utøverne Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling og Daniel Aakhus viser at framføringskontekster var viktige for konstruksjonen av identitet, inkludert rekonstruksjon av idealiserte forestillinger om norsk nasjonal og regional kultur, påvisning av kompatibilitet

mellom etnisk kulturell praksis og amerikanske idealer og en bekreftelse av lojalitet til norske kulturtradisjoner. Undersøkelsen har også vist at musikalske uttrykk fungerte som utløp eller rammer for refleksiv regulering av følelser og egenverdi, og som kulturelt bindeledd for innvandrere som sto overfor kompliserte spørsmål om tilpasning til det amerikanske samfunnet.

## A Note on Translation and Use of the Norwegian Language

Quotations drawn from Norwegian texts are translated into English throughout the dissertation. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Norwegian to English are my own. Original Norwegian passages are provided in footnotes throughout. The same applies to quotations drawn from French and Swedish texts.

Where Norwegian terms are used, I use the *bokmål* form of written Norwegian. Plural forms of Norwegian words are used where appropriate (i.e. taking the *-[e]r* ending). For example: *kappleik* (singular) and *kappleiker* (plural); *stevne* (singular) and *stevner* (plural).

A “Glossary of Terms” with definitions of recurring Norwegian and other technical terms can be found in Appendix 5.



Music's special force derives from its ability to animate imaginal spaces and—perhaps more importantly—to penetrate and traverse margins and boundaries of the self, of bodies and entire nations and regions. Music offers a veritable soundtrack to the transnational movements of people, ideologies, capital, and mass media images (à la Appadurai 1996). Music goes wherever people travel, but it also travels where they cannot go or where they might hope to go, sounding at the same time spaces of hope, desire, and longing. . . . [M]usic identifies boundaries at the same time that it marks the potential for their amelioration and reconfiguration. In this way musical practices construct, reconfigure, and challenge cultural imaginaries by offering a space for the sounding of memories and desires and for the creative play with identities, margins, and boundaries.

— Jonathan Holt Shannon, *Performing al-Andalus: Music and Nostalgia Across the Mediterranean*, 2015, pp. 7–8



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# 1 Introduction

Throughout and beyond the roughly 100-year period—circa 1825–1925—during which Norwegians immigrated en masse to the United States, music remained a powerful cultural force through which Norwegian Americans constructed and reconstructed notions of individual and group identity. Through performances of two music genres—*bygdedans* music and Norwegian-American old-time music—Norwegian Americans negotiated and extended identities and boundaries, expressing narratives of the past, individual and collective dreams, loyalty to the homeland, and compatibility with American ideals. These musical practices also enabled Norwegian-American groups and individuals to examine and express immigrant subjectivity, serving as outlets for various psychological pressures and as contexts for the exploration of the complex challenges of life in America.

This study investigates the construction of Norwegian-American identities through performances of *bygdedans* music and Norwegian-American old-time music in the American Upper Midwest between 1900 and 1970. The term “*bygdedans* music” refers to the oldest forms of traditional instrumental dance music in Norway and encompasses a variety of triple- and duple-meter dance forms, including *springar*, *gangar*, and *halling*. The term “Norwegian-American old-time music” refers to a more recent genre of instrumental dance music that developed in Norwegian-American communities. The genre is one of numerous sub-genres of what historian Victor Greene terms “ethnic old-time” music found among various, primarily European-American, ethnic groups in the Upper Midwest, all of which share a common alignment towards waltz, schottische, and polka tune types (Greene, 1992, p. 3).

Investigating the performance of heterogeneous Norwegian-American identities through these two genres is of importance because it contributes to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of musicians, audience members, and the dynamic role of music performance in the production of social and cultural meaning. Music can express many layers of identity, including nationality, ethnicity, race, class, and gender; moreover, individuals and groups construct diverse elements of their identities through music. While the sounds and structures of music contribute to the performance of identity, the contexts for the performance of music also possess a unique capacity to construct ideas of place, group and individual identity, and memory. As ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes observes, “the musical event . . . evokes and organises collective memories and presents experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity” (Stokes, 1994, p. 3). Distinct sociomusical performance contexts can therefore be viewed as sites for the construction of identity; in this study, I examine specific performance contexts for both *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music, analyzing the musical expression of diverse layers of identity through these contexts.

This study also investigates how, during a period of major social, cultural, technological, political, and economic change in the United States, a combination of global and local flows and forces contributed to processes of musical change and exchange in the Norwegian-American music culture, and furthermore, how these processes reflect diverse processes of identity construction. By investigating how Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with musicians from neighbouring ethnic groups in the Upper Midwest; with various popular and mainstream music genres disseminated via travelling entertainment, sheet music, phonograph recordings, and radio; and with the Norwegian homeland music culture, I consider how these processes of interplay reflect various dynamics of Norwegian-American identity construction.

The impetus for this study stems from several previous studies I have done of Norwegian-American performers of *bygdedans* music in North America (Ellestad, 2010, 2011, 2014). While I have formerly focused on Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddlers who emigrated from the Valdres region, the current study takes a much broader view in that it deals with both *bygdedans* music and Norwegian-American old-time music and is not delimited to specific Norwegian regional music traditions. This research was motivated by an interest in understanding the complex social meanings of both genres within the same historical era and in the same region—the Upper Midwest.

## 1.1 Background and Rationale for the Study

Previous studies from several academic fields, including Norwegian-American studies, American immigration studies, Scandinavian studies, folklore studies, ethnomusicology, and musicology have explored Norwegian-American social identity construction and/or the social function of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music. Previous research in the field of Norwegian-American studies has characterized Norwegian-American group identity as ethnocentric, and simultaneously shifting, fluid, and multifaceted. Furthermore, prior studies in this field have shown that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Norwegian-American group identity was constructed through various dynamic “mythmaking” processes that entailed interplay with both American and Norwegian cultures and national ideologies (D. W. Olson, 2013).

Previous research on *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest has identified central social functions associated with performances of the two genres, such as community building, recreation and entertainment, ethnic symbolism, and cultural assimilation, all of which are involved in social identity construction, although this is



generally not made explicit in the literature. Only one major study, by folklorist Anna C. Rue (2014), has explicitly addressed issues of identity construction. Rue's study investigates musical practices in the Norwegian-American music culture in recent and contemporary contexts, finding that the heterogeneity of contemporary expressions of Norwegian-American music reflects a diversity of expressions of contemporary Norwegian-American identity.

The present study addresses a need to extend discussions of identity issues within the body of literature on *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest, as well as in the field of Norwegian-American studies. As such, the study addresses several gaps identified in previous research. First, while Norwegian-American studies scholars have examined the role of various factors, such as language, religion, settlement patterns, and political life in the construction of Norwegian-American identities (e.g. Gjerde, 1996, 2002; Joranger, 2019; Lovoll, 1999; D. W. Olson, 2007; Schultz, 1994), the role of music in identity construction has not been sufficiently examined. Second, while previous research on *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music from the fields of ethnomusicology and folklore studies has discussed performance contexts and their social functions, limited research has been done on identity construction through the performance of the two genres, and a broader and more thorough investigation of identity construction is therefore needed.

Furthermore, the study addresses the need for a comparative investigation that considers both genres and the dynamic ways in which they functioned to construct Norwegian-American identities during the early and mid-twentieth century. While most previous studies mention both genres, none have taken a comparative approach; rather, prior research has tended to focus primarily on one of the two genres, often making generalizations about the other. A comparative approach, in which both genres are considered, is needed in order to better understand their complex social meanings within the same historical era and ethnographic setting.

The study also addresses a need to examine processes of interplay between the Norwegian-American music culture and various global and local cultural forces, and how these processes reflect various processes of Norwegian-American identity construction. While many past studies explore the retention, decline, and/or development of one or both genres, most have not considered what ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin calls the "bigger picture," including processes of interplay with "supercultural," "intercultural," and "subcultural" musics, structures, and forces (Slobin, 1993).<sup>1</sup>

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1 "Superculture," "interculture," and "subculture" are key terms from the comparative framework outlined by Mark Slobin in *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*—these terms are defined in Chapter Two. Slobin's framework is a central analytical tool in the study's theoretical framework and is used to analyze forms of interplay between the Norwegian-American music culture and various global and local cultural forces.

Finally, the study addresses a need to develop alternate readings of processes of musical change and exchange in the Norwegian-American music culture. While most previous scholars have discussed these processes using the concept of creolization, this concept, while relevant, does not contain the tools for understanding all of the forces at work in the development of the Norwegian-American music culture, nor does it give a full picture of the global cultural forces involved in these processes.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative, historical study is to investigate the construction of Norwegian-American identities through performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest between 1900 and 1970.

The study seeks to address the following two research questions:

*How did the Norwegian-American music culture in the Upper Midwest interplay with supercultural, intercultural, and other subcultural musics, structures, and forces? How do these processes of interplay reflect processes of Norwegian-American social identity construction?*

*How were heterogeneous Norwegian-American identities constructed through performances of the genres of bygdedans and Norwegian-American old-time music in various sociomusical contexts in the American Upper Midwest, 1900–1970?*

To address the first research question, I explore three broad processes through which Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with local and global cultural forces: inter-subcultural interaction, the use of supercultural materials, and interplay via the diasporic interculture. Furthermore, I investigate how these processes reflect various processes and dynamics related to Norwegian-American identity construction. In order to examine these processes, I analyze multiple examples of interplay drawn from a diversity of qualitative data.

To address the second research question, I examine a selection of performance contexts for the two genres through the analytical vantage point of case studies of the historical performers Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling (1869–1952) and Daniel Aakhus (1881–1969). Through these case studies, I address a diversity of performance contexts for the two genres, exploring the capacity of these events and settings to construct ideas of group and individual identity, place, and memory.

While I consider the second research question the more overarching of the two, I have arranged the research questions in this order to reflect the order in which I address the questions in the organization of the dissertation. Beginning with an investigation of processes of interplay with global and local cultural forces provides a broad historical and cultural foundation that is useful to have established before examining individual performers in greater depth. In my consideration of the two research questions I have thus chosen to begin from a broad perspective and move to the particular.

Throughout the study I draw on a large body of qualitative data, including documents (genealogical records, newspaper articles, concert posters and other promotional materials, private documents, music transcriptions), interviews (both my own, as well as interviews conducted by past researchers), and audiovisual materials (archive and commercial music recordings, photos, videos) which were collected through (physical and digital) archival research, qualitative interviews, and fieldwork in Minnesota and Wisconsin. This study builds on, and is indebted to, the ethnographic research undertaken by Kevin Hoeschen, LeRoy Larson, James P. Leary, Philip Martin, and Philip Nusbaum among Norwegian-American musicians in the Upper Midwest. By analyzing selections from the qualitative data collected by these scholars, I have aimed to develop new interpretations of previously collected data. I have also aimed to expand the data corpus in this field of research by collecting and analyzing sets of previously unexamined data.

The main ethnographic setting for this study is the American Upper Midwest. According to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Study of Upper Midwestern Cultures (CSUMC), "most arbiters apply the term [Upper Midwest] to Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (with overlap into lower Michigan, Ontario, Manitoba, the Dakotas, Iowa, Illinois, and even extending to river towns like St. Louis, Missouri)" (CSUMC, 2016). This study is limited to the area comprising the five Upper Midwestern states of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, since this was a prime region for Norwegian settlement and musical activity in the Upper Midwest.

The rationale for locating the study within the period of 1900 to 1970 is based on several factors. First, this was a period of major social, cultural, political, and economic change in the United States, during which Norwegian-American identities shifted significantly. During this period, Norwegian-American group identities transitioned through at least three eras of what historian Daron O. Olson terms "mythmaking" processes in response to various hegemonic and assimilative forces (D. W. Olson, 2013). These include the xenophobia of the first World War and the concurrent insistence on allegiance to American values; the reduction of immigration quotas brought about by the National Origins Act; the decline of the Norwegian language

among Norwegian Americans; the rise of a notion of transnational Norwegian identity from the Depression era to 1945 which aimed to enable the safeguarding and validation of the Norwegian-American self-image; and the rebirth of interest in ethnic heritage during the “new ethnicity” movement beginning in the 1960s. In the context of these substantial shifts, the social meaning of performances of the two genres also shifted considerably during this era.

Second, the period saw dramatic change in the development of the modern American music industry and various media technologies, including the emergence of the phonograph, the radio, and home recording technologies. These developments in the media landscape engendered substantial change in the Norwegian-American music culture, facilitating the dissemination of various popular music genres, new performance formats, and American mainstream ideologies. Norwegian-American reception and use of these mainstream/popular materials, formats, and ideologies can be understood as reflecting various aspects of Norwegian-American identity construction.

By examining a diversity of Norwegian-American historical performers, performance contexts, and processes of interplay with global and local cultural forces, using a qualitative, comparative approach and analyzing multiple forms of data, this study aims to contribute to existing knowledge by enhancing our understanding of how a diversity of Norwegian-American identities were constructed and expressed through performances of the two genres. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the complexity and shifting nature of the Norwegian-American music culture during the early and mid-twentieth century and the dynamic role of musical performance in the constitution of social and cultural meaning.

## 1.3 Definitions of Terms

In this section I define three key terms that are used throughout the dissertation: *bygdedans* music, Norwegian-American old-time music, and genre.

### 1.3.1 *Bygdedans* Music

The term “*bygdedans* music” refers to the oldest forms of traditional instrumental dance music in Norway and is associated with several dance types, including the triple-meter dances *springar*, *springdans*, *pols*, and *springleik*, and the duple-meter dances *gangar*, *bonde*, *rull*, and *halling*. With the exception of the *halling*, all of these dances are couple dances. According to musicologist Bjørn Aksdal, the dances stem from European couple dances from the Renaissance period and

emerged in Norway during the sixteenth century (Aksdal & Nyhus, 1993, p. 130). *Bygdedans* music can be found in a large number of Norwegian regional and local “dialects” which differ according to repertoire and playing style. Moreover, the triple-meter dance tunes can be found in various symmetrical and asymmetrical rhythms/types (Aksdal & Nyhus, 1993, p. 132). *Bygdedans* music has been played on a variety of instruments, including *hardingfele* (Hardanger fiddle), *vanlig fele* (standard fiddle), *munnharpe* (Jew’s harp), *langeleik* (a type of zither), *enrader/torader* (one- and two-row diatonic button accordion), and traditional wind instruments such as *sjøfløyte* (recorder) and *seljefløyte* (willow flute). While most of the traditional repertoire played on these instruments is *bygdedans* music, a smaller repertoire of ceremonial music (including bridal marches and other repertoire connected to traditional wedding celebrations) and *lydarslåtter* (listening tunes) also forms part of the oldest instrumental music repertoire.

While scholars have used the term *bygdedans* to refer to these forms of Norwegian instrumental dance music since the late twentieth century, musicians and audiences during the period under investigation did not use this term, but generally referred to this repertoire as *nasjonalmusikk* (“national music”) or *nasjonalspel* (“national fiddling”).<sup>2</sup> These terms are linked to the Norwegian national romantic movement of the nineteenth century, during which comprehensive efforts were made, particularly by the urban upper classes, to create a new national culture based on constructed notions of a common cultural heritage.<sup>3</sup> This involved the collection, study, and conservation of living rural folk traditions, including folklore, folk music, traditional dress, and folk customs. According to anthropologist Jan-Petter Blom, this national romantic interest in folk culture also engendered a new self-awareness and cultural pride in rural communities (Blom, 1993, p. 8). The *bygdedans* music genre therefore has strong historical ties to nineteenth century Norwegian cultural nationalism and had high cultural status among certain groups of Norwegian Americans in the early twentieth century.

Although it is not the emic term for the genre during this period, since it is a more neutral term I have chosen to use *bygdedans* throughout this dissertation.

### 1.3.2 Norwegian-American Old-Time Music

The term “Norwegian-American old-time music” refers to a more recent genre of instrumental dance music that developed in Norwegian-American communities. Norwegian-American old-time music has partial roots in Norwegian *runddans* music: the term “*runddans* music” (literally “round dance” music) refers to a newer category of instrumental dance music in

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2 Other common contemporary terms for this repertoire include *slåttemusikk* and *slåttespel*.

3 The nineteenth-century national romantic movement in Norway was related to nation-building efforts following the establishment of the Norwegian constitution in 1814.

Norway that is associated with the duple-meter dances *polka* and *reinlender* and the triple-meter dances *vals* and *masurka*, all of which are couple dances.<sup>4</sup> These dances have roots in German and Austrian couple dances and are part of a broader, pan-European repertoire of popular social dances and dance music that became fashionable across social strata during the nineteenth century (Aksdal & Nyhus, 1993, pp. 121, 153). The waltz was the first of these dance forms to appear in Norway and is the most widespread; the earliest evidence of the waltz in Norway dates from around the turn of the nineteenth century (Aksdal & Nyhus, 1993, p. 122).

*Runddans* music and its associated social dances were immensely popular in Norway during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and these music and dance forms also migrated with Norwegian immigrants to the United States and came to be referred to by Norwegian Americans as “old-time” music. The same four main tune types found in the *runddans* genre can be found in the Norwegian-American old-time genre, although the *reinlender* is most commonly referred to as “schottische” in the Norwegian-American context.<sup>5</sup> The genre is not limited to the tune types found in *runddans* music, however; in addition to waltzes, schottisches, polkas, and mazurkas, Norwegian-American old-time musicians also adopted tunes from Anglo-American folk music, including square dances, quadrilles, jigs, and reels. Moreover, as will be shown in this study, the genre incorporated repertoire from various popular music genres transmitted through channels of the mainstream media during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including minstrel songs, parlour music, ragtime tunes, Tin Pan Alley songs, Swedish *schlager* music, and early country music, to name a few.

The genre is also one of several sub-genres of what Victor Greene terms “ethnic old-time” music found among various, primarily European-American, ethnic groups in the Upper Midwest (Greene, 1992, p. 3). In the multiethnic setting of the Upper Midwest, the genre functioned as a musical “common language” in encounters with other European immigrant groups in the region, many of which shared a common alignment towards waltz, schottische, and polka tune types.

The emic term for the genre is “old-time.” In general, folklorist James P. Leary notes that the term “old-time music” began to surface in the Upper Midwest “in the early 1920s in the speech of musicians and their audiences, in newspaper ads and stories, and on the posters and business cards of assorted bands” (Leary, 2006, pp. 26–27). Furthermore, he suggests that the term

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4 The term “*gammeldans* music” (literally “old dance” music) is also used in Norway to refer to the same music genre. Arild Hoksnes argues that *runddans* is the more technically correct term of the two (Hoksnes, 1988, pp. 78–79). For consistency and accuracy, I use the term *runddans*.

5 The term “schottische” originated from the German word *schottisch*, which means “Scottish.” Some scholars suggest that the schottische has links to the waltz-like turns that were integrated into the *écossaise*, a popular European social dance of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the United States, the social dance known as schottische had become a fashionable ballroom dance form in the 1840s (Norton & Aldrich, 2011; Tilmouth & Lamb, 2001).

“emerged chiefly to distinguish dance bands whose repertoires tended to be familiar, rooted, and agrarian from those whose sounds were new, exotic, and urban” (Leary, 2006, p. 27). The antithesis of old-time music, then, was the jazz and “modern” music that emerged in American urban centres such as New Orleans, New York, and Chicago during the early twentieth century.

Since the term “old-time” is associated with many different musical repertoires, styles, and communities throughout North America, the term “Norwegian-American old-time music” is useful since it specifies the genre’s community of practice. Scholars have employed various names for the genre; the term “Norwegian-American old-time music” has been applied in recent studies (e.g. Beetham, 2005; Rue, 2009) and is used in the present study. However, for brevity and variation, I intermittently shorten the name to “old-time.”<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3.3 Genre

I identify both *bygdedans* music and Norwegian-American old-time music as “genres” throughout the dissertation. My use of the term genre does not imply that I view these forms of music as “pure” or static, nor that they can be definitively defined. Rather than conceiving of genre as a “categorizing system,” I view the concept as “fluid and socially constructed through discourse” in accordance with contemporary understandings of the term (Sparling, 2008, p. 402). Drawing on studies by Franco Fabbri (2012), Mats Johansson (2016), and Heather Sparling (2008), I understand the notion of genre as relationally defined and culturally negotiated within a community. In straightforward terms, musicologist Franco Fabbri defines musical genre as “a set of music events regulated by conventions accepted by a community” (Fabbri, 2012, p. 188).

Genre can be understood as musical behaviour—i.e. a set/framework of rules, conventions, codes, practices, or patterns—that is socially constructed. Since these conventions are constructed and negotiated both within a community and in a dialogic relationship with other genres, they can change “as a result of any ideological shift” (Sparling, 2008, p. 407). Moreover, genre is also situated “relative to its history and tradition” (M. S. Johansson, 2016, p. 47). Genre systems may therefore be viewed as part of a “dynamic set of interrelationships that are constantly shifting” (Sparling, 2008, p. 413).

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6 Various other names for the genre have been used in previous research. In his study, LeRoy Larson refers to the music under investigation as “Scandinavian-American folk dance music” even though his fieldwork was limited to Norwegian-American informants in Minnesota. In a sense this is logical, as the Norwegian-American old-time repertoire includes a large number of tunes of Swedish origin. Larson does not discuss his choice of terminology, however, and the reader could readily interpret the term as a universal label for repertoire performed by Norwegian-, Swedish-, Finnish-, and Danish-American musicians, thus implying a single, shared repertoire among Scandinavian-American folk music performers. Although this may be the case to some extent, deviations between the various Scandinavian immigrant groups, in terms of ethnic old-time music repertoire, do exist. Similarly, Rue (2014) intermittently uses the terms “Scandinavian-American old-time” and “Scandinavian old-time” in her study.

I have struggled at times to justify conceiving of Norwegian-American old-time music as a “genre.” As an outsider, it was difficult for me to establish a full sense of the musical practice; indeed, the more layers of musical interplay with local and global impulses I discovered, the more elusive and indeterminate the genre’s “framework” and boundaries seemed. Furthermore, it was not clear that conceiving of a Norwegian-American old-time music genre was the most appropriate way of conceptualizing this music; it may be equally relevant to locate the music within a broader framework such as the panethnic terms “Scandinavian-American old-time,” “ethnic old-time,” “polkabilly,” or “Upper Midwestern old-time.” Moreover, this music has not been institutionalized through organizations or formal systems of education, although Julane Beetham argues that this lack of institutionalization has had some positive effects:

those who play Norwegian-American old-time music have benefited from not having a formalized milieu as there is in Norway. Although there are standard tunes, there is more flexibility in how they can be played. Also, there are no rigid rules about what can or cannot be played in certain local areas. (Beetham, 2005, p. 48)

Unlike *bygdedans* music, Norwegian-American old-time music does not tend towards “boundary maintenance and the preservation of gatekeeping institutions” (M. S. Johansson, 2016, p. 55). The genre, along with other “ethnic old-time” genres in the Upper Midwest, has also remained largely overlooked by scholars and in broader accounts of American folk music (Leary, 2006, pp. 4–5). The genre is characterized, then, by openness and porousness, breadth and heterogeneity, and by its continuous development throughout the early and mid-twentieth century through interplay with global and local cultural forces. At the same time, it also functioned as a shifting ethnic symbol that had the capacity to draw links to fluid notions of Norwegiananness, as well as re-negotiating ethnic boundaries. In this sense, I argue that the notion of a Norwegian-American old-time music genre is relevant.

## **1.4 A Brief History of Norwegian Migration to the American Upper Midwest**

This section gives a very brief history of Norwegian migration to North America and the Upper Midwest, with the aim of setting the stage for discussing the Norwegian-American music culture during the early and mid-twentieth century. Comprehensive studies on Norwegian migration have been undertaken by Odd Lovoll (1999, 2007), Ingrid Semmingsen (2003), and others, and it is recommended that readers interested in thorough histories of Norwegian migration to North America consult these.



The Upper Midwest has historically been one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the United States. Iroquois, Sioux, Ojibwe, Dakota, Ho-Chunk, and Algonquin peoples were among the first to inhabit the region (Leary, 2006, p. 10; Studies). French and British fur traders and missionaries began arriving in the area in the early 1600s, and other groups began settling in the region in the early 1800s, including Yankees from New York, as well as French and British Canadians. The timber boom that began in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota in the early nineteenth century attracted groups of immigrant lumberjacks, including Irish, Canadian, Scandinavian, and Indigenous peoples. Likewise, the lead, copper, and iron mining industries that had gotten underway by the mid-nineteenth century drew workers from England, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and later from Croatia and Slovenia. Germans also immigrated in large numbers, particularly to Wisconsin, starting in the mid-nineteenth century. Other ethnic groups of European origin that settled in the region during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include Swiss, Polish, Ukrainian, Welsh, Dutch, Belgian, Czech, Slovak, Russian, Italian, and Greek immigrants.



Figure 1: Map of the Upper Midwest. By Christa Brelsford, ORNL.

The first group of modern-day Norwegians to immigrate to North America set sail from Stavanger on the sloop *Restauration* on July 5, 1825 (Østrem, 2006, p. 8).<sup>7</sup> Many of the 52 migrants on board the *Restauration* (often referred to as the “Sloopers”) were sympathizers of Quakerism or the Haugean religious movement and were opposed to the Lutheran Church of Norway.<sup>8</sup> One of their main motivations for immigrating was the pursuit of religious freedom. While the quest for freedom of religion was one of the principal reasons for early migration, researchers have pointed to a number of structural, economic, demographic, and social “push” and “pull” factors that contributed to emigration from Norway. “Push” factors include poor economic conditions and a lack of prospects in Norway; the wish to break free from political restrictions; agricultural mechanization and a reduction in the agricultural labour force; crop failures; famine; and population growth, which surpassed available local resources in many rural areas. “Pull” factors include the pursuit of higher income, economic prosperity, and upward social mobility; the widespread circulation of notions of America as a “promised land,” including information about agricultural opportunity in America; and encouragement from those who had already emigrated (Lovoll, 1999, pp. 21–25).

The main period of Norwegian migration lasted from 1825 to 1929. Although the Sloopers’ departure in 1825 is recognized by historians as the beginning of the era of Norwegian migration to North America, it was not until 1836 that a steady, annual stream of emigration became established (Lovoll, 2007, p. 8). During the late 1830s and early 1840s several hundred migrants departed each year, rising to 1,600 in 1843 (Semningsen, 2003, p. 32). According to Odd Lovoll, between 1825 and 1990 over 900,000 Norwegians emigrated to North America (Lovoll, 1999, p. 7). Lovoll also points out that the bulk of Norwegian emigrants—87 percent—left Norway between 1865 and 1930 (Lovoll, 1999, p. 8). The so-called period of “mass emigration” from Norway occurred between 1865 and 1915 (Lovoll, 1999, p. 31). Norway’s rate of emigration was the second highest in Europe—only Ireland’s was higher (Haugen, 1967, p. 4).

The Sloopers aboard the *Restauration* established what became the first modern-day Norwegian settlement in America, the Kendall settlement, in New York State. Norwegian Cleng Peerson (1782 or 1783–1865)—an important figure during the early years of the Norwegian migration

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7 According to Østrem, it has become a tradition within Norwegian migration history to claim that these first emigrants left Norway on July 4 (American Independence Day); however, the customs clearance protocol from the port of Stavanger specifies that the *Restauration* set sail on July 5, 1825 (Østrem, 2006, p. 8).

8 Norwegian soldiers who had been imprisoned in England during the Napoleonic wars are said to have brought the Quaker movement to Norway after 1814 (Østrem, 2006, pp. 7-8).

period—acted as an agent for the Sloopers and had purchased the land prior to their arrival.<sup>9</sup> In 1833 Peerson went in search of new land to the west, travelling by foot from western New York to La Salle County, Illinois, where he found a “promised land” on the Illinois River in the Fox River Valley. Peerson returned to the Kendall settlement to report his discovery, and on his recommendation, many of the Kendall settlers set out for the Fox River Valley. A new settlement was established here in 1834. The founding of the Fox River settlement (later called Norway, Illinois) was a pivotal moment in Norwegian migration to North America: it set the stage for a surge of Norwegian migration to the American Upper Midwest. In the years following its establishment, the Fox River settlement served as a “fertile ‘mother settlement’ for numerous Norwegian settlements farther westward and northwestward” (Qualey, 1934, p. 133).

As the American frontier expanded further west, many Norwegian immigrants set out from established “mother” settlements, such as the Fox River settlement, forming “daughter” settlements on frontier land. These mother and daughter settlements created a network which steadily extended its reach to form a “chain” of Norwegian settlements, the bulk of which were concentrated in the Upper Midwestern region. Indeed, Norwegian migration patterns during the nineteenth century are usually characterized as “chain” or “stage” migration, a repeating process in which a small group of immigrants, typically hailing from the same region in Norway, split off from an established settlement to create a new settlement on the frontier (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 17).

Early Norwegian rural settlements were generally bound to strong regional ties and were usually populated by immigrants originating from the same rural district in Norway. This phenomenon, which Nils Olav Østrem calls a “stock effect” and Lovoll terms the “*bygd* phase” of Norwegian settlement, resulted in specific communities being populated by immigrants from the same rural district in Norway, which enabled the preservation and reconstruction of elements of Norwegian regional culture, including dialects and other local traditions (Lovoll, 2007, p. 13; Østrem, 2006, pp. 65–66).<sup>10</sup> This phenomenon was also strengthened through contact with the home district, which occurred via personal correspondence, trips to visit Norway, as well as the arrival of new immigrants from the same rural area.

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9 Peerson, who is listed in the Tysvær parish register for 1800 under the name Klein Pedersen Hesthammer (Semmingsen, 2003, p. 20), has been referred to as “the father of emigration,” “the pathfinder,” and “Peer Gynt on the prairie” (Lovoll, 1999, p. 12).

10 According to Lovoll, the term *bygd* refers to “a topographically and socially defined community of farmsteads. . . . [I]t may also be used for the administrative township (*herred*), the parish (*sgn*), or even for a group of these units. To a Norwegian, the word connotes a sense of sharing, of living together; it represents a unified area of customs and traditions” (Lovoll, 1975, p. 2).

### 1.4.1 Traditional Music in Early Norwegian-American Settlements in the Upper Midwest

In many early Norwegian settlements, these tendencies towards regional attachment and cultural conservatism often encouraged the continued use of traditional music.<sup>11</sup> The fiddle and Hardanger fiddle were among the main folk instruments in Norway during the nineteenth century, and there is a significant amount of written documentation of fiddle playing in early Norwegian settlements. For example, a written history of the town of Vermont, Wisconsin includes a brief description of how one of the town's pioneers, Valdres fiddler Arne Steinsrud (1799–1878), who immigrated to America with his wife and nine children in 1852, “entertained at weddings and other ‘merrymakings’” with his wife, Berit Olsdatter Røang (Vermont, 1977, p. 228). Another fiddler, Pål Knutsen Løytnantsdreng (1786–1867) from Nore and Veggli, Numedal, immigrated to the Upper Midwest with his family in 1842 or 1843, and according to one account he was requested to play at the wedding of a member of the Myhli family, whose roots were in Hallingdal (a region that neighbours Pål Knutsen's home region of Numedal). G. S. Mogan's account of the wedding provides a rich description of the event:

The wedding lasted, as in the old fashion, for “three whole days,” and Pål's fiddle sounded like it had in the long-gone days of youth. It goes without saying that [the wedding] was full of home-made wine and liquor and lefse and sour cream porridge and fermented fish, such that no one else could make here in America, and everything else good that could be had when the Myhli people held a banquet, and in these fleeting days the old fiddle player felt young again. (Flatin, 1939, p. 74)<sup>12</sup>

Performances of fiddle music in the context of transplanted Norwegian regional customs also took on new meanings for early settlers. In the same source as above, Tov Flatin describes the significance of fiddle music in these contexts for early Norwegian immigrants:

Just as indispensable in its way was the fiddle—for both Pål himself and for his closest countrymen. Of course he continued playing in his new home. And the settlers maintained the old customs when it came to baptismal celebrations and weddings and festive days and fun and play. These customs were even often a good deal more highly regarded over there in the foreign world, and they somewhat healed the

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11 However, there is also ample evidence of early Norwegian-American communities that were opposed to fiddle music and dancing due to the prevalence of pietistic religious attitudes. These attitudes were often a continuation of prevailing attitudes in the home district in Norway.

12 “Bryllupet varte som på gammel vis ‘trio heile dagar til ende’, og Påls fele gav klang som den hadde gjort i de forlengs henrundne ungdomsdage. Det sier sig selv at det var fullt op av hjemmelaget vin og brennevin og lefse og rømmegrøt og rakefisk, slik som ingen annen kunde lage den her i Amerika, og alt annet godt i dette av Myhli-folket holdte gjestebud, og den gamle felespiller følte sig i disse stakkete dage som ung igjen.”

wounds that homesickness and sorrow had dug into the minds of those who were advanced in years when they emigrated. (Flatin, 1939, pp. 73–74) <sup>13</sup>

Literary accounts of early Norwegian settlements in America, such as Ole Edvart Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, also illustrate some performance contexts for traditional fiddle music in these communities. In a description of caravans that sometimes paused for advice and respite in the Spring Creek settlement in Dakota Territory—the main setting of Rølvaag's famous novel—Rølvaag writes about rare occasions of fiddling and dancing among the caravan folk:

The caravan usually intended to stop only long enough for the women folk to boil coffee and get a fresh supply of water; but the starting was always delayed, for the men had so many questions to ask. Once in a while during these halts a fiddler would bring out his fiddle and play a tune or two, and then there would be dancing. Such instances were rare, but good cheer and excitement accompanied these visits. (Rølvaag, 1991, p. 306)

## 1.5 Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter has introduced the study, establishing the context, background, and importance of the research topic. The study's purpose and main research questions have been presented, and the key terms of *bygdedans* music, Norwegian-American old-time music, and genre have been defined. Furthermore, a brief history of Norwegian immigration to the Upper Midwest has been given.

The overall structure of this study takes the form of seven chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter Two introduces core theoretical perspectives that underpin the interpretation and analysis of performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest. Chapter Three presents a thematic review of literature related to the topic of this study, outlining significant findings and identifying gaps that justify the relevance of the study. Chapter Four outlines the research design, giving an account of the methods and strategies of inquiry used to carry out the research. Chapter Five addresses the study's first research question, exploring three broad processes through which Norwegian-American

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13 "Og likeso umissande på si vis var fela—både for han Pål sjølv og for hans næraste landsmenn. Visst er det då at han heldt fram med speling på den nye heimstaden sin. Og nybyggjarane heldt uppe dei gamle skikkane når det galdt barnsøl og brudlaup og høgtidshelgir og leik og moro. Ja, det var helst so at desse skikkane var endå ein god mun gjævare der burte i den framande verdi og batna noko dei sår som heimlengt og sagnad og sut hadde gravi i hugen til dei, som var noko tilårskomme då dei vandra ut."

musicians interplayed with local and global cultural forces. Chapter Six addresses the study's second research question, examining a selection of performance contexts for the two genres through the lens of case studies of performers Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus. Finally, Chapter Seven summarizes the contributions of the study and makes some recommendations for future research.

In the next chapter, I outline three main theoretical paradigms that shape my interpretation and analysis of performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest: 1) social identity and constructs of ethnicity and diaspora; 2) performance theory; and 3) globalization theory as connected to ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin's comparative framework for analyzing subcultural musics (Slobin, 1993).

## 2 Theoretical Perspectives

### 2.1 Introduction

This study of the musical performance of Norwegian-American identities is grounded in an interdisciplinary framework that draws on theories from ethnomusicology, anthropology, sociology, migration studies, cultural studies, performance studies, folklore studies, and media studies. This chapter outlines core concepts that underpin the interpretation and analysis of performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest: social identity and constructs of ethnicity and diaspora; performance theory; and globalization theory as connected to Mark Slobin's framework for the study of subcultural musics (Slobin, 1993).

This study was carried out within an ethnomusicology paradigm. All the central theories employed in the study have been utilized in ethnomusicological research since the 1980s and 1990s. Taking a broader view, the study also falls within the research paradigm of constructivism. The ontology of constructivism assumes a relativist view of reality, which posits the existence of multiple realities both individually and co-constructed, and which are local and specific in nature (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2017). In other words, constructivism entails a belief that diverse realities are constructed through individual, lived experiences and social exchanges with others. The epistemology of constructivism assumes that knowledge is formed through individual experiences and is co-created by the researcher and the research subject (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In the first section of the chapter, I discuss constructivist theories of social identity drawn from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. I focus mainly on frameworks of ethnic and diasporic identity for the interpretation of Norwegian-American social identities. In the second section, I introduce theories and concepts from the field of performance studies that inform my discussions of performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest. This study is oriented towards the anthropological-theatrical strain of performance studies influenced by Richard Schechner and Victor Turner, and central concepts and ideas drawn on from this approach include cultural performance, *communitas*, liminality, and performance as cultural process. In the final section, I discuss perspectives from globalization theory, briefly introducing Arjun Appadurai's framework for the analysis of the global cultural economy (Appadurai, 1990), as well as presenting aspects of Mark Slobin's comparative framework for analyzing dynamic, overlapping local and global cultural forces in complex subcultural music systems (Slobin, 1993).

## 2.2 Social Identity Constructs: Ethnic and Diasporic Identities

Ethnomusicological research on themes of music and identity have been prevalent in the field since the early 1980s. In his essay, “Reflections on Music and Identity in *Ethnomusicology*,” which surveys recent ethnomusicological research on the topic, Timothy Rice found that the first article to appear in the journal *Ethnomusicology* containing the word “identity” in the title was published in 1982, and that by the early 2000s, the relationship between music and identity had become a major theme in the discipline (Rice, 2017, pp. 140–141). While the general study of identity can be divided thematically into studies of individual self-identity and studies of group identity, most recent ethnomusicological research on themes of music and identity tends to focus on the study of group identity, exploring topics such as how music-making contributes to group self-understanding and the construction of social identities (Rice, 2017, p. 144).

There are many examples of ethnomusicological research that explore the function of music in the construction of localized, minority group identities. Relevant early studies that also contain a comparative dimension include Manuel Peña’s study of Texas-Mexican conjunto music, which demonstrates how the development of a distinct conjunto musical style can be linked with intra- and interethnic socioeconomic struggles of working-class Texas-Mexicans in relation to Texas society (Peña, 1985); and Peter Manuel’s study of three genres of flamenco music in Spanish society, which shows how each genre participates in the construction of social identity among three oppressed groups (Manuel, 1989). One example of research analogous to the topic of the present study is Paula Savaglio’s study of the musical self-representation of Polish Americans in Detroit, which discusses how two music ensemble types, Polish choirs and polka bands, each functioned differently to “define the ethnic community, across both inter- and intra-group boundaries” (P. Savaglio, 1996, p. 36; 1992).

This study addresses Norwegian-American group identities, employing theories of identity from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies to examine the construction of shifting and emergent Norwegian-American social identities in the Upper Midwest through the two genres of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music. I draw mainly on two related social identity constructs: frameworks of ethnic and diasporic identity. Much like Savaglio, I use the framework of ethnic identity to examine how these two distinct music genres contributed to Norwegian-American ethnic self-definition.

On a broader level, the study is informed by two contrasting general understandings of group identity in the humanities and social sciences, namely essentialist and constructivist



(or anti-essentialist) positions, and contends that a diversity of Norwegian-American identities—some of which can best be understood as having essentialist tendencies, and others of which are seen as constructivist—were performed in various settings through the two genres. While the essentialist position conceives of identity as a permanent, stable, eternal set of characteristics shared by a group, the constructivist position views group identities as unstable, fluid, and subject to a continuous process of construction (Rice, 2017).

Writing about cultural identity in the context of Black Caribbean identities, Stuart Hall outlines essentialist and anti-essentialist understandings. For Hall, the essentialist position

defines “cultural identity” in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective “one true self,” hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed “selves,” which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as “one people,” with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. (Hall, 1990, p. 223)

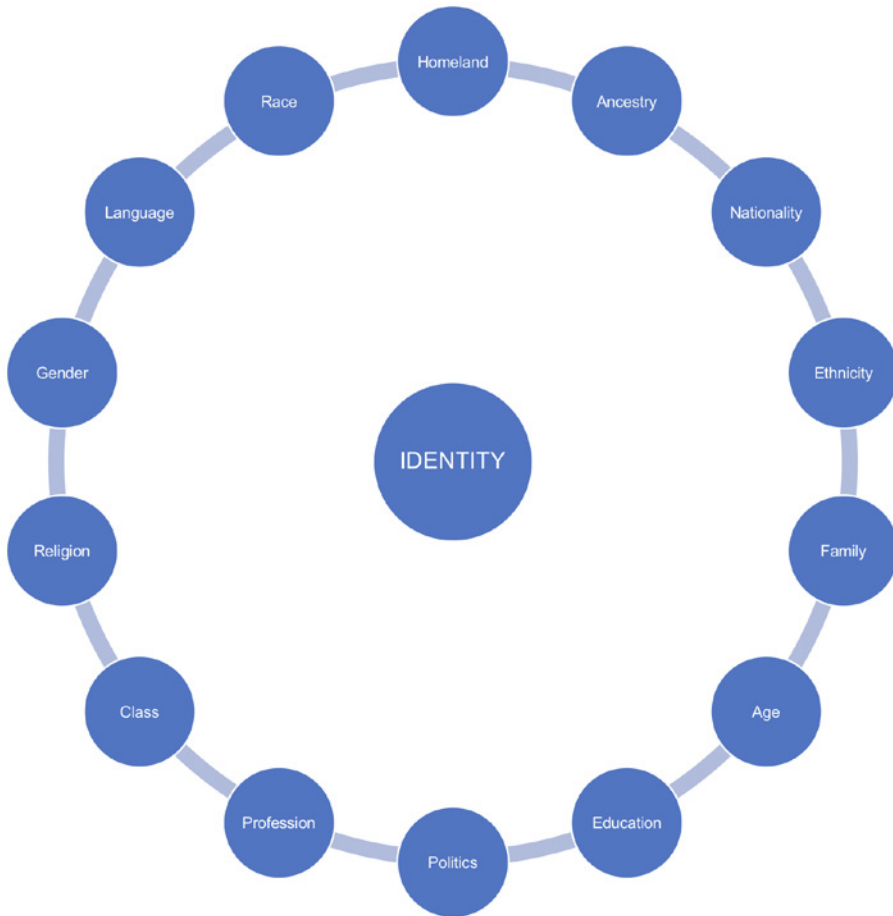
Conversely, Hall’s anti-essentialist understanding views cultural identity as disposed to a continuous process of “becoming” as well as of “being”; as “subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall, 1990, p. 225). According to Hall, anti-essentialist cultural identity

belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. . . . Far from being grounded in a mere “recovery” of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall, 1990, p. 225)

In this view, cultural identity is not a fixed, factual essence or “law of origin,” but a “positioning.” It is always “constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” and entails a “politics of identity, a politics of position” (Hall, 1990, p. 226). The anti-essentialist position also implies the possibility of “multiple, shifting and fragmented identities that can be articulated together in a variety of ways” (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 273).

Within the constructivist understanding of identity, I espouse the view of identity as a collection of “overlapping layers,” or “points of difference” where any individual identity is seen as

comprising a multitude of aspects and statuses, including language, birthplace, age, gender, family, ancestral background, social class, political outlook, education, profession, religion, nationality, and ethnicity, some of which are ascribed, and others of which are achieved (Figure 2) (Eriksen, 2001). Many of these individual layers are themselves unstable: the meanings of “Norwegianness,” “whiteness,” “working class,” and “Lutheranism,” for example, evolve constantly (Barker & Jane, 2016).



*Figure 2: Dimensions of identity, adapted from Eriksen (2001, p. 38).*

As mentioned above, the study draws on frameworks of ethnic and diasporic identity to examine how performances of Norwegian-American old-time music and *bygdedans* music participated in the construction of shifting and emergent Norwegian-American social identities

in the Upper Midwest. These two frameworks are related, but distinct; each framework is associated with specific aspects of the immigrant experience. While the ethnic identity framework is useful for addressing how music is used to construct, negotiate, or maintain ethnic boundaries in specific contexts, the diasporic identity framework is helpful for examining how music is used to express experiences of displacement, relationships with a homeland, and notions of collective identity constructed around memory, sentiment, and homeland culture. I outline each framework in greater detail below.

### 2.2.1 Ethnic Identity

To examine how performers and performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music participated in the construction of Norwegian-American ethnic identities, I use a social constructionist model of ethnicity grounded in Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth's seminal "ethnic boundary" theory (Barth, 1998) or what sociologist Richard Jenkins calls the "basic social anthropological model of ethnicity" (Jenkins, 2008). Barth's conceptual model centres on the notion that boundaries between ethnic groups are continuously constructed, maintained, and negotiated over time through social interaction, thereby rejecting an essentialist notion of ethnicity as a closed system containing fixed cultural content. A social constructionist model of ethnicity stresses the "fluid, situational, and dynamic character of ethnic identification, organization, and action"; it emphasizes the nature of ethnicity as the "product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture" while also being "constructed by external social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions" (Nagel, 1994, p. 152).

Richard Jenkins outlines what he calls the "basic social anthropological model of ethnicity" as consisting of four elements or propositions:

- In ethnicity the emphasis falls on cultural differentiation (although identification is always a dialectic between similarity and difference);
- Ethnicity is based in shared meanings—"culture"—but is produced and reproduced during interaction;
- Ethnicity, rather than being fixed or unchanging, is, depending on situation and context, to some extent variable and manipulable; and
- Ethnicity, as an identification, is both collective and individual, externalized and internalized (Jenkins, 2008, p. 42)

As per Jenkins's third element, ethnicity can also change situationally (Nagel, 1994). Taking Norwegian Americans as an example, various "levels" of ethnic identity are possible (e.g. regional, national, ancestral), and depending on where and with whom an interaction takes place, an individual can choose the most socially relevant level.

In addition to the four propositions of the social constructionist model, questions of power relations should also be considered in relation to the construction of ethnic identities. As ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes notes, ethnic groups are often "defined or excluded in terms of the classificatory systems of the dominant group" and must therefore define themselves in relation to the classificatory systems of the dominant group (Stokes, 1994, p. 20). In a music context, the exclusion of the broad, panethnic Upper Midwestern European-American musical style that James P. Leary terms "polkabilly" (and which encompasses a diversity of ethnic "old-time" sub-genres, including Norwegian-American old-time music) from the "canon" of American folk music traditions, and the dominance of Anglo-Celtic musics within the canon, is one example.

Martin Stokes notes that in the context of music, the social constructionist approach to ethnicity enables us to explore "questions of how music is used by social actors in specific local situations to erect boundaries, to maintain distinctions between us and them, and how terms such as 'authenticity' are used to justify these boundaries" (Stokes, 1994, p. 6). In this study I explore how a diversity of Norwegian-American ethnic identities were constructed and expressed through the two genres, and in a variety of performance contexts. Both genres contributed to the self-definition of Norwegian-American ethnicity, but each had a different function: while *bygdedans* music, and associated material culture such as the Hardanger fiddle and *bunad* (Norwegian folk costume), often functioned as shared symbols for a common, imagined past, thereby contributing to the construction of ethnic boundaries as well as cultivating diasporic interaction with the homeland, performances (and repertoire) of Norwegian-American old-time music often functioned to renegotiate and extend the ethnic boundaries of the Norwegian-American community. As illustrated here in the example of *bygdedans* music, it is important to note that while the social constructionist approach to ethnicity rejects the idea of ethnicity as something static or "pure," ethnic identities can still be constructed around signifiers that imply universality, geography, and purity (Barker & Jane, 2016).

In relation to issues of ethnic identity, then, I ask how Norwegian-American ethnic identities, and ethnic boundaries, were constructed, maintained, and negotiated over time through performances of the two genres.

## 2.2.2 Diasporic Identity

Academic discourse associated with the term “diaspora” is tangled and complex, and the meanings and uses of the term have been discussed and questioned in academia for several decades. Its use has been problematized by many theorists, and several of the issues associated with its application in cultural analyses will be outlined below. Any employment of the term in research should first acknowledge these issues, as well as the various definitions the term has been assigned over the years. In spite of these numerous issues and obstacles, I have found that employing diaspora in the constructivist sense proposed by Rogers Brubaker—as an “idiom, a stance, a claim” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 12) rather than as a distinct, quantifiable entity—has proven useful as an analytical tool for examining the extent to which musical performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music demonstrate a “diasporic stance.”

The etymology of the word “diaspora” can be traced to the Greek *diaspeirein*, which means “to scatter about” or “disperse” (“Diaspora,” 2017).<sup>14</sup> “Diaspora” is found in the Greek translation of the Bible in the phrase “*esē diaspora en pasais basileias tēs gēs*” (“thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth,” Deuteronomy 28:25). In this original, paradigmatic sense, the term refers specifically to Jews living in involuntary exile outside of Israel, and to the dispersion of Jews throughout many regions of the world (often referred to as *the Diaspora*). “Diaspora” later came to be associated with other “classical” historical dispersions, including the Armenian and Greek diasporas. Used in these senses, the term is also often negatively loaded through its association with forced dispersion, persecution, violence, oppression, and trauma.

From the 1970s onwards, “diaspora” has increasingly been used to refer to the (forced or voluntary) dispersion of any group of people from their (real or imagined) homeland. Since then, there has been an exponential increase in the use of the term across many academic disciplines. In the first issue of the academic journal *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, established in 1991, founder Khachig Tölölyan specifies that the journal uses the term “provisionally to indicate our belief that the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (Tölölyan, 1991, p. 4). In the same issue, political scientist William Safran makes a similar, critical observation, claiming that “today, ‘diaspora’ and, more specifically, ‘diaspora community’ seem increasingly to be used as metaphoric designations for several categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*” (Safran, 1991, p. 83).

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14 From *dia* (“across”) and *speirien* (“scatter”).

Safran's critical stance towards the broadening use of the term is founded in the danger of "diaspora" losing its meaning—of it being applied to too many groups and situations to be useful any longer. To avoid total dilution of the term, Safran proposed that the concept be used to designate expatriate minority communities that can be described using several of a set of six attributes.<sup>15</sup>

According to Safran, who identifies the Jewish Diaspora as an "ideal type" (Safran, 1991, p. 84), these criteria limit what can be designated a diaspora to a small number of existing and historical expatriate communities. Yet the fact that most of Safran's criteria cannot be identified based on empirical evidence, but rather are based on individual feeling or conviction (e.g. Safran's criteria nos. 3–6), points to another problem, and one of the central problems scholars have grappled with regarding the use of the term: that the concept of diaspora is ambiguous. Or, as ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin puts it, "some sort of *consciousness* of a separation, a gap, a disjuncture must be present for the term to move beyond a formalization of census data. Once analysis moves into this territory, the terrain gets very swampy indeed" (Slobin, 2012, pp. 97, italics added).

Sociologist Rogers Brubaker's 2005 article, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," also addresses recent expansions of "diaspora" in academia, pointing out that the term has come to have an increasingly weakened connection to "paradigmatic cases" such as the Jewish diaspora. Brubaker calls this phenomenon the "'diaspora' diaspora"—the dispersion of the term itself from its original meaning or "homeland." Brubaker enumerates several ways in which the term has been dispersed: first, it has been applied to a continually expanding assortment of groups, "essentially to any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space" (Brubaker, 2005, p. 3). The issue here is that by applying the term to an ever-increasing number of cases, "diaspora" becomes essentially universalized, thus losing its power of identification. Second, the term has been dispersed in "disciplinary and social space"—this points to its application, in academia, across the social sciences and the humanities, as well as its widespread use in the media and popular culture. Third, Brubaker refers to a "proliferation of terms," which concerns offshoots of the word itself.<sup>16</sup>

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15 These are: "(1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral,' or foreign, regions; (2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements; (3) they believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; (4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; (5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; (6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship" (Safran, 1991, pp. 83–84).

16 These include the nouns diasporicity, diasporism, diasporization, diasporology, diasporistics; and the adjectives diasporist, diasporic, and diasporan (Brubaker, 2005, p. 4).

Nevertheless, Brubaker suggests that it is possible to single out three central criteria that are intrinsic to nearly all definitions of diaspora: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary-maintenance. Dispersion is the most broadly recognized criterion. There are various ways of interpreting dispersion, from its strict meaning in the sense of forced dispersion, to the more diffuse “any kind of dispersion in space, provided that the dispersion crosses state borders,” to the even broader, metaphorical sense of “dispersion *within* state borders” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5). The second criterion, homeland orientation, refers to “orientation to a real or imagined ‘homeland’ as an authoritative source of value, identity, and loyalty” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5). Brubaker points out that while this criterion was highlighted in previous discussions, including Safran’s criteria, subsequent studies (e.g. Clifford, 1994) have downgraded its importance, claiming that Safran’s and others’ strict definitions disqualify the experiences of many dispersed populations.

Finally, Brubaker’s third criterion, boundary-maintenance (which clearly invokes Barth’s ethnic boundary theory), implies the perpetuation of a discrete identity in relation to the host country/society over several generations.<sup>17</sup> While this criterion has been deemed essential in several definitions of diaspora, Brubaker points to a marked ambivalence within the field of diaspora studies: “Although boundary-maintenance and the preservation of identity are ordinarily emphasized, a strong counter-current emphasizes hybridity, fluidity, creolization and syncretism” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 6). Brubaker goes on to cite Stuart Hall, who, in his 1990 article, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” claims that the “diaspora experience . . . is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*” (Hall, 1990, p. 235).

In addition to discussing the “diaspora” diaspora and definitional criteria, Brubaker advances the aforementioned constructivist understanding of diaspora, arguing that diaspora should be conceived of as a stance, claim, or category of practice, rather than as an entity or an “ethnodemographic fact.” While many scholars have approached diaspora as something quantifiable—often as a group of individuals identified based on their ancestry—Brubaker argues that “not all those who are claimed as members of putative diasporas themselves adopt a diasporic stance” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 12). What’s more, he continues, “those who consistently adopt a diasporic stance . . . are often only a small minority of the population that political or cultural entrepreneurs formulate as a diaspora” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 12).

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17 Brubaker emphasizes that, in order to fulfill this criterion, the phenomenon of boundary maintenance must extend beyond the first generation of migrants. He points out that “the interesting question, and the question relevant to the existence of a diaspora, is to what extent and in what forms boundaries are maintained by second, third and subsequent generations” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 7).

Brubaker proposes the study of diaspora as a category of practice, which is used to “make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 12). His approach entails empirical study of “the degree and form of support for a diasporic project among members of its putative consistency,” and “to what extent, and in what circumstances, those claimed as members of putative diasporas actively adopt or at least passively sympathize with the diasporic stance” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 13).

In this study, I adopt this constructivist understanding of diaspora, replacing Brubaker’s “stance” with a constructivist notion of “identity.” I employ Brubaker’s criteria (dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary-maintenance) as three distinct, dynamic dimensions of diasporic identity. Following Brubaker’s criteria, as well as Kim, Zhou, and Lee’s model of diasporic identity as a new psychological construct based on an adaptation of two of Brubaker’s criteria (Kim, Zhou, & Lee, 2021), I propose that diasporic identity entails the following three dimensions:

1. A subjective experience of displacement (metaphorical or actual)
2. A relationship with a (real or mythical/imagined) homeland
3. A fluid notion of group identity founded on memory, feelings, mythology, fellowship, and a notion of homeland culture that is continuously constructed, maintained, and negotiated over time

I ask how performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music constructed diasporic identities; specifically, how did performances (and performers) of the two genres express connections to a migration experience, relationships with a homeland, and notions of collective identity constructed around memory, sentiment, and homeland culture?

## 2.3 Music as Cultural Performance

Timothy Rice asserts that within a constructivist understanding of group and individual identity, where identity is conceived as a collection of multiple layers (i.e. ethnicity, race, class, gender, etc.), the expression of each of these layers is “contingent on particular contexts and specific performances of the self in those contexts.” He continues: “[m]usic as a performance and as a context would seem to provide a particularly fruitful arena for the expression of multiple identities in context” (Rice, 2017, p. 148). If we accept that the expression of identity



is contingent on specific performances of identity (e.g. through music) in specific contexts, it follows that distinct musical performance contexts can be viewed as sites for the construction of identity. It is with the intention of analyzing the musical expression of diverse layers of identity that I have therefore chosen to examine specific performance contexts for *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music. In order to understand *how* the performance of music in specific contexts constructs identity, it is necessary not only to understand various identity constructs (e.g. ethnic and diasporic identities), but also to establish some basic assumptions about the nature of music *as* performance.

In ethnomusicology, music is generally conceived as a social behaviour and cultural practice that has broad significance in everyday life (Rice, 2014). As Rice points out, various ontological assumptions about the nature of music are often expressed in the field of ethnomusicology through metaphors that connect music to other conceptual domains; examples include “music as culture,” “music as a social and psychological resource,” and “music as a system of signs,” among others (Rice, 2014, pp. 44–45). In this study I draw on the metaphor of “music as performance,” which entails the use of theory from the broad, interdisciplinary field of performance studies.

The roots of the field of performance studies can be traced to theorists from a variety of fields, including literature, theatre, anthropology, and structural linguistics. Among those who are considered founders of the field are anthropologist Victor Turner and performance theorist Richard Schechner (Schechner, 2006, p. 13). During the 1970s and early 1980s Turner and Schechner worked, both individually and collaboratively, to draw connections between the fields of anthropology and theatre. Turner developed several concepts which have become central to the anthropological subset of performance studies, including “social drama,” “liminality,” and “communitas”; and Schechner built upon these concepts in his own work. Schechner identifies the years between 1950 and 1970 as the period just prior to the emergence of performance studies as a discipline (Schechner, 2006, p. 14). Among those theorists who were active during this period, and who have influenced the more recent trajectory of performance studies, were psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, anthropologist Gregory Bateson, sociologist Erving Goffman, and philosopher of language J. L. Austin.

Various approaches to performance theory have been used by ethnomusicologists since the 1980s (Waterman, 2019). Stone points to five main approaches (Stone, 2008, p. 136): the musicological concept of “performance practice” (which the Oxford Dictionary of Music defines as “the way in which music is performed, especially as it relates to the quest for the ‘authentic’ style of performing the music of previous generations and eras”; “Performance practice,” 2013); performance theory as developed by folklorists, particularly Roger Abrahams

and Richard Bauman (sometimes termed “performance folkloristics,” this approach emphasizes the study of “the actual behavior and social interaction of participants in the performance, and of the rules or codes and contexts of the performance”; Béhague, 1984, p. 4); performance theory that emphasizes the study of theatrical performances (as developed by Schechner and others); the anthropological approach to performance (including the concept of “cultural performance” as developed by Milton Singer, Victor Turner, and others); and the notion of “performativity” as first outlined by J. L. Austin, and later advanced by Judith Butler (which emphasizes the production of forms of subjectivity in everyday life).

In this study, I combine elements from the anthropological and theatrical approaches to performance studies to analyze how performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music contributed to the construction of various Norwegian-American social identities. In her essay on performance studies research in ethnomusicology, Waterman gathers these two approaches under the term “ethnography of performance.” For Waterman, the ethnography-of-performance approach emphasizes the process and organization of performance and highlights “not only the actions of performers but also those of audiences and organizers.” It also emphasizes “transition and transformation” and describes the “affective dimension of situated practice.” Studies of musical performances within this approach draw attention to “the role of music and sound in such processes” (Waterman, 2019, p. 147).

While Waterman, Béhague, and others emphasize the centrality of ethnography to this approach, the study of a music culture of the past precludes many of the recommended research methods. In his introduction to the edited volume *Performance Practice: Ethnomusicological Perspectives*, Béhague writes that “the ethnography of musical performance must be based on numerous ethnic views and evaluations of any musical situation, specific events, musical systems, and practices, so that the researcher will, in most cases, base his perception on the commonalities of the evaluations” and recommends that the researcher employ a variety of field techniques, particularly “those involving several forms of participation and observation” (Béhague, 1984, pp. 8–9).

While it is clearly impossible to employ present-day participatory field techniques to investigate historical performances of the two genres, my methodology for studying the historical music culture of Norwegian Americans in the Upper Midwest takes an alternative approach grounded in methods from the field of historical ethnomusicology. By collecting and analyzing an abundance of diverse evidence concerning historical performers and performances—including (recorded and written) firsthand accounts of performances, newspaper accounts of performances, concert programs and other associated performance paraphernalia, music transcriptions, audio and video recordings, and photographs—I establish a holistic understanding

of the phenomena based on a multiplicity of perspectives.<sup>18</sup> Instead of an “ethnography of performance,” this approach might be called a “historical ethnography of performance.”

Within this approach, I adopt the view of performance as a “cultural process”—and thereby of culture as performance—in the sense described by ethnographer Dwight Conquergood (Conquergood, 2013). Conquergood, who was deeply influenced by the work of Victor Turner and his notion of “cultural performance,” conceives of culture as a “vortex” of shapeless centripetal and centrifugal energies that draw inwards towards a “moral centre” while simultaneously “throwing off” formal expressions of culture. Conquergood’s striking description of his notion of culture is worth quoting at length here:

Instead of using visual metaphors, we might play around with the idea of culture as a felt flow of enabling energies swirling around an axis. These volatile energies sweep and pull in opposite directions, simultaneously exerting centripetal and centrifugal forces. The centripetal force is the power of culture to draw everything in its ambit towards the center, which is always a moral center, a cosmology. . . . Cultural processes both pull towards a moral center as social dramas are enacted while they simultaneously express themselves outward from the depths of that symbolizing, synthesizing core. That is, cultures throw off forms of themselves—literally, “expressions”—that are publicly accessible. These formal expressions of culture collect, set, heighten, frame, stylize, regulate, reproduce, refract, contain, and fix amorphous energies, drives, impulses, tensions. These heightened surfacing forms throw into bold relief the core values, virtues, and visions of a culture. Turner calls these formal expressions “cultural performances” and refers to them as “peaks” of social experience, “precipitates” from the eventful social flow that function as prismatic lenses through which one can glimpse the inner dynamics and depths of culture. (Conquergood, 2013, pp. 17–18)

Cultural performance, in the dynamic sense described by Conquergood here, and as theorized earlier on by Singer and Turner, is a central “unit of analysis” in this study. Milton Singer (cited in Turner, 1986, p. 23) conceives of cultural performances as “the elementary constituents of [a] culture and the ultimate units of observation. Each one [has] a definitely limited time span, . . . an organized program of activity, a set of performers, an audience, and a place and occasion of performance.” Turner, who built on Singer’s concept, views cultural performances as reflexive, describing them as “magic mirrors” of social life which “exaggerate, invert, re-form, magnify, minimize, dis-color, re-color, even deliberately falsify, chronicled events” (Turner, 1986, p. 42). Indeed, cultural performances do not merely reflect social reality, but “may

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18 The study’s strategy of inquiry is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four.

themselves be active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting ‘designs for living’” (Turner, 1986, p. 24). For Turner, cultural performances break down logical, rational structures, playing with their constituent parts in new, unimagined ways. He terms the unique space that is created during this process a “liminal” space.

I justify cultural performance, in its myriad forms, as a relevant “unit of analysis” in this study by once again quoting Conquergood:

Cultural performance is the appropriate unit of analysis—perhaps we should say “focus of reflection”—for the interpretive researcher because it is self-consciously available for plumbing insights into cultural process, for natives primarily, for ethnographers incidentally. . . . Cultural performances are dynamic, ephemeral, volatile, but nonetheless framed, repeated, and recognizable events. (Conquergood, 2013, pp. 19–20)

Also useful and related to the notion of cultural performance and “performance as cultural process” is Béhague’s notion of music performance as an “event and process.” Béhague recommends that the study of music performance as event and process should focus on four elements: “the actual musical and extra-musical behavior of participants (performers and audience), the consequent social interaction, the meaning of that interaction for participants, and the rules or codes of performance defined by the community for a specific context or occasion” (Béhague, 1984, p. 7).

Drawing on aspects of musical performance outlined by both Waterman and Béhague, as well as Turner’s and Conquergood’s notions of cultural performance, I orient my analysis of performances of the two genres along the following dimensions, formulated as questions:

- How do performances generate social and cultural meaning?
- How do performances reflect, transition, or transform the social life of the music culture?
- How are performances organized? Who are the actors (performers, audience, organizers)? What is the setting and time frame?
- What are the (musical and extra-musical) actions of performers, audience, and organizers?

- What rules, procedures, or codes of performance have been defined by the community for the performance context/event?
- What aesthetic preferences/discriminations are connected to performance (e.g. relating to ideas of beauty, pleasure, enjoyment, form, affect)?

By employing these questions in the analysis of performances and performance contexts for the two genres in Chapter Six, I emphasize the active, dynamic use of cultural performance to constitute social life and social meaning.

## 2.4 Music Subcultures and Global Cultural Flows

In addition to issues of social identity construction and the role of performance in the generation of social meaning, this study also engages with perspectives from globalization theory to examine the combination of global and local flows and forces that contributed to processes of musical change and exchange in the Norwegian-American music culture. I analyze these processes through an “ethnomusicology of globalization” framework that directs attention to global flows of people, media, technology, ideas, and economic forces. To do so, I draw primarily on a comparative framework for analyzing the musical interplay between “micromusics” and global cultural forces outlined by ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin in *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*. Key concepts from Slobin’s framework are outlined below, following a brief introductory discussion of globalization. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s framework for analyzing what he calls the “global cultural economy” informs Slobin’s approach and is also briefly discussed below.

While the term globalization quickly became a buzzword in the public and academic scenes of the 1990s, it is by no means an exclusively modern, turn-of-the-century phenomenon, but also a historical phenomenon that extends back, by one account, at least 500 years: Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson identify the rise of the Portuguese and Spanish colonial empires in around 1500 as a “new globalization initiative” and “the beginning of a basically irreversible process of worldwide integration” (Osterhammel & Petersson, 2005, p. 28). Globalization, much like “modernization,” is a metaconcept that “attempts to integrate . . . various processes into a single, all-encompassing development” (Osterhammel & Petersson, 2005, p. 4). In a general social scientific understanding, globalization can be defined as the “development, concentration, and increasing importance of worldwide integration” (Osterhammel & Petersson, 2005, p. 26). Most theorists agree that globalization involves

a change in the balance of power between nation-states and markets, where markets gain power. It also entails increased compression of the world—what some theorists call “space-time compression”—in the sense that increasingly rapid forms of communication enable the creation of global social relations and “imagined worlds” (Osterhammel & Petersson, 2005). Another key characteristic of globalization is its sweeping influence on culture.

The impact of globalization on culture has been discussed extensively (see e.g. Appadurai, 1990, 1996; Hannerz, 1992; Pieterse, 1994; Robertson, 1992; Tomlinson, 2002) and there are various ways of conceiving of cultural globalization. In this study, I adopt a “bottom-up” or “grassroots” understanding of globalization which emphasizes the agency of social actors in their encounters with global market forces and other global hegemonic systems. In the opposing, top-down, deterministic understanding (the “cultural homogenization argument”), the balance of power between social actors and these forces is viewed as weighing much more heavily in the favour of global forces, particularly Western capitalism and cultural imperialism, which are understood as having a homogenizing effect on local cultures (see e.g. Schiller, 1969, 1985).

Arjun Appadurai’s pivotal article, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” (Appadurai, 1990), presents a reconceptualizing of the global order that emphasizes its complexity and disjointedness, and challenges the notion of globalization as a system with a centre and periphery:

The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models. . . . The complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics which we have only begun to theorize. (Appadurai, 1990, p. 6)

To examine these disjunctures Appadurai outlines a framework for analyzing relationships between five “dimensions of global cultural flow” which he calls “ethnoscapes,” “mediascapes,” “technoscapes,” “financescapes,” and “ideoscapes” (Appadurai, 1990, pp. 6–7). All of the “-scapes” are in continuous flux. They are partly interconnected, and changes in one can lead to shifts in another. However, no single “-scape” predominates, and there is no central control or general logic to the system: relationships between the five “-scapes” are “deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 8).

Since Appadurai’s five “-scapes” are incorporated into Slobin’s comparative framework, it is pertinent to define them briefly here. By “ethnoscapes,” Appadurai means “the landscape

of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 7). This notion does not negate the existence of established networks and communities but is meant to draw attention to the constant permeation of these by mobile people and groups. “Technoscape” refers to “the global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology, and of the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 10). Appadurai emphasizes that the distribution of technologies is driven by “increasingly complex relationships between money flows, political possibilities and the availability of both un- and highly skilled labor” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 8). “Financescapes” refer to the distribution and transfer of global capital, a landscape characterized as “more mysterious, rapid and difficult . . . to follow than ever before” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 8).

Appadurai describes mediascapes and ideoscapes as “landscapes of images” that refract and inflect the disjunctures of the global order. “Mediascapes” refer “both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations and film production studios) . . . and to the images of the world created by these media” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 9). The crucial point about mediascapes is that they supply consumers with a large, transregional repertoire of mediated accounts of reality from which they can construct “scripts” of “imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 9). “Ideoscapes” refer to series of terms and images such as “freedom,” “welfare,” and “democracy” that are “often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power” (Appadurai, 1990, pp. 9–10).

Appadurai’s worldview provides a point of departure for Mark Slobin in *Subcultural Sounds*. Here, Slobin lays out a notion of a “big picture” of “interlocked world sound systems” in which subcultural musics interact reciprocally with Appadurai’s five “-scapes,” and with three types of “-cultures” (Slobin, 1993, p. 10).<sup>19</sup> For Slobin, the dynamism of music elucidates the interplay of global disjunctive flows sketched by Appadurai:

music is woven into the cultural fabric Appadurai presents as one of the most scarlet of threads, created by ever-evolving technologies, transmitted by media, marketed through high and low finance, and expressive of private and public ideoscapes of autonomy and control for shifting populations. . . . By tuning into music, we can hear the play of the -scapes. (Slobin, 1993, p. 16)

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<sup>19</sup> Slobin draws a direct link between his notion of the “big picture” and Appadurai’s “global cultural economy” (Slobin, 1993, p. 13).

The aim of the comparative framework outlined by Slobin is to “draw attention to . . . the global within the local and vice-versa” (Slobin, 1993, p. 23). This approach embraces “multiple viewpoints,” which he argues is necessary to understand musical practices as situated within the interplay of global cultural forces.

Central to Slobin’s framework is his notion of three types of “-cultures,” which he terms “subculture,” “superculture,” and “interculture.” “Superculture” is related to Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony and refers to an “umbrellalike, overarching structure that could be present anywhere in the system—ideology or practice, concept or performance” including “the usual, the statistically lopsided, the commercially successful, the statutory, the regulated, the most visible” (Slobin, 1993, p. 29). Slobin views supercultural music complexes as hegemonic subsystems of the superculture that include three components: an industry (i.e. the music industry, upheld by finance-, media-, and technoscapes); the state and its regulations and locales for music; and shared assumptions about facets of music-making that are enforced via “quiet agents of ideology” (e.g. the hegemonic consensus regarding music styles, repertoires, and performance practices of the “mainstream”) (Slobin, 1993, p. 33).

Slobin deliberately avoids explicitly defining “subculture,” choosing rather to sketch out the space within which subcultures operate. Subcultures, and the “micromusics” they contain, are cultural units of primary focus in Slobin’s framework. They are smaller groupings nested within the overall interactive global cultural system, and each subculture contains microworlds, or micro-units, on a variety of different levels, from the individual musician, to smaller groupings (e.g. ensembles, family units, music associations), to neighbourhoods and communities, to name a few. “Interculture” is defined as “the perspective of the far-flung, expansive reach of musical forces that cross frontiers” (Slobin, 1993, p. 61). The interculture is a cross-cutting system that establishes networks between, and interaction with, the other “-cultures.” Slobin identifies three types of interculture: industrial interculture, diasporic interculture, and affinity interculture.

Slobin presents several important considerations for the analysis of subcultural music-making. He underscores the importance of considering which units, or levels (e.g. the individual, the family, the neighbourhood) and themes (e.g. class, race, gender, ethnicity) of analysis to examine. Music studies, he points out, tend to lump together various levels in order to describe a music subculture as a group, neglecting to take into account the complexity and dynamics of a subculture’s “inner expressive life,” and the “ways in which individual music-makers stand for, influence, are accepted, or rejected” by subcultures (Slobin, 1993, pp. 36–38). In this regard, he points out that it is meaningful to consider how an individual actor’s identity consists of a “web of affiliations.” As we have already seen, this echoes the constructivist view of



identity as a collection of overlapping layers in the form of points of difference, relationships, and group affiliations, both ascribed and achieved (see Figure 2, page 20). The makeup and dynamic nature of individual identities contributes to the complexity and shifting nature of music subcultures. This also points to the interplay and inextricable connection between the individual and affinity groups: analyzing one without considering the other neglects considering the “big picture.” The role of the superculture in micromusics should also be considered: the power of the superculture varies, and in some cases may seem to be “just another strand in the web of group affiliations, chosen out of aesthetic affinity” (Slobin, 1993, p. 57).

Through his framework, Slobin aims to achieve an “overall analysis” of micromusics: a “continuity between the social, the group, and the individual,” achieved by “welding the disparate strips of observation into a finished work of analysis” (Slobin, 1993, pp. 39, 42). One common strategy of analysis in ethnomusicological research, Slobin points out, is to foreground one issue or theme “while throwing in as many other insights as one can manage” (Slobin, 1993, p. 38). But foregrounding one issue (such as class, in a number of examples given by Slobin) can be problematic:

looking at one variable introduces many others, elbowing any single factor and crowding the frame. . . . Looking at one variable like class blocks the view, making many concurrent categories invisible. We have not yet found a way to handle more than one major social parameter at a time effectively—or even do a good job on the one we have chosen to isolate. (Slobin, 1993, p. 49)

Slobin doesn’t propose a solution, but emphasizes the need for “overlapping perspectives, for multiple viewpoints in sorting out the possible meanings of a given micromusic,” and for recognizing the “relative independence” of variables (Slobin, 1993, pp. 52, 60).

Additional, important analytical tools introduced by Slobin are the concepts of musical codes and codeswitching, which he adapts from the field of sociolinguistics. These concepts can be used to understand how music subcultures express themselves in the space of interaction between the three “-cultures.” In brief, “codes” are musical styles, and “codeswitching” points to instances in performance when a musician or ensemble alternates between distinct musical codes. The values, meanings, and resonances of musical codes are many for both subcultural musicians and subcultures:

Subcultural musicians keep one eye on their in-group audience and the other on the superculture, looking out for useful codes and successful strategies, while a third, inner eye seeks personal aesthetic satisfaction. No wonder there are so many

detours along the path, since all three audiences are restless. Indeed the musicians' own creations contribute to internal change and outside reevaluation of subcultural life, leading them to further alteration, as they adjust to personal, inner, and outer imagined worlds of music. (Slobin, 1993, p. 89)

The term "code layering" is also useful in the music context: because of the abundance of variables in musical "languages," it is possible to combine multiple codes simultaneously in performance, creating a stratified system of shifting, kaleidoscopic combinations of codes (Slobin, 1993, p. 87).

Slobin's framework provides the basis for investigating the study's first research question, which asks how the Norwegian-American music culture in the Upper Midwest interplayed with supercultural, intercultural, and other subcultural musics, structures, and forces, and how these processes reflect processes of Norwegian-American social identity construction. I investigate these issues in Chapter Five of the dissertation.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined three main theoretical paradigms that shape my interpretation and analysis of performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest: 1) social identity and constructs of ethnicity and diaspora; 2) performance theory; and 3) globalization theory as connected to Mark Slobin's framework for the study of subcultural musics. Each of these paradigms raise a number of specific questions that have informed my interpretations and analyses. Applied in concert, these theoretical perspectives form a comprehensive framework that is appropriate in the context of the research questions.

In the next chapter, I review previous research and position the study in relation to current knowledge in the field. Several of the themes in the literature review relate to theoretical concepts discussed in this chapter; for this reason, I have chosen to introduce the theoretical framework first, in order to facilitate an ongoing dialogue with the theoretical framework throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

## 3 Literature Review

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present a thematic review of literature related to the topic of this study, with the aim of outlining significant findings and identifying gaps that justify the relevance of the study. Since the topic of the study is interdisciplinary, I have drawn on research from several academic fields, including Norwegian-American studies, American immigration studies, Scandinavian studies, folklore studies, ethnomusicology, and musicology.

The chapter is organized according to several themes. I begin by discussing prior findings regarding Norwegian-American social identity construction from the fields of Norwegian-American studies and American immigration studies. These studies have shown that Norwegian-American identities were strongly ethnocentric, while also multilayered and variable. Furthermore, they have demonstrated that Norwegian-American group identities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were constructed through mythmaking processes involving interplay with both American and Norwegian national ideologies. While these studies occasionally mention music, the role of music in the construction of Norwegian-American identities has largely remained unexamined.

I subsequently examine findings within the narrow field of research on *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the American Upper Midwest relating to two themes: identity construction through performances of the two genres; and retention, decline, and development of the genres. While performance contexts and their social functions have been discussed frequently, limited research has been done explicitly on identity construction through performances of the two genres, though these topics are related. I assert that past studies have identified at least four central social functions of the two genres: community building, recreation and entertainment, ethnic symbolism, and cultural assimilation.

The majority of past studies explore questions related to retention and decline. I argue that together, these studies suggest broad dichotomous themes that contributed to the genres' retention and decline: simplicity/complexity and adaptability/stability. Finally, the review of literature shows that most studies have employed the concept of creolization to describe processes of musical change and exchange in the Norwegian-American old-time music genre. I argue that this concept, while unquestionably relevant, is not an appropriate tool for understanding all of the processes involved in the musical development of the genre.

### 3.2 Norwegian-American Identities in the Upper Midwest

As outlined in Chapter Two, this study addresses Norwegian-American social identities—primarily frameworks of ethnic and diasporic identity—by employing theories of identity from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies to examine the construction of shifting and emergent Norwegian-American social identities in the Upper Midwest through performances of the two genres. In this section, I review findings regarding Norwegian-American identity in central literature on the topic, primarily from the fields of Norwegian-American studies and American immigration studies. The discussion is loosely structured according to the chronological emergence of diverse “identity myths” among Norwegian Americans as outlined by historian Daron W. Olson (2013). The development of various Norwegian-American identities is also viewed in conjunction with changing supercultural attitudes and ideologies regarding immigration in the United States, including assimilationism, nativism, cultural pluralism, and the New Ethnicity movement.

A significant body of literature within the field of Norwegian-American studies incorporates discussions of identity issues. While ethnic identity formation is the most commonly addressed theme in the literature with regard to Norwegian-American social identities, some studies investigate issues of racial, class, and religious identity, as well as the intersectionality between ethnicity and race (e.g. Sverdljuk, Joranger, Jackson, & Kivisto, 2021). Regarding diasporic identity, scholars seem to have generally eschewed applying this framework to Norwegian-American identity; however, the related concept of transnationalism (and transnational identity)—a complementary research perspective that increasingly overlaps with diaspora—has been employed in several studies (e.g. Gjerde, 2001; Hansen & Sun, 2011; D. W. Olson, 2013). My review of literature that addresses Norwegian-American identity issues has focused on studies by April R. Schultz (1994), Odd Lovoll (1999, 2007), Orm Øverland (2000), Jon Gjerde (1996, 1997, 2002), Nils Olav Østrem (2006), Daron W. Olson (2007, 2013), and Terje Mikael Hasle Joranger (2019, 2021). Although it has not been possible to carry out an exhaustive review of the literature that addresses Norwegian-American identity formation within the scope of this study, my aim has been to draw out some central points.

There is consensus in previous studies around a general notion of Norwegian-American identity as both strongly ethnocentric, and simultaneously shifting, fluid, and malleable. I explore these tendencies as described in the literature below.

### 3.2.1 Ethnocentricity

In general, previous studies have found that Norwegian Americans have tended to exhibit a markedly strong sense of ethnic solidarity that has been sustained over several generations. In his study of contemporary Norwegian Americans, *The Promise Fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today*, Lovoll found that “Norwegian Americans throughout their history have evinced a high degree of ethnocentricity . . . even more so than all other northern European nationalities” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 2). Lovoll argues that this is due to several factors, including “national peculiarities and circumstances, localism, patterns of settlement, religious loyalties, social interaction, and ethnic biases” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 4).

Lovoll’s first factor refers mainly to the impact of Norwegian nationalist ideologies on Norwegian-American ethnic identity formation. The Norwegian migration period coincided with a period of nationalism and nation-building in Norway that began following the dissolution of its union with Denmark and the establishment of the Norwegian constitution in 1814 and extended through the nineteenth century, culminating in the achievement of full national independence in 1905. Sympathy with various strains of Norwegian nationalism were carried to America by Norwegian immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The second and third factors, localism and patterns of settlement, are partly linked. Localism refers to the tendency for Norwegian Americans to foster connections with their local, in addition to national, origins. Lovoll argues that this “attachment to a romanticized vision of an ancestral home” was “at the core of immigrant identity” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 47). The localist tendency is connected to the rugged topography of Norway, in which distinct local societies and cultural expressive forms developed in remote mountain valleys and fjords. In many cases, Norwegian Americans remained strongly attached to their local ancestral origins, including cultivating imagined bonds to the physical landscape. As discussed in Chapter One, these local ties were also reflected in settlement patterns, in the sense that early settlements were often populated by immigrants from the same Norwegian rural district, resulting in the preservation of elements of Norwegian local cultures.

Norwegian Americans sustained a strong attachment to settling in rural communities well into the twentieth century, which contributed to the emergence of a Norwegian-American ethnic identity. Joranger identifies Norwegians as the “most rural of any nineteenth century immigrant group” and points out that in as late as 1940, “more than half of all Norwegian-Americans in the upper Midwest lived outside of towns with more than 2,500 inhabitants” (Joranger, 2019, p. 498). Early rural settlements were isolated, and inhabitants had little contact with other cultural and ethnic groups. This contributed to building a high degree of

ethnic solidarity among Norwegian Americans, which studies have found to be distinctive, even compared with other Scandinavian immigrant groups: Joranger argues that “Norwegian immigrants in the Upper Midwest were more prone than their Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon neighbors to retain their local identity in homogeneous rural settlements and thus establish a strong basis for ethnic community building” (Joranger, 2021). Gjerde, referring to the writings of Midwesterner Herbert Quick, points out that the sheer size and abundance of land in the Midwest “provided the possibility for segmentation that enabled cultural groups to segregate themselves from others” (Gjerde, 1997, p. 18).

A similar phenomenon took place in large cities, where Norwegians tended to settle in “urban colonies.” Distinct Norwegian-American enclaves were formed in cities such as New York, Chicago, Seattle, and the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Urban Norwegian Americans also established many organizations founded on ethnic and regional affiliation, including social clubs, choirs, women’s societies, and businesses. Both of these factors allowed urban Norwegian Americans to continue to live in relative isolation. In small towns, however, Norwegian immigrants came into much more frequent contact with other cultural groups. According to Østrem, Norwegian Americans who settled in small towns were more compelled to integrate than their urban and rural counterparts (Østrem, 2006, p. 68).

Lovoll also points to “religious loyalties” as a factor that influenced Norwegian-American ethnocentricity. He characterizes Norwegian Americans as demonstrating a “unique ethnic intensity of religious observance, mainly expressed through the Lutheran faith, [which] set ethnic and religious boundaries” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 3). This was underpinned by the rural nature of Norwegian settlement patterns, which gave “added force to congregational life and pastoral influence. The strong Lutheran pietism that prevailed in many Norwegian-American communities strengthened ethnocentric prejudices in the American environment and encouraged a segregated ethnic life” (Lovoll, 2007, pp. 3–4). Lovoll’s study shows that, in the 1990s, Norwegian-American identity still remained strongly linked to Lutheranism for many respondents: “for many Norwegian Americans a nearly symbiotic relationship between Lutheranism and Norwegian ethnicity continues in force” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 4).

I interpret what Lovoll calls “ethnic biases” or “ethnocentric biases” as related to what Daron W. Olson terms “mythmaking processes”; both are concerned with identifying central themes of a constructed Norwegian-American identity.<sup>20</sup> These processes—viewed primarily through Olson’s mythmaking framework—will be explored below.

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20 Lovoll’s term also encompasses Norwegian-American attitudes towards elements that are perceived as potentially threatening the ethnic group’s self-definition, such as sexual orientation issues (Lovoll, 2007, pp. 129–137).

### 3.2.2 Shifting Identities

In addition to indicating the group's ethnocentricity, most contemporary studies that address Norwegian-American identity issues demonstrate that Norwegian Americans had flexible, multilayered identities, including Norwegian local, regional, and national identities, and "American" identities. As we have seen above, localism and settlement patterns are recognized as two factors that led to a high degree of ethnocentricity among Norwegian Americans; however, Jon Gjerde nuances this claim, arguing that in spite of the fact that the establishment of Norwegian-American ethnic communities in the Midwest was informed by "common pasts," such as hailing from the same rural district in Norway, these common pasts should be regarded as "fluid in definition and multilayered in structure," thus pointing to a constructivist concept of identity (Gjerde, 1996, p. 79). Gjerde points out that Norwegian-American identities could change situationally, depending on what was most socially relevant: "their definition of themselves was often informed by the context in which they lived. . . . [I]dentities could change from one to another depending on the circumstances or on their own desires to change it" (Gjerde, 1996, p. 79).<sup>21</sup> Gjerde also points to the fact that Norwegian Americans increasingly identified as "American" and as "Norwegian," rather than local identifications such as "halling" (a person hailing from the valley of Hallingdal), as evidence of a growing tension between local and "global" identifications (Gjerde, 1996, p. 79). These shifts in identity are in some cases also evidence of an instrumental use of ethnicity (Gjerde, 1996, p. 79).

#### *Mythmaking and Positioning between the American, the Norwegian, and the Norwegian-American*

Several authors have found that early Norwegian-American historiography contributed to the formation of a core Norwegian-American identity and ideology (Gjerde, 2002; D. W. Olson, 2007, 2013; Øverland, 2000). Similar to the historiography of other immigrant groups in the United States, early Norwegian-American historiography was "filiopietistic, reverential, and uncritical in tone" (Gjerde, 2002, p. 13) and sought to validate and promote the group's status within American society (D. W. Olson, 2013). Olson contends that writings by filiopietistic Norwegian-American historians, such as Rasmus Bjørn Anderson, Martin Ulvestad, and Hjalmar Rued Holand, "formed the core of the Norwegian-American ideology" (D. W. Olson, 2007, pp. 42–46). This ideology was centred around the construction of a historical narrative, which Øverland terms a "homemaking myth," that aimed to demonstrate to the

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21 This relates to Richard Jenkins's model of ethnicity as outlined in Chapter Two, particularly the third point: "ethnicity, rather than being fixed or unchanging, is, depending on situation and context, to some extent variable and manipulable" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 42).

Anglo-American dominant group that Norwegian Americans had a distinctive right to a place in American society and should be considered “ideal citizens.”

In efforts to create a homemaking myth, early Norwegian-American historians and ethnic leaders argued that Norwegians had had a long, unbroken connection with America, claiming that Norwegian Vikings had “discovered America,” that “their ancestors were among the first European colonists, that Norwegian-American heroes had contributed to the success of America through both service and sacrifice, and that Norwegian immigrants settled and tamed much of the American frontier” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 42). They also claimed racial kinship to Anglo-Americans through the Viking raiding and settlement of England and Normandy, and ideological ties to American values through the identification of Norway as the origin of American democracy (Øverland, 2000, p. 5). Through their telling and re-telling, Øverland argues, these homemaking myths weaved Norwegian Americans “into the basic fabric of America by linking them to the pivotal events and ideas of their new homeland” (Øverland, 2000, jacket flap).

While Øverland situates the creation of Norwegian-American identity within his model of “homemaking myths,” which focuses on the negotiation of immigrant identity vis-à-vis the dominant Anglo-American group, and which he identifies as a process common to almost all immigrant groups, Olson argues that two other aspects should also be considered with regard to Norwegian-American mythmaking: the construction of myths “through negotiation between themselves and national myth-makers back in Norway” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 31). Referencing historian David Mauk, Olson characterizes Norwegian-American identity as being constructed through a triangulation process—a positioning between shifting American and Norwegian nationalisms and the Norwegian-American subculture (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 31). According to Olson, these continuous processes of positioning led Norwegian-American leaders to engage in shifting strategies of mythmaking, which resulted in the construction of several identity myths. As is evident in the discussion of Norwegian-American identity myths below, Olson underscores the importance of interrogating the motivation behind the various processes of mythmaking, pointing out that “the motivation behind the myths changed as circumstances in America and Norway changed” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 32).

Olson divides Norwegian-American mythmaking processes into four historical periods. During the earliest period, which spans from 1860 to 1890, Norwegian-American group identity was largely constructed through the creation of “origin myths,” which claimed that Norwegian Americans had the right to a place in American society based on the loyal military service and sacrifices of Norwegian Americans in the American Civil War, as well as on the assertion that Norwegians had had extended and formative historical contact with the New World (here associated with the alleged “Norwegian” discovery of America by Leif Erikson and the



Vikings, as well as the stalwart efforts of Norwegian pioneer immigrants of the nineteenth century). Origin myths also depicted Norwegian immigrants as “ideal citizens” and “superior” to other immigrant groups by portraying them as law-abiding, moral, honest, frugal, industrious, and robust (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 28). Norwegian-American image-makers during this period sought to construct a hybrid Norwegian-American identity that was acceptable to both Anglo-American and Norwegian elites, and which would allow them to selectively “share in the ongoing development of Norway’s evolving national identity” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 40).

Between 1890 and 1917, Olson argues that “hegemony myths” gained currency among Norwegian Americans. Olson designates this period a Norwegian-American “golden age” during which Norwegian-American leaders challenged the Anglo-American cultural hegemony, contending that Norwegian Americans were “superior to Anglo-Americans because Norwegians in America were more Nordic, more Protestant, and more innately imbued with the proper racial traits, such as love of freedom and proclivity for democratic institutions” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 112). Olson contends that two concepts were central to the articulation of Norwegian-American identity during this period: the “modern Viking concept,” which asserted that Norwegian immigrants embodied “modern Viking virtues” and depicted them as a “robust and virile race, capable of taming the American frontier or building its modern cities” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 71); and the “Norway in America” concept, an idea directed towards Norwegians in Norway which posited that Norwegian immigrants had successfully preserved and “largely transplanted their homeland culture to American soil” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 78),<sup>22</sup> and also expressed the notion that “emigrated Norwegians could still participate in celebrations of homeland Norwegian nationalism” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 80). Norwegian-American leaders also sought to foreground a progressive self-image, with a lesser emphasis on the romanticized, peasant-oriented past that had prevailed during the previous period (although some of these elements persisted) (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 112). The abilities and contributions of Norwegian Americans in all aspects of American society, including industry, business, culture, and politics, were therefore underscored by Norwegian-American leaders during this period; through these contributions Norwegian Americans were seen to have earned the right to a place in American society.

The xenophobia that emerged in the United States during and following the first World War caused Norwegian-American mythmaking to veer in a different direction. Olson terms the myths that were constructed by Norwegian-American image-makers between 1917 and 1929 “legacy myths” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 116). These myths were a reaction to an intensified suspicion of “foreigners” that was enacted politically, socially, and culturally, including the

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<sup>22</sup> This was exemplified in the retention of the Norwegian language and local dialects within the ethnic group, the flourishing of Norwegian-American newspapers, the successful establishment of Norwegian-American religious institutions and ethnic organizations, and the retention of cultural traditions, among other things.

suppression of the use of languages other than English, and legislation that limited immigration from Europe.<sup>23</sup> Intense pressure to assimilate and abide by American norms and practices was experienced by all immigrant groups during this period (some more than others); thus, processes of assimilation and Americanization were greatly accelerated. Norwegian-American legacy myths therefore sought to convey the group's loyalty to America, while also seeking recognition of the Norwegian-American legacy within American and Norwegian national narratives. According to Olson, the most significant change in the approach of Norwegian-American leaders during this period was a renewed, "almost hyperbolic" insistence on Norwegian-American allegiance to America and American values:

Although this was not a new tactic, it was featured front and center in the new Norwegian-American articulation of characteristics shared with Anglo-Americans. Norwegian-American leaders argued that owing to the close similarity in values between the two groups, the Norwegian community served as a conservative bulwark in the defence of America against "radical" challengers. In return, Norwegian-American leaders hoped that American leaders would see fit to include the Norwegian-American story within the larger American narrative. (D. W. Olson, 2013, pp. 115–116)

During this period, Norwegian-American leaders also recognized that the long-term perpetuation of the Norwegian language in Norwegian America was unsustainable and consequently focused their efforts on gaining recognition for other aspects of Norwegian culture in America. In this respect, Norwegian Americans also resisted pressures to assimilate with the aim of upholding Norwegian cultural practices. As Olson writes, the reactions of Norwegian-American leaders to assimilative forces "represented a resurgence of *norskhet* (Norwegianness), an effort to affirm the superiority of Norwegian culture" (D. W. Olson, 2013, pp. 120–121). An example of subtle resistance and challenge to Anglo-American hegemony can be found in the 1925 Norse-American Immigration Centennial held in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, which has been thoroughly studied by April R. Schultz: while the festival organizers sought to convey a Norwegian-American identity that fit "within the framework of accommodation with Anglo-American superiority," the event's constructed narrative simultaneously reiterated notions of Norwegian-American supremacy "in the coded language of pageantry and the ideas surrounding the occasion" (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 148; Schultz, 1994). The end of

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23 Examples of the political suppression of the use of languages other than English include several state-level policies that banned oral communication in any language other than English—such a policy was enacted in Iowa in 1918 (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 117). In Minnesota, a Commission of Public Safety was established in 1917 with the aim of enforcing conformity on ethnic groups. The commission "required the registration of all aliens, resolved that English was to be the 'exclusive medium of instruction' in all the state's schools, and banned meetings of any groups suspected of favoring the 'idea of peace'" (Gjerde & Qualey, 2002, p. 61). Among its surveillance activities, the commission coordinated a Scandinavian Press service "to watch over the foreign-language press and to provide pro-America tracts for use in the newspapers" (Gjerde & Qualey, 2002, p. 61).

the period of legacy myths was marked by the passing of the National Origins Act in 1927 (which became law in 1929), which greatly reduced the quota of immigrants from Norway and all other European countries except for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.<sup>24</sup> Olson suggests that Norwegian-American leaders viewed this development as the failure of the “legacy myth” tactic and claims that the legacy myth approach was abandoned in favour of a concept of a transnational Norwegian-American identity which Olson terms the “greater Norway.”

The final period of Norwegian-American mythmaking examined by Olson, from 1929 to 1945, is characterized by the promotion of this “greater Norway” (*et større Norge*) concept. Constructed by leaders and elites on both sides of the Atlantic, this concept was centred around the notion that Norwegian Americans “were loyal citizens of a Norwegian nation that existed beyond the physical boundaries of the homeland” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 117). The greater Norway existed as an “imagined community” (B. Anderson, 2006) in an idealized, transnational space.<sup>25</sup> For Norwegian Americans, participation in a transnational Norwegian identity enabled them to safeguard, validate, and restore the Norwegian-American self-image following the xenophobia of the first World War and its aftermath. Norwegian Americans were granted membership in the greater Norway by demonstrating loyalty to their Norwegian heritage. For homeland Norwegians, the concept was connected to the construction of an “alternate vision of Norwegian nationalism” which emphasized an image of Norway as a “great trading nation and a highly cosmopolitan society” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 151). Cultivating transatlantic bonds with Norwegian America would allow homeland Norwegians to “tie Norway’s self-image to the greatness of America by showing how historic Norwegian national traits could explain the success of Norwegian Americans” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 164). Olson illustrates how significant transnational celebrations and events, such as the dual celebration of the 900-year anniversary of the death of the Norwegian king, St. Olav (known for bringing Christianity to Norway), in 1930 reinforced the greater Norway concept. The financial and military aid provided by Norwegian Americans during the Nazi occupation of Norway in the Second World War also strengthened the transnational bond. During this period the Norwegian-American cultural

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24 The National Origins Act of 1927 was based on a quota system that limited total annual immigration to 150,000, with immigration quotas per country based on the distribution of nationalities in the 1920 census. The policy favoured “immigrants from Britain, Northern Ireland, and certain southern and eastern European countries at the expense of immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 155). The National Origins Act had been preceded by previous racist and quota-based immigration policies (e.g. the 1921 Emergency Quota Act and the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act) that were based on census data and which aimed to greatly reduce immigration, particularly of unskilled or “undesirable” immigrants.

25 Olson traces the origin of the greater Norway concept to the formation of the Norwegian organization, *Nordmands-Forbundet* (Norsemen’s Federation/League), in 1907: in its first monthly publication, *Nordmands-Forbundet* expressed an aim to cultivate bonds between homeland Norwegians and those living outside Norway, proposing that “Norwegians living outside Norway, including Norwegian Americans, were part of *et større Norge* – ‘a greater Norway’” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. ix). While the notion had existed since 1907, it was not until the late 1920s that the greater Norway concept gained increased traction. At this time, leaders and elites in Norway and Norwegian America sought to mutually uphold, and benefit from, transnational connections.

legacy was also validated in significant ways in both Norway and America—in Norway, through the incorporation of the Norwegian-American story in Norwegian academic scholarship (e.g. the publication of Volume One of Ingrid Semmingsen's *Veien mot vest* in 1941), and in America, through the proclamation of Leif Erikson Day by President Roosevelt in 1935 (which gave official credence to Leif Erikson's legacy) (D. W. Olson, 2013, pp. 175–176).

### *Racial Identity and Whiteness*

Recent studies demonstrate how the various Norwegian-American identity myths also functioned to construct a Norwegian-American racial identity that portrayed Norwegian Americans as racially superior, and therefore as “good” and “desirable” American citizens (Grav, 2021). Symbols of Norwegian romantic nationalism, such as the idealization of Norwegian peasants and their culture as “pure” and “authentic” expressions of Norwegianness, as well as the notion of Norwegians as belonging to the “Norrøna race”—thereby invoking the prowess of the Viking Age and its “dissemination of a Nordic gift unto the world”—were appropriated in the construction of Norwegian-American racial identity (Grav, 2021, p. 101). Grav traces the emergence of this idea, locating its origins in a nineteenth-century poem by Norwegian author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson:

Norwegian Americans conceived of themselves as belonging to a race they often referred to as “Norrøna-ætten” or “Norrønafolket” (Northern race or Northern folk). Projected onto the Norwegian consciousness in 1872, in the midst of a nationalist awakening, and growing emigration to the United States, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's poem “Norrønafolket, det vil fare, det vil føre kraft til andre” (The Northern Folk, it will traverse, it will bring empowerment to others) linked Viking Age Norse identity to nineteenth-century Norwegian nation-building. (Grav, 2021, p. 101)

An established racial and ethnic hierarchy driven by American nativism and eugenics prescribed the social statuses of the various ethnic and racial groups in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the outer limits of this hierarchy were clear, with White “Old Stock Americans” at one end of the spectrum and Black Americans, Indigenous peoples, and Asian Americans at the other, the status of European immigrants fell somewhere in between. Immigrants from northern and western Europe had higher status than eastern and southern Europeans, whose arrival in the country was more recent, and whose racial status was more “uncertain.”<sup>26</sup> A small illustration of this can be seen by exam-

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26 In *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Matthew Frye Jacobsen argues that immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were racialized by American nativists, until a gradual “whitening process” unified hierarchically-ordered White races under the monolithic racial construction “Caucasian” (Grav, 2021; Jacobson, 1998).

ining nicknames for ethnic groups that proliferated in America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: although immigrants of Scandinavian origin were sometimes referred to using blanket jocular terms such as “Scandihoovian,” “Scandiwegian,” or “Scowegian,” these terms are relatively innocuous, comical plays on the term “Scandinavian,” and were not racial slurs of the kind directed towards eastern and southern Europeans (Leary, 1980, 2014).<sup>27</sup> According to Grav, as members of the “Nordic” race, Norwegian Americans “understood that they ranked on the highest level of the racial hierarchy along with Anglo-Saxons” and “did not appear concerned with an expressed need of ‘becoming white’” (Grav, 2021, p. 100).

By virtue of their race and their whiteness, Norwegian Americans were positioned higher up on the ethnic and racial hierarchy than many other groups in the United States, granting them social and economic privileges, opportunities, and freedoms. Joranger points out that the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) hegemony “considered the great majority of Norwegian immigrants to be white on arrival and [they] were thus entitled to the privileges of the dominant group” (Joranger, 2021, p. 119). Norwegian Americans were granted rights by means of their racial identity that many other immigrant groups were refused, including the right to vote (for men), and they could easily acquire citizenship (Gjerde, 2002).<sup>28</sup> They were also able to freely recreate cultural expressions from Norway, including religious life, linguistic traditions, and artistic and musical practices. Access to these privileges and freedoms made it possible for Norwegian Americans to embrace life in America and reconstruct elements of “Norwegianness” (Gjerde, 2002).

### *Ethnic Celebration as “Homemaking”*

As discussed briefly above, several studies draw attention to the significance of ethnic celebration in processes of Norwegian-American identity construction (D. W. Olson, 2013; Øverland, 2000; Schultz, 1994). In *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870–1930*, Orm Øverland argues that ethnic celebrations such as the annual celebration of Norwegian Constitution Day (*syttende mai*) in Norwegian-American communities throughout the United States serve a different function than in the home country, reinforcing ethnic

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27 According to the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, the term “Scandihoovian” first appeared in publication in 1901, with “Scowegian” (a combination of the words “Scandinavian” and “Norwegian”) following in 1919 (“Scandihoovian,” 2013; “Scowegian,” 2013). As such, these terms “must have been circulating in the late nineteenth century as an aggregate designation for Norwegians and Swedes” (Leary, 2014, p. 11). Other, slightly more derogatory terms for Scandinavian immigrants, such as “squarehead,” “herring choker,” and “snooser,” focused mainly on caricaturing Scandinavians according to their facial features or their tendencies to consume herring and *snus* (smokeless, powdered tobacco).

28 Gjerde points out that while immigrants defined as “white” were guaranteed the right to naturalization, this right was denied other immigrant groups based on blatant racial discrimination. For example, United States naturalization and citizenship policies racially excluded Asian immigrants from US citizenship until 1952 (Gjerde, 2002).

boundaries, as well as expressing American nationalism: “the ethnicity that is celebrated has European roots but has taken on American characteristics. The nationalism that is confirmed and celebrated is unabashedly American” (Øverland, 2000, p. 2). Øverland continues: “ethnic celebration in the United States, then, is primarily a celebration of the American identity of immigrants and their descendants. The affirmation and celebration of ethnicity is a way of affirming and celebrating that a particular ethnic group has a home in America” (Øverland, 2000, p. 3). For Øverland, this is an act of what he terms “homemaking.”

Exploring the significance of Norwegian-American public ethnic celebrations such as *syttende mai* during the late nineteenth century, Olson recognizes a dual purpose in these events, namely the construction of an identity that affirmed allegiance to, and participation in, both Norwegian and American cultures and ideologies:

At these public festivals the common people and the cultural elites came together and acted out the rituals associated with the Norwegian-American identity. The chance to participate in the celebrations also gave the common people a chance to reaffirm their allegiance to their ethnic culture while simultaneously displaying the compatibility between their cultural practices and American ideals. At another level, participation in these celebrations allowed the Norwegian-American community, particularly its leaders, to reaffirm their loyalty to the cultural traditions of the old country. The dual purpose of these celebrations revealed how the construction of a Norwegian-American identity involved a process in which the image-makers sought to promote an image that proved their membership within the American and the Norwegian national traditions. (D. W. Olson, 2013, pp. 58–59)

Although Olson is here discussing the late nineteenth century context, these reflections can also be applied to Norwegian-American ethnic celebrations in the early and mid-twentieth century. As will be shown in Chapter Six, these observations are also useful for interpreting musical performance contexts such as *kappleiker*, certain concert and festival performances, and performances for Norwegian-American *bygdelag* as components of ethnic celebrations, although these occasions represent public ethnic celebrations on varying scales.

### *Norwegian-American Identity, 1945–1970*

Little research has been done on Norwegian-American identity formation during the postwar era; however, some general remarks about American society during this period are useful. During the postwar period, American culture was characterized by economic prosperity, the growth of the mass media, and the rise of mass consumer culture, which was facilitated in

particular through the ubiquity of television (Halliwell, 2007; Kammen, 1999).<sup>29</sup> The political climate was coloured by the conservatism and anticommunism of the Cold War period, and attitudes of ethnic conformity and assimilation prevailed (Archdeacon, 1990). Due to the economic prosperity of this period, Norwegian Americans increasingly became part of a middle-class socioeconomic environment, and many moved to urban and suburban areas (Lovoll, 2007, pp. 200–201). Gjerde's and Qualey's brief summary of the status of Norwegian-American identity and culture in Minnesota during the 1950s provides a rough indication of the Norwegian-American circumstances in the Upper Midwest during the postwar era:

By 1950 the Norwegian America of 1914 was no longer clearly visible in Minnesota. The third and fourth generations considered themselves Americans, spoke English, and increasingly married persons from other ethnic groups. A culture based on class, occupation, or region (such as the Midwest) seemed to have displaced Norwegianness. Like Veblen in his Yankee world, Norwegians may have exhibited certain characteristics—perhaps the cultural traditions of the home such as Lutheranism, a continued predilection for farming, a preference for the professions, or a fondness for certain ethnic foods. But it could be argued that some of these traits were midwestern rather than exclusively Norwegian. (Gjerde & Qualey, 2002, p. 70)

Lovoll also points out that a small number of new immigrants arrived from Norway during this period, but unlike earlier migrants, postwar immigrants represented a more “elite” segment of Norwegian society and primarily sought white-collar jobs in urban and suburban areas, rather than rural, working-class occupations (Gjerde & Qualey, 2002, p. 68; Lovoll, 2007, pp. 37–39). New postwar immigrants also likely “experienced a certain distance from the expressions of Norwegian ethnicity they encountered” among the Norwegian-American “colonists” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 37).<sup>30</sup>

The 1960s and early 1970s saw a rebirth of interest in, and awareness of, ethnic heritage among White ethnic groups in the United States. Often called the “ethnic revival” or the “new ethnicity,” this movement stemmed in part from a greater tolerance for cultural pluralism in American society and was also a response to revolutionary movements of racial minorities such as the Black Power movement. Gjerde and Qualey note that this

rebirth of awareness of ethnicity among Minnesota's Norwegian Americans differed from older forms of ethnicity. . . . Today in a more complex society, Norwegian

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29 In 1948 just 0.4 percent of the American population possessed a television set; by 1952 over a third of the population owned a television (Burke, Briggs, & Ytreberg, 2020, p. 246). By 1960 TV had become “preeminent in home entertainment” and had ushered in “fundamental changes to the ways that Americans lived” (Kammen, 1999, p. 186).

30 Lovoll has also shown that certain tensions existed between the two groups (Lovoll, 1999, pp. 333–334).

Americans may speak Norwegian perhaps only at the meeting of a fraternal organization or singing society, and they may participate in traditional folk dances only as a diversion. Other Norwegian Americans cannot speak the language but represent their ethnic allegiance by dutifully eating *lutefisk* and purchasing Norwegian American crafts. (Gjerde, 2002, pp. 71–72)

Healey observes that the ethnic revival among White ethnic groups manifested itself in a variety of forms: “some people became more interested in their families’ genealogical roots, and others increased their participation in ethnic festivals, traditions, and organizations” (Healey, 2007, p. 80). This selective, voluntary, casual engagement with ethnicity—what has been termed “symbolic ethnicity” by sociologist Herbert Gans—was a privilege reserved for White ethnics (Anagnostou, 2009). According to Gans, in symbolic ethnicity, identity becomes the

primary way of being ethnic, [and] ethnicity takes on an expressive rather than instrumental function in people’s lives, becoming more of a leisure-time activity and losing its relevance, say, to earning a living or regulating family life. Expressive behavior can take many forms, but is often involves the use of symbols—and symbols as signs rather than as myths. (Gans, 1979, p. 9)

Lovoll’s study of Norwegian Americans in the 1990s found “ample evidence for the voluntary character of middle-class Norwegian-American ethnicity” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 45). Contemporary Norwegian Americans may symbolically affirm their ethnic background in a variety of ways, such as engaging with Norwegian or Norwegian-American Christmas foodways like *lutefisk* and *lefse*, or with common sets of symbols associated with a “romanticized vision of an ethnic identity” such as “Viking images, folk dancing, *bunads*, and peasant crafts” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 201); through a loyalty to Lutheranism, or interest in the Norwegian language, aspects of Norwegian culture (literature, music, dance, craft), or genealogical research, to name a few “ethnic options” (Gjerde & Qualey, 2002, pp. 73–74; Waters, 2009).

### 3.2.3 Conclusion

As we have seen in this section, scholars of Norwegian-American studies and American immigration studies have established that Norwegian-American social identities were both ethnocentric, and simultaneously shifting, flexible, and multilayered. Furthermore, past studies have shown that during the period between 1860 and 1945, Norwegian-American ethnic, racial, and transnational (or diasporic) identities were constructed through various myth-making processes that involved a triangulation, or positioning, between shifting American and Norwegian nationalisms and the Norwegian-American subculture. We have also seen



how Norwegian-American ethnic celebrations during this period are understood to have functioned as spaces for the construction of identities that affirmed allegiance to, and participation in, both Norwegian and American cultures and ideologies. Finally, we have seen that during the postwar era, third- and fourth-generation Norwegian Americans increasingly considered themselves “Americans” and formed part of a middle-class, urban socioeconomic environment, while during the 1960s and 1970s a rebirth of interest in ethnic heritage saw Norwegian Americans become engaged with Norwegian-American ethnicity through selective expressive behaviour, termed “symbolic ethnicity.”

To relate these findings to the research questions in this study, it is pertinent to ask how performances of the two genres participated in Norwegian-American mythmaking processes, including conveying various themes of Norwegian-American identity such as the glorification of the Viking Age, the “modern Vikings” concept, the “Norway in America” concept, racial superiority, and ideological ties to American values. And during the postwar era, how did performances of the two genres interplay with supercultural forces of the Cold War period (i.e. the development of mass culture), as well as the subsequent emergence of a new, symbolic ethnicity based on voluntary, selective participation? Music scholars have examined some of these issues in prior studies; in the next section, I review previous findings regarding the construction of Norwegian-American identities through performances of the two genres; and the retention, decline, and development of the two genres.

### **3.3 Previous Research on *Bygdedans* and Norwegian-American Old-Time Music in the Upper Midwest**

Academic studies of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the American Upper Midwest—which have mainly been undertaken within the disciplines of musicology, ethnomusicology, and folklore studies—constitute a narrow field of research. To date, only a handful of researchers have carried out studies within the field, making it possible to gain a fairly comprehensive overview of the research terrain. In this section I introduce previous studies on the two genres with regard to the following themes: the construction of Norwegian-American identities through performances of the two genres; and retention, decline, and development of the two genres.

This review focuses primarily on studies by American researchers LeRoy Larson, Janet Kvam, James P. Leary, Philip Martin, Philip Nusbaum, Kevin Hoeschen, Julane Beetham, Anna C.

Rue, and Amy M. Shaw.<sup>31</sup> These studies constitute a core segment of academic research on Norwegian-American folk music traditions in the Upper Midwest to date.<sup>32</sup> While most of these studies focus on the Norwegian-American old-time music genre, several also make some mention of *bygdedans* music traditions in the Upper Midwest. Kevin Hoeschen's research is the only study discussed here which covers the *bygdedans* genre exclusively.<sup>33</sup> One of the reasons for the prevalence of research on Norwegian-American old-time music by American scholars compared with *bygdedans* music is that, during the main period when fieldwork and research was being conducted in the Upper Midwest (the 1970s and 1980s), Norwegian-American old-time music was much more visible than *bygdedans*: at this time, there were very few active Hardanger fiddle players in the region, whereas there were many fiddlers and accordion players still performing Norwegian-American old-time music.<sup>34</sup> The reverse is true in Norway, where Norwegian-American old-time music has not been researched by scholars; in the Norwegian context, *bygdedans* music has historically had higher status in academia, and Norwegian scholarly interest in folk music in the Norwegian-American context has also primarily focused on this genre.<sup>35</sup>

Firstly, it is relevant to give a brief overview of the general thematic and methodological scope of prior research done within the field. The folk music culture of the Norwegian-American community was first considered by scholars during the 1970s and 1980s. Early research, such as studies by Larson (1975), Leary (1980, 1981, 1983, 1984), Martin (1979–1980, 1982a),

31 While most of the materials consulted here are readily available in the form of theses, dissertations, published articles, and books, a number of unpublished materials have been retrieved from public archive collections.

32 In addition to academic research, a significant number of studies have been undertaken by independent researchers in North America and Norway. Since few scholarly studies have been done on the two genres in the Upper Midwestern context, independent research and fieldwork serve as significant supplements and have been taken into consideration.

33 In addition to Hoeschen's study, my research on emigrant Hardanger fiddle players who performed *bygdedans* music traditions from Valdres, Norway deals with this topic (Ellestad, 2014).

34 Philip Nusbaum encountered this imbalance while making field recordings in Minnesota in 1987 and 1988 for the LP *Norwegian-American Music from Minnesota: Old-Time and Traditional Favorites*. The album contains one *bygdedans* tune performed on Hardanger fiddle, while the remainder of the tracks are old-time tunes or vocal numbers. During our interview Nusbaum commented: "I didn't think that Hardanger was any more deserving to be documented than old-time. But it had to be documented. And also, there are so many more fiddle players than Hardanger players, at least at the time. And so many more accordion players" (Nusbaum, 2015).

35 In the Norwegian research context, *bygdedans* music has had high cultural and academic status since the national romantic movement of the nineteenth century, when the collection of *bygdedans* music was part of a comprehensive effort to collect the living folk traditions of the rural peasant culture with the aim of constructing a Norwegian national identity that established links to a historic "golden age" of Norwegian culture during the Middle Ages. Older genres of folk music, including *bygdedans* music, were defined as "art" and were evaluated and in some cases "restored" according to classical aesthetic norms. Research during this period also aimed to support the broader effort to construct national ideologies. Havåg argues that the Norwegian ethnomusicological research paradigm of the early twentieth century was shaped by this nineteenth-century national romantic ideology and the aesthetic values connected with it: "it seems clear that the focus on national artistic values came to be a distinguishing characteristic of folk music research after the turn of the century" (Det synast å vere klart at fokuseringa på dei nasjonale kunstverdiane kom til å bli eit særkjenne for folkemusikkforskinga etter hundreårsskiftet) (Havåg, 1997, p. 8). For discussions of research paradigms in Norwegian ethnomusicological research, see Ledang (1975), Havåg (1997), and Kvitte (2007).

Nusbaum (1989b), and Hoeschen (1989) involved ethnographic fieldwork that aimed to collect and document repertoire and/or firsthand accounts of experiences in sociomusical settings.<sup>36</sup> This early fieldwork is invaluable, as it was undertaken at a critical point in time, capturing aspects of the repertoires and experiences of practitioners and participants in the performance settings of the early twentieth century while they were still living.

Several early studies, such as Larson's (1975) and Kvam's (1986), are partly concerned with tune origins. A central objective of Larson's doctoral research was to collect and document lesser-known Scandinavian-American folk dance tunes in Minnesota; that is to say, tunes which were not considered "standard" repertoire, and which had not previously been recorded or transcribed and published. In his fieldwork, Larson recorded and transcribed a total of 166 melodies and determined that 54 of these were versions of a basic set of 112 melodies. He found that only 13% of these were of Scandinavian origin (eight tunes were Norwegian, and seven were Swedish),<sup>37</sup> and estimated that a large portion of the remaining melodies might be classified as indigenous Scandinavian-American folk dance music.<sup>38</sup> Kvam's 1986 doctoral dissertation expanded on Larson's fieldwork by comparing his collected melodies to *runddans* music in Norway with the aim of discovering whether any of the melodies were common to both Norwegian and Norwegian-American repertoires, and, if so, whether this "shows choice on the part of the immigrants or [if it is a] coincidence that certain [melodies] were preserved" (Kvam, 1986, p. 2). In order to identify common repertoire among Norwegian *runddans* and Norwegian-American old-time music traditions, Kvam sent a survey, as well as audio recordings of herself performing 134 of Larson's melodies, to seven Norwegian

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36 Music documentation carried out in these studies involved audio recordings made in the field. Larson and Kvam also made music transcriptions which formed part of their analyses. Martin included music transcriptions in the companion booklet to the 1982 LP/cassette production *Across the Fields: Traditional Norwegian-American Music from Wisconsin* (Martin, 1982a).

37 The names of the tunes Larson identified as Norwegian are "Norsk Bondevals," "Skinn Posa" (a variant of the well-known waltz "Prinsevalsen"), "Nord Sjøen Vals" (in fact, this is a Swedish waltz, "Nordsjön," written by Martin Nilsson), "Sørensen's Waltz," "Nidelven," "Dansen går på måkeskjær" (this is in fact another Swedish waltz, "Dansen går på Svinnska skär," with lyrics by Gideon Wahlberg), "Glade Ålesund," and "Waltz" (this may actually be the Swedish tune "Fjällnäs"). The tunes Larson identified as Swedish are "Sørensen's Reinlender" (a Norwegian tune composed by Anders Sørensen) "Livet i Finnskogarna," "Kväsar Valsen," "Hejsan Grabbar" (this tune likely has Norwegian origins and was made popular by Alf Prøysen under the title "Musevisa"), "Gamle Ole Mattis," "Där nackrosen blommar," and "Gärdebylåten" (L. Larson, 1975, p. xi).

38 On this basis, Larson separates the folk dance repertoire performed by Norwegian Americans in Minnesota into two categories: "Scandinavian folk dance music" and "Scandinavian-American folk dance music." Larson defines the former as "Scandinavian folk dance melodies that originated in Scandinavia, whether they be genuine folk music (composer unknown) or composed music in the folk style which found its way into the standard repertory of the people." The latter is defined as "folk dance melodies whose origins are uncertain, i.e., original Scandinavian melodies or variants thereof, or indigenous folk music of an area in this country but based on the style of the Scandinavian prototypes" (L. Larson, 1975, pp. x-xi). These definitions are somewhat problematic, as there is a significant area of overlap between the two categories: the latter category may potentially include "original Scandinavian melodies," which could also be included in the first category.

musicians.<sup>39</sup> One or more of the informants were able to identify 71, or 53%, of the melodies, of which 22 were identified as Norwegian, 13 as Swedish, two as German, and 12 of uncertain origin (Kvam, 1986, pp. ii–iii).<sup>40</sup> In sum, Kvam’s informants agreed that a large proportion of the 71 identified melodies from Larson’s collection were popular and/or originated in Norway and Sweden during the period between 1860 and 1930, and belong to a category of *runddans* music that Kvam’s informants described as “new,” “commercial,” or “pop” in style (Kvam, 1986, pp. 61–63). These conclusions differ from what Larson determined about the origins of the melodies in his study: Kvam’s study reveals that many of the melodies Larson collected may have belonged to a stratum of popular music that originated in Norway and Sweden in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Larson and Kvam also both include musical analyses of Norwegian-American old-time music in their studies. Larson’s study presents a stylistic analysis of the Norwegian-American old-time music genre, examining elements such as form, rhythm, melody, harmony, and accompaniment using the melodies collected during his fieldwork as evidence (L. Larson, 1975, pp. 58–82). Kvam’s study also includes a general musical analysis of the melodies in Larson’s collection in which she incorporates findings from her survey of informants (Kvam, 1986, pp. 64–87). Both studies also address the prevalence of various tune types within the genre.

Subsequent studies by Martin, Leary, and Nusbaum—which were all based on primarily publicly-funded fieldwork undertaken in Wisconsin and Minnesota during the late 1970s and 1980s<sup>41</sup>—have a different focus: while, like Larson, they are preoccupied with documenting firsthand accounts and repertoire, the primary focus of the scholarly discussion is the social function and context of Norwegian-American (and other ethnic) folk music, and the complexity of its development in the Upper Midwestern setting.<sup>42</sup> Hoeschen’s 1989 master’s thesis

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39 Kvam’s informants were Ottar Akre, Terje Bronken, Oddmund Dale, Ånon Egeland, Atle Lien Jenssen, Erling Kjök, and Olav Sæta. In addition, Hans Brimi listened to the first 30 melodies on Kvam’s recording.

40 Kvam’s methodology can be criticized for her choice to re-record Larson’s field recordings; however, it is not clear whether she had access to Larson’s original recordings, nor whether it would have been possible to share these with her informants. A classically-trained violinist, Kvam identifies herself as “untrained in the aural tradition of Norwegian music,” and claims that “the style of playing in the tapes is not authentic” (Kvam, 1986, p. 6). Due to these qualities, it is possible that Kvam’s informants interpreted her recorded performances differently than they would have interpreted Larson’s original field recordings.

41 Leary’s fieldwork in northern Wisconsin, undertaken from 1979 to 1981, received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and Northland College (Leary, 1983, p. 228). Martin’s fieldwork in southwestern Wisconsin was carried out in 1979 and 1980 under the auspices of his own Wisconsin Old-Time Music Project, which received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (see <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9911124817102121>). Nusbaum’s field recordings of Norwegian-American musicians in Minnesota, made in 1987 and 1988, were undertaken in the context of his work as a Folk Arts Program Associate at the Minnesota State Arts Board (Nusbaum, 1989b).

42 It should be mentioned that Leary’s research area is broader than Martin’s and Nusbaum’s: Leary’s work on ethnic musics in the Upper Midwest focuses on the documentation and interpretation of the “folk cultural pluralism” in the region (Leary, 2006, p. 203), the cultural mixture between the region’s ethnic groups, and the formation of eclectic regional music styles.

on Hardanger fiddle players in the Upper Midwest adopts a similar approach through the use of qualitative interviews to document firsthand accounts and performances of repertoire, and his analysis is focused in part on performance contexts and the cultural significance of *bygdedans* music within the Norwegian-American subculture. As such, the studies by Martin, Leary, Nusbaum, and Hoeschen form a core point of departure for this study.

Studies by Beetham, Rue, and Shaw, undertaken during the decades after 2000, ground their discussions in examinations of specific historical or contemporary performers, performance contexts, and/or regional settings. In addition to sections on six contemporary performers, Beetham's study outlines several of the supercultural and intercultural influences on the Norwegian-American old-time music genre, as well as discussing performance and transmission contexts, the role of the genre in Norwegian-American identity construction, and an analysis of musical style (Beetham, 2005). Rue's master's thesis, which is localized in part in Decorah, Iowa, examines issues of identity and change among Norwegian Americans through the lens of the fiddle and its connection to Norwegian migration, gender, celebration, folk beliefs, and performance contexts (Rue, 2009). Rue's doctoral dissertation (2014) is one of the only studies in the field to examine the contemporary period and explores present-day Upper Midwestern musicians and groups, as well as a folk music festival, with the aim of expanding the notion of Norwegian-American folk music to include modernized, experimental, and "historically reimagined" variants. Particularly relevant to this study is Rue's interpretation of these examples as various performances of Norwegian-American identity. Shaw's study of Norwegian-American fiddler Ole Hendricks (Shaw, 2020) was initiated following the discovery of Hendricks's tunebook, a personal collection of transcriptions of 124 dance tunes assembled by Hendricks during the late nineteenth century. Shaw's monograph includes a case study of Hendricks and his activities as a dance fiddler and band leader in the community of Elbow Lake, Minnesota, as well as an annotated edition of his tunebook. These more recent studies all build to some extent on the work of Larson, Kvam, Martin, Leary, Nusbaum, and Hoeschen.

It should also be mentioned that many of the researchers cited above are musicians, and in several cases a practice-oriented approach was employed as a supplement to the scholarly approach: for example, in his field recordings, Larson (who had grown up with Norwegian-American old-time music and dance in a rural Norwegian-American community in northern Minnesota) provided tenor banjo accompaniment for many of his informants, and both Beetham and Shaw made professional recordings of tunes from the repertoires they examined in their studies (Lund, Rotto, Rotto, Larson, & Musser, 2006; Orchestra, 2019). Martin, Nusbaum, and Hoeschen—also musicians—all learned repertoire related to their studies, although this was not directly employed within the context of the research. Furthermore, several of the researchers have been involved in the production of audio releases that aimed

to disseminate findings and foster links to the broader Upper Midwestern public: both Martin and Nusbaum produced commercial LP/cassette productions containing selections from their field recordings in Wisconsin and Minnesota, respectively (Martin, 1982b; Nusbaum, 1989a);<sup>43</sup> Larson released selections from his field recordings, a re-issue of 78 rpm recordings of Scandinavian-American dance music, as well as many other contemporary recordings of Scandinavian-American old-time musicians on his label, Banjar Records (1974, 1983); and Leary produced a documentary recording of the Goose Island Ramblers—a prime example of the multiethnic Upper Midwestern “polkabilly” style that includes Norwegian-American elements (Ramblers, 2004), to name some examples.

### 3.3.1 Norwegian-American Identity Construction through Musical Performance

Most previous research on *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music discusses performance contexts and their social functions; however, few studies have explicitly addressed social identity construction through performances of one or both genres. I view these topics as closely connected and have therefore chosen to discuss findings on identity construction and the social function of performance contexts together in this section. To justify the connection between social function and identity construction, I briefly depart from the literature review to include some ethnomusicological considerations regarding music’s uses and functions.

In ethnomusicology Alan P. Merriam was one of the first to differentiate between the concepts of “use” and “function,” defining “use” as “the situation in which music is employed in human action,” while function “concerns the reasons for its employment and particularly the broader purpose which it serves” (Merriam, 1964, p. 210). Within this framework, what I am calling “performance contexts” are analogous to “uses.” Merriam outlines ten major functions of music; however, as Nettl points out, others have subsequently emphasized the idea that music has “one principal function.”<sup>44</sup> While there is no consensus in the field regarding a taxonomy of music’s functions, Nettl notes that in recent decades the expression of identity has been recognized as a major function of music and might be regarded as an overriding, fundamental

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43 The primary aims of these releases were similar: Nusbaum’s production aimed to “present recordings of traditional music from Minnesota and interpret them both historically and culturally,” as well as to “stimulate traditional music activities and help Minnesotans of all backgrounds appreciate the work of the state’s traditional musicians of varying backgrounds” (Nusbaum, 1989b), while Martin’s production aimed to “uncover the history of old-time music in rural communities,” “document a slice of the folkways of a past era,” and “challenge and encourage other musicians, folklorists, local historians, school teachers and librarians to actively seek out the many elder traditional artists in our midst” (Martin, 1982a, p. 4).

44 Merriam’s ten functions of music are: emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcing conformity to social norms, validation of social institutions and religious rituals, contribution to the continuity and stability of culture, and contribution to the integration of society (Merriam, 1964, pp. 219–227).

function (Nettl, 2015, pp. 263, 271). Similarly, in his survey of literature on music's functions, Martin Clayton emphasizes music's "role in the management of relationships between self and other" (Clayton, 2016, p. 47). It is in this sense that I view the various social functions outlined in prior research as largely related to an overall function of identity construction, although this is generally not made explicit in the literature.

Previous studies identify a variety of social functions associated with performances of the two genres. I suggest that it is possible to synthesize many of these functions into four broad categories with regard to social function: inter- and intraethnic community building; recreation and entertainment; ethnic symbolism; and cultural assimilation.<sup>45</sup> All of these functions participate in social identity construction, as they variously engage in processes of mediation and negotiation between individuals and social groups. In the following, I address previous findings according to these categories, discussing both genres where relevant.

In the final section, I briefly outline findings from studies by Rue and Beetham regarding identity construction in recent and contemporary contexts. Since these findings primarily relate to performers and performance contexts outside the historical period of investigation in this study, they are largely not incorporated into the discussion of themes of social function. However, since these studies are among few that relate explicitly to issues of identity construction, it is relevant to summarize them briefly here.

### *Inter- and Intraethnic Community Building*

Almost all of the reviewed studies touch on ways in which performances of one or both genres were central to community building in Norwegian-American neighbourhoods, particularly in frontier contexts. Community dances of various forms (such as house parties, barn dances, *julebukking*, bowery dances, and wedding dances) were especially important settings for network building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Martin, rural house parties, which were also an important early form of recreation, "had a greater significance as activities that helped to solidify the bonds of fellowship among a given circle of farm families" (Martin, 1994, p. 44). The cultivation of community bonds was essential in early rural Upper Midwestern neighbourhoods since such communities commonly "had no formal organization, except perhaps a threshing association." Instead, "the neighborhood was

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45 In synthesizing findings regarding social function, I have primarily derived these categories from the literature, rather than applying taxonomies such as Merriam's or Clayton's (Clayton, 2016, pp. 54–55). Nevertheless, links can be drawn between these categories and ethnomusicological taxonomies of music's functions; for example, community building is related to two of Merriam's functions ("contribution to the continuity and stability of culture," and "contribution to the integration of society") and to two of Clayton's ("mediation between self and other" and "coordination of action").

simply based on habits of socializing and cooperation built up over the years” (Martin, 1994, p. 44). Families in rural Upper Midwestern neighbourhoods, which were relatively isolated, were therefore dependent on informal systems of exchange work to accomplish agricultural tasks, and they also relied on each other for social companionship.

While, in early settlements, community networks were primarily formed within the Norwegian-American ethnic group, interethnic community building and collaboration became crucial as homogeneous settlements developed into multicultural communities: “rural neighborhoods by the early 1900s were likely to contain at least some mix of ethnic groups. . . . The mingling was typical of the Midwest. With a need to be neighborly, the ethnic mixture encouraged the attitudes of sharing, helping, joking, and just being friendly for which the region is renown [*sic*]” (Martin, 1994, p. 47). Community events involving old-time music and dancing contributed to the establishment and strengthening of interethnic community bonds, and old-time music was particularly well-suited to reaching across ethnic boundaries: “across cultural ethnic boundaries, it would provide a common language of schottische, waltz and polka that would contribute to the unifying of diverse nationalities and smaller sub-ethnic groups into a Midwestern mosaic of culture” (Martin, 1979–1980).

While most findings related to community building are associated with performances of Norwegian-American old-time music, Hoeschen’s study outlines several ways in which *bygdedans* music contributed to intraethnic community building in Norwegian immigrant settlements. Hardanger fiddle music was performed in “traditional rural performance outlets” such as “weddings, funerals, and informal neighborhood parties” which were “still vital to family and community life as they had been in the Old Country” (Hoeschen, 1989, p. 32). Quoting Erling Smedal, Hoeschen shows that performances of *bygdedans* music at informal gatherings in private homes served to strengthen both local, regional, and transnational Norwegian-American bonds:

The Evans farm got to be the stopping place for anyone who thought he or she could play the [Hardanger] violin. There were many from Norway, who usually stayed for many days. Most of them were from Telemark, such fine [Hardanger] violinists as Lars Fykerud, Kjetil Flatin, Høye Kvåle, Andreas Quisling, etc. The house was full of Haringfele (*sic*) music all day. (Erling Smedal, quoted in Hoeschen, 1989, p. 35)

According to Hoeschen, there is evidence that informal gatherings in private homes involving *bygdedans* music (as well as dancing, in some cases) “continued well into the twentieth century” (Hoeschen, 1989, p. 36).



## Recreation and Entertainment

While the term “entertainment” has been used in most previous studies as a blanket term to refer to both home-made, participatory music making as well as presentational contexts in which musicians performed for a passive audience, I have chosen to nuance the terminology here by distinguishing between “recreation,” which I use to refer to participatory performance, and “entertainment,” which is employed to refer to presentational forms of performance. Before introducing findings regarding the two genres’ functions as recreation and entertainment, it is relevant to briefly define these terms, as well as the terms “participatory” and “presentational.”

The terms “recreation” and “leisure” are closely connected, and both are appropriate for describing participatory forms of music making. Leisure is a modern concept; a product of industrial capitalism, it implies a distinction between notions of work and leisure (Burke, 1995, p. 137). In their volume on music making and leisure, Mantie and Smith briefly define leisure as “*avocational involvement with music*” and designate leisure an “integral part of the human condition” (Mantie & Smith, 2017, p. 3). Music sociologist Max Kaplan—one of few to study music within the field of leisure studies—formulated a philosophy of recreational music that provides a useful framework for understanding the social function of music as a leisure activity. Kaplan identifies five functions of recreational music: “*a collective experience*, drawing its participants together and expressing their identity as a group; *a personal experience*, a means of escape or fantasy, or a way of reaching out to others; *a social symbol*; *a moral value*; or, *purely incidental or secondary* to an event, as in a parade or a game” (McCarthy, 2017, p. 18).<sup>46</sup> Among other things, Kaplan’s principles of recreational music highlight the role of play in recreational music, which includes the notion of musical activity as voluntary, the idea that “prior ability is not always a prerequisite for participation,” the importance of repetition to the activity, and the tendency for a “play-community” to become a permanent “in-group” (McCarthy, 2017, p. 19). Another relevant principle is the notion that recreational music temporarily suspends “everyday social roles to assume ‘prestige-less’ roles,” creating a space for social interaction “based on roles apart from routine work and social considerations” (McCarthy, 2017, p. 19). Recreational music corresponds with ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino’s concept of “participatory performance,” which describes a form of musical participation in which “there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role” (Turino, 2008, p. 26).

“Entertainment,” on the other hand, is related to what Turino terms “presentational performance,” which describes a field of music making “where one group of people, the artists,

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46 Kaplan’s publications have proven difficult to access; therefore, Marie McCarthy’s essay, which outlines key ideas from Kaplan’s prolific writings, has served as a primary source (McCarthy, 2017, p. 19).

prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing” (Turino, 2008, p. 26). While there are many different approaches to defining entertainment, the criteria offered by Stephen Bates and Anthony J. Ferri are useful: “We suggest that entertainment, defined largely in objective terms, entails communication via external stimuli, which reaches a generally passive audience and gives some portion of that audience pleasure” (Bates & Ferri, 2010, p. 15).

Several researchers have found that old-time music and dance served as important forms of recreation in early Norwegian-American communities—a kind of recreation that was decidedly home-made and required its participants’ active engagement. In his research, Martin found that “homemade music-making for country dances,” which he calls a “tradition of recreational fiddling and dancing,” was a “fairly common pastime in many Midwestern farm neighborhoods throughout the early 1900s” (Martin, 1994, p. 9). Likewise, based on his interviews, Larson found that “before the advent of the phonograph, radio, and automobile, people had no choice but to invent and develop their own forms of entertainment. Instrumental music and dancing played a major role in their social lives” (L. Larson, 1975, pp. 7–8). This included musical recreation during social visits: “in rural Norwegian settlements (also the towns) evening visits to the neighbors invariably resulted in homemade musical entertainment since most homes had at least one instrument and the visitors frequently brought a violin, accordion, or some other instrument with them” (L. Larson, 1975, p. 8). As Martin points out, music making also functioned as a solo form of recreation, and many fiddlers never ventured out to perform for others: “farmhouse fiddlers, the plainest of ‘kitchen sawyers,’ played mostly at home for their own amusement” (Martin, 1994, p. 25).

Studies have suggested that performing old-time music in the context of early Norwegian-American communities was not a professional or “artistic pursuit”—few “farmhouse fiddlers” earned money, but rather played for the purpose of recreation: “while few made much money at it, they used their skills to brighten up the home or entertain the neighbors. Often, music-making was just a pleasant way to end a long day on the farm” (Martin, 1994, p. 36). As the house party era waned during the 1930s and 1940s, subsequent forms of community and commercial dances, such as rural town dances, barn dances, and dance hall events, also served a recreational function, although the composition of audiences, particularly at public dance halls, was altered (L. Larson, 1975, pp. 18–19; Martin, 1994, pp. 84–90). Larson also discusses the social and cultural transition from this era of participatory recreation to a subsequent period, dating from the 1910s, of passive entertainment forms in which people “became spectators, entertained by radio, movies, phonograph, juke box, and travelling vaudeville shows, dance bands, and itinerant entertainers” (L. Larson, 1975, pp. 50–51). Larson identifies the 1910s as a “period of change sparked by the automobile, phonograph, and radio” and describes how

this technology was “largely responsible for the gradual break-down of the traditional, self-sufficient Norwegian communities in Minnesota” (L. Larson, 1975, p. 50).

In spite of the changes brought on by the technological revolution of the first decades of the twentieth century, the social function of most forms of music making, particularly within the Norwegian-American old-time music genre, remained strongly participatory and recreational. While commercial dances altered the composition of audiences and sparked the professionalization of music ensembles, the primary activity was social dancing—an interactive social occasion. Commercial dance hall performances did establish clearer distinctions between performer and audience, but as Leary points out, old-time musicians often used strategies to diminish the boundaries between themselves and their audience: “they banter with people between and amid numbers, enter the crowd while playing, badger idle musicians to spell them for a dance, call up friends to help sing a tune, acknowledge birthdays and anniversaries” (Leary, 1984, p. 82).

Studies have also found evidence of the recreational function of *bygdedans* music and dance at social gatherings in early Norwegian-American communities. Hoeschen lists several examples, including a statement by an informant, Dreng Bjornaraa, who recalled that “when he stayed with [Hardanger fiddler] Bjorn Tveitbakk in 1921 and 1922 near Neptune, Minnesota, they often stayed up nights playing the Hardanger violin and the piano” (Hoeschen, 1989, p. 35). In another, earlier example cited by Hoeschen, Hardanger fiddler Knut Sjøheim (1849–1908) played frequently for his own recreation and the entertainment of others: “he could sit all day and play. On Sundays and in the evenings people always came in and wanted to listen to him” (Hermundstad, 1968, p. 295).<sup>47</sup> Recreational activity could also involve gatherings between several Hardanger fiddle players: in my own previous research I have found evidence of gatherings between Gunleik Smedal, Jøger Quale, and Oscar Hamrey who met frequently during the 1930s and “played for each other, exchanged tunes, and discussed technique and phrasing” (Ellestad, 2014, p. 69).

Recreational social gatherings involving *bygdedans* music persisted throughout the period under investigation, although they were less widespread than those involving old-time music. While these have not been explored in the literature, an informant in this study provides one example: in an interview, Norwegian American Einar Johansen described private late-night parties held in rented cabins during annual gatherings of the *bygdelag* Valdres Samband during the post-war era. These parties were the only opportunity to dance during the *bygdelag* events, since

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47 “Han kunne sitta heile dagen og småspela. Om sundagane og om kveldane kom det alltid folk inn og ville høyre på han.”

there was no dance or music at those banquets. When the banquet was over and the program was over then they had a choice either go to bed or find a place where they could start partying again.

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It was an all-night affair. . . . It was a standing tradition. . . . I know a couple of times out in Granite Falls we even took over the parking lot at the motel and started a party out there. Kept going until the wee hours of the morning. (Johansen, 2016)

### *Ethnic Symbolism*

In addition to functioning as recreation and entertainment, research has shown that both genres variously functioned as ethnic symbols. Several studies demonstrate that *bygdedans* music, and first and foremost the Hardanger fiddle itself, have consistently functioned as symbols of Norway and “Norwegianness” in Upper Midwestern Norwegian-American communities. Hoeschen attributes the symbolic value of the Hardanger fiddle to the instrument’s association with social, cultural, and religious developments in Norway during the nineteenth century, including the transformation from a pre-industrial, predominantly rural society to an industrial one (*det store hamskiftet*), romantic nationalism, and pietistic religious movements (Hoeschen, 1989, p. 56). As an ethnic symbol, researchers also regard the Hardanger fiddle as having had the capacity to establish nostalgic, diasporic links to Norway. Writing about two of his informants, Hardanger fiddlers Gunder Odden and Kolbein Ornes, Hoeschen reflects:

What linked them with one another and with so many other *spelemenn* was the significance of the instrument itself—its power as a symbol of their native Norway. This symbolism fostered a flowering of the *hardingfele* playing tradition in the Upper Midwest, involving hundreds of players. Nearly all of these *spelemenn* were first-generation Norwegians, who played the instrument for themselves and for their listeners as a nostalgic tradition. The music they played was a poignant link to the Home Country. It was this same powerful symbolism which caused succeeding generations to abandon the Hardanger violin and its music as they chose those music traditions identifiable with the larger American culture. (Hoeschen, 1989, p. 58)

The symbolic function of *bygdedans* music performed on Hardanger fiddle also persisted beyond the period in question in this study: Nusbaum observes that “in the 1980s *bygdedans* music is being performed, for the most part, at displays of history and culture, where the

sound and sight of the Hardanger fiddle symbolize ‘Norwegianness’ to the descendants of the immigrants” (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 4).

In his research, Nusbaum found that for some third- and fourth-generation Norwegian-American musicians, the Hardanger fiddle functioned as a symbol of Norwegian-American ethnic identity and pride, even if their repertoires consisted predominantly of old-time music. In a footnote, Nusbaum writes “so symbolic is the Hardanger that some fiddlers, such as Sidney Mathistad of Butterfield, may own one (or more), yet not play it. Elmo Wick of Brooten, accomplished on the conventional fiddle, learned to play the Hardanger as well because it represented his heritage” (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 11). Another fiddler interviewed by Nusbaum, Archie Teigen, related that his preference for the Hardanger fiddle over the violin “comes from the prettiness of the instrument, as well as his pride in his background” (Nusbaum, n.d.).<sup>48</sup>

There is some disagreement in the literature regarding the extent to which Norwegian-American old-time music has functioned as an ethnic symbol. Some researchers, such as Nusbaum, assert that old-time music had some symbolic value, citing the fact that many players were aware of “tune lineages” as one indication of this (Nusbaum, n.d.). Nusbaum also suggests that Norwegian-American old-time music symbolized “Norwegian-Americanness” by musically illustrating “perceived differences between Norwegians and Americans”; as an example, Nusbaum cites the music of the Bjorngjeld family of Columbus, North Dakota as having a style that “places in the foreground the contact between Norwegian and surrounding American culture as an aspect of the musical communication” (Nusbaum, n.d.).<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, Nusbaum suggests that old-time music typically served multivalent functions, the most central of which was a social function, rather than a symbolic one:

There is some symbolic behavior linking the music to things Norwegian. . . . But the symbolic value linking the music to Norwegian-ness is less a part of the function of the old-time music performance event than it is with hardanger [*sic*] music. Old-time music settings are most often, ones where enactment of a social activity is paramount. The meaning of the music at such events relate [*sic*] most strongly to the attitudes members of the social occasion bring to or develop at the event. That can include symbolic behavior, linking the music, and participants at the occasion to Norway. . . . As old-time music is music of general social use . . . it is not surprising

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48 Both Mathistad and Teigen were third-generation Norwegian Americans whose grandparents had all been born in Norway, while Wick’s paternal grandmother and great-grandfather had emigrated from Norway.

49 Nusbaum notes that the Bjorngjelds self-described their musical style as “Norwegian bluegrass” (Nusbaum, n.d.). The Bjorngjeld Family, as recorded by Nusbaum in 1988, consisted of siblings Olga (vocals, mandolin), Borghild (guitar), and Al (accordion), as well as Al’s son, Art Bjorngjeld (fiddle). The older generation of Bjorngjeld musicians comprised six siblings. They are featured on the 1989 LP/cassette production *Norwegian-American Music from Minnesota: Old-Time and Traditional Favorites*. The Bjorngjelds are discussed further in Chapter Five.

that it is more popular than hardanger music. In the musical communication between the musicians and audiences, the Norwegianness of the music is only one handle. At most events where old-time music is played, audiences have many behavioral options. They may relate to the music as a dancer, listener, as background in a party atmosphere, or not at all. (Nusbaum, n.d.)

Martin, on the other hand, views Norwegian-American old-time music as a powerful ethnic symbol that had the capacity to draw symbolic links to a common past, but that, like other Norwegian-American ethnic symbols, had been subject to a process of simplification, adaptation, and stereotyping which had transformed it into an “icon of ethnic worship” for later generations:

[C]ertain items—tunes as well as other old artifacts like family photographs—would continue to be treasured as links, if somewhat symbolic, to the past. Music especially would retain this power as an ideal vehicle for nostalgia. To second and third generations of Norwegian-Americans, the actual original content of such symbols of the past would have less meaning than their symbolic appeal as [a] familiar object associated with an ethnic heritage. As the tunes were removed farther and farther from their original context, they would more easily be adapted, simplified, symbolized, stereotyped. Like the red vest of the Norwegian-Americans, the troll on the knick-knack shelf, the lutefisk church supper, such elements of folk culture would become icons of a newly created pantheon of ethnic worship, symbols of a now hazy Norwegianness existing now only in the second-hand reminiscences of the descendants of the original pioneers. Tunes such as *Hälsa Dem Där Hemma* and *Nidvelven* would soon come not only to remind one of this Norwegianness, they would become ethnicity itself, stylized and glorified as a way to become Norwegian instead of expressions of an underlying, subconscious Norwegianness. (Martin, 1979–1980)

Some research indicates that by the 1980s, Norwegian-American old-time music had gained value as an ethnic music tradition and had, at least partially, come to function as a shared Norwegian-American ethnic symbol on occasions of ethnic celebration, thus functioning similarly to *bygdedans* music. Kvam argues that attitudes towards Norwegian-American old-time music in Minnesota at the time of her study (completed in 1986) were “generally reverent,” exemplified by the fact that “care has been taken by Dr. LeRoy Larson and others to preserve it through notation and taped performance, much as the ‘bygdedans’ was preserved in Norway.” Kvam also points to the fact that old-time music was showcased at the annual Norwegian-American Folk Music Festival in Decorah, Iowa, as well as the availability of commercial recordings of the genre through Larson’s record label, as evidence of the music’s

high esteem (Kvam, 1986, p. 147). Nusbaum observed that in the 1980s, Norwegian-American old-time music was still included in some social events, but that “today, old-time music is likely to accompany events that commemorate (or symbolize) the settler’s determination to prosper on the frontier, such as Syttende Mai” (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 7). Conversely, Beetham argues that in the early 2000s, Norwegian-American old-time music was not viewed as a strong ethnic symbol due to its perceived “hybrid” nature (Beetham, 2005, p. 48).<sup>50</sup>

### *Cultural Assimilation*

While both genres have been found to have functioned as ethnic symbols to varying degrees, studies have primarily identified Norwegian-American old-time music as having served a culturally assimilative function. This function can be regarded as related to Merriam’s tenth main function of music, “contribution to the integration of society,” in which music functions to integrate society by “providing a solidarity point around which members of society congregate,” and to Clayton’s “mediation between self and other,” in which he views music as a “tool for interaction in instances when normal speech communication is found to be inadequate” (Clayton, 2016, p. 54; Merriam, 1964, p. 226).

Studies have pointed to several ways in which performances of Norwegian-American old-time music have contributed to processes of cultural assimilation. As mentioned above, Martin suggests that old-time music functioned as a musical “common language” among various ethnic groups in the Upper Midwest, providing a medium for these groups to interact across ethnic boundaries both musically and socially. Similarly, Leary views the performance of multiethnic European-American music in the South Shore of Lake Superior as a “parallel pattern” to the use of English as the “chief medium of interethnic communication” among the same ethnic groups:

[A] wealth of “foreign” dance tunes and songs dominated gatherings at homes, on outdoor platforms, and in newly erected ethnic halls. Predictably, such events were not exclusive, as people from various backgrounds assembled to dance and play music. In this way, a Polish button accordionist might learn a Norwegian waltz, while a Swedish fiddler could acquire a Hungarian *czardas* or a Finnish polka. At

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50 Although not made explicit in Beetham’s research, a link might be drawn between the late-twentieth-century revival of *bygdedans* music in America—mainly driven by the establishment of the Hardanger Fiddle Association of America in 1983—and the declining symbolic value of Norwegian-American old-time music indicated by Beetham here. In other words, the revival of *bygdedans* music in America may have altered and reduced the symbolic function of the old-time genre. Related to this, Beetham suggests that the *bygdedans* music revival, driven by a faction she terms the “imported tradition camp” (musicians who “may or may not be Norwegian by heritage and [who] want to play runddans or bygdedans music as it is currently played in Norway”), attracted musicians who would otherwise have played Norwegian-American old-time music (Beetham, 2005, pp. 42–48).

the same time—while keenly aware and proud of their Old World heritage, and generally tolerant of others's [sic] ethnicity—these people, especially the youthful immigrants and children of the second generation, soon played and sang many American numbers. Dubbed *English* for linguistic reasons, these songs and tunes were learned, like the English language, in the aforementioned contexts of the workplace, the urban or rural neighborhood, the town, and the school. (Leary, 1983, p. 221)

Researchers have also found that the adapted use of Norwegian-American old-time music in certain performance contexts reflects broader processes of cultural assimilation among Norwegian Americans. In her master's thesis, Rue explores how transplanted Norwegian rural wedding customs, which included performances of fiddle music, were adjusted in the Norwegian-American context to reflect a group self-image that sought to align itself with Anglo-American norms and values. Rue suggests that "acculturating forces . . . were at work in transforming the ethnically marked Norwegian-American wedding into a generic protestant wedding" (Rue, 2009, p. 73). According to Rue, in the Norwegian-American context, the drinking, dancing, and brawling associated with traditional Norwegian weddings gradually came to be viewed as improper. Rue asserts that Norwegian Americans, who were an "upwardly mobile ethnic group," were driven to distance themselves from this kind of behaviour, which was regarded as unsuitable by Anglo-Americans, and, according to Norwegian minister Sigvard Sondresen "has contributed to reducing Norwegian immigrants in American eyes, as existing on a lower cultural level than is actually the case" (Nichol, 2005, p. 33). Correspondingly, during the first half of the twentieth century, Norwegian Americans

instituted changes to the typical and representative wedding within the community, like patterns of invitation, the substitution of an English liturgy for the Norwegian, use of white wedding dresses as opposed to the Norwegian *bunad*, . . . shortening the celebration from a several day long affair to a one-day event, and the transformation of the post-wedding celebration from a raucous and debaucherous affair to a restrained and modest meal of coffee and cake reception in the Lutheran church basement. (Rue, 2009, p. 63)

### *Identity Construction through Contemporary Performances*

In this final section, I briefly review findings from studies by Rue and Beetham regarding identity construction in recent and contemporary Norwegian-American contexts. These studies are among few within the field that explicitly address issues of identity construction. Rue's dissertation (2014) examines musical practices in the Norwegian-American music culture



from the 1960s to the present day, exploring diverse expressions of Norwegian-American identity and musical heritage in modern contexts. One of Rue's central arguments is that Norwegian-American music has "never been a static category of music" and has "continued to be creatively adapted to the times in which it exists" (Rue, 2014, p. 119).

Rue's study focuses on performers and performance contexts spanning from the 1970s, which she designates a period of revival and revitalization for Norwegian-American old-time music, to the present day (2014). In her examination of the revival period, she focuses on the Norwegian-American Folk Music Festival held in Decorah, Iowa, which she argues functioned to revitalize Norwegian-American old-time music, and on three musician-curators (Robert Andresen, LeRoy Larson, and Bruce Bollerud) whom she demonstrates have served as the "crucial link from the first and second generations of Norwegian American folk musicians to the present" (Rue, 2014, p. 74) since all three were concerned with collecting, preserving, and disseminating the music traditions of the first and second Norwegian-American generations, particularly lesser-known and regionally distinctive material.

In her examination of the contemporary period, Rue investigates how Norwegian-American performers "reflect their modern-day context" while continuing to "reflect familiar conventions and characteristics" of the music tradition, asserting that the tradition is "adaptable to addressing the changing realities of the Norwegian American community" (Rue, 2014, p. 119). Rue employs folklorist Robert Klymasz's framework for observing folklore change among immigrant communities in North America to discuss the relationship between cultural conservatism and change exhibited by Norwegian-American musicians and bands. Klymasz's framework consists of "three interrelated yet fairly distinct segments or layers of materials: traditional, transitional, and innovational" (Klymasz, 1973, p. 132). Rue uses Klymasz's framework as "a way of bringing to the fore the diversity of ways in which an ethnic group can enjoy the continued process of articulating its identity" and to "describe general trends in the continuance of ethnic folk music post-immigration" (Rue, 2014, pp. 124, 138).<sup>51</sup> She examines Norwegian-American musicians and bands (Foot-Notes, Hütenänny, Scandium, Tulla, and Kari Taurig) that she loosely classifies according to Klymasz's framework; however, she is careful to underscore the permeability and interrelatedness of the framework's three layers.

Rue's central finding regarding Norwegian-American identity construction through music is that the diversity of contemporary expressions of Norwegian-American music, encompassing the spectrum of traditional, transitional, and innovative trends, reflects a diversity of articulations

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51 Klymasz's three layers are not only relevant in a contemporary context but could be applied to describe the development of traditional cultural practices at other historical points in time. Rue points to one example of this: "for some time the changes made to the repertoires and styles of the first and second generation immigrants' music could be suitably described as transitional" (Rue, 2014, p. 138).

of contemporary Norwegian-American identity, and that musical choices by contemporary performers reflect modern contexts. In a similar fashion, Beetham characterizes Norwegian-American old-time music as reflecting the growth of “new ideas, identities, and values” in the Norwegian-American community of the Upper Midwest (Beetham, 2005, p. 108): “Norwegian-American old-time fiddling demonstrates a shift in identity as Norwegians have lived in America. Unlike with some preconceived efforts at preserving what has been decided as authentically Norwegian, as with the rosemaling movement, Norwegian-American old-time fiddling is a non-organized result of a new heritage” (Beetham, 2005, p. 38). By contrast, Beetham points out, *bygdedans* music has functioned as one of a number of shared symbols of Norwegian-American ethnic identity drawn from Norwegian expressive culture and an imagined collective past: “Norwegian-Americans have instead chosen to emphasize Vikings, rosemaling, and *bygdedans* music as symbols of identity” (Beetham, 2005, pp. 38–39). Beetham’s study, which focuses on the Norwegian-American old-time music genre, does not explore identity issues in depth.

### Conclusion

In this section, we have seen that previous findings on the social functions of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music bring to light at least four central functions (community building, recreation and entertainment, ethnic symbolism, and cultural assimilation), all of which may be related to an overall function of identity construction, although this is generally not made explicit in the literature. Rue’s study, which is one of the only studies in the field to deal explicitly with issues of identity construction, found that the range of contemporary expressions of Norwegian-American music reflects a heterogeneity of Norwegian-American identities; while these findings illustrate developments in identity construction that are outside the historical scope of this study, similar developments were observed within the period of investigation.

On the whole, while many prior studies have addressed the social function of one or both genres, there has been limited discussion of identity construction through performances of the two genres. Therefore, a more extensive study of identity construction is warranted. In the next section, I move on to discuss previous findings on the retention, decline, and development of the two genres.

#### 3.3.2 Retention and Decline

Because this study examines the development of the two genres through their interplay with intercultural, supercultural, and subcultural forces and structures, it is relevant to review what has been found in previous research regarding the genres’ retention and decline. Most

previous research addresses issues related to the retention and/or decline of one or both genres. Scholars outline a number of factors; broadly, studies suggest that Norwegian-American old-time music was retained because of its simplicity and adaptability, while *bygdedans* music was retained for a time because of its capacity to construct a “continuity of cultural expression” that drew links to a constructed, common past (Martin, 1979–1980); however, the genre largely declined after the death of the immigrant generation because of its cultural and musical specificity and complexity. It is possible to synthesize the factors that contributed to the genres’ retention and decline presented in prior studies into two broad, dichotomous themes: simplicity/complexity; and adaptability/stability. Furthermore, research has found that pietistic opposition to music and social dancing was an additional factor that affected both genres and led to decline during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In order to facilitate a comparative discussion, I discuss the genres together under all of these themes.

### *Simplicity/Complexity*

Prior research identifies the musical (formal, rhythmic) and aesthetic “simplicity” of Norwegian-American old-time as one of the reasons for the genre’s retention. Martin argues that the difficult circumstances of pioneer life required an “acceptance of the utilitarian” in many facets of life, including music-making. Homesteading involved a sense of immediacy: “most important was to get things done as quickly and as simply as possible” (Martin, 1979–1980). Martin suggests that this attitude carried over into the realm of music:

In dance music, similar trends can be perceived. There seems to have been a shift in taste away from the more intricate regional styles in favor of a simple, clear dance rhythm. The tunes were slowly stripped of their peculiar flourishes and ornamentations; fiddlers no longer had the time to perfect them . . . [However,] there was still the need for good, basic dance music. . . . Simple music was all that was needed and was perhaps more valued considering the privations of life on the frontier. . . . The result: a gradual simplification of tunes and musical tastes, to emphasize the only really necessary quality—the dance rhythm. (Martin, 1979–1980)

As a “simple” form of music, old-time was sufficient to fulfill the most basic social purpose in the lives of immigrants on the frontier—the need for a simple dance rhythm. The “simplification of musical tastes”—the apparent “shift in taste” away from more complex musical styles implied by Martin suggests that aesthetic simplicity was more highly valued among Norwegian immigrants than musical intricacy because it was more expedient in the frontier context.<sup>52</sup>

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52 In another article, Martin points to changing musical trends driven by the availability of sheet music and phonograph recordings, among other things, as an additional factor influencing this “shift in taste”; see Martin (1980).

Nusbaum makes a similar claim, suggesting that the popularity of the genre in the Upper Midwest during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may be viewed as a manifestation of philosopher Jacques Ellul's principle of efficiency.<sup>53</sup> Paraphrasing Ellul, Nusbaum writes that "the history of humankind is one of continually streamlining cultural artifacts so that they can best be used in a greater variety of situations" (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 11). Nusbaum implies that a parallel dynamic can be seen in the popularity of old-time music among Norwegian Americans in the Upper Midwest, as this music and dance genre "enabled individuals from many regions to appreciate and perform the same types of music and social dancing" (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 4). Similarly, Kvam argues that the ways in which Norwegian Americans chose to maintain some elements of their music traditions while abandoning others "reflects the memories they want to hold and those skills which are expedient to keep from the 'old country' as well as necessary adjustments they must make in the new one" (Kvam, 1986, p. 1).

While researchers argue that the musical "simplicity" of old-time is one of the reasons for the genre's retention, they consistently point to the cultural and musical "complexity" of *bygdedans* music as a cause for that genre's decline in the Upper Midwest. "Why do some customs die?" Philip Martin asks in a 1980 newspaper article on Hardanger fiddle players in the Midwest (Martin, 1980). "The key is complexity versus simplicity," he concludes, and suggests that the most important indication of whether transplanted cultural practices will persist post-migration is if it is "simple to fit the custom into the existing pattern of American life" (Martin, 1980, p. 11). Martin asserts that Hardanger fiddle (i.e. *bygdedans*) music was "unable to find a stable base or niche" because it was a "much more complicated custom" in a number of ways (Martin, 1979–1980; 1980, p. 11). Musically speaking, Martin argues, the genre is difficult to learn and perform, difficult to dance to, and difficult to listen to: "its strange sounds do not necessarily please an untrained ear upon first hearing" (Martin, 1980, p. 11).

Martin also determined that the complexity of the genre's cultural and social function in Norwegian rural peasant society made it difficult to transplant *bygdedans* music to the Norwegian-American context: he writes that "the traditions had been born and developed to fit [the] special nature of Norwegian village life," and Norwegian-American settlements, even if populated by people from same Norwegian rural community, would never resemble the village in Norway because such communities were "the complex product of hundreds of years of geographical isolation, local cultural development and population persistence" (Martin, 1979–1980). These complicated cultural and social interworkings, Martin argues, were too complex to reassemble in new world. As Hoeschen points out, this resulted in the

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53 In *The Technological Society*, Ellul puts forward an "efficiency principle" which claims that efficiency is the "only criterion in all the decision making processes in technological society" (Jerónimo, Garcia, & Mitcham, 2013, p. 49).

disintegration of Old World traditions—of the genre’s primary social function—which “eroded the base of support for the Hardanger violinist” (Hoeschen, 1989, p. 52).

Researchers also point to the genre’s cultural and musical complexity to explain why so few second-generation Norwegian Americans carried on the *bygdedans* music tradition. According to Hoeschen, the “complex symbolism” of the Hardanger fiddle and *bygdedans* music, which “was responsible for much of its appeal to first-generation Norwegian-Americans” did not appeal to subsequent generations: “this same symbolism made the tradition less desirable to maintain by the second and third generations. . . . Unique to Norway, its performance in the Upper Midwest was obviously foreign” (Hoeschen, 1989, p. 53). Moreover, the musical intricacies of the genre made it difficult to learn, and “the young ones simply did not see the point in troubling themselves to master its complexities” (Martin, 1980, p. 11).

There is general consensus in the literature that the practice of playing *bygdedans* music died with the first generation of Norwegian immigrants and, on the whole, was not passed on to subsequent generations.<sup>54</sup> Hoeschen suggests that “Hardanger violin activity had diminished greatly” by the mid-twentieth century (Hoeschen, 1989, p. 52); by the 1950s, there were only a handful of Hardanger fiddle players still living in the Upper Midwest.<sup>55</sup>

### *Adaptability/Stability*

Another central factor determined to have contributed to the retention of the Norwegian-American old-time music genre is its adaptability. As mentioned earlier, because the tune types in Norwegian *runddans* music—the fundament of the Norwegian-American old-time music genre—have origins in a broader, pan-European repertoire of social dance music, the genre functioned as a musical “common language” in encounters with other European immigrant groups in the region: the genre could reach across ethnic boundaries, while *bygdedans* music could not (Rue, 2009, p. 20).

As mentioned above, interethnic community building and collaboration became essential in the rural Upper Midwest as homogeneous immigrant settlements gradually developed into multicultural communities. Martin argues that the musical language of old-time facilitated cross-cultural cooperation. In place of a tradition-bound, transplanted Norwegian immigrant village rose

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54 However, Hoeschen documents several second-generation Norwegian Americans who had learned to play Hardanger fiddle from their fathers, and who represent exceptions to this rule (Hoeschen, 1989, pp. 55–56).

55 Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddle players still living in the late 1950s included Gunnar Odden, Steinar Odden, Jøger O. Quale, Kolbein Ornes, and recent immigrants Nils Lie and Anund Roheim.

a culture of neighborly interdependence and sharing, a society based on the least common denominators of mutual aid and mutual enjoyment. The most popular rhythms were those shared in common—the waltz, polka and schottische. The most popular tunes were those quickly recognized by many people, a stock repertoire that included the most common tunes from many different groups; Irish Washerwoman, a German polka or two, the Yankee Redwing and Soldier's Joy, a couple of common Norwegian waltzes like *Livet i Finnskogen* and the Saturday Night Waltz. (Martin, 1979–1980)

Researchers regard the genre's adaptability as a social asset in contexts of intercultural contact in the Upper Midwest. Furthermore, Martin suggests that social arenas for cross-cultural contact and exchange drove the development of ethnic old-time music in the region, which he argues "became a very generalized, simple type of music, characterized by its neighborly social traditions rather than by its musical complexity or specificity" (Martin, 1979–1980).

Scholars also indicate further manifestations of the genre's adaptability. Rue points out that the adaptability of the fiddle itself—one of the genre's standard lead instruments, along with the accordion—was a factor in the genre's persistence: "the strong adaptive qualities of the standard violin, its roots in other European musical traditions, and its prominence in the world of popular and commercial music, all contributed to its success and popularity as an instrument in this region whereas the Hardanger fiddle was not able to reach across ethnic boundaries in the same way" (Rue, 2009, p. 20). Nusbaum proposes that the genre survived because of its adaptability to various, often new, sociomusical contexts, and suggests that this quality is central to an understanding of the music tradition itself: "the tradition of Norwegian music in America might best be seen not only as a set of tunes, tune types, and musical conventions, but also as the adaptation of the music to different, sometimes new social settings" (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 9). Finally, Kvam draws a parallel between the development of the genre and broader processes of cultural assimilation among Norwegian Americans, indicating that certain melodies and musical elements were preserved, while others were discarded via a process of adaptation: "the nature of the music of the Norwegian immigrants is a reflection of their adjustment to a new society. The elements that were kept, those that were lost, and the addition of new characteristics parallel the Norwegians' adaptation to American culture" (Kvam, 1986, pp. 153–154).

While the genre's adaptability enabled it to persist for several generations, research has shown that broader social, cultural, and technological change during the twentieth century led to its gradual decline, although Nusbaum contends that the "frontier tradition of more casual performance has never disappeared" (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 7). In his study, Larson found that

Norwegian-American old-time music had had a stable role in early, self-sufficient Norwegian rural communities in Minnesota and was often transmitted to subsequent generations but that it had begun to be neglected to some extent by the third generation.<sup>56</sup> Larson found that in some communities in rural Minnesota, Norwegian-American old-time music and dance practices were still in use in the 1970s. He determined, however, that the genre “generally began to be neglected by those of the second American-born generation, so that today [ca. 1975] there are few musicians capable of performing, transmitting and sustaining this repertory” (L. Larson, 1975, p. 3). Here, it would seem that Larson identifies the 1960s and 1970s as a period of decline for the genre.<sup>57</sup>

Beetham’s 2005 study points to a contemporary decline of the Norwegian-American old-time music genre due to a number of factors. She claims that the lack of institutional support for the genre has led “many talented Norwegian-American fiddlers [to] fall away from it in preference for American fiddling” (Beetham, 2005, p. 47). Beetham contends that the genre has lacked support from the Norwegian-American subculture because it is not considered to have strong symbolic value as an ethnic identity marker: “because Norwegian-American old-time music, as a hybrid music, is not seen as a strong ethnic symbol in America there is less effort to continue it” (Beetham, 2005, p. 48). The genre’s simplicity and “old fashioned” quality, and the younger generation’s changing musical tastes, as well as their desire for variety and technical challenge are also named as factors. Another factor mentioned is the music’s affective value: while older fiddlers may find more personal meaning in the music through its ability to connect them with memories, for younger fiddlers the music is “just a tune” (Lloyd and Loy Larson, quoted in Beetham, 2005, p. 47).

To round off this section, I return briefly to *bygdedans* music which, unlike Norwegian-American old-time music, is not characterized as adaptable in prior studies. While *bygdedans* music was not easily assimilated into patterns of American life, researchers suggest that it was retained for some time within the Norwegian-American community because it served another function, which Martin describes as “the need for a tie to the old country” (Martin, 1979–1980). Martin suggests that a primary social function of *bygdedans* music in the Upper Midwest was to draw nostalgic, symbolic links to a constructed, common past: “it created a continuity of cultural expression that linked memories of the past with the reality of the present” (Martin, 1979–1980). I am calling this “stability” here because the intent was to

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56 Larson’s study traces Norwegian-American old-time music through the cultural transition from the era of self-reliant Norwegian settlements in the late 1800s until the mid-1970s, and his observations on folk music and dance in the decades leading up to the 1910s are based on the recollections of his informants regarding the experiences of their parents’ and grandparents’ generations.

57 This is supported by Victor Greene’s study of ethnic old-time music in America, which indicates that the heyday of most ethnic old-time music genres in America spanned from World War One through the 1950s and points to the late 1940s as a “golden age” (Greene, 1992, p. 1).

construct what appeared to be a stable, permanent, shared group identity; however, as we have seen, these efforts are perhaps more precisely interpreted as a “positioning” within the interplay between supercultural, intercultural, and subcultural flows; between the “American,” the “Norwegian,” and the “Norwegian-American.”

For Norwegian immigrants, performances of *bygdedans* music can be understood as constructing diasporic identities; according to Martin, the music “stimulated the recalling of scenes of family and friends, of the days of youth,” as well as serving as a catharsis of melancholy, “as a way to bridge any sense of overwhelming loss” post-migration (Martin, 1979–1980). For the second and third generations, *bygdedans* music had a more symbolic function, becoming one of several icons of what Martin calls a “pantheon of ethnic worship” (Martin, 1979–1980).

### *Pietism*

Finally, it should be mentioned that studies on both genres identify religious or pietistic opposition to music and social dancing as a factor that led to decline during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hoeschen, 1989, pp. 53–55; L. Larson, 1975, pp. 25–28; Martin, 1994, pp. 32–36). Pietistic attitudes, which were common among Norwegian immigrants, “condemned many folk expressions as worldly and sinful,” including music and dancing (Lovoll, 1975, p. 5).<sup>58</sup> The degree of religious influence exerted on cultural expression varied from settlement to settlement, and some early Norwegian-American rural communities were much more pietistic than others. In certain communities, neither genre was tolerated because of music’s association with dancing, alcohol, and unruly behaviour. Larson writes about his own experiences of Norwegian-American pietistic attitudes as a youth in Clearwater County, Minnesota:

As late as the 1950’s [*sic*] I recall such pietistic attitudes exerting a strong influence in the Norwegian communities of northern Clearwater County. Certain homes and congregations were strongly opposed to drinking, smoking (by women especially), and card playing, although these activities were obviously flourishing. There were also many who disapproved of movies, and of women wearing cosmetics.

I vividly recall the uproar in our school district the first time that folk and social dancing was taught in one of the Physical Education classes at Clearbrook High School. I also recall certain members of certain churches handing out religious tracts at local Saturday night dances. (L. Larson, 1975, pp. 27–28)

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58 These attitudes were carried over from Norway, where lay religious movements had swept the country during the nineteenth century. These movements characterized fiddle playing and dance as sinful and resulted in the decline of music traditions in many rural communities (Aksdal & Nyhus, 1993, p. 21).



On the whole, pietistic attitudes among Norwegian Americans declined during the first half of the twentieth century, and while research on the topic is scant, it seems that religious opposition to music had diminished greatly by mid-century. Martin suggests that pietistic attitudes towards music tapered off even earlier, writing that “by the end of the 1800s anti-fiddler sentiment subsided across both Europe and America, and the music of the fiddler was tolerated and enjoyed by many” (Martin, 1994, p. 34).

### *Conclusion*

In this section, we have seen that previous findings regarding retention and decline reveal consistent themes that account for the development of the genres. However, prior studies have not tend to explore the “bigger picture” of how the genres, and individual performers, interacted with existing “patterns of American life” (Martin, 1980, p. 11). This indicates a need to examine specific manifestations of how performers and performances interplayed with, and were shaped by, these patterns, which, in Slobin’s framework, can be understood as the interplay of the “-cultures.” Previous studies have also tended to focus on the retention/decline of a single genre: a comparative approach to the examination of the development of the genres would enable a more comprehensive understanding of the shifting social meanings of both genres within this particular setting and historical period. In the next section, I discuss theoretical frameworks employed in previous studies to analyze the musical development of the Norwegian-American old-time music genre in particular.

### 3.3.3 Norwegian-American Old-Time as a Creolized Music

Most scholars who have discussed the musical development of the Norwegian-American old-time genre through processes of musical change and exchange have employed the concept of creolization to describe these processes (Beetham, 2005; Leary, 2006; Lornell, 2002; Rue, 2009, 2014; Shaw, 2020). Folklorist James P. Leary’s use of the term in his book, *Polkabilly: How the Goose Island Ramblers Redefined American Folk Music*, seems to have established creolization as the prevailing concept for describing the broader phenomenon of multiethnic musical mixture in the Upper Midwest, and, by extension, of musical mixture in the Norwegian-American context.

In *Polkabilly*, Leary uses the concept of creolization to describe the development of a unique, multiethnic regional musical style in the Upper Midwest. Discussing the phenomenon of musical sharing and exchange between a diversity of ethnic groups in the Upper Midwestern region (what Slobin might call “interaction among subcultures”), Leary points to creolization as a suitable term: “What Bob Andresen termed a ‘mix,’ what Richard White calls the

creative interactions of the ‘middle ground,’ what Victor Barnouw refers to as intercultural ‘free masonry,’ other scholars have labeled ‘creolization’” (Leary, 2006, p. 12).

Leary’s long-term, exhaustive fieldwork and research on what he has also termed a “pan-ethnic hybrid” old-time regional music style (Leary, 1983) eventually lead to his attachment of the term “polkabilly,” originally coined by Roby Cogswell, to this distinctive Upper Midwestern musical style. Centred on a case study of the Goose Island Ramblers, a band from south-central Wisconsin that performed repertoire “that shuffled, bent, and fused British and Irish fiddle tunes, ballads, and sentimental songs with Hawaiian marches, Swiss yodels, and the polkas, waltzes, schottisches, and mazurkas of Central and Northern Europe” (Leary, 2006, p. vi), Leary’s *Polkabilly* delineates the contours of the polkabilly style, an eclectic, distinctly Upper Midwestern style that draws on “a broad span of locally performed, ethnically grounded musical traditions [combined with] several genres whirling their way through mass media” (Leary, 2006, p. vii).

Identifying Upper Midwesterners as “North Coast creoles,” Leary contends that the polkabilly style can be understood through the concept of creolization as it has been employed in folklore studies, exemplified in how musical exchange in the region has “long been distinguished by egalitarianism, by freewheeling accommodation and blending across complex boundaries” (Leary, 2006, p. 12). Rather than pointing to the development of music traditions of individual ethnic groups as examples of processes of creolization, Leary’s use of the term focuses on a broader, shared regional style. He describes how, in both rural and urban, labour and celebratory contexts, “Upper Midwesterners traded songs and tunes, forging a new regional style that creatively fused their cultural and linguistic similarities and differences” (Leary, 2006, p. 13). A shared grammar of performance contexts also laid the foundation for fluid cultural interaction: creolized music emerged in contexts that gathered people of various ethnic backgrounds, such as lumber camps, fraternal halls, and community work exchange events.

Some scholars of Upper Midwestern culture have offered alternatives to creolization. Folklorist B. Marcus Cederström, for example, asserts that while creolization is appropriate for examining “contact situations that are deemed to be mutually *unintelligible*” and is useful for “explaining the emergence of fundamentally new cultures through contact,” another framework, which he terms “folkloristic koineization” is more appropriate for examining “immigrant ethnic identity, which emerges from contact situations that are defined as mutually *intelligible* and that result in a unique culture, but one that is not necessarily fundamentally new” (Cederström, 2012, p. 124).<sup>59</sup>

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59 Cederström applies this framework to an analysis of Swedish-American ethnic identity formation in the Upper Midwest.

I have struggled for some time to reconcile the concept of creolization with processes of musical change and exchange in the Norwegian American subculture in the Upper Midwest. I have explored alternative concepts for cultural mixture, such as hybridity, syncretism, transculturation, diasporic cultural development, and others, but no single term seems to contain the tools for understanding all of the forces at work in the development of the Norwegian-American music culture. Some of the terms are also problematic because of their semantic baggage, which should be acknowledged and reckoned with in any use of the term. Creolization, for example, was first used in an academic sense in the field of linguistics to explain the emergence of creole languages and has origins in the displacement of large groups of people in colonial slave economies in the Caribbean basin and the Indian Ocean (Eriksen, 2007, p. 155).

Focusing on creolization (or similar terms/tropes) to explain the patterns and processes of change and exchange in the music culture of Norwegian Americans, and the broader Upper-Midwestern music culture, does not give a full picture of the global cultural forces involved in these processes, either. The “creolization explanation” tends to paint a somewhat idealized picture that emphasizes egalitarianism, creativity, fluidity, and originality, while neglecting to scrutinize the significance of global cultural forces in these processes. This neglect is produced by the concept itself, which directs attention precisely towards “cultural phenomena which result from displacement and the ensuing social encounter and mutual influence between two or several groups, creating an ongoing dynamic interchange of symbols and practices, eventually leading to new forms with varying degrees of stability” (Eriksen, 2015, p. 313). This focus on interchange between groups neglects to consider a “bigger picture”—the extent to which forces of the global cultural economy (the five “-scapes”) were also involved in musical change. And they certainly were. I suggest, then, that while creolization is clearly relevant for understanding certain specific examples of cultural interaction in the Norwegian-American context, it cannot fully explain, and is not the most appropriate tool for understanding, all of the processes of musical change among Norwegian Americans.

How, then, should we approach using terminology to describe processes of musical change? Slobin suggests that instead of deciding on a single blanket term, such as creolization, hybridity, etc., it may be more appropriate to experiment with terminology on a case-by-case basis:

Some words seem more suitable than others . . . though the multivalent nature of the musical text means that no one term can cover all possible meanings, resonances, nuances. Trying out a large vocabulary, rather than settling on one blanket term for many different cases, would at least push the analyst to consider the broad range of motivations and receptions a subcultural move can represent. (Slobin, 1993, p. 91)

It is also important, Slobin reminds us, to use a multidimensional approach to analyze specific cases of musical codeswitching in order to understand meaning-making from multiple angles, such as the performer's intent, audience/consumer reception, and so on. Hopefully, this type of approach could provide a more nuanced understanding of the interplay of various global flows in the context of the development, performance, and social meanings of both genres.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

A number of gaps in prior studies point to the relevance of the present study. Research in the fields of Norwegian-American studies and American immigration studies provides important insights into mythmaking processes that are central to an understanding of Norwegian-American identity construction. While these fields have extensively examined topics such as the importance of Lutheran religious life, language, settlement patterns, political life, and cultural expressions such as literature in studies of the construction of Norwegian-American identities, Norwegian-American studies scholars have not sufficiently examined music's role in this context.

Several gaps can be identified in previous music research on the two genres. First, while most studies mention both genres, none have taken a comparative approach. Prior studies have tended to focus primarily on one of the two genres, often making generalizations about the other. A comparative study is needed in order to better understand the complex, multivalent social meanings of both genres within the same historical era and ethnographic setting. Second, while Rue's dissertation is an exception, there has been limited discussion of identity construction through performances of the two genres, and a broader and more thorough investigation of identity construction is also needed. Third, previous studies, with the exception of Leary's work, generally do not consider what Slobin calls the "bigger picture," including the supercultural forces that interplayed with both genres. Most of the focus on interpreting the retention, decline, and/or development of the genres has been directed towards the internal development of the Norwegian-American subculture, as well as interactions with other ethnic groups in the region. Finally, the often-used framework of creolization, while relevant, somewhat limits the scope of investigation and interpretation, and has also tended not to be interrogated.

With regard to data collection and findings, there is significant potential for expanding the data corpus and developing a deeper understanding of the music culture through further physical and digital archival research—this has been demonstrated in an exemplary fashion

by Shaw in her historical case study of fiddler Ole Hendricks (Shaw, 2020). In this study I have aimed to expand the data corpus by collecting and analyzing bodies of previously unexamined data, including qualitative documents, as well as audiovisual and digital materials and artifacts. There is also potential for developing new interpretations of existing data by revisiting the raw data collected in previous studies. This is one of the approaches taken in this study: by analyzing selections from the qualitative interview data collected by Hoeschen, Larson, Martin, and Nusbaum, I have aimed to develop fresh interpretations of some of this important source material.

In the next chapter, I outline the research design and methods used in the study, including processes of data collection, management, and analysis.

## 4 Materials and Methods

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, historical study is to investigate the construction of Norwegian-American identities through performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest between 1900 and 1970. This was accomplished by examining a selection of performance contexts for both genres and analyzing the musical expression of diverse layers of identity through these contexts. A case study approach was used in which the musical activities of two historical Norwegian-American performers, Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus, were analyzed. Moreover, the construction of Norwegian-American identities through performances of the two genres was investigated by exploring three broad processes through which Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with local and global cultural forces. In order to examine these processes, I analyzed multiple historical examples of interplay drawn from a diversity of qualitative data.

The strategy of inquiry in this study combines historical research and case study research. Data collection was accomplished through archival research, qualitative interviews, fieldwork, and the collection of qualitative documents, audiovisual materials, and artifacts. Data management and analysis involved the use of various systems, including a relational database, spreadsheets, and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software.

In this chapter I give an account of how the research was carried out. I begin by presenting the research design, including a discussion of the selected research approaches and a justification for why these were chosen. Following this I describe processes involved in collecting and managing data for the study. I then recount the approaches taken to analyze and interpret the data. Following this I discuss ethical considerations surrounding the research. Finally, I acknowledge and consider my own positionality and discuss how it affected the research process.

## 4.2 Research Design

A qualitative research approach was taken in this study. Taking a qualitative approach to the investigation of identity construction through performances of the two genres was appropriate because a complex, detailed understanding of this historical phenomenon within the specific ethnographic setting of the Upper Midwest was needed. Qualitative research is appropriate for studying complex, real-life phenomena in detail. Historical performance contexts and individual performers are situated in specific settings, and a complex understanding of these was needed; according to David Silverman, qualitative research is useful for addressing how people construct their behaviour in real-life settings (Silverman, 2020, p. 28). To develop a complex understanding of these contexts and individuals, the collection of multiple forms of qualitative data was appropriate. Qualitative research is also suitable in studies that aim to develop themes and findings based on multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44).

The study proceeded from several philosophical assumptions. First, the study proceeded from the ontological assumption that reality is “seen as multiple through many views” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20) and acknowledged that identities can be viewed and expressed through multiple perspectives. By examining multiple forms of data, the study aimed to present these multiple perspectives and realities. Second, the study proceeded from the epistemological assumption that knowledge is known through the subjective experiences of people; accordingly, John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth maintain that the qualitative researcher should “minimize the ‘distance’ or ‘objective separateness’ between himself or herself and those being researched” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). Hence, in order to gain knowledge about Norwegian-American identity construction through music performance, it was essential to “get as close as possible” to the phenomenon. In this study, this has meant gaining knowledge about the phenomenon through the examination of accounts of firsthand, subjective experiences, including interviews conducted by previous researchers, newspaper accounts of performance events, and conducting my own interviews with informants who participated in performances during the historical period in question. It has also involved analyzing other forms of data, particularly audio recordings of performances, as well as photographs and video recordings. As a supplemental tool, I have also learned and performed music from the repertoires of several historical performers investigated in this study. Furthermore, in order to understand the physical and geographical context of the study, I conducted three field research trips to Minnesota and Wisconsin, spending a total of seven weeks in the region. Previous to this, I had already travelled to the Upper Midwest to conduct research for my master’s thesis, as well as to teach, perform, or learn Hardanger fiddle on a number of occasions during the 2000s and 2010s.

Third, the study proceeded from the methodological assumption that procedures of qualitative research are “inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). The methodological procedures for the study have emerged and been modified during the course of the study. In early phases of the study, more emphasis was placed on practice-based research as a strategy of inquiry; an early aim was to study historical performance contexts through my perspective as a performer by investigating and performing repertoire from the period. This was later adjusted: while, as mentioned above, learning and performing some of the repertoire of several historical performers has served as a way to “get as close as possible” to the phenomenon, this has not served as a concrete, practice-based research strategy, but rather as a supplement to the research process. Overall, the study’s strategy of inquiry has been modified from a more practice-based approach to a more theoretical one.

The strategy of inquiry in this study combined two approaches: historical research and case study research. A discussion of, and justification for the selection of each of these approaches is presented below.

#### 4.2.1 Historical Research

This study has involved the collection and analysis of multiple forms of historical source material. In the use and analysis of these source materials, I have used a historical research approach. In this section I briefly describe important aspects of the historical research approach taken in this study.

Historical research involves interpreting the meaning of historical events by analyzing existing source material. Historical research differentiates between primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are first-person accounts of events and can be found in multiple forms of data. In this study, primary sources included audio recordings of performances by historical performers, newspaper accounts of performance events, recorded interviews with historical performers by past researchers, published autobiographies, photographs, and video recordings. In historical research, primary sources allow the researcher to “get as close as possible to what actually happened during a historical event or time period” and therefore “hold the greatest value in the validity and reliability of historical analysis” (Lundy, 2008). While primary sources are the most important form of data in historical research, they must be analyzed critically by the researcher to determine their validity and authenticity. As Karen Saucier Lundy indicates, historical researchers must also acknowledge that primary sources represent “only a trace of what remains of a historical event” and are “greatly influenced by the perception, biases, and selective survival of the document” (Lundy, 2008).



Secondary sources are created after an event occurred and can therefore include interpretations of primary sources, placing them in a historical context. Secondary sources are therefore not evidence; rather, they make reflections on evidence. In this study, secondary sources primarily included scholarly and popular books and articles, as well as unpublished manuscripts, that reference relevant historical performers or performance contexts. Other secondary sources included sheet music collections and unpublished music transcriptions. In the same manner as for primary sources, secondary sources must also be critically analyzed to discern their validity. In historical research, determining the reliability and validity of primary and secondary sources involves both external and internal criticism: external criticism entails determining the authenticity of a source, while internal criticism involves determining the accuracy and credibility of the source's contents (Lundy, 2008). In this study, internal criticism of authors' biases and perceptions in written accounts of performance events has been particularly important.<sup>60</sup>

Historical research also involves using various forms of observation, including "listening to music or recordings of the era, reading and knowing the language and expressions of the era, taking extensive notes from primary sources, observing art and other media, and examining available artifacts" (Lundy, 2008). In the context of this study, this has involved listening to a large body of archival and commercial recordings from the era; listening to interviews conducted by past researchers; reading hundreds of newspaper accounts of performances in both English and Norwegian; observing photographs, concert paraphernalia and event programs, sheet music collections, and video recordings; and examining artifacts such as musical instruments, physical collections of reel-to-reel and 78 rpm recordings, and *kappleik* (competition) trophies, among other things.

On account of the historical research approach taken, I also locate my research within the sub-field of ethnomusicology referred to as "historical ethnomusicology." Historical ethnomusicology entails the study of musical practices in the past, and involves the application of historical methods within an ethnomusicology paradigm (McCollum & Hebert, 2014, p. 2). While the ethnographic study of present-day musical practices—encompassing fieldwork, participant observation, and "learning to perform" on the part of the researcher—has traditionally been, and continues to be the primary research approach in ethnomusicology, historical methodologies have gained acceptance in the field since the 1980s (McCollum & Hebert, 2014, p. 3). The employment of historical materials as the basis for ethnomusicological research is now broadly accepted, and many contemporary researchers position ethnomusicological research questions in a historical framework (Carr, 2007, p. 9). The framework for analysis in

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60 For example, in Chapter Six, I discuss how written descriptions of *kappleik* performances by case study subject Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling employ a rhetoric that subtly undermines her authority as a musician.

historical ethnomusicology is the historical “field.” Ethnomusicologist Philip V. Bohlman calls this approach “doing fieldwork in the ethnomusicological past” and underscores that there is “not one ethnomusicological past, but many” (Bohlman, 2008, pp. 249–250). Moreover, he argues that ethnomusicological fieldwork, due to its “concern with the narrative and performative agency of music,” provides multiple ways of considering these “many pasts” (Bohlman, 2008, p. 256).

Limitations and challenges of the historical research approach include confirmation bias, which concerns both the personal bias in first-hand accounts given by informants or found in primary sources, as well as the “knowledge claims of researchers themselves” (McCollum & Hebert, 2014, p. 369). As Jonathan McCollum and David G. Hebert point out,

[r]esearchers ultimately tend to find what they had expected to see, including in historical studies. This tendency calls for conscientious music historians to make a habit of rigorously questioning and re-questioning our assumptions and interpretations, routinely challenging the legitimacy and sufficiency of data used to support our claims, and even embracing the element of *surprise* in the research process, with sincere consideration of alternative explanations. (McCollum & Hebert, 2014, p. 369)

#### 4.2.2 Qualitative Case Study Research

Within the overall historical research approach, a case study approach was also taken in order to investigate the capacity of performance contexts to construct identity through an in-depth examination of two historical performers. In this section I discuss key aspects of the case study approach employed in this study, which was drawn primarily from the “intrinsic” case study approach outlined by Robert E. Stake (Stake, 2003). Stake sees the case study not as a specific research method, but as a decision to study an individual case based on interest in the case itself. He describes a holistic notion of case study research, in which the aim is to acquire a deep understanding of a case rather than using it to derive generalizations.

Stake defines a “case” according to concepts of “boundedness” and behaviour patterns. A case may be defined as a “bounded system” in that it has functioning parts, is wilful, is situated within a clear boundary, and may have a specific identity. Cases also display clear patterns of behaviour which can be located within the boundaries of the system. While it may seem most natural to associate both of these concepts with case studies of larger social or institutional environments such as a specific education program (which is Stake’s field of expertise), they may also be applied to a specific individual.

Like many other methodologists (e.g. Lijphart, 1971; Moses & Knutsen, 2007; Yin, 1994), Stake also introduces a case study typology. His consists of three types: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies. Intrinsic case studies are carried out based on an interest in the case itself, with the goal of gaining a more profound understanding of the case. This type of case study does not aim to formulate theories. In instrumental case studies, the case study serves as an instrument to acquire a better understanding of a specific, external issue. Here, the principal aim is not to gain a deeper understanding of the case itself; rather, a specific case is chosen in order to facilitate the understanding of an external interest. Finally, collective case studies are instrumental case studies which comprise multiple cases, rather than a single case. In addition to these three types, Stake also acknowledges other kinds of case studies, including biography, documentary, and typologies by Harrison White, Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, Charles C. Ragin, and Mary M. Kennedy (Stake, 2003, pp. 138–139).

Stake writes that “case study method has been too little honored as the intrinsic study of a valued particular” (Stake, 2003, p. 140) and reinforces the fact that, even among qualitative methodologists, there is considerable emphasis on generalization in case study work. For Stake, the true function of the case study is particularization—the study of the particular—rather than generalization. Particularization is especially central to intrinsic case studies: here, the investigator aims to understand the case’s significance within its own context, establishing a case’s thick description.<sup>61</sup> In order to study a case’s particularity, Stake urges the researcher to investigate several or all of the following six points: 1) the nature of the case; 2) the case’s historical background; 3) the physical setting; 4) other contexts (e.g. economic, political, legal, and aesthetic); 5) other cases through which this case is recognized; and 6) those informants through whom the case can be known (Stake, 2003, pp. 139–140). As several of Stake’s six points indicate, investigating a case’s context is crucial. According to Stake, a holistic case study should examine the complex array of contexts within which the case functions. Indeed, in qualitative research, cases are understood as being situated, which refers to the “involvement of social beings with symbolic and material dimensions of sites and with the various social processes occurring in those domains” (Given, 2008, p. 815).

Stake suggests that case study research should involve a series of six steps (which, apart from the first step, resemble the approach taken in other kinds of qualitative research).<sup>62</sup> In the first

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61 The term “thick description,” which was first used by philosopher Gilbert Ryle and later by anthropologist Clifford Geertz, refers to an interpretation of a social or cultural phenomenon which “incorporates the cultural framework and meaning of the actors, their codes of signification, providing an emic account grounded in the actors’ cultural context” (Given, 2008, p. 880).

62 The six steps are as follows: 1) Bounding the case, conceptualizing the object of study; 2) Selecting phenomena, themes or issues—that is, the research questions—to emphasize; 3) Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues; 4) Triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation; 5) Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue; 6) Developing assertions or generalizations about the case (Stake, 2003, p. 155).

step, the researcher “bounds” the case, appraising it and the workings of its bounded system. Even prior to this, however, comes the crucial stage of case selection. While in intrinsic studies it may be clear to the researcher that a certain case is of interest before she even begins the research process, instrumental and collective case studies require the researcher to make a deliberate, judicious case selection according to a number of criteria. Research questions are selected in the second step. In the third step, working with various forms of collected material, the researcher uncovers patterns of data and makes reflections on the meanings of this material within its context. Both of these actions serve to refine the investigator’s understanding of the issues raised in the research questions. In addition to uncovering patterns of data, Stake suggests that the researcher follow a reflective process which involves contemplating both collected materials and impressions. In doing so, a range of meanings will emerge, including “local meanings,” “foreshadowed meanings,” and “readers’ consequential meanings” (Stake, 2003, p. 150).

The fourth step involves the triangulation of various kinds of data. In qualitative research, triangulation may be used in order to increase the accuracy or validity of an analysis of a specific phenomenon. According to Stake, triangulation is a “process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 2003, p. 148). In other words, triangulation involves using multiple methods in the study of a single phenomenon, with the aim of collecting data about the phenomenon from multiple perspectives and contexts. Triangulation affords a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon being investigated and diminishes the risk of bias and imbalance posed by using only one method. As a natural result of triangulation processes, the next, fifth step involves exploring alternate interpretations of a case. Finally, in the sixth step of case study research, the researcher may propose generalizations or other claims based on the investigation.

Music therapist Gary Ansdell’s “ecological model” for music research, although not specifically devised for qualitative case study research, also lends itself well as a general approach when investigating a “musical world” and has influenced the case study approach taken in this research. Ansdell’s ecological perspective, a term which is drawn from Tia DeNora’s concept of the “meso-perspective” or “meso-level” of analysis, denotes an alternate, “middle” way of examining a particular musical world. In the two standard perspectives for music research, one either focuses in on highly specific musical details, or adopts a broad perspective in order to identify abstract concepts or interrelationships. This third, ecological perspective proposes to “stay looking, listening and thinking *in situ*, in the middle of the musical action” (Ansdell, 2014, p. 26). Using this perspective, the researcher investigates relationships between three elements: musical things, musical people, and musical situations. Ansdell points out that

each specific musical world encompasses all of these elements, and that the continual, varied interactions between these elements are precisely what shapes a particular musical world. This perspective enables the investigator to gain a deeper understanding of the social aspects of music-making. Coupling Stake's intrinsic case study approach with Ansdell's ecological perspective brings nuance and depth to the concept of the "case" itself.

The case study approach in this study was drawn primarily from Stake's intrinsic case study approach and was also informed by Ansdell's ecological perspective. By taking this approach I have sought to examine the unique, contextual, situated, and complex qualities of two historical performers. I have aimed to gain a holistic understanding of each case study subject through a combination of methods and perspectives. These included analyzing qualitative documents related to performances (newspaper articles, concert posters, concert programs); listening to interviews with descendants of the performers; examining photographs; listening to audio recordings of the performers; writing in-depth biographies of each performer; investigating performance contexts in which each performer was active; creating an overview of each performer's repertoire (where possible); and learning and performing a selection of music from their repertoires.

Case study research was an appropriate strategy of inquiry for this study in that it allowed for the development of an in-depth, detailed, holistic understanding of each performer. Limitations of the case study approach include the potential for researcher bias in the analysis and interpretation of data; the difficulty of replicating the research process; and the fact that findings may not be generalizable to broader populations.

### **4.3 Data Collection**

In this section I describe the processes used to collect data for the study. In order to rigorously study a research question, qualitative research should collect multiple forms of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data corpus collected for this study includes numerous forms of data that fall into three broad categories: documents, qualitative interviews, and audiovisual materials. Data collection was accomplished through physical and digital archival research, qualitative interviews, and fieldwork.

Three fieldwork trips to Minnesota and Wisconsin were undertaken during the data collection phase. During the first trip (March 12 – April 4, 2015) I interviewed four informants, as well as visiting archives at the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin-Madison,

and the Wisconsin Historical Society, at which I viewed and copied various documents, photographs, and audiovisual materials. I also visited two private archive collections. One of these was the collection of LeRoy Larson; Larson gave me permission to duplicate digitized copies of his field recordings from his doctoral research, which encompasses 46 magnetic reel-to-reel tapes. He also allowed me to duplicate archive recordings of fiddler Gust Ellingson from his collection, as well as various recording notes.

During the second fieldwork trip (January 31 – February 11, 2016) I interviewed five informants and visited two private archive collections. One of these collections housed the Daniel Aakhus Collection and the Ole Braaten Collection, which are collections of magnetic reel-to-reel tape recordings made by Norwegian Americans. I received permission to digitize 45 reel-to-reel tapes from these collections (primarily from the Aakhus Collection) during this trip.

During the third fieldwork trip (October 26 – November 5, 2016) I interviewed eight informants and again visited two private archive collections, receiving permission to digitize an additional 26 reel-to-reel tapes from collections of recordings made by Daniel Aakhus, Ole Braaten, Ove Guberud, and interview recordings made by researcher Kevin Hoeschen. I also scanned photos and other artifacts from the Daniel Aakhus and Kevin Hoeschen collections (both housed in a private collection).

To digitize reel-to-reel recordings I used a borrowed Akai X-360D reel-to-reel tape recorder connected via stereo cable to a portable Zoom H4 digital recorder (Figure 3). Digitizations were made at a sample rate of 44.1 kHz.



*Figure 3: The system used for digitizing reel-to-reel recordings during fieldwork. Photo by the author.*

Over the course of these three trips to Minnesota and Wisconsin, a number of individuals also generously gave me documents, artifacts, and audiovisual materials, including photos, letters, sheet music, recording notes, and audio recordings.

In addition to these three trips to the Upper Midwest, I also visited two folk music archives in Norway in November 2015. At the Arne Bjørndal Collection in Bergen I made copies of correspondence and notes concerning various Norwegian-American musicians. At the Valdres Folk Museum I looked through the Ole Hjelle Collection with regard to Jøger O. Quale's recordings of Norwegian-American musician Oscar Hamrey.

In addition to collecting data during fieldwork, I also conducted digital archival research in a number of online archives, including genealogical databases and historical newspaper databases. This research has taken place continuously throughout the study. Moreover, I also requested several digitizations of archival recordings and interviews from public archives over the course of the study.

Overall, the qualitative data collected in this study can be organized into three broad categories (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 160): 1) documents (public and private); 2) interviews; and 3) audiovisual materials. The data collected under each of the above categories is discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

### 4.3.1 Documents

Documents collected include both public and private documents, as well as documents accessed in public research archives. The collected documents fall into five main sub-categories: 1) historical public records; 2) newspaper articles and reports collected from historical American and Norwegian-American newspapers; 3) programs, posters, etc. from public music performances; 4) music transcriptions; and 5) archival/unpublished documents.

#### *Historical Public Records*

Numerous historical public records and data were examined via online genealogical databases, primarily the subscription-based website Ancestry.com and the open access Norwegian online public archive, Digitalarkivet.no (the Digital Archives). Types of records accessed include census records, as well as records of birth, emigration/immigration, marriage, citizenship, and death. These records provided important biographical data about individual performers. Historical public records also revealed information about an individual performer's family network, their various places of residence, records of military service, land patents, and other contextual information. Much of this biographical information was registered in a database of Norwegian-American performers constructed during this study.

#### *Articles/Reports from Historical Newspapers*

Historical newspapers were a significant source in this study, in that they provided among the only written records of numerous types of performances. The widespread availability of digitized historical newspapers has been indispensable to this research: extensive data was collected through searches of online newspaper databases, including the subscription-based websites Newspapers.com and Newspaperarchive.com, as well as the open-access websites



Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov and Nb.no, among others. News items collected in the study comprise reports of relevant public performances, including *kappleiker*, *bygdelaag stevner*, radio performances, festivals, meetings, and other public concerts and events. I also collected news items that contained relevant biographical information concerning historical Norwegian-American musicians (e.g. obituaries). Approximately two hundred newspaper articles/items reporting on *kappleiker* (folk music competitions) were also transcribed to allow for straightforward searching and analysis in NVivo.

While English-language newspaper articles published in the mainstream American press form a significant portion of the collected source material, searches of digitized Norwegian-American newspapers also uncovered hundreds of reports of performances. As Odd Lovoll notes, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Norwegian-American newspapers played an important role in the formation of a Norwegian-American ethnic awareness, since they established a broader sense of community among their readership. They also supported the establishment and continuation of immigrant organizations and institutions such as the Norwegian-American *bygdelaag* (Lovoll, 2010, p. 5).<sup>63</sup>

### *Programs, Posters, and Other Promotional Materials from Public Concerts*

Copies of concert posters, programs, and other promotional materials from public concerts were collected from public and private archives. These include concert posters and promotional postcards advertising performances by Norwegian-American musicians and programs from events such as *bygdelaag stevner* and music festivals. Posters and promotional materials provide information about how performers presented themselves to their audience and include a number of elements of interest such as promotional phrases, selections of repertoire, and artist photos. They also provide contextual information such as the dates and locations of performances, and ticket prices. Programs are useful since they often provide detailed information about what occurred at performance events, including repertoire, dates and locations of performances, names of performers, and other events that took place during the program (e.g. speeches, readings, other musical performances).

### *Music Transcriptions*

Copies of published and handwritten music transcriptions were collected during fieldwork in the Upper Midwest. I received copies of early twentieth century commercial sheet music

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63 During the first decades of the twentieth century, Norwegian-language newspapers were a major source of information about *bygdelaag* activities, and entire sections were regularly dedicated to covering and promoting *bygdelaag* events.

from the collections of several Norwegian-American musicians, including collections of Scandinavian dance music published in America (e.g. Olzen, 1935). These materials provide evidence of repertoire performed by individual musicians and also served as the basis for investigating Norwegian-American interplay with published collections of “Scandinavian” dance music.

Furthermore, copies of a small number of handwritten music transcriptions by musician Robert Andresen and folk music collector Helene Stratman-Thomas were collected from the Mills Music Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Andresen’s transcriptions have served as secondary sources in the documentation of Norwegian-American old-time music repertoire, while Stratman-Thomas’s transcriptions provide evidence of her work to document performances by case study subject Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling.

### *Archival/Unpublished Documents*

Various types of unpublished documents were also collected from public and private archives during fieldwork. Unpublished manuscripts on *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music by researchers such as Robert Andresen, Philip Martin, and Philip Nusbaum were retrieved from public archives and consulted in the literature review. I also collected records and notes pertaining to work done by previous researchers to catalogue some of the archival music collections I digitized. These documents were critical in the processes of digitizing, indexing, and analyzing recordings from these collections. In many cases I would not have been able to determine the name/origin of a melody without access to documentation of previous cataloguing work. These documents also provide overviews of cataloguing/numbering systems developed by previous researchers. Additional unpublished documents collected from various archives include personal correspondence and research notes.

#### 4.3.2 Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative personal interviews were conducted with 14 informants over the course of 15 separate interviews during three fieldwork trips to Minnesota and Wisconsin in 2015 and 2016.<sup>64</sup> The interviews were unstructured, and an interview guide was not employed. This approach was chosen deliberately in order to encourage open-ended conversation with informants. This approach is particularly suitable in ethnographic research and when interviewing articulate experts; according to Michael Firmin “allowing [articulate] people freedom to take

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<sup>64</sup> The discrepancy in these numbers is due to the fact that some informants were interviewed more than once; moreover, while most interviews were conducted individually, two group interviews were also conducted consisting of two and four informants, respectively.

the interviews where they wish to go may provide insights to the construct being studied that could not be assessed via more structured interview means” (Given, 2008, p. 907).

Informants interviewed during fieldwork fell into one (or several) of four categories: 1) musicians; 2) descendants of historical Norwegian-American musicians; 3) individuals with firsthand knowledge of the historical context; and 4) academic/amateur experts. Informants were selected according to a variety of criteria. Descendants of historical musicians were selected for their ability to provide biographical insights into a case study subject or other historical musician of interest for the study. Individuals with firsthand knowledge of the historical context were selected because of their unique firsthand experience as performers and/or participants in relevant Upper Midwestern historical performance contexts for Norwegian-American music. Academic and amateur experts were selected because of their expert knowledge about the Norwegian-American ethnic group and/or music culture, and/or their experience researching and collecting music from one or both genres. A number of the informants in the above categories also fall into the “musician” category; informants in this category were selected because of their experience and familiarity with performing music repertoire from the *bygdedans* and/or Norwegian-American old-time music genre(s).

The qualitative interviews conducted during this study were carried out with the intention of collecting data to supplement the data obtained from the large range of collected primary sources, as well as qualitative interviews conducted in prior studies (see below). As such, the method of interview documentation was not exhaustive. The primary method of documentation was note-taking: notes were written during all of the interviews. Audio recordings were made of five interviews, with duplicate video recordings made of two of the same five interviews.

### *Qualitative Interviews Conducted in Prior Studies*

In addition to my own field interviews, I also collected, transcribed, and analyzed audio recordings of 19 qualitative field interviews conducted in prior studies by researchers Kevin Hoeschen, LeRoy Larson, Philip Martin, and Philip Nusbaum. While Hoeschen and Martin each wrote useful abstracts of their interviews (Hoeschen, 1989; Martin, 1979–1980), to my knowledge, full transcriptions have not previously been made of any of the recorded interviews of which I obtained digital copies. Making full transcriptions of these field interviews was valuable, as it provided the opportunity to access the words and direct experiences of primary sources who are no longer living, and whose life experiences would otherwise be largely inaccessible. I give brief overviews of the selected interviews and their research contexts below.

Kevin Hoeschen conducted seven qualitative interviews in conjunction with his undergraduate honour's research at the University of Minnesota from April to June, 1974. These were later used as data for Hoeschen's 1989 master's thesis (Hoeschen, 1989). While two of his participants were Hardanger fiddlers (Gunnar Odden and Kolbein Ornes), others were folk dancers (Harald Sersland), academic experts (Marion Nelson), or had been involved in the American organization for Hardanger fiddle players, *Spelemannslaget af Amerika* (Edith and Gunnar Helland, Dreng Bjornaraa). Hoeschen's interviews were made on reel-to-reel tape and are currently housed in a private collection. I made digital copies of all of Hoeschen's interview recordings in October and November of 2016. I subsequently made full transcriptions of Hoeschen's interviews with Gunnar Odden, Dreng Bjornaraa, and Marion Nelson.

In addition to making field recordings of Norwegian-American musicians during his doctoral fieldwork, LeRoy Larson also conducted and recorded nine interviews with musicians and other informants during this study (L. Larson, 1975). In the decades following the completion of his dissertation, Larson recorded an additional six interviews with Norwegian-American and Swedish-American informants. Larson provided me with digital copies of all 15 of these interviews. I made full transcriptions of seven of Larson's interviews: these are interviews with Dreng Bjornaraa, Thelma "Babe" Kolesar (daughter of case study subject Daniel Aakhus), and musicians Ove Fossum, Ove Guberud, Ben Johnson, Richard Larson, Julius Lothen, and Arvid Wikstrom.

Philip Martin carried out approximately 15 interviews with Norwegian-American informants in southwestern Wisconsin between 1978 and 1981. Martin's fieldwork was part of a research project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and his interview recordings were deposited in the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) archives.<sup>65</sup> I obtained digital copies of ten of Martin's interviews from the WHS in 2015, and I have written full transcriptions of eight of these. The informants in the transcribed interviews are musicians Ernest Bekkum, Bert Benson, Bertel Berntsen, Rudolph Everson, Elmer Gald, Albon Skrede, Selmer Torger, and Knute Volden.

During his tenure at the Minnesota State Arts Board, Philip Nusbaum collected materials on hundreds of folk artists and traditional musicians of diverse cultural backgrounds working in Minnesota. These materials are now housed in the Minnesota Folk Arts Program (Philip Nusbaum) Collection at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives and include audio and video recordings, photographs, field notes, and written records.<sup>66</sup> As part of this work,

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65 The collection finding aid can be viewed at <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9911124817102121>

66 The finding aid for this collection can be viewed at <https://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi/f/findaid/findaid-idx?c=wiarchives;view=reslist;subview=standard;didno=uw-csumc-csumc0034cg>

Nusbaum made field recordings and conducted interviews with numerous Norwegian-American musicians in Minnesota during the late 1980s. I obtained a digital copy of one of Nusbaum's interviews with musicians Alfred, Clarence, and Ervin Bjorngjeld, which I transcribed in full.

The quality of the abovementioned interviews is good overall. All four researchers had varying degrees of experience performing Norwegian-American music or other music traditions, which aided in building trust and rapport with the informants. Furthermore, they all give informants ample space to reflect and recount personal experiences, and they ask useful follow-up questions and competently guide the conversation through relevant topics.

### 4.3.3 Audiovisual Materials

Audiovisual materials collected and examined in this study fall into three sub-categories: 1) music recordings; 2) photographs; and 3) video recordings.

#### *Music Recordings*

The most significant category of audiovisual material collected in this study was music recordings. Music recordings were collected from public and private archive collections, from commercial recordings, and from my own field recordings. Archival recordings were accessed in a variety of ways. As described above, I digitized numerous reel-to-reel tape recordings from private collections during fieldwork in the Upper Midwest, primarily from the Daniel Aakhus collection, the Ole Braaten collection, and the Ove Guberud collection. Outside of the fieldwork period, I also digitized various archive recordings received or borrowed from private collections in Norway and the Upper Midwest. Furthermore, some archival recordings were obtained through digitization requests from public archives, while still others were accessed via digital online open-access archives such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison's LeRoy Larson Collection, Local Centers/Global Sounds Collection, and Wisconsin Folksong Collection. Commercial recordings were borrowed, purchased, or accessed via music streaming services. Finally, I also made field recordings of several tunes performed by two of my informants, Art Bjorngjeld and Mel Brenden. Altogether, the collected recordings number approximately 1,800 tracks.

While, as ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger notes, the "sounds preserved in archives do not in themselves provide sufficient material to address the issues" investigated in ethnomusicological research (Seeger, 1986, p. 262), when combined with multiple forms of data, they can tell us something about the musical life of a community. Moreover, as ethnomusicologist Bruno

Nettl observes, investigating a mixture of archive, field, and commercial recordings may be a useful way of “getting the picture of a musical culture” and an “effective way of acquiring a representative sample of a genre in one musical culture” (Nettl, 2015, p. 185). Examining archival and commercial sound recordings may also enable us to understand how a music culture has changed over time (Nettl, 2015, p. 186).

### *Photographs*

Scans of numerous historical “found” photographs of Norwegian-American musicians were collected from public and private archives. While some of these are highly composed artist portraits or group photos, others are more spontaneous images taken in everyday life situations. These photos provide visual biographical evidence about individual performers, from factual details like appearance and approximate age, to clues about how individuals performatively presented themselves as musicians. They also provide evidence of material culture, such as musical instruments and clothing/dress. When combined with other forms of data, historical photographs contribute to building an in-depth understanding of an individual performer within a music culture. However, it is also important to note that contemporary scholars approach photos as “constructions that have a complex relationship to the world they depict” (Tinkler, 2013), recognizing that photographs are shaped by numerous variables, including technological and material parameters, as well as individual choices made by the photographer, all of which bestow meaning. Accordingly, while photographs can provide evidence of social reality they also “distort” it (Tinkler, 2013).

A number of photographs were also taken during fieldwork trips. These include photos that depict aspects of the research process (e.g. work with archival collections, photographs of informants) and photographs of artifacts encountered during fieldwork (e.g. musical instruments, 78 rpm record collections, fiddle contest trophies). These photographs served as a record and memory aid when examining other data collected during fieldwork.

### *Video Recordings*

The main video recording consulted during data collection and analysis was two episodes from the 1988 Norwegian television series *De som dro vest* produced by the Norwegian state broadcasting company, NRK (Vegheim, 1988a, 1988b). The series, which documents Norwegian-American music and history in Minnesota and Wisconsin, includes relevant interviews with Norwegian-American musicians and descendants of musicians, including an interview with Sverre Quisling, son of case study subject Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling.

## 4.4 Data Management

As outlined above, this study gathered a large amount of multiple forms of data. In research that involves a large assemblage of data, it is critical to “design systems to receive, manipulate, and store data in ways that allow the researcher to have ease of arranging and rearranging the data” (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2018, p. 152). In this section I describe the systems used to manage data for the study, which included the construction of a relational database using FileMaker Pro; the use of spreadsheets; and the use of the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software NVivo.

### 4.4.1 A Norwegian-American Music Database

The relational database application FileMaker Pro 14 was used to construct a database for organizing biographical information about historical performers, as well as information about a selection of Norwegian-American old-time melodies drawn from the collected audio recordings. Two layouts were constructed: a “Performer” layout, and a “Melody” layout.

#### *“Performer” Layout*

A total of 466 performers representing both music genres were registered in the Performer layout. I registered biographical information about any and all relevant performers I encountered while examining collected data and previous studies. The purpose of the Performer layout was to have a system for storing and easily accessing information pertaining to relevant historical performers. Aside from Kevin Hoeschen’s “Annotated List of Spelemenn in the Upper Midwest” (Hoeschen, 1989, pp. 96–127), I am not aware of a similar systematic register of Norwegian-American musicians.

Performers were catalogued according to 39 metadata fields (see Figure 4).

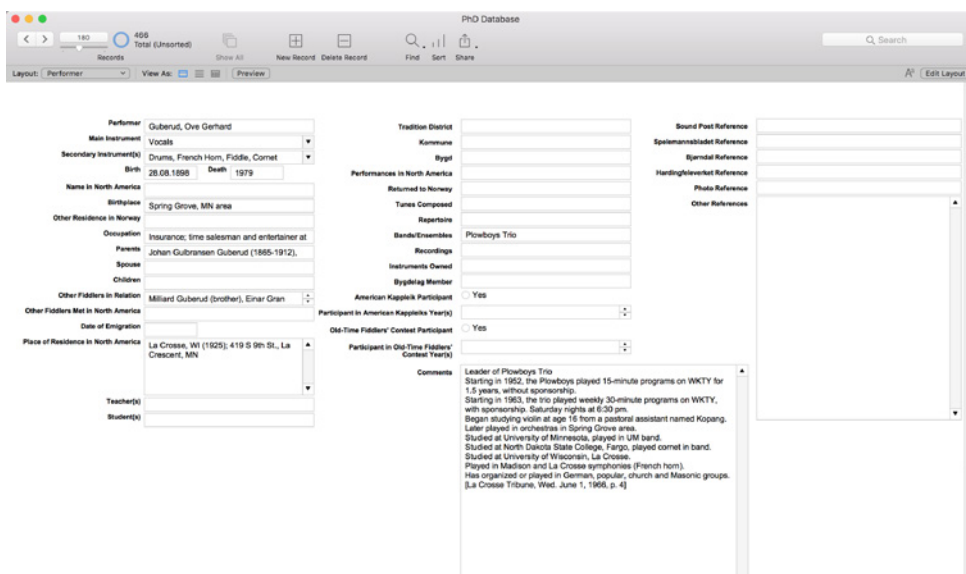


Figure 4: Screenshot of a database record in the Performer layout.

## “Melody” Layout

A total of 578 melodies were catalogued in the Melody layout. The melodies catalogued in the database are from the Norwegian-American old-time music genre and are limited to those collected melodies that were found to have specific melody names. These selection criteria were used because the melodies of primary interest for analysis were those that could be identified as relating to various genres/styles of mainstream and other subcultural musics. Because many such melodies are composed and/or represent canonical dance tune repertoire, they often have specific names, or are known by several names.<sup>67</sup> Collected melodies that are untitled, or titled e.g. “Waltz,” “Schottische,” or “Polka,” were therefore not catalogued.<sup>68</sup>

Melodies were catalogued according to the following metadata fields: Melody ID; Larson ID; Melody Name; Alternate Name; Composer; Melody Type; Time Signature; Key; Tuning; Tradition District; Origin; Related Genre; Transcription; Transcription Source; and Comments (Figure 5).

67 This is supported by Kvam: in her analysis, Kvam concludes that those of Larson’s collected melodies that were known under the same title by two or more of her Norwegian informants either “have known composers, are published, or are recorded” on commercial recordings. Furthermore, she maintains that melodies with several titles are “probably best-known throughout Norway” (Kvam, 1986, pp. 67–68). For the purposes of this study, the latter could be adjusted to designate tunes which are best known throughout the Upper Midwest.

68 It was beyond the scope of this research to attempt to identify all of the untitled melodies gathered during data collection. Likewise, it was not possible to trace the origins of all of the catalogued melodies in the database. This is an ongoing endeavour that I hope to continue in future research.



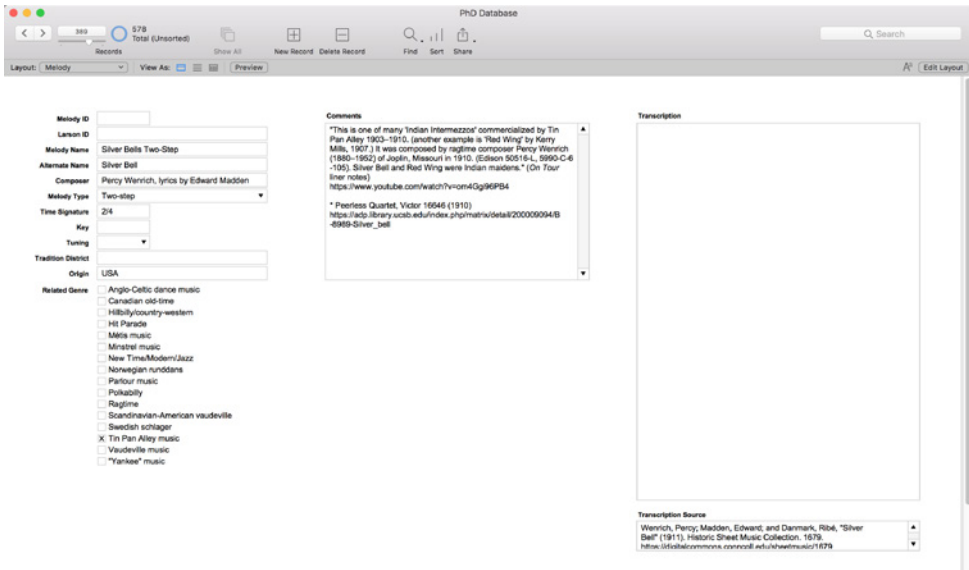


Figure 5: Screenshot of a database record in the Melody layout.

#### 4.4.2 Spreadsheets

Multiple spreadsheets were constructed using Microsoft Excel to organize various kinds of information gleaned from the collected data. Spreadsheets were used to organize information such as the following:

- The documented musical repertoire of case study subjects and other historical performers
- The documented performances of case study subjects (e.g. Figure 6)
- The dates, locations, and contents of various events (e.g. *kappleiker, bygdelag stevner*)

Spreadsheets also served many other organizational purposes throughout the study.

Date	Event	Location	Performance
04.03.1897	Concert	Crookston College, Crookston, MN	A choir sang, and both DA and EA performed solo
26.06.1900	Open air concert	Luther College Campus West Side schoolhouse, District 33, Warren?, MN	Various performers. DA performed solo - classical and a halling.
31.08.1902	Concert		(Solo) concert with violin and phonograph.
13.12.1903	Concert	Underwood, MN	Concert tour with Eivind Aakhus. The entertainment will consist of violin playing, fiddle playing, stories and stev singing, as well as piano accompaniment, where there is piano at the location.
14.12.1903	Concert	Rothsay, MN	Concert tour with Eivind Aakhus. The entertainment will consist of violin playing, fiddle playing, stories and stev singing, as well as piano accompaniment, where there is piano at the location.
15.12.1903	Concert	Pelican Rapids, MN	Concert tour with Eivind Aakhus. The entertainment will consist of violin playing, fiddle playing, stories and stev singing, as well as piano accompaniment, where there is piano at the location.
16.12.1903	Concert	Erhard, MN	Concert tour with Eivind Aakhus. The entertainment will consist of violin playing, fiddle playing, stories and stev singing, as well as piano accompaniment, where there is piano at the location.
17.12.1903	Concert	Fergus Falls, MN	Concert tour with Eivind Aakhus. The entertainment will consist of violin playing, fiddle playing, stories and stev singing, as well as piano accompaniment, where there is piano at the location.
18.12.1903	Concert	Dalton, MN	Concert tour with Eivind Aakhus. The entertainment will consist of violin playing, fiddle playing, stories and stev singing, as well as piano accompaniment, where there is piano at the location.
19.12.1903	Concert	Ashby, MN	Concert tour with Eivind Aakhus. The entertainment will consist of violin playing, fiddle playing, stories and stev singing, as well as piano accompaniment, where there is piano at the location.
23.04.1904	Concert	Hegna Hall, Minneapolis, MN	Solo performance. Concert arranged by Syd Minneapolis Afholdsforsening. Various performers.
15(?) .05.1904	Stereopticon Address	First Congregational Church, Menomonie, WI?	Solo performance at stereopticon address on subject of "Stanley in Africa"
17.05.1904		Grand Opera House, Eau Claire, WI	
20.06.1904	Concert	Red Jacket Town Hall, Calumet, MI	
29.10.1904	Convocation exercises, ND State University	Fargo, ND	Performance, accompanied by Mr. Blickfeldt (piano), at University of North Dakota convocation exercises.
17.12.1904	Concert	Erskine Literary Society	Various performers. DA performed solo. Concert arranged by Hamline Young People's Society and Ladies' Society of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod Church
01.05.1905	Declamatory Contest	Baptist Church, Grand Forks, ND	Solo performance during contest.
27.04.1906	Concert	Crookston Theatre, Crookston, MN	Solo performance. Various performers, including Crookston Band.
07.06.1907	May 17 celebration	Metropolitan Opera House, Grand Forks, ND	Program to celebrate independence of Norway from Sweden. Afternoon and evening program. DA performed "Violin Solo" by Ole Bull in afternoon program; Eivind Aakhus and Olav Moe performed in evening program.
16.08.1907	Concert	M. E. Church, Drayton, ND	Solo performance at choir concert
07.10.1907	Concert	First Presbyterian Church, Grand Forks, ND	Performance of Handel's Largo

Figure 6: Excerpt from a spreadsheet containing information about case study subject Daniel Aakhus's documented performances.

### 4.4.3 NVivo

Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was used to facilitate the organization and analysis of interview transcriptions and transcribed newspaper articles. The software employed was NVivo (Release 1.5.1). Since the study involved the transcription and analysis of field interviews conducted in prior studies, interview transcriptions and interview notes were organized into folders according to interviewer. Transcribed newspaper articles were organized into folders according to topic (e.g. articles discussing *kappleiker* were organized in one folder). The organization of these documents in NVivo allowed me to easily run text search queries across multiple sources.

## 4.5 Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis has taken place simultaneously with other aspects of the study, including data collection, data management, and writing the dissertation. The qualitative data collected during this study has been thoroughly examined with the aim of gleaning significant historical, biographical, and other contextual information. A smaller portion of the data—primarily interview transcriptions—has been analyzed using CAQDAS (NVivo). In order to highlight the experiences of historical performers and audiences, numerous excerpts from interviews and other collected documents were included in the dissertation.

During the data analysis process, I aimed to identify common themes found in the various forms of data. One example is my work to analyze processes of Norwegian-American interplay with supercultural, intercultural, and other subcultural musics, structures, and forces. Analyzing multiple forms of data, including sound recordings, documents, and interview transcripts, revealed that Norwegian-American musicians primarily interplayed with these forces through three distinct processes of interplay. Furthermore, based on this analysis work I inferred that these processes of interplay reflected two main dynamics related to Norwegian-American identity construction (see Chapter Five).

A combination of descriptive and concept coding was employed to code interview transcriptions using NVivo. Descriptive coding entails assigning a descriptive code “that summarizes in a word or a short phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020, p. 65). Descriptive codes were used to label interview segments in which informants reflected about various performance contexts: descriptive codes used included Barn Dances, *Bygdelag*, Commercial Dances, House Parties, *Julebukking*,

Radio, Touring Ensembles, and Weddings. Descriptive codes were also used to label interview segments in which informants discussed interplay with the “-cultures”; here, descriptive codes included 78 rpm Recordings, Radio, Sheet Music, and Travelling Entertainment.

Concept coding entails assigning “meso- or macrolevels of meaning to data” and “bypasses the detail and nuance of other coding methods to transcend the particular participants of your fieldwork and to progress toward the *ideas* suggested by the study” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 66). Concept codes that were used included Entertainment, Norwegianness, and Nostalgia. Coding was not incorporated into the study as a method of data analysis until the final stages; therefore, additional interpretations could likely be developed through a more thorough coding process.

## 4.6 Ethical Considerations

This study involved qualitative interviews with 14 participants; as such, the study has been reported to and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). Interview participants were provided with information about the project and signed a consent form (see Appendix 1). Personal data was stored and processed on a password-protected computer belonging to the Norwegian Academy of Music, and I was the only person with access to the collected personal data. Following the completion of the study, personal data gathered during this research will be stored in the Norwegian Centre for Research Data’s research archives for use in future research, verification, and follow-up studies.

Interview participants’ personal data has not been anonymized in this study. Although anonymization of personal data is standard in many research traditions, I assessed the upholding of anonymity in this study to be unnecessary. All of the primary research subjects (historical performers) are deceased and are therefore not subject to the General Data Protection Regulation.

During my research I have been given access to, and granted permission to copy materials from several private archival collections. The collection owners have provided me with written agreements regarding the terms and conditions of use of these materials.

The study has also adhered to the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees’ Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities.

## 4.7 Positionality

A critical component of doing qualitative research is the acknowledgement and consideration of the researcher's own positionality. Every researcher is situated within her own personal biography and a number of social identities, including gender, age, race, immigration status, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, linguistic status, beliefs, and theoretical, political and ideological perspectives (Berger, 2013). These positions influence how a researcher designs and conducts a study, and may also be sources of power and privilege or marginalization and disadvantage. I evaluated my own positionality during the study by reflecting on how my personal biography and social identities affected my research in three areas: my access to the field, the nature of my relationship with research subjects, and my analysis and interpretation of information gathered during the study (Berger, 2013).

I am a Hardanger fiddle performer in addition to being a scholar of Norwegian and Norwegian-American music traditions. My identity as a performer facilitated my access to the field during my fieldwork and archival research in Minnesota and Wisconsin, often making it easier for me to gain access to informants and archival materials. As Cassandre Balosso-Bardin maintains, "highlevel musicianship can build a strong sense of trust and reciprocity with other musicians in the field where performative ability creates cultural capital that can be expended on research" (Balosso-Bardin, quoted in McKerrell, 2021, p. 9). During my fieldwork, the influence of this cultural capital extended to all four categories of informants I interviewed (musicians; descendants of historical performers; individuals with firsthand knowledge of the historical context; and academic/amateur experts).

In addition, other aspects of my social identity also influenced my access to the field. My positionality as a White, middle-class, cisgender, straight, non-disabled woman was a source of privilege during my fieldwork and throughout the study. Moreover, while English is my native language, I am also fluent in Norwegian: my fluency in both languages enabled me to consult with experts and access sources in both languages, and in both Norway and the United States.

While my positionality as a performer of Norwegian Hardanger fiddle music facilitated access to the field and enabled my "insiderness" within Norwegian folk music circles in Norway and the United States, as a Canadian expat settled in Norway, and with ethnic origins in Norway, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, I am also bound to multiple notions of "home" that complicate my performer and researcher identity. While doing fieldwork in the Upper Midwest, my positionality as a Norwegian Canadian probably enabled informants to easily relate my identity to theirs, perhaps facilitating my access to the field through the assumption that my engagement with Norwegian-American music stems from a personal connection to, and

interest in investigating my “own” past. The nature of my past as a descendant of Norwegian immigrants established a “discourse between myself and my consultants”: as Philip Bohlman notes, contextualizing one’s own relationship to the past one is studying “alter[s] the context for the fieldwork itself” (Bohlman, 2008, pp. 254–255).

My analysis and interpretation of information gathered during the study has been influenced by my positionality as an insider scholar-practitioner, and as an immigrant. As a practitioner/performer, I have tacit, practice-based cultural knowledge of *bygdedans* and old-time music which affects my way of “knowing” the research subject. Moreover, as a performer who has focused primarily on *bygdedans* music, I have observed a tendency in myself to privilege *bygdedans* music and Hardanger fiddle performers during this research, which I have actively worked to alter.

Finally, as an immigrant to Norway, I share some aspects of the immigrant experience with the historical performers I researched; as such, I was uniquely positioned to explore the theme of migration and its meaning for musicians. However, as a fourth generation “return migrant” I have had the privilege of having recourse to my Norwegian ethnic origins and identity while negotiating processes of integration. Thus, I find myself in a much different position than the Norwegian immigrants of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as other immigrant groups in contemporary Norway.

## 4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the research in this study was conducted. A discussion of the study’s overall approach, philosophical assumptions, and research design has been given. Processes used to collect, manage, and analyze data have been described, and ethical considerations related to the study have been discussed. I have also acknowledged and considered my own positionality in relation to how it affected this research.

In the next chapter, I explore three broad processes through which Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with local and global cultural forces, and how these processes reflect various processes of Norwegian-American identity construction. To do so, I analyze multiple historical examples of interplay drawn from a diversity of qualitative data collected during this study.

## 5 Norwegian-American Musical Interplay with the “-Cultures”

### 5.1 Introduction

In this study, I assert that a complex combination of global and local flows and forces contributed to processes of musical change and exchange in the Norwegian-American music culture in the Upper Midwest, and furthermore, that these processes reflect various processes of Norwegian-American identity construction. The aim of this chapter is to address these issues, as expressed in the study’s first, twofold research question:

*How did the Norwegian-American music culture in the Upper Midwest interplay with supercultural, intercultural, and other subcultural musics, structures, and forces? How do these processes of interplay reflect processes of Norwegian-American social identity construction?*

In this chapter I show that Norwegian-American musicians primarily interacted with the “-cultures” through three broad processes of interplay: intersubcultural interaction, the use of supercultural materials, and interplay via the diasporic interculture. The process of data analysis revealed that, of the two genres, Norwegian-American old-time musicians mainly interplayed with supercultural and other subcultural materials, groups, and musicians, whereas evidence was found of interplay via the diasporic interculture involving both *bygdedans* and old-time musicians. While these were not the only processes of interplay at work within the music culture, the process of data analysis established them as central to the development of the two genres.

Furthermore, I suggest that these processes of interplay variously reflect two main dynamics related to Norwegian-American identity construction. First, they reflect the multivalent plasticity and permeability of the Norwegian-American ethnic group and its engagement in shifting processes of ethnic boundary negotiation. Second, they reflect broader positioning and mythmaking processes related to Norwegian-American identity construction.

Many of the examples of Norwegian-American old-time repertoire given throughout the chapter are drawn from the database of archival and commercial recordings of Norwegian-American old-time music collected and catalogued during the data collection phase of the study. Ethnographic data and examples given throughout the chapter are drawn from the multiple forms of qualitative data collected during fieldwork.

In the first sections of the chapter, I outline significant intersubcultural, supercultural, and diasporic intercultural processes and forces of interplay. Intersubcultural interplay occurred through interactions between Norwegian-American musicians and other musicians of various (primarily European) ethnic groups settled in the Upper Midwestern region. Interactions with supercultural materials occurred in a variety of ways, and through a diversity of channels and media, including early forms of travelling entertainment, the popular sheet music industry, the phonograph industry and so-called “foreign-language” 78 rpm recordings, and the radio industry. Interplay via the diasporic intercultural occurred through direct interactions between Norwegian-American musicians and Norwegian musicians, as well as through disembodied modes of transnational communication such as the exchange of commercial and home recordings, sheet music, letters, news, and other media.

This outline does not claim to be exhaustive; indeed, it would be an impossible task to trace all of the paths of interplay with the Norwegian-American music culture. Rather, it is an attempt to trace paths of interplay that the data analysis process has shown to be significant to the development of the two genres. While most of these forces of interplay have been identified in past research, they have not previously been studied through an analytical framework such as Slobin’s.

In the final section I analyze several musical examples that illustrate various dynamics of interplay with the “-cultures.” The musical examples are drawn from the Norwegian-American old-time genre, and the analyses explore how supercultural and other subcultural materials were received into the sound world of Norwegian-American old-time music, and whether these musical choices reflect broader processes of identity construction within the Norwegian-American community. I analyze three representative melodies drawn from the database of archive and commercial recordings of Norwegian-American old-time music collected and catalogued during the data collection phase of the study.

## 5.2 Intersubcultural Interplay: Neighbouring Ethnic Musicians

By the early twentieth century, the Upper Midwest had become a multicultural region that was home to peoples from a variety of Indigenous tribes, to Anglo-Americans, as well as to immigrants from Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and countries throughout Europe.<sup>69</sup>

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69 A partial list of the various peoples inhabiting the region at this time include Iroquois, Sioux, Ojibwe, Dakota, Ho-Chunk, Algonquin, French, British, Canadian, Irish, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Croatian, Slovenian, German, Swiss, Polish, Ukrainian, Welsh, Dutch, Belgian, Czech, Slovak, Russian, Italian, and Greek peoples.



Previous studies, particularly by Leary—whose research has focused on investigating complex combinations of the vernacular cultures of the Upper Midwest’s various ethnic groups—provide extensive evidence of musical interplay between musicians from various ethnic groups in the region, including Norwegian Americans. Intersubcultural interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and neighbouring musicians of various (primarily European) ethnic groups has also been highlighted in previous research as a significant factor in the development of the Norwegian-American old-time genre. For instance, Nusbaum views Norwegian-American old-time music as having a “regional as well as a Norwegian ethnic base” since “in the multicultural setting of the Midwest, other musicians living near Norwegians learned their tunes,” and vice versa (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 4). Likewise, Martin suggests that Norwegian-American “exposure to the presence of other ethnic groups was common” and indicates that “over the years the immigrant neighbors learned to interact, in part through the necessity of shared labor, in part through the pleasure of dance parties held in the neighborhood” (Martin, 1982a, p. 7).

As discussed in Chapter Three, although early Norwegian immigrants tended to settle in ethnically homogeneous communities, these settlements were not impermeable, and they gradually became multicultural. Early Norwegian settlements were commonly composed of immigrants from the same region, or even from the same *bygd* (Norwegian rural village/community), but, as Martin points out, “occasionally neighborhoods were new homes for other nationalities as well—German, Bohemian, Irish, Swiss, Polish, or resettled ‘Yankees’ from the eastern United States—whose customs differed greatly from the core group of original settlers” (Martin, 1998, p. 262). Furthermore, Martin asserts that the frontier experience had an equalizing effect among various immigrant groups in the region, which in turn cultivated an attitude of tolerance and cooperation: “The pioneer equality of need and newness encouraged the immigrants to accept and incorporate each other’s differences into a workable compromise” (Martin, 1998, p. 262).

Findings from the fields of Norwegian-American studies and American immigration studies contradict some of these optimistic characterizations of interethnic interaction, however. While interethnic relations have not been extensively researched within the field of Norwegian-American studies, scholars have emphasized the insularity and cohesion of the Norwegian-American ethnic group on various levels. One measurement of ethnic cohesion used is the extent of endogamy (intragroup marriage). Lovoll, citing several studies, concludes that “statistics for Norwegian Americans give evidence of a high degree of intragroup marriage” and that “intragroup marriage was more pronounced among Norwegians than . . . among rural Swedes” (Lovoll, 2007, pp. 188–189). Moreover, there is evidence that Norwegian-American ethnic cohesion extended to the social realm: in his study of rural Norwegian communities

in western Wisconsin circa 1950, sociologist Peter A. Munch found that 90 percent of social visiting in several communities “was confined to others of Norwegian descent” (Lovoll, 1999, p. 336). However, writing about the overall ethnic old-time music scene in northern Wisconsin, Leary suggests that the extent and development of interethnic “sociability” in the region varied from community to community:

Sometimes interethnic sociability was immediate. The Barksdale area, for example, was settled prior to World War I by Swedes, Norwegians, Finns, Germans, Irish, and English transplants from the Canadian Maritimes, and Hungarian and Lithuanian ex-miners lately of western Pennsylvania. In Vivian Brevak’s recollection, they were “just neighbors, all neighbors and friends that knew everybody else.”

Elsewhere in the region diverse ethnics banded together at a slower rate. With most residing in ethnic enclaves and the immigrant generation still hale, gatherings featuring music tended to be chiefly but not exclusively dominated by a single group. . . . More complex alliances, nonetheless, were forming along general linguistic and religious lines. (Leary, 1984, pp. 74–75)<sup>70</sup>

Gjerde’s study (1997) also points to a general tendency towards territorial ethnic segmentations in the rural Midwest. While these segmentations had “often originated at the outset of white settlement,” Gjerde argues that the “ethnic context of settlement communities in the rural Middle West remained vital to local life well into the twentieth century” (Gjerde, 1997, pp. 228, 241). Furthermore, he indicates that while interactions across ethnic lines often facilitated the diffusion of outside practices to an ethnic group, they also spurred the development of negative stereotypes and classifications of various Others, motivated in part by the desire of an ethnic group to position itself beneficially in the American ethno-racial hierarchy. In the case of Norwegian Americans, there is some evidence of ethnically-based animosity between their group and Irish Americans, for example.<sup>71</sup> Gjerde quotes an interview conducted by Peter Munch with a Mrs. Philipson of Blanchardville, Wisconsin in 1949 in which she described

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70 In the case of Norwegian Americans, interethnic alliances emerged in particular in the form of various Scandinavian-American associations. In his study, Jørn Brøndal shows that Norwegian-, Danish-, and Swedish-American ethnic leaders endeavoured to develop a Scandinavian-American collective identity by “glossing over” differences in order to “claim for themselves and the whole group that they represented a recognized place in American public life” (Brøndal, 2004, pp. 4–5). Examples of Scandinavian-American associations active in the Upper Midwest include mutual-aid societies like the Independent Scandinavian Workingmen’s Association, and temperance associations, including the over one hundred Scandinavian-American lodges within the International Order of Good Templars (Brøndal, 2004, pp. 58, 68).

71 While there is not space to examine them here, other examples of ethnically and racially-based frictions between Norwegian Americans and other minority groups exist. For instance, recent scholarship has examined interactions between Norwegian immigrants and Indigenous peoples in processes of settler colonialism and Indigenous land dispossession in the Upper Midwest (e.g. Bergland, 2021; Hansen, 2013).

what she called the “fighting spirit” between those of Norwegian ancestry and those of Irish background, though she “could not explain it.” “I guess the Norwegians have always regarded the Irish as nothing but dirt,” she remarked, whereas the Irish still considered the Norwegians “newcomers.” (Gjerde, 1997, p. 241)<sup>72</sup>

In spite of the perspectives introduced above, there is concrete evidence of Norwegian-American interethnic interaction through music, which indicates that music-making was a largely positive, constructive avenue of interethnic interaction during this period.

Indeed, Norwegian Americans encountered a diversity of other ethnic groups in a range of everyday settings. Leary, discussing cultural contact between various ethnic groups that had settled along the South Shore of Lake Superior beginning after the Civil War, describes four intersecting socioeconomic realms in which this contact typically occurred: the workplace/occupational settings; community work exchange and machinery/equipment exchange; economic transactions (e.g. trading or selling goods/produce); and public schools (Leary, 1983).<sup>73</sup> In addition to these arenas, other settings for interethnic interplay included community events and dances of various forms: recreational, social, and ritual events in local communities, such as house parties, holiday celebrations, weddings, and social dances in barns and at local halls, could all serve as settings for interethnic interaction, and were perhaps most conducive to intersubcultural music-making and exchange.

There are several examples of intersubcultural interaction between Norwegian Americans and musicians of various ethnic backgrounds in occupational settings. Previous studies have found that seasonal work contexts, such as harvesting (including threshing, fruit- and hop-picking) and logging, were common settings for the exchange of tunes. In an interview with Philip Martin, Wisconsin fiddler and fiddle maker Knute Volden described how his uncle, Nels, a Norwegian immigrant fiddler, learned new tunes while working as a harvesting labourer: “He used to go out to the Dakotas for harvest, you know—‘trashing’—and of course he picked up some new tunes out there. And the first thing he did when he come back—he took his fiddle and went over ‘em” (Martin, p. 1). However, while it is conceivable that Nels encountered non-Norwegian musicians on the harvesting crew and perhaps learned music from them, this is not specified by Volden.

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72 Gjerde also provides another example drawn from Munch’s fieldwork: “Even in the mid-twentieth century, a Norwegian American illustrated his perception that the Irish were shiftless by noting that ‘if you want to see the unpainted houses, you would have to go into an Irish community.’ He undoubtedly would have been displeased by the statement from a Yankee neighbor that the Norwegians and the Irish had the ‘same temperament.’” (Gjerde, 1997, p. 242)

73 Following Gjerde, most of these settings can also be regarded as arenas in which interplay with supercultural materials (what Gjerde calls the “diffusion of outside practices”) occurred: according to Gjerde, “forces in institutional arenas” such as public schools, the workplace, and the marketplace “explicitly fostered the diffusion of American practices into immigrant society” (Gjerde, 1997, pp. 232–233).

Martin and Leary both emphasize the significance of lumber camps as fruitful settings for intersubcultural musical exchange.<sup>74</sup> As Martin writes, logging crews “were composed of men from many nationalities. It was fertile mixing ground, as new immigrants were exposed to each other’s language, music, and habits. Fellows returned home to their families in the spring with a little cash in their pockets and a lot of new tunes, songs, and tales” (Martin, 1994, pp. 21–22). Instrumental dance music played at Upper Midwestern lumber camps has not been well documented, however, and was largely excluded from the collecting efforts of early twentieth century folk music collectors and scholars working in the region, such as Earl C. Beck, Alan Lomax, Franz Rickaby, Sidney Robertson, and Helene Stratman-Thomas, all of whom primarily collected vocal folk music.<sup>75</sup> In an exception to the norm, Stratman-Thomas made field recordings of several lumberjack fiddle tunes performed by Swiss-American Otto Rindlisbacher (1895–1975), a multiinstrumentalist and owner of the “Friendly Buckhorn” tavern in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, in 1941.<sup>76</sup> Rindlisbacher had worked “in the woods and in sawmills” of northern Wisconsin, where he had also picked up some lumberjack music; he later

74 The professional woodsman emerged in America during the eighteenth century, and the lumber industry began developing in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota by the mid-nineteenth century, with the last three decades of the nineteenth century becoming what folk music collector Franz Rickaby called the “Golden Age” of American lumbering (Rickaby, Dykstra, & Leary, 2017; Society). In Wisconsin, the logging and lumbering industry reached its peak during the late nineteenth century, employing 25% of the state’s working population during the 1890s, with lumberjacks, or “shanty boys” (the preferred local term), inhabiting approximately 450 lumbercamps each winter (Society). There were close ties between the Upper Midwestern and Canadian logging industries, with labour migration taking place in both directions across the border. As such, Upper Midwestern logging crews often included French and English Canadians. The last decade of the nineteenth century saw an increasing number of Indigenous and Scandinavian workers enter the logging camps, many of whom were farmers taking on extra employment during the off-season. According to Odd Lovoll, Norwegian immigrants participated in the lumber industry in as early as the 1850s: lumber camps “in the vicinity of Eau Claire in west-central Wisconsin . . . attracted many Norwegian pioneers in the 1850s. A decade or so thereafter, Norwegians made their way to Michigan’s forests and copper and iron mines for the same reason: quick income from work they were familiar with” (Lovoll, 1999, p. 65). Correspondingly, Gjerde affirms the Norwegian-American presence in northern Minnesotan lumber camps during the late nineteenth century: “Norwegian Americans also worked as lumberjacks in the pine forests of northern Minnesota, where they might have earned \$25 to \$30 a month in the cold winter seasons of the 1880s” (Gjerde & Qualey, 2002, p. 23).

75 The lyrics and melodies collected by Upper Midwestern “songcatchers” were of predominantly Irish origin, as was the vocal style: as Rickaby writes regarding his own collection of shanty-boy ballads and songs, “an examination of the names of the heroes in the songs recorded in this collection, and of the names of those from whom the songs were obtained, will support the assertion that in the logging camp the hegemony in song belonged to the Irish. Although the Scotch and French-Canadian occur occasionally, the Irish were dominant, and the Irish street-song was the pattern upon which a liberal portion of the shanty-songs were made” (Rickaby et al., 2017, p. 90). According to Leary, this claim was “fully substantiated by an ensuing half century of scholarship” (Rickaby et al., 2017, p. 6).

76 Stratman-Thomas’s recordings of Rindlisbacher’s lumberjack tunes were published on the 1960 Library of Congress LP, *Folk Music from Wisconsin* (Stratman-Thomas, 1960). Sidney Robertson and Alan Lomax also recorded a variety of instrumental and vocal “lumberjack” tunes performed by Rindlisbacher and his ensemble, the Wisconsin Lumberjacks, at the National Folk Festival in 1937 and 1938, respectively. At the 1937 festival the ensemble performed a program entitled “An Evening in a Bunkhouse” put together by Rindlisbacher and his wife, Iva Rindlisbacher; the program was meant to create “nostalgic yet vital representations of bygone lumber camp music, dance, and song” (Leary, 2015, pp. 75–78). Both Robertson’s and Lomax’s recordings of the Wisconsin Lumberjacks were released on the 2015 CD box set *Folksongs of Another America* (Leary, 2015).

taught several of these tunes to Norwegian-American fiddler Leonard Finseth of Drammen, Wisconsin (Robert Andresen, in liner notes for Finseth, 1979; Rickaby et al., 2017, p. 10).

While there is little documentation (transcribed or recorded) of instrumental dance music repertoire played at lumber camps in the region, several individual accounts of lumber camp life describe the performance of instrumental dance music in camp, which typically occurred on Saturday nights, when a “stag” (all-male) dance might be held in the bunk house. In his 1889 book depicting experiences in lumber camps in Michigan and Wisconsin, John W. Fitzmaurice describes a typical Saturday evening dance:

[T]he camp fiddler begins to tune up, which is a signal for a “stag dance.” The “ladies,” represented by robust shanty boys, tie a handkerchief about their arm and off they all go in a well danced set of cotillions, with a zest and gusto indicative of the power music can put into lively heels. . . . Around the room, close to the bunks, runs one continuous log bench, filled with men of nearly all nationalities. . . . At one end is placed the “orchestra,” usually a violin and possibly a mouth organ. The playing is meritorious more for zeal than skill, but is cheerfully given, till all who want to dance have had full satisfaction. (Fitzmaurice, 1889, pp. 55–56)

Accounts such as Fitzmaurice’s affirm the significance of instrumental dance music at Upper Midwestern lumber camps and give credence to the lumber camp as a setting for interethnic musical interplay. Certainly, Norwegian immigrants working in the lumbering industries in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century encountered such Saturday night bunk house dances, listening, dancing, and perhaps playing themselves. Nevertheless, this remains conjectural, as little concrete evidence of interethnic musical exchange at lumber camps between Norwegian-American musicians and other “ethnic” musicians was found in the collected data and the reviewed literature.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to occupational settings, there are numerous examples of interethnic musical interaction between Norwegian Americans and other groups in the context of various community events, particularly dances. In an interview with Philip Martin, fiddler Jacob Varnes of Ridgeland, Wisconsin recounts intermixing between Norwegian Americans and German-American neighbours:

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77 The only concrete example I encountered was the following often-cited quote from Thor Helgeson’s collection of accounts of Norwegian pioneer life, translated into English by Malcom Rosholt. The account was told to Helgeson by Ola Johnson of Wisconsin Rapids: “While the lumberjacks spent most of their leisure time singing, card playing and dancing, that was not all. There was also violin playing and dancing, as there were no less than four fiddlers in the crew. Real musicians though were lacking, but in logging camp we were not particular about the quality of music. . . . Here the boys and girls, men and women, gathered to dance the waltz and French-Four far into the night” (Rosholt, 1985, p. 270).

Oh, yes, the Germans used to come to our [Norwegian families'] house parties. And we went to theirs. We didn't speak the same language, but we all enjoyed the music and the mingling. Their music was a little different from ours, but we enjoyed it just the same. (Martin, 1994, p. 47)

Furthermore, in communities where dances were attended by a multiethnic audience, musicians sometimes acquired a "multiethnic" repertoire in order to satisfy dancers and listeners. Leary, writing about ethnic musicians in the Lake Superior region, where he conducted fieldwork, observed that "nearly every self-respecting veteran of home and hall parties acquired at least one tune that might appeal to each of the many different nationalities" (Leary, 2006, p. 17). In a 1990 interview conducted by Leary, Polish-American musician Florian Chmielewski of the Duluth, Minnesota area described the importance of acquiring an eclectic repertoire when playing for a multiethnic dancing audience: "when we come out to these dances, I pretty soon realized that I had to learn '*Helsa Dem Darhemma*' [for the Swedes] . . . and I had to learn '*Svestkova Alej*' for the Bohemians" (Chmielewski, quoted in Leary, 2006, p. 17). A final example of interethnic interplay is cited from Polish-American accordionist Bruno Synkula, who was interviewed by Leary in Ashland, Wisconsin, in 1981 and who "not only learned to play an accordion from an Italian, but also acquired a Swedish version of a Finnish song from a Norwegian accordionist whose repertoire included mostly German tunes" (Leary, 2006, p. 17).

There are also many examples of Norwegian-American old-time musicians whose repertoires included what could be called "panethnic regional standards"—tunes that had "ethnic" origins and were favoured by various ethnic groups in the Upper Midwest. While it is seldom possible to uncover the exact source or setting of musical exchange, these tunes were likely encountered via a variety of media and settings, including radio, commercial recordings, and live performances. Norwegian-American fiddler Randie Easterson Severson (1877–1959) is one example of a fiddler whose repertoire included panethnic regional standards: born in Pleasant Valley Township, Wisconsin, Severson learned to play fiddle as a child along with her younger brothers, and the siblings played together for local dances. In addition to Norwegian tunes, Severson's repertoire also included "multiethnic Wisconsin favorites such as the circle two-step, the *Flying Dutchman*, *Herr Schmidt*, *Coming thru' the Rye* and square dances" (Martin, 1982a, p. 23).<sup>78</sup>

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78 All three of the melodies mentioned here are associated with specific popular "novelty" dances or "mixers." I was not able to trace the origins of the "Flying Dutchman"; however, it was released on LP by the Minnesota-based "Dutchman" band, the "Whoopie" John Wilfahrt Orchestra during the 1960s (Decca DL 74298 and DL 74801). The tune accompanies the Butterfly dance and begins with a slower section in waltz meter, with a second, faster section in 2/4 (polka) time. For a description of the Butterfly dance as danced in Decorah, Iowa, see Rue (2014, pp. 168–169). "Herr Schmidt" is a mixer in 2/4 (polka) meter, likely of German origin. Several commercial recordings were released, the earliest of which was a 78 rpm recording by the Freddy "Schickelfritz" Fisher Orchestra in 1938 (Decca 45067). "Comin' thru' the Rye" is not an "ethnic" tune, but is originally a Scottish air that has been "adapted to dancing in a number of rhythms and genres" and likely refers here to a version of the tune known as "The Rye Waltz," an Anglo-American novelty dance (Archive, 2022).

Such panethnic regional standards can be found in the repertoires of various ethnic old-time musicians throughout the Upper Midwest. Alongside Norwegian-American old-time music, discrete Austrian, Belgian, Bohemian (Czech), Croatian, Finnish, German, Irish, Italian, Mexican, Polish, Slovenian, Swedish, and Swiss ethnic old-time genres existed in the region, each with individual styles, repertoire, and instrumentation (Leary, 1998, p. 273). Although these can be viewed as distinct genres, they share an alignment towards waltz, schottische, and polka tune types. Common repertoire exists, and certain tunes can be found in different versions in many of the Upper Midwestern ethnic old-time genres. Nusbaum identifies the tunes “Gary’s Polka,” “Mariechen Waltz,” and “Mountain Dew” as examples of shared repertoire (Nusbaum, 1990/1991, p. 32). Other examples of panethnic regional standards documented during the process of cataloguing and analysis include “Helena Polka,” “Julida Polka,” “Ping Pong Polka,” and “Tinker Polka.”<sup>79</sup>

Intersubcultural interplay also occurred via commercial entertainment settings such as the various forms of mainstream and “ethnic” travelling entertainment acts that toured the region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While some professional and semi-professional Upper Midwestern ethnic music and entertainment acts joined mainstream entertainment circuits operating in the region, such as Chautauqua and vaudeville circuits, other ethnic bands and troupes toured the region independently.<sup>80</sup> Some examples include Swiss yodelling groups like the Moser Brothers, German (“Dutch”) acts such as the Famous Boscobel Dutch Band, and Slavic tamburitza bands like the Adriatic Tamburica Band.<sup>81</sup> Norwegian Americans undoubtedly attended performances by various ethnic musical troupes touring the region, although they were perhaps most likely to attend performances by Norwegian-American and other Scandinavian-American “ethnic” acts such as the Norwegian-American Olson Sisters or Swedish-American Olle i Skratthults Luffarekapell.

Finally, there is evidence of increased Norwegian-American intersubcultural musical interaction during the post-World War Two era. One example of this can be found in the second

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79 The majority of these tunes have links to the so-called “Dutchman” style of German-American Upper Midwestern polka music. Leary identifies four major ethnic polka styles in Wisconsin: Bohemian (Czech), German, Slovenian, and Polish (Leary, 1998, p. 273). The influential “Dutchman” style of German-American polka music arose in New Ulm, Minnesota, a German-American town that was home to several well-known polka bands that were active during the early and mid-twentieth century, including “Whoopie John” Wilfahrt, Harold Loeffelmacher and the Six Fat Dutchmen, Fezz Fritsche and the Goose Town Band, and others. These bands reached Upper Midwestern musicians “through radio broadcasts, recordings, and tours,” and their “Dutchman” style “featured a tuba that abandoned staid oompahing to romp and take leads, a sophisticated blending of brass and reeds, and a concertina that offered improvised solos” (Leary, 1998, p. 227).

80 Forms of mainstream travelling entertainment that toured the Upper Midwest are examined in greater depth in section 5.3.1.

81 For more on the various travelling European ethnic acts that toured the Upper Midwest during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Leary (2006, pp. 19–24).

incarnation of the Wisconsin polkabilly band, the Goose Island Ramblers, which was established in 1963. In his study of the Goose Island Ramblers, two of whose three members (Bruce Bollerud and George Gilbertsen) had full or partial Norwegian ancestry, Leary shows how the “collective experiences” of the three musicians “drew upon an extraordinary array of cultural strains well established since the nineteenth century in their respective home communities.” In addition to using various supercultural materials, the band members also drew on “ethnic” strains including “marches and novelty songs featuring Hawaiian guitar; Swiss yodeling; Norwegian, German, and various Slavic polkas, waltzes, and schottisches; and dialect songs in broken English” (Leary, 2006, pp. 37–38).

Moreover, during the postwar period semi-professional Norwegian-American old-time musicians seem to have increasingly participated in ensembles that performed an ethnically mixed repertoire, as well as in non-Norwegian ethnic ensembles. For example, prior to joining the Goose Island Ramblers, Norwegian-American accordionist Bruce Bollerud (1934–2020) was a member of Emil Simpson’s Nite Hawks in the early 1950s—a band that performed “‘the German and Czech things, . . . Some foxtrots,’ and ‘some of the old Norwegian tunes’” (Bruce Bollerud, quoted in Leary, 2006, p. 120). Likewise, during my interview with Norwegian-American accordionist Mel Brenden, he mentioned having played with a Polish band, the Polish Brass—also known as the Polka Debonaires—before he began playing Norwegian-American music semi-professionally with LeRoy Larson in 1968 (Brenden, 2016). The increased intersubcultural interaction during this period can be explained in part through general characterizations of third- and fourth-generation Norwegian Americans, who, according to Gjerde and Qualey, “considered themselves Americans, spoke English, and increasingly married persons from other ethnic groups” (Gjerde & Qualey, 2002, p. 70).

In conclusion, while there is some evidence from previous studies documenting musical interactions between Norwegian-American musicians and musicians from neighbouring ethnic groups in the Upper Midwest, and there were ample settings in the region for various forms of intersubcultural interaction, such as the workplace, schools, economic transactions, and community events, little concrete evidence of such musical interactions were found in the collected data. This may be related to the particular insularity of the Norwegian-American ethnic group and/or to limitations of the data set. Compared with other forms of interaction cited by performers, intersubcultural interplay may therefore have been less significant to the development of the genre than intrasubcultural interaction (i.e. in-group activity such as learning from family, from Norwegian-American community members, or from recent Norwegian immigrants) and interplay with various popular, and popular “ethnic” music genres through the mediascape, particularly radio and 78 rpm recordings (as will be shown in the next section). Regional ethnic old-time standards can be found in the repertoires of



Norwegian-American old-time musicians, however; although the sources for these tunes are not known in each case, they were likely encountered via a variety of media and live settings, including radio, commercial recordings, and live performances. Likewise, intersubcultural interplay also occurred via commercial entertainment settings such as the various forms of mainstream and “ethnic” travelling entertainment acts that toured the region. Finally, evidence shows increased intersubcultural interaction by Norwegian-American musicians during the 1950s and 1960s, which may be due in part to the increased “Americanization” of the third and fourth generations.

What do these processes of intersubcultural interplay reveal about Norwegian-American identity construction? While, as mentioned in Chapter Three, previous studies often link intersubcultural interactions between Norwegian-American and neighbouring “ethnic” musicians to processes of creolization—i.e. a phenomenon resulting from the “displacement and the ensuing social encounter and mutual influence between two or several groups, creating an ongoing dynamic interchange of symbols and practices, eventually leading to new forms with varying degrees of stability” (Eriksen, 2015, p. 313)—it is not clear that there is convincing evidence in support of this interpretation in the Norwegian-American case. It is evident that Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with other ethnic groups and their musics in various shared socioeconomic realms and social gathering spaces, as well as via presentational and mediated performances such as travelling musical troupes and sound recordings, and that the musical “common language” of waltz, schottische, and polka facilitated social encounters with other ethnic groups in the region. Here, the waltz, schottische, and polka might be viewed as generators of interethnic sociocultural practices which, in turn, can be viewed as illustrating a broader, shifting dynamic of boundary negotiation—as one manifestation of the multidirectional permeability of the Norwegian-American ethnic group.

### **5.3 Interplay with Supercultural Musical Materials**

The Norwegian Americans, hard-working and eager to succeed, were not slow to imitate Yankee ways of doing business, farming and politicking. They followed popular styles of dress, quickly discarding the homespun clothes that marked themselves as immigrants. Likewise, they were eager to improve their homes and cultural environment. They purchased pianos and pump organs, and later, wind-up phonographs and radios, bringing the popular music of the day into their parlor.

Though they came from tradition-bound villages, the Norwegians on the frontier were generally willing to try new things that might prove useful or enjoyable. (Martin, 1998, p. 263)

As mentioned in the previous section, Jon Gjerde's study of ethnic cultural patterns in the rural Middle West identifies a broad tendency towards ethnic segmentations which "remained vital to local life well into the twentieth century." However, Gjerde asserts that local ethnic communities "were not immune to an innovation and diffusion of outside practices" and suggests that through interplay with various outside practices, the "cultural contents" of these communities gradually changed (Gjerde, 1997, p. 228). Indeed, this study proceeds from the assumption, drawn from Slobin, that "people draw on available resources, reshape them for current needs (bricolage), reevaluate, and start over, building a culture day by day, following strategies, adapting to change" (Slobin, 1993, p. 85). Gjerde identifies two parallel forces that brought outside practices and cultural innovations into Midwestern ethnic communities: 1) the acceptance of "material diffusions," "novelties," or "seemingly neutral innovations that lightened work loads or changed fashions, innovations commonly seen as elements of 'American' life," which Gjerde calls a "benign force"; and 2) the deliberate or inadvertent "censure of immigrant behavior and culture," which he terms a "hostile force" and links to institutional arenas such as public schools and the workplace, which "explicitly fostered the diffusion of American practices into immigrant society" (Gjerde, 1997, pp. 230–233). Gjerde suggests that these two forces worked in tandem to foster change in ethnic communities.

While, as explored in Chapter Three, Norwegian Americans "did not easily lose their cultural identity through assimilation" and "were not passive victims of Americanization," they also displayed a willingness to accept outside practices, interplaying with these through "benign" material diffusions as well as "hostile" diffusions via institutional arenas (Lovoll, 1999, p. 314).<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the above quote from Philip Martin characterizes Norwegian Americans as willing and eager to embrace the material and technological improvements, fashions, popular culture, and business practices of the American mainstream.

The process of data analysis has shown that one such "benign force" willingly received by the Norwegian-American subculture was the various mainstream/popular music genres disseminated to Norwegian-American communities and individuals via travelling entertainment

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82 Lovoll provides several examples of the Norwegian-American willingness to adapt to American society and accept "outside practices." He points out how Scandinavian immigrant women who worked as domestic servants "came into close contact with Americans; they learned American ideas about housework and conventional American middle-class gentility," and, quoting H. Arnold Barton, became "convinced apostles of Americanism" by the time they married. Likewise, men "learned new ways and developed new loyalties in their work" (Lovoll, 1999, p. 313). Lovoll also indicates that the immigrant's will to adapt "revealed itself . . . in name changes, an Americanization that would ease the relationship with the English-speaking majority" (Lovoll, 1999, p. 314).

acts, sheet music, commercial phonograph recordings, and radio. Through these channels, Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with miscellaneous popular musics such as minstrel music, parlour music, Tin Pan Alley hits, Anglo-Celtic dance music, “Yankee” music, Swedish *schlager*, and country music, to name a few.

I argue that the Norwegian-American subculture related to these supercultural materials as what Gjerde calls “neutral innovations” or “novelties”; as benign forces that “did not in themselves suggest an ‘Americanization’” (Gjerde, 1997, p. 232). However, these supercultural musical flows were not merely benign, but also worked to foster change in the Norwegian-American ethnic group. As Gjerde writes, material diffusions “gratified people of varying ethnocultural backgrounds as [they] created resemblances in appearance and patterns of behavior between them” and were thus “instrumental in encouraging change” (Gjerde, 1997, p. 231). In some cases, the Norwegian-American reception of supercultural musical materials might be interpreted as a sign of acceptance of “American” life. However, if we heed Slobin, the multifarious reception and use of supercultural musical materials by Norwegian-American old-time musicians should be interpreted on a case-by-case basis, and one should endeavour to develop precise readings to describe the process(es) of interplay at work in each case.

Slobin argues that subcultural interactions with the superculture’s musical materials “lie at the heart of a subculture’s definition of itself and its boundaries” (Slobin, 1993, p. 90). My interpretations of the multifarious Norwegian-American use and reception of supercultural musical materials reflect several themes related to Norwegian-American identity construction. First, Norwegian-American reception of supercultural musical materials reflects the multivalent plasticity and permeability of the Norwegian-American ethnic group and its engagement in shifting processes of ethnic boundary negotiation. In Chapter Three, we saw that previous studies identify adaptability as a factor that contributed to the retention of the Norwegian-American old-time genre, since the genre functioned as a musical common language in encounters with other ethnic groups and was adaptable to new sociomusical contexts. I argue that in addition to the genre itself, the Norwegian-American reception of supercultural musical materials also reflects the adaptability, plasticity, and permeability of several other boundaries and “groupings,” including the Norwegian-American ethnic group, as well as the supercultural musical materials themselves and their global movement through disjunctive intercultural exchange networks. In other words, plasticity and permeability can be viewed as central dynamics at work on various subcultural, supercultural, and intercultural levels.

Drawing on Didier Francfort’s reading of the popular composed waltz genre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I view several of the popular music genres (i.e. supercultural musical materials) that Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with as what

Francfort calls music of “great plasticity.” In his investigation of the shifting uses and forms of the popular composed waltz “Sogne d’automne” (“Dream of Autumn”) across national and genre borders during the early twentieth century,<sup>83</sup> Francfort suggests that the waltz genre’s inherent flexibility—its “capacity to be imported, exported or re-exported” prevents it from functioning as an “instrument of mobilization . . . of resistance, [or] of passive consent.” Nevertheless, he points out that the waltz genre has “great plasticity . . . [and is therefore] likely to be appropriated and re-appropriated in very contradictory ways” (Francfort, 2018, p. 141).<sup>84</sup> I argue that the plasticity, or flexibility, of much repertoire within popular music genres such as parlour music, Swedish *schlager*, Tin Pan Alley music, and others, enabled Norwegian-American musicians, and the broader ethnic group, to redefine this music through their use of it; thus, in addition to being “American” or “Swedish,” melodies such as “Ranger’s Waltz” or “Johan på Snippen” also became “Norwegian” or “Norwegian-American.”<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, the ability of these popular music genres to permeate national, ethnic, and/or genre boundaries also reveals the porousness of these boundaries as well as the power and disjuncture of global flows of supercultural musics.

Second, Norwegian-American reception of supercultural musical materials reflects broader positioning and mythmaking processes related to Norwegian-American identity construction. In addition to being read as a manifestation of plasticity and permeability, the reception of various popular music repertoire into the genre can also be read as an auditory sign of participation in the host culture, and in the modern age. At the same time, redefinitions

83 “Sogne d’automne” was composed in 1908 by British musician Archibald Joyce, and was supposedly the last melody played on board the sinking Titanic in 1912, hence the title of Francfort’s book.

84 “La valse a quelque chose qui facilite peut-être cette vocation à être importée, exportée, ou réexportée.”  
 “Il y a des musiques qui ne sont pas des instruments de mobilisation, ni de résistance, ni de consentement passif.”  
 “C’est simplement aussi observer la grande plasticité du matériau musical, susceptible d’être approprié et réapproprié de façon très contradictoire.”

85 “The Rangers Waltz” was purportedly composed by American saxophone player Quentin Ratliff, a member of the Spokane, Washington-based polka/easy listening band the Mom & Dads, in the 1950s (Beisswenger & McCann, 2008, p. 187). The waltz was recorded by the Mom & Dads and released as a single in Canada in 1970, selling over 80,000 copies (“GNP distributes Moms & Dads,” 1971). It was subsequently released in the United States on an LP of the same name in 1971 (GNP Crescendo GNPS 2061), reaching number 85 on *Billboard*’s chart of “Top LPs” and remaining on the chart for a total of 23 weeks (Whitburn, 1973a, p. 104). In my analysis of collected recordings I found the waltz in the repertoires of Norwegian-American fiddlers Bill Sherburne and Leonard Finseth, as well as Norwegian-American band the Erskine Olde Tymers, all of whom play the tune with a decidedly Norwegian-American lilt. The tune was also played by a number of Missouri fiddlers, including LeRoy Haslag (Beisswenger & McCann, 2008, p. 187).

Also called “Bonn-jazz,” the schottische “Johan på snippen” is a Swedish *schlager* composed and published in 1922 by Gaston René Wahlberg, with lyrics by Theodor Larsson (alias Skånska Lasse). A canonical dance tune in the Norwegian-American old-time repertoire, the tune was released on numerous 78 rpm recordings in Sweden and the United States, as well as being published in several “ethnic” Scandinavian-American sheet music collections (C. J. Johnson, 1937, p. 14; Olzen, 1951, pp. 11, 17). The melody also entered the repertoires of Upper Midwestern “Dutchman” polka bands like the Six Fat Dutchmen, who recorded an arrangement of it for Victor in 1947 (Victor 25-1078-B), and “Whoopie John” Wilfahrt.

and recontextualizations of supercultural musics by Norwegian-American musicians also transformed these materials into shifting signs of “Norwegianness.” I argue that the use of supercultural musics by Norwegian-American old-time musicians thus expresses two opposing dynamics that are related to processes of Norwegian-American positioning between American nationalisms and the Norwegian-American subculture: the adoption of “American” lifeways and ideologies; and the subcultural domestication of supercultural materials, which made them “Norwegian” or “Norwegian-American” and served to construct ethnic boundaries. In addition, I assert that Norwegian-American reception of supercultural musics also played a part in other Norwegian-American positioning and mythmaking processes, including the production of a common “Scandinavian-American” culture, and participation in a broader White American nostalgia for “old-time” values and other aspects of nineteenth century American life and culture.

In this section, I outline several significant supercultural channels that generated interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and popular and mainstream musics: early forms of travelling entertainment, sheet music, commercial phonograph recordings, and radio. Each section also incorporates reflections related to some of the above-mentioned themes of Norwegian-American identity construction.

### 5.3.1 Travelling Entertainment

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries various genres of American mainstream travelling entertainment toured the nation, including the rural Upper Midwest; these included blackface minstrelsy, medicine shows, “Toby shows,” Chautauqua, and vaudeville, among others. All of these genres incorporated musical performances and were therefore significant channels for the (particularly oral) transmission of American popular musics during this era. Furthermore, for inhabitants of remote rural areas such as the Upper Midwest, these performances were among the only forms of mainstream popular entertainment encountered before the arrival of the phonograph, radio, and cinema in the early twentieth century, making them all the more significant as community “happenings” and supercultural transmissions.<sup>86</sup>

In addition to exposing Norwegian-American musicians to mainstream musical repertoire, these travelling entertainment genres also channeled two other significant supercultural flows: popular performance formats that Norwegian-American musicians and entertainers both participated in and reinterpreted; and various American supercultural myths and ideologies. While portrayals of various racial and ethnic Others, such as Black, Indigenous, and

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86 For instance, McNamara writes that “for many rural Americans the medicine shows provided the only taste of professional entertainment from one year to the next” (McNamara, 1971, p. 431).

immigrant peoples through these popular performance formats communicated a hegemonic Anglo-American fear, desire, objectification, repression, appropriation, and self-protective mockery of these groups, tent shows such as Toby shows and Chautauqua reinforced mainstream “American” values such as the exaltation of rural life and the Protestant work ethic, while vaudeville reflected the complexity of modern, urban life and the major social, economic, and cultural changes of the Progressive Era.

### *Blackface Minstrelsy*

Established as an entertainment “institution” in the 1840s, blackface minstrelsy is the earliest of these genres and is considered the first “distinctively American and highly successful form of publicly staged commercial entertainment” (Riis, 2017; Springhall, 2008, p. 57). During the “classic age” of blackface minstrelsy (ca. 1840–1870) minstrel shows were primarily performed by White men wearing blackface make-up who impersonated Black vernacular performance practices, including song, music, dance, and humour.<sup>87</sup> Commonly performed by an ensemble of four or five White male performers playing folk instruments such as banjo, bone castanets, tambourine, and fiddle, the general structure of minstrel shows in the mid-nineteenth century was tripartite:

Music of the “genteel” tradition . . . prevailed in the first section, where popular and sentimental ballads of the day and polished minstrel songs by such composers as Stephen Foster supplanted the older and cruder dialect tunes. The middle part consisted of the “olio”, a potpourri of dancing and musical virtuosity, with parodies of Italian operas, stage plays and visiting European singing groups such as the Rainer Family. In the third section the walk-around, at once the conclusion and high point of the show, took on primary importance. This was an ensemble finale in which members of the troupe in various combinations participated in song, instrumental and choral music and dance. (Henderson, 2001)

Lott characterizes blackface minstrelsy as the “first formal public acknowledgment by whites of black culture” and argues that minstrel shows expressed a dialectical oscillation between White envy and repression of Blacks—a “cross-racial desire that coupled a nearly insupportable fascination and a self-protective derision with respect to black people and their cultural practices, and that made blackface minstrelsy less a sign of absolute white power and control than of panic, anxiety, terror, and pleasure” (Lott, 2013, pp. 4, 6–7, 18). He suggests that the influence of blackface minstrelsy has remained ubiquitous in the White American imaginary

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87 Minstrel troupes composed of Black performers, often managed by Whites, emerged following the Civil War.

and can be seen in cultural expressions ranging from “‘Oh! Susanna’ to Elvis Presley, from circus clowns to Saturday morning cartoons” (Lott, 2013, p. 5).

Likewise, the practices and techniques of minstrel shows were foundational for later forms of popular theatrical entertainment, including medicine shows and vaudeville. Indeed, Robert Cantwell suggests that a broad variety of historical and contemporary American entertainment forms have partial roots in the minstrel show, “from ragtime and jazz to standup comedy and the circus ring” (Cantwell, 2003, p. 255). Moreover, as a vehicle for the dispersion of popular musics, Lornell contends that the rhythmic, syncopated music performed in minstrel shows “clearly prepared audiences across the country for the ragtime, blues, and jazz styles that began emerging in the early 1890s” while also “introduc[ing] music that ultimately filtered back to become a part of the folk musicians’ repertoire” such as ‘Turkey in the Straw’ and ‘Buffalo Gals’” (Lornell, 2002, p. 39). Musical repertoire performed in early minstrel shows ranged from Anglo-Celtic dance tunes, to popular composed repertoire, to tunes that “seem to share a common African American heritage” (Henderson, 2001).

There is ample documentation of minstrel shows in the Upper Midwest, including Norwegian-American communities; according to Leary, “traveling minstrel shows and jubilee singers were active both along the upper Mississippi and in the hinterlands” (Leary, 2006, p. 20). Historical newspapers provide evidence of minstrel shows touring parts of the region since at least 1860. In an early example, a newspaper account of an 1864 performance by Duprez & Green’s Minstrels at Davenport, Iowa’s Metropolitan Opera Hall describes French troupe member Sig. Bideux’s performance of the popular minstrel song “Mocking Bird,” Lew. Benedict’s comic dance routine, as well as the anticipated performance of original songs and ballads by Gustavo Bidaux (“Duprez & Green’s Minstrels,” 1864).<sup>88</sup> In her study of Norwegian-American fiddler and saloon/dance hall operator Ole Hendricks, Amy M. Shaw indicates that several minstrel troupes, both Black and White, had performed at the Olson & Hendricks Hall in Elbow Lake, Minnesota, during the 1890s (Shaw, 2020, pp. 51–52). Furthermore, Shaw points out that Hendricks’s tunebook contains three melodies from the minstrel/vaudeville tradition and suggests he “may have played them at the minstrel show put on by the locals at Olson and Hendricks’s hall . . . on February 28, 1895” (Shaw, 2020, p. 52).<sup>89 90</sup>

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88 The song “Mocking Bird” is very likely “Listen to the Mockingbird,” a melody composed by African-American musician Richard Milburn with lyrics by Septimus Winner (under the pseudonym “Alice Hawthorne”). First published in 1856, the song was a popular minstrel song of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

89 The melodies in Hendricks’s tunebook identified as minstrel/vaudeville melodies are “Darkie’s Dream,” “Whistling Coon,” and “Buck and Wing Dance” (Shaw, 2020, p. 52).

90 The organization of amateur minstrel shows in local communities by White Americans became a popular leisure pursuit around the turn of the century. In these performances “everyday people enacted racial otherness, performed class solidarity, and took their place in a newly commodified, and increasingly mass produced, world of leisure activities” (Franz & Smulyan, 2012, p. 49).

While minstrel shows were a significant popular entertainment genre in Upper Midwestern communities, the extent of the diffusion of minstrel songs and instrumental tunes into the Norwegian-American old-time repertoire appears to be small in comparison with the prevalence of other genres/styles of mainstream music. Of the melodies catalogued in the database, four melodies (less than 1% of the catalogued melodies) were identified as minstrel tunes, or as having connections to the minstrel music genre; these are “Missouri Waltz” (1914), “Golden Slippers” (1879), “Arkansas Traveler” (1847), and “Turkey in the Straw.”

### *Medicine Shows*

Medicine shows were another form of variety entertainment that toured the country from approximately 1870 to 1930 (McNamara, 1995, p. 43). Using free musical and theatrical performances as enticement, these performances aimed to attract audiences in order to pitch and sell patent medicines. Anderson describes the medicine show as a “theatrical mix of circus, wild west show, minstrelsy, vaudeville, and popular drama. Equal parts entertainment, sermon, and doctor’s house call, medicine shows were samplers of American popular theater in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (A. Anderson, 2000, p. 1).

Medicine shows transmitted both popular musics and racial stereotypes to their audiences. Most medicine shows hired musician-entertainers to rouse the local audience—Robert Cantwell and Bill C. Malone both point out that many hillbilly/country musicians, often wearing blackface, started their professional careers as medicine show performers, while Bruce Bastin makes a similar point regarding blues musicians (Bastin, 1984; Cantwell, 2003, p. 255; Malone, 2002, p. 6).<sup>91</sup> As Malone points out, medicine shows and other travelling entertainers were one of the most effective channels for transporting urban musical ideas to rural America (Malone, 2002, p. 6). Moreover, through their employment of stereotyped images of Indigenous peoples, medicine shows (particularly so-called “Indian medicine shows”) popularized, and aimed to capitalize on, an “Indian mystique” founded in the late nineteenth century White romanticization of “the Indian [as] a natural physician, endowed with an iron constitution because he possessed secrets of healing unknown to the white man” (McNamara, 1971, p. 432).

Again, historical newspapers provide abundant documentation of medicine shows in the Upper Midwest.<sup>92</sup> According to McNamara, along with the South, the Middle West was

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91 According to Malone, professional country musicians who gained early experience performing in medicine shows include Uncle Dave Macon, Jimmie Rodgers, Roy Acuff, Gene Autry, Lew Childre, Clarence Ashley, and Hank Williams (Malone, 2002, p. 6).

92 A search for “medicine show” in digitized newspapers published in Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin between 1850 and 1940 turned up thousands of hits on the Newspapers.com online database.



favoured by travelling medicine show companies, since “pitchmen and showmen tended to believe that . . . rural Middle Western types were most easily sold” (McNamara, 1995, p. 46). Leary notes that medicine shows were “part of Wisconsin life in the late 19th and early 20th century” and often occurred simultaneously with county fairs (Leary, 1987, p. 33). There is even evidence of a Norwegian-American community member dancing *bygdedans* at medicine shows in Minnesota. One of Larson’s informants, Harlan Lee (1916–2001), recalled that his great aunt, Bergit Tofto, originally from Hallingdal, Norway, danced the *halling* at medicine shows in the Brooten, Minnesota area during the 1920s: “When the medicine shows came to town that was part of the attraction. She would dance the *halling* and kick the hat. (Laughs) She was probably seventy years old at the time” (O. Anderson, Lee, Lee, & Hanson, 1973; L. Larson, 1975, p. 5).

### *Toby Shows and Circuit Chautauqua*

“Toby show” refers to a “traveling vaudeville-type melodramatic tent show” featuring the popular stock Anglo-American “Toby” character, a rustic comedic figure who emerged in rural tent theatre repertoire of the early twentieth century and became an enduring feature of shows performed by many tent repertoire companies during the ensuing decades (Larsen, 2001).<sup>93</sup> Slout characterizes the Toby persona as the “traditional rustic of low comedy”—as a combination of stock theatrical “boaster” and “fool” characters (Slout, 1972, pp. x, 85). According to Poole, Toby

was a rural everyman who had power both over himself and those interlopers from the big cities. He exemplified rural values and achieved the impossible. . . He not only faced rural enemies, but he defeated them with humor and brain power. . . He exemplified the mythic possibility of potent rural morality, stability, and hegemony, supported by Jeffersonian philosophy, the Protestant diaspora, *McGuffey Reader* sensibility, and gender reification. (Poole, 2012, p. 160)

Rural audiences identified with Toby: as Mickel points out, Toby shows, which expressed the generalization that “country life is essentially virtuous and that life in the city is essentially wicked,” emerged during a period of rapid modernization and urbanization in the United States and can be viewed as a response to these changes, as well as a defence of rural people as “homely and unsophisticated, but unassailable in their virtue” (Mickel, 1967, p. 339).

European-American ethnic comic figures and musicians of this era also engaged with the Toby character. For example, Leary draws links between the Anglo-American Toby figure

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93 According to Slout, the stock Anglo-American “Toby” character emerged in 1911 (Slout, 1972, p. 92).

and the persona enacted by Minnesota Dutchman-style polka musician “Whoopee John” Wilfhart during performances, whom he likens to the stock German rustic comic character “Hanswurst” (Leary, 2006, p. 212). Wilfahrt

charmed his mixed audiences by playing a decidedly ethnic yet broadly recognizable rustic fool who yodeled exuberantly to punctuate his horn section’s surges, rolled his eyeballs crazily, stretched the bellows of his concertina to its limit, and wore frumpy lederhosen that clashed with the spiffy suits of his bandmates. (Leary, 2006, p. 118)

Another form of tent show travelling the Upper Midwest during this period was Circuit Chautauqua, or “tent Chautauqua”—an itinerant form of the Chautauqua movement.<sup>94</sup> Circuit Chautauqua, founded by Iowan Keith Vawter in 1904, and which proliferated in rural America until the Great Depression, typically took place over the course of three to seven days and included “musical groups, lectures, elocutionary readers, special programming for children, and leisurely socializing with other members of the community” (Canning, 2005, pp. 1–2; Leary, 2006, p. 20). According to Leary, musicians who performed on the Midwestern Circuits included conventional acts such as “the Kaffir African Boys, assorted blackface minstrel troupes, and various African-American jubilee singers”; however, European-American “ethnic” groups such as “Fiechtl’s Yodelers, the Tyrolean Alpine Singers and Yodelers, and Rudolph’s Swiss Singers and Players . . . were just as common” (Leary, 2006, pp. 20–21). As such, Chautauqua generated interplay with various mainstream popular music genres as well as local ethnic performers.

According to Charlotte Canning, Circuit Chautauqua can be viewed as a performance setting where “rural citizens could see their ideas, attitudes, and politics reflected back to them” (Canning, 2005, p. 1). Moreover, Richard L. Poole’s study of theatrical culture in the rural Midwest from roughly 1870 to 1940 indicates that both Toby shows and Circuit Chautauqua were central to reflecting and reinforcing local and mainstream “American” core values, such as the exaltation of rural life and a view of urban life as “evil [and] morally debased,” Protestant religious values, hard work, conservative gender roles, and the importance of the family and education (Poole, 2012, p. 142). Although Rieser views Chautauqua as the “epicenter of racial and national identity” and maintains that Chautauquans “unwittingly constructed a white public, or . . . a ‘home of the sturdy Anglo-Saxon,’” as “white ethnics” Scandinavian Americans were also welcomed: since they were dependent on “wide patronage, Chautauqua assemblies and circles adapted to their ethnic environments,” and ““Scandinavians, Protestant Germans,

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94 Chautauqua was an American adult education movement, founded in 1874, that gained national popularity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Stanton, 2009).

[and] Hollanders’ were especially prominent in the ‘western Chautauquas’” (Rieser, 2003, pp. 129, 131–132).

There is some evidence of interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and both Toby shows and Chautauqua in the Upper Midwest. For example, Leary describes how Norwegian-American accordionist and member of the Goose Island Ramblers Bruce Bollerud was enthralled by his experience of Toby shows put on by the Iowa-based troupe Tilton’s Comedians in his hometown of Hollandale, Wisconsin during the late 1940s and early 1950s: according to Leary, Bollerud was “captivated by their painted truck, big tent, elevated stage, use of sets, and especially the deft way that Mr. Tilton on trombone, his wife on piano, a sax player, and a drummer not only warmed up a crowd of strangers but held them through an evening’s antics” (Leary, 2006, pp. 117–118). Meanwhile, during the 1910s the popular Norwegian-American variety entertainers known as the Olson Sisters (or the Olson Concert Company) were hired to perform on Chautauqua circuits in the Upper Midwest, and probably drew Norwegian Americans to Chautauqua. The troupe, which featured Norwegian-American sisters Ethel (1870–1946) and Eleonora (1885–1943) Olson of Chicago, performed a program consisting of “vocal works, piano solos, and comic monologues,” with musical repertoire ranging from “recital pieces and folk songs to parlor songs and gospel hymns” (E. Olson, 1979) (Figure 7). The sisters were well-known entertainers in Norwegian-American communities throughout the Upper Midwest, and it was particularly their Norwegian dialect humour that established them as “ethnic stars” (Greene, 1992, p. 93).<sup>95</sup> A newspaper piece on the North Dakota Chautauqua at Devil’s Lake, Iowa held between July 1 and 16, 1911, includes mention of a performance by the Olson Concert Company on July 12,<sup>96</sup> while an article in the Norwegian-American *Sanger-hilsen* magazine boasts that the “Chautauqua Managers Association” had hired the sisters to perform for the entire summer season in 1915 (“Lidt om Eleonora Olsons Koncertselskab,” 1915).

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95 The Olson Sisters also gained a national audience through their recordings for major record labels such as Victor, Edison, and Brunswick.

96 Other features of the 1911 North Dakota Chautauqua program included performances by the Fort Totten Indian Band and comedian S. Platt Jones, ball games, moving pictures, and regular bible study sessions, among others (“Gates of the North Dakota Chautauqua will be thrown open,” 1911).



University of Iowa Libraries | [digital.lib.uiowa.edu/tc](http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/tc)

Figure 7: Olson Sisters promotional poster. Courtesy of the Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century collection, University of Iowa.

## Vaudeville

Vaudeville was the “dominant context for popular entertainment” in the United States from the 1890s to the 1920s (Gebhardt, 2017, p. 2). Originally a French term referring to a “poem or song of satirical or epigrammatic character common in the 17th and 18th centuries” (Barnes, 2001), during the late nineteenth century the term “vaudeville” replaced “variety” in American theatre and indicated “an entertainment consisting of short, variegated acts, sometimes musical, sometimes comic, all offered on the same bill” (Bordman, 2004, pp. 637–638). According to *The Oxford Companion to Theatre*, modern American vaudeville had partial origins in the “free concert saloons, ‘free-and-easies,’ and Western ‘honky-tonks’” that emerged prior to the Civil War; during the 1870s and 1880s these acts were sanitized to give them broader appeal (Bordman, 2004, p. 637). In addition to concert saloons, vaudeville also drew on other popular nineteenth-century American performance genres such as blackface minstrelsy, variety theatre, and burlesque (DesRochers, 2014, p. 14). American vaudeville’s prime occurred during the first quarter of the twentieth century, during which time the size of vaudeville circuits ranged from small-time, local “family circuits” to nationwide circuits such

as those operated by B. F. Keith and E. F. Albee, Alexander Pantages, S. Z. Poli, F. F. Proctor, and Martin Beck (Bordman, 2004, p. 638; McLean, 1965, p. 2). The emergence of radio and “talking pictures” were major factors in the downfall of the performance genre during the early 1930s (Bordman, 2004, p. 638).

Theatre studies scholar Rick DesRochers views vaudeville as a “vital reflection of the complex and changing times” of the Second Industrial Revolution and the Progressive Era and argues that the performance genre “could both reveal and alleviate the anxieties of life in the early twentieth century” (DesRochers, 2014, pp. 13–14):

Vaudeville embodied the “new” onstage and reflected the arrival of the new immigrants, the new middle class, and the new woman. The new was a harbinger of the industrial age, when machines, factories, automated assembly lines, and offices with white-collar middle managers began to dominate daily life. (DesRochers, 2014, p. 29)

Moreover, drawing on vaudeville historian Albert McLean, DesRochers suggests that vaudeville employed a “new humour”—a “boldly burlesque entertainment tailored for a new audience that enjoyed a more openly antagonistic, physicalized form of comedy” (DesRochers, 2014, p. 30). This brand of satirical humour reached across ethnic and social class segments, while also portraying the cultures of new immigrants and their (often awkward, clumsy) adjustments to American life. Stereotyped portrayals of ethnicity in mainstream vaudeville also served to allay Anglo-American fears of “foreign invasion,” since “[w]hat appeared to be foreign, incomprehensible, and threatening to conventional Anglo-American wisdom could be laughed at, as well as with” (DesRochers, 2014, p. 12).

Vaudeville also mirrored the ambience of modern, urban life. McLean argues that the major components of vaudeville acts, such as dance, music, humour, magic, acrobatics, and playlets, functioned as “new and exciting symbols of urban life” and expressed the “complexity and constant motion” of the modern city (McLean, 1965, p. 7). He also suggests that, for immigrant and rural audiences, vaudeville served as a longed-for aesthetic encounter with urban civilization (McLean, 1965, p. 11). Moreover, McLean argues that vaudeville celebrated the mythic, contradictory ambience of urban life in tandem with the American “Myth of Success,” in which the desirability of money functioned as a consistent pattern in an otherwise chaotic world (McLean, 1965, pp. 8–9).

According to musicologist Nicholas Gebhardt, mainstream American vaudeville was one of the primary turn-of-the-century entertainment contexts for disseminating new songs and

music genres and was the performance genre through which popular musicians, composers, and lyricists could achieve the greatest success (Gebhardt, 2017, pp. 1, 105). During the 1890s and 1900s the publishers and composers of Tin Pan Alley sought to popularize their melodies through vaudeville performances (Gebhardt, 2017, p. 110).

Gebhardt argues that vaudeville music was characterized by practices, such as the endless search for “ever newer, and more remarkable, instances of musical novelty,” that mirrored broader values, structures, and aesthetics in the vaudeville entertainment genre (Gebhardt, 2017, p. 107). Peter van der Merwe’s notion of “creative fragmentation” in American popular music is central to Gebhardt’s interpretation of vaudeville musical practices: van der Merwe describes creative fragmentation as a process through which “a tune is broken down into simpler and simpler elements, while, in compensation, these elements may develop a new complexity of their own” (Van der Merwe, 1989, p. 203). For Gebhardt, the musical “creative fragmentation” processes that defined the vaudeville experience are exemplified in the songwriting of Irving Berlin, whose popular hits, such as “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” were performed on vaudeville stages across the country.<sup>97</sup> Gebhardt argues that Berlin’s songs “derived their meaning from the way in which they allowed for recognition on the part of the listener, while at the same time opening up the possibility of transforming that familiarity, whether through modulation, lyrical additions, or changes in tempo” (Gebhardt, 2017, p. 110). He understands Berlin’s songs as living entities subject to continuous process of becoming; as allowing for “a continuous variation of singers, groups, situations and styles, and no single performance was meant to be the original or definitive one. It was the performance that made the song, and not the other way around” (Gebhardt, 2017, p. 111). Drawing on William Austin’s study of songwriter Stephen Foster, Gebhardt suggests that vaudeville music’s global participation in processes of creative fragmentation is reflected in the reception and use of the music by various groups across an array of contexts. Gebhardt quotes Austin who, discussing the popularity of Foster’s song “Oh Susanna,” writes that the tune “served all sorts of groups, enhancing their internal unity, but among the groups, in relation to each other, the tune established no unity of will or understanding. The tune was adaptable to the functions of many separate ‘folks.’ What it meant to each of them depended on them more than on the music” (William Austin, quoted in Gebhardt, 2017, p. 104).

There is some evidence of interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and vaudeville musical performances in the Upper Midwest. In an interview with Philip Martin, Norwegian-American fiddler Ernest Bekkum (1917–2009) recalls that hearing vaudeville performances

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97 Berlin’s “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” was “introduced by variety star Emma Carus in Chicago in 1911” and “went on to sweep the United States and Europe” (Hischak, 2014).

by a fiddle and banjo duo as a child during the 1920s in Coon Valley, Wisconsin, was what awoke his interest in playing fiddle:

And I remember they used to have some vaudeville doings in Coon Valley in the town hall, and I remember distinctly they had a banjo and a violin player together and we thought that was awful good, you know. They were just, they were just roaming musicians, then they just, but I think they played for a couple nights in a row. We went, we went both nights, you know. Things like that I remember well, because I got, I was interested in that music, you know? . . . I wouldn't have been more than about eight years old then. (Bekkum, 1980)

Moreover, it is plausible that Norwegian-American musicians encountered popular music genres such as minstrel and Tin Pan Alley music at vaudeville performances, in tandem with other supercultural channels such as sheet music, phonograph recordings, and radio. In addition to the four minstrel melodies identified in the database, eleven melodies were identified as Tin Pan Alley songs, some of which were likely encountered at vaudeville shows.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to their reception and use of popular music disseminated through vaudeville, Norwegian-American and other European-American ethnic musicians and entertainers in the Upper Midwest also adapted and reinterpreted the vaudeville performance format itself, shaping it into a unique regional theatrical culture. Greene argues that performances on the ethnic vaudeville stage helped to forge a collective ethnic identity and solidify bonds within an ethnic group (Greene, 1992, p. 90). Often embodying the persona of a rustic comic figure, ethnic entertainers also explored how naive, rural immigrants could cope with, and even master the complex challenges of adjusting to life in America. The performance context of ethnic vaudeville is explored further in Chapter Six.

### 5.3.2 Sheet Music

Commercial sheet music is another notable supercultural channel that generated interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and various popular, mainstream music genres. Although only a portion of them learned to read music, some Norwegian-American musicians active during the period under investigation interplayed with commercial sheet music connected with at least four different genres and eras of music publishing: parlour music, Tin Pan Alley music, commercial “ethnic” (particularly “Scandinavian”) dance music, and

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98 Regarding the melodies identified as Tin Pan Alley songs, see under “Tin Pan Alley Music” in section 5.3.2.

music from Top 40 radio, Hollywood films, and other branches of the culture industry that emerged following the Great Depression.<sup>99</sup>

While an early music publishing trade emerged on the east coast of the United States during the last decade of the eighteenth century, it was not until the mid- to late-nineteenth century that the American music publishing business expanded considerably.<sup>100</sup> The nineteenth-century development of the sheet music publishing trade is regarded as the inception of the modern American music industry and the beginning of the commodification of music: according to Richard Crawford, the sheet music industry “was the economic agent that, more than any other, turned the American home into a marketplace for music” and “the same principle—distributing music in cheap, accessible units—has sustained the music business ever since” (Crawford, 2001, pp. 221–222).

In a broad sense, interplay with each genre or era of sheet music publishing mentioned above can be understood as reflecting various aspects of Norwegian-American identity construction. While interplay with parlour music can be interpreted as denoting a Norwegian-American desire for ties to White middle-class American ideals and socioeconomic improvement, interaction with Tin Pan Alley music can be read as an auditory indication of Norwegian-American participation in, and enthusiasm for, the modern age, as well as for certain popular dance and music fashions of the early twentieth century. Interplay with American-published, homogenized “Scandinavian” sheet music collections during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s reflects the participation of Norwegian Americans in the production of a musical, and broader ethnic “pan-Scandinavian” identity, while interaction with “hit parade” and other mid-twentieth-century sheet music folios of mainstream American music points to a sustained Norwegian-American interest in popular music genres of the mid-twentieth century.

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99 Two other significant sources of published music notation—Norwegian-American songbooks, and nineteenth-century anthologies of Anglo-Celtic dance tunes compiled by publishers such as Elias Howe, Carl Fischer, and others—are not examined here. A product of the Norwegian-American subculture rather than a supercultural channel, Norwegian-American songbooks, such as *En samling af norske, svenske, danske og amerikanske Sange* (1874), *The Norway Music Album* (1881), *Sangbog for sønner af Norge* (1926), *Nordisk Tidende Sangbok* (1942), and *Sons of Norway Songbook* (1948) were important sources for Norwegian folk, patriotic, and religious songs (see I. Lien, 2014, pp. 40–47). Some of the anthologies published by Howe and Fischer included a number of Anglo-American fiddle standards that are frequently found in the repertoires of Norwegian-American fiddlers, such as “College Hornpipe” (also known as “Sailor’s Hornpipe”), “Devil’s Dream,” “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” “Turkey in the Straw” (also known as “Old Zip Coon”), and “Soldier’s Joy.” These tunes have histories in Britain (often Scotland) and a subsequent past in America dating from the eighteenth century (Goertzen, 2008, p. 8). There is little evidence regarding the extent to which Norwegian-American musicians interacted with these publications, although Shaw speculates about whether fiddler Ole Hendricks may have drawn some of the quadrille tunes found in his handwritten tunebook from published collections such as these (Shaw, 2020).

100 According to Crawford, the first American-published sheet music was printed in 1787 by John Aitken in Philadelphia. Prior to this, secular sheet music had been imported to the United States from Europe—primarily England (Crawford, 2001, p. 223).



Before examining the various genres and eras, I begin with a short, illustrative anecdote. While doing fieldwork in Minnesota in 2016, I was given a selection of sheet music from the collection of Norwegian-American pianist Ida Malvina Moen (née Nilsby) (1895–1968) of Underwood, Minnesota. Although our conversation was brief, the owner of the collection told me that Ida and her husband, fiddler Alvin H. Moen (1892–1967) had performed together at a rural Sons of Norway hall. The couple were likely amateur musicians; I was unable to uncover published accounts of any public performances. The sheet music collection, while small, is remarkably representative of the various popular music genres that Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with through the sheet music medium (Figure 8). The waltz “When It’s Night-time in Nevada” (1931) is an early country song, while “The Jolly Swiss Boys” (1946) is a polka medley from the polkabilly genre recorded by the Six Fat Dutchmen, among others. “Clayton’s Grand March” and the Irish air “The Last Rose of Summer,” first published in 1877 and 1858, respectively, belong to the parlour music genre, while “Wedding of the Fairies” (1909) and “Weeping Willow Lane” (1912) are Tin Pan Alley tunes. The only “Scandinavian” tune in the collection is the Swedish “Spelmansvalsen från Jämtland,” a waltz published in Chicago by Dalkullan Publishing & Importing Co. and composed by Edvin Jonzon. Several of the publications are stamped with the names of local music shops, including Roy Olson’s Music Store & Studio, Knese Music Co., and J.N. Rovang, all located in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, which indicates the accessibility of popular sheet music publications in rural Minnesota. On the whole, this small collection, which I initially dismissed because of the lack of any “Norwegian” material, is meaningful evidence of the variety of performed “mainstream” music in two Norwegian-American musicians’ repertoires.



Figure 8: Sheet music from the collection of Ida Malvina Moen. Photo by the author.

## Parlour Music

Parlour music denotes music composed for domestic performance; the term typically designates “undemanding compositions (particularly those of the 19th and 20th centuries) of a lightweight character and designed for private amusement” (Bellingham, 2011). The genre proliferated in the United States during the hundred years from approximately 1820 to World War One (Key, 2016). Parlour music was published in sheet music editions, frequently with ornate engraved covers by popular commercial artists which attracted buyers. Key views the emergence of parlour music as related to three phenomena: the nineteenth-century expansion of the American music publishing industry, the rise of a middle class with increased leisure time, and the emergence of the parlour in American homes—a room separate from quotidian tasks that served as a “marker of social stature for Americans” (Key, 2016). The mass fabrication and increased affordability of musical instruments for the amateur market, particularly pianos, was also a key factor in the development of the parlour music industry (Key, 2016).

The parlour music genre can be interpreted as reflecting certain traits and socioeconomic aspirations of the Norwegian-American ethnic group. In a musical and broader cultural

sense, the genre was connected with values of gentility, refinement, sentimentality, simplicity, economic status, and domesticity. Susan Key claims that parlour music was associated with a genteel tradition “somewhere between the noisy, lowbrow genre of blackface minstrelsy and the aristocratic pretensions of symphonic and operatic music” and that it symbolized “aspirations of economic status . . . along with the perceived superior values that accompanied gentility” (Key, 2016). Musically, since the genre was aimed towards the amateur market, it was characterized by simplicity in terms of melody, arrangement, transcription practices, and performance ideals. Thematically, lyrics typically concerned topics such as love, children, and the home (Key, 2016). Interplay with parlour music can be read as reflecting the Norwegian-American desire for socioeconomic advancement and association with White middle-class American ideals. At the same time, parlour music’s themes of domesticity, virtue, and piety are also compatible with Norwegian-American self-perceived “ethnic” attributes of family commitment, morality, and religious piety.

Only a small percentage of old-time repertoire analyzed in this study can be connected with the parlour music genre. Of the repertoire examined and catalogued in the database, twelve melodies were identified as parlour music, six of which are waltzes.<sup>101</sup> Eight of these melodies are from the repertoire of fiddler Daniel Aakhus.<sup>102</sup> The fact that many of the parlour melodies were found in Aakhus’s repertoire is attributable to Aakhus’s musical literacy and extensive use of sheet music, as well as the general profile of his public performances as light, simple, wholesome, sentimental entertainment, combined with elements of Norwegian culture. A newspaper account of a concert by Daniel and Gecina Aakhus on March 17, 1915 at the Knights of Pythias Hall in Valley City, North Dakota reflects this profile:

Mr. Aakhus is an accomplished violinist and delighted his hearers with selections from the best-known authors, as well as rendering numerous pieces of lighter music and old-time Norwegian dances. Prof. Aakhus has a pleasing personality and plays with the grace and ease of a master of the art. (“Musical Treat for K. P. Lodge,” 1915)

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101 The twelve melodies identified as parlour music are “Beautiful Dreamer” (1864), “Fairy Kiss” (1908) (also registered as a Tin Pan Alley song), “Home, Sweet Home” (1823), “Kiss of Spring” (1906), “Last Rose of Summer” (1813), “Mountain Belle Schottische” (1856), “The Old Refrain,” “Over the Waves” (1888), “Silver Threads Among the Gold” (1873), “Sweet Bunch of Daisies” (1894), “To a Wild Rose” (1896), and “Waves of the Danube” (1880).

102 Daniel Aakhus (1881–1969) is one of the two case study subjects discussed in Chapter Six. For biographical details about Aakhus, see Chapter Six.

### *Tin Pan Alley Music*

“Tin Pan Alley” refers to the popular sheet music publishing trade based in New York City from the 1890s to the 1950s, as well as to a specific location on New York’s West 28th Street where the offices of popular music publishers such as Willis Woodard and T.B. Harms were based during the early twentieth century (Hischak, 2014; Hitchcock, 2001). The term also came to indicate the general type of song promoted by the industry (Hitchcock, 2001). The expansion of the Tin Pan Alley music publishing industry was linked to the rise of mass consumption and the growth of an economy that valorized novelty, produced desires, and promised personal fulfillment through commodities (Suisman, 2009, p. 10).

Compared with the nineteenth-century approach to music publishing, when publishing houses maintained broad catalogues of music ranging from popular parlour songs to choral music, instructional books, chamber music, opera scores, and other wares, Tin Pan Alley publishers focused exclusively on publishing popular songs and used a more diverse range of promotional techniques to sell their publications (Hamm, 1979, p. 287). As mentioned in the above discussion of vaudeville, a central technique used by Tin Pan Alley publishers to market new songs was to engage vaudeville artists to perform them onstage, since the theatrical genre was one of the primary entertainment contexts for disseminating and popularizing new songs and music genres around the turn of the century:

By the 1880s and ‘90s more Americans were hearing songs in vaudeville than in any other form of live entertainment; thus singers in such shows became prime targets for Tin Pan Alley publishers who understood that having songs heard in public was the best method of persuading potential customers to buy sheet music. (Hamm, 1979, p. 287)

According to Crawford, sheet music editions of Tin Pan Alley songs plugged by touring vaudeville artists were often made available to audiences for purchase following performances (Crawford, 2001, p. 472).

On the whole, the reception and use of Tin Pan Alley songs by Norwegian-American old-time musicians can be read as an auditory sign of Norwegian-American participation in, and enthusiasm for, the modern age. Tin Pan Alley composers mixed conventional musical elements from parlour songs and vaudeville tunes with the novel music styles of ragtime, early jazz, and popular modern dances such as the two-step and the foxtrot, creating music that both reflected and shaped contemporary popular culture. Textually, the themes of Tin Pan Alley music can also be understood as indications of public sentiment. According to

Thomas S. Hischak, Tin Pan Alley music “accurately reflected the heart and soul of the country” through its songs “about the latest inventions, dance steps, crazes, people in the news, current events, and even slang expressions and catch phrases” (Hischak, 2014).<sup>103</sup> A significant body of Tin Pan Alley songs are what musicologist C. Matthew Balensuela terms “novelty” or “parody” songs that narrate a comedic or satirical storyline, many of which also project ethnic and racial stereotypes.<sup>104</sup>

Their rapid spread through American soundscapes and mediascapes of the early twentieth century, their popular appeal, and their musical accessibility enabled Tin Pan Alley songs to permeate micromusics around the nation. Like parlour music, Tin Pan Alley music featured simple vocal melodies with a narrow melodic range and straightforward piano arrangements, making it easily accessible to amateur musicians. Musicologist Charles Hamm writes that Tin Pan Alley music “quickly penetrated to all parts of America” and “in time, many of the songs of Tin Pan Alley passed into oral tradition, as songs that people heard, remembered, sang from memory, even taught to other people” (Hamm, 1979, p. 325). Likewise, writing about old-time fiddle repertoire in Missouri, Howard Wight Marshall asserts that many Tin Pan Alley compositions “shifted into oral tradition, and many went into the repertoires of fiddlers and dance bands” (H. W. Marshall, 2013, p. 277). Indeed, several of the Tin Pan Alley tunes noted by Marshall in the repertoire of Missouri old-time fiddlers were also found in Norwegian-American old-time repertoire catalogued in this study.<sup>105</sup>

Of the melodies catalogued in the database, eleven tunes were written by Tin Pan Alley composers; of these, four are considered two-step tunes.<sup>106</sup> The incorporation of new American social dance music, including two-step, cakewalk, and foxtrot melodies into the Norwegian-American old-time music repertoire, indicates Norwegian-American interplay with, and participation in popular dance and music fashions of the early twentieth century. The two-step,

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103 For example, songs such as Harry Dace’s “Daisy Bell” (1892) commented on the invention of the bicycle, while Gus Edwards and Vincent Bryan’s “In My Merry Oldsmobile” (1905) is linked to the dawn of the automobile (Balensuela, 2019, p. 15). Meanwhile, songs such as “Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes” and “Jeepers Creepers” are connected with the popularization of slang expressions, and “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier” was a pacifist commentary on the First World War (Hischak, 2014).

104 While the intention of these songs was to “denigrate and diminish minorities and exclude them from full participation in American life,” Balensuela argues that the reverse was achieved since “over time the popularity of the musical style (the notes rather than the text) elevated the value of black contributions to music” (Balensuela, 2019, p. 19).

105 These include the two-steps “Old Grey Bonnet,” “Red Wing,” “Dill Pickle Rag,” and “Silver Bell” (H. W. Marshall, 2013, pp. 143, 288, 293).

106 The eleven melodies identified as Tin Pan Alley music are “After the Ball” (1891), “And the Cat Came Back” (1893), “Any Time” (1921), “Dill Pickle Rag” (1907), “Fairy Kiss” (also registered under the parlour music genre) (1908), “Glow Worm” (1902), “In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree” (1905), “My Wild Irish Rose” (1899), “Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet” (1909), “Red Wing” (1907), and “Silver Bell” (1910). Of these, “Dill Pickle Rag,” “Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet,” “Red Wing,” and “Silver Bell” are considered two-step tunes. “Red Wing” is also variously performed as a polka or a reel on some recordings.

which was popularized during the 1890s, is one of several modern American social dances that emerged during the ragtime era and that challenged the hegemony of the European popular dances that had been preeminent on American dance floors during the nineteenth century (Powers, 2013).<sup>107</sup> In addition to the two-step, my survey of collected recordings also found cakewalk, foxtrot, and ragtime melodies among Norwegian-American old-time music repertoire.<sup>108</sup> A statement from one of LeRoy Larson's informants, accordionist Orin Anderson, also indicates the prevalence of modern American social dance music and other contemporary American popular songs at some Norwegian-American commercial dances during the interwar period: "In the 1930's and 40's, Anderson recalls that the repertoire [at commercial barn dances] consisted of about one half Scandinavian music and one half 'new time,' i.e., fox-trots, two-steps, and the current tunes popularized by radio" (L. Larson, 1975, p. 21).

Norwegian-American attitudes towards American "new time," "jazz," or "modern" dances and music were not universally positive, however. Several newspaper accounts of Norwegian-American *kappleiker* penned by ethnic leader Bjørgulv Bjørnaraa between 1924 and 1941 juxtapose the perceived authenticity, purity, and supremacy of Norwegian *bygdedans* music and dances (here termed *nationaldans*, or "national dance") performed at the *kappleiker* with "the terrible modern jazz music" ("Kappleiken," 1924a) and its accompanying dances, which are described as vulgar and corrupting to the Norwegian body and soul:

That evening our fathers could safely look down on the earth. With great wonder they would have recognized their people— if not the country. There is something proud, manly, majestic about the Norwegian national dance. It is no wonder that Norwegians are at the head of great enterprises and have supplied almost the entire world with heirs apparent and America with some of its finest presidents.

And the more this wretched modern "licking dance" takes hold with us, the fewer chieftains we will breed. (Bjørnaraa, 1925)<sup>109</sup>

107 The two-step is described as a "fast ballroom dance" with steps "to a quick-quick-slow rhythm in each bar [that] were done with a gliding skip similar to that of the polka" (Norton, 2001).

108 In addition to the four identified Tin Pan Alley two-steps, Daniel Aakhus's recorded repertoire contains at least two unidentified two-step tunes. Furthermore, several two-step melodies of unidentified origins were found among recordings of the Plowboys (e.g. the "Storsveen Two-Step," and the "E Flat Two-Step," "Peaches and Cream," and "North Dakota Two-Step") as well as among recordings of Gust Ellingson, Henry Everson, and Chester and Beatrice Lee. Recordings of two unidentified cakewalk tunes were also found in the repertoire of Ellingson. Two versions of a single foxtrot melody were found among recordings of brothers Knut, Harold, and Gunder Sorenson. Nusbaum's recording of Bill Sherburne and his band includes the ragtime tune "Peacock Rag."

109 "Den Kveld kunde Fædrene trygt seet ner paa Jordi. De vilde med stor Undring kjendt att sitt Folk— om ikke Landet. Der er noget stolt, karsligt, kongeligt ved den norske Nationaldans. Slet intet Under, at Nordmænd gaar i Brodden for store Tiltag og har forsynet omlag hele Verden med Kongsemner og Amerika med nogen af sine glupeste Præsidenter. Og jo mere denne hersens moderne 'Sleike-Dansen' faar Indpas hos os, jo færre Høvdinger aler vi op."

Compared to this modern “risqué dance,” the Norwegian national dance seems to belong to a higher sphere and a purer world. (Bjørnaraa, 1937)<sup>110</sup>

Do you see the Norwegians in free and healthy folk dance! It is something else than this “risqué dance,” with “sawing,” “twisting,” “swaying” and “shuffling”!

No, Norway’s and America’s “Old Time” is something else than jazz and rubbish, which the money-Jews have pushed on people to the point of vulgarity and health damage!

Yes, such are the thoughts and exclamations in the hall during the competition. And the fiddlers take turns on the stool and add atmosphere to the whole thing,— Norwegian atmosphere and Norwegian high-mindedness, that does not spoil body or soul. (Bjørnaraa & Tveitbakk, 1941)<sup>111</sup>

These attitudes echo some of the views expressed by automaker Henry Ford, who sought to revive nineteenth century Anglo-American “old-fashioned dancing” and “early American music” through the establishment of the Ford Motor Company Music Department in 1924 as an antidote to modern American social dances of the ragtime era and the Jazz Age. Ford believed that these “decadent” music and dance forms, which explicitly integrated African American and other “foreign” cultural expressions (e.g. Argentinian tango and other Latin dances) into mainstream popular culture, led to the “degradation of social mores” (Brucher, 2016, p. 476). Ford’s remedy was a campaign for the revival of “old-fashioned” Anglo-American dancing and music, which he believed could be “developed into an invaluable instrument for social righteousness” (Brucher, 2016, p. 470). Furthermore, opinions conveyed in Bjørnaraa’s 1941 article echo views expressed in some of the articles published in the *Dearborn Independent*—a newspaper purchased by Ford in 1918 which he employed to “begin an anti-Semitic campaign” (Gifford, 2010, p. 312) during the 1920s—which “accused Jews of supporting African American music and perverting ‘Anglo-Saxon’ Americans’ understanding of American song by controlling the commercial music industry” (Brucher, 2016, p. 476).

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110 “Sammenlignet med denne moderne ‘kline-dansen,’ saa er den norske nationaldans som hørende til en høiere sfære og en renere verden.”

111 “Ser du nordmenn i fri og frisk folkeleik! Det er noko anna enn denne ‘kline-dansen,’ med ‘saging,’ ‘vriing,’ ‘vagging’ og ‘loddning’!

Nei, Norges og Amerikas ‘Old Time’ er noko anna enn jazz og vass, som penge-jødane har prakka inn på folk til råskab og helseskade!

Ja, slik er tanker og utropene i hallen med leiken går. Og spelemennene skiftes om krakken og legger stemningen over det hele,— norsk stemning og norsk høgsinn, som ikke skjemmer enten sjel eller krop.”

Similar to Ford's belief that "old-fashioned" Anglo-American dancing and music could serve as an "instrument of social righteousness," the excerpts from Bjørnaraa's articles place *bygdedans* music and dance, and the Norwegian-American ethnic group by extension, on a comparable racial and moral high ground by cultivating Norwegian-American hegemony myths: Norwegian Americans are portrayed as racially and morally superior through their embodiment of modern Viking virtues (i.e. the performance of Norwegian "national dance" as "proud, manly, majestic" and as belonging to a "higher sphere and a purer world") and through their peerless contributions to American society ("It is no wonder that Norwegians are at the head of great enterprises and have supplied almost the entire world with heirs apparent and America with some of its finest presidents"). The successful preservation and transplantation of homeland culture to America is also underscored—a notion that is central to Norwegian-American hegemonic mythmaking ("That evening our fathers could safely look down on the earth. With great wonder they would have recognized their people— if not the country").

While Bjørnaraa does not identify specific dances in the excerpts above, since his opposition is directed towards jazz music and Jazz Age social dances involving close bodily contact and sexual innuendo, he is likely referring to various explicitly sexualized dances of the 1920s and 1930s that were popular among the working class and were performed in urban dances halls (D'Emilio & Freedman, 1997, p. 195). Based on the collected data, the two-step, the circle two-step (a mixer based on the two-step), and to a lesser degree the foxtrot seem to be the principal ragtime-era American dances integrated into the Norwegian-American old-time music and dance repertoire. While I have not found descriptions of how the two-step or foxtrot were danced in Norwegian-American communities, it is reasonable to assume they were danced in a non-erotic manner influenced by White Anglo-American dance apologists such as Vernon and Irene Castle, who "provided a new impetus for the white middle and upper class to participate" (Cook, 1998, p. 140) in ragtime dances by "respond[ing] to the discourse of dance pathology with their own carefully crafted one of propriety in which their dancing, self-described as 'modern,' was so identified by its calculated 'refinement' in opposition to the 'roughness' associated with its working-class and ethnic predecessors" (Cook, 1998, p. 141). In my analysis of the collected data I did not find explicit evidence of Norwegian-American opposition to the two-step or the foxtrot; further research could be done to investigate Norwegian-American attitudes towards, and practices of these dances.

### *"Ethnic" Sheet Music Collections: "Scandinavian" Dance Music*

Commercial "ethnic" sheet music published in the United States, particularly collections of "Scandinavian" instrumental dance music arranged for piano, violin, or piano accordion, was probably the most significant genre of commercial sheet music that Norwegian-American



musicians interplayed with. During an interview, LeRoy Larson asserted that since Norwegian-American musicians were always looking for tunes to play, sheet music could function as a source of new material; furthermore, he stated that it was quite common for Norwegian-American musicians to use sheet music and that “accordion books” published during the 1920s and 1930s served as sources for standard repertoire (L. Larson, 2016). Similarly, Leary maintains that ethnic sheet music and songbooks were prevalent in northern Wisconsin and writes that “this arm of ethnic media was well developed, and the region was inundated with related print materials” (Leary, 1984, p. 76).

The emergence of “Scandinavian” sheet music collections beginning in the mid-1930s can be linked to changes in the broader American ethnic music industry of the Depression era. Greene points to a shift in ethnic entertainment during this period from the ethnic vaudeville troupes and the amateur, “monoethnic” local ensembles of the 1920s to the emergence of a new type of ethnic dance band he terms “crossover ensembles.” In contrast with their predecessors, these bands aspired to become professional acts and thus placed greater emphasis on commercial ambitions, aiming to appeal to both ethnic “insiders” and mainstream “outsiders”—to the younger, American-born immigrant generation as well as the general public (Greene, 1992, p. 118). Among other things, crossover ensembles broadened their appeal by playing a mixture of European ethnic music and American mainstream songs, and by adapting their instrumentation to resemble that of mainstream dance bands (Greene, 1992, pp. 118, 121). Interaction between the mainstream music industry and ethnic crossover ensembles was also reciprocal: by 1940, ethnic “crossover” music had gained “such outside popularity that . . . it had a considerable impact on and really became a new part of American *mainstream* popular culture,” thereby cutting across “old” ethnic group boundaries (Greene, 1992, pp. 114–115).

In the Norwegian-American context, “Scandinavian” dance bands were the predominant type of crossover ensemble. While these bands generally did not achieve the same degree of commercial and popular success as other ethnic crossover ensembles such as the Yiddish and Bohemian examples given by Greene (1992, pp. 127–139), many established themselves as successful “territorial” ethnic bands, particularly in the Upper Midwest, and also spread their music extraregionally through sheet music publications and 78 rpm “foreign-language” recordings. Examples of such “crossover” Scandinavian ensembles of the Depression era include Ted Johnson and his Scandinavian Orchestra, the Viking Accordion Band, and the various ensembles led by Swedish-American accordionist Eddie Jahrl.<sup>112</sup>

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112 Between 1927 and 1940, Eddie Jahrl recorded dozens of 78 rpm sides under a variety of ensemble names, including Jahrl Nyhetskvintetten, Jahrl Trio, Jahrl Instrumental Quintet, Eddy Jahrl’s Kvintett, Jahrl Quintette, E. Jahrl’s Dansorkester, Jahrls Orkester, Jahrl & Lager, Jahrl’s Trio, E. Jahrl’s Militär Band, Jahrl-Stein Orchestra, and Jarl-Franzen Quartette. For background on the Viking Accordion Band led by Norwegian/Swedish-American Leighton “Skipper” Berg, see Leary (2006, pp. 25–26).

According to Greene, another significant factor in the development of ethnic “crossover ensembles” during this period was the popularization of accordion music and the piano accordion. The piano accordion craze in America, which Greene dates to the 1930s, saw the instrument acquire a leading role in mainstream and ethnic dance bands alike (Greene, 1992, p. 124). At the same time, a new class of ethnic piano accordion virtuoso emerged; while the bulk of these performers were Italian Americans, a number of Scandinavian-American accordionists rose to prominence, including Swedish Americans Arvid Franzen, Eddie Jahrl, and Eric Olzen, and Finnish American Viola Turpeinen (Greene, 1992, p. 124). These musicians, who performed in professional dance bands, on radio, and on 78 rpm recordings, played an important part in the promotion of various ethnic popular music genres. The widespread enthusiasm for “ethnic” piano accordion music inspired by these virtuosos also generated increased demand for sheet music, and both new and established music publishing houses printed collections of piano accordion arrangements, “especially for the old-time ethnic selections” (Greene, 1992, p. 124).



Figure 9: Cover of Eric Olzen's Scandinavian dance album for piano, violin or piano accordion (Vol. 3) (1945).

Some of the most widely known sheet music collections of Scandinavian dance music published in America during this period seem to be the volumes produced by Swedish-American musicians Carl J. Johnson and Eric Olzen and published by Edwin W. Morris and Company of New York and Chart Music Publishing House in Chicago, respectively (Figure 9). During my fieldwork in Minnesota LeRoy Larson generously gave me copies of these, as well as several other collections of Scandinavian dance music. These have served as the basis for a comparative survey of repertoire catalogued in the database with the tunes published in these collections.<sup>113</sup> Through the survey, I found that 40 (ca. 7%) of the tunes catalogued in the database were also published in one or more of the examined Scandinavian sheet music collections, which indicates that the repertoire in Scandinavian dance music collections reflects a significant segment of the overall Norwegian-American old-time music repertoire of this period. Of these, 28 tunes (70%) were identified as having Swedish origins; of the 28 Swedish tunes, 20 belong to the “popular folk music” genre known as Swedish *schlager*.<sup>114</sup> Of the remaining 12 melodies, five were found to have Norwegian origins, two had American origins (one of which is the popular song “Nikolina” written by Swedish-American Hjalmar Peterson), one had Danish origins, one had Finnish origins, one is Bavarian, and two had unknown origins (Figure 10). The distribution of tune origins found among the database recordings reflects the predominance of Swedish material, particularly from the Swedish *schlager* genre, among “Scandinavian” ethnic popular culture during this period.

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113 The Scandinavian sheet music collections investigated in my analysis are those by Eddie Jahrl (1938), Carl J. Johnson (1937, 1941, 1943, 1950), and Eric Olzen (1935, 1937, 1941, 1945, 1951).

114 Swedish *schlager* music was a genre of popular, composed dance and revue music that emerged in Sweden around the turn of the twentieth century and remained popular for several decades. The genre consists of foxtrot, waltz, onestep, tango, and *bonnjazz* melodies, usually with composed lyrics. For an extensive study of the Swedish *schlager* phenomenon, see Edström (1989).

Distribution of tune origins: Repertoire found in database and "Scandinavian" sheet music collections

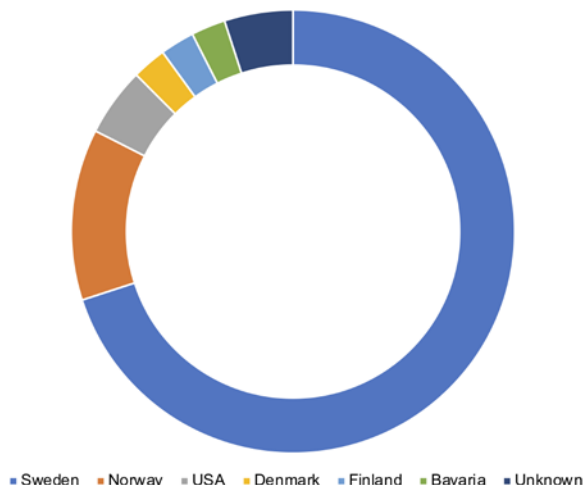


Figure 10: Chart showing the distribution of tune origins of repertoire found in both the database and surveyed "Scandinavian" sheet music collections.

I also compared the 40 tunes found among both the database recordings and the examined Scandinavian sheet music collections with the "Standard Repertory Index" compiled by LeRoy Larson in his dissertation (L. Larson, 1975, pp. 417–435). This index is a set of 44 melodies that Larson "selected from published Scandinavian accordion books printed in the United States during the 1930's, 40's and 50's"; he asserts that these books "were very popular among the Scandinavians in Minnesota" (L. Larson, 1975, p. 417).<sup>115</sup> Using his knowledge as an insider practitioner, Larson "selected only those melodies [he] believe[d] were popular among the Scandinavians in Minnesota" for inclusion in the index (L. Larson, 1975, p. 417). Twenty-four of the 40 tunes found among the database recordings and the Scandinavian sheet music collections were also found in Larson's index of standard repertory, which indicates that American-published "Scandinavian" dance music collections of this era played an important role in defining "standard repertoire" in the Norwegian-American old-time music genre (for an overview of catalogued melodies from the database that were found published in the examined "Scandinavian" sheet music collections and on Larson's "Standard Repertory Index," see Appendix 2).

<sup>115</sup> The eight Scandinavian accordion books Larson surveyed to create his index were also examined in my survey. In addition to the eight collections examined by Larson, I surveyed two additional collections (C. J. Johnson, 1941; Olzen, 1941).

The emergence of commercially-oriented Scandinavian “crossover ensembles” and the popularization of their “Americanized ethnic music” (Greene, 1992, p. 125) through sheet music publications, commercial 78 rpm recordings, live appearances, and radio broadcasts also functioned to draw together and homogenize regional subgroups and national ethnic groups (i.e. Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Finnish ethnic groups) into a pan-Scandinavian musical—and by extension, ethnic—identity. This musical conglomeration of “Scandinavians” can be regarded in part as a “superculturally produced and media-packaged” phenomenon (Slobin, 1993, p. 100), since the music publishing and recording industries played an active role in the formation and popularization of these genres.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, the supercultural musical “lumping together” of Norwegians, Swedes, Finns, and Danes as “Scandinavians” led Norwegian Americans to become “complicit in their stereotyping as interchangeable” Scandinavians by adopting primarily Swedish, but also Finnish and Danish musical repertoire (Slobin, 1993, p. 100). As mentioned in section 5.2, interethnic fusing of “Scandinavians” in the United States also occurred in other realms and is referred to as “pan-Scandinavianism” by scholars such as Jørn Brøndal and John Jenswold (Brøndal, 2004; Jenswold, 1985).

### *“Hit Parade”*

In addition to collections of Scandinavian dance music, some Norwegian-American musicians also picked up tunes from mid-twentieth-century sheet music publications of mainstream American popular music. For instance, fiddler Elmer Gald (1896–1980) of Viroqua, Wisconsin, who learned to read music from a local violinist, Clint Wallace, states that, in addition to a piece by Norwegian violinist Ole Bull, his personal collection of sheet music included collections of tunes from the “Hit Parade”:

Philip Martin: So did you get your tunes from sheet music?

Elmer Gald: Yeah, sheet music books. I got a lot of it over at home, sheet music.

Philip Martin: Can you remember the names of any of the tunes?

Elmer Gald: Well there’s a lot of those Hit Parade tunes.

Philip Martin: Oh yeah?

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116 In fact, this process of musical pan-Scandinavianism—of drawing together and homogenizing national ethnic groups into a pan-Scandinavian musical identity—had already begun with the (primarily accordion-playing, predominantly Swedish) immigrant touring entertainers and recording artists of the 1910s and 1920s.

Elmer Gald: I've got some of them, if you remember the Hit Parade? And I've got one piece by Ole Bull, he was the violinist from Norway. (Gald & Gald, 1980)

Gald is likely referring to sheet music collections connected to, or inspired by, the popular radio (and later television) program, *Your Hit Parade*, one of radio's first musical countdown programs and the precursor to later manifestations such as the "Top Forty" format (Burns, 1998). There are many examples of sheet music collections dating from the 1940s and onwards that are connected to the *Hit Parade* phenomenon, including various "hit parade" song folios printed by major publishers such as Edwin H. Morris and Company, as well as *Hillbilly Hit Parade*, a series of annual collections of popular country western songs published in the 1940s and 1950s (Figure 11). Collections of "hit parade" songs invariably gathered the most popular current mainstream American songs.

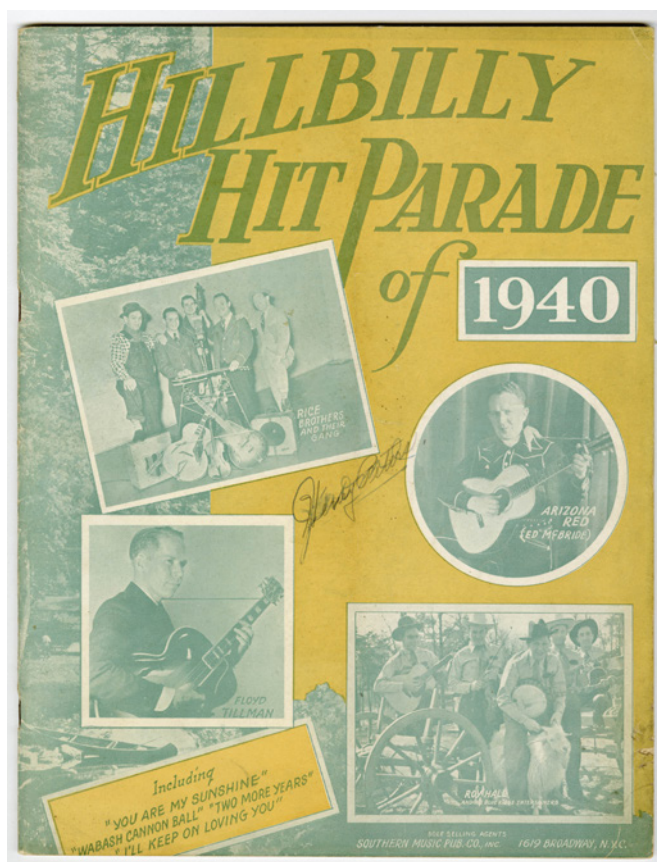


Figure 11: Cover of the sheet music folio *Hillbilly Hit Parade of 1940*.

Only three melodies in the database are connected with the “Hit Parade” phenomenon; these are the waltzes “Anniversary Waltz” and “Mockin’ Bird Hill” as well as the song “Love Letters in the Sand.”<sup>117</sup> Although the collected evidence does not indicate significant Norwegian-American interplay with “hit parade” sheet music, the fact that some Norwegian-American musicians incorporated “hit parade” songs into their repertoire points to an ongoing Norwegian-American interplay with, and interest in evolving popular music genres and trends of the early and mid-twentieth century. Continuing interplay with popular music genres is further evinced by Norwegian-American interplay with 78 rpm recordings and radio, which are examined in the next two sections.

### 5.3.3 Commercial “Foreign-Language” Recordings

One of the most significant supercultural channels that generated interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and various popular musics was the phonograph industry of the early twentieth century. In this section, I focus on so-called “foreign-language” or “ethnic” 78 rpm records marketed towards immigrant groups, since the collected data shows that Norwegian-American musicians interplayed actively with these recordings. Norwegian Americans also interplayed with mainstream popular music released on 78 rpm records; while I will cite some examples of this, “foreign-language” recordings are the primary focus of this section.

Norwegian-American interplay with “foreign-language” and mainstream 78 rpm records can be understood as reflecting several processes related to Norwegian-American identity construction. First, previous studies have shown that “foreign-language” recordings were employed by large record companies as a tool in broader assimilationist efforts of the early twentieth century—a process through which immigrants’ attachment to “foreign-language” recordings led to their manipulation into becoming “active participants in their own Americanization” (Swiatlowski, 2018, p. 51). While difficult to substantiate, it is reasonable to infer that active Norwegian-American interplay with “foreign-language” and other 78 rpm recordings of this era may have accelerated processes of Americanization. Second, to an even greater extent than “Scandinavian” sheet music collections, “foreign-language” recordings from the various “Scandinavian” series (a superculturally-produced phenomenon) functioned to consolidate and

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117 “Anniversary Waltz” is discussed in depth in section 5.5.1. The country song “Mockin’ Bird Hill,” with lyrics by George Vaughn Horton, was first recorded by the Pinetoppers, featuring the Beaver Valley Sweethearts, in 1950. A sheet music edition of the song was issued a year earlier, in 1949, by Southern Music Publishing Co. The song was subsequently popularized through Patti Page’s rendition, which was released by Mercury Records in 1951 and remained on *Billboard*’s “Best Selling Singles” charts for 22 weeks that year, peaking at number two (Whitburn, 1973b). Incidentally, according to one source, the song’s melody was adapted from the waltz “Livet i Finnskogarna” written by Swedish accordionist Carl Jularbo (“Mockin’ Bird Hill,” 2022). The popular song “Love Letters in the Sand,” composed by J. Fred Coots, with lyrics by Nick Kenny and Charles Kenny, was first published in 1931; Pat Boone’s version became a chart-topping hit when it was released in 1957 and remained on *Billboard*’s “Top 100” charts for 34 weeks, peaking at number one (Whitburn, 1978, p. 608).

homogenize Scandinavian national ethnic groups into a pan-Scandinavian musical identity. At the same time, however, Norwegian-American reception and use of both “Scandinavian” and mainstream repertoire also transformed it into shifting signs of Norwegianness, thereby serving to construct and renegotiate Norwegian-American ethnic boundaries.

### *The “Foreign-Language” Recording Market*

In the early twentieth century American record companies released tens of thousands of “foreign-language” or “ethnic” 78 rpm records. The most prominent of these companies were the Victor Talking Machine Company and the Columbia Phonograph Company, which dominated the phonograph and record player market, as well as the Edison National Phonograph Company, the principal firm producing cylinder recordings. In addition to these, a multitude of other labels also contributed to the “foreign” record market, some of which specialized in specific “ethnic” music genres.<sup>118</sup> According to Pekka Gronow, whose two-volume *Studies in Scandinavian-American Discography* documents Scandinavian-American releases on Victor, Columbia, and other labels, the 1910s and 1920s saw a huge production of “foreign-language” records; both Victor’s and Columbia’s “foreign” record outputs exceeded their manufacture of “standard popular records” during this period (Gronow, 1977a, p. 5).<sup>119</sup> Many of these releases included reprints of European and Middle Eastern recordings originally issued overseas on labels such as the UK-based Gramophone Company; however, American record companies also produced their own commercial recordings of a large number of immigrant artists, as well as international artists who were on tour in the United States. The sheer volume of “foreign-language” releases on American labels during the first half of the twentieth century is noteworthy: Gronow estimates that American record companies released “at least 30,000 78 rpm records aimed at the non-English-speaking communities in the United States” between 1900 and 1950 (Gronow, 1982, p. 12).

Before examining interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and “foreign-language” recordings, it is worthwhile to sketch out a basic timeline of the development of the “foreign-language” recording activity that took place in early twentieth century America. The global recording industry originated in Edouard-Léon Scott de Martinville’s invention of the phonograph in 1857 and Thomas Alva Edison’s creation, twenty years later, of the phonograph (1877). Sound reproduction was developed by Edison and others shortly thereafter, and by

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118 In addition to Victor, Columbia, and Edison, the main companies that contributed to the “foreign-language” record market were Brunswick, Emerson, Gennett, Pathé, Plaza (Banner), Vocalion, and Okeh (Gronow, 1982, p. 5). Smaller, independent labels that specialized in the Scandinavian “ethnic” market included Wallin’s, which released a number of Swedish-American recordings in the 1920s.

119 According to Gronow, Columbia released approximately 5,000 “domestic” records in their “A” catalogue between 1908 and 1923, while they released around 6,000 “foreign-language” records in their “E” catalogue during the same period (Gronow, 1982, p. 5).



the mid-1890s disc and cylinder recordings and players (gramophones and phonographs) had advanced to a degree that they could be sold at a moderate cost to individual consumers and households. A selection of “foreign-language” recordings could be found in the catalogues of most American record companies by the turn of the century, and this output increased dramatically during the decades that followed. While, as mentioned above, American record companies relied more heavily on reissuing European masters during the industry’s early years, the onset of the First World War meant that European masters were no longer accessible, leading to increased production of “foreign-language” recordings in the United States. Record companies became more dependent on American immigrant musicians to produce new “foreign-language” recordings; moreover, ensembles of studio musicians were also used to “[churn] out instrumentals and were given names like Columbia Polish Orchestra or Victor International Orchestra” (Spottswood, 1982, p. 56). During the war, loyalties to home countries were reinvigorated among many of America’s immigrant groups, and as a result, “sales of patriotic and war-related songs rose dramatically” (Spottswood, 1982, p. 55). The war years established “foreign-language” recordings as big business.

Sales of both “foreign-language” and “domestic” recordings reached a climax in 1921, declining again following the introduction of radio, which proved to be a significant rival to the record industry. Production of “foreign-language” recordings was maintained at a steady pace during the 1920s, however. In fact, Richard K. Spottswood refers to the period between 1925 and 1935 as the “Golden Age” of commercial ethnic folk recordings, establishing this period as a time when many rich, authentic “ethnic” recordings were produced. According to Spottswood, Ukrainian-American fiddler Pawlo Humeniuk, who recorded for Columbia’s Polish and Ukrainian series, and whose 1926 hit recording “Ukrainske Wesilie,” a “simply prepared skit combining dialog, songs, and dance music,” sold over 100,000 copies,

seems to have been the catalyst for the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of records that followed his, presenting the folk music of his own and other countries in authentic and informal settings, and turning the ten years following 1925 into an incredibly rich era of ethnic folk recording activity. (Spottswood, 1982, p. 60)

Another cause for the emergence of the “Golden Age” of vernacular music recordings was the nascent awareness of the rural music market among record companies, who began dispatching talent scouts to rural areas in the early 1920s to “set up recording equipment in a local school or warehouse, and record whatever musicians were most popular in that area” (Leary & March, 2004, p. 33). Like Spottswood, Mathew R. Swiatlowski also identifies a shift of focus from professional artists and European art music to “vernacular performance” among the “foreign-language” recordings made during the post-World War One era. Swiatlowski

suggests that this later era of “foreign-language” recordings better “resonated with the musical tastes of the immigrant and ethnic communities as their target demographic” and that the “audiopolitics” of “foreign-language” recordings thus “swung dramatically from a perception of cultural refinement to the sonification of ethnic particularity” (Swiatlowski, 2018, p. 35).

While such a shift can be discerned among the body of Norwegian, Scandinavian, and Swedish “foreign-language” releases, it cannot be called dramatic. Although there are a number of examples of “foreign-language” recordings of Norwegian and Swedish folk musicians produced during this period that might be identified as more “authentic” or “vernacular” folk music performances, the “Golden Age” years of 1925 to 1935 cannot clearly be identified as an “incredibly rich era of ethnic folk recording activity” among Scandinavian-American musicians. Most of the instrumental dance music released in Scandinavian record catalogues during this period was accordion-based dance music played in ensembles, and the repertoire mainly consisted of melodies belonging to the Swedish *schlager* genre. Some original Norwegian-American and Swedish-American “folk” compositions were released during this time, however. Examples of this include Swedish-American Hjalmar “Olle i Skratthult” Peterson’s hugely popular song, “Nikolina” (which Peterson first recorded for Columbia in 1917, and subsequently recorded for Victor in 1923 and 1929), and Norwegian-American Aslak “Casey” Aslakson’s waltz compositions “Casey’s Old Time Waltz” and “Ocean Waves” (recorded at Victor’s New York studio on May 13, 1931). Other examples of what might be designated “informal” or non-commercial music include Bob Johnson and Einar Erickson’s recording of two original tunes, Johnson’s “New Sweden-Vals” and Erickson’s “Sällinge-Hambo” for Columbia in 1929. The accordion duo recorded a total of four sides for Columbia that year, and aside from these recordings, the duo does not appear to have been active as a professional act.

Moreover, it was during this period, at Victor’s Chicago studio at 952 North Michigan Avenue, that the only known American commercial 78 rpm recordings of *bygdedans* music performed on solo Hardanger fiddle were made by Gunleik Smedal (1878–1948).<sup>120</sup> Victor allegedly invited Gunleik Smedal to record after getting wind of his victory at the June 1928 *kappleik* in Albert Lea, Minnesota. After placing first in the “First class” category at that year’s *kappleik*, Gunleik was awarded a Hardanger fiddle made by Gunnar Helland—valued at \$600—for the third year in a row, a feat that gave him permanent ownership of the instrument. Purportedly in recognition of this triumph, the Victor Talking Machine Company requested that Gunleik

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120 While both Victor and Columbia initially established recording studios in New York, both labels subsequently set up studios in Chicago. Columbia’s Chicago studio was founded in 1915, and Victor’s was in operation by the early 1920s. Expanding to Chicago gave the labels access to a broader range of performers, and certainly brought them closer to the Scandinavian-American population. Chicago had long been an important urban settlement for Norwegian immigrants; by 1910 there were over 45,000 Norwegians in the city, and Lovoll characterizes the urban Norwegian colony as “a major cultural and organizational center within the national Norwegian ethnic community” (Lovoll, 2007, p. 16).

make a number of commercial recordings. As a news item in the *Albert Lea Evening Tribune* reports, “Mr. Smedal has won the National Violin contest for three years straight and because of this honor was asked by this wonderful talking machine company to play for some records” (“Local Man has Made Records,” 1928). According to the same article, Gunleik used the prize fiddle to make the recordings and spent six days recording at the Chicago studio. This may be an overstatement, as written records connected with the master recording specify that Gunleik recorded four tunes (the *gangar/halling* tunes “Guro Heddelid” and “Nes Haugen,” and the *springar* tunes “Gibøens minde” and “Sagafossen”) for the Victor record label in Chicago on November 23, 1928 (“Smedal, Gunleik,” 2019). The recordings were released on two double-faced commercial 78 rpm records (Victor V-15001 and V-15002) (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Disc label from Gunleik Smedal’s 1928 recording of the halling “Nes Haugen” for Victor (V-15002-B). Courtesy of the Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Due in part to the Depression, the production of “foreign-language” recordings decreased during the 1930s, and as described in section 5.3.2, a new form of “homogenized” or “crossover” ethnic music rose to predominance, represented by groups like Ted Johnson and his Scandinavian Orchestra, “Whoopee John” Wilfahrt and his Orchestra, and Jolly Jack Robel and his Radio Band. According to Spottswood, these ensembles were “consciously aiming their music at the widest possible audience, turning out a steady fare of polkas and waltzes, eschewing the more distinctively regional dances like the kolomyika, hambo, czardas, and oberek” (Spottswood, 1982, pp. 63–64). This “melting pot” musical aesthetic came to dominate “foreign-language” recordings by the Second World War. Victor and Columbia continued to make new pressings of “Golden Era” “foreign-language” recordings after the war, but when 78s were phased out following the introduction of 45s and 33s in the late 1940s, remastering vintage “foreign-language” recordings for release on these new media was not deemed lucrative, and in 1952 “both Victor and Columbia quietly bowed out of the ethnic recording business” (Spottswood, 1982, p. 64). The subsequent rise of magnetic tape in the 1950s enabled small record companies to fill the “ethnic music” void left by Victor and Columbia.

### *“Foreign-Language” Recordings and Americanization*

Now we must return to the burgeoning “foreign-language” recording activity of the first decades of the twentieth century and examine why large American record companies such as Victor and Columbia were so interested in the “foreign-language” market to begin with. While domestic recordings of mainstream, popular music could sell hundreds of thousands of copies, sales of “foreign-language” recordings were usually insignificant in comparison, often selling only a few hundred copies. In spite of this, record companies invested significant resources into cultivating the “foreign-language” record market, placing advertisements for their new “foreign” releases in American foreign-language newspapers and publishing separate record catalogues for their various “ethnic” series (Figures 13, 14, and 15). If sales numbers were seemingly so insignificant, one might ask why large record companies like Victor and Columbia invested so heavily in the “foreign-language” market.

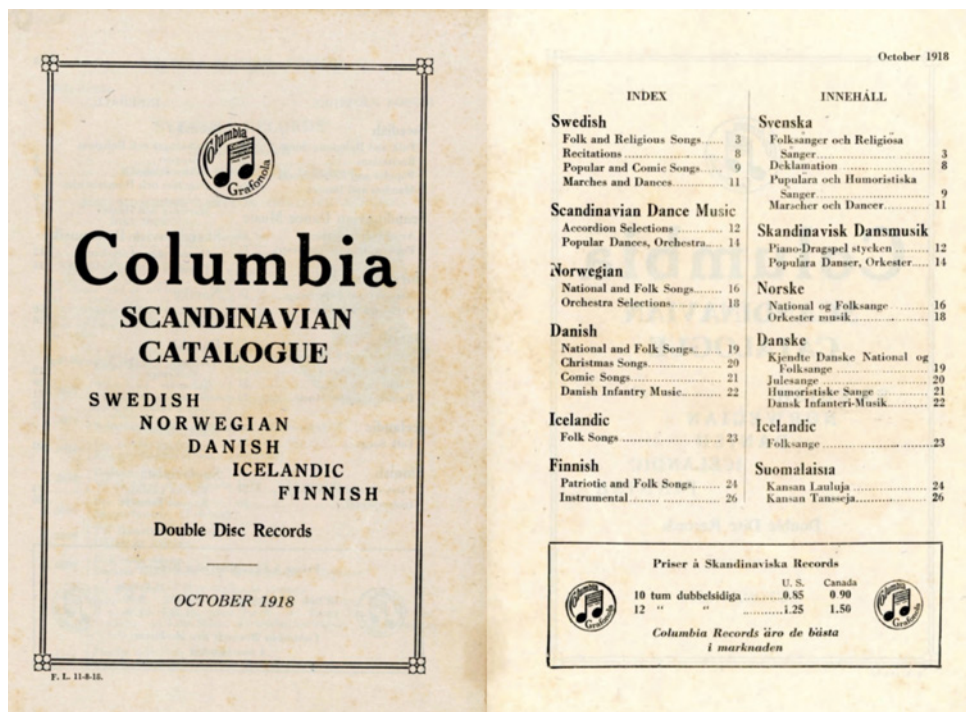



Figure 13: Title and index pages from the 1918 Columbia Scandinavian Catalogue. Courtesy of the Arhoolie Foundation.

VICTROLA NR. 22  
\$100  
Mahogni, Eg eller  
Valnød



ETHEL og ELEANOR OLSEN  
Populære norske Komikere

**De vil glædes ved at høre disse Kunstnere**

Ethel og Eleanor Olsen er altid parate til at underholde Dem i Deres eget Hjem. Læg deres Victor Records

**Nye komiske Olson Victor Records**

77286	Præst-Giftermaal (engelsk-norsk Dialekt)	Eleanor Olsen	10 Tm.
	I Delikatessen (engelsk-norsk Dialekt)	Ethel Olsen	75c

**Nye Sange af Carsten Th. Woll**

77302	Narvebytte-Vise	75c
	Norske Steve	10 Tm.

**Nye Numre af "Olle i Skratthult"**


77284	Nikoline (paa svensk)	10 Tm.
	Kopparslagaren (paa svensk)	75c
	Hjalmar Petersen	

**Andre Victor Records De bør have:**

68609	Min Sjæl, min Sjæl, lov Herren	12 Tm.	
	O, salige Stund	August Werner	\$1.25
72581	Aa kjære Vatten aa kjære Ve	10 Tm.	
	Paal paa Haagen	Christian Mathisen	75c
65601	Da Barnet sov ind	10 Tm.	
	Endnu et Streif	Carsten Th. Woll	75c
65794	Hasela-Polska (2) Dellens Vagor	10 Tm.	
	Marten Andersens Vals	Polska	75c
	Svenska Nationaltryppen		
77167	Jernvrongia — Springer	10 Tm.	
	Myllargutten—Springer	Kjetil Flatin	75c
	(Hardanger Violin Solo)		
69465	Mazurka Nr. 1	10 Tm.	
	Faddeljorden Vals	(Trækspil) Fritz Aase-Hugo Johnson	75c
72980	Strille-Vals	10 Tm.	
	Hans Erichsen-Harry Syvertsen	75c	
	St. Hans-Vals	(Trækspil) Hans Erichsen	
73688	Aftenstemning (2) Halling (3) I ensomme Stunde	Scand. Kenc. Trio	10 Tm.
	Nordboens Hjemlængsel	(Violin Solo)	75c
	Arthur E. Uho		
72721	Dala Hambo-Polska	10 Tm.	
	Donnas Vagoraa-Vals	(Trækspil) John Lager-Erik Olson	75c
72916	(Bjørnherrogenes Marsch	10 Tm.	
	Finnska Rytteriets Marsch	Elite Orkester	75c
16967	Hyrdpigens Drøm	10 Tm.	
	Glæde Dage	(Violin, Fløite, Harpe, Neapolitan Trio)	75c

Der er en Forhandler af Victor Produkter i Deres Nabolag, som med Glæde vil spille de ovennævnte Records for Dem paa hvilkenomhelst Mønstet af Victrola, fra \$25 og op. Han vil ogsaa give Dem, frit, en Victor Katalog og maanedlig Supplement.


**Victrola**  
REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.



Se under Laaget og paa Mærkelappen efter disse Victor Fabrikmærker.

**Victor Talking Machine Co.,**  
Camden, N. J., U. S. A.

Figure 14: Victor Talking Machine Co. advertisement in the Norwegian-American newspaper Skandinaven, April 16, 1924. Newspaper clipping courtesy of the Norwegian National Library.



**NORSKE SANGE**

Kommer ind i Deres Hjem som et Ekko fra de mægtige Fjælde og Skove, hvor Skiløberen og Jægeren finder deres Eldorado, hvis De eier

**Norske Columbia Records**

og de belagtede Skandinaviske Selections, saaledes som opført i den Skandinaviske Columbia Catalog og det maanedlige Supplement. En Potpourri af norske Sange, leverede hovedsagelig af Columbia Scandinavian Infantry Band, samt "To Springdansa", er den nyeste Gave for Dem. Lyt hos Deres Forhandler til de andre Skandinaviske Records som er anført her. De vil tilfredsstille Dem lige saa godt; tag dem hjem.

**10 Tommer—75 Cents.**

**Scandinavian Infantry Band.**

E 3501 Potpourri af Norske Sange. (C. M. Selling, To Springdansa. (Bergen-Aamot).

**Skandinaviske Danse-Musik—Columbia Band.**

E 3507 Jodler March-Polska

E 3507 Polka-Mazurka

E 3508 Militær Rheinländer

E 3508 2 Polkar. a) Trekarlepolka; b) Fjeldingspolka

**Haandklaverduetter, spillede af Lager og Olson.**

E 3509 Wædd-Valsen

E 3509 Hop—Hop—Hambo

**Haandklaver, Clarinet og Guitar.**

E 3510 Lille Fiskerpige

Som du er

Zitter solo, Max Margot.

E 3511 Det sidste Kys

Tyske Sange

Violinsolo

E 3512 Determination. Irene Stolofsky

E 3512 Ved du, kjære Mor, hvad jeg drømte om dig? Irene Stolofsky

E 3513 Kanarieenglen Sang. Derk Gootjes.


E 3513 Ballade. Derk Gootjes.

Hør ogsaa andre af det store Antal af skandinaviske Records af Columbia hos deres Handlende. Spørg ham efter den skandinaviske Katalog og det nyeste Supplement, og hvis han ikke skulde have denne Litteratur, send os Deres Adresse.

—Columbia Handlende overalt—

**Columbia**

Graphophone Co.,  
International Record Departement  
102 W. 38th Str. New York  
Dept. Sk.



Grafonolas fra \$15 og op.

Figure 15: Columbia Records advertisement in the Norwegian-American newspaper Skandinaven, August 31, 1917. Newspaper clipping courtesy of the Norwegian National Library.

There are several sides to the story: first, according to Gronow, selling small quantities of “foreign” releases could still be profitable for the companies, and a grander strategy was at the root of their motivation to attract the “ethnic” consumer group (Gronow, 1982, p. 3). In addition to selling records, both Victor and Columbia also sold record players (Victor’s “Victrola” and Columbia’s “Grafonola”), and they correctly reasoned that “ethnic” consumers would be more easily persuaded to purchase record players if they could obtain music in their mother tongue. A note from Columbia to record dealers in a 1914 edition of *The Columbia Record* convincingly outlines why selling “native music” to immigrant populations was a booming business that should not be overlooked:

With from five to eight thousand miles between them and the land of their birth, in a country with strange speech and customs, the 35,000,000 foreigners making their home here are keenly on the alert for anything and everything which will keep alive the memories of their fatherland—build them a mental bridge back to their native land. They are literally starving for amusements. With no theatres, except in one or two of the larger cities, few books in their native tongue, it is easy to realize why the talking machine appeals to them so potently, so irresistibly. Their own home music, played or sung by artists whose names are household words in their homeland—these they must have. They are patriotic, these foreigners, and their own intense interest in their own native music is strengthened by their desire that their children, brought or born in this new country shall share their love of the old.

The immense stirring of patriotic fervor due to the European war has given an impetus to the sale of Columbia records of foreign music which is truly phenomenal.

If you are not getting your share of it, you are overlooking a large and profitable business which, moreover, is right at your door. (As reproduced in Gronow, 1977b, p. 8)

The prevalence of the phonograph in Upper Midwestern European, and specifically Norwegian immigrant communities in the early twentieth century has been documented in previous research. For instance, referring to findings from his fieldwork in northern Wisconsin, Leary comments that “the old timers with whom I have spoken, universally agree that by about 1920 their families either owned phonographs or had access to a neighbor’s machine” (Leary, 1983, p. 223). Writing about Norwegian-American musicians in Minnesota, Larson observes that “[m]usicians from many parts of the state have mentioned the influence of radio and phonograph, and many have old 78 rpm recordings to document these claims” (L. Larson, 1975, p. 51).

The large record companies were profiteers, and their investment in the ethnic market had a dual intention: while they initially aimed to diversify their customer base by fulfilling immigrant consumers' longing for connection with the homeland through "foreign-language" recordings, in the long run they intended to cultivate a dependence on popular music among the same groups, thereby increasing the consumer base for mainstream music in the country. Indeed, Richard K. Spottswood, whose seven-volume *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893 to 1942* is the definitive discography for the entire output of American "foreign-language" recordings during this period, writes that "the notion of weaning people's tastes away from their own ethnic forms and fostering a reliance on mainstream popular music was there from the beginning" (Spottswood, 1982, p. 61). This assertion is amplified in more recent research by Mathew R. Swiatlowski, who argues that "foreign-language" recordings functioned as a tool in assimilationist efforts and points out how record companies such as Victor argued for the use of these recordings as a "stepping stone to welcome the wary newcomer on a path to national and cultural allegiance" (Swiatlowski, 2018, p. 49).

Major American record companies had a complicated relationship with early twentieth century politics of American nativism and the push for cultural assimilation. On the one hand, they sought to gain profits and market share by wooing immigrant populations with regular releases of "foreign-language" recordings. These recordings clearly had a positive function for immigrant groups, providing them with a mode of connection with the culture and values of the old country, as well as bolstering their feeling of self-respect. As Spottswood writes:

In a country with strange customs and values, where other people spoke an unfamiliar language, a phonograph could and did provide a means of emotional retreat into one's homeland. Records of familiar songs reinforced traditional values and an immigrant's sense of self-worth. If a Mexican *corrido*, a Polish *sztajerek*, or a Cretan *pentozali* was worthy of attention from Columbia or Victor, that fact went far in making up for neighbors or shopkeepers who did not know the immigrant's language and made fun of his clothes. It meant that at least one American business was soliciting his patronage by recognizing, respectfully, who he was. (Spottswood, 1982, p. 54)

On the other hand, Victor, Columbia, and others consciously contributed to the national campaign for assimilation by means of the very same products. In 1920 Victor's Educational Department published a tract entitled *The Victrola in Americanization*, which outlines a four-point strategy for employing "foreign-language" recordings and recordings of American "folk and patriotic songs" to guide immigrant populations towards a "knowledge of American songs



and dances” and, furthermore, an “appreciation of American ideals, sentiment, institutions, and history” (Company, 1920, p. 3). Victor’s four-part strategy for “Americanization Through Music” is summarized as follows:

1. Hearing much music of other lands, forming a basis of contact and understanding.
2. Community Singing:
  - (a) Songs of the Birthland of Newer Citizens
  - (b) Singing English Translations
  - (c) American Folk and Patriotic Songs.
3. Dances of America and Other Lands:
  - (a) Recognized and approved as valuable exercise
  - (b) Learning American Country Dances
4. Music of Epochs of American History:
  - (a) Meaning; significance. (Company, 1920, p. 3)

Victor’s document describes a process in which immigrants’ attachment to, and pride in their native music is manipulated in order to encourage them to become “active participants in their own Americanization” (Swiatlowski, 2018, p. 51). While the four-part process seemingly promotes mutual respect and understanding through the initial sharing of various ethnic musics, in reality, this is a strategy for gaining immigrants’ trust and attention. From here, the process of Americanization progresses from learning “American” music and dance cultures, to the English language, and, ultimately, to the full integration of American ideals and patriotism:

We should encourage him in his pride in and love of his folk-arts. We should USE that love to attune him to his new life. And THROUGH IT, by comparison and analogy, bring him to an appreciation of American ideals as expressed in our music of national sentiment and patriotic appeal, and thus pave the way for an understanding and love of and pride in *all things American*. (Company, 1920, p. 6).<sup>121</sup>

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121 For a more extensive analysis of Victor’s “Americanization Through Music” strategy, see Swiatlowski (2018, pp. 49–54).

### “Norwegian” and “Scandinavian” “Foreign-Language” Recordings

According to Richard K. Spottswood’s documentation of ethnic recordings issued in the United States during the early twentieth century, the first Norwegian recording made in America was recorded for the Edison label in 1901 by vocalist Ole Paulsen. There is a predominance of vocal material among early Norwegian-American commercial recordings; Spottswood’s section on Norwegian recordings in his *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893 to 1942* lists 42 artists or groups, 38 of whom are vocal artists.

The Norwegian-American 78 rpm recordings made during the first decades of the twentieth century closely match Gronow’s general description of early foreign catalogue recordings, which he describes as containing “many recordings of classically trained singers, performing arias or lieder by composers from the home country, or translations of famous classics” as well as “patriotic songs . . . and folksong arrangements in the fashion of the Romantic era, with piano or orchestra” (Gronow, 1982, p. 17). There are plenty of examples of Norwegian-American vocal performers who fit this description.<sup>122</sup>

With few exceptions, there is little instrumental dance music among the “foreign-language” recordings that were categorized by record companies as “Norwegian.” Instead, recordings of Norwegian-American instrumental dance music were usually placed under headings such as “Scandinavian” or “Scandinavian Dance Music.” While these categories contained a predominance of Swedish instrumental dance music—particularly Swedish *schlager*—performed by Swedish-American musicians, one also finds a handful of Norwegian-American performers, such as Ottar E. Akre (aka Ottar Agre, 1896–1992), Casey’s Old Time Fiddlers, and the accordion duo of Hans and Henry Erichsen. Gronow suggests that the limited Norwegian-American output of instrumental dance music in these categories was due to the geographical distance between Norwegian-American communities and the major recording studios, as well as the influence of religion within the ethnic group, which Gronow postulates resulted in a predominance of religious songs among “Norwegian” “foreign-language” recordings:

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122 One such performer, Hjalmar E. Røren (1880–1941), a baritone from Kristiania (now Oslo), travelled to New York in April 1904, where he remained for three years, making recordings for Victor and Edison in 1906 and 1907. His recorded material includes national/patriotic songs (“Ja, vi elsker dette landet,” “Millom bakkar og berg ut med havet,” “Sønner af Norge,” “Vi vil os et Land,” “For Norge, kjæmpers fødeland,” “Det Norske flag”); pieces by contemporary Norwegian composers (e.g. Ole Bull’s “Sæterjentens søndag,” a widely recorded piece during this era); and arrangements of folk songs (“Aa Ola Ola min eigen Onge,” “Jeg lagde mig Saa Sildig”). Following his return to Norway in 1907 he set aside his singing career and entered the copper import business, later founding an asphalt company (Voll, 2019). A selection of Røren’s recordings can be heard on the Discography of Historical American Recordings website ([https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/mastertalent/detail/100972/Rren\\_Hjalmar\\_E](https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/mastertalent/detail/100972/Rren_Hjalmar_E)).

Norwegians are culturally and linguistically related to Swedes, and record companies issued “Scandinavian instrumental” recordings, (here classified with Swedish), which would appeal to Norwegians as well as to Swedes. In addition, Norwegian-Americans lived far from the main recording centers, and religion had considerable influence in their lives; records were perhaps considered too-worldly amusement. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, when Norwegian-American recording activity was at its peak, religious songs formed a large part of the recorded repertoire. (Gronow, 1982, p. 21)

Like American-published “Scandinavian” sheet music collections, superculturally constructed “ethnic” 78 rpm recording categories such as “Scandinavian Dance Music” similarly served to merge Norwegians, Swedes, Finns, Danes, and sometimes Icelanders into a homogenized, pan-Scandinavian musical identity. Furthermore, the predominance of popular melodies from the Swedish *schlager* industry among “Scandinavian Dance Music” releases also functioned to standardize “Scandinavian” instrumental dance music repertoire. Indeed, Larson remarks that for Norwegian-American musicians the phonograph was a great asset because it “sustained, popularized, and standardized the Scandinavian folk dance repertoire in America” (L. Larson, 1975, p. 51). Meanwhile, major label marketing practices, such as the reissuing of recordings of instrumental dance music with altered titles and performer credits in different “foreign-language” series, served to further homogenize broader “ethnic” musical repertoire and aesthetics. As Spottswood indicates, “both Columbia and Victor recycled instrumental polkas, waltzes, and occasional songs, assigning them new release numbers in different national series, disguising artist and title credits in the process” (Spottswood, 1982, p. 63). For example, certain recordings by Swedish-American accordionist Eddie Jahrl were reissued on Polish, Finnish, Slovenian, and other “ethnic” series under altered ensemble names, such as Orkiestra Warszawska, Jahrlin Uusi Kvintetti, Columbia Hudebni Kvintet, Columbian Soitto Kvintetti, or Instrumentowy Kwartet “Warszawa” (Spottswood, 1990). This deceptive practice was intended to “make the purchaser think he was buying something intended especially for him” (Spottswood, 1982, p. 56).

Nevertheless, Norwegian-American reception and use of both “Scandinavian” and mainstream repertoire learned from 78 rpm recordings (as well as other supercultural channels) also transformed it into fluid signs of “Norwegianness” which functioned both to mark and renegotiate Norwegian-American ethnic boundaries. One example of this is the redistribution and redefinition of the Swedish *schlager* “Kväsarvalsen,” which easily permeated the Norwegian-American old-time repertoire, became known under a variety of names, and was eventually transformed by the Goose Island Ramblers into the comic dialect song “No Norwegians in Dickeyville.”

One of the earliest Swedish *schlager* melodies, the lyrics and melody of “Kväsarvalsen” were first published in 1898 in the Swedish humour magazine, *Strix* (“Kväsar-Valsen,” 1898). While

the lyrics were composed by Arthur Högstedt, the melody is supposedly based on a traditional tune Högstedt heard at a dance.<sup>123</sup> The lyrics describe a “flashy worker swaggering into a dance hall in search of a pretty girl” (Leary, 2015, p. 84). The song was performed in the Swedish New Year’s revue “Den stora strejken” in 1899, and during the first decade of the twentieth century the tune quickly became one of the most well-known *schlager* melodies in Sweden, often referred to as a *landsplåga* (“national plague”). Musicologist Olle Edström indicates how various early sources characterize the melody as embodying an essential quality of “Swedishness”:

Composer W Peterson-Berger states that the waltz is a Swedish gem. He describes the rhythm in the waltz’s second reprise . . . in lyrical terms: “The faster note values give a surprising impression of resilience and power”. The melody is funny, he thinks, and he testifies to the Swedishness of the melody: “This melody can in its entirety be seen as an expression of Swedish musical folk humor, and we have many such [melodies], which we should not wrinkle our noses at, but study. In that case, we would find them far more valuable than the imported, factory-produced melodies from Berlin, Vienna, and Paris, which bounce around on three notes with stupid merriment and monotony . . . and with frightening clarity depict their authors’ lack of emotion and taste.”

[Emil] Norlander even designates the waltz as a new “Du gamla, du fria” [the Swedish national anthem]: “That melody has been played in blackest Africa, at parties among Swedes in Asia, and by a lot of foreign ensembles, who have heard it in Sweden, and unabashedly play the good Kväsarvalsens when it comes time to play a Swedish national anthem.” (Edström, 1989, pp. 75–76)<sup>124</sup>

“Kväsarvalsens” also became popular in both Norway and the American Upper Midwest. In the United States the song was recorded by a number of Swedish-American musicians, including baritone Joel Mossberg, who recorded a version for Victor in 1906 (Victor 3423); accordionist John Lager, who recorded two instrumental versions for Victor during the 1920s (Victor 77661 and 80145); and Eddie Jarl’s Quartet, who made a recording of the tune for the

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123 Emil Norlander, quoted by Olle Edström, claims that the song’s origins date back to an old Swedish positive organ tune (Edström, 1989, p. 75).

124 “Tonsåttaren W Peterson-Berger konstaterar att valsens är en svensk klenod. Han beskriver rytmen i valsens andra repris . . . i lyriska ordalag: ‘De hastigare notvärdena ger ett överraskande intryck av spänstighet och kraft. Melodin är lustig, anser han, och vittnar om melodins svenskhet: ‘Ja, denna melodi kan i sin helhet ses som ett uttryck av svensk musikalisk folkhumor, och vi äga många sådana, som vi inte borde rynka på näsan åt, utan studera. Vi skulle i så fall funna dem vida mer värdefulla än den importerade fabriksvaran av Berlin-, Wien-, och Paris-melodier, som med stupid munterhet och enformighet skutta omkring på tre toner. . . och endast med förskräckande tydlighet avmåla sin upphovsmans brist på känsla och smak.

Norlander utnämner valsens t o m till en ny ‘Du, gamla, du fria’: ‘Den melodien har spelats i svartaste Afrika, vid fester bland svenskar i Asien, och av en massa utländska kapell, vilka ha hört den i Sverige, och ogenerat dragit den goda kväsarvalsens, när det gällt för dem att spela någon svensk nationalsång.’”

Scandinavia label in 1943 (1106-A). LeRoy Larson’s field recordings contain three versions of “Kväsarvalsen” (melody numbers 13, 37, and 67). One of Larson’s informants, fiddler Adolph Westby, called the tune “Hva tenker du på?” and referred to accompanying “shady” lyrics in Norwegian; Larson also refers to the existence of a number of parody texts to the melody (L. Larson, 1975, p. 108). According to Janet Kvam’s informants, other Norwegian names for the tune include “Anne Malena,” “Tjukk-Marja-guten,” “Madame Ellertsens Mann,” and “Gjerdeguten” (Kvam, 1986, p. 38). Popular Norwegian musician and songwriter Alf Prøysen also wrote lyrics to the melody, calling his version of the song “Du og jeg og dompapen.”

The Wisconsin polkabilly trio, the Goose Island Ramblers, also played a version of “Kväsarvalsen” which they called “No Norwegians in Dickeyville,” named after Dickeyville, Wisconsin, a town in the southwestern corner of the state.<sup>125</sup> It was band member K. Wendell “Windy” Whitford who introduced the waltz—which he held to be a “Norwegian fiddle tune”—to the band. Leary traces the origin of the “No Norwegians in Dickeyville” title back to a radio performance given by Whitford in the mid-1940s:

Whitford . . . knew Norwegian fiddle tunes aplenty. . . . Several tunes came from Clarence Reieron, including one Windy had called the “Dickeyville Waltz” since the mid-1940s. “When I played on WIBA in ’44 and ’45, then I had to write down every tune that we played and put if it was BMI or ASCAP or if it was public domain. So I had to have a name for these old time Norwegian waltzes that Reieron played and the old time fiddlers played, but nobody ever knew what to call ‘em. So I called this one “The Dickeyville Waltz.”

Bruce [Bollerud, accordionist in the Goose Island Ramblers], whose Hollandale home was not far from Dickeyville, immediately recognized the waltz’s pedigree, while pointing out the contradictions of Whitford’s improvised title. “I said, ‘Wendy, that’s some kind of Norwegian waltz.’ I said ‘How can it be the “Dickeyville Waltz”? There’s no Norwegians in Dickeyville.’ Because I assumed there weren’t any down there. It’s a lead-mining area and the people down there are Cornish and Welsh and so forth. So we kind of laughed about that and started just joking around with the thing.”

Eventually, the two cobbled a comic dialect song, “No Norwegians in Dickeyville,” complete with esoteric references to Dickeyville’s lack of *rullepølse*, a rolled-meat Norwegian delicacy, and its citizens’ unfamiliarity with *Finnskogen*, the “Finnish

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125 A recording of “No Norwegians in Dickeyville” can be heard on the Goose Island Ramblers’ 2004 album, *Midwest Ramblin’* (Ramblers, 2004).

woods” of the Norwegian-Swedish borderlands celebrated in the old tune “*Livet i Finnskogen*” (Life in the Finnish Woods). (Leary, 2006, pp. 133–134)

The production of lyrics in Norwegian, and later in English in the Goose Island Ramblers’ “No Norwegians in Dickeyville,” is an important factor in the process through which “Kväsarvalsen” became a “Norwegian” waltz. Lyrics in Norwegian and English functioned to recontextualize the song, transforming it into a component of Norwegian-American ethnic culture, as well as of a broader Upper Midwestern Scandinavian-American culture: Whitford’s lyrics, and the Ramblers’ rendition of the song, place the melody within the established genre of Scandinavian-American folk humour known as “Scandihoovian” humour (Leary, 2014).

### *Examples of Norwegian-American Interplay*

During the data analysis process I found ample evidence showing that Norwegian-American musicians interplayed actively with 78 rpm recordings. Among other things, the metadata for a number of the recordings catalogued in the database reveals that several performers learned tunes directly from 78 rpm recordings. For instance, fiddler Leonard Finseth learned the waltz “Vals fra Hardanger” from a 78 rpm recording owned by button accordion player Rudy Jackson (1902–1994) of Whitehall, Wisconsin, while he had learned another tune, the Tin Pan Alley song “And the Cat Came Back,” from a 78 rpm recording of a “southeastern United States fiddler” as a young man (Finseth, 1983).<sup>126</sup> According to Larson, fiddler Bill Sherburne (1903–1991) learned the polkabilly tune “Little Joe Polka” from a record (L. Larson, 1975, pp. 120–121); this was likely a recording by the Minnesota “Dutchman” style band, Little Joe’s Dance Band, released on a 45 rpm record by the Minnesota-based record label Pleasant Peasant in 1962 (“Pleasant Peasant - Label Discography,” n.d.). Furthermore, I found that most of the catalogued melodies that can be classified as supercultural musical materials (i.e. as belonging to various popular music genres) were recorded on commercial 78 rpm records, which indicates that as a channel of the mediascape, 78 rpm recordings were likely a significant transmission pathway for these melodies.

Informant Melvin “Mel” Brenden (1933–2019) also discussed his lifelong, active use of 78 rpm recordings to learn both repertoire and style. Brenden was born in 1933 on a farm north of Sheyenne, North Dakota, in an area mainly populated by Norwegians and Swedes (Figure 16). His parents both emigrated from Norway to America—his mother, Sina Solberg, was from Gudbrandsdalen, and his father, Olaf Brenden, was from Hamar. Olaf Brenden played

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126 While originally composed in 1893 by Tin Pan Alley songsmith Harry S. Miller, “And the Cat Came Back” caught on among country musicians during the early twentieth century through 78 rpm recordings by Fiddlin’ John Carson (OKeh 40119) and Fiddlin’ Doc Roberts (Gennett 3235). A comparison of versions suggests that Finseth may have learned the tune from Fiddlin’ Doc Roberts’s recording.

diatonic button accordion, which is one of the reasons why Brenden became interested in playing accordion: according to Brenden, he “grew up . . . with the Scandinavian style of music” (Brenden, 2016). Brenden began playing accordion in about 1941, learning at first on his father’s diatonic button accordion. He never took formal lessons; instead, he learned by ear, picking up many of his first tunes from 78 rpm recordings that were in the family home, including records by the Swedish-American accordion duo of John Lager and Eric Olzen:

I never had any lessons as such. I played by ear. And we had a few old records at home, some 78 records from the early 1900s. And it was a lot of good accordion music on that. And I, I would learn those tunes and try playing them. (Brenden, 2016)



Figure 16: Melvin “Mel” Brenden. Photo by the author.

When I interviewed him at his home in Blaine, Minnesota in February 2016, Brenden showed me his 78 rpm record collection, which was stored in an antique record cabinet and organized into categories including “Misc. Scand. Orchestras,” “Scandinavian Comedy Songs,” “Misc. Accordion,” “Misc. Scandinavian Accordion,” “Franzen + Others,” “Eddie Jahrl,” and “Lager & Olson,” and “Pietro Deiro” (Figures 17 and 18). His collection reflects his admiration for numerous professional “ethnic” piano accordion virtuosos of the 1930s and 1940s, including Swedish Americans Arvid Franzen, Eddie Jahrl, John Lager, and Eric Olzen, Finnish American Viola Turpeinen, and Italian American Pietro Deiro. All of these performers released music on “foreign-language” recordings during the early twentieth century. Brenden’s first exposure to many of these recordings was in the family home:

In the early years, Victor and Columbia, they would put out many records, and they put out many 78s of the big time accordion players, like John Lager, and Eric Olzon, they played duets. . . . And Arvid Franzen. He was, he was a good accordionist. And so we had their records, quite a few of their records that, that my father had bought over the years in the early 1900s. And so I was already learning, learning songs then from the records. (Brenden, 2016)



*Figure 17: Mel Brenden’s 78 rpm record collection. Photo by the author.*





Figure 18: Mel Brenden's 78 rpm record collection (detail). Photo by the author.

As indicated by his collection of 78 rpm records, which appears to contain a predominance of recordings by Swedish-American musicians, Brenden noted that his repertoire encompassed a large number of tunes of Swedish origin. He suggested that this was because “there are more Swedish old-time dance tunes”: “I think for some reason my, my repertoire is, is mostly Swedish, too. There are more Swedish old-time dance tunes. Waltzes and so on. But of course I have to play a little Norwegian, once in a while” (Brenden, 2016). Brenden also pointed out that some elements of his playing style were inspired by Finnish-American virtuoso Viola Turpeinen: “I got some of my stylings from her, too. You know, when you play by ear, you copy everybody” (Brenden, 2016). Since he liked the sound of Turpeinen’s accordion on her recordings, he even managed to acquire a similar instrument himself (Brenden, 2016).

Brenden’s considerable, active use of 78 rpm recordings to learn repertoire and style is not representative of the average Norwegian-American old-time musician, however. During my interview with Philip Nusbaum, he commented that Brenden does not represent a typical “post-frontier” old-time musician, since he made a conscious effort to develop into a great accordion player using available technology: “he basically made himself into a great accordion player. Now that’s a little different than the frontier tradition. That’s using the technology to bear down and, you know, become great” (Nusbaum, 2015). Nevertheless, the abundance of evidence of interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and commercial 78 rpm recordings distinguishes them as a significant supercultural channel.

### 5.3.4 Radio

Following on the heels of the gramophone industry, radio emerged in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s and rapidly became a powerful new medium of mass communication. The NBC (National Broadcasting Company) Radio Network—the nation’s first national broadcasting company—was founded in 1926, and over the course of the next decade radio technology became ubiquitous in America: “by the close of the 1930s, twenty-eight million households (and seven million cars) boasted at least one radio set, with most tuned-in to a network or local station for an average of five hours a day” (Eldridge, 2008, p. 93). In the Upper Midwest, half of all rural homes had a radio by the end of the 1920s (Berry, 2008, p. 3; Martin, 1994, p. 93).

Radio became an entrenched form of entertainment during the late 1920s, which led to a decline in phonograph sales. Compared with the phonograph, many listeners were partial to radio programming because it offered a broader diversity of entertainment, better sound quality, and allowed them to “sit in comfort and listen to an entire program of music without having to change records every few minutes” (Malone, 2002, p. 34). During the 1920s and 1930s radio broadcasts presented an eclectic mixture of programming, including “opera, boxing matches, agricultural information, cooking classes, serialized drama, comedy programs” as well as the “newest musical idols, the hillbilly balladeers and cowboy crooners” (Martin, 1994, p. 93).

Although radio facilitated Norwegian-American interaction with a diversity of supercultural musical material, the process of data analysis identified country music and Canadian old-time music as two significant genres Norwegian-American old-time musicians interplayed with. The working-class, agrarian values expressed in country music, such as the romanticization of the rural lifestyle and resistance to forces of urbanization and industrialization, parallel characteristic Norwegian-American values of the same era. However, Norwegian Americans also participated in the “weaving of their own pattern” of country music (Mackay, 1993, p. 299), which included such approaches as translating lyrics, writing original country-inspired songs, creating regional parodies of commercial country hits, and employing various country music imagery and accoutrements in Norwegian-American ensembles. Norwegian Americans also listened to regional ethnic musics and commercially-oriented ethnic “crossover” ensembles broadcast live on Upper Midwestern stations; moreover, some Norwegian-American musicians and ensembles participated in live broadcasts, shaping their own interpretations of a popular performance format that has roots in mainstream radio programs such as WLS’s *National Barn Dance*.

## Country Music

In its early years, radio played an important role in the commercialization of country music nationwide. Country music, initially termed “hillbilly” music, originated as a commercial music genre in 1927 when Victor record executive Ralph Peer “discovered” soon-to-be stars Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family during a recording session in Bristol, Tennessee (Carlin, 2002, p. x), and the genre—as well as the image of the American cowboy—were quickly popularized through live national radio programs such as the Chicago-based *National Barn Dance* and *The Grand Ole Opry* in Nashville.

A number of Norwegian-American musicians drew inspiration and repertoire from early country music acts they heard on WLS’s *National Barn Dance* program, as well as on Upper Midwestern spin-off “barn dance” programs. The *National Barn Dance*, one of the earliest shows from the era of barn dance radio, was first aired on Chicago’s WLS station in the spring of 1924 and endured on the airwaves for more than three decades (Berry, 2008, p. 4). From its beginnings, the show targeted a rural audience, and while it started out as “a program of barn dance fiddlers” (Tyler, 2014, p. 179), aspiring to recreate the atmosphere of a real barn dance (complete with square dance calls), WLS took an experimental approach to programming, eventually finding an ideal position by concentrating on what folklorist and ethnomusicologist Paul L. Tyler calls “domestic traditions” which “led to a shift to smaller and more intimate acts: solo performers, vocal duos and trios, and jocular conversational skits” (Tyler, 2008, pp. 33, 35). The program incorporated a range of musical styles with both popular and country musics figuring most prominently. The *National Barn Dance* played a central role in the early dissemination of country music and featured many country artists over the years, including Lulu Belle and Scotty, the Arkansas Woodchopper, the Prairie Ramblers, Gene Autry, and the Hoosier Hot Shots (Tyler, 2008, pp. 27–29). Tyler notes that the program was a “towering presence in the emerging commercial field of country music” (Tyler, 2008, p. 21). There was immense interest in programs like the *National Barn Dance* among rural Upper Midwestern listeners, and such programs gave rise to a veritable “cowboy craze” in the region.

Country music appealed to Norwegian-American musicians, both because it dealt with themes and values that resonated with their life experiences, and because of the pop-cultural allure of the cowboy figure. Leary quotes Norwegian-American multiinstrumentalist George Gilbertsen, who relates how, during the early 1930s, he became “captivated by singing cowboys encountered through radio, magazines, and song folios”:

My brother [Jim] used to have these old western magazines. And I’d hear him singing some of these songs back then. I don’t know what they cost . . . a nickel or

ten cents. They were old western novel magazines. And then in the back of them they'd always have about eight, ten songs back in there. . . . then he started buying these songbooks. Like WLS songbooks, Gene Autry songbooks, some of these. And that's where I started picking up some of this stuff. And then, of course, hearing it on the radio then. That's WLS and the "Supertime Frolic" . . . [and] the big Saturday night "Barn Dance" then. (George Gilbertsen, quoted in Leary, 2006, p. 75)

The messaging in country music also resonated with Norwegian-American musicians, as themes from their own lives, and the experiences of their pioneer predecessors, were echoed in those expressed in the cowboy music of American southerners: as Leary and March write, "[c]ountry music's 'hillbilly' preoccupations with mobility, home, rural life, labor, exuberant sociability, loneliness, and religion have always been shared by the Upper Midwest's 'jackpine savages'" (Leary & March, 2004, p. 32).

Furthermore, the ideologies expressed in country music parallel a number of conventional elements of Norwegian-American identity of the first half of the twentieth century. Jock Mackay views country music as the "self-conscious vehicle of hinterland and under-class sentiment" and as expressing a populist impulse in the sense that it deals with themes such as the romanticization of the rural lifestyle and the idealized "old home place," and the heroic struggle to resist economic forces that threaten to disrupt such a lifestyle, such as urbanization and industrialization (Mackay, 1993, p. 285). As rural and working-class people, Norwegian Americans in the Upper Midwest typically had strong rural bonds, harboured conservative values, were family-oriented, valued honesty and hard work, and some had participated in antiurban and anti-industrial agrarian revolts (Lovoll, 2007, p. 125).

In a musical sense, Slobin suggests that country music projects a "multiple appeal" which allows it to move easily between the subcultural and the supercultural, and moreover, to come across as both subcultural and supercultural. At the supercultural level, Slobin argues that its "rustic veneer" and "plain folks" appeal has functioned as a "wedge for the penetration of country music into far-flung rural and urban markets," thus making it "part of the mainstream American consensus" (Slobin, 1993, p. 80). The genre's "chameleonlike" spread to diverse audiences and subcultures also results in the generation of new manifestations, as described by Mackay:

Similar demographic niches adopt forms of the country music style and message despite important differences of particular regional identity, ethnicity, or language. Rather than a uniformity of style and repertoire, each region of the continent is found to have its own particular kind of country music. Selecting from the

media-disseminated mainstream, adding from local tradition, mixing styles eclectically and maintaining musical forms that have roots in past generations, each area weaves its own pattern of country music. (Mackay, 1993, p. 299)

Judging from the small number of tunes in the database found to have connections to country music, which number eight in total, Norwegian-American old-time musicians seem to have been partial to commercial hits from the first three decades of commercial country music, prior to the emergence of the smooth, pop-oriented “Nashville sound” in the mid-1950s.<sup>127</sup> In addition, Norwegian-American musicians also contributed to the “weaving of their own pattern” of country music. Some, like Ernest “Slim Jim” Iverson, translated the lyrics of Norwegian songs into English and rendered them in a country style. One example of this is the song “En liten gylden ring” (written by Norwegians Henry Carlsen and Arne Svendsen in 1936), which Iverson translated to English and recorded under the title “Ring of Gold” in 1955 (Soma 1044x45), backed by the Westerners and the Honeytones. Iverson also composed new songs in an “ethnic country mode” (Leary, 1983, p. 227), as well as a regional parody of the 1955 country hit “The Shifting, Whispering Sands.”<sup>128</sup> Other acts wore cowboy costumes, chose western-sounding band names (e.g. Thorstein Skarning and his Norwegian Hillbillies; or the Prairie Ramblers, a dance band that performed in the vicinity of Westby, Wisconsin—not to be confused with the well-known Kentucky string band of the same name who were regular performers on WLS), or employed other imagery that reflected a country music orientation.

### *Regional Ethnic Musics, Ethnic Crossover Ensembles, and the Live Radio Format*

Mainstream radio programs like the *National Barn Dance* also inspired local spin-offs. In the Upper Midwest, some radio stations created their own “barn dance” radio programs, which often featured a mixture of country music and local ethnic old-time music. According to Robert

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127 The eight melodies with connections to the country music genre are “Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain” (composed by Fred Rose and first recorded by Roy Acuff in 1947), “Blue Ridge Mountain Home” (composed by Carson Robison and first recorded by Vernon Dalhart in 1927), “Goodnight Waltz” (also known as “Fiddler’s Waltz”; the Leake County Revelers’ 1927 recording of the tune was one of the most popular country records of that year), “I’ll Be All Smiles Tonight” (a sentimental ballad written by T. B. Ransom in 1879, the song was popularized through the Carter Family’s 1934 recording and became a country music standard), “Mockin’ Bird Hill” (see section 5.3.2), “Shannon Waltz” (recorded by the East Texas Serenaders in 1928), “Sweet Bunch of Daisies” (a parlour song written by Anita Owens in 1894, the song was recorded by many early country musicians; Meade lists 21 78 rpm recordings made between 1925 and 1939; see Meade, 2002, pp. 233–234), and “Westphalia Waltz” (based on a Polish folk melody called “Pytala Sie Pani,” this tune is often credited to Texas fiddler Cotton Collins of the Lone Star Playboys and was popularized through a 1955 recording by Hank Thompson).

128 This was “The Drifting, Vistling Snow,” one of Slim Jim’s most popular songs, which is spoken and sung in a comic, exaggerated Norwegian accent and describes the silly tribulations of a Norwegian-American man confronting seemingly endless heaps of snow.

Andresen, Twin Cities radio stations such as KSTP and WCCO each broadcast popular live barn dance programs (KSTP's show was called the *Sunset Valley Barn Dance*) which featured a variety of performers, including "Scandinavian" acts such as Tom and Eddie Plehal and country bands whose members represented a mixture of ethnic and musical backgrounds, from Polish to Scandinavian, and from jazz to classical to ballroom music (Andresen, n.d.-a, pp. 23–24). In one example, Robert Andresen describes the "wealth of Scandinavian fiddle and accordion tunes" that were included on live shows broadcast by Fargo-Moorhead's KFGO and WDAY (Andresen, n.d.-a, p. 24).

Regional and local Upper Midwestern radio broadcasters therefore also served as means for the dissemination of various local ethnic musics, as well as ethnic "crossover" ensembles (Greene, 1992, p. 118). Similar to "foreign-language" recordings, the broadcasting of "regionally familiar" ethnic musics to Upper Midwestern audiences also offered a supercultural recognition of immigrant culture, "a kind of national sanction to indigenous rural music" (Leary, 1983, p. 223). The enduringly popular radio act developed by Norwegian-American brothers Ernest "Slim Jim" (1903–1958) and Clarence "the Vagabond Kid" (1905–1990) Iverson is a prime example of one such ethnic "crossover" ensemble. The brothers, who performed a Scandinavian brand of "ethnic country music" (Leary & March, 2004, p. 29), were the "foremost exponents of the Scandinavian American hybrid style which [combined] Scandinavian lyrics with a typical Southern instrumental accompaniment" (Anderson, quoted in Greene, 1992, p. 153).

Ernest and Clarence, whose maternal and paternal grandparents had all immigrated to the United States from Norway, were born on a farm near Binford, North Dakota at the turn of the century and grew up in a Norwegian-speaking household. Following the death of their mother in 1910, the brothers were raised in part by Norwegian immigrant Molly Ruud (or Rood), who worked as a housekeeper in the Iverson home in Brooten, Minnesota. Ruud is credited with having taught the brothers to play guitar and sing Norwegian songs, and this material formed the basis for their Norwegian musical repertoire (Greene, 1992, p. 151). Ernest began performing at an early age and joined a travelling Wild West show as a teenager, which subsequently brought him to Texas. Both brothers worked in the Texas oil fields for a stint; during this time, Ernest was injured by an unsecured oil barrel, rendering him unable to do manual labour. Soon after, Ernest dropped by an Omaha, Nebraska radio station with his guitar, where he received his moniker, a nickname that evokes a cowboy figure of the Wild West: "The manager looked at the lanky 6 1/2 foot Iverson and exclaimed: 'Well, if it ain't Slim Jim!' And that is how he got his stage name, taken from a fictional Paul Bunyan-like folklore character of the American frontier" ("The Slim Jim saga," 1978).



Figure 19: Ernest and Clarence Iverson perform on live radio. Courtesy of the Internet Archive.

Both brothers worked separately as radio entertainers during the late 1920s and early 1930s (Ernest in Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota; and Clarence in Fargo, North Dakota) before teaming up to form the duo, Slim Jim and the Vagabond Kid, after both had relocated to Minneapolis. In 1932 the duo began performing a noontime program that was broadcast on several stations in the Twin Cities region, including WGDY, KSTP, WLWL, and others (Figure 19). Their performances comprised “cowboy songs, hymns, sentimental recitations, polkas, Molly Ruud’s old country favorites, and . . . a generous dose of . . . comic Norsk dialect songs” including “John Johnson’s Wedding” and “The Drifting, Vistling Snow,” among others (Leary & March, 2004, p. 56). The duo’s repertoire, musical style, and performance attire all reflect a crossover stance that is not only rooted in a synthesis of popular Norwegian and commercial country music traditions, but also played a part in the development of an enduring Scandinavian-American stereotype—the comic Upper Midwestern “Scandihoovian.” As Swedish-American dramaturg, singer, and participant in the Olle i Skratthult Project, Anne-Charlotte Harvey, writes in the liner notes of the LP *Return to Snoose Boulevard*, the

brothers “always performed in cowboy dress, yet even their cowboy songs were sung with a Scandinavian lilt” (Harvey, 1974). By the mid-1950s, largely due to the emergence of television, live radio programs such as those performed by Slim Jim and the Vagabond Kid declined, but in some areas, such as Madison, Wisconsin, they were briefly succeeded by “live television programs featuring local musicians performing on rustic sets while dancers whirled” (Leary, 2006, p. 124).

### *Canadian Old-Time Music*

The Upper Midwestern region’s proximity to the Canadian border also made it possible to tune into Canadian radio stations, and many Norwegian-American old-time fiddlers listened to radio programs broadcast from Canada, particularly from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Through these broadcasts they were exposed to popular Canadian old-time music performed by well-known fiddlers such as Don Messer and Andy DeJarlis. For example, Bill Sherburne cites having learned “Red River Waltz” from a recording of Don Messer broadcast on a Canadian radio station (L. Larson, 1975, p. 118), while fiddler Calmer Brenna mentions having learned an unnamed waltz from a radio station in Winnipeg (L. Larson, 1975, p. 126). According to Robert Andresen, one of Sherburne’s “favorite ‘Norwegian’ polkas turned out to be a Canadian tune called ‘Flannagan’s Polka’” (Andresen, n.d.-b). During my fieldwork I was told that fiddler Gilmore Lee of Roseau County, Minnesota—a town near the Canadian border—learned tunes from a Winnipeg radio station.

Bill Sherburne’s repertoire in particular contains a number of Canadian old-time tunes which may have been transmitted via Canadian radio broadcasts, including “Rochester Schottische” and the above-mentioned “Flannigan’s Polka” (both recorded by Don Messer), “Shin Plaster Polka” (composed and recorded by Andy DeJarlis), and “Marion Waltz” (composed by Johnny Mooring). Nusbaum’s field recordings of the Erskine, Minnesota based ensemble the Erskine Olde Tymers contain at least three Canadian old-time tunes, while his recordings of father and son Ed (Edwin) and Jerry Selvaag of the Vining, Minnesota area include another three.<sup>129</sup>

Messer and DeJarlis were influential fiddlers in Canada and beyond. Neil V. Rosenberg credits Don Messer with having created a modern Canadian old-time fiddle canon, since his ability to read music and his clean sound and “correct” technique (facilitated by formal violin lessons) established him as an expert interpreter of the genre; furthermore, he cultivated a profile that combined both old-time and modern imagery (Rosenberg, 1994, pp. 26–29). Meanwhile,

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129 The Canadian old-time tunes recorded by the Erskine Olde Tymers are “Bride of the Winds,” “Jimmy’s Two-Step” (aka “Jimmy’s Favorite Jig”), and “Tom Sullivan’s Hornpipe.” Those recorded by Ed and Jerry Selvaag are “Andy’s Old-Time Waltz” (composed by Andy DeJarlis), “Candlelight Waltz,” and “Marion Waltz.”



Sarah Quick, quoting an article by Richard Green, points out that DeJarlis’s playing style has been characterized as “conforming to the smooth sound of Don Messer to create a ‘synthesis of Messer’s “down-east” style with native and Métis repertoires” (Quick, 2010, p. 117). As was the case in Canada, the popular appeal of both Messer and DeJarlis also seems to have shaped the style and repertoire of Norwegian-American musicians, although to a much lesser extent.

### *Norwegian-American Interplay*

There is plentiful evidence of interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and radio, both as a source for repertoire and as a performance context. In addition to those mentioned above, other Norwegian-American musicians I encountered during data analysis who learned tunes from radio include Werner Nottestad, members of the Bjorngjeld family, Albon Skrede, Lloyd Larson, and Wilbur Foss. Musicians who performed on live radio broadcasts include the Plowboys, the Viking Accordion Band, the Bjorngjeld family, Mel Brenden, George Gilbertsen, Selmer Ramsey, Elmo Wick, Oliver Sagedahl, and Daniel Aakhus. For the sake of brevity, I will cite just a few of these examples here.

In an interview with Philip Martin, fiddler Werner Nottestad (1913–1983) of Cashton, Wisconsin recalls the first time he heard a radio broadcast as a child while visiting his sister at her boarding school in nearby Sparta: “they had three dials on, you know, boy and oh you got in some, some stations you know, like a Minnesota stations, you know, with some old-time music on, you know, and that was really something” (Nottestad, 1980). Nottestad confirms that he picked up some tunes from radio broadcasts, and remembers listening to Saturday night programs from Chicago’s WLS and Nashville, as well as the popular comedy program *Fibber McGee and Molly* during his youth. When asked whether he thought old-time music broadcast on radio was “the same” as the music he had grown up playing and listening to at house parties in the Cashton area, Nottestad responded: “Oh, kind of, pretty much, yeah, the same, yeah. ‘Course a lot of their music [i.e. music Nottestad heard on radio] [has] a lot of singing, but there was fiddle players too and they played, oh, square dances, you know, waltzes” (Nottestad, 1980).

There are also numerous examples of Norwegian-American old-time musicians who performed on live radio broadcasts. For some musicians, radio performance was a relatively isolated occurrence: in an interview with Philip Martin, fiddler Ernest Bekkum (1917–2009) of Westby, Wisconsin describes how he started an old-time band when he was 17 or 18 that “played around the countryside” and also played at the WKBH radio station a few times during the 1930s (Bekkum, 1980). For others, it was a recurrent, semi-professional pursuit: banjo player Leighton Arnold “Skipper” Berg (1905–1995) of Albert Lea, Minnesota performed

regularly with his Viking Accordion Band (founded in 1931) for more than 20 years on stations including WMT, WOI, WNAX, and WDGY in Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota (Greene, 1992, p. 158). Their radio performances, which were sometimes unpaid, helped the band obtain ballroom bookings in the region; this strategy is an example of what Tyler describes as “radio-supported personal appearances,” in which a band performs on radio in order to book performances in the broadcasting area (Tyler, 2014, p. 176). According to Leary, this strategy could be quite effective: “popular radio performers were assured of enthusiastic crowds at dance halls within their station’s listening radius” (Leary, 1998, p. 272). The Viking Accordion Band’s many radio appearances also served as a source of repertoire for Norwegian-American listeners: in an interview with Martin, accordion player Albon Skrede (1913–2012) of Viroqua, Wisconsin recounts having picked up tunes from radio broadcasts of the Viking Accordion Band, including the waltz “Skål, skål, skål!”<sup>130</sup>

## 5.4 Interplay via the Diasporic Interculture

Thus far in this chapter, we have seen that Norwegian-American performers of old-time music primarily interplayed with the various outlined intercultural and supercultural forces and flows; little evidence was found of interplay between Norwegian-American *bygdedans* musicians and these forces. This is supported by previous studies, which, as discussed in the literature review, have found that *bygdedans* music was not easily assimilated into patterns of American life and did not have a culturally assimilative function, but rather functioned to construct and maintain ethnic boundaries. However, evidence of another kind of interplay, via the diasporic interculture, was found involving both *bygdedans* and old-time musicians.

The diasporic interculture is one of three types of interculture outlined by Slobin. Slobin writes that the diasporic interculture “emerges from the linkages that subcultures set up across national boundaries” and has to do with how “scattered populations keep in touch with and influence each other” (Slobin, 1993, p. 64). In this study, interplay via the diasporic interculture—or, more simply put, “diasporic networking” (Slobin, 1993, p. 65)—indicates the musical relationship and interplay between two cultures: the Norwegian-American subculture and the homeland music culture.

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130 “Skål, skål, skål!” was originally a Swedish *schlager* composed by Louis Noiret, with lyrics by Tor Bergström (alias herr Dardanell). Swedish actor and vocalist Ernst Rolf recorded the song for Odeon in 1929 (Odeon D4783). The Viking Accordion Band recorded a version of the waltz for the American Record Corporation label Vocalion (catalogue number 15970) sometime during the mid-1930s.

Diasporic networking occurred through direct interactions between Norwegian-American musicians and Norwegian musicians, as well as through disembodied modes of transnational communication such as the exchange of commercial and home recordings, sheet music, letters, news, and other media. Slobin suggests that these various forms of diasporic networking have different meanings, or provide different types of sustenance: compared to disembodied modes of transmission, a live performance by a “homeland” musician

has a subtly different meaning as cultural nourishment, akin to preparing dishes from fresh ingredients instead of eating out of a can. Measuring yourself as an immigrant or “ethnic” against a group of homeland musicians who are standing right in front of you is not the same as flipping on a cassette of disembodied voices from somewhere in space and time. (Slobin, 1993, p. 67)

As discussed in the literature review, previous studies have shown that Norwegian-American group identity was continuously constructed and negotiated through a triangulation process that involved a positioning between shifting Norwegian nationalisms and the Norwegian-American subculture— through an ongoing “negotiation between themselves and national myth-makers back in Norway” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 31). Aspects of this relationship are reflected to some extent in the musical diasporic networking between Norwegian-American musicians and the homeland music culture. The different forms of direct and indirect diasporic networking served variously as “cultural nourishment” for Norwegian-American musicians in the Upper Midwest: diasporic networking was a way to acquire new repertoire, to keep in touch with the folk music scene in Norway, to feel connected to a living tradition, to demonstrate loyalty to Norwegian heritage, and to participate in an imagined, transnational community (the “greater Norway”). Meanwhile, homeland Norwegian musicians also participated in this imagined community, cultivating transatlantic bonds and maintaining contact with musicians in the diaspora. Furthermore, homeland attitudes towards various aspects of the Norwegian-American music culture also reveal the hegemony of Norwegian concepts of authenticity in constructions of musical “Norwegianness.”

One significant form of disembodied diasporic networking that served as “cultural nourishment” was the exchange of informal home recordings sent between family and friends in Norway and the Upper Midwest. While I was examining a collection of reel-to-reel recordings that had belonged to Norwegian American Ole J. Braaten (1893–1984), an immigrant from the Valdres district, I found a number of recordings of Hardanger fiddlers sent from Valdres by Per Riste to his sister Randi Johansen (née Riste) (1926–2003) of Richfield, Minnesota. Randi was a friend of Ole’s and was an active dancer (she was also married to informant Einar Johansen). One of the tapes Per sent to Randi includes tunes performed by Valdres

Hardanger fiddlers Embrik Beitoaugen, Harald Fylken, and Ola Fylken. Randi shared this recording with Ole Braaten and others, and in a taped Christmas greeting made by Ole at his Minneapolis home not long after Randi had received the recording, both Ole, Randi, and Hardanger fiddler Kolbein Ornes (also of Minneapolis) expressed their appreciation for the recording. Ole declared that the recording was “really excellent, it was the best gift that we could get to hear over here.” Randi described how while playing the tape they had lain on the floor in order to hear “absolutely everything,” while Kolbein Ornes said the recording made him “twenty-five, thirty years younger” (Braaten, n.d.).<sup>131</sup>

Home recordings sent from the Upper Midwest to Norway could also impact Norwegian music subcultures and serve as a kind of nourishment or “cultural memory bank.” In another example from Valdres, copies of home phonograph recordings made in 1939 by Jøger O. Quale (1881–1969) of Hardanger fiddler Oscar O. Hamrey (aka Ola O. Reishagen) (1884–1943)—both immigrants from Valdres who had settled in Minnesota—were sent by Jøger’s son, Thorwald Quale, to folk dancer Ola Hjelle in Valdres in 1976. The recordings were shared with other fiddlers in Valdres, and in 1984 a small selection of them were broadcast on the NRK show *Folkemusikkstreif* in a segment made by Hjelle. In a letter to Hamrey’s daughter, Rena Hiet, Hjelle writes that the radio program had been a success and “many people I have talked with are impressed of your father’s ability in playing hardingfele” (Hjelle, 1984). The recordings of Hamrey are also connected to a story of the return of a “lost form” of a tune to Valdres; according to Norwegian Hardanger fiddler Torleiv Bolstad, one tune recorded by Hamrey, titled “Bröta Gutt Slått fra Slidre” on the label of the original recording (Figure 20), was a

*springar* that has been in Valdres in many forms, but this form came back from America with the recording of Reishagen. . . . Old fiddlers probably remembered it here, but it was not in use, so now it has come in a renewed edition, after “Hamrisbrøtin,” one could say. (Bolstad, 1974)<sup>132</sup>

This claim had been previously disputed by fiddler Olav Moe who, in a newspaper commentary, wrote that he had been Hamrey’s source for the tune, and that the tune had not been forgotten in Valdres (Moe, 1961).

131 Ole Braaten: “Hva som var på det lydbåndet, det var riktig utmerket, det var den beste gave som vi over her kunne få høre.”

Randi Riste: “Me låg på gulvet her og lytta for å få med oss absolutt alt.”

Kolbein Ornes: “Det gjorde meg 25–30 år yngre.”

132 “[Ein] springar som har vore i Valdres i mange formar, men denne formen har kome att ifrå Amerika med innspeling etter Reishagen. . . . Gamle spelemenn hugste han nok her, men han var ikkje i bruk, så no har han kome i fornya utgåve, etter Hamrisbrøtin kan me seia.”



Figure 20: Phonograph recording of Oscar Hamrey playing a “forgotten” springar from Valdres, here titled “Brøta Gutt Slått fra Slidre.” A total of 28 phonograph records containing recordings of Hamrey and others, made by Jøger O. Quale, are stored in the collections of the Valdres Folk Museum, Fagernes. Photo by the author.

Another example of individual networking in the direction of diaspora to homeland can be found in Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddler Eilev Aslaksson Smedal (1889–1938), who immigrated to La Crosse, Wisconsin from Flatdal, Telemark in 1914 and maintained a considerable degree of contact with Norway, as well as regional connections with the Telemark district, through both direct and disembodied forms of communication. His trips to Norway in 1928 and 1935 were particularly significant; on both trips, his playing attracted great attention and “left deep, lasting impressions” (Vaa, 1994, pp. 117–118).<sup>133</sup> During his trip in

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133 “To gonger var han heim til Telemark: 1928 og 1936. Båe gongene etterlet han djupe og varige inntrykk med spelet og personlegdomen sin.”

1935, Eilev visited and exchanged tunes with other fiddlers, including fiddler Eivind Mo, who later passed on tunes learned from Smedal. Eilev also performed live on the radio program *Folkemusikkhalvtimen* (The Folk Music Half Hour) hosted by Eivind Groven, as well as making phonograph recordings for *Norsk rikskringkasting* (NRK, the Norwegian state-owned public broadcasting company). He played eight tunes for the live broadcast on September 5, 1935, and around two weeks later, following an illness, he returned to NRK's studio to record an additional eight tunes on phonograph records, as was common practice at the time (Solberg, 2019, p. 272). Together with commercial pathephone recordings he had made in Kristiania before he emigrated, these are the only known recordings of Eilev's playing.<sup>134</sup> Transcriptions of several of Eilev's tunes were also made during his 1935 trip to Norway: *Folkemusikkhalvtimen* host Eivind Groven, who was also a fiddler, researcher, and composer, transcribed 17 of Eilev's tunes which, along with several others (a total of 22 tunes for which Eilev is named as the source), were later published in the multivolume collection of transcriptions of Hardanger fiddle music, *Norsk folkemusikk: Hardingfeleslåttar*.

Eilev's recordings, as well as other elements of his musical legacy, have high cultural status within the Norwegian folk music community and have contributed to conferring an almost mythical status on Smedal. As folk musician and long-time host of the radio program *Folkemusikkhtimen* (The Folk Music Hour), Leiv Solberg writes, "the eight tunes recorded by Eilev Smedal in 1935 have meant a great deal to many fiddlers, and have been broadcast on *Folkemusikkhtimen* on NRK several times in various contexts up to the present day" (Solberg, 2019, p. 273).<sup>135</sup> The recordings have also inspired Norwegian musicians to make pilgrimages to Eilev's home in Wisconsin: Solberg himself was so enthralled by the "nerve and intensity" of Eilev's performances on the 1935 recordings that he made a detour to La Crosse on a trip to the Midwest to look for "traces of the master fiddler" (Solberg, 2019, p. 273).<sup>136</sup> <sup>137</sup> Furthermore, Eilev's recorded performances are described by some as having special affective capacities—Norwegian Hardanger fiddler Knut Buen (b. 1948) recounts how, for his family, recordings of Smedal had the power to dissolve all animosity: "[our family] had a special gramophone recording of Eilev Smedal. When it was put on during the arguing, everyone stopped and cried

134 All of Eilev's known recordings were released on cassette by Buen Kulturverkstad during the 1990s. See Smedal (1990, 1992).

135 "De åtte slåttene med Eilev Smedal fra 1935 har betydvd svært mye for mange spelemenn, og har blitt sendt i Folkemusikkhtimen på NRK flere ganger i ulike sammenhenger helt opp til vår tid."

136 "For min egen del ble jeg så grepet av nerven og intensiteten i disse innspillingene at jeg ved en studietur til midtvesten i 2005 la turen innom La Crosse i Wisconsin for å se om det kunne være spor etter meisterspelemannen."

137 Norwegian "pilgrimages" to the American homes, burial sites, or performance venues of historical Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddlers are not uncommon. In a 2018 example, Hardanger fiddler Lars-Ingar Meyer Fjeld posted a video to the Facebook group "Forum for hardingfele" (Hardanger Fiddle Forum) in which he plays the *gangar* "Vårlengt" outside the former home of another legendary Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddler, Anund Roheim, in Great Falls, Montana, dubbing his trip a "pilgrimage" (Fjeld, 2018). Perhaps this kind of interaction could be called "retrospective" diasporic interculture.

and was ashamed of themselves. Smedal melted everything. There was something about the sincerity of his playing which struck my family right in the heart” (Blikstad, 1998, p. 205).<sup>138</sup>

Norwegian interest in the recordings of Eilev Smedal can be read as illustrating an instrumental approach to Norwegian-American culture, in which Norwegians claim ownership of what is viewed as “authentic” Norwegian music, whereas interest in musical expressions not regarded as authentically Norwegian, such as Norwegian-American old-time music, is “ambivalent at best” (Dembling, 2005, pp. 184, 196).<sup>139</sup> These differing homeland attitudes towards various aspects of the Norwegian-American music culture bring to light how musical “authenticity” is defined in Norway, since those aspects of the Norwegian-American music culture that are considered “worthy of adoption” must fit within a Norwegian notion of authenticity, which, in turn, is tied to Norwegian identity construction (Dembling, 2005, p. 185). Similar to Jonathan Dembling’s study of the attitudes of Scots towards Cape Breton music, I suggest that determinants of authenticity in the Norwegian case are age, Norwegianness, and a third criterion, genre. In Norway there is greater interest in Norwegian-American musicians who played the older genre of *bygdedans* music and in tunes which existed prior to emigration, including “lost” tunes and “lost” versions of tunes (as indicated in the Oscar Hamrey example above). Authenticity is thus tied to a notion of Norwegianness with strong links to nineteenth-century national romantic ideology, in which interest in *bygdedans* music and a historic “golden age” of Norwegian culture was part of a comprehensive effort to construct a Norwegian national identity. Norwegian-American old-time music, with its ties to the newer genre of *runddans* music and its broad range of “outside influences,” is therefore mostly disregarded.

The reflections of Norwegian postwar immigrants, who commonly experienced a “certain distance from the expressions of Norwegian ethnicity they encountered,” reveal some of these homeland attitudes towards old-time music and its innovations (Lovoll, 2007, p. 37). For example, informant Einar Johansen, a Norwegian “newcomer” who arrived in Minnesota in 1951 and participated in the Norwegian-American social- and folk dance scene, commented that Norwegian-American dance music played on the piano accordion (which came to dominate the American market by the late 1930s), as opposed to the chromatic button accordion (which is one of two standard types of button accordions used in Norwegian folk music, the other being the smaller diatonic button accordion), does not have the correct style of ornamentation, and more broadly, likened the effect of the displacement of the music from Norway to a kind of malnourishment:

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138 “Men vi hadde en spesiell gramofonplate med Eilev Smedal. Når den ble satt på under kranglinga, stoppet alle opp og gråt mens de skammet seg. Smedal smeltet alt. Det var noe med inderligheten i spillet hans som traff slekta mi midt i hjertet.”

139 A parallel can be drawn between varied Norwegian interest in Norwegian-American musics and the attitudes of Scots towards Cape Breton music studied by Jonathan Dembling.

Well, the thing is with the, the music they brought with them from Norway, after they played here for a while it gets so anemic and it loses a lot. For one thing, you know, if you play an accordion like button accordions they use in Norway, compared with the piano keyboards they have here, you don't get the same *ornamentikk* [ornamentation] in the music. (Johansen, 2016)

On the other hand, when I asked informant and accordionist Mel Brenden, who had switched from chromatic accordion to piano accordion while serving in the army during the 1950s, how he thought the two instruments affected the style of the music, he agreed that it was “not a big deal” and that “it could be one or the other” (Brenden, 2016).

A final example of individual diasporic networking can be found in Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddler Gunnar Odden (1895–1977). Gunnar, who was from Seljord, Telemark, immigrated to Hazel Run, Minnesota in 1913. Two of his brothers, Steinar (1893–1962) and Ole (1897–1987), also immigrated to the Upper Midwest, while a third brother, Erik (1900–1972), remained in Norway—all four brothers played Hardanger fiddle.

In a 1974 interview conducted by Kevin Hoeschen, Gunnar imparts that he had not played his fiddle very much during the decades he had lived in Minnesota, and he conveys the importance of feeling connected to a living music community and learning new repertoire in order to cultivate personal motivation and remain active as a musician:

Kevin Hoeschen: [D]id you play your violin a lot, your Hardanger fiddle a lot, during the years you've lived in Minnesota?

Gunnar Odden: No.

Kevin Hoeschen: Not very much?

Gunnar Odden: No, because you never learned anything new. Because they were so very few and far apart where the fellows played the same music so you get disgusted and forget all about it. You gotta learn some new tunes if you're going to keep it up to be interested. (Odden, 1974)

For Gunnar, diasporic networking seems to have served as cultural nourishment. Although he never returned to Norway, various forms of direct and indirect diasporic networking enabled Gunnar to learn new repertoire, to keep in touch with developments in the folk music scene in Norway, and to feel connected to a living tradition in some small way. In the interview with



Hoeschen he explains that he learned most of his repertoire after immigrating to the United States, particularly from another Norwegian-American fiddler and postwar “newcomer” immigrant, Anund Roheim (1913–1999) of Bø, Telemark, who came to America in 1950 and settled in Black Eagle, Montana. Although they did not live close to each other, Roheim mailed Gunnar tape recordings of tunes which Gunnar picked up from the recordings. In later years, Gunnar also received home tape recordings of fiddle music from family in Norway. He also learned tunes from commercial recordings made in Norway; during the interview he plays a *hallingspringar* learned from a recording of Norwegian Hardanger fiddler Odd Bakkerud.

According to Marion Nelson, Gunnar acquired commercial recordings from Norwegian Hardanger fiddlers who visited the United States, and he also kept himself informed about contemporary performers in Norway, including their performances at Norwegian *kappleiker*, through both Norwegian and Norwegian-American newspapers:

Kevin Hoeschen: What kind of music is it that Gunnar Odden plays?

Marion Nelson: He plays mostly the Telemark traditional dance music. He was born in Norway, so he picked up most of it there. Uh, continued to follow it, though I don't believe that he has been back to his home country since he came here at the age of about 18 or so, I've forgotten the precise, his precise age. But he has gotten records from there, whenever anyone who plays the [Hardanger] violin comes to this country he gets in touch with them and picks up tunes that way. So he has built up repertoire even after he has been away from the home country.

Kevin Hoeschen: I see. That's, that's an interesting point. Because I'm interested in knowing how they, you know, how they can continue to add to their repertoire when they, it seems, well, it seems they have no contact.

Marion Nelson: No, he's very well informed on the violinists. He follows the competitions in Norway, can tell you immediately who wins the competitions in Hardanger fiddle playing up to the last year. And he also gets recordings when he can from Norway.

Kevin Hoeschen: I see. What sources do you think he uses as far as printed sources to get information on fiddlers?

Marion Nelson: Newspapers. I'm sure, judging from the things he tells me that he gets the Telemark newspaper, probably just sent by relatives or something rather than

a regular subscriber. And then he follows of course, what he can in the Norwegian-American press and there's occasional reference there. (Nelson, 1974)

A multilayered form of diasporic networking also occurred when Gunnar was visited by Norwegian journalist Eric Bye, who interviewed him for the Norwegian television program *Amerika-reportasje* in the late 1960s. During the short segment, Gunnar plays a home tape recording of Hardanger fiddle music sent to him from Norway by his brother Erik, and responds to the recording by performing his own tune for the TV crew. Erik Odden watched the program at home in Bø when it aired in March 1970 and was amazed to have his brother's "face and voice right in his own living room after so many years" ("Gjensyn mellom brødre etter 57 år – på fjernsynsskjermen," 1970) (Figure 21).<sup>140</sup>



Figure 21: Erik Odden watching his brother, Gunnar Odden, play fiddle on the Norwegian television program *Amerika-reportasje* in 1970. Newspaper clipping courtesy of the Norwegian National Library. Used with permission from Telemark Arbeiderblad.

140 "Da Erik Odden kom med dette utbruddet, var det ikke som noen anerkjennelse av det musikalske, men snarere en berømmelse av den tekniske utvikling som gjorde det mulig å få brorens ansikt og stemme helt inn i sin egen stue etter så mange år."

These are only a few of many examples of diasporic networking between Norwegian-American musicians and Norwegian musicians I encountered during this study. Examples involving old-time musicians include fiddler Harold Sorenson, who learned the schottische “Heimreis frå bryllaup” from a version Anund Roheim recorded at a concert given by a fiddler from Norway (Finseth, 1983), and musician Ove Guberud (1898–1979), who learned repertoire from Norwegian immigrant farm labourers, whom he calls “newcomers,” whom Ove’s parents employed on the Guberud farm near Spring Grove during the summer:

[S]ee my father, bought the old homestead, the Guberud estate there. So it was necessary for him to employ help on the farm. So he, he was in the habit of sending money to Norway, that would pay the fare across the Atlantic and way into Minnesota. And then they in turn would stay on the place and work through the summer to pay for their immigration ticket. . . . So the result was we had many new members, new faces. And some of those people could play, and they brought along their violin, and they played certain pieces. . . . You see, these old Norwegian newcomers were very brilliant when it come to fiddle music. And they would teach their melodies to other members in that vicinity that would copy that and they would play it. So, in other words, that musical lessons were given from one member to another one. (Guberud, 1971)

Still other examples include the numerous Norwegian Hardanger fiddlers who toured the Upper Midwest during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries giving solo performances and drawing hordes of eager Norwegian-American listeners. Broadly speaking, these dynamics of diasporic networking illustrate a mutual, transatlantic desire for connection, community, “cultural sustenance,” and exchange—for the maintenance of transatlantic bonds and the construction of a “greater Norway.”

## 5.5 Analyses of Musical Examples

In the final section of this chapter I analyze several musical examples that illustrate various dynamics of interplay with the “-cultures.” In each example, I analyze how supercultural and other subcultural materials were received into the sound world of Norwegian-American old-time music, and whether these musical choices reflect broader processes of identity construction within the Norwegian-American community. To do so, I analyze three melodies from the database of archive and commercial recordings of Norwegian-American old-time music collected and catalogued during the data collection phase of the study.

In order to select melodies for analysis, I began by examining all of the catalogued melodies and collecting relevant information regarding the following: origins (composer, related genre[s]); date and medium of publication, if applicable (sheet music, 78 rpm recording, etc.); Norwegian-American performers of the melody; and known/possible transmission path(s). Based on this, I created a “long list” of relevant examples for analysis consisting of 79 melodies. From the long list, I selected three melodies for analysis: “Anniversary Waltz / Danube Waves,” “Emigrantvalsen / Farvel mitt fedreland,” and “Home, Sweet Home.” While space restrictions made it impossible to include a sufficient number of examples to represent all of the various dynamics of interplay with the “-cultures,” I have aimed to select diverse examples that represent varied forms of interplay. The selected examples are not the “best” or “most representative”; other examples could have just as easily been selected.

My approach to analyzing the selected melodies was twofold. First, I observed and described musical structures and characteristics of the selected performances and related these to previous findings regarding the “sound world” of Norwegian-American old-time music.<sup>141</sup> Second, I applied elements of Slobin’s framework for analyzing musical interplay between micromusics and global cultural forces. I attempted to trace possible paths of interplay/transmission and to find precise terminology to describe the specific process(es) of interplay at work in each case described. My aim has been to develop a precise reading, and to take into consideration the potentially multivalent nature of the musical material—to “consider the broad range of motivations and receptions a subcultural move can represent” (Slobin, 1993, p. 91). Slobin’s framework of code layering was also used to analyze one of the selected examples.

### 5.5.1 Anniversary Waltz / Danube Waves

Three recorded versions of the tune “Anniversary Waltz,” performed by Daniel Aakhus, Gust Ellingson, and the Plowboys, were collected during the data collection phase of the study. I view the presence of “Anniversary Waltz” in the repertoires of these musicians as an example of the global flow of a melody via the industrial interculture across both national and genre borders. Aakhus, and later Ellingson and the Plowboys, all adopted the waltz into their repertoire; however, it likely came to them via different supercultural channels and therefore probably had slightly different meanings.

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141 Concerning previous findings on the “sound world” of Norwegian-American old-time music, I have primarily referred to LeRoy Larson’s analyses of field recordings and transcriptions made during his doctoral research, as well as Janet Kvam’s analyses of the same material in her subsequent study (Kvam, 1986, pp. 64–87; L. Larson, 1975, pp. 58–82).

“Anniversary Waltz,” better known as “Anniversary Song,” is based on the popular composition “Valurile Dunării” (internationally known as “Danube Waves” and “Waves of the Danube”) written by Romanian composer Iosif Ivanovici and published in Bucharest in 1880 (Ghircoiașiu, 2001).<sup>142</sup> Ivanovici’s composition can be classified as parlour music; the composition, a waltz cycle consisting of an introduction, four waltzes, and a finale, was first published in the United States in 1896 (Scott, 2019, p. 240). Various piano arrangements of the piece were published in America in the early twentieth century.

Ivanovici’s composition achieved international recognition after it was awarded a composition prize at the 1889 Paris Exposition. It was later further popularized in the United States through its use in several motion picture soundtracks, particularly the 1946 musical biopic *The Jolson Story*, which narrates the life story of Lithuanian-American singer and entertainer Al Jolson. In the film, Jolson’s character performs an arrangement of the first waltz in Ivanovici’s composition under the title “Anniversary Song,” with lyrics by Saul Chaplin. Sheet music for “Anniversary Song” was also published in 1946; here, Jolson and Chaplin are credited as composers of the melody “based on a theme by Ivanovici” (Figure 22) (Jolson & Chaplin, 1946). Following on the heels of its popularization through *The Jolson Story*, various commercial recordings of the melody were released on 78 rpm records in 1946 and 1947. Al Jolson’s own recording for Decca (23714) debuted on *Billboard*’s “Best Selling Singles” Pop Charts on February 7, 1947, remaining on the charts for 14 weeks and peaking at number two (Whitburn, 1973b, p. 29).<sup>143</sup> The waltz also became “a perennial favorite with Jewish populations”: in the narrative of *The Jolson Story*, the tune is “sung in honor of Cantor Yoelson and his wife, Al’s parents . . . and therefore was perceived to be a Jewish tune” (Gottlieb, 2004, p. 84).

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142 The melody discussed here should not be confused with another melody of the same name, “Anniversary Waltz” written by Dave Franklin, with lyrics by Al Dubin, published in 1941.

143 Other best-selling recordings of “Anniversary Waltz” include Glenn Miller Orchestra’s recording for RCA Victor (2126), which remained on *Billboard*’s charts for eight weeks in early 1947, peaking at number three; Guy Lombardo’s recording for Decca (23799), which spent ten weeks on *Billboard* charts in early 1947, peaking at number four; Andy Russel’s recording for Capitol (368), which remained on the charts for two weeks during the spring of 1947, peaking at number five; and Dinah Shore’s recording for Columbia (37234), which spent eight weeks on the charts, peaking at number four (Whitburn, 1973b, pp. 11, 33, 42, 43).



Figure 22: Cover of sheet music for "Anniversary Song," published in 1946 by Mood Music Company.

The melody appears to be known as "Anniversary Waltz" among Norwegian-American old-time musicians. One version, performed and recorded by fiddler Daniel Aakhus and accompanied by an unknown pianist for Aakhus's personal collection of reel-to-reel tape recordings, is a performance of the full cycle of four waltzes. This indicates that Aakhus performed from sheet music, and that he played the composition as a performance piece rather than a dance tune. There is also evidence that Aakhus, a classically-trained violinist and co-founder of the touring ensemble "The Aakhus Concert Company," performed the piece in public concerts: a postcard advertising the Aakhus Concert Company's performances includes "Danube Waves" among the ensemble's repertoire, under the heading "Whistling, Violin & Piano" (Figure 23). Aakhus probably performed the piece accompanied by his wife, Gecina Stockland Aakhus, who played piano and whistled.

Daniel Aakhus’s version, with its adherence to a sheet music arrangement of Ivanovici’s composition, can be located within the sound world of sentimental American parlour music of the early twentieth century. The melody is played at a fast tempo (ca. 200 bpm)—much higher than the average waltz tempo in Norwegian-American old-time music noted by Larson (163 bpm). His performance is somewhat flat, and the nostalgic mood of the piece is not fully conveyed. This version has a “novelty” feel and the air of belonging on the Norwegian-American vaudeville stage.



Figure 23: Aakhus Concert Company promotional postcard. From the author’s collection.

The other two versions of “Anniversary Waltz” analyzed here are abridged versions of Ivanovici’s composition, both performed by musicians from the Spring Grove, Minnesota area. The version performed by the Plowboys (a Norwegian-American trio consisting of Einar Gran on fiddle, Otto Gran on piano, and Ove Guberud on vocals) is limited to the first waltz in the cycle and is likely based on “Anniversary Song” as popularized through *The Jolson Story* and subsequent commercial recordings. The version played by fiddler Oliver Gustav “Gust” Ellingson (1891–1967) is similar; however, at the end of his performance Ellingson plays the coda from Ivanovici’s original composition.

The recording of the Plowboys, a copy of which was obtained from LeRoy Larson, was broadcast on the trio’s weekly radio show for WKTY in La Crosse, Wisconsin during the 1960s. The recording of Gust Ellingson, accompanied by Anna Gil Muller on piano, was also obtained

from Larson and is a home recording made on reel-to-reel tape during the 1960s. Although no documentation of the recorded performers' sources for the tune has been found, it is possible that both Ellingson and the musicians in the Plowboys learned the tune by ear, picking it up over the radio airwaves or by listening to 78 rpm recordings following its popularization during the late 1940s as "Anniversary Song."

The Plowboys' version begins with an announcement by Ove Guberud, who opens the evening's radio show by declaring: "Tonight we will start our program with the 'Anniversary Waltz' in G minor. *Så legg i vei da!* [Get going then!]" (Plowboys, n.d.). This is the most danceable of the three versions: it is played in standard waltz tempo (157 bpm), and Einar Gran's performance on fiddle is snappy, staccato, and slightly rough—a playing style that corresponds with Larson's and Kvam's findings. Einar also adds rhythmic density by subdividing long notes into two or three staccato bow strokes, which creates a sense of speed. Some typical ornamentation, including grace notes and slides, is used, but fairly sparingly. This also corresponds with Kvam, who found that the Norwegian-American sound, compared with Norwegian playing styles, is generally less ornamented (Kvam, 1986, p. 140). Einar is accompanied by his brother, Otto, on piano. Fiddle and piano-based arrangements were typical in Norwegian-American old-time music, and Otto's accompaniment style, which articulates the metric structure of the waltz through heavy bass notes on the first beat of the measure and short afterbeats, creates a typical heavy, pronounced rhythmical style. Overall, the Plowboys' version fits within a "standard" characterization of the Norwegian-American old-time "sound." In this example, the melody has been domesticated—to use Slobin's term—into the sound world of Norwegian-American old-time music, making it a functional dance tune.

Gust Ellingson's version is played at a much slower tempo (ca. 110 bpm) and is more of a "listening tune" rather than a dance tune. His playing style is smooth, expressive, and conveys a sentimental mood. Gust's version employs more ornamentation than Einar Gran's; his use of slides is particularly noticeable, while Norwegian-style grace notes are also used. Like the Plowboys' version, this version is also a piano arrangement: Gust is accompanied by his regular accompanist, Anna Gil Muller. Anna's performance is lighter, softer, and more expressive than Otto Gran's. While Gust Ellingson's version is not a typical dance tune performance, his musical articulation, particularly his use of grace notes, positions it within the Norwegian-American sound world.

Since the Jolson/Chaplin version, or one of the many other subsequent commercial recordings of "Anniversary Song," may have served as the basis for both the Plowboys' and Ellingson's versions, it is pertinent to return briefly to this superculturally produced version and ask whether meanings expressed here were carried over in the Plowboys or Ellingson versions.



The Jolson/Chaplin version is sentimental and poignant; in *The Jolson Story*, the song also functions as a turning point for Jolson’s character from being “down in the dumps” as a semi-retired musician, to embarking on a musical “comeback.” Composer Saul Chaplin’s reflections about his experience of writing lyrics for “Anniversary Song” reveal that the song was initially only intended to function as background filler in a sentimental scene in *The Jolson Story*, but the production team found the song to be “so effective and touching that they then decided to focus on it in the finished version”:

There was a new scene in the picture where Jolson’s parents were coming to California for Jolson and his wife’s anniversary. It seemed appropriate to put a little refrain in there for a bit of sentiment. A little *schmaltz* as they say. In the screenplay this was at a time when Jolson had gone into semi-retirement, and he was down in the dumps about that. He’d stopped singing, and the insertion of a little song would sort of indicate a vehicle for his return to Broadway...his comeback.

....

So here the three of us [Chaplin, Al Jolson, and head of the music department for Columbia Pictures Morris Stoloff] are having lunch, and Jolson says he remembers this little song that he’s known since childhood, a Russian waltz, “Valurile Dunarii,” or maybe it’s written by a Hungarian. But it’s attributed to this fellow Ivanovici. It’s translated into “The Waves of the Danube” written in 1880. Al thought it could be heard as background as an anniversary theme but also the fact that Jolson is not working. So these are the emotions that are to be expressed. Well, I told Jolson that as a kid I had played the song on a mandolin at my own bar mitzvah. “Could you write a lyric for it,” they asked? It took me about 45 minutes to get it down on paper.

....

We made a recording for the sound track . . . and it was so effective and touching that they then decided to focus on it in the finished version. They’d use it, lyric and all. Knowing this, I wanted to polish it up, but was told to leave it alone, it was perfect the way it was—very sentimental, very poignant. As it turned out, the entire scene made for the right transition. On his wedding anniversary Jolson had decided to come out of retirement; he was ready for his return to stardom. The song? Well, it was “The Anniversary Song” and it was very effective. Though there’s an irony because, remember, it was going to be just a piece of material—a filler. (Chaplin, quoted in Whorf, 2012, pp. 48, 50)

Chaplin's comments most strikingly illustrate the plasticity of Ivanovici's composition (and of the waltz genre itself) and its ability to permeate both national and genre boundaries. The fluid global circulation of the melody generates an "ever-expanding" variety of meanings: the melody can therefore be understood as a "process" or "form of value in motion," rather than a fixed object (Gebhardt, 2017, p. 104). Chaplin's remarks also indicate the melody's ability to function as a sign of nostalgia in different music cultures. I view the versions by Ellingson and the Plowboys examined here as more or less "domesticated" into the Norwegian-American sound world, the melody interpreted through musical elements that convey "Norwegianness" within the Norwegian-American music culture.

### 5.5.2 Emigrantvalsen / Farvel mitt fedreland



Figure 24: "Emigrantvalsen" sheet music cover. Courtesy of Musik- och teaterbiblioteket, Musikverket, Stockholm.

“Farvel mitt fedreland” (Farewell My Native Land), better known as “Emigrantvalsén” (Emigrant Waltz), is originally a Swedish *schlager* composed by Helge Lindberg (alias W. Berner), with lyrics by Gösta Stevens (alias John Nelson) and is a well-known song from the Scandinavian emigrant song tradition (Figure 24). The melody was widely known throughout Sweden and Norway: sheet music was published in Sweden in 1928, and Swedish 78 rpm recordings of the melody were made in late 1928.<sup>144</sup> Sheet music with Norwegian lyrics by Steinar Jøraandstad was published in 1929; Jøraandstad also recorded the song in Norway for Brunswick (catalogue number 7971) that same year. The melody quickly circulated to the Norwegian and Swedish diasporas in the United States: the first American “foreign-language” 78 rpm recording of the song was made in early 1929 by Svenska Sjömans Orkestern for Victor (V-24008) and the record soon entered the shelves of Norwegian-American and Swedish-American music shops such as Benson Music House in Minneapolis (Figure 25). E. Jahrl’s Dansorkester, featuring Swedish-American accordionist Eddie Jahrl, also recorded the song for Columbia (22121-F) in 1930 (Spottswood, 1990).



Figure 25: Benson Music House advertisement for Victor’s release of Svenska Sjömans Orkestern’s recording of “Emigrant-Valsén” in the Swedish-American newspaper Svenska amerikanska Posten, May 15, 1929. Courtesy of the Swedish American Newspapers collection at the Minnesota Historical Society.

“Emigrantvalsén” is a song of departure and longing—a central motif in the Scandinavian emigrant song tradition. According to Reimund Kvideland, songs of departure, which were often written from the perspective of the emigrant, could function as anti-immigration propaganda, reducing a prospective emigrant’s positive expectations of life in America and

144 Early Swedish 78 rpm recordings include Carl Jularbo, Helge Eriksson, and Artur Rolén’s recording for Odeon in 1928 (catalogue number D4741).

creating a “prenostalgic” reaction (Amundsen & Kvideland, 1975, p. 31). Among immigrants in America, songs of departure and longing had a different function: they could relieve psychological pressure, acting as an outlet for homesickness and longing for family in the homeland. As Ann-Marie Ivars writes, “no matter how well the immigrants settled in the new country, homesickness became their constant companion” (Ivars, 2020, p. 100).<sup>145</sup> One of Ivars’ Finnish-American informants describes how she found an outlet for homesickness in festive contexts “by singing songs that belonged to the tradition from home”: “At gatherings we sang ‘Barndomshemmet,’ ‘Hälsa dem därhemma’ . . . Then we got a gramophone and ‘Emigrantvalsen.’ It went through both marrow and bone and tears flowed” (Ivars, 2020, p. 100).<sup>146</sup> In “Emigrantvalsen,” Gösta Stevens’ nostalgic lyrics describe an emigrant’s emotional departure via boat from his homeland:

*Verse:*

Amerikabåten lägger ut till fjärran land den går.  
 Det är uti en tung minut som emigranten står.  
 Hans tankar drar till svunna dar och dem han lämnat kvar.

*Refrain:*

Farväl, mitt fosterland. Farväl min barndomsstrand.  
 Vad än i världen möter mej, jag aldrig glömmer dej.  
 Farväl min mor och far, det käraste jag har.  
 Farväl, min egen lilla vän när skall vi ses igen. (Bernier & Nelson, 1928)

One recorded version of “Farvel mitt fedreland,” performed by the Bjorngjeld Family, was examined during the study.<sup>147</sup> I view the Bjorngjeld Family’s performance of the tune as an amalgamation of “Scandinavian” and early country music styles that foregrounds the interplay between Norwegian-American musicians and American popular culture, and which can be interpreted through what Slobin terms “code-layering.” The Bjorngjeld Family’s performance was recorded by Philip Nusbaum for the LP production *Norwegian-American Music from Minnesota* in 1988. The band on the recording consists of siblings Olga Hanson (vocals and mandolin), Borghild Person (vocals and guitar), and Al Bjorngjeld (piano accordion), along with Al’s son, Art Bjorngjeld (fiddle).

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145 “Hur väl utvandrarerna än fann sig till rätta i nya landet, blev hemlängtan deras ständiga följeslagare.”

146 “Vid sammankomster sjöng man ‘Barndomshemmet,’ ‘Hälsa dem därhemma’ . . . Sen skaffade vi grammofon och ‘Emigrantvalsen.’ Den gick igenom både mörk och ben och strida tårar rann.”

147 While the waltz is titled “Farvel min fedreland” on the Bjorngjeld Family recording, I refer to it here as “Farvel mitt fedreland,” with the correct possessive pronoun (*mitt*), in order to avoid confusion.

Olga (1922–2016), Borghild (1920–2005), and Al (1917–1995) are three of a total of six musical Bjorngjeld siblings—the other three being Clarence (1910–1993), Ervin (1912–2004), and Oliver (1913–1985). The Bjorngjeld siblings grew up in the small town of Columbus in northwestern North Dakota, in an area where Norwegian and Swedish immigrants had settled. While they grew up learning tunes from immigrant musicians in the area, they were also influenced by phonographs, and particularly by early country music and Scandinavian “crossover” bands heard on the radio. In an interview with Philip Nusbaum, Al Bjorngjeld recounts how his brother, Oliver, who played diatonic and chromatic button accordion, primarily played “old Scandinavian music” learned from neighbours until the arrival of the phonograph and the radio:

Philip Nusbaum: And what kind of music was he playing?

Al Bjorngjeld: Old Scandinavian music. That’s all anybody knew up there at that time, until radios came around, and a few phonograph records. That’s right, my dad had an Edison...cylinder records. Yeah. He had some old-records on there that introduced us to some other tunes and, but it was mostly old-time until the radio start coming in. Then there was bands out of Minneapolis. Oh, 60 years ago when Scandinavian music around Minneapolis was dying out, they moved up to Minot, these big bands, and they would play out of Minot, North Dakota on KLPM radio Minot.

Philip Nusbaum: What bands were those?

Al Bjorngjeld: It was Thorstein Skarning and his Norwegian Hillbillies, he called them. (Bjorngjeld, Bjorngjeld, & Bjorngjeld, 1987)

After the family got their first radio in 1927, the siblings “picked up a lot of tunes” off the airwaves. Thorstein Skarning’s radio performances introduced them to “modern foxtrots mixed in with the Scandinavian music” that Oliver learned on his accordion, while Borghild and Olga listened to the yodelling of country singers like Jimmy Rodgers, Patsy Montana, and Elton Britt “with a sharp ear” (Bjorngjeld et al., 1987). Ervin and Clarence describe how Borghild and Olga devised a system for catching song lyrics off the radio, which they supplemented with WLS songbooks ordered from the Sears Roebuck catalogue:

Ervin Bjorngjeld: Well, it’s, they had a little system worked out where, when they heard a song on the radio, why, they would, one would write down the first line and the other one would write down the second line, and, well, after hearing it two or three times,

why, they had the whole song, and of course my brother Oliver, after hearing it two or three times he could play the tune, so. That's how they learned a lot of the songs.

Clarence Bjornjeld: And then they'd send for, to Sears Roebuck in the catalogue. They advertised some of the WLS entertainers and you could buy a book there for about a dollar. Boy, the Arkansas Woodchopper, he had a lot of good tunes in there. So did the Prairie Ramblers, they had a lot of good tunes, and they learned a lot of that stuff from that. (Bjornjeld et al., 1987)

The Bjornjeld Family's version of "Farvel mitt fedreland" reflects the mixture of Norwegian and Swedish tunes, early country music, and Scandinavian "crossover" music heard and performed by the siblings during their early years in Columbus. The primary signifiers of "Norwegianness" in the performance are the Norwegian lyrics and the piano accordion lead, while the string band-style accompaniment on mandolin and guitar, as well as Borghild and Olga's "brother duet" singing style, all gesture towards early country music. Nusbaum dubs this sound "Norwegian Bluegrass" (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 10); this amalgamation of styles can be read as what Slobin calls "code-layering," a stratified layering of style upon style, musical code upon code (Slobin, 1993, p. 87).

***Farvel min fedreland***

*Farvel min fedreland  
Farvel min barndom hjem  
Hvor ute i verden møtes meg  
Jeg aldri glemmer deg  
Farvel min mor og far  
Det kjæreste en jeg har  
Farvel min kjære liten venn  
De skal jeg se igjen.*

***Farewell My Native Land***

*Farewell my native land  
Farewell my childhood home  
Wherever in the world I roam  
I will never forget you  
Farewell my mom and dad  
The dearest ones I have  
Farewell my dear little friends  
Someday we'll meet again.*

Figure 26: Norwegian lyrics, with an English translation provided by Al Bjornjeld, from the Bjornjeld Family's recorded performance of "Farvel min fedreland" (Nusbaum, 1989b, p. 15).

While the original melody is a waltz in binary form, with verse and refrain, the Bjornjelds omit the verse, playing only the refrain. The recording opens with the refrain played on piano accordion, backed by chording on the mandolin and guitar and a faint second voice played

on fiddle. Al's articulation on piano accordion is snappy, with accented snap rhythms at the cadence, placing it well within the Norwegian-American old-time “sound world.” However, the accordion voice also evokes American popular music of the early twentieth century: compared with Berner's original melody, Al adds in chromatic passing notes in melodic movements from the second to the third, and from the fifth to the sixth scale positions (see Appendix 3: “Farvel mitt fedreland,” e.g. measures 2, 4, 6, 10, 12); these movements evoke gestures from the ragtime era and the Jazz Age.

Following the accordion solo, Borghild and Olga sing the refrain in a vocal duet. Their nasal timbre and close vocal harmonies function as a country music code, layered together with the Norwegian song lyrics (Figure 26). As Nusbaum points out, the sisters' singing style is reminiscent of “brother duet style,” a vocal style that developed in hillbilly music during the pre-World War Two era (Malone, 2002, pp. 108–109; Nusbaum, 1990/1991, p. 34). This singing style, which was usually “associated with gentle parlor or gospel songs” and was customarily performed by brothers (early examples from the hillbilly/country-western genre include the Blue Sky Boys, the Delmore Brothers, and the Monroe Brothers), is characterized as “high-pitched, with one voice carrying the melody and the other harmonising a third or fifth above” (Broughton, 2000, p. 538). The Bjorngjeld sisters' style differs, however, in its timbral quality, which is nasal and slightly harsh.

Does the Bjorngjeld's version evoke homeland nostalgia and longing, or serve as an outlet for homesickness, in the sense that early recordings of “Emigrantvalsen” did? While the performance accentuates certain “Norwegian” musical codes, perhaps it can be better understood as a kind of “homemaking,” as a foregrounding of “the contact between Norwegian and surrounding American culture as an aspect of the musical communication” (Nusbaum, n.d.). Following Slobin, we could inquire about the Bjorngjelds' motivation for this kind of code layering. Looking to Nusbaum's 1987 interview with Al, Clarence, and Ervin, the siblings locate their playing style within a regional Upper Midwestern style that mixed “Scandinavian” music with popular country music; as Al remarks, converting popular songs into “our type of music, accordion-type music” was just “the thing to do” (Bjorngjeld et al., 1987).

### 5.5.3 Home, Sweet Home

The parlour song “Home, Sweet Home” is an example of supercultural repertoire originally disseminated through sheet music publications that appears to have been widespread among Norwegian-American old-time musicians. While it was likely primarily transmitted to Norwegian-American musicians by ear, the song was first published in the United States in 1823, the same year that it was performed in American dramatist John Howard Payne's

melodramatic operetta *Clari, or the Maid of Milan*. The melody was written by English composer Sir Henry Rowley Bishop, with lyrics by Payne (Sanjek, 1988, pp. 52–56). Because the composition was not protected by copyright law in the United States, American publishers exploited the song’s popularity, printing myriad sheet music editions of the song during the nineteenth century: “in the two years following its first appearance (1824–25), it was brought out in more editions and sold more copies than any other song to that date” (Hamm, 1979, p. 167) (Figure 27). Marshall, writing about Missouri fiddlers, points out that the song also entered the minstrel repertoire and further, that the melody “worked its way into the fiddler’s repertory as an instrumental” (H. W. Marshall, 2013, p. 167).



Figure 27: “Home, Sweet Home” sheet music cover (1856). Courtesy of the Historic Sheet Music Collection, Greer Music Library, Connecticut College.



As “perhaps the most popular song of the nineteenth century,” “Home, Sweet Home” can be understood as archetypically American and as expressing an idealized notion of American life (Crawford, 2001, p. 177). Through the combination of its lyrics and musical structure, the song communicates a melodramatic, nostalgic desire for the childhood home. Musically, the song combines simple, static, and repetitive melodic, harmonic, and structural elements to construct a sense of stability that evokes a notion of home (Crawford, 2001, p. 178). Lyrically, the song elevates the childhood home to a “sacred site” associated with values of innocence, stability, and love, while also celebrating honour, purity, and the power of home to reinforce morals learned as a child (Bennett, 2012, p. 171; Clague, 2002, p. 304). The song also conveys universal themes of exile and return: the longing for home expressed through the lyrics reflected the experience of most nineteenth and early twentieth century American listeners, “whose lives often involved mobility (geographical and social) and the associated uncertainty that comes with flux” (Bennett, 2012, p. 179).<sup>148</sup>

‘mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,  
 Be it ever so humble there’s no place like home!  
 A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,  
 Which seek through the world, is ne’er met with elsewhere:  
 Home! Home! Sweet, sweet, Home!  
 There’s no place like Home!  
 There’s no place like Home!

An exile from Home, splendor dazzles in vain,  
 Oh! Give me my lowly thatch’d cottage again!  
 The birds singing gaily that came at my call,  
 Give me them with the peace of mind, dearer than all:  
 Home! Home! Sweet, sweet Home!  
 There’s no place like Home!  
 There’s no place like Home! (Bishop, 1856)

One recording of “Home, Sweet Home” was catalogued during the data collection phase of the study: this is a version performed on harmonica by Bertel Berntsen (1891–1991) of Stoughton, Wisconsin for Philip Martin during an interview in 1980 (Berntsen, 1980). This recording is not analyzed here; rather, in the following, I focus on examples of Norwegian-American use of, and interplay with the song found in various written documents.

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148 For further analyses of “Home, Sweet Home,” see Bennett (2012, pp. 175–179), Clague (2002, pp. 290–326), and Crawford (2001, pp. 176–180).

I encountered two accounts of Norwegian-American fiddlers whose aspirations to learn to play the instrument were explicitly linked to learning “Home, Sweet Home.” The first is quoted from the liner notes of the album *My Father Was A Fiddler...* by Decorah, Iowa-based band Foot-Notes, and describes how fiddler Genette Leyse Burgess (1903–1977) of Waukon, Iowa covertly learned to play the tune on her father’s fiddle:

As a young girl, Genette had a burning desire to play “Home, Sweet Home” on her father’s fiddle. It hung on the wall on the main floor of the house, but she was forbidden to touch it. Eventually she began to play it in secret, and, while practicing one day, she failed to notice her father, Edward Leyse, enter the cellar from outside. When he began rapping on the floor joints, she was petrified. To her relief, when he came up the steps he smiled and said in Norwegian, “*Spel det igjen!*” (“Play it again!”). (Foot-Notes, 1998)

Similarly, in a 1980 interview with Philip Martin, Norwegian-American fiddler Selmer Torger (1906–1998) recounted how “Home, Sweet Home” was one of the first tunes he learned when he began to play fiddle after being given an instrument by his older brother, Clarence Torger:

So then I started to practice when I got it, and one day they was away and, yeah, that was after dinner. Well after dinner, then, I took that little violin, I went in the other room and I was playing, and when they come back again about three o’clock at lunch and I was playing on a waltz there, “Home Sweet Home.” (Torger, 1980)

The tune also served a specific function at some house parties. Both Martin and Foot-Notes cite accounts of how “Home, Sweet Home” was customarily the last tune played at a house party—a signal for partygoers to return home for the night (Foot-Notes, 1998; Martin, 1994, pp. 53, 60). The convention is described in a conversation between pianist Ellen Blagen and pianist and fiddle player Helen Ehrie quoted by Foot-Notes:

Helen: And at the last he always played “Home, Sweet Home.” She [Ellen] knows it, too.

Ellen: Yes, my folks always ended the dances with that.

Helen and Ellen: Always.

Ellen: The last dance of the night. Any dance. Always ended it. Never fail.

Helen: It got to be kind of morning hours, I think.

Ellen: Oh, yes. (Foot-Notes, 1998)

This practice also exists in other American vernacular music traditions: Marshall refers to a similar convention in Missouri (H. W. Marshall, 2013, p. 167); Tisserand in zydeco communities in Louisiana (Tisserand, 1998); and Kartchner in Arizona (Kartchner, 1990, p. 256). Although unsubstantiated, it may be possible to draw a link between this practice and the Civil War tradition wherein regiment bands on both the Union and Confederate sides performed “Home, Sweet Home” as a closing number at concerts (Clague, 2002, pp. 318–321).

The melody was also used by Norwegian Americans in a context of public ethnic celebration. April R. Schultz describes how the song was performed in three languages in a scene from *The Pageant of the Northmen* in which Norwegian and American pioneers mingled with Indigenous peoples on the Wisconsin frontier:

The audience watched as each group sang its own song and then all sang “Home Sweet Home,” each group in its own language. This scene was reminiscent of the pluralistic aspects of some Anglo-American pageantry in which each culture contributes its more “colorful” traditions to a unified Anglo-American cultural framework, in this case, each using its own language to sing the quintessentially American “Home Sweet Home.” (Schultz, 1994, p. 89)

*The Pageant of the Northmen* was an “elaborate spectacle of Norwegian-American history and identity” that served as the grand finale of the 1925 Norse-American Immigration Centennial held in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota (Schultz, 1994, p. 8). This scene can be viewed as an illustration in miniature of Schultz’s larger thesis, which argues that centennial organizers sought to construct a Norwegian-American ethnicity that “claimed power and status for the Norwegian-American community and simultaneously defused the hostility of the larger culture by demonstrating that Norwegian-American values and ideals were perfectly compatible with those of American culture” (Schultz, 1994, p. 126).

The appeal of “Home, Sweet Home” for Norwegian Americans can be interpreted as related to several factors. Young, aspiring fiddlers’ desire to learn the tune was probably linked to the song’s omnipresence in the American soundscapes and mediascapes of the early twentieth century: by the time Burgess and Torger were learning the tune (likely during the mid-1910s), scores of phonograph recordings and sheet music editions of the song had been published, and it was regularly performed in a broad range of settings including “the operatic and

concert stage, the parlor, the dance hall, the parade ground, the battlefield, the campfire,” not to mention at Upper Midwestern house parties (Crawford, 2001, p. 180).<sup>149</sup> Its appeal to Norwegian Americans may also be connected to the song’s celebration of complex notions of home. As exemplified through its use in *The Pageant of the Northmen*, the song can be interpreted as expressing two opposing dynamics related to the construction of Norwegian-American homemaking myths: a desire for, and demonstration of the ethnic group’s distinctive right to a “home” in American society, and a concurrent celebration of, and longing for the Norwegian homeland. Moreover, the song’s ideals of stability and purity are consistent with Norwegian-American self-perceived group attributes of family loyalty and piety.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored numerous examples of how Norwegian-American musicians interacted with the “-cultures” through three broad processes of interplay: intersubcultural interaction, the use of supercultural materials, and interplay via the diasporic interculture.

We have seen that these processes of interplay variously reflect two main dynamics related to Norwegian-American identity construction. First, they reflect the multivalent plasticity and permeability of the Norwegian-American ethnic group and its engagement in shifting processes of ethnic boundary negotiation, as well as revealing plasticity and permeability as central dynamics at work on subcultural, supercultural, and intercultural levels (e.g. the plasticity of Ivanovici’s “Valurile Dunării”). Second, processes of interplay with the “-cultures” reflect broader positioning and mythmaking processes related to Norwegian-American identity construction.

In the case of intersubcultural interaction, we have seen how Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with other Upper Midwestern ethnic groups and their musics in various shared socioeconomic realms and social gathering spaces, as well as through presentational and mediated performance formats such as travelling musical troupes and sound recordings. Through interplay with supercultural musical materials, which occurred via a range of channels, including travelling entertainment acts, sheet music, commercial 78 rpm recordings, and radio, Norwegian-American old-time musicians interacted with a variety of popular musical repertoire and performance formats, as well as positioning themselves vis-à-vis American mainstream ideologies, modern music and dance fashions, and superculturally produced

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149 For an overview of early phonograph recordings of “Home, Sweet Home,” see the online database, *Discography of American Historical Recordings* (<https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php>).

musical “pan-Scandinavianism,” among other things. These interactions can be read as auditory signs of participation in the host culture and in the modern age; however, the multifarious reception of supercultural musics by Norwegian-American musicians underscores the musicians’ individual agency as well as revealing how these materials were transformed into shifting signs of “Norwegianness.” The use of supercultural musics by Norwegian-American old-time musicians therefore expresses two opposing dynamics: the acceptance of “American” ways, and the subcultural domestication of supercultural materials, which made them “Norwegian” or “Norwegian-American” and served to renegotiate ethnic boundaries. Meanwhile, interplay via the diasporic intercultural—or diasporic networking—provided “cultural nourishment” for Norwegian-American musicians in the Upper Midwest and enabled them to participate in an imagined, transnational community.



## 6 Case Studies

### 6.1 Introduction

While the aim of Chapter Five was to address a broad terrain of processes through which Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with intercultural, supercultural, and diasporic intercultural forces and flows, this chapter aims to examine how performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music—in various sociomusical contexts—contributed to the construction of various Norwegian-American social identities.

In this chapter, I address the study's second research question:

*How were heterogeneous Norwegian-American identities constructed through performances of the genres of bygdedans and Norwegian-American old-time music in various sociomusical contexts in the American Upper Midwest, 1900–1970?*

Rather than giving a systematic overview of the variety of performance contexts for both genres, I take a different approach in this chapter, in which the individual musician and her/his performances constitute the analytical vantage point. Through case studies of two individual performers, fiddlers Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus, this chapter addresses a diversity of performance contexts and events for both music genres, including Norwegian-American *kappleiker*, Scandinavian-American vaudeville, Norwegian-American *bygdelag stevner*, concert performances, music festivals, and field and home recordings.

Neither of the selected case study subjects are typical or representative performers of *bygdedans* or Norwegian-American old-time music: Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling was one of very few female Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddle players active during the early twentieth century, while Daniel Aakhus's broad range of musical activity spanning a variety of genres, including Norwegian-American old-time music, *bygdedans* music, and classical music, distinguishes him as unusual. Andrea and Daniel were selected as case study subjects for several reasons: first, their atypicality underscores the heterogeneity of Norwegian-American musician identities in the Upper Midwest; by selecting unconventional examples, my aim has been to emphasize this heterogeneity. Second, while substantial qualitative data is available on both performers, neither have been studied in depth in previous publications; my aim has therefore also

been to draw attention to underexamined performers.<sup>150</sup> Histories of female performers are also largely missing from the historiography of Norwegian-American music. Finally, since the examples given in Chapter Five touch on a variety of other performers, my hope is that the present case studies, in combination with the examples given throughout Chapter Five, ensure that a diversity of performers are represented in the study.

## 6.2 Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling (1869–1952)

Hardanger fiddler Dagny (Dagne) Andrea Gunnarsdatter Veum was born on May 15, 1869, and was raised on the Uppigard Veum farm in Fyresdal, in the Vest-Telemark region.<sup>151</sup> She was the seventh of ten children, six of whom immigrated to America (Marvik, 1992, p. 1499).<sup>152</sup> Her parents were Gunnar Gunnarson Veum (1823–1903) and Gjertrud Knutsdotter Brokke (1835–1922).

Andrea began singing and playing music during her childhood, but it was not until adulthood that she flourished as a Hardanger fiddler. According to her son, Sverre, Andrea had an intense thirst for knowledge and learned to play both harmonica, accordion, and fiddle as a child in Fyresdal. In what is certainly an exaggeration of her accomplishments as a child, Sverre relates that she “memorized all the folk-songs, hymns, and tunes of Norway” (Quisling, 1953). Sverre states that Andrea was not permitted to play fiddle as a child, as her parents were opposed to fiddle playing for religious reasons. Even so, she managed to learn by practicing behind the barn (Vegheim, 1988a). As an adult, she learned Hardanger fiddle tunes “by watching her husband, Dr. Andreas Quisling” (Dietrichson, 1953, p. 5). Aside from learning tunes from her husband, little is known about other fiddlers Andrea may have learned from. One possible source for tunes at home in Fyresdal may have been the well-known fiddler Petter Veum (1811–1889); although she was not related to him, both she and Andreas had purportedly learned tunes from him (Ormtveit, 2012, p. 108).

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150 Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling has been investigated briefly in several publications (Ormtveit, 2012; Reinskås, 2008; Wagn, 2002). While he is mentioned in passing in several studies, the only previous publication on Daniel Aakhus and the Aakhus Concert Company is LeRoy Larson’s 1985 article (L. Larson, 1985).

151 It appears that Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling used Andrea as her first name, although many American sources also refer to her as Dagny Quisling. Throughout this chapter, she will be referred to as Andrea.

152 Andrea had four sisters and one brother who immigrated to America in the late 1870s and 1880s; she was the last of the siblings to immigrate.





*Figure 28: Portrait of Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling. Private collection.*

As a case study subject, Andrea is significant both because she is the only known active woman Hardanger fiddler of the period in question, and because she performed in a very broad range of contexts, including for Norwegian-American *bygdslag*, at Norwegian-American *kappleiker*, at the National Folk Festival and other multiethnic events, and on field recordings. Her use of an uncommon technique called “fiddling singing” is also of interest.

## 6.2.1 Andreas A. Quisling (1859–1911)

Since her husband had a significant influence on Andrea's development as a Hardanger fiddler, a brief biography of Andreas Quisling will be given first, before examining Andrea's musical life and performance history. Andreas was the son of District Sheriff Lars Abraham Rasmusson Qvisling (1816–1876) and Gro Jonsdotter Spokkeli Fjone (1821–1900), and was raised on the Lunden farm in Hegglandsgrend, only a few kilometers from Andrea's home on the Uppigard Veum farm. Andreas also played Hardanger fiddle. There are few records of his activity in Norway or the United States, but according to a nephew, Andreas met master fiddler Olav Gunnarson Napper (1833–1903), a fellow emigrant from Fyresdal, in Lake Mills, Iowa, and learned many tunes from him. His nephew also venerates Andreas's skill as a fiddler:

I have not heard any fiddler measure up to uncle Andreas in terms of the fine voice in his fiddle, the whole man was pure music, but he had to stick to his work as a doctor so there were long periods when he didn't touch the fiddle, but oh my, what a talent so it seemed to me that he was better than both Napperen and Myllarguten. (*Letter to Arne Bjørndal*, 1950, pp. 199–200).<sup>153</sup>

Andrea and Andreas married in Chicago, Illinois on October 24, 1891.<sup>154</sup> One source claims that the two had known each other in Norway and had gotten engaged before immigrating together to the United States (Dietrichson, 1953, p. 6).

Accounts of Andreas's pursuits in early adulthood give the impression of an adventurous spirit. He studied theology at Kristiania University starting in 1875 and switched to law, which he studied for three years. Following this he served as a lieutenant in the Norwegian army for one year, after which he spent several years at sea ("Doktor Andreas Quisling," 1911; "Dr. Quisling død," 1911). According to one source, he entered the navy and travelled in Asia for a time; another source claims that he travelled to Asia and Egypt (Iowa, 1910–1911, p. 290). Following this period, he journeyed to America: Norwegian emigration records show that he travelled from Kristiania to Minneapolis in April 1884. At some point during these first years in America he worked for the Maverick Oil Company; this work involved a number of trips abroad. According to his son, Sverre, who was interviewed during the taping of the 1988 Norwegian television series *De som dro vest*, which documented Norwegian-American music and history in Minnesota and Wisconsin, Andreas joined the army following his arrival in

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153 "Jeg har ikke hørt nogen spillemand komme op til onkel Andreas i fint mål i fela, hele karen var jo bare musik, men han måtte jo holle sig til doktringen saa det var lange tider han ikke tog i fela, men du store tid for et anleg saa de synest meg som han var bedre end både Napperen og Myllarguten."

154 According to Dietrichson, their marriage was in Lake Mills, Iowa; however, a record of their marriage in Chicago was found in the Cook County, Illinois Marriages Index (Records, 2010).

America, serving as a scout in the Dakota Territory, but he left the service after he developed a “rheumatic condition” (Vegheim, 1988a). He returned to Norway briefly in 1891, departing for the United States with Andrea on July 9 of that year. The couple departed from Kristiania and stated Albert Lea, Minnesota, as their destination (“Emigranter over Oslo 1867-1930: Andrea Quisling pe00000000476441,” n.d.; “Emigranter over Oslo 1867-1930: Andreas Quisling pe00000000476440,” n.d.).

Following their immigration, Andreas studied medicine at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, completing his studies in the Homeopathic Medical Department in 1893. He then taught at the university’s school of medicine for a time before the family moved to Lake Mills, Iowa, where he practiced medicine. Andrea and Andreas lived in Lake Mills until circa 1901, when they relocated to Madison, Wisconsin. In Madison, Andreas ran a medical practice in the lower level of the family home, specializing in the treatment of chronic disorders (Ormtveit, 2012, p. 107). Andrea and Andreas had six children, one of whom died as an infant: Agnes (1893–1893), Axel Goodwin (1894–1986), Sverre (1898–2001), Abraham (“Abe”) (1906–1990), and twins Gunnar (“Gunny”) Dagmart (1909–1951) and Rolf Andreas (1909–2001).

Andrea purportedly studied medicine informally, learning alongside Andreas while he was in medical school and acting as an assistant in his medical practice. Among other things, she learned how to tend to patients, prepare medicines, and evaluate symptoms. She is referred to as “Dr. Andrea Quisling, woman physician” in a 1922 newspaper article which describes an episode during which she was attacked by a deranged patient in her office (“Woman physician attacked in home,” 1922).

Medicine was somewhat of a “family profession” in the Quisling family and can be traced back to Andreas’s uncle, Andreas Rasmusson Bakka (1813–1906), who was a district physician in Vest-Telemark, as well as Andreas’s older brother, Nils Andreas Quisling (1854–1934). Andrea and Andreas’s sons Sverre, Abraham, Gunnar, and Rolf all became medical doctors, while Axel worked as an accountant for the family medical business. Together, the brothers founded the Quisling Clinic in Madison in 1933. The clinic, which was originally located on King Street, was formally opened at a new location at 2 W Gorham Street in 1936. The Gorham Street building’s Art Moderne features (which it acquired after a remodel in 1946, based on a design by architect Lawrence Monberg), make the building one of Madison’s landmark structures to this day.<sup>155</sup> During its prime, the clinic allegedly had a very good reputation; one source describes it as “a sort of Mayo clinic back in the day” (Tanzilo, 2009).

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155 The property was converted into an apartment building, called “Quisling Terrace,” in 2000.

Andreas Quisling's brother, Jon Lauritz Qvisling, was the father of Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945), a Norwegian military officer “whose collaboration with the Germans in the occupation of Norway during World War II established his name as a synonym for ‘traitor’” (Britannica, 2020). Before Vidkun's infamous collaboration with Nazi Germany during the German invasion of Norway in World War Two, the Quisling name was respected in Telemark, and many of the family members had prestigious careers as church leaders, priests, district sheriffs, doctors, authors, and officers.

During the taping of *De som dro vest*, Sverre Quisling also relates that his father built a Hardanger fiddle in America modelled on an old violin.<sup>156</sup> Carved on the scroll of Andreas's fiddle is the head of a Native American (Figure 29); as he shows the fiddle to the producers of the program, Sverre explains why his father chose to carve this motif, instead of the dragon's or lion's head that typically decorates the scroll of Hardanger fiddles: “the violin you see here, he made this himself, and he said ‘This is America. We can't put a dragon head on an American thing, those Americans they use Indians, they're dragons enough’” (Vegheim, 1988a). Notes written by one of the television show's producers include a more detailed description, provided by Sverre, of the building of Andreas's “American Hardanger fiddle”:

During his stay at the university, Andreas Quisling lived with a minister. One day the minister noticed that Andreas were looking a little glum, and asked him what was the matter. “Oh, I used to play the fiddle in Norway, and I should like to play here, but I have none.” “Well,” said the minister, “perhaps you could make one.” Andreas's eyes lit up, but he said, “But I don't have any wood.” “Well,” said the minister, “just look around here (we'll just) and you're welcome to use anything that you need.” So down came a mahogany bookcase, and Andreas knocked out the back and carved the back-piece for a fiddle out of it; another piece of furniture became the top, and soon Andreas had the body of a fiddle. He added a neck, hollowed out in the Hardanger style (four strings on top of the fingerboard, and four strings underneath it). And when it came to the head of the fiddle, he decided that since he was in America now, he would make this an American Hardanger fiddle. So instead of the traditional troll's head, with a dragon's face, golden crown, and flowing hair, he carved a grinning Indian head (cigar-store). He placed four regular tuning pegs in the neck for the four bowed strings, and for the four sympathetic strings, he carved four war-bonnet feathers (out of wood) to fit into the holes arranged in a diamond shape on the back of the Indian's head. The four extra strings attached

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156 Another source claims that Andreas built a Hardanger fiddle for himself and one for Andrea, and that these are now in the possession of family members in America (Ormtveit, 2012, p. 111). Andreas may have had contact with and received assistance from fiddle makers Gunnar and Knut Helland, who ran the Helland Brothers fiddle workshop in Cameron, and later in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin (Ormtveit, 2012, p. 111).

to the “feathers” in back, came out through the Indian’s grinning mouth (painted) and disappeared under the fingerboard. (Horne, 1976 and 1977)

Andreas’s “American Hardanger fiddle” can be regarded as a “hybrid” or “double object”: an example of hybrid material culture whose “parts originate in two different worlds” (Liebmann, 2015, p. 320). Constructed with the basic form of a traditional Norwegian Hardanger fiddle, including a hollowed-out fingerboard and eight strings, the instrument differs from the Norwegian standard in its decorative elements. Instead of a traditional lion’s head, Andreas carved what Sverre describes as a “cigar-store” depiction of a “grinning” Native American.<sup>157</sup> Andreas chose this motif because “he was in America now, [so] he would make [it] an American Hardanger fiddle,” and because, for Americans, “Indians . . . are dragons enough” (Horne, 1976 and 1977; Vegheim, 1988a). The instrument is a hybrid object in the sense that it combines Norwegian material culture with a distorted, stereotyped image of an Indigenous person similar to Anglo-American representations of Native Americans during the late nineteenth century. According to Lisa Aldred, as the colonization of North America escalated during the late 1800s, “genocidal measures were stepped up to get Native Americans out of the way of Anglo settlements, [and] portrayals of Native Americans became more blatantly racist and tarnished with Social Darwinist thought” (Aldred, 1993, p. 211).



*Figure 29: Detail of the scroll decoration on the “American Hardanger fiddle” made by Andreas Quisling. Screenshot NRK.*

<sup>157</sup> A number of different styles of scroll decoration have been used on Norwegian Hardanger fiddles. Bjørn Aksdal has identified four main types of scroll decor: human heads, animal heads, grotesques, and volutes (the traditional spiral shape used on standard violins) (Aksdal, 2009, p. 174). The lion’s head motif, which has remained the most common type of carved figure found on the scroll of Hardanger fiddles since the motif rose to predominance around 1900, stems from the coat of arms of Norway and became a popular decorative motif in late eighteenth century folk art. While other, older types of scroll decor sometimes had symbolic significance, the function of the modern lion’s head motif was primarily decorative.

Andreas carved the four tuning pegs for the instrument's sympathetic strings in the image of feathers from a Native American war bonnet; the "feather pegs" protruded from the back of the scroll, creating a semblance of a war bonnet (and replacing the "flowing hair" of the standard lion's head motif). The sympathetic strings emerged "through the Indian's grinning mouth (painted)." The combined effect of the figure's exaggerated facial features, its distorted facial expression, and what must have been an unsettling impression given by the four sympathetic strings emerging from the figure's large, open mouth, could be described as grotesque, thereby defining the Native American as a grotesque Other, while also placing the scroll motif somewhere in the vicinity of the "grotesque" type of Hardanger fiddle scroll decor found in Norway.

On May 6, 1911, two years after the birth of their youngest children, Andreas died of pneumonia at the age of 52. Andrea, now widowed, single-handedly raised their five young sons, all while taking over the treatment of Andreas's medical patients, with the assistance of two women from Norway. For the rest of her life she remained living near the shore of Lake Mendota at 421 North Paterson Street in Madison, Wisconsin.

### 6.2.2 A Late-Blooming Fiddler

Andrea's first and last documented performances in the Upper Midwest were at the first and last Norwegian-American *kappleiker*, in 1912 and 1952, respectively. It is noteworthy that this first documented performance took place just a year after the death of her husband, and after this it seems that she never stopped playing; indeed, she appears to have flourished as a performer in mid- and late life. Her most active decade seems to have been the 1930s, when she was in her 60s. It was during this decade that she gave her first performance at the National Folk Festival; she also performed at a number of *bygdslag stevner* and Daughters of Norway events, among other things. In the same decade, she also returned to Norway; during the summer of 1937 she travelled to Telemark on a trip organized by Telelaget in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the departure of the first emigrants from Telemark to America. During this trip she gave vocal and Hardanger fiddle performances, including a concert at the Breidablikk youth hall in Fyresdal. Her last known performance, at the last Norwegian-American *kappleik* in June 1952, took place just six months before she passed away at the age of 83.

Andrea was known for her optimistic, good-natured disposition, and Hardanger fiddle music, song, and dancing were an important part of everyday life at the Quisling home in Madison. To use music sociologist Tia DeNora's terminology, on an individual level, Andrea also seems to have used her own music-making for "self-conscious articulation work." In a memorial notice following her death of a heart ailment on December 2, 1952, her son, Sverre, writes:

Her sons remember her best for her inspiring cheer, and her firm faith in the goodness of God. When faced with problems and adversity she had but to play her violin and sing one of her favorite Norwegian hymns, and gloom miraculously faded. (Quisling, 1953)

This can be viewed as an example of how fiddling and singing can function to manage moods, as well as acting as both an initiator of, and a repository for certain emotions. As DeNora writes,

to play music as a virtual means of expressing or constructing emotion is also to define the temporal and qualitative structure of that emotion, to play it out in real time and then move on. In this sense music is both an instigator and a container of feeling. (DeNora, 2000, p. 58)

According to one source, Andrea gave roughly 100 musical performances during the 60-year period between 1892 and 1952 (Ormtveit, 2012, p. 108). Written records of performances collected during this study provide evidence of around 75 performances, and reports or mentions of her performances were found in approximately 150 newspaper articles/items. Andrea performed in a wide range of contexts, including events and meetings organized by various Norwegian-American *bygdslag*; by the Daughters of Norway and Sons of Norway organizations; and by aid societies and temperance organizations.<sup>158</sup> She was invited to perform at private social events and at public music festivals, and she also performed at a large number of Norwegian-American *kappleiker*. In addition to this diversity of live performance contexts, she also made audio recordings for the Archive of American Folk Song. Several of these performance contexts will be discussed in greater detail below.

### 6.2.3 “America’s Only Woman Hardanger Artist”

Andrea was unquestionably the most active woman Hardanger fiddler in the Upper Midwest during the first half of the twentieth century; a concert poster advertising a solo concert performance in Deerfield, Wisconsin declares her “America’s Only Woman Hardanger Artist” (Figure 30). Very few other female Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddlers have been documented from this period, and none of them were active performers to the extent that Andrea was.<sup>159</sup> Conversely, a larger number of women performers have been documented within the

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158 Andrea led a teetotal lifestyle; according one source, no one was permitted to drink at her house.

159 Kevin Hoeschen’s “Annotated List of Spelemenn in the Upper Midwest” lists two other female Hardanger fiddlers in addition to Andrea. These are Gro Gudmundsrud Svendsen (1841–1878) from Ål, Hallingdal, and Ragnhild Snorheim Anderson (1882–1970) from Vestre Slidre, Valdres (Hoeschen, 1989). In addition, Laura Hop Heller (1897–1978), daughter of Norwegian fiddler Lauritz Th. Hop (1861–1942), played Hardanger fiddle. She immigrated in 1950 to the Heller farm in Williston, North Dakota, and returned to Norway in 1970.

Norwegian-American old-time music genre; to date, 25 such performers have been recorded in the project database. Approximately half of these played fiddle, while the other half played accompaniment instruments, including piano, pump organ, accordion, guitar, mandolin, and double bass.<sup>160</sup> The prevalence of women accompanists in the genre is a reflection of gender practices associated with Norwegian-American old-time music, including the fact that women were often assigned instruments according to gender, rather than interest, and that they were commonly allocated musical roles that were supplementary to men's.



Figure 30: Andrea Quisling promotional poster. Private collection.

160 The distribution of instruments among the female performers entered in the database is likely not an accurate representation of the actual circumstances in the Norwegian-American old-time music genre. Information about nearly half of these female performers was found in research by Philip Martin and Anna C. Rue, both of whom address the theme of women fiddlers in their work, and may thus present an overrepresentation of women fiddlers in relation to women who played other instruments within the genre.



To a large extent, the absence of women Hardanger fiddlers in the Upper Midwest during the early twentieth century mirrors the gendered nature of Hardanger fiddling in Norway during the same time period. In Norway fiddle playing remained a male-dominated realm until the mid- to late twentieth century, although women fiddlers existed, in some cases in significant numbers, in many parts of the country dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>161</sup> In spite of this, there has been a “tendency to undercommunicate the fact that female musicians existed” in both written and oral accounts of the history of the genre (Graff, 2018, p. 9; M. Johansson, 2013, p. 367). According to Mats Johansson, whose 2013 study of gender codes ingrained in the stylistic practices of Norwegian folk music is one of few academic investigations of gender in that music genre, “this anonymization of women [in the written and oral history of the genre] is symptomatic of folk music history writing, female subjects being either completely invisible or portrayed as ‘exotic’ exceptions” (M. Johansson, 2013, p. 367).

Andrea has been mentioned briefly in a small number of Norwegian-language studies and historical writings about Norwegian folk music and immigrant culture (Ormtveit, 2012; Reinskås, 2008; Wagn, 2002), but the full extent of her activity as a musician has not previously been recognized or documented. She did, however, receive a multitude of mentions in Norwegian-American and American newspapers and appears to have been well-known in certain Norwegian-American circles in the Upper Midwest, particularly in Wisconsin—an obituary notice states that she was “well-known among Norwegians in America for her skill with the Hardanger fiddle” (“Mrs. Quisling avgaat ved Døden,” 1952). Nevertheless, I would argue that she was not wholly recognized, neither by her peers nor by folk music historians, as a serious musician or *spelemann*.<sup>162</sup>

Andrea must have been tenacious in order to challenge the prevailing patriarchal norms of the Norwegian-American music culture. The essence of the woman fiddler’s challenge is expressed succinctly by Johansson:

one might argue that at the core of the contemporary female folk musician’s struggle for artistic autonomy is a heritage of gendered imbalance; a patriarchal culture that has effectively silenced alternative voices and ensured a continued regime of dominating and dominated. (M. Johansson, 2013, p. 369)

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161 Nordfjord and Sunnmøre are two areas where a large number of women fiddlers were active during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The tradition of women fiddlers in these areas died out before 1850, likely due to the religious revival that took place in Western Norway between 1820 and 1850. This movement amplified pietistic ideals, wherein it was acceptable for women to do religious and domestic work, but fiddle playing was not approved (Fet, 1999, pp. 30–31).

162 Johansson defines the Norwegian term *spelemann* as “not neutrally descriptive (referring to anyone who occasionally plays folk tunes on the fiddle) as much as it is a hard-won title aligned with highly specialized musical skills and a fierce commitment to the craft” (M. Johansson, 2013, p. 368).

Through her extensive, broad performance activity, Andrea defied the social boundaries of what was considered normal behaviour for women during the first decades of the twentieth century. Not only was she a woman Hardanger fiddler who gave extensive solo performances in public, she was a middle-aged, religious, teetotaling woman fiddler who was also known to use the unusual technique of fiddling and singing simultaneously (more on this below). In more ways than one, then, Andrea's musical voice and identity were "alternative" ones. As will be discussed subsequently, it could be argued that the patriarchal Norwegian-American *kappleik* culture also worked subtly to minimize Andrea's alternative voice by allocating her to the "third class" category and awarding her "honorary prizes" instead of actual rankings.

#### 6.2.4 A Fiddling Singer

As mentioned above, in addition to being a woman fiddler, Andrea was also unconventional as a Hardanger fiddle performer in the sense that she was a "fiddling singer": a number of accounts of her performances describe her singing to her own accompaniment on Hardanger fiddle. The term "fiddling singer" was originated by Johanna Seim in her recent investigation of the overlooked tradition of simultaneous singing and Hardanger fiddling in Norway. Seim shows that fiddling singing is a relatively uncommon practice that likely emerged during the first half of the twentieth century in Norway, citing examples of 12 Hardanger fiddlers (11 of whom were men) who sang to their own accompaniment on fiddle. Most of what they performed using this technique was religious songs, and many of the performers were actively religious, which Seim suggests provides grounds for establishing a relationship between the tradition of fiddling singing and religious practice:

A connection between religious practice and fiddling singing in Norway can be drawn, in the sense that preaching and prayer can be identified as the main functions under which the accompaniment of a singer's own singing on the fiddle was employed traditionally. (Seim, 2020, p. 74)

Regarding the musical accompaniment style used in traditional fiddling singing, Seim observes that all 12 of the performers she investigated "accompany singing on the fiddle melodically, instead of harmonically or rhythmically" (Seim, 2020, p. 69), but that there are a number features within the melodic accompaniment that, when combined, create a heterophonic sound.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Seim describes the "sound" of fiddling singers as "a combination of a single melody performed on two instruments (voice and fiddle) with different timbres; in parallel octaves (with the exception of one female performer); with subtle variations in intonation, and subtle variations and omissions of single melody notes; ornaments, such as trills and grace notes, adding many tiny extra notes; [and] double stops or drones adding extra notes" (Seim, 2020, p. 74).

While Seim stipulates that, in traditional Norwegian fiddling singing, “the focus is on the singing, while the fiddle playing forms the accompaniment, and not vice versa” (Seim, 2020, p. 62), in Andrea’s case, she seems to have used the technique both to accompany vocal folk music, as well as using vocals to double the melodies of fiddle tunes. In this sense, she could be called both a fiddling singer and a singing fiddler; in the first case, the fiddle functions as an accompaniment instrument for the vocal melody, and in the second, the voice serves as accompaniment for a fiddle tune.

There is ample written evidence of Andrea’s use of this technique. One source describes her employment of the technique during a performance she gave on the second evening of a 1924 *stevne* and *kappleik* in Minneapolis: “Mrs. Dr. Quisling, good at playing fiddle tunes, showed herself to also be a folk singer. She executed some folk songs, simultaneously playing the melodies on her violin” (“Kappleiken,” 1924b).<sup>164</sup> In a second example, during a performance she gave at a meeting of the Madison Vosselag on January 12, 1929, she “played several selections on the Hardanger violin, closing with a number in which she sang a ‘tusseslaat’ to her own accompaniment” (“John Pederson New President of Vossalag,” 1929). A third example, taken from an article advertising the upcoming *kappleik* in Albert Lea, Minnesota, on June 29 and 30, 1928, describes her fiddling singing as a special attraction for audiences: “Mrs. Quisling sings and plays her violin at the same time and those who have heard her play and sing ‘Olav! Olav! Kjyre de ha Kalva,’ will want to hear her again” (“Many Visitors to be in City for Conventions,” 1928). One recorded example of Andrea’s use of the technique can be heard on folk music collector Helene Stratman-Thomas’s 1941 field recording of Andrea’s performance of a schottische tune, in which Andrea joins in on vocals on the second round of the tune.<sup>165</sup>

It is not clear whether Andrea developed her technique of fiddling singing on her own, or whether lines can be drawn to the tradition of fiddling singing found in Norway.<sup>166</sup> The 12 fiddling singers identified by Seim were from the regions of Indre Agder, Telemark, and Hadeland, so it is not inconceivable that Andrea may have come into contact with the tradition before emigrating. However, the oldest performer identified by Seim was born in 1892, and it is uncertain whether the tradition existed earlier on; according to Seim, because fiddle

164 “Fru Dr. Quisling, flink til at spille Slaatter, viste sig ogsaa at være Visesangerske. Hun foredrog nogle Folkeviser, spillende Melodierne samtidig paa sin Violin.”

165 This tune is a very widespread, and therefore likely old, Norwegian *reinlender* tune commonly known as “Fireskillingen.” Many different lyrics have been set to the melody, including the children’s songs “Du og jeg og vi to” and Margrethe Munthe’s “Geiterams” (“Å, jeg vet en seter”). Andrea’s recording of the tune for Stratman-Thomas can be heard at <https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/26UPQH22LM4459C>

166 There is also evidence of a similar tradition in America: in her study of the relationship between fiddle and song traditions in the music of West Virginia, Erynn Marshall notes that “female fiddlers . . . were inclined to sing while they played and performed numerous vocal pieces, especially sacred songs, on the instrument” (E. Marshall, 2006, p. 179).

playing was viewed as sinful by followers of the religious revival movements of the nineteenth century, fiddle accompaniment for hymns and religious songs before 1900 would have likely been regarded as unacceptable. On the other hand, Seim's sources were all identified based on a survey of audio recordings found in folk music archives, so it is possible that the phenomenon existed before 1900, although documentation has not been found to confirm this.

Andrea may have also given performances in which she played fiddle and danced at the same time. According to her son, Sverre, Andrea "never would play, but what she performed at the same time. And then sometimes . . . she'd take her dress and pin it up . . . so if she wanted to kick she could. And that was different . . . they'd look at that and say well that *is* different" (Vegheim, 1988a).

### 6.2.5 Performances for Norwegian-American *Bygdelag*

The list of Andrea's documented performances compiled during this research reveals that she gave performances at *stevner* and other events organized by a variety of Norwegian-American *bygdelag* during a period of time spanning from at least 1912 until 1952. These include Søndfjordlaget (also known as Sunnfjordlaget), Hardangerlaget, Vosselaget in Madison, Southern Wisconsin Sognalag, Sigdalslaget, Setesdalslaget, Valdres Samband, and local and national chapters of Telelaget. Before discussing Andrea's performances at *bygdelag* events, some background on the *bygdelag* phenomenon, its function with regard to Norwegian-American identity construction, and the general role of *bygdedans* and old-time music at *bygdelag* events will be given.

#### *Music and the Bygdelag Movement*

*Bygdelag* were a distinctive type of social organization established by Norwegian-American immigrants during the early twentieth century. Historian Odd Lovoll defines the *bygdelag* as "a society of immigrant families from a specific Norwegian *bygd* (rural community), valley, district, or fjord area" (Lovoll, 1999, p. 282). The societies aimed to gather Norwegian immigrants who hailed from the same Norwegian rural district, organizing annual (or more frequent) *stevner* (gatherings) which served as reunions and contexts where elements of both *bygd* and Norwegian national culture were reconstructed. Emerging primarily because of the strong tendency among Norwegian immigrants to foster connections with their local, in addition to national origins, the movement began in 1899 with the convening of what would become members of the first *bygdelag*, Valdres Samband. In the decades that followed, approximately fifty *bygdelag* with nationwide appeal were established, in addition to several hundred whose activities were restricted to regional areas (Lovoll, 1975, p. 15).

The *bygdslag* and their *stevner* served several functions with regard to Norwegian-American identity construction and were a significant component in broader Norwegian-American myth-making processes. Furthermore, *stevner* can be viewed as what Øverland calls “ethnic celebrations” and as acts of “homemaking,” since they served to affirm allegiance to, and participation in, Norwegian (local and national) and American cultures and ideologies. First and foremost, the *bygdslag* aimed to revive and strengthen Norwegian-American localism and immigrant attachment to the home *bygd* by reinterpreting elements of local rural folk culture within the framework of the *stevne*. One of the goals here was to cultivate respect for Norwegian rural “peasant” or “low” culture, which Lovoll points out was looked down upon by urban Norwegian Americans who “did not wish to reinforce the widespread view of Norwegians as being country folk” (Lovoll, 1999, p. 283). In addition to strengthening localism, *bygdslag* also functioned on a broader level to reaffirm loyalty to homeland cultural traditions and “preserve a national romantic and idealized view” of Norway (Lovoll, 1999, p. 283). As historian Daron Olson has observed, the *bygdslag* “worked to present Norwegian-American nationalism’s strength as residing in the rugged descendants of those rural pioneers” (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 95). Moreover, they served a function in Norwegian-American positioning processes vis-à-vis the host society: the *stevne* was also a site for the demonstration of compatibility between Norwegian-American ethnic cultural practices and American ideals. Finally, the *bygdslag stevne* also served as a psychological and emotional outlet and support for Norwegian immigrants: events and performances at the *stevne* could alleviate psychological pressure, function as outlets for homesickness, and foster a sense of self-respect and a “positive view of their lowly peasant origin” (Lovoll, 1999, p. 284).

The role and acceptance of folk music at *stevner* varied between the different *bygdslag*. Lovoll points out that *bygdslag* activities were generally permeated by a “church-centered and pious spirit” due to the church’s authority in rural Norwegian-American communities, and *bygdslag* leaders were often local pastors, many of whom restricted, or were opposed to the cultivation of homeland folk culture (Lovoll, 1999, p. 285). While the most pious *bygdslag*, particularly those that represented regions in southwestern Norway, held “revival meetings,” other *bygdslag*, such as Hallinglaget, Telelaget, and Setesdalslaget, were “to a large extent able to free themselves from a pietism that regarded all entertainment as sin” and “promoted folk dancing, fiddle playing, and storytelling” (Lovoll, 1975, p. 18; 1999, p. 285). Many other *bygdslag* can be located somewhere between these two poles.

At *stevner* organized by those *bygdslag* that encouraged the performance of folk music, both *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music might be performed. Performances of *bygdedans* music, mainly on Hardanger fiddle, were generally scheduled as part of a *stevne*’s official program and often functioned as important components in the reconstruction of *bygd* culture, as well as in the acting out of rituals associated with Norwegian-American identity. For

example, part of the official program at *stevner* held by Setesdalslaget was “Setesdalskvelden” (the “Setesdal Evening”), a program featuring music, dance, and song that aimed to recreate Setesdal culture:

The evening of the *stevne*'s first day is called *Sætedalskvelden*, and then one tries to relive life in the valley, which is why the program consists as much as possible of fiddle playing, *halling* and *springar* dance, the singing of *stev* and folk costumes from Setesdal. (T. O. Lien, 1930)<sup>167</sup>

The cultivation of Norwegian localism through performances such as these was also understood as a means of being a “good American.” In a speech by Professor Peter Munch from the University of North Dakota given at the 1954 Setesdalslaget *stevne*, Munch suggests that

[t]he best contribution we can make to this country is to be true to our own background and be proud of it . . . . “If you want to be a good American, be a good Norwegian, and if you want to be a good Norwegian, be a good Setesdøl,” he said. (M. E. Johnson, 1954)<sup>168</sup>

Performances of *bygdedans* music also served as psychological and emotional outlets for attendees. Many accounts of Hardanger fiddle performances at *stevner* remark on the music's affective capacity: the music is variously described as enabling listeners to relive idealized memories and landscapes from Norway, forget their sorrows, or relieve other psychological pressures. For example, commenting on a performance of folk songs and fiddle tunes by Andrea Quisling and Olav Ormbreck following the banquet on the first evening of the 1925 Telelaget *stevne* in Minneapolis, one writer observed: “People can never get enough of songs and tunes by Mrs. Quisling and Ormbrek, it reminds them so much of their youth in Norway” (A. Leifson, 1925).<sup>169</sup> In an account of one of Anund Roheim's performances at the 1952 Setesdalslaget *stevne* in Oklee, Minnesota, his performance is characterized as “doing attendees good” by bringing forth visions and sensations of the Norwegian landscape:

Again this year we had the honour of hearing the famous Anund Roheim, now from Great Falls, Mont., play the Hardanger fiddle. His notes trilled beautifully and we

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167 “Første Dags Kveldsstævne kalder man Sætedalskvelden, og da prøver man at leve op igjen Livet i Dalen, hvorfor Programmet bestaar saa meget som mulig af Felespil, Halling og Springar Dans, Stevjing og Sætedalsbunader.”

168 “Det beste bidrag vi kan gi til dette land er å være tro mot vår egen bakgrunn og være stolt av den, sa Munch. ‘Hvis du vil være ein god amerikaner, vær ein god Nordmann, og hvis du vil være ein god Nordmann, vær ein god Setesdøl,’ sa han.”

169 “Folk faar aldrig nok af Sanger og Slaatter af Mrs. Quisling og Ormbrek, det minder dem saa meget om Ungdomsdage i Norge.”

never get tired of listening to him. It does us all so much good to hear such music—sometimes we thought we were sitting by a waterfall and heard nature speaking to us—birds, other animals and waterfalls. It is wonderful! (S. B. Johnson, 1953)<sup>170</sup>

*Stevner* were also regarded as having the ability to “do good” during the difficult years of the Great Depression. The board of Setesdalslaget determined that they would arrange a *stevne* in 1933 because “it was agreed that a convention like ours can do a lot of good in times like these” (Bjørnaraa & Lien, 1933).<sup>171</sup>

*Bygdelag stevner* were also important performance contexts for some Hardanger fiddlers because they provided the motivation to practice and the opportunity to meet other fiddlers. While Gunnar Odden remarked that he had not played his fiddle much due in part to the lack of opportunities to learn new tunes and meet other fiddlers in Minnesota, one context in which he performed was at the *stevner* held by Telelaget and Setesdalslaget, where he met other Hardanger fiddlers such as Charlie Kittilson (1883–1969) and Anund Roheim. Gunnar relates that when the date of the *stevne* was approaching, fiddlers would begin practicing in preparation: “of course when they know they were going to have a convention they can have started to play more or less, to practice up” (Odden, 1974).

Furthermore, the acting out of selectively transplanted Norwegian cultural traditions and rituals at *stevner* that integrated performances of *bygdedans* music, such as re-enactments of Norwegian country weddings, also enhanced the sense of a shared local and national heritage and afforded the opportunity to perform loyalty to the home *bygd* and to the Norwegian nation. Rue and Lovoll describe how members of the *bygdelag* Hardangerlaget engaged in a group re-enactment of a Norwegian country wedding, modelled after Adolph Tidemand and Hans Gude’s well-known national romantic painting, *Brudeferd i Hardanger* (1848), at the *lag*’s first *stevne* in 1911 (Lovoll, 1975, pp. 89–90; Rue, 2009, pp. 56–57):

As might be the case at a *bonde* wedding in old Hardanger, a master of ceremonies headed the bridal party as it marched into the banquet hall, followed by a fiddler and the bride and groom in traditional wedding attire. Next came the bridal attendants—young men, maids, and matrons, the latter wearing the Hardanger kerchief indicating married status. Thirty-five young girls in festive folk dress completed the impressive cortege.

170 “Igjen iaar fik vi den Ære at høre den berømte Anund Roheim, nu fra Great Falls, Mont., spille paa Hardangerfela. Hans Toner trillet vakkert og vi blir aldrig træt av at høre paa ham. Det gjør os alle saa godt at faa høre slige Toner—somme Tider syntes vi, at vi sad ved en Fos og hørte Naturen tale til os—Fugle, andre Dyr og Fossefald. Det er vidunderlig!”

171 “[M]an var enige i, at et Stævne som vort kan gjøre meget godt i Tider som disse.”

When the procession had lined up on the stage, a male singing society, Minnehaha Mandskor, surrounded the group and intoned the beautiful and romantic song bearing the same name as the painting and describing a wedding party plying the majestic Hardangerfjord. (Lovoll, 1975, p. 90)

This invention, which may have roots in the Norwegian *Jonsokbryllup* custom, became a recurring tradition at Hardangerlaget's annual gatherings, as well as being adopted by other *bygdelag*.<sup>172</sup> Lovoll observes that the tradition “clearly revealed the idealized and romantic notions of Norway still alive in the immigrant societies” and expressed their conscious cultivation of “an emotional experience, seeking out distinctive aspects of the old *bygd* life” (Lovoll, 1975, p. 90). Another such transplanted and reconstructed tradition cultivated by some of the *bygdelag* was the Norwegian *kappleik* (folk music competition)—more will be said about this performance context below.

While performances of *bygdedans* music at *stevner* were largely formal, organized occurrences that functioned to reconstruct *bygd* culture, relieve psychological pressure, and affirm loyalty to Norwegian local and national heritage, performances of old-time music had a recreational function, and primarily occurred in the context of social dancing held following the official *stevne* program, or between more “official” numbers on the program. There is much evidence of old-time music being performed in such contexts: for instance, newspaper accounts of Setesdalslaget's *stevner* throughout the 1950s and 1960s report that “old-time fun” was held after the program (*oldtime moro etter programmet*), and performers included dance ensembles led by the Sorenson brothers, Selmer Ramsey, and Ralph Berg, among others.

### *Andrea Quisling's Performances at Bygdelag Stevner*

Andrea performed regularly at *stevner* held by various *bygdelag*. The *lag* she frequented most was Telelaget, in both its local and national chapters—this is logical, since the *lag* represented Andrea's personal regional connections to the Telemark district. Andrea's performances at Telelag *stevner* seem to have been viewed by many as an integral element of the events, and both her physical appearance in her Telemark *bunad* (folk costume) and her music and dance performances functioned as “symbolic abstractions” in the construction of localist and broader Norwegian-American identities (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 86). As a rule, Andrea and a lifelong friend, Johanne Leifson, who had grown up on a neighbouring farm in Fyresdal, appeared at the *stevner* dressed in their *bunader*: “something was missing from the Telelag *stevne* until

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172 *Jonsokbryllup* was a folk tradition associated with the holiday known in Norway as *Sankthans* or *Jonsok* (the Feast Day of Saint John the Baptist) which is celebrated on June 24 as well as on the preceding evening, Saint John's Eve (called *Sankthansaften* or *Jonsokaften*). *Jonsokbryllup* was a make-believe wedding in which children would perform an imitation of a real wedding celebration, complete with a bridal couple, pastor, fiddler, and wedding guests, and was especially prevalent in Western Norway (Dybdahl, 2020).



Johanne Leifson and Andrea Quisling entered the hall in their beautiful Telemark costumes. Then the jubilation broke out” (J. Leifson, 1953).<sup>173</sup> Both her performances and her appealing personality made a lasting impression on other *stevne* participants: Dagny Dietrichson declares that she and her friends “remember very well the woman who played the Hardangerfele at the Telelag. She always appeared in her Telemark costume, and she always had time to talk with us. We admired her sharp insight, her charm, and her ability” (Dietrichson, 1953, p. 6).

The following commemorative poem, written by Marie Sexe and published in *Telesoga* (Telelaget’s quarterly/semiannual publication) following Andrea’s death in 1952, emphasizes how her *bygdelag* performances functioned to construct an idealized image of homeland rural cultural traditions. In the poem, her physical appearance onstage—her *bunad* and fiddle in particular—is credited with creating a lasting, unique image, and her music, singing, and her spirit itself are defined as wholly Norwegian. The elements of culture mentioned in the poem—Andrea’s *bunad*, Hardanger fiddle, and repertoire of Norwegian vocal and fiddle music—are part of a repertoire of Norwegian cultural heritage used to connect with an idealized, Norwegian national culture:

#### Commemorative Words about Andrea Quisling

*Dear Dagny Andrea, we mourn today  
for your passing so calm and still.  
Never again will we meet at Telemarks-lag  
to enjoy your song and your playing.*

*There is sorrow in your city—there is sorrow in your home—  
and by thousands for whom you were a friend!  
We so clearly see you come out on the stage—  
but and truly—never again.*

*In your Telemark dress and with the fiddle in hand  
you created an image like few can!  
You were Norwegian in your playing, in your song, in your spirit  
til the last beat of your heart.*

*You will be missed by all, I know that for certain,  
but your memory will always be dear.  
And so we say thanks for every moment and for the last,  
and the good we learned from you.*

#### Mindeord om Andrea Quisling

*Kjære Dagny Andrea, vi sørger idag  
for din bortgang saa rolig og still.  
Aldrig mere vi mødes paa Telemarks-lag  
for at nyde din sang og dit spil.*

*Der er sorg i din by—der er sorg i dit hjem—  
og av tusener som du var ven!  
Vi saa tydelig ser dig paa scenen kom frem—  
men og virkelig—aldrig igjen.*

*I din Telemarks-dragt og med fela i haand  
du et billede skapte som faa!  
Du var norsk i dit spil, i din sang, i din aand  
til det sidste dit hjerte fik slaa.*

*Du blir savnet av alle, det ved jeg for vist,  
men dit minde vil alltid bli kjært.  
Og saa sier vi tak for hver stund og for sidst,  
og det gode fra dig vi fik lært. (Sexe, 1953)*

173 “Det manglet noget ved telestevnet indtil Johanne Leifson og Andrea Quisling traadte ind i salen i sine prægtige telemarksdragter. Da brød jubelen løs.”

## 6.2.6 Norwegian-American *Kappleiker*

A number of the *bygdelag* events Andrea performed at were combined with *kappleiker* (folk music competitions), in which she also usually competed. The Norwegian-American *kappleik* can be viewed as another transplanted and reconstructed Norwegian tradition cultivated by some of the *bygdelag*; following the organization of the first Norwegian-American *kappleik* in 1912, these events became an important context for the performance of *bygdedans* music in the Upper Midwest until the 1950s. Before discussing Andrea's participation in *kappleiker*, the emergence of the *kappleik* in Norway and the Upper Midwest and its function with regard to Norwegian-American identity construction will be explored.

### *The Kappleik in Norway*

The Norwegian *kappleik* has partial origins in forms of informal music and dance competition that occurred in preindustrial rural Norwegian society. Up until the mid-1800s, it was commonplace for fiddlers and dancers to meet and compete at markets and mountain dances held in various locations and times of the year. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, these informal competitions had lost their foothold in Norwegian rural society at the same time as the new, modern *runddans* melodies and dances were becoming established. Beginning in the 1870s, advocates of the national cultural movement organized folk music contests with the aim of upholding and stimulating older rural music and dance forms; for instance, the Norwegian Trekking Association (*Den Norske Turistforening*) arranged competitions on some of the oldest Norwegian folk instruments, such as *lur*, *bukkehorn*, and *langeleik*. These events provided the model and inspiration for the first Hardanger fiddle *kappleik*, held in 1888 at the Grivi farm in Bø, Telemark (Aksdal & Nyhus, 1993, pp. 248–249).

The first Hardanger fiddle *kappleik* with nationwide appeal was arranged in 1896 by *Vestmannalaget* (an organisation for the promotion of the *nynorsk* language and Norwegian rural dialects) in Bergen. Between 1896 and 1914, *Vestmannalaget* held a *kappleik* approximately once every two years, and the event developed into a kind of national competition, attracting some of the best fiddlers from around the country. Composer Edvard Grieg and violinist and composer Johan Halvorsen are also known to have attended the events, and Halvorsen served as a judge at the 1896 *kappleik* (Bjørndal & Alver, 1985, pp. 198–199). The participation of these and many other prominent representatives of Norwegian “high culture” during this initial period gave the events legitimacy and aided in the establishment of the *kappleik* as an institution (Omholt, 2018, p. 238). Moreover, by transplanting rural music onto the contest stage, the *kappleik* conveyed status and prestige on the music; this is similar, and related to

the migration of *bygdedans* music to the concert stage during the same period (more will be said about the Norwegian “concert era” phenomenon below).

For many Hardanger fiddle players in Norway, the *kappleik* became a central performance context. The competitions also impacted various aesthetic preferences connected to performances of *bygdedans* music. As Per Åsmund Omholt has noted, since its emergence the *kappleik* has functioned to establish and control various aesthetic and quality criteria in the performance of Norwegian folk music (Omholt, 2018). Early *kappleiker* were also intended to serve as a framework through which fiddlers would be encouraged to improve the quality of their performances, and refinement was one of several important aesthetic criteria.

### *The Norwegian-American Kappleik: A Transplanted Tradition*

Norwegian immigrants transplanted the *kappleik* to the Norwegian-American context in the early twentieth century, fostering it at first within the framework of the *bygdelag*. The earliest known Norwegian-American *kappleik* was held on May 17, 1912 in Stoughton, Wisconsin and was organized during a gathering of the *bygdelag* Wisconsin Telelag. A brief description of the event is given in Telelaget’s quarterly publication, *Telesoga*: “in the evening there was a *kappleik* on Hardanger fiddle in the auditorium, which was packed. It was the first *kappleik* that has been held in America” (Oftelie, 1912, p. 30).<sup>174</sup> *Kappleiker* were also held at *stevner* arranged by regional chapters of Telelaget in 1913 and 1915.

In 1915 a discrete organization for Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddle players was formed: at the Wisconsin Telelaget *stevne* in Ellsworth that year, Telelaget’s chairman, A. A. Trovaten, put forth the idea of founding a Norwegian-American association for Hardanger fiddlers. The proposal was embraced by members of the *lag*, and at Telelaget’s annual meeting, which took place on the following weekend, on June 24 and 25 in Montevideo, Minnesota, the new fiddlers’ association held its first official *kappleik*. Six fiddlers competed: they were Peter Aasland, Ole Dølen, Hans Rygh, Olav Ormbrekk, Øystein Einung, and Hans Fykerud. The competition was judged by Hovar Hammers, John Westerheim, and Hardanger fiddle maker Knut Helland. Telelaget resolved to purchase a silver cup to be awarded to the winners of this and future *kappleiker*. The 1915 *kappleik* was won by fiddlers Hans Fykerud and Hans Rygh (Oftelie, 1915, p. 27).

During its existence the fiddlers’ association was known under several names, including “Hardangerviolinist forbundet af Amerika” (Hardanger Violinist Association of America),

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174 “Um kvelden var der kappleik paa haringfela i Auditorium, som var fullpakka. De var den fyste kappleik, som er holden i Amerika.”

“Spelemannsforbundet af Amerika” (Fiddler’s Association of America), and “Spelemanns Laget af Amerika” (hereafter referred to as Spelemannsforbundet). As Lovoll points out, the formation of Spelemannsforbundet was a “direct result of *bygdelag* activity” (Lovoll, 1999, p. 286), and the organization’s *kappleiker* continued to be arranged in conjunction with *bygdelag stevner*, particularly those arranged by Telelaget, until the mid-1920s (for an overview of the dates and locations of Norwegian-American *kappleiker*, see Appendix 4). As one of the *bygdelag* that most actively encouraged the performance of folk music and dance, it is no surprise that Telelaget played a central role in the establishment and cultivation of the Norwegian-American *kappleik*.

Spelemannsforbundet is characterized in *Skandinavens Almanak og Kalender* as the smallest nationwide Norwegian-American organization: in 1925 the organization had over 100 members, most of whom were active fiddlers living in the northwestern United States. The organization’s principal stated aims were preservationist, but it also aimed to stimulate interest in “Norwegian national music” (*bygdedans* music) in America and credited itself with having contributed to a growth of interest in Hardanger fiddle music. A description of the organization in *Skandinavens Almanak og Kalender* reads: “All members are Hardanger violin virtuosos, who mainly play Norwegian national melodies, *halling* and *springer* [*sic*], and the purpose of the organization is to promote and preserve this kind of music from oblivion in this country” (Bjørnaraa, 1924).<sup>175</sup> Although not explicitly stated in its aims, the organization also functioned to bring together Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddlers and to create a new arena for the performance of *bygdedans* music in America. The organization’s main activity was arranging an annual *kappleik*.

Like *bygdelag stevner*, Norwegian-American *kappleiker* can be regarded as “ethnic celebrations” in that they functioned as a framework for the affirmation of loyalty to, and participation in, both Norwegian and American cultures and ideologies. Affirmation of allegiance to homeland culture is articulated as one of the aims of Norwegian-American *kappleiker* in a 1921 newspaper article by fiddler Harald Smedal, who served as Spelemannsforbundet’s chairman of the board that year:

The chief concern of our *kappleiker* is not to find out who comes in first, second or third place—no, our great goal is and must be to maintain the preservation of our ancestry. To scorn one’s ancestry is to scorn oneself, as well as one’s father and mother. Let us therefore strive to cherish what our forefathers gave us—our mother

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<sup>175</sup> “Alle medlemmer er Hardanger-violin virtuoser, som fortrinsvis spiller norske nationalmelodier, halling og springer, og formaalet med organisationen er at opelske og bevare fra forglemmelse i dette land denne slags musik.”

tongue and our national music, which is so wonderful and rich. In addition, it is absolutely, genuinely Norwegian. (H. Smedal, 1921)<sup>176</sup>

*Kappleiker* also served as sites for the demonstration of compatibility between Norwegian-American cultural practices and American ideals. In his closing speech at the 1924 *kappleik* in Minneapolis, Professor Gisle Bothne asserted that Spelemannsforbundet's *kappleiker* contributed to the furtherance of American society; to this end, he encouraged Norwegian Americans to

maintain their national values, their national character, be themselves. They should play their note in the great orchestra beneath the star-spangled banner. America would then become an orchestra of people which would surpass all others. That is what this *kappleik* would contribute to. ("Spelemanskappleiken i Amerika," 1924)<sup>177</sup>

Similarly, in a speech at the 1920 *kappleik*, Norwegian-American politician James Thompson of La Crosse, Wisconsin underscored certain "stable" traits of the Norwegian-American group and its strong ideological ties to American society:

In a fine fine manner he then spoke of our national music . . . the fixed character of the Norwegian people—the Norwegian people as the best American citizens, who had taken with them from Mother Norway their strong democratic tendencies, always working for freedom—freedom is the thing that a Norwegian values more than anything else. (H. Smedal, 1920)<sup>178</sup>

Organizers of *stevner* and *kappleiker* alike may have also been stimulated by American national festive culture in the construction of their own ethnic celebrations. Geneviève Fabre and Jürgen Heideking suggest that ethnic groups, which had largely been excluded from mainstream American celebrations and pageantry such as Independence Day and Columbus Day, were "inspired by the grand processions and festivals of American democracy to organize their own

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176 "Det er ikke Hovedsagen med disse vore Kappleiker at finde ud hvem der bliver første, anden eller tredje Mand—nei vort store Maal er og maa være at holde oppe for Bevaring vor Herkomst. At ringeagte sin Herkomst er at ringeagte sig selv samt Far og Mor. Lad os derfor prøve at værne om hvad Fædrene gav os—vort Modersmaal og vor nationale Musik, der er så vidunderlig og rig. Dertil er den absolut ægte norsk."

177 "Taleren opfordret norske folk herover til at holde paa sine nasjonale værdier, sit nasjonale særpreg, være sig selv. De burde spille sin tone i det store orkester under stjernebanneret. Amerika vilde da bli et folkeorkester som vilde overgaa alle andre. Det var det denne kappleik vilde bidra til."

178 "Paa en fin fin Maade talte han saa om vor nationale Musik . . . det norske Folks faste Karakter—det norske Folk som de bedste amerikanske Borgere, der havde medtaget fra Moder Norge sine stærke demokratiske Tendenser, altid arbejdende for Frihet—Friheden er jo den Ting som en Normand sætter mere Pris paa end nogen anden."

ceremonial life and commemorations” and “staged their own ritualized events as alternative celebrations with their own distinctive sites” (Fabre & Heideking, 2001, p. 12).

Norwegian-American *kappleiker* were modelled after Norwegian *kappleiker*, but the format of the program was also largely based on the *bygdelag stevne* framework; moreover, as a “transplanted” or “reconfigured” tradition, they differed from the Norwegian prototype in several ways. *Kappleiker* were mainly held in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota and usually lasted for two days. In many cases, they were held at the end of June, around the time of the holiday known in Norway as *Sankthans* or *Jonsok*.<sup>179</sup> During the competition entrants were arranged into three classes, numbered first, second, and third according to their ability.<sup>180</sup> Fiddlers had to win first prize in their class in order to move up into a higher class, with first class being the highest and most prestigious. Dreng Bjørnaraa points out three reasons for the division of competitors into classes according to ability, or “quality”: first, it provided more players the opportunity of winning a prize (which probably aided in persuading more fiddlers to participate); second, it had a pedagogical aim directed towards the audience, with the intention of helping listeners learn to discern musical quality within the genre; and third, the fact that fiddlers could potentially advance from a “lower” class to a “higher” one was meant to motivate them to improve their playing (Bjørnaraa, 1974). Judges were chosen from the various classes so that fiddlers in the second or third class judged the playing of the first-class fiddlers, and vice-versa. As each fiddler performed, Bjørgulv Bjørnaraa, acting as a kind of curator-emcee, provided background information about the tunes and explained the meaning of the music to the audience.<sup>181</sup>

Aside from the *kappleik*, the two-day program contained a variety of events ranging from various musical numbers (e.g. brass band, choir, classical, piano, and solo vocal performances); *allsang* (group singing); folk dance performances and a folk dance competition (*kappdans*); speeches by prominent Norwegian-American politicians, newspaper editors, clergymen, authors, *bygdelag* leaders, or artists; poetry readings; lectures; theatrical performances;

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179 In Norway *Sankthans* coincided with ancient traditions associated with midsummer and fertility. One of the central customs associated with the holiday in Norway was the burning of a large bonfire on Saint John's Eve. *Sankthansaften* was filled with games, dancing, music, and drink for both young and old.

180 The *kappleiker* held between 1912 and 1916 operated with a single competitive class in which all entrants would compete. Two competitive classes (first class and second class) were first introduced at the 1917 *kappleik* in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. An additional category, third class, was introduced at the 1925 *kappleik* in St. Paul, Minnesota.

181 Bjørgulv Bjørnaraa, who also played Hardanger fiddle, was best known among Norwegian Americans in the Upper Midwest as an author, poet, and speaker and was tremendously active in a number of Norwegian-American organizations. In his longtime role as secretary for *Spelemannsforbundet* he wrote many newspaper articles both advertising and reporting on the organization's *kappleiker*. According to his son, Dreng, Bjørgulv was the “chief organizer and promoter” of the *kappleiker* and had also been involved in the founding of the organization (Bjørnaraa, 1974).

automobile excursions; film screenings (often of scenes or narrative films from Norway); church services; a banquet featuring Norwegian traditional dishes; and an award ceremony. Norwegian-American innovations such as the *huldrekappleik* and the “Leif Erikson fest” also emerged over the years. The *huldrekappleik*, or *huldrespil* was first held at the 1922 *kappleik* in Grand Forks, North Dakota and was a competition in which participants performed a tune in one of the many alternative Hardanger fiddle tunings (some of which have names such as *trollstemt*, *trollstilt*, *huldrastilt*, etc.). The “Leif Erikson fest” was first held in 1935 and was tied to the establishment of the American national observance, Leif Erikson Day—these programs featured music, singing of the American and Norwegian national anthems, and speeches highlighting the influence of Norwegian immigrants in American society.<sup>182</sup>

Performances of old-time music also took place at *kappleiker*, both as part of the stage program surrounding the *kappleik*, and in the context of evening social dancing following the official program. In a 1934 article advertising that year’s *kappleik*, Bjørnaraa writes: “Both evenings there will be fun for young and old—following the regular program. Then the old, dear ‘Old Time’ music will also be heard” (Bjørnaraa, 1934).<sup>183</sup> Old-time music is mentioned in newspaper accounts of *kappleiker* from the early 1930s onward and seems to have become a recurring element during the last decade of *kappleik* activity. In some cases, extra prizes were also awarded to old-time musicians who had performed in the program surrounding the *kappleik*. The function of old-time music at Norwegian-American *kappleiker* is similar to the role of *runddans* music at Norwegian *kappleiker* well into the late twentieth century, which ethnomusicologist Chris Goertzen describes as having an “important, but low-status, position in contest weekends, that of music to relax and dance to late at night” (Goertzen, 1997, p. 44).

Spelemannsforbundet continued to arrange annual *kappleiker* until 1941. At this time, no doubt related to the United States’ entry into World War Two, the organization suspended its activity. Following the war, Spelemannsforbundet remained inactive, and appears to have essentially disbanded. Another cause of the organization’s dissolution was likely the fact that many key members, including Spelemannsforbundet’s long-time advocate and board member Bjørgulv Bjørnaraa (1878–1942), and prominent fiddlers Harald (1876–1936) and Eilev Smedal, had passed away, and almost no second-generation Norwegian Americans had joined the organization. Several years after the dissolution of Spelemannsforbundet, two

182 Leif Erikson Day was first commemorated on September 25, 1926 (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 153). In the following year it was celebrated on October 9, which became the established date in America, as this was the date of the arrival of the Sloopers in New York in 1825. The observance is a day for honouring Leif Erikson and celebrating Norwegian-American heritage. As a transnational celebration, commemorated in both America and Norway, the observance also served to validate the Norwegian-American identity in Norway (D. W. Olson, 2013, p. 155).

183 “Begge kvælder blir der moro for unge og gamle—etterpaa de regulære programmer. Da vil de gamle, kjære ‘Old Time’-toner ogsaa la sig høre.”

additional *kappleiker* were arranged in the United States: one in Everett, Washington in 1948, and one in Montevideo, Minnesota in 1952.

### *Andrea Quisling's Performances at Norwegian-American Kappleiker*

Andrea is one of two women who participated in Norwegian-American *kappleiker*. The other, Ragnhild Snortheim Anderson of Austin, Minnesota (who had emigrated from Vestre Slidre, Valdres), appears to have participated in just one *kappleik*: the 1928 *kappleik* in Albert Lea, Minnesota, at which she received an “extra prize” in the third class category for her performance (no other competitors are listed in the third class category that year). In addition, two other women fiddlers had expressed the intention of participating in the first *kappleik* at the Telelag *stevne* in Stoughton, Wisconsin, on May 17, 1912. They were Margaret Bjoin and Miss Reindahl; it is not known whether they in fact competed (“Telelag’ Plans are Discussed at Meeting,” 1912).

Andrea is known to have participated in at least twelve *kappleiker*, in 1912, 1915, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1922, two in 1924, 1925, 1927, 1931, and 1952. Although she achieved several good results early on (in 1912 she placed third, behind Hans Fykerud and Olav Ormbreck, and in 1918 she placed third in the second class category, earning a silver medal), she never advanced to the first class category, and starting in 1925 she competed in the newly-created “third class” category. Dreng Bjornaraa describes the third class category as a “category for beginners or people who weren’t so proficient” (Bjornaraa, 1974). As a third class competitor in 1925 and 1927 she did not receive a ranking; instead, like Ragnhild Snortheim Anderson, she received an “extra prize.” The fact that she was relegated to the third class category, and that she was (at least on four occasions) not ranked, instead being awarded “extra” or “honorary” prizes (there are examples of this occurring when she competed in second as well as third class) suggests that she was dismissed as a fully legitimate fiddler by the organization, although this was not stated explicitly.<sup>184</sup> She did, however, receive several first prizes for her performances in folk dance competitions held during the *kappleiker*. It was likely safer to allow her to succeed as a folk dancer, an activity that was non-threatening, supportive of the (male) fiddler, and within the realm of acceptable behaviour for women.

There are a number of written descriptions of Andrea’s performances at *kappleiker* that, while they may seem neutral and supportive at first glance, have subtle undertones of dismissal or derision. One newspaper article describes her performance in the second class category at the *kappleik* in Minneapolis on June 23 and 24, 1924 as follows: “the second group also

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184 The New Oxford American Dictionary defines an honourable mention as “a commendation given to a candidate in an examination or competition who is not awarded a prize” (“Honorable mention,” 2017).



comprised particularly competent forces. Here one had a female representative in Mrs. Dr. Quisling, Madison, Wis., who proved to be fully equal to her male competitors, and whose entertaining performance of two tunes brought her pure ovations” (“Kappleiken,” 1924a).<sup>185</sup> Here, the use of the Norwegian word *festlig* (here translated as “entertaining”) to describe her performance, functions to undermine the authority of her performance. Two further examples highlight her physical appearance and demeanour during her performances. In the first, Bjørgulv Bjørnaraa describes a performance Andrea gave during the 1925 *kappleik* in St. Paul: “Mrs. Dr. Quisling stood there in her floral-patterned national *bunad* and bowed one tune after the other, while she hummed and sang and followed the fiddle both high and low” (Bjørnaraa, 1925).<sup>186</sup> The second example is from a report of the 1931 *kappleik* in Minneapolis: “not least effective were Smedal’s and Hamrey’s numbers, a beautiful and fine *halling* played by Aarnes and a couple of tunes played by Mrs. Quisling who completely immersed herself in the rhythm of the music. One of her tunes was ‘So sulla ho Mor paa Rokken sin’” (“Kappleiken,” 1931).<sup>187</sup> Both of these descriptions work subtly to undermine Andrea’s authority as a musician, making her seem clownish and her actions seem exaggerated. Comparing the preceding quotes with a description of Andrea’s fellow male competitor, Eilev Smedal, it is clear that an entirely different rhetoric is used to comment on male performances at the *kappleiker*: “Dr. Eilev Smedal from La Crosse, Wis., who is probably the greatest living artist on Hardanger fiddle, opened the *kappleik* with a beautiful tune, so that people were completely beside themselves with enthusiasm and demanded one more, which they also got” (Bjørnaraa & Neset, 1922).<sup>188</sup>

185 “Anden Gruppe talte ogsaa særdeles dygtige Kræfter. Her havde man en kvindelig Repræsentant i Fru Dr. Quisling, Madison, Wis., som viste sig sine mandlige Konkurrenter fuldt jævnbyrdig og hvis festlige Udførelse af to Slaatter bragte hende rene Ovationer.”

186 “Mrs. Dr. Quisling stod der i sin blomstrede Nationalbunad og strøg op den ene Slaat efter den anden, medens hun traliede og sang og fulgte Felen baade høit og lavt.”

187 “Ikke mindst virkningsfulde var Smedals og Hamreys Numre, en flot og fin Halling spillet af Aarnes samt etpar Slaatter spillet af Fru Quisling som levet helt med i Musikens Rytme. En af hendes Slaatter var ‘So sulla ho Mor paa Rokken sin.’”

188 “Dr. Eilev Smedal fra La Crosse, Wis., som vistnok er den største nulevende Kunstner paa Haringfele, aabnede ‘Leiken’ med en ovfager Slaat, saa Folk blev rent ellevilde af Begeistring og forlangte en til, som de ogsaa fik.”



Figure 31: Participants in the 1921 kappleik in Mount Horeb, Wisconsin. Back row: Sjur Bjotveit, Helge Thoresen, John Gudvangen, J. G. Nordgaard, Olav Smedal, Sveinung T. Innleggen, Gunnar Helland. Front row: Tolleif Strand, Eilev Smedal, Harald Smedal, Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling, Hans Fykerud, Bjørgulv Bjørnaraa. Private collection.

It seems that Andrea always performed in her Telemark *bunad*; she is wearing a *bunad* in almost all of the group photos of *kappleik* participants. This stands in contrast to the male participants, none of whom are wearing *bunader* in any of the known *kappleik* group photos, but rather wear contemporary American suits, often with prize medals pinned to their jackets (Figure 31). While this echoes tacit dress codes for the classical concert stage in which men wear the “uniform” of the tuxedo, while women have a less rigid code of dress, but in order to be “taken seriously” should not appear “too appealing” (Griffiths, 2008, p. 274), in the *kappleik* context, notions of “appropriate display” for female performers may be connected to the visual signalling of ethnicity. Perhaps the visual cue of the *bunad* signals a commitment to ethnicity that male performers were exempt from making through visual cues, since they were already assumed to be serious performers of Norwegian music.

### 6.2.7 The National Folk Festival

While Andrea mainly performed in Norwegian-American contexts, including *bygdelag stevner* and *kappleiker*, as well as providing entertainment at meetings of Norwegian-American organizations and societies like the Daughters of Norway (of which she was an active member), the Sons of Norway, and the Women’s Aid Society of a local Norwegian-American Lutheran

church, she also performed in some multiethnic contexts.<sup>189</sup> Local examples include performances during the “nationality events” at a Fourth of July celebration in Madison in 1915, and at the Farm and Home Week Banquet in 1939—a program recognizing Wisconsin’s pioneer history and featuring performances by German, Norwegian, Scottish, Swiss, Welsh, and Irish musicians, as well as exhibiting the state’s agricultural produce (Kalnes, 1939; “Sane Fourth is a big success; dances pleasing,” 1915). A more extraordinary example of performance in a multiethnic context is her participation in at least three National Folk Festivals as a representative of Norwegians in Wisconsin. The National Folk Festival, described as “the oldest multi-cultural celebration of traditional arts in the [United States] and the event that defined this form of preservation,” held its inaugural event in 1934 (Arts); Andrea gave solo performances at the fourth annual National Folk Festival in Chicago, Illinois in 1937, the fifth annual festival in Washington, D.C. in 1938, and the festival in St. Louis, Missouri in 1947.

The folk festival movement emerged in the United States during the late 1920s and early 1930s as a novel means of bolstering the preservation of traditional musics in the face of various global cultural forces (Whisnant, 1983, pp. 184–185). To this end, festival organizers hoped that audience approval would boost the self-respect of previously isolated performers, while audiences would be “moved to forsake vulgar commercial imitations” when confronted by the “beauty and authenticity of the ‘real thing’” (Whisnant, 1983, p. 185). While other large festivals initiated during this period, such as Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, the American Folk Song Festival, and White Top Folk Festival, “drew performers mostly from the South,” the National Folk Festival had a broader notion of folk culture and was part of an “evolving internationalist trend by the early 1930s” (Cohen, 2008, p. 14).

The National Folk Festival was distinctive for its time in that, although it remained “essentially white oriented,” it established a practice of incorporating performers from a diversity of ethnic groups during a period when “such inclusiveness was by no means taken for granted” (Cohen, 2008, p. 14; Quist, 2007, p. 85). Indeed, in the face of forces of assimilation and acculturation, historian David Whisnant views folk music festivals as “affirming the existence of a benign tolerance for cultural pluralism in [American] society,” characterizing modern festivals as similar to “ancient saturnalian festivals—sacred spaces and times in which normal social structures and codes of behavior are suspended” (Whisnant, quoted in Cohen, 2008, p. xii). Perhaps with the intention of fostering such a “sacred space,” founder and director of the National Folk Festival, Sarah Gertrude Knott, aimed to showcase the music and dance of a range of ethnic

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189 Andrea served as the first president of the Daughters of Norway Fremysyn Lodge, No. 53, in Madison, and remained a long-time, active member of the organization. Fremysyn Lodge 53 was formed in 1915 as a sister lodge to the Sons of Norway Idun Lodge 74, and Andrea was one of the lodge’s charter members. She served as lodge president from 1915 to 1919, and again in circa 1946 (“Local Daughters of Norway Lodge has 250 Members,” 1928; “New Lodge is Formed in City,” 1915).

groups on the festival stage in order to highlight for audiences “the sense of interdependence between nations which makes toward mutual tolerance and understanding” (Knott, quoted in Cohen, 2008, p. 15). Knott also cultivated a regional emphasis, drawing performers for the National festival from preliminary local and state festivals (Cohen, 2008, p. 15).

Adjacent to these noble intentions, historian Jane S. Becker argues that Sarah Gertrude Knott and other middle-class leaders of the folk festival movement, through their fostering of a constructed notion of “real” and “authentic” music and dance traditions, also proceeded to “sanitize culture, weeding out the vulgar and the crude and presenting only those forms that upheld their middle-class standards of propriety and taste” (Becker, 1998, p. 37). Accordingly, folk festivals of this era can be understood as public arenas for the middle-class domestication and consumption of traditions: Becker characterizes 1930s America as a dynamic “administered folk world” and suggests that organized folk music festivals and other “consumable versions of tradition” such as museum exhibitions, photographs, literature, and handcrafted goods can be viewed as opportunities for consumers to “bring America’s folk into their own consciousness and sometimes into their homes” (Becker, 1998, pp. 10, 12). Furthermore, she points out that while the consumable folk/traditional performances presented at folk festivals were effective because they “*appear[ed]* to be uncontrived in origin,” they were in fact “divorced from their original contexts and provide[d] mediated encounters with the folk” (Becker, 1998, p. 9). Nevertheless, Becker indicates that these staged representations of tradition may have also functioned as contexts for performers to articulate and retain their local identities (Becker, 1998, pp. 9–10).

In her work to arrange the festival program, Knott collaborated closely with academics, fieldworkers, and folk music collectors. In her preparations for the 1937 festival she corresponded with several Wisconsin academics with the goal of turning up a Wisconsin “lumberjack” musical group equivalent to the Michigan Lumberjacks—an ensemble that had performed at the 1934, 1935, and 1936 festivals (Leary, 2015, pp. 75–76). Although she had initially corresponded with Charles E. Brown (director of the Wisconsin State Historical Society museum) in this pursuit, she later communicated with one of Brown’s colleagues, Gregg Reeve Montgomery.<sup>190</sup> Correspondence between Knott and Montgomery resulted in Montgomery’s suggestion that Andrea Quisling be selected to perform at the 1937 festival, as indicated in this excerpt from a letter sent by Montgomery to Knott:

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190 Montgomery served on the 1937 National Folk Festival Advisory Board for Wisconsin along with her colleagues, Charles and Dorothy Brown, and was a Field Supervisor for the Folklore Division of Wisconsin’s Federal Writers’ Project.

Since the Browns are to be away they have left me to take charge of any other folk group you may want. Mrs. Quisling, a native Norwegian and a Madison resident, who plays the 8-string Hardanger fiddle has consented to appear at the Festival at her own expense. She plays and sings native folk songs that have never been written down but have been played by ear for generations. Would you like to have her and if so what day? (Montgomery, 1937)

Since she returned to perform at the 1938 and 1947 National Folk Festivals, Knott must have considered Andrea's music sufficiently "authentic" for inclusion in the festival on multiple occasions.

The multiethnic character of the National Folk Festival is evident in the pages of the 1937 festival program. At that year's festival, which was held at Chicago's Orchestra Hall from May 22 to 28, Andrea performed three tunes during the evening program on May 26—these are listed in the program as a *halling* titled "Olav," and the *springdans* tunes "Vaaren" and "Kjeringamed Staven" (Festival, 1937). She was part of a segment of that evening's concert titled "Norwegian Folk Music from Wisconsin"; the second performance in the segment was given by a Norwegian-American all-female psalmodikon quintet from Stoughton and McFarland.<sup>191</sup> Other performances at that evening's concert included a work song sung by a member of the Potawatomi tribe; Mexican music and dances presented by a group from Kansas City, Missouri; Kentucky music and songs by the Kentucky Mountain Group; German song dances by the Paul Dunsing Group of Chicago; original miner ballads sung by the Pennsylvania Anthracite Miners; sea shanties performed by a member of New London, Connecticut's Jib-Boom Club Chantey Singers; spirituals sung by the Umbrian Glee Club; and Irish music and dance performed by Irish Americans from Chicago.

While I have not encountered any detailed descriptions of Andrea's performances at the National Folk Festival, nor any information about her own experience of performing, by participating in these events she took part in a framework that consciously worked to cultivate intercultural tolerance. As a delegate of "authentic" Wisconsin folk culture, she represented both Norwegian-American ethnic culture as well as the state in its ethnic diversity, albeit in a mediated, domesticated format. As such, these performances can be viewed as a distinctive multiethnic context in which she articulated and performed her ethnic identity.

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191 The psalmodikon, or salmodikon, is a string instrument that was introduced in Norway in the early nineteenth century and was employed in congregational singing (Aksdal & Nyhus, 1993, p. 41).

## 6.2.8 Stratman-Thomas Recordings

In 1941, several years after her first National Folk Festival performance, Andrea was asked to record a number of tunes for Wisconsin folk music collector Helene Stratman-Thomas. Aside from a home recording of her performance at the 1952 *kappleik* in Starbuck, Minnesota, these are the only known recordings of Andrea's playing, as well as being among the only early American field recordings of Hardanger fiddle music.<sup>192</sup>

Stratman-Thomas's field recordings must first be situated within the context of the development of folk music collecting in America. While the first field recordings of traditional music in the United States were those made in 1890 of members of the Passamaquoddy Tribe in Calais, Maine by anthropologist Jesse Walter Fewkes (Congress), researchers did not begin significantly recording Anglo-American performers until the 1920s, and "ethnic" performers were first documented the 1930s (Leary, 1987, p. 27). The establishment of the Archive of American Folk Song by the Library of Congress in 1928 subsequently gave rise to a period of extensive state and federally funded ethnographic audio documentation, including the documentation of musics of diverse ethnic groups.

Helene Stratman-Thomas (1896–1973) was born in Dodgeville, Wisconsin and taught music at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; when the university received funding from the Library of Congress to document the folk music of Wisconsin for the Archive of American Folk Song in 1939, Stratman-Thomas assumed responsibility for the project. During the summers of 1940, 1941, and 1946 she travelled throughout the state, making recordings of over 150 musicians and ensembles—an effort that resulted in over 700 recorded tracks. The performers recorded by Stratman-Thomas represent over 30 different ethnic and cultural groups, including several Native American tribes, African Americans, French Canadians, European immigrant groups, Anglo Americans, and "lumberjack" music (Leary, 1987, 2015).

Among Stratman-Thomas's recordings are performances by six Norwegian-American musicians or ensembles. Andrea was the only Norwegian-American fiddle player recorded by Stratman-Thomas; however, she also recorded four Hardanger fiddle tunes performed by Swiss-American multiinstrumentalist Otto Rindlisbacher. Stratman-Thomas recorded Andrea playing seven tunes on May 16, 1941, also making transcriptions of the melodies.<sup>193</sup> On the

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192 Norwegian American Ole J. Braaten recorded all seven participants at the 1952 *kappleik*; this recording is currently housed in a private collection.

193 Stratman-Thomas's original recordings of Andrea are housed at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the Mills Music Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison retains copies of the recordings. The recordings can be accessed online via the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Wisconsin Folksong Collection (<https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/AWiscFolkSong>). Copies are also stored in the Traditional Music and Spoken Word Catalog at the American Folklife Center, see <https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/html/afccards/afccards-home.html>

recording, Andrea performs three *springar* tunes, a *halling*, a waltz, a polka, and a schottische. The quality of her performances is not top-notch, with mediocre intonation and tone quality, but at age 72 this is understandable. The recordings are noteworthy as documentation of an individual performer's repertoire; as evidence of Andrea's participation in the field recording context; and as an indication of collectors' interest in recording an obscure form of Upper Midwestern "ethnic" culture.

### 6.2.9 Conclusion

As a Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddler in the Upper Midwest, Andrea was unconventional and exceptional in a number of ways. As an alternative voice in a male-dominated realm, she was accepted and praised, but also subtly undermined. In addition to her gender and advanced age, as a performer, she was also unorthodox in her use of the technique of fiddling singing—a style of performance that made her all the more distinctive. Her broad range of activity as a fiddler, spanning from performances at *bygdelag stevner* and *kappleiker* to the National Folk Festival and on rare American field recordings of *bygdedans* music, make her a truly unique figure among Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddlers.

While she was clearly an unconventional performer, the elements of material and immaterial culture involved in her performances (her *bunad*, Hardanger fiddle, and repertoire of Norwegian vocal and fiddle music) also functioned as "symbolic abstractions" in the construction of localist and broader Norwegian-American identities in settings such as *bygdelag stevner* and *kappleiker*. In other contexts, such as the National Folk Festival, she represented the Norwegian-American ethnic group, as well as the state of Wisconsin. On an individual level, Andrea seems to have sometimes used her own music-making as a repository for emotions—as a means of articulating or constructing emotion in her everyday life.

## 6.3 Daniel Aakhus (1881–1969)

The second case study subject, violinist, fiddler, piano tuner, and amateur folk music collector Daniel Aakhus, was a second-generation Norwegian-American musician born on a farm near the Red Lake River in Bygland, Minnesota on January 5, 1881. His father, the well-known Hardanger fiddler Eivind D. Aakhus (1854–1937), had immigrated to the United States from

Bygland, Setesdal in 1878. Daniel's mother, Gro Danielsdotter Ose (1859–1925), who was also born and raised in Bygland, Setesdal, immigrated to America with her family in 1872.<sup>194</sup>

Daniel Aakhus has been selected as a case study subject in part because of his idiosyncratic range of activity as a musician. Although he performed a large repertoire of Norwegian-American old-time music, he also played music from various other genres, including classical music, parlour music, and *bygdedans* music. As a young man he trained to become a professional classical violinist; influenced by his father's manner of touring the Upper Midwest as a professional Hardanger fiddle soloist, Daniel emulated this approach, first giving concerts as a touring solo violinist in his 20s, then in a duet with his wife, Gecina, and still later as a family act with their two children. After this period of touring broke off in the mid-1920s, Daniel shifted career paths, becoming a piano tuner. From the 1930s onwards, the main context in which he performed was at *bygdelag stevner*, particularly those held by Setesdalslaget.

Daniel has also been selected as a case study subject due to the existence of a substantial collection of materials documenting his repertoire and performances. This collection, the "Aakhus Collection," is one of the principal resources for this case study and consists of reel-to-reel audio recordings, photographs, newspaper clippings, concert posters, and published transcriptions of Hardanger fiddle music, among other things. The collection will be discussed in greater detail below. In addition to the Aakhus Collection, approximately 100 additional newspaper clippings documenting Daniel's performances were collected and analyzed for this case study.

### 6.3.1 Eivind D. Aakhus (1854–1937)

It is not possible to evaluate the musical life and contribution of Daniel Aakhus without first considering his father, Hardanger fiddler Eivind D. Aakhus (Figure 32). Eivind Aakhus appears to have played an important part in Daniel's early musical development and served as a model for Daniel to emulate when he began embarking on solo tours in the Upper Midwest as a young adult.

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194 Bygland Township is named after the Setesdal town of the same name, and is located in Polk County in northwestern Minnesota, in an area colonized by a large number of immigrants from Setesdal. The first European pioneers in the Bygland Township area were Setesdøls Daniel and Knute Ose and their families; they arrived in 1872. Many immigrants from Setesdal settled in the Red River Valley region of northwestern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota, arriving in significant numbers after 1873 (B. I. Anderson, 1954, pp. 8, 10).





Figure 32: Portrait of Eivind Aakhus. Courtesy of Andrea Een.

Eivind D. Aakhus was born on December 18, 1854 on the nedre Aakhus farm in Bygland, Setesdal. His parents were Birgit Eivindsdotter Ose and Daniel Grundeson Frøyraak (Aakhus). He began playing fiddle around the age of five and purchased his first Hardanger fiddle as a 12-year-old. Eivind's mother did not approve of fiddling, and during his youth he was not allowed to bring his fiddle inside the house. Eivind was a religious man, and during periods of his life he had a conflicted relationship with fiddle playing; in his memoir, *Minne frå Noreg og Amerika*, Eivind describes a period preceding confirmation when he had trouble reconciling his faith with fiddling (E. D. Aakhus, 1930, p. 11).<sup>195</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Eivind's memoir provides a detailed autobiography, with accounts of his concert tours in America and Norway. Many of the biographical details in this section have been drawn from the memoir.

Eivind immigrated to the United States in August 1878, and following his arrival he stayed with his brother, Grunde, who had purchased land near Fisher, Minnesota. During his first winter in Minnesota he worked for an American farmer in Crookston, and he also attended school. In the following summer he worked for a man named Daniel Ose—this is where he met Gro Ose, Daniel Ose's daughter, whom he married during the winter of 1880.

Eivind purchased a quarter section of land near the Red Lake River in northwestern Minnesota, and he and his wife settled here during the summer of 1880. At this time, partly influenced by his religious faith, he decided to sell the Hardanger fiddle he had brought with him from Norway: "I later regretted that. But I had so much work on the farm. I was somewhat influenced by religion, and it has followed me all the time since then" (E. D. Aakhus, 1930, p. 18).<sup>196</sup> During the following eight years, Eivind did not play fiddle. He farmed the land, which he describes as "treeless, and quite low, so the floodwater went across some places during the spring. The yield was mediocre" (E. D. Aakhus, 1930, p. 20).<sup>197</sup> The couple had four children, including Daniel, during these years.

In 1888 Eivind sold the farm and purchased six lots on speculation near the growing town of Superior, Wisconsin. The value of the lots declined, however, and the family spent the next year in Portland, Seattle, and Spokane. They returned to the Red River Valley in circa 1889, taking up residence in a house in the "Red River forest," where they remained for two years. At this point, Eivind acquired a standard fiddle and resumed playing. The family then moved to Crookston, Minnesota in circa 1891. They remained here for two years, and Eivind worked intermittently at a sawmill. Around this time, he also began giving solo concerts: in 1893 Eivind embarked on his first concert tour, performing in a number of towns in Minnesota and Wisconsin, as well as at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago.

### Konserttida: *Hardanger Fiddlers Take to the Stage*

Eivind Aakhus began giving solo fiddle concerts during a period known as *konserttida* (the "concert era") in Norwegian folk music historiography. Several Norwegian scholars have studied the phenomenon of the "concert era" or "concert tradition" (*konserttradisjonen*), an era of solo public performances given by Hardanger fiddlers in both Norway, Europe, and North America that began in the mid-nineteenth century and extended until approximately

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196 "Det angra eg sidan på. Men eg hadde so mykje arbeid på farmen. Noko var eg påverka av religionen, og det hev hange med meg heile tidi sidan."

197 "Det var ingen skog der, og heller lågvore land, so flåvatnet gjekk innver sumestad um våren. Grøden var då so som so."

1930.<sup>198</sup> Concert fiddling emerged in Norway as a new professional performance context for Hardanger fiddlers during the mid-1800s and must be viewed in connection with *det store hamskiftet* (the Great Transformation) that took place in Norwegian society during the same period. During *det store hamskiftet* Norway converted from a pre-industrial, predominantly rural society to an industrial one. The era was characterized by a number of substantial changes in Norwegian society, including the introduction of new agricultural tools and machinery, an increasingly market-oriented economy, increased urbanization, the decline of traditional customs, values, and forms of social contact, the rise of various lay religious movements, and a greater degree of international cultural influence.

These changes also ushered in a new era for traditional music and dance in which *bygdedans* music lost much of its established function in society. As the rise to popularity of new, modern melodies and dances (i.e. *vals*, *reinlender*, *polka*, *masurka*) and the introduction of new instruments, including accordion, guitar, and harmonium, brought a new era for folk music and folk dance, new customs and forms of social gathering took root, which meant that in many places the old tunes and dances were seen as out of date and were put aside (Aksdal & Nyhus, 1993, p. 244). For Hardanger fiddlers, these many changes resulted in the large-scale decline or disappearance of what were previously central arenas for performance and income (e.g. traditional weddings, markets), giving rise to a need to establish new performance contexts. Håkon Asheim and Gunnar Stubseid suggest that concert fiddling can be seen as a form of adaptation to the changes brought on by *det store hamskiftet*; as a way for both the music genre, and Hardanger fiddlers themselves, to survive (Asheim & Stubseid, 2010, p. 77).

Concert performances of Hardanger fiddle music during this period also functioned as an important component of nineteenth-century Norwegian nation-building, contributing to the construction of notions of Norwegianness and of an imagined national community. Concert repertoire was commonly referred to as *nasjonalmusikk* (“national music”) or *nasjonalspel* (“national fiddling”), while the Hardanger fiddle was designated Norway’s *nasjonalinstrument* (“national instrument”). Codes of performance from classical music were adopted by performers, and classical violin technique became a performance ideal: performers adopted a standing playing position, refrained from tramping the beat with their feet, and held the fiddle under their chins, rather than against their chests (Asheim & Stubseid, 2010, p. 88). The concert performance format also gave rise to the “fleshing out” of traditional tunes in order to make them more compelling concert numbers, as well as the development of a new body of concert

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198 Anne Svånaug Haugan has examined the phenomenon in the Midwest, focusing on public performances given by Hardanger fiddler Knut Dahle (1834–1921) after he immigrated to the United States in 1896 (Haugan, 2008). Håkon Asheim has studied the concert tradition in Hardanger fiddle music in both Norway and the United States (Asheim, 1995, 1997; Asheim & Stubseid, 2010).

repertoire called *tonestykker* (Asheim, 1995, p. 12).<sup>199</sup> Moreover, many traditional tunes were given names during this period, and performers also developed entertaining and informative verbal elements in their concert programs, such as recounting historical backgrounds or legends connected with tunes, which can be seen as a continuation and adaptation of older narrative traditions. These moderations, together with the adoption of performance codes and frameworks from classical music, gave status and legitimacy to the music and distanced it from its origins as traditional, functional music. Furthermore, Norwegian cultural nationalists of this period regarded *nasjonalmusikk* performed on Hardanger fiddle as a “Norwegian alternative” to European art music and high culture (Omholt, 2018, pp. 238–239).

Many Norwegian concert fiddlers also toured Norwegian-American communities in the United States during this era, while some who had settled permanently in the Upper Midwest, such as Eivind Aakhus, built careers as semi-professional Norwegian-American concert artists. In Eivind’s case, he toured the country for several decades, with his last longer North American concert tour taking place in the spring of 1920 (E. D. Aakhus, 1930, pp. 96–97). He also returned to Norway five times, where he embarked on concert tours.

Performances of “national music” by Hardanger fiddlers in Upper Midwestern Norwegian-American communities had a somewhat different function than in Norway; in many cases, they were described as opportunities for Norwegian Americans to reaffirm loyalty to homeland cultural traditions. In an article in the Norwegian-American newspaper *Fergus Falls Ugeblad* reporting on an upcoming tour by Eivind and a young Daniel Aakhus in western Minnesota in 1903, the reporter encourages community members to “show their love for our ancestral heritage” by attending the concerts:

Mr. Eivind Aakhus is a “Norwegian fiddle player” in the best sense of the word. He is a rare musical talent, who with deep understanding and great technical skill understands how to interpret our beautiful national music in an uncommonly fine and appealing way. His son Daniel seems to have inherited his father’s genius and has already made a very promising start on an artistic career path. . . . Our Norwegian people should show their love for our ancestral heritage by supporting these artists in the best possible way and showing up in large numbers to their concerts. The entertainment will consist of violin playing, fiddle playing, stories and *stevkvad*

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199 Arrangements or compositions that elude the traditional categories of the *bygdedans* genre, *tonestykker* were popular with audiences during this period and were an important part of the repertoire of concert fiddlers (Asheim & Stubseid, 2010, p. 80).

[Norwegian lyric one-stanza folk songs], as well as piano accompaniment, where there is a piano on site. (“En Række Underholdninger,” 1903)<sup>200</sup>

Similarly, in two newspaper articles recounting a performance by Norwegian-American Hardanger fiddlers Hans Fykerud (1862–1942) and Olav Ormbreck (1878–1941) at Dania Hall in Minneapolis, Minnesota on December 27, 1923, the concert was described as an occasion to honour one’s Norwegian ancestral heritage and to connect with an idealized, Norwegian “national” landscape and “national” culture:

It was a real pleasure to attend Fykerud and Ormbreck’s concert on Hardanger fiddle in Dania Hall last Thursday evening. When we speak about maintaining our ancestral heritage, we must not forget folk music; for it was created among the broad strata of the people and depicts the most wonderful moods in nature and inner life. The deep sadness, the wistful sob, the broad seriousness and the exuberant laughter are moods that succeed each other in these wonderful tones, and you find them in both “Springaren,” in “Gangaren” in “Hallingslaatten” and in the wonderful old folk melodies, and Fykerud and Ormbreck are masters of interpreting these moods. In Norway people are awakened to an understanding of the value of folk music, and the so-called “Kappleikar” are held annually, where the best players take part and where prizes are awarded.

Here is now a task for us, who want to honour our ancestral heritage, to also support this part of our heritage, and not let artists like the above-mentioned gentlemen play to half-full houses when they present the best that we have in the field of folk music. (Hauge, 1924)<sup>201</sup>

200 “Hr. Eivind Aakhus er ‘norsk Felespiller’ i Ordets bedste Betydning. Han er en sjelden musikalsk Begravelse [*sic*], der med inderlig Forstaaelse og stor teknisk Dygtighed forstaaar at tolke vor deilige nationale Musik paa en sjelden fin og tiltalende Maade. Hans Søn Daniel synes at have arvet sin Faders Geni og har allerede gjort en meget lovende Begyndelse paa den kunstneriske Løbebane. . . . Vort norske Folk burde vise sin Kjærlighed til vor Fædrearv ved at støtte disse Kunstnere paa bedste Maade og møde talrigt frem til deres Konserter. Underholdningen vil bestaa af Violinspil, Felespil, Historier og Stekvad, samt Pianoakkompagnement, hvor der er Piano paa Stedet.”

201 “Det var en sand Nydelse at overvære Fykerud og Ormbrecks Koncert paa Hardangerfele i Dania Hall sidste Thorsdag Aften. Naar vi taler om Vedligeholdelse af Fædrearven, saa maa vi ikke glemme Folkemusikken; for den er bleven skabt blandt Folkets brede Lag og skildrer de mest forunderlige Stemninger i Natur og Sjæleviv. Den dybe Sorg, den vemodige Hulken, det brede Alvor og den sprudlende Glædeslatter er Stemninger, som afløser hindanden i disse underfulde Toner, og du finder dem baade i ‘Springaren,’ i ‘Gangaren’ i ‘Hallingslaatten’ og i de vidunderlige gamle Folkemelodier, og Fykerud og Ormbreck er Mestere i at tolke disse Stemninger. I Norge er man vaagnet til Forstaaelse af Folkemusikens Værdi, og aarlighaars holdes de saakaldte ‘Kappleikar,’ hvor de bedste Spillemand deltager og hvor Premier uddeles.

Her er nu en Opgave for os, som vil hædre Fædrearven, at støtte ogsaa den Del af Arven, og ikke lade Kunstnere som de ovennævnte Herrer spille for halvfylt Hus, naar de byder frem det bedste, som vi har paa Folkemusikens Omraade.”

It was a real Norwegian national evening at Dania Hall last night. Tones from mountain and fjord, lake and valley, Norwegian tunes, dance, *stev* and folk songs created an atmosphere in which America lay infinitely far away. People were moved thousands of miles across the sea to Norway again through the well-known national musicians Hans Fykerud's and Olav Ormbreck's bow strokes and songs. For many of the listeners it was a familiar and dear thing, as evidenced by the hearty applause. One must know and love Norwegian nature and folklife in order to fully understand and enjoy these national tones, which have sprung forth from the folk soul itself and are distinctive of Norwegian nature. ("Fykerud og Ormbreck," 1923)<sup>202</sup>

Fykerud and Ormbreck toured a number of Norwegian-American communities in late 1923 and early 1924 (Figures 33 and 34). Their performances incorporated standard "concert era" repertoire, including tunes attributed to Norwegian Hardanger fiddlers Myllarguten and Sjur Helgeland, *tonestykker* evoking life in Norwegian mountain pastures (including musical imitations of lowing cattle and twittering birds), and folk songs performed on fiddle. To close their concert at Dania Hall, in an affirmation of allegiance to the United States and Norway, both the American and Norwegian national anthems were sung ("Fykerud og Ormbreck," 1923).



Figure 33: Concert ticket from a performance by Olav Ormbreck and Hans Fykerud. From the author's collection.

202 "Det var en rigtig norsk national Aften paa Dania Hall igaar Aftes. Toner fra Fjeld og Fjord, Li og Dal, nor-sknorske Slaatter, Danse, Stev og Folkeviser skabte en Atmosfære, der laa Amerika uendelig fjernt. Man flyttedes Tusinder af Mil over Hav til Norge igjen gennem de bekendte Nationalmusikere Hans Fykeruds og Olav Ormbrecks Buestrøg og Sange. For mange av Tilhørerne var det kjendte og kjære Ting, derom vidnede det hjertelige Bifald. Man maa have lært at kjende og elske norsk Natur og Folkeliv for helt at kunne forstaa og nyde disse nationale Toner, som er sprunget frem af selve Folkesjælen og er særpræget af norsk Natur."

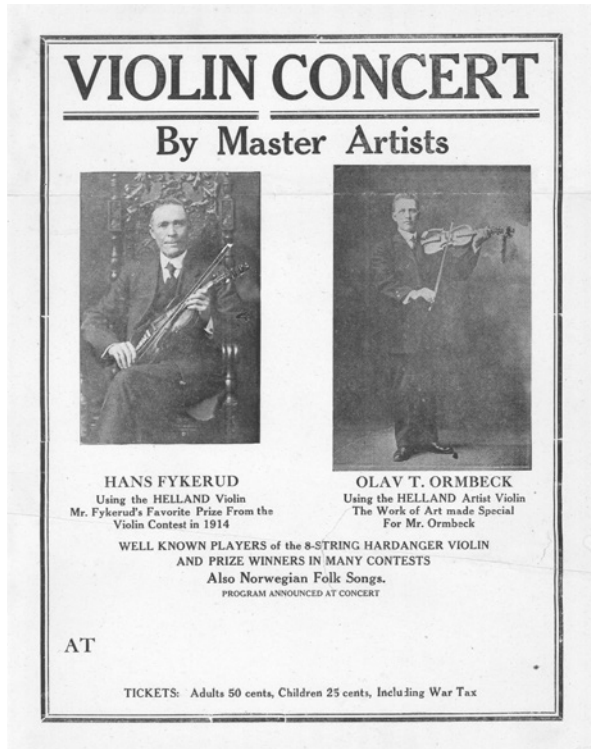


Figure 34: Promotional poster for a concert by Olav Ormbreck and Hans Fykerud. From the author's collection.

Like emigrant songs and Hardanger fiddle performances at *bygdelaag stevner*, performances of “national music” are described here as functioning as outlets for homesickness, and as emotional, and even physical and spiritual conduits to the homeland. Concerts such as those given by Hardanger fiddlers Eivind Aakhus, Hans Fykerud, Olav Ormbreck, and others could thus relieve psychological pressure and create a feeling of connection with the homeland landscape and culture. These descriptions also characterize Norwegianness as a material phenomenon represented by a constructed, idealized “Norwegian” national landscape and culture. Moreover, harbouring and cultivating a “deep understanding” of “national music,” on the part of both performers and audience, also granted membership to an imagined transnational community.

### 6.3.2 “Son of the Noted Norwegian Violinist”

Like his father, Daniel also pursued a career as a musician. In a 1974 interview with LeRoy Larson, Daniel's daughter, Thelma “Babe” Kolesar (1912–1987), relates that she thinks Daniel was compelled to play violin by his father:

He was actually, I think he was actually forced into playing the violin. He was the oldest son and I hear them telling about it that he'd be out getting wood for the stove and so forth and his dad would come out and he said if you want to practice your violin Dan, I'll chop the wood. So he would always slip out of everything. And he'd take the road of least resistance. . . . He had violin drilled into him ever since he was a little kid and it's the only thing he knew. He didn't know how to do anything else. (Kolesar, 1974)

According to one source, Eivind taught Daniel to play (B. I. Anderson, 1954, p. 36). Daniel began studying classical violin in 1893 and started performing in his father's concerts in 1894 (L. Larson, 1985, p. 114). In 1900 he attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, where he studied classical violin under Haldor Hanson. Daniel also studied violin under Professor J. Schefstad at the University of Dakota in Grand Forks, North Dakota, in 1901, and later under Emil Straka at the Northwestern Conservatory of Music in Minneapolis.<sup>203</sup> To help fund his studies, he played concerts during the summer holidays, and in 1901 he began touring in earnest, travelling by bicycle to give solo performances (Figure 35).



*Figure 35: A young Daniel Aakhus prepares to tour by bicycle. From the author's collection.*

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203 Other teachers mentioned on his concert advertisements include Marie Page, Melius Christiansen, Otto Meyer, Richard Czerwonky, and Maxmillian Dick.



Written documentation collected in this study gives evidence of approximately 125 performances by Daniel between 1897 and 1968. The primary source for information about Daniels's performances has been American and Norwegian-American newspapers: reports or mentions of performances were found in approximately 100 newspaper articles/items. In addition, Bergit I. Anderson's *Saga of Setesdals Laget* has provided information about some of Daniel's performances for the *bygdelag* Setesdalslaget (B. I. Anderson, 1954).

Daniel performed in a range of contexts; most of his performances between 1897 and 1926 were formal concerts, first solo or with Eivind Aakhus, and later with his wife, Gecina Aakhus, and with his family troupe, the Aakhus Concert Company. While many of these concerts were organized by Daniel himself, some were arranged by Norwegian-American societies, such as the Sons of Norway, various Norwegian-American *bygdelag*, Spelemannsforbundet af Amerika, the Syd Minneapolis Afholdsforening (a Norwegian-American temperance society), the Ladies' Society of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod Church, the Twin Cities St. Olaf Club, Bygland Kvindeforening, the Norwegian Society, Den progressive literære Klub, Nationalkomite af norsk-amerikanske Kvinder, or Folkets Vel. Still others were arranged by Scandinavian-American societies such as Den Skandinaviske Forening. Daniel also performed at Norwegian-American church services, May 17 (Norwegian Constitution Day) celebrations, and private events such as wedding anniversary parties. Moreover, he gave some live performances on local radio during the late 1920s and early 1930s. From 1932 on, most of Daniel's documented performances were at *bygdelag stevner*, primarily for Setesdalslaget, as well as Østfoldlaget, Nordhordlandslaget, Hallinglaget, Nordlandslaget, and Telelaget.

Daniel's family connection to Eivind Aakhus, as well as his possession of a legendary violin acquired for him by his father in Norway, are emphasized, both in Daniel's own promotional material and in newspaper accounts of his performances, as significant links to Norway and as signs of authenticity. In 1900 Eivind gave Daniel the legendary "Strømsing fiddle" which he had acquired while on tour in Norway. The fiddle had previously been owned by renowned fiddler Petter Strømsing (1759–1836), a Romani (*tater/traveller*) fiddler who had been a central figure in the development of folk music traditions in Setesdal and Vest-Agder during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Strømsing fiddle (*strømsing-fela*) was well-known among fiddle players in Agder for its "unusually good tone" (Lande, 2000, p. 80).<sup>204</sup> Daniel owned this instrument until his death in 1969, and according to his daughter, Babe, Daniel valued the instrument immensely: "He put a high price, a very high value on that violin. That came before any of us or anybody else or anything else. That violin was his whole possession" (Kolesar, 1974). Promotional materials proclaim that Daniel is the "son of the noted Norwegian violinist, Eivind Aakhus" and that he "possesses the 200

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204 "Den hadde ein uvanleg god tone, etter dåtidas mål."

year old Stromsing violin, which was owned by Gypsies three generations” (Figure 36). This strategy may have been emulated from Eivind, who used a similar strategy in his own promotional materials in which he declared that he owned the “legendary fiddle, ‘Sigrid,’ which had once belonged to Møllarguten” (*Aakhus har den berømte Fele “Sigrid,” som engang har tilhørt Møllarguten*) (Figure 37).<sup>205</sup>

**AAKHUS**

VOLIN, VOCAL,  
PIANO, WHISTLING  
READINGS and STORIES

GEICINA STOCKLAND AAKHUS

**Daniel Aakhus**  
Piano Tuner and Manager  
DUPONT 4153  
3517 43 Ave. So., Minneapolis

DANIEL AAKHUS, VIOLINIST, SON OF THE NOTED NORWEGIAN  
VIOLINIST, EIVIND AAKHUS

He possesses the 200 year old Stromsing violin, which was owned  
by Gypsies three generations.

GEICINA AAKHUS

Figure 36: Daniel Aakhus promotional poster. From the author's collection.

205 Eivind Aakhus purchased the Hardanger fiddle “Sigrid” from another Norwegian “concert fiddler,” the well-known Hardanger fiddler Lars Fykerud (brother of Hans Fykerud), from Sauherad, Telemark. The two met in Decorah, Iowa in 1894: Fykerud, who had been touring the United States since 1890, was eager to return to Norway and convinced Eivind to purchase his Hardanger fiddle, an instrument called “Sigrid” made by Erik Jonsson Helland, for 100 dollars. The instrument had previously been owned by the renowned fiddler Myllarguten, or Tarjei Augundsson (1801–1872). Eivind borrowed money from a friend in order to purchase the fiddle. He and Fykerud proceeded to give two concerts together, in the towns of Mabel and Harmony, Minnesota (E. D. Aakhus, 1930, p. 26).

# Eivind Aakhus

## En Kveld med Felespil, Fortællinger og Stekvad.

**EIVIND AAKHUS.**

Hys, der staar han, Kirkestillet.  
 En to, tre Stræk, en Troldheimsvældhet.  
 Det brumner luft, det bysser mildt,  
 det koger, vælter, skummer vildt,  
 det frænder, sprøtter, drypper, tikler,  
 det susler, skvatter, kysser, sikler.  
 Hys — hvad er det for en Stimen?  
 Der dør den, — det var „Fossegrinnen“.  
 Da, aander man igjen, mens Taaren  
 nedad Kinden rinder,  
 mens Sjælen smiler ren som Vaanen  
 og leker med de tusen Minder.

Saa stryker Bøen atter Sirengen,  
 det bær tilfjelds i Sol og Sommer,  
 hun staar der ven i Søterengen,  
 der lauker hun, de svarer, kommer.  
 Her, hvor Bjælden dingler, klunger,  
 net se, hvor alle hopper, springer.  
 Men hys — hvad var det? Der igjen!  
 „Kuk-ku“ — du kjender ham, min Ven?  
 Man lytter spændt — det drar forbi.  
 Farvel, du vakre Systerli.

De stille lidd: hvert Ole glittrer,  
 hver Sjæl er ren som Stjermeglittrer.  
 Der loffes Feleu atter op —  
 Jeg staar saa høit, som paa en Top,  
 der ind i Englevrimlen stiger,  
 jeg ser som ind i Himlens Riger.

Det kalder, lokker, vinker, vover,  
 det knæler ned og løfter, soover,  
 jeg kan ei mer, jeg tar til Gratsten, —  
 Herregud! — det var „Rökkelatzen“.

Hvem gav dig denne store Sjæl,  
 som spiller hele Verden sød?  
 Hvem gav dig Magt til allt at jævne?  
 Tak Heimensens Drot for slik en Evne!

*Jon Norstog.*

Billetpris : \_\_\_\_\_

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DANIEL AAKHUS  
 EXPERT PIANO TUNING \$2.50  
 3022-18th AVE. SE.  
 DU. 4285 MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

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Torgeir Bjornaran skriver om Eivind Aakhus efter hans første  
 Konsert i Kristiania:  
 „Eivind Aakhus er en noksaa enestaaende Felespiller. Han gjen-  
 gir ikke bare (som saa mange af de nationale Felespillere) de gamle  
 Sliatter og Tonestykker i deres oprindelige, umiddelbare, ofte ensfor-  
 nige Naturlighed, men forstaar i Ordets bedste Betydning at „moder-  
 nisere“ dem. Aakhus og hans Kunst er et. Det er den gløggø Sæ-  
 tesed, som har faaret rundt i Verden og har suget i sig Livens nye  
 Toner, men bevaret den gamle Resonans eller Klangbund, hvorfra han  
 saa lar dem — forklaret — lyde tilbage“.

„Fædrelandsvennen“ skriver om Aakhus: „Det var rigtig en  
 Fest igaaerkeveid i Turnhallen at høre Eivind Aakhus med sin brede  
 og fyldige Bøe, som han benytter til sidste Trel, den syngende, klang-  
 fulde Tone og storstiledede Foredrag med vældig Kraft, men dog be-  
 hersket, med den overlegne tekniske sikkerhet, hvormed de vanligste  
 Stykker adføres med Lethed, den ukunstlede Maade, hvoreed han  
 gjengir disse rene, enkle Sliatter og Melodier. Hans Stev med sit  
 lune Humor vandt uuaadelig Bifald“.

**Aakhus har den berømte Fele „Sigrid“, som engang har  
 tilhørt Møllargutten.**



**Til EIVIND AAKHUS.**

Live du lengje heil og sød  
 som Herre i Tonerik-  
 Dalen, som er din Fødesheim,  
 er stolt for hun fostrar slike.

Det drysser for kvart eit Bogedrag,  
 Tomar som Forlar reime.  
 Og „Sigrid“ lokkar og „Sigrid“  
 ho er trugi mot deg alleine.

Du tolkar den villaste Hjarvent,  
 du far fram det kaasteste Kjele,  
 du trollar baad Folket og Heimen  
 fram,  
 teikna i Ljud og Laete.

Sæl sitje du Sættisals stante Son  
 med Arc etter Møllarguten!  
 Tak Helsingar med til din  
 nye Heim  
 fra Folket ved Svorvarnuten,  
 Straume, 15. august 1898.

*Gunnar Rysstad.*

Figure 37: Eivind Aakhus promotional poster. From the author's collection.

### 6.3.3 The Aakhus Concert Company

On February 5, 1910, Daniel married Norwegian-American musician Gecina Stockland (1883–1960) of Stephen, Minnesota, and not long after their marriage the couple began touring together, often under the name “The Aakhus Concert Company.”<sup>206</sup> The earliest documentation found of performances given by Gecina and Daniel is a mention of a concert tour planned for the autumn of 1911 (“Fra tonernes verden,” 1911). The couple toured by motorcycle, giving concerts primarily in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota, and playing in school auditoriums, churches, town halls, “opera houses,” libraries, and auditoriums.<sup>207</sup> Gecina accompanied Daniel on piano or on a transportable organ and was also a skilled soprano singer and whistler. They performed a variety of repertoire, including works by

206 Other names used include the Aakhus Entertainers and the Aakhus Concert.

207 Upper Midwestern small-town theatres were often euphemistically referred to as “opera houses.” For rural folk, this term invoked the “cachet of big-city class and culture without having to confront what many rural folk thought were the ‘evils’ of big-city life” (Poole, 2012, p. 147). In Midwestern towns, these buildings were often the largest public spaces and functioned as “multipurpose facilities,” serving both the town and the surrounding rural community (Poole, 2012, p. 147).

Norwegian Romantic-era composers Edvard Grieg, Halvdan Kjerulf, Christian Sinding, and Ole Bull; compositions by Henrik Wieniawski and Pietro Mascagni; traditional Norwegian *halling*, *springar*, and vocal tunes; as well as some of Daniel's own compositions (see Figure 23, page 185). A promotional postcard boasts that Daniel "plays the master pieces of the great composers, brings you to the mountains of Norway by playing folk songs and dances, and also his own compositions and arrangements" (D. Aakhus, n.d.).

The Aakhus Concert Company subsequently evolved into a family act. Daniel and Gecina had two children, Donovan (1910–1986) and Thelma ("Babe"); the family settled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, but Daniel and Gecina continued to tour extensively after their children were born. While they were on tour the children often stayed with their grandmother, but in 1916, at the age of four, Babe began performing and touring with the Concert Company, and Donovan soon followed suit (Kolesar, 1974).<sup>208</sup> The family toured during the summer months in their Ford Model T, setting up camp near the evening's concert venue and sleeping in the car or in a tent following their performance (Figure 38) (Kolesar, 1974). While Daniel had booked some of the performances in advance, many of the concerts were arranged while the family was on the road.



Figure 38: Daniel and Gecina in their Ford Model T. From the author's collection.

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208 In an interview with LeRoy Larson, Babe relates that her nickname was used as a show name, as it was more suitable than her real name, Thelma (Kolesar, 1974).

The Aakhus Concert Company's family performances were typically from one and a half to two hours long (Kolesar, 1974). The concert program generally consisted of violin and piano duets, song solos, dance numbers, whistling, acrobatics, imitations of various immigrant dialects, elocution, and storytelling performed by Gecina and the children. Gecina did "maybe seven different dialects" including Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, Irish, and "Negro" ("Aakhus concert Friday, Nov. 4," 1921; Kolesar, 1974). According to Babe, Gecina was "full of fun" and told humorous stories onstage (Kolesar, 1974). Judging from promotional photos, she may have performed in a homogenized "Norwegian national costume" or modern formal dress, while Daniel performed in a tailcoat suit, and Babe and Donovan wore "folk" costumes sewn by Gecina (Figure 39). Babe Aakhus, who was advertised on concert posters as "the versatile entertainer, singing, whistling, stories, monologues, and dancing," describes how, during performances, she danced schottische alone or with her brother, whistled, did acrobatics and "toe dancing" (pointe ballet); and played piano duets or sang with her brother (Kolesar, 1974). After the performance, a dance was often held at which Daniel and Gecina played old-time music:

and then a lot of times after we were through with the concert, they'd hold a dance, and then dad and mother would play for the dance. They did a lot of that and then that was of course all schottische, polkas, mazurkas. (Kolesar, 1974)



*Figure 39: Promotional photograph for the Aakhus Concert Company. From left to right: Donovan, Babe, and Gecina Aakhus. From the author's collection.*

Through their wide-ranging concert programs, which spanned from classical music to mainstream parlour music, from ethnic dialect humour to Norwegian-language classical and popular vocal selections, *bygdedans* tunes, old-time dance music, whistling, and child acrobatics, the Aakhus Concert Company's performances combined "high," "popular," "ethnic," and "Norwegian" cultural expressions. Historian Michael Kammen suggests that historical orthodoxies regarding high and popular culture imply that high culture is "expected to connect humankind to its finest past achievements," while popular culture "provides more ephemeral access to amusement and experience across class lines in the here and now" (Kammen, 1999, p. 26). Interpreted through this lens, *bygdedans* music performed on stage by Daniel can be understood as the performance of both "high" and "Norwegian" culture: performances of *bygdedans* tunes learned from Eivind Aakhus likely drew associations to the Norwegian "concert era," in which the music functioned as a component of Norwegian nation-building and *nasjonalmusikk* was regarded as a legitimate alternative to European high culture. Furthermore, in the Norwegian-American context, staged performances of *bygdedans* music also functioned as opportunities to reaffirm loyalty to these homeland "high" cultural traditions. Renditions of compositions by Grieg, Kjerulf, Bull, and other Norwegian Romantic-era composers can also be understood along similar lines. Conversely, performances of popular parlour repertoire such as "Danube Waves," "Home, Sweet Home," and "Annie Laurie" expressed two opposing dynamics: the acceptance of, and participation in an American popular entertainment culture that reached across both ethnic and social class segments, and the concurrent Norwegian-American domestication of these supercultural materials. Finally, Gecina's dialect humour can be linked to the broader mainstream vaudeville performance genre, as well as Upper Midwestern "ethnic" vaudeville, in which ethnic "dialect acts" and ethnic humour were a central component (DesRochers, 2014, p. 58). And these are just some of the many elements included in the Aakhus Concert Company's performances.

Although Daniel pursued the same career as his father, then, the form and content of the Aakhus Concert Company's performances differed significantly. While Eivind Aakhus was a prototypical example of the Norwegian "concert fiddler," the Aakhus family's performances were closer in form to performances by ethnic vaudevillians and itinerant Scandinavian-American entertainers who toured the Upper Midwest during the first decades of the twentieth century. The format of the Aakhus Concert Company's performances can thus be understood as having roots in both the Norwegian *konsertradisjon* as practiced by Eivind Aakhus, and in mainstream American vaudeville and its Upper Midwestern "ethnic" offshoots.

As mentioned in Chapter Five, some European-American "ethnic" musicians and entertainers in the Upper Midwest adapted and reinterpreted the vaudeville performance format, shaping it into a unique regional theatrical culture that also served to unify ethnic communities.

According to Greene, ethnic entertainers were significant to ethnic group identity construction in that they

helped to transform their community, to bring together disparate elements of their ethnic group and thereby forge a new and larger audience. In the process these entertainers also aided in establishing a common and more secure identity for their patrons, developing bonds that were both localized and more broadly ethnic. (Greene, 1992, p. 90)

Performances by ethnic musicians and entertainers such as the Aarhus Concert Company served as a significant reflexive framework for immigrant audiences in several senses: they provided emotional comfort and psychic continuity, helped audiences to “gain perspective on problems of adjustment,” and enabled them to “retain a degree of continuity with the past by invoking memories and ties to a *generic* village or region” (Greene, 1992, pp. 91–92). Some ethnic entertainers, adopting a persona similar to the Anglo-American “Toby” figure, also used humour to explore how immigrants confronted the complex challenges of life in America.

Perhaps the most well-known performer of the Scandinavian-American brand of ethnic vaudeville in the Upper Midwest was Swedish American Hjalmar Peterson (1886–1960), whose stage name was “Olle i Skratthult” (“Olle from Laughtersville”). He immigrated from the Värmland region of Sweden to the United States in 1905 or 1906, settling in Minneapolis. Along with ethnic vaudeville, his performances can also be located within the genre of *bond-komik*, a Swedish entertainment tradition of “rustic comedy.” Stage performances by Hjalmar Peterson and his troupe consisted of plays and skits, interspersed with “selections by the orchestra and dancers; songs by [Peterson’s wife] Olga Lindgren; mime, monologues, songs, jokes, and comical stories by Olle, who also performed short gags with other actors. Following the program the orchestra played for dancing until 1 a.m.” (L. Larson, 1983).<sup>209</sup> The troupe dispersed in 1933, largely due to the effects of the Depression; however, Hjalmar continued performing in the Upper Midwest with other groups, only ceasing to perform professionally in 1949. The Norwegian-American counterpart of Hjalmar Peterson was accordionist Thorstein Skarning (1888–1939), who was lesser-known, but who had a successful touring career in the Upper Midwest, travelling a predominantly rural circuit. The previously mentioned

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209 In addition to touring and giving stage performances with a changing troupe of musicians, dancers, and actors, Hjalmar Peterson was also a recording artist, releasing over 60 sides on Victor, Columbia, Wallin’s, Bluebird, and His Master’s Voice under his own name and with his ensemble, Olle i Skratthults Luffare Kapell (Olle i Skratthult’s Hobo Orchestra). His composition, “Nikolina,” was first recorded for Columbia in 1917 and became one of the most popular songs among Scandinavian Americans. The recording sold approximately 100,000 copies, an extraordinary accomplishment for a “foreign-language” record.

stage performances by the Norwegian-American Olson Sisters can also be located within Scandinavian-American ethnic vaudeville.

Daniel and his family continued to tour for 15 years. The children performed with their parents throughout the summer holidays, and during the school year Gecina and Daniel toured on their own. In the winter months the couple spent time at home in Minneapolis, preparing new material: “[W]hen they’d come in town and stayed for a couple of months, well then they’d start working on a whole new repertoire for the next year” (Kolesar, 1974). The children were also expected to train continuously for future performances: Babe recalls that she was “constantly practicing, constantly memorizing” (Kolesar, 1974).

Concert touring was Daniel’s only means of supporting his family. As Babe puts it, having himself grown up with a father who was constantly on the road, touring was the “only thing he knew” (Kolesar, 1974). However, in about 1925 Gecina expressed that she was tired of the touring lifestyle, and the Aakhus Concert Company ceased most of its activity. When Gecina refused to continue touring, Daniel “thought it was going to be the end of the world” (Kolesar, 1974). The family continued to give occasional performances at local Minneapolis venues, however. Daniel also took up the profession of piano tuning, at which he became proficient. He and Gecina divorced in 1930, and following this, he sometimes took his new profession on the road, meeting other Norwegian-American musicians along the way: “he took up piano tuning and he’d play as he went along, you know, always had his violin along” (Kolesar, 1974).

#### 6.3.4 *Vår trofaste spelemann: Performances for Setesdalslaget*

In the early 1950s Daniel began living a “snowbird” lifestyle, spending his summers in Minneapolis tuning pianos and his winters in the southern part of the country, particularly in California. He continued to perform occasionally; one of his regular performance contexts during this period was the midsummer *stevner* arranged by the *bygdelag* Setesdalslaget. According to one source, he was a valued staple of the events:

[W]hen Setesdals lag time draws near, Daniel returns. He realizes they look to him for music and he generously supplies it. When the president calls into the crowd “Hev Daniel komme” [“Has Daniel come”] there is usually a big applause as Daniel comes to the stage with his violin. (B. I. Anderson, 1954, p. 110)

Daniel’s first time attending a Setesdalslaget *stevne* was in 1911, two years after the founding of the *lag*. He attended this *stevne* with his father, Eivind, and from this time forward Daniel often took his father’s place as one of the *lag*’s “own fiddlers”: “whenever Eivind was far away



on concert tours, Daniel took over and became one of the “Vor Egen Spillemenn” (our own musicians), along with his father Eivind, Sam Sorenson, Bjorn Tveitbakk, and Olav Dale” (B. I. Anderson, 1954, p. 36). After the death of his father in 1937, Daniel may have felt an even stronger sense of duty to perform at the events. At the 1940 *stevne* in Crookston, Minnesota, he purportedly stated “I have to be here now since my father is gone. Last time, I came clear from the coast to be here in his place” (B. I. Anderson, 1954, p. 58). Likewise, Babe Aakhus commented that he “always went back there [to the Setesdalslag *stevner*] until he quit driving. I think he took the bus up there then once too. But he always came back, he had to come back for that” (Kolesar, 1974).

Daniel’s participation in, and performances at Setesdalslaget *stevner* reveal that he cherished his parents’ national and regional heritage. His performances at the *stevner* were somewhat varied: in the official program, he commonly played Norwegian Romantic-era pieces such as Johan Svendsen’s “I fjol gjætt’e gjeitinn” and Ole Bull’s “Sæterjentens søndag.” On at least one occasion he accompanied the singing of the American and Norwegian national anthems on his violin during the opening of the *stevne*, and at other times he performed old-time tunes such as “Casey’s Old Time Waltz.” On still other occasions he played reel-to-reel tapes from his own collection of home recordings: at the 1955 *stevne* he played recordings he had made of Hardanger fiddler Anund Roheim, who had returned to Norway (M. E. Johnson, 1955). With their strong ties to the national romantic movement, Daniel’s stage performances of Norwegian classical pieces at the *stevne* seem to have served a similar function as Andrea Quisling’s Hardanger fiddle performances, in that they served to construct and reconstruct an idealized view of homeland national culture. Moreover, even though the collected documentation shows that he does not seem to have performed repertoire from Setesdal, his performances also served as a centerpiece for reinterpreting *bygd* culture. In a description of the Setesdalslag *stevne* held on June 13 and 14, 1958 in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, lag secretary Mrs. Erick Johnson writes:

Wonderful fiddle music by our faithful fiddler, Daniel Aakhus, who came all the way from California. No fiddler has done so much for Setesdalslaget as Aakhus, whose beautiful tones will never be forgotten. He is the Setesdøl who adorns the program, and we hope he can be with us for many years to come. (M. E. Johnson, 1959)<sup>210</sup>

His last documented performance at a Setesdalslaget *stevne* was in 1968, one year before he passed away at the age of 88.

210 “Vidunderlig felemusikk av vår trofaste spelemann, Daniel Aakhus, som kom helt fra California. Ingen spelemann har gjort så mykje for Setesdalslaget som Aakhus hvis vakre toner aldri blir gløymt. Han er Setesdøl som pryder programmet, og vi håper han kan vare [sic] med oss ennå i mange år.”

### 6.3.5 The Aakhus Collection

As mentioned above, Daniel became a curator of his own musical legacy through the collection and preservation of various documents and materials associated with his and the Aakhus Concert Company's performances. After purchasing his first tape recorder in the mid-1950s (a Webcor reel-to-reel magnetic tape recorder), he supplemented this personal collection by making extensive home recordings of himself, as well as several other Norwegian-American fiddlers. This collection, which I refer to as the "Aakhus Collection," is an important archive of a second-generation Norwegian-American immigrant's musical activity and has served as a primary source for this case study.<sup>211</sup> The home tape recordings in the collection reveal Daniel's audible, performative exploration of identity through the performance and recording of varied musical discourses.

Home recording was a significant performance context for several Norwegian-American musicians, particularly after the introduction and spread of magnetic tape recording technology in the 1950s and 1960s. In the history of home recording, early cylinder-playing phonographs had allowed users to make recordings—an activity that had been broadly popular; however, the standardization of phonograph technology made amateur recording much more difficult and led to the decline of home recording until the introduction of magnetic reel-to-reel tape recorders to the consumer market in the early 1950s (Katz, 2010).<sup>212</sup> As a sound recording technology that aimed to attract a large consumer base during the period between the dominance of the phonograph and the rise of the Compact Cassette and other mobile music technologies, reel-to-reel recorders were originally marketed to consumers as an "acoustic family album" or "family memory device" in which users could "record precious moments of family life" and share them with relatives and friends living in a different place (Bijsterveld & Jacobs, 2009, pp. 26, 29). Other domestic uses of the tape recorder suggested by manufacturers included "creating voice letters for family overseas, rehearsing lectures or amateur music performances" as well as "making radio plays. . . [and] recording radio programs" (Bijsterveld & Jacobs, 2009, pp. 29–30). In spite of the multiplicity of uses promoted by manufacturers, one of the primary uses of the technology by consumers was to record music, particularly from radio.

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211 The Aakhus Collection consists of over 200 reel-to-reel audio tapes; a number of photographs, including artist portraits and family photos; copies of a scrapbook collection of newspaper clippings documenting performances and performance programs; several concert posters; facsimiles of Eivind Aakhus's two published collections of Hardanger fiddle music (*Kjende slåttar* and *Gamle og nye slaattar*); copies of Eivind's published family history (*Ættesoge*) and memoir (*Minne frå Noreg og Amerika*); and a facsimile of the early Hardanger fiddle transcriptions, *VIII Norske slaatter for Hardangerfele* (1865) published by Czech Carl Schart. The collection was donated to the University of Minnesota by Thelma "Babe" Aakhus in 1971, two years after Daniel's death; currently, the reel-to-reel recordings and a number of the documents are in a private collection, while several documents and photographs were given to the author by LeRoy Larson in 2016.

212 Two examples of home recordings of Norwegian-American musicians made prior to the introduction of the magnetic tape recorder are the previously-mentioned phonograph recordings of Oscar Hamrey made by Jøger O. Quale, and wire recordings of McFarland, Wisconsin fiddler Henry Everson (1874–1966) and the Hoveland brothers made in the late 1940s and early 1950s by Milo Edwards (R. Larson, 1991, p. 35).

The Aakhus Collection includes over 200 reel-to-reel audio tapes recorded by Daniel beginning in the 1950s (Figure 40).<sup>213</sup> In the 1970s work was commenced at the University of Minnesota to catalogue the tape recordings, first by LeRoy Larson, and later by other music students. Ethnomusicologist Alan Kagan, who was a professor of music at the university, supervised work on the collection. Eighty of the tapes were catalogued at this time; while quite a few of the melodies were identified, a large proportion were not identified beyond tune type/genre. Professor Alan Kagan and his students also catalogued many of the melodies using numeric melody codes based on transcriptions of the first bars of the melodies.



Figure 40: Several reel-to-reel tapes from the Aakhus Collection. Photo by the author.

213 In an interview for this study, LeRoy Larson, who was involved in acquiring the Aakhus Collection for the University of Minnesota, commented that when he received the tapes, they were not stored in boxes, but were collected loosely in a suitcase (L. Larson, 2016). Daniel, who was described by his daughter as “stingy,” used low-quality tapes for his recordings, which puts the collection at risk of more rapid degradation. This also made the digitization process more challenging, as the tapes need to be handled carefully since they can easily break.

A survey of the Aakhus recordings reveals that Daniel employed reel-to-reel home recording technology for a variety of uses. One of his primary uses was to record, and duplicate recordings of, his own repertoire. His own performances, with piano accompaniment, constitute a significant portion of the recorded material: 49 of the 80 tapes catalogued by students and faculty at the University of Minnesota contain home recordings of Daniel performing on violin. However, many of these seem to be duplicates of the same recordings, sometimes in different sequences. This indicates another purpose of Daniel's use of home recording technology: to distribute copies of his recordings to others. This is confirmed in an audio letter found in the collection: the audio letter, from the Nelissons in Crosby, Minnesota, thanks Daniel for the "tape of old-time music you gave us before you left," and the speaker goes on to discuss an old tape recorder he has been having problems with, asking for Daniel's advice on which new model he should purchase (Nelisson, 1965).<sup>214</sup> As indicated by the tape from the Nelissons, another of Daniel's uses of reel-to-reel recording was the exchange of audio letters. Exchanging audio letters through the reel-to-reel medium facilitated an intimacy beyond the written word and allowed individuals to share life experiences across "spatiotemporal divides" (Campbell, 2019, p. 2). There are several audio letters among 141 numbered, but uncatalogued "non-commercial" tapes that constitute the remainder of the preserved Aakhus recordings.<sup>215</sup>

Still another of Daniel's uses of recording technology was to record music from radio broadcasts and phonograph recordings; as indicated above, this was a very common practice among reel-to-reel users. A number of reels in the collection contain recordings of radio, primarily of classical music. In her interview with LeRoy Larson, Babe confirms that recording radio broadcasts had been a regular pastime for Daniel:

LeRoy Larson: I noticed from his tapes, at least when he was out west in California, I think he taped an awful lot off the radio.

Thelma Kolesar: Oh yes. FM.

LeRoy Larson: Classical music. Yeah, FM stations.

Thelma Kolesar: He followed that still.

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214 According to Babe, Daniel introduced several of his friends to tape recording: "that was a wonderful pastime for him and he visited friends and got them interested in tape recorders. People that were senior citizens. Got them interested in it" (Kolesar, 1974).

215 Analyzing the audio letters in the Aakhus Collection was beyond the scope of this study; further research into the contents of these letters would likely reveal significant additional biographical details and context that could flesh out the discussion of Aakhus as a performer.

LeRoy Larson: I suppose he listened to those tapes back then and?

Thelma Kolesar: Oh yes. (Kolesar, 1974)

Finally, Daniel also used his tape recorder to record other (primarily Norwegian-American) musicians he encountered. Other Norwegian-American musicians recorded in the collection include Hardanger fiddler Anund Roheim, whom Daniel met on several occasions at Setesdalslaget *stevner*; the brothers Knute and Gunder Sorenson; Chester and Beatrice Lee of Kenyon, Minnesota; Gunnar Odden; and Casey Aslakson.

### 6.3.6 The Aakhus Recordings: A Closer Look

During my fieldwork in the Upper Midwest I was able to digitize 45 tapes from the Aakhus Collection. Aside from two reel-to-reel tapes of Aakhus recordings that formed part of the collection of recordings Larson analyzed in his dissertation (all of which have been recently digitized by the University of Wisconsin-Madison), none of the Aakhus Collection has previously been digitized. To date, I have indexed approximately half of the digitized tapes based on the cataloguing previously undertaken by Larson, Kagan, and others. When combined with concert programs, advertisements, and newspaper reports of the Aakhus Concert Company's performances, these recordings enable an exploration of Daniel's performative agency and his second-generation immigrant subjectivity.

The indexed recordings from the Aakhus Collection can be divided into two broad categories: 1) rehearsed recordings of Daniel performing his own repertoire with a (usually unknown) piano accompanist; and 2) recordings of other Norwegian-American musicians Daniel knew and encountered. The recordings in the first category reveal how Daniel, as a second-generation Norwegian American, could easily alternate between composed repertoire from a variety of mainstream and popular music genres, primarily American and "Scandinavian." These recordings incorporate both old-time, parlour, and classical/light classical music; this variety of repertoire therefore also reflects how the Aakhus Concert Company's concerts and old-time dance music performances might have sounded. In the present discussion, I focus on the 60 old-time tunes identified among the indexed recordings of Daniel Aakhus.<sup>216</sup>

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216 Fourteen of the 21 tapes indexed thus far contain recordings of Daniel: these are tapes number 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, and 27. From these tapes, a total of 216 tracks containing performances by Daniel have been indexed. Among the indexed tracks are multiple recordings of the same melodies; within the 216 indexed tracks there are approximately 150 individual melodies. Of these, 73 melodies have been identified. Thirteen of the 73 identified melodies are classical/light classical pieces and are not included in the present analysis.

On the whole, Daniel's recorded old-time repertoire contains an unusually large number of composed melodies drawn from several different popular music genres. This is also reflected if we narrow our focus to a single tune type: for example, in Daniel's recorded repertoire of waltzes indexed thus far (Figure 41), which are 35 in number, 33 of the waltz melodies can be traced to a composer; of the remaining two, one is a traditional tune with composed lyrics ("Livet i Finnskogarna"), and the other has composed lyrics, while the melody may be Italian in origin ("Månstrålar klara"). Twenty-one of the waltzes (60%) are Swedish; of these, 20 can be traced to a composer, and 17 have lyrics. Of the remaining 14 waltzes, eight have been identified as American, four as Norwegian, one as Mexican, and one as Romanian in origin.

Melody Name	Alternate Name	Composer/Lyricist	Origin
After the Ball (1891)		Charles K. Harris	USA
Anniversary Waltz (1880)	Waves of the Danube; The Anniversary Song	Iosif Ivanovici	Romania
Brudvalsén		David Hellström/Göran Svenning	Sweden
Casey's Old Time Waltz (1926)	Casey's Melody	Casey Aslakson	USA
Coo Coo Waltz (1918)	Gökvalsén	Emanuel Jonasson	Sweden
Dan's Old Time Waltz (1935)		Daniel Aakhus	USA
Där näckrosen blommar (1928)	Ved skogtjønnet; Der vannlijen blomstrer	Sven du Rietz/Sven-Olof Sandberg	Sweden
Fairy Kiss (1908)	Fairy Kisses Waltz	Charles Leslie Johnson	USA
Finska valsén (ca. 1915)	The Finnish Waltz; Silver Lake Waltz; Fleckeras vals	Hezekiel Walroth/Ernst Rolf	Sweden
Fiskarvals från Bohuslän (1908)	Fisherman's Waltz; Fiskarvalsén	David Hellström/Göran Svenning	Sweden
Glad sjömann	En sjömann så glittrande glad	Ernst Rolf/Martin Nilsson	Sweden
Grabo Waltz (1920?)	Gråbovalsén	Hugo Larsson/Ivar Pira	Sweden
Hornskrogs Waltz (1909)		Thyra af Klercker	Sweden
Kiss of Spring Waltz (1906)		Walter Rolfe	USA
Kom Adolfina	Friarevalsén	David Hellström/Göran Svenning	Sweden
Kostervalsén (1913)		David Hellström/Göran Svenning	Sweden
Kristianiavalsén		Gotthard Erichsen	Norway
Kväsarvalsén (1898)		Arthur Högstedt (trad.)/Arthur Högstedt	Sweden
Livet i Finnskogen (1913)	Livet i finnskogarna; Life in the Finnish Woods	trad./Anna Myrberg	Sweden
Lokkeren-vals	Lokker'n	Gotthard Erichsen	Norway
Lördagsvalsén	Saturday Waltz	Anselm Johansson/Anna Myrberg	Sweden
Malstram Waltz	Gammal vals från Dalarna; Gammal Dalavals	Carl Jularbo	Sweden
Midsommer Waltz	Midsommarvalsén	David Hellström/ Göran Svenning	Sweden
Missouri Waltz (1914)	The Graveyard Waltz	Lee Edgar Settle/John Valentine Eppel	USA
Månstrålar klara	Tantis serenad	Italian melody?/Arvid Ödman	Sweden
Naterby Waltz	En vals i Nättraby; Nättrabyvals	Georg Ringvall	Sweden

Melody Name	Alternate Name	Composer/Lyricist	Origin
Norsk Bondvals	Mattis-valsen, Norska valsen; Norsk Bondevals	Carl Mathisen	Norway
Ny Fiskarvals (1912)		David Hellström/Göran Svenning	Sweden
Ocean Waves (1929)		Casey Aslakson/Casey Aslakson	USA
Over the Waves (1888)	Sobre las olas	Juventino Rosas	Mexico
Sjömannsvalsen (1910)	Sailor's Waltz; Bohusländska sjömannsvalsen	David Hellström	Sweden
Sørensen's Vals	Den ubemerkte	Anders Sørensen	Norway
Sorunda-låten (1909)		Adolf Englund	Sweden
St. Paul Waltz (1868)		A. J. Vaas	USA
Styrmansvalsen (1914)	The Pilot's Waltz	Helmuth Marcussen/Nalle Halldén	Sweden

Figure 41: Daniel Aakhus's catalogued waltz repertoire.

All 17 of the Swedish waltzes with lyrics are *schlager* melodies; meanwhile, the Norwegian waltzes in Daniel's repertoire all belong to the stratum of popular, composed Norwegian *runddans* music that Arild Hoksnes refers to as the "popular style," the development of which was directly influenced by Swedish *schlager* music (Hoksnes, 1988, p. 72). The Mexican waltz is the well-known parlour tune "Over the Waves" by Juventino Rosas, while the Romanian waltz is "Anniversary Waltz" (Ivanović's "Danube Waves," discussed in Chapter Five). In addition to these, there are eight waltzes of American origin: while several of these are popular minstrel, parlour, or Tin Pan Alley tunes ("After the Ball," "Fairy Kiss," "Kiss of Spring," "Missouri Waltz," "St. Paul Waltz"), three are original compositions by Norwegian-American fiddlers. Two of the Norwegian-American waltzes were composed by fiddler Aslak "Casey" Aslakson (1893–1974): "Casey's Old Time Waltz" was published in 1926, and "Ocean Waves," a waltz with melody and lyrics by Aslakson, was published in 1929. Performing with session musicians in the ensemble Casey's Old Time Fiddlers, Aslakson also released recordings, with a decidedly early country sound, of both of his original waltzes on the Victor label in 1931 (Victor 23560).<sup>217</sup> In addition to becoming popular among Norwegian-American fiddlers, "Casey's Old Time Waltz" entered the broader ethnic old-time repertoire the Upper Midwest and has been recorded by "Dutchman" polka bands like the Six Fat Dutchmen and the "Whoopee" John Orchestra, among others; furthermore, the tune permeated the Canadian old-time genre and has been recorded by ensembles led by both Don Messer and Andy DeJarlis.<sup>218</sup>

217 According to Victor studio records, Casey was accompanied by an instrumental ensemble of session musicians, including Alfredo Cibelli on mandolin. Cibelli also performed on recordings made by vocalists Frankie Marvin and Robert MacGimsey on the same date. See <https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/date/browse/1931-05-13>

218 Among the recordings catalogued in the database, "Casey's Old-Time Waltz" was found performed by Norwegian-American musicians Chester and Beatrice Lee, Selmer Ramsey, Ed and Jerry Selvaag, and Harold Sorenson, in addition to Daniel Aakhus.

The third Norwegian-American waltz in Daniel's recorded repertoire, "Dan's Old Time Waltz," was written by Daniel himself and published in 1935. According to Babe Aakhus, Casey Aslakson, who was a very good friend of Daniel's, may have helped Daniel compose the tune (Kolesar, 1974). Like Daniel, Casey had roots in Setesdal and was also born in Minnesota's Red River Valley, in the town of Fisher, 11 kilometers east of Bygland Township. Daniel may have been inspired to compose the waltz by Casey, and he may have also been influenced by his father, Eivind, who had published two collections of transcriptions of Hardanger fiddle music, including some of his own compositions.<sup>219</sup> Daniel's and Casey's composed waltzes reflect both musicians' interplay with American and "Scandinavian" popular musics.

The multitude of composed melodies in Daniel's recorded repertoire can primarily be explained through his use of sheet music. As a performer myself, when listening to Daniel's recordings of old-time tunes it is clear to me that he is playing directly from, or based on sheet music. Moreover, I found that 23 of the 60 identified old-time tunes were published in popular collections of Scandinavian dance music produced in America, particularly those by Swedish-American musicians Eddie Jahrl, Carl J. Johnson, and Eric Olzen. As mentioned in Chapter Five, these collections played an important role in defining "standard repertoire" in the Norwegian-American old-time music genre, and they also functioned to lump together Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, and Finns into a superculturally-produced, pan-Scandinavian musical identity. When comparing some of Daniel's recorded performances with the transcriptions found in these collections, in many cases he closely follows the transcribed melody, performing with a semi-classical, slightly stiff expression that makes it evident he is reading from notation. Most of the remaining identified old-time melodies could also be found in published sheet music editions or collections, which were likely Daniel's sources for the tunes in the majority of cases.

Daniel's rehearsed recordings of old-time music, primarily consisting of composed repertoire from a range of popular American and "Scandinavian" genres, and likely performed from sheet music, reflect his reality as a second-generation Norwegian American comfortably participating in a host culture that burgeoned with an abundance of mainstream, commodified music. Further, his performance of old-time tunes drawn from the standardized repertoire of "Scandinavian Dance Music" found in sheet music collections can be viewed as one facet of his personal approach to performing a "Norwegian" layer of identity. Daniel could easily alternate between this varied repertoire; through the voice of his fiddle the various tunes also seem to comfortably amalgamate into a uniform "old-time" form of expression.

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219 Eivind Aakhus's collections of transcriptions, *Gamle og nye slaattar*, and *Kjende sl ttar*, were published in Norway in 1925 and 1934, respectively. Facsimiles of both of these were found in the Aakhus Collection.



The second category of recordings from the Aakhus Collection encompasses recordings of other Norwegian-American musicians. These recordings reveal Daniel's interest in documenting, collecting, and perhaps learning new repertoire from Norwegian-American musicians performing both old-time and *bygdedans* music. Among these recordings are many old-time tunes performed by fiddler Chester Lee (1912–2000) of Kenyon, Minnesota, accompanied by his wife, Beatrice, on piano. According to LeRoy Larson, who interviewed Lee, Chester had studied violin at McPhail School of Music in Minneapolis and had been a member of the Rochester, Minnesota Civic Orchestra; he had also led a dance band during the 1950s (L. Larson, 1975, pp. 93–94). Larson writes that Daniel recorded Chester in circa 1956; according to Julane Beetham, Daniel Aakhus had told her informant, fiddler Harold Sorenson (who also admired Lee), that he thought Lee “was the best fiddler he had ever heard” (Beetham, 2005, p. 196). Indeed, Lee's playing is virtuosic, and it is easy to understand that Daniel, as a classically-trained musician, would have thought highly of Lee.

As mentioned above, other recordings of Norwegian-American musicians in the collection may have been made during Daniel's annual trips to participate in Setesdalslaget's *stevne*: recordings of several *bygdedans* tunes played by Hardanger fiddler Anund Roheim were made in Roheim's hotel room during a joint *stevne* for Telelaget and Setesdalslaget in 1959. The brothers Knute (1897–1976) and Gunder (1910–1989) Sorenson, who also had roots in Setesdal and played fiddle and piano, respectively, had often participated in Setesdalslaget's *stevner*, and Daniel's numerous recordings of them may have also been made in conjunction with one of these events. Overall, Daniel's recordings of other Norwegian-American musicians are significant in that by recording them, he was consciously collecting and preserving specific musical events and repertoire that connected him to a range of musical expressions of Norwegianness.

### 6.3.7 Conclusion

As a performer, Daniel Aakhus explored and expressed his second-generation immigrant subjectivity through a range of performance contexts and musical discourses. Second generation immigrants tend to distance themselves from their ethnic background in order to construct their own set of values, and although Daniel exhibited these tendencies to some extent, he also maintained connections with regional and national aspects of his Norwegian-American ethnic identity. This can be seen in his interest in performing traditional Norwegian music, as well as music by Norwegian Romantic-era composers; his regular performances at gatherings of the *bygdelag* Setesdalslaget; and in the fact that he followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a touring musician.

Further, Daniel's exploratory negotiation of individual identity is evident in the eclectic makeup of the Aakhus Concert Company's concert programs, as well as in his varied uses of, and repertoire recorded on his reel-to-reel recordings. Although he pursued the same career as his father, the form and content of the Aakhus Concert Company's performances deviated significantly: while Eivind Aakhus embodied the typical Norwegian "concert fiddler," the family's performances more closely resembled performances by the itinerant Scandinavian-American groups that existed during the first decades of the twentieth century and presented a much wider variety of music. Furthermore, these eclectic performances could also unify ethnic communities, contributing to the construction of a stable sense of group identity, as well as serving as emotional and psychic intermediaries for an audience of immigrants facing complex issues of adaptation to American society. Finally, his home recordings reflect his ability to comfortably alternate between composed repertoire from a range of mainstream and popular music genres, primarily American and "Scandinavian," while his recordings of other Norwegian-American musicians can be viewed as a conscious effort to collect and preserve meaningful events and repertoire that variously expressed Norwegianness.

## 6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, through the analytical vantage point of two individual musicians—Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus—we have examined how heterogeneous Norwegian-American identities were constructed through performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in various sociomusical contexts in the Upper Midwest.

Both musicians, neither of whom have been studied in depth previously, were unconventional performers and reflect the heterogeneity of Norwegian-American musical identities during the early and mid-twentieth century. Through her extensive performance activity as one of very few female Hardanger fiddles active during this period, Andrea Quisling defied the social boundaries of what was considered normal behaviour for women, performing an alternative musical voice. Daniel Aakhus's broad range of musical activity reflects his reality as a second-generation Norwegian American who could comfortably alternate between varied "Norwegian" and mainstream repertoire. We have also seen that in certain performance contexts, such as *bygdelag stevner*, *kappleiker*, and public concerts, performances by both Andrea and Daniel served to construct and reconstruct idealized notions of homeland national and/or *bygd* culture, to relieve psychological pressure, to affirm loyalty to Norwegian local and national heritage, and to display compatibility between ethnic cultural practices and American ideologies.

Mark Slobin notes that analyses on the level of the individual musician may contribute to an understanding of the complexity and dynamics of a subculture's "inner expressive life" and the "ways in which individual musicians stand for, influence, are accepted, or rejected" by subcultures (Slobin, 1993, pp. 37–38). Furthermore, he suggests that the dynamic nature of individual identities, each consisting of a "web of affiliations," contributes to the complexity and shifting nature of music subcultures (Slobin, 1993, p. 39). I contend that Andrea and Daniel's manifold performance activities and their multilayered, shifting individual identities reflect the fluid, emergent, and heterogeneous nature of the Norwegian-American music subculture during this period of major social, cultural, technological, and economic change in the United States.

## 7 Concluding Remarks

This study has aimed to investigate the construction of Norwegian-American identities through performances of *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music in the Upper Midwest between 1900 and 1970. I have addressed this topic by employing an interdisciplinary theoretical framework centred on concepts of social identity, performance, and globalization theories as connected to ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin's framework for the study of subcultural musics. This framework has been grounded in a constructivist understanding of identity in which identities are conceived of as fluid and subject to continuous processes of construction; as collections of "overlapping layers" or "points of difference," many of which are themselves unstable.

In this final chapter I make some concluding remarks. I begin by reflecting on what has been learned in relation to the study's two research questions, before concluding with some suggestions for future research.

### 7.1 Contributions

I addressed the study's two research questions individually, beginning with a broad investigation of processes of interplay with the "-cultures" before "zooming in" to examine individual performers and performance contexts through case studies of Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus. Below I summarize the findings of the study in relation to the two research questions and relative to findings in previous research.

#### 7.1.1 Interplay with the "-Cultures" and Identity Construction

The study's first research question was:

*How did the Norwegian-American music culture in the Upper Midwest interplay with supercultural, intercultural, and other subcultural musics, structures, and forces? How do these processes of interplay reflect processes of Norwegian-American social identity construction?*

To address this twofold question, I analyzed multiple examples of interplay drawn from the collected data and found that Norwegian-American musicians primarily interacted with the "-cultures" through three broad processes of interplay: 1) intersubcultural interaction;

2) the use of supercultural materials; and 3) interplay via the diasporic interculture. Further, I found that these processes of interplay variously reflected two main dynamics of Norwegian-American identity construction: 1) plasticity, permeability, and ethnic boundary negotiation; and 2) positioning and mythmaking processes.

### *Intersubcultural Interplay*

I found that Norwegian-American musicians interplayed with other ethnic groups and their musics in shared socioeconomic realms and social gathering spaces in the Upper Midwest, as well as through presentational and mediated performance contexts such as live performances, 78 rpm recordings, and radio. While previous studies establish interethnic community building as an important social function of Norwegian-American old-time music, and numerous settings for intersubcultural interaction have been identified, I found little concrete evidence of direct musical interactions between Norwegian-American musicians and other ethnic groups in the collected data. I pointed to the insularity of the Norwegian-American ethnic group described by Norwegian-American studies scholars as one possible explanation; limitations of the data set could be another reason for the scant evidence of direct musical interactions with other ethnic groups. However, there was evidence of increased direct intersubcultural interaction during the 1950s and 1960s, which may have been due in part to the increased assimilation of the third and fourth generations. On the other hand, more evidence was found of intersubcultural interplay that occurred via presentational and mediated performance contexts, particularly travelling entertainment, 78 rpm recordings, and radio. Based on these findings, I speculated that direct intersubcultural interplay may have been less significant to the development of Norwegian-American old-time music than intersubcultural interplay facilitated via various supercultural channels. With regard to identity construction, I found that on a broader level, the documented interethnic interactions reflect the permeability and plasticity of the Norwegian-American ethnic group, facilitated through the musical “common language” of waltz, schottische, and polka.

### *Interplay with Supercultural Musical Materials*

While previous studies account for the development of the two genres through the dichotomous themes of simplicity/complexity and adaptability/stability, the “bigger picture” of how the genres, and individual performers, interacted with supercultural musics, structures, and forces has generally not been examined. I found that Norwegian-American interplay with supercultural musical materials was particularly significant for the Norwegian-American old-time music genre and occurred through a diversity of channels and media, including travelling entertainment, sheet music, commercial phonograph recordings, and radio. Through these

channels, Norwegian-American old-time musicians interplayed with numerous popular music genres such as minstrel music, parlour music, Tin Pan Alley songs, Swedish *schlager*, country music, and Canadian old-time music, among others. I have suggested that the Norwegian-American subculture related to these supercultural materials as what Jon Gjerde calls “benign forces,” “neutral innovations,” or “novelties”; however, I have argued that they were not benign, but functioned to propel change in the Norwegian-American ethnic group.

Furthermore, I found that through interplay with supercultural musics, structures, and forces, Norwegian-American old-time musicians interacted not only with a variety of popular musics, but also with various performance formats, American mainstream ideologies, modern dance fashions, and superculturally produced notions of musical “pan-Scandinavianism.” While these dynamics of interplay can be understood as auditory signs of participation in American lifeways and the modern age, Norwegian-American musicians’ diverse reception of supercultural musics and forces also emphasizes performers’ individual agency and reveals the variety of ways in which these materials were domesticated and reconstructed, making them “Norwegian” or “Norwegian-American” and serving to renegotiate ethnic boundaries.

Previous studies identify adaptability as a factor that contributed to the retention of the Norwegian-American old-time genre, since the genre functioned as a musical common language in encounters with other ethnic groups and was adaptable to new sociomusical contexts. I found that the Norwegian-American reception of supercultural musical materials also reflects the adaptability, plasticity, and permeability of several other boundaries and “groupings,” including the Norwegian-American ethnic group, the supercultural musics themselves, and the disjunctive global exchange networks through which they flowed. Plasticity and permeability can therefore be viewed as central dynamics at work on subcultural, supercultural, and intercultural levels.

### *Interplay via the Diasporic Interculture*

Evidence of interplay via the diasporic intercultural, or “diasporic networking,” was found involving both *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time musicians. I found that diasporic networking occurred through both direct interactions and disembodied forms of transnational communication. While diasporic networking has not been highlighted in previous studies of the two genres, research from the field of Norwegian-American studies has shown that Norwegian-American group identity was negotiated through positioning processes between shifting Norwegian nationalisms and the Norwegian-American subculture (D. W. Olson, 2013). I found that some elements of this relationship were reflected in the musical diasporic networking between Norwegian-American musicians and the Norwegian homeland music

culture: diasporic networking provided “cultural nourishment” for Norwegian-American musicians, serving as a way to feel connected to a living tradition, to demonstrate loyalty to Norwegian heritage, and to participate in a transnational Norwegian identity. Broadly, I found that dynamics of musical diasporic networking indicated a reciprocal desire for “cultural nourishment,” musical exchange, connection, and participation in the construction of an imagined, transnational community.

### *Interpreting Processes of Musical Change and Exchange*

Most prior studies that explore the musical development of Norwegian-American old-time music have employed the concept of creolization in analyses of these processes. I have argued that employing frameworks of creolization, hybridity, or other concepts of cultural mixture to account for all of the patterns and processes of change and exchange in the Norwegian-American music culture does not give a full picture of the global cultural forces involved in these processes, nor does any single concept contain the theoretical tools necessary for understanding all of these forces. I have suggested, drawing on Slobin, that rather than using a single blanket concept/term such as creolization to interpret dynamics of musical change and exchange, it is more constructive to experiment with terminology on a case-by-case basis. By taking this approach in analyses of specific musical examples that illustrated various dynamics of interplay with the “-cultures,” I interpreted an array of individual motivations and receptions; this approach pushed me to look closer and simultaneously to strive to take into account a multitude of overlapping perspectives and levels of analysis in order to interpret the meaning of a specific “subcultural move” (Slobin, 1993, p. 91).

### 7.1.2 Performance Contexts and Identity Construction

The study’s second research question was:

*How were heterogeneous Norwegian-American identities constructed through performances of the genres of bygdedans and Norwegian-American old-time music in various sociomusical contexts in the American Upper Midwest, 1900–1970?*

Through case studies of performers Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus, I found that performance contexts served important functions related to identity construction, including the construction and reconstruction of idealized notions of homeland national and regional culture; the display of compatibility between ethnic cultural practices and American ideals; and the affirmation of loyalty to Norwegian cultural traditions of the homeland. By serving these functions, certain performance contexts can therefore be understood as

“ethnic celebrations” and as participating in positioning and mythmaking processes related to Norwegian-American identity construction. I also found that performances in various contexts functioned as outlets, or frameworks, for the reflexive regulation of emotions and self-worth, and as intermediaries for immigrants facing complex issues of adaptation to American society.

### *Performance as Positioning, Homemaking, and Mythmaking*

Previous studies have found that both *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time music have variously functioned as ethnic symbols. While prior findings suggest that performances of *bygdedans* music, and the Hardanger fiddle itself, have consistently functioned as ethnic symbols in the Norwegian-American music culture, there are differences of opinion about the extent to which Norwegian-American old-time music has served as an ethnic symbol. Philip Nusbaum has suggested that old-time music has some symbolic value; however, he maintains that the genre served multiple functions, primarily a social one. Conversely, Philip Martin has asserted that Norwegian-American old-time music functioned as a potent ethnic symbol that could draw links to a common past, but that it had undergone a process of simplification, adaptation, and stereotyping.

Expanding on these findings, and drawing on research by Norwegian-American studies scholars Odd Lovoll and Daron W. Olson, I found that performances of *bygdedans* music at *bygdelag stevner*, *kappleiker*, and public concerts functioned to reinterpret and reconstruct elements of homeland *bygd* and national culture, to reinforce loyalty to Norwegian cultural traditions, and to reaffirm the Norwegian-American “home” in American society. Furthermore, I found that the acting out of selectively transplanted Norwegian cultural traditions and rituals at *stevner* and *kappleiker* that incorporated performances of *bygdedans* music, such as re-enactments of Norwegian country weddings, or the *kappleik* itself (a transplanted tradition), functioned as a context for the performance of loyalty to Norwegian local and national culture. In the same vein, Norwegian-American *kappleiker* also constructed frameworks, such as the division of competitors into classes according to ability, and Bjørgulv Bjørnaraa’s performance of the role of curator-emcee, to help audiences learn about *bygdedans* music and recognize musical quality, thus strengthening notions of shared local and national culture. Moreover, in the cases of both Andrea Quisling and Daniel Aakhus, I found that elements of material and immaterial culture, such as folk costumes, instruments, music repertoire, and family connections functioned as significant links to Norway and as signs of a performer’s individual authenticity. Conversely, performances of Norwegian-American old-time music at *stevner* and *kappleiker* were found to have served a primarily recreational function, mainly in the context of social dancing that occurred after the conclusion of the “official” program, although old-time music was included in the stage program surrounding *kappleiker* beginning in the 1930s.



Other performance contexts also participated in positioning processes. Drawing on historian Victor Greene's research, I found that ethnic vaudeville performances by troupes such as the Aakhus Concert Company also served to unify ethnic communities by merging diverse musical and cultural elements (Greene, 1992, p. 90). Moreover, the Aakhus Concert Company's performances of popular music repertoire on the Norwegian-American ethnic vaudeville stage expressed still another dynamic of positioning, between the acceptance of American popular culture and the simultaneous Norwegian-American domestication of these supercultural musics.

### *Performance as a Framework for Reflexive Emotional Regulation*

While previous studies have pointed to the recreational function of both genres, little attention has been given to the music's affective capacities in everyday life. I found that performances of both genres, in numerous contexts, functioned as outlets, or frameworks, for the reflexive regulation of emotions and/or self-worth. Many descriptions of performances of *bygdedans* music at *bygdelag stevner*, *kappleiker*, and public concerts comment on the music's affective power and characterize how it enabled listeners to relive memories and landscapes from Norway and relieve psychological pressures. Moreover, performances by ethnic vaudevillians also provided emotional comfort and psychic continuity, enabling audiences to invoke memories of the home country, as well as deal with issues of adjustment to American society. In addition, I found that for individual musicians, music-making could function to manage moods, both initiating and absorbing emotions.

### *A Heterogeneity of Norwegian-American Musical Identities*

The multiple and diverse examples of individual performers given throughout Chapters Five and Six also reflect the heterogeneity of Norwegian-American musician identities during the early and mid-twentieth century. Both of the case study subjects were unconventional performers and serve to underscore this heterogeneity: Andrea Quisling's musical voice and identity were "alternative" on a number of fronts, while Daniel Aakhus's idiosyncratic range of musical activity marks him as atypical. Both Andrea and Daniel audibly, performatively explored their individual identities through diverse performances of *bygdedans* and/or Norwegian-American old-time music. These findings are consistent with those of Anna C. Rue (2014), who found that the diversity of contemporary expressions of Norwegian-American music reflects a diversity of articulations of contemporary Norwegian-American identity.

## 7.2 Future Research

Perhaps one of the most exciting, yet challenging aspects of the design of this study has been its broad scope. By casting a broad geographical, generic, and contextual net, I have collected an enormous amount of data to which it has been impossible to do justice within the space of this dissertation, and within the timeframe of the research. In future research it would therefore be fruitful to select a single performance context, or even a single event, and examine in depth how identities were constructed in that setting. I hope to continue researching Norwegian-American *kappleiker* with this aim.

Similarly, it was not possible within the scope of this study to transcribe and analyze all of the interviews conducted in prior studies; moreover, due to the late-stage incorporation of qualitative coding, it was not possible to thoroughly analyze the transcribed interviews using this approach. Thorough coding of all available interviews by Hoeschen, Martin, and Larson, as well as interviews conducted by Philip Nusbaum and James P. Leary, would enrich the investigation of the topic. Likewise, doing further analyses of specific music examples using Slobin's framework would also be fruitful and would likely uncover many other processes of interplay, individual motivations, and receptions that would enrich our understanding of the Norwegian-American music culture. Combining Slobin's framework with a historical case study approach has been a productive strategy of inquiry, and it would be fruitful to conduct additional case studies using this approach in order to represent a greater diversity of individual performers.

What is the value of striving to understand the meanings of musical performances, and musical interplay, in a historical context such as the early/mid-twentieth century Norwegian-American music culture in the Upper Midwest? As Philip V. Bohlman indicates, “[t]he disjuncture between past and present—the disjuncture that fieldwork necessarily confronts—has become more precarious and more compelling as a social space the ethnomusicologist must investigate” (Bohlman, 2008, pp. 268–269). Investigating ethnomusicological pasts contributes to a holistic understanding of music cultures, producing insights and awarenesses that can, and should, inform and enrich our understanding of contemporary practices.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form

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## **Appendix 1:**

### **Consent Form**

## **Are you interested in taking part in the research project “Kappleiks and House Parties: Norwegian Traditional Fiddle in Upper Midwestern Contexts, 1900–1970”?**

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project in which the main purpose is to investigate Norwegian-American fiddle players and their performances of two distinct genres of Norwegian-rooted traditional music in the American Upper Midwest during the period between 1900 and 1970. In this letter I will provide you with information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

### **Purpose of the project**

This doctoral research project investigates Norwegian-American fiddle players and their performances of two distinct genres of Norwegian-rooted traditional music in the American Upper Midwest during the period between 1900 and 1970. These two musical genres, referred to here as *bygdedans* music and Norwegian-American old-time music, have roots in Norway in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively. Using theoretical perspectives of performance theory, diasporic cultural development, and identity theory, the project investigates layers of meaning involved in performances of these musical genres. Domains of inquiry include the musical performance itself; fiddlers' personal and performance histories; artefacts, imagery, and objects linked to performances; and the ways in which performances articulated Norwegian-American social life and the expatriot experience.

Upper Midwestern performance contexts for *bygdedans* music included formal concerts, “play parties” (informal gatherings of fiddlers), events coordinated by Norwegian-American social organizations, performances for Norwegian-American folk dance groups, and more. A central performance context for *bygdedans* music – and one of the focal points of this project – was the American *kappleik* (Hardanger fiddle competition), an annual event arranged between 1915 and 1941 by a national organization for Hardanger fiddlers, *Spelemannslaget af Amerika*.

Norwegian-American old-time music – a creolized music tradition with roots in Norwegian *runddans* music – was associated with a wide variety of performances contexts. These include house parties, old-time fiddle contests, live radio broadcasts, commercial old-time dances, and many others. The genre had a strong foothold among Norwegian-Americans during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has continued to survive, largely as a family tradition, to the present day, although its current position is threatened.

Finally, as a supplement to the theoretical treatment of the topic, I investigate these performances from a contemporary performer's perspective by recreating and renewing *bygdedans* and Norwegian-American old-time traditions from this period.

The project's central research question is as follows:

During the period between 1900 and 1970, how did Norwegian-American/Norwegian immigrant fiddlers performing the genre(s) of *bygdedans* and/or Norwegian-American old-time music in the American Upper Midwest adapt their performances in response to local and national cultural contexts?

### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

The Norwegian Academy of Music is the institution responsible for the project.

### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

You are being asked to participate in this project because you represent one or more of the following categories:

- Academic/amateur expert within the fields of Norwegian-American folk music and/or Norwegian-American immigration
- Descendent of a historical performer of Norwegian-American folk music
- Person with firsthand knowledge of the historical context under study
- Musician within the genre(s) of *bygdedans* and/or Norwegian-American old-time music

### **What does participation involve for you?**

If you chose to participate in this project, this will involve participating in a personal interview with the project leader. The length of the interview will be approx. one hour (this may vary). Your answers will be recorded electronically, and audio and/or video recordings of the interview may also be made.

### **Participation is voluntary**

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

### **Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data**

I will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. I will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

Those who will have access to your personal data are the project leader (Laura Ellestad).

Your interview responses may be quoted in publications relating to the research project (including the dissertation). Other personal information may also be published (e.g. name, age, occupation etc.).

### **What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?**

The project is scheduled to end in December 2022. At the end of the project, the collected data will be archived for future research, verification, and follow-up studies. The data will be stored indefinitely in the Norwegian Centre for Research Data's archives, and may be accessed by master's students and researchers who are conducting research in the humanities, fine arts, or social sciences disciplines.

Norwegian Centre for Research Data's archives are located in Bergen, Norway. You may withdraw consent for your personal data to be stored in the Norwegian Centre for Research Data's archives at any time by contacting [personvern@nsd.no](mailto:personvern@nsd.no).

### **Your rights**

As long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

### **What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the Norwegian Academy of Music, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

**Where can I find out more?**

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The Norwegian Academy of Music via Laura Erin Ellestad, by email: ([laura.e.ellestad@nmh.no](mailto:laura.e.ellestad@nmh.no)) or by telephone: +47 975 22 770.
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Erin Ellestad  
(Researcher and Project Leader)

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**Consent form**

I have received and understood information about the project “Kappleiks and House Parties: Norwegian Traditional Fiddle in Upper Midwestern Contexts, 1900–1970” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in a personal interview
- for statements made during the interview and/or information about me/myself to be published in a way that I can be recognised
- for my personal data to be stored after the completion of the project for use in future research

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. December 2022.

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(Signed by participant, date)



## **Appendix 2:**

### **Overview of Repertoire Found in Database and Surveyed “Scandinavian” Sheet Music Collections**

Overview of catalogued melodies from the database of archival and commercial recordings that were found published in one or more of the examined “Scandinavian” sheet music collections.

<b>Melody Name</b>	<b>Transcription Source</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Swedish schlager</b>	<b>Larson "Standard Repertoire"</b>
Clarinet Polka	Johnson (1950), Jarl (1938)	Bavaria		
Hälsa dem därhemma, waltz	Johnson (1937)	Denmark		X
Björneborgarnes March	Johnson (1941)	Finland		
Ball i Halling Dale-Reinlaender (Dance from Halling Dale)	Olzen (1937)	Norway		
Hejsan grabbar-Schottis (Happy boys)	Olzen (1937)	Norway		
Kristiania Valsen	Johnson (1950), Olzen (1937)	Norway		X
Lokkeren-vals (Callers waltz)	Olzen (1935)	Norway		X
Norsk Bondevals (Norwegian peasant waltz)	Olzen (1935)	Norway		X
Ala Schottische	Johnson (1937), Olzen (1937)	Sweden	X	X
Balen i Karlstad-schottis (The ball in Karlstad)	Olzen (1935)	Sweden	X	X
Bond-Vals (Farmer Waltz)	Jarl (1938)	Sweden	X	X
Champagne galop	Olzen (1935)	Sweden	X	
Dragspel Valsen (Accordion Waltz)	Johnson (1950)	Sweden		X
Finska valsen (Finnish waltz)	Olzen (1937), Jarl (1938), Johnson (1950)	Sweden	X	X
Fjällnäs, hambo-mazurka	Johnson (1937)	Sweden		X
Från Frisco Til Cap-Valsen (From Frisco to Cape)	Johnson (1950)	Sweden	X	
Frykdals-Jäntan, schottische	Johnson (1941)	Sweden		
Hasselby steppen, polka	Johnson (1937)	Sweden	X	X
Hipp och hopp-hambo (Swedish hambo)	Olzen (1937), Johnson (1941)	Sweden		X
Joan på snippen, bonn-jazz	Johnson (1937), Olzen (1951)	Sweden	X	X
Jubileums Schottis (Jubilee Schottische)	Jarl (1938)	Sweden	X	
Kinne kulle-schottis (The hill of Kinne)	Olzen (1935)	Sweden	X	
Kom Adolfinas-vals (Come Adolphina)	Olzen (1937)	Sweden	X	X
Koster Valsen (Anglers Waltz)	Olzen (1951)	Sweden	X	X
Kväsar Valsen (Swagger Waltz)	Olzen (1945)	Sweden	X	X

## Appendix 2

Melody Name	Transcription Source	Origin	Swedish schlager	Larson "Standard Repertoire"
Livet i Finnskogarna, waltz	Johnson (1937), Jarl (1938)	Sweden	X	X
Lördags valsen (Saturday waltz)	Olzen (1937), Johnson (1941)	Sweden	X	X
Midsommar Natts-Vals (Midsummer Nights-Waltz)	Olzen (1945)	Sweden	X	
Min egen lilla sommar visa (My Own Little Summer Tune) Hambo	Jarl (1938), Johnson (1941)	Sweden	X	
På Hultet-Schottis (On The Plains)	Olzen (1945)	Sweden		X
Roslags-schottis (Swedish schottische)	Olzen (1935)	Sweden		
Sjömans Valsen (Sailor Waltz)	Jarl (1938)	Sweden	X	X
Skål, skål, skål, waltz	Johnson (1937)	Sweden	X	X
Spelmansvalsens (The Fiddler's Waltz)	Johnson (1943)	Sweden		
Styrmans Valsen	Johnson (1941), Olzen (1935)	Sweden	X	X
Ut på landsväjen, schottische	Johnson (1937)	Sweden		X
Klapp-dans (Clap Dance)	Jarl (1938)	Unknown		
Norska Clarinet Polka (Norwegian Clarinet Polka)	Johnson (1950)	Unknown		
Nikolina	Johnson (1937)	USA		
St. Paul Valsen (The St. Paul Waltz)	Johnson (1950)	USA		X



## **Appendix 3:**

**“Farvel mitt fedreland”**

# Farvel mitt fedreland

(Emigrantvals)

Gösta Stevens (John Nelson)

Helge Lindberg (W. Berner)  
as performed by Alfred Bjørngjeld

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is as follows:

Staff 1: D chord above the first measure. The melody consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.

Staff 2: Measure 11 is marked with a '3' above the first three notes (D4, E4, F#4). Chord markings above the staff are: D (measures 11-12), E (measure 13), A (measure 14), and D (measures 15-16). The melody continues with quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.

Staff 3: Measure 22 is marked with a 'G' above the first note. Chord markings above the staff are: G (measures 22-23), D (measures 24-25), B (measure 26), E (measures 27-28), A (measures 29-30), and D (measures 31-32). The melody concludes with quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4.

## **Appendix 4:**

### **Overview of Norwegian- American *Kapleiker***

Overview of the dates and locations of documented Norwegian-American *kapleiker*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Organizing <i>bygdslag</i></b>
17.05.1912	Auditorium, Stoughton, WI	Wisconsin Telelaget
24–25.06.1912	Pavillion by the lake, Glenwood, MN	Telelaget
22–23.08.1912	Colfax, WI	Telelaget
03–04.06.1913	Cameron, WI	Wisconsin Telelaget
13–14.08.1913	Forest City, IA	Iowa Telelag
17–18.06.1915	Ellsworth, WI	Wisconsin Telelaget
24–25.06.1915	Auditorium and Smith Park, Montevideo, MN	Telelaget
23–24.06.1916	The Commercial Club, Thief River Falls, MN	Telelaget
19–20.06.1917	Blair, WI	Hardangerlaget
13–14.06.1918	Chippewa Falls, WI	Telelaget
19–21.06.1919	Crookston, MN	Setesdalslaget
24–26.06.1920	Hall, Moorhead, MN	Telelaget
29–30.06.1920	City auditorium, Eau Claire, WI	
09–10.06.1921	Opera House, Mt. Horeb, WI	Setesdalslaget
16–17.06.1921	Belview, MN	Numedalslaget
22–24.06.1922	The Commercial Club, Fergus Falls, MN	Telelaget
29–30.06.1922	Grand Forks, ND	Setesdalslaget
20–21.06.1923	Crookston, MN	Setesdalslaget
18–20.06.1924	Albert Lea, MN	Telelaget
22–23.06.1924	Norway Hall, Minneapolis, MN	
06–09.06.1925	State Fairgrounds, St. Paul, MN	
07–08.09.1926	Norway Hall, Minneapolis, MN	
23–25.06.1927	Detroit Lakes, MN	Telelaget
27–28.06.1927	Stoughton, WI	
29–30.06.1928	Albert Lea, MN	Ringerikslaget?
24–25.06.1929	Fargo, ND	
05–06.06.1930	Armory Hall, Montevideo, MN	
26–27.06.1931	Norway Hall, Minneapolis, MN	
1932	Melrose, WI?	
09–10.06.1933	Hayfield, MN	
01–02.11.1934	Crookston, MN	
16–17.10.1936	Auditorium, Thief River Falls, MN	
22–23.10.1937	Grand Forks, ND	
14–?10?.1938	Hall at agricultural school, Park River, ND	
17–18.11.1939	School auditorium, Fosston, MN	



Appendix 4

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Organizing <i>bygdelag</i></b>
31.05–02.06.1940	Northwood, IA	
18–19.10.1940	School auditorium, Northwood, ND	
24–25.06.1941	Auditorium, McVile, ND	
1948	Everett, WA	
06–08.06.1952	Starbuck, MN	Valdres Samband
1953?	Granite Falls, MN?	Valdres Samband?



## **Appendix 5:**

### **Glossary of Terms**

## Glossary of Terms

<b>Bygd</b>	Norwegian rural district, village, or rural area. Odd Lovoll writes that “to a Norwegian, the word connotes a sense of sharing, of living together; it represents a unified area of customs and traditions” (Lovoll, 1975, p. 2).
<b>Bygdedans music</b>	Music genre that encompasses the oldest forms of traditional instrumental dance music in Norway, including the duple-meter dances <i>gangar</i> , <i>bonde</i> , <i>rull</i> , and <i>halling</i> , and the triple-meter dances <i>springar</i> , <i>springdans</i> , <i>pols</i> , and <i>springleik</i>
<b>Bygdelag</b>	Norwegian-American secular society centred around association with a specific rural <i>bygd</i> , valley, district, or fjord area in Norway
<b>Bygdelag stevne</b>	Gathering of a Norwegian-American <i>bygdelag</i> which served as a reunion and context where elements of <i>bygd</i> and Norwegian national culture were reconstructed
<b>Kappleik</b>	Norwegian folk music and folk dance competition
<b>Norwegian-American old-time music</b>	A more recent genre of instrumental dance music that developed in Norwegian-American communities. One of numerous subgenres of what historian Victor Greene terms “ethnic old-time” music found among various, primarily European-American, ethnic groups in the Upper Midwest, all of which share a common alignment towards waltz, schottische, and polka tune types.
<b>Runddans</b>	A newer genre of instrumental dance music in Norway associated with the duple-meter dances <i>polka</i> and <i>reinlender</i> and the triple-meter dances <i>vals</i> and <i>masurka</i> . These dances have roots in German and Austrian couple dances and are part of a broader, pan-European repertoire of popular social dances and dance music that became fashionable during the nineteenth century.
<b>Swedish schlager</b>	A genre of popular, composed dance and revue music that emerged in Sweden around the turn of the twentieth century and remained popular for several decades. The genre consists of foxtrot, waltz, onestep, tango, and <i>bonnjazz</i> melodies, usually with composed lyrics. For an extensive study of the Swedish <i>schlager</i> phenomenon, see Edström (1989).







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How did musical practices contribute to the construction of Norwegian-American identities? Laura Ellestad's dissertation examines the music culture of Norwegian-American communities in the Upper Midwest between 1900 and 1970, investigating how performances of the genres of *bygdedans* music and Norwegian-American old-time music functioned to construct heterogeneous Norwegian-American identities during a period of major change in the United States. Using an interdisciplinary, comparative approach, this historical ethnographic study draws on a large body of qualitative data collected through archival research and fieldwork in the Upper Midwest.

Ellestad begins by investigating how Norwegian-American musicians engaged in processes of interplay with global and local forces, and how these processes reflect diverse processes of identity construction. Drawing on Mark Slobin's framework for the study of subcultural musics (Slobin, 1993), Ellestad finds that Norwegian-American musicians engaged in three broad processes of interplay: intersubcultural interaction, the use of supercultural materials, and interplay via the diasporic interculture. Further, she argues that these processes reflect two main dynamics of identity construction: plasticity, permeability, and ethnic boundary negotiation; and positioning and mythmaking processes. Ellestad then examines a selection of performance contexts for the two genres through case studies of historical performers Dagny Andrea Veum Quisling and Daniel Aakhus.

By investigating a wealth of empirical evidence, the dissertation offers a novel understanding of how Norwegian-American musicians performed, negotiated, and extended identities and boundaries, expressing narratives of the past, individual and collective dreams, loyalty to the homeland, and compatibility with American ideals.

Laura Ellestad (b. 1982) is a Hardanger fiddle player, music researcher, and teacher.