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HANDWRITTEN NORWEGIAN MUSIC BOOKS: DOCUMENTATION AND INSPIRATION

I am a practical musician. That does not mean that I am practical and handy in every field of life, but where music is concerned I am looking for hard and simple facts. Since I am also interested in history, my questions are threefold. How did old music actually sound when it was new? How should it sound today? And how do we present it to today's audiences?¹

These three questions seem valid and stimulating and are of a general nature, but the answers, as always, depend on where we look for them and on the nature of the sources. For many years, I had wanted to create colourful concert programmes, mixing well-known European Baroque music with Norwegian music, but the eighteenth-century Norwegian music I needed was hard to find. We should perhaps not be surprised. Lars Roverud, the first music publisher in Norway (selling scores from 1809 and printing music from 1811), maintained that 'music' was nothing but a word to the majority of the population.² To be fair, he was describing the past and trying to raise funds for a better future, proposing to set up a music institute in Christiania (now Oslo). During the eighteenth century, Norway, unquestionably the less influential of the 'twin realms' of Denmark and Norway, had access to European culture mostly through the capital Copenhagen (in Denmark) and its universi-

¹ These questions were also raised in my PhD thesis: Hans Olav Gorset, "The Pleasurable Passage of Time": A Description, Discussion, and Musical Presentation of Music from 18th Century Norwegian Music Books as Seen in the Light of Performance Practice', Oslo, 2011; http://idtjeneste.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-bibsys_brage_17155 (accessed 21 March 2016).

² Lars Roverud, *Et Blik paa Musikens Tilstand i Norge* [A glance at the state of music in Norway] (Oslo, 1815).

ty, as well as through prosperous Norwegian merchants dealing directly with other major cities. The system of municipal musicians and their ‘deputies’, as well as the centralised military training that many young men received, including the learning, memorising and performance of signals, marches and dance tunes, must also be taken into account. Of course, there are a number of Norwegian composers from this period, but in my opinion their efforts are not that interesting. We need to look elsewhere, both for concert repertoire and for a general assessment of ‘the state of music in Norway’, as Roverud called his pamphlet.

A number of music books written in eighteenth-century Norway provide the basis of this ongoing twofold search for concert repertoire and documentation. Of varying size and complexity, they present very different kinds of music. However, most of the tunes have a distinctive feature in common: they are quite catchy and encourage colourful arrangements for groups of musicians, even though most of these music books were clearly intended for personal use and adapted for one instrument only.

Discovering this repertoire stimulated me as a performer. Trained as an orchestral musician and finding something worth exploring, my first impulse was rather to practise than to research. Unfortunately, certain repertoires need more investigation than others, as these handwritten collections of personal favourites demonstrate very well. The notation is sketchy and incomplete, and there are simply too many questions to be asked before I can even pick up my instrument. These are practical questions concerning performance matters and musical choices, but apart from the obvious problems of torn pages, ink smears and incorrect (or idiosyncratic?) notation, there is the fundamental question of historical context. If we do not know enough about the background, the when, where and why, of these manuscripts, how can we use them as documentation (and what exactly can be documented)? When were they compiled, where and how were they used, and what was the purpose behind making such books in the first place? If we can answer at least a few of these questions, we may continue our investigation and even cast a wider net. What can these collections tell us about musical life in Norway in the eighteenth century?

THE SOURCES

The above question reveals my bias, of course; I believe there is much to be learned from these collections. Below is a short description of the six sources that will be examined. There is no point in hiding the fact that the selection of sources is determined by the points I want to make. Since the main topic of this conference is traditional music, the emphasis will be on issues relating to the dating and diffusion of what is today called ‘folk music’. Although most of the music in these books probably comes from abroad, we do find tunes that seem typically ‘Norwegian’, even tunes that today are considered part of our national heritage. All six sources include dance music, marches, instrumental pieces, psalm tunes and small ‘arias’. Sometimes the tune’s title points to the appropriate lyrics by indicating the first line of a psalm or a song.

Source	Associated name/owner/user	Scribe/compiler	Instrument
C	Martinus Calmar (1727–1760)	Calmar	Keyboard
HNB	Hans Nielsen Balterud (1735–1821)	Balterud	Violin(s)
TJH	Truels Johannesson Hvidt (dated 1722)	Peter Augustinsson Flor (and Hvidt?)	Recorder(s) and oboe
JM	Jacob Mestmacher (1762–1810)	Jørgen or Jacob Mestmacher	Keyboard
NHC	Christopher Blix Hammer (1720–1804)	Unknown	Keyboard
PB	Peter Bang (dated 1679)	Peter Bang (?)	Bass viol and violin

Each source in the table has been assigned an abbreviation. The number attached to an abbreviation refers to the melody’s place in the source. I am assuming that the name associated with the music book represents the owner as well as the ‘user’ in a very broad sense. The owner may be a collector, in which case the book, at least to a certain extent, also functions as a symbol of social status. In other words, it is not always certain that the music book was used to perform from. Since quite a few tunes appear in several books, and for different instruments, they naturally exhibit small differences. It becomes very obvious that they are not polished and complete ‘works of art’, but snapshots of a particular rendering



of a popular melody in a certain time and place. Most of these sources contain tunes that even today are transmitted orally, and partly for this reason considered to be traditional Norwegian music.³

Calmar's music book (C), dated 1751, contains 93 pieces and fragments arranged for keyboard. A few of them have figured bass. As a young man, Martinus Calmar, born in Christiania, was sent to his uncle, the municipal musician of the mining town of Kongsberg, probably to become his apprentice. He seems to have changed his mind, however, becoming a private tutor and then moving back to Christiania, where he ended his life as a sexton in a correctional facility. His book, signed on the cover, can therefore be regarded as a collection of educational music, but possibly also as a personal record of pieces he might have needed in order to fulfil his duties. Famous composers like Telemann, Handel and Pergolesi are represented, alongside a couple of minuets by Calmar himself, demonstrating his rudimentary skills in composition. As with most of these music books, however, the majority of tunes must still be termed 'anonymous'.

Hans Nielsen Balterud's music book (HNB), dated 1758, contains 390 tunes, among them 37 duets. They are all clearly meant for violin, but some of them are playable on the flute. Balterud was a wealthy farmer in the district of Aurskog, about 50 km east of Christiania. He owned his own mill, worked as a timber marker for wealthy merchants, and also functioned as a deputy musician to Peter Høeg, the municipal musician of Christiania. His duties included stepping in for Høeg, providing music for weddings and other official occasions in his absence. Given Høeg's obligations, this was probably quite often. The municipal musicians in eighteenth-century Denmark-Norway, appointed by the king, were responsible for all the official music-making in the district assigned to them. The enormous size of many of these districts necessitated a system of semi-professional subcontractors, so-called 'deputy musicians', approved, directly or indirectly, by the municipal musician.⁴

Node-Bog med Haand-stykker til Claveer (NHC) belonged to Christopher Blix Hammer, a rich, influential author, collector, scientist and

³ See Gorset, "The Pleasurable Passage of Time" (pp. 93–144) for a more detailed description of the sources.

⁴ Whether or not the municipal musician actually knew his deputies personally and was able to assess their musical proficiency is difficult to determine. Judging from a dated annotation in his music book, Balterud seems to have visited Christiania before signing the contract with Høeg.

high-ranking civil servant, who lived on his model farm at Hadeland, 70 km north of Oslo. Although we know quite a lot about Hammer, his relationship to music remains unclear. NHC is made up of 111 melodies of extremely varied repertoire arranged for keyboard, including psalms, dance music, character pieces, marches and arias (some of them including lyrics).

Truels Johannessøn Hvidt's music book (TJH), signed 'Bragnes 1722' on the inside cover, consists of two sections.⁵ The first 126 tunes, of a total of 137, are for one or two alto recorders, and in the last section we find a few of the same tunes transposed for oboe. We know nothing about Hvidt, but we do know something about his recorder teacher, Peter Augustinssøn Flor. He studied theology in Copenhagen and later became a chaplain in Vestfold, a district southwest of Oslo. On the first page of the music book, Flor declares that on this date, 22 August 1722, he started to teach Hvidt to play the recorder. After a brief 'essay' on the history of music, most likely written by Flor, Hvidt presents a poem on the diverting and entertaining effects of playing the flute.

Peter Bang's music book (PB1, 2 and 3) has puzzled musicologists for years. On the cover, it is stamped 1679, but it is clear that its content dates from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. PB2 is the second section of the book, where we find 76 tunes for the violin, probably written around 1740 or a little later. Since we know nothing about the owner, the dating of this section is based on the presence of a few melodies we can identify. They include a very famous 'Murky' that was printed in Leipzig in 1736, and a psalm tune appearing in *Troens rare Klenodie*, a collection published in 1739 by the Danish author Hans Adolph Brorson.

Jacob Mestmacher's music book (JM) contains 263 pieces for keyboard instrument, some with figured bass. Jacob Mestmacher, a wealthy merchant in the Hansa town of Bergen in western Norway, compiled this collection, possibly with the assistance of his half-brother, an organist. It includes music by Telemann, as well as quite a few English country dances.

⁵ Bragnes (today spelled Bragernes) is now part of Drammen, a city 40 km south-west of Oslo (then Christiania).

POLS AND POLONAISE

These music books have not often been subjected to musicological scrutiny. The repertoire has not been considered ‘national’ enough to warrant attention from folk music researchers, nor ‘art’ enough to be noticed by music historians. A notable exception was Professor Hampus Huldt-Nystrøm, who in the seminal article ‘Pols dances and halling dances from old Norwegian music books’ enthusiastically set out to find melodies that ‘because of their title or their character are samples of, or are influenced by, Norwegian folk music’.⁶ Indeed, he showed the way forward for the relatively few of us interested in this music. Having commended him, I must point out that his background as an ‘art music historian’ in some ways inhibited his research. For him, art music and folk music were two separate worlds, something I find increasingly more difficult to accept when discussing the music of the eighteenth century. Demarcation lines can be useful to show differences in style and delivery, but it is also rewarding to ‘tear down the barricades’ and cross the borders in order to discover similarities. Both researchers and performers will benefit from this.

Huldt-Nystrøm’s agenda was to look for traces of traditional music. Perhaps because of his background, when he examines *Peter Bang’s music book*, he is more successful finding folk titles than folk melodies. Being an ‘outsider’, he missed a few significant melodies which an ‘insider’, a musician or researcher familiar with this repertoire, would recognise. ‘Pols Dans’, ‘Haappern’ and ‘Hallingen’ are certainly folk music material, but he did not discover ‘Sarras Osandals Vise’ (PB2/23), today a well-known *springleik* from the valley of Gudbrandsdalen. This tune is well documented, first in 1868 by Theodor Broch (who collected it for L. M. Lindeman); later, it was published in O. M. Sandvik’s *Folkemusikk i Gudbrandsdalen*.⁷ It is still performed, and several transcriptions by renowned fiddlers appear in *Feleverket* (1992–1997), a reference work of fiddle and hardanger fiddle music transcriptions. This tune is known also in Sweden, where it was used for the broadside ballad ‘Sandals Nisse wid ett hurtigt mod’, printed in 1722. In Denmark, in the music book of Count Christen Scheel of

⁶ See Hampus Huldt-Nystrøm, ‘Polsdanser og hallinger fra gamle norske notebøker’ [Pols dances and halling dances from old Norwegian music books], *Sumlen*, 1978, pp. 24–39. The English title is my translation – H. O. G.

⁷ O. M. Sandvik, *Folkemusikk i Gudbrandsdalen* [Folk music in the Gudbrandsdal] (1919; Oslo, 1948).

Gammel Estrup, it is called ‘Polonoise’. To complete the picture, it also occurs in another Norwegian source, NHC, from c.1750, as ‘pol’.⁸

Plate 1. ‘Sarras Osandals Vise’ (PB2/23)



Example 1. ‘pol’ (NHC/87)

A printed musical score for the piece 'pol'. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 3/4. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

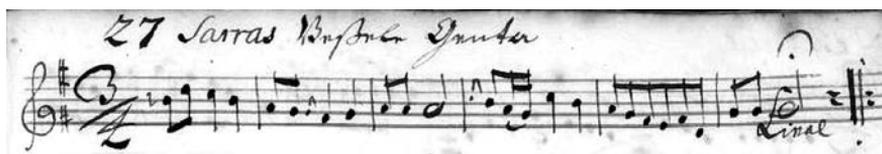
Another tune that did not catch Huldt-Nystrøm’s attention is ‘Sarras Vessele Genta’, again a puzzling combination of a foreign title and a native text (‘vesle jenta’ is Norwegian for ‘little girl’). A connection with Poland is clear.⁹ In *Hvidt’s music book*, the same tune is called ‘Sarres’ (TJH/80);

⁸ Magnus Gustafsson (‘Transformations of Melodies’, in Märta Ramsten (ed.), *The Polish Dance in Scandinavia and Poland* (Stockholm, [2003]), p. 100 and n.73) gives a very good description of this tune’s Swedish background. He also claims to have found two versions of it in PB and one in JM. As far as I can see, there is only one version of the tune in PB, and I have been unable to locate it in JM (see Gorset, “The pleasurable passage of time”, pp. 186–193, especially p. 189).

⁹ Gustafsson (‘Transformations of Melodies’, p. 98), tracing the history of the sarras melody and its name, mentions the previous work of Anders Rosén and Fleming Horn. Variations of the word ‘Sarras’, ‘Serras’, ‘Sarres’, ‘Saras’ and ‘Sera’ often refer to the last dance in a cycle of three. The Polish phrase ‘tancyz sera y chleba’ literally means to ‘dance bread and cheese’ (German, ‘Käs und Brot’; Danish/Norwegian, ‘Ost og Brød’), which in the eighteenth century was the name given to the *Nachtanz* (after-dance), frequently made from the same melodic material as the previous

in two Swedish sources, the titles are ‘Poll’ and ‘Polonesse’. Its title in PB2 reveals a mixture of cultures and languages, and this is also evident in the typography. The foreign element, ‘Sarras’, is written with Latin letters. The scribe of PB treats other foreign names, such as ‘Menue’ [*sic*], ‘Engels Giga’, etc., the same way, whereas Norwegian/Danish and German names and song titles are written in Gothic script. Perhaps this feature expresses a respect for, or a certain distance towards, the source material being copied, but we look in vain for consistency: ‘Pols Dans’ is written with Latin lettering, while Norwegian/Danish words like ‘Haappern’ (jumping dance) and ‘Hallingen’ (halling dance) are written in Gothic.

Plate 2. Beginning of ‘Sarras Vessele Genta’ (PB2/27)



Four melodies simply called ‘Sarras’ also escaped Huldt-Nystrøm’s notice. Three of them appear in other Norwegian music books, under inconspicuous names such as ‘Pollonesse’, ‘Aria’ and ‘Sarres’ (Hvidt spells *sarras* this particular way). This ‘Sarres’ (TJH/79) shows an intriguing similarity to another tune: it matches, along with the first part of PB2/8, the third part of the *springar* ‘Halvor’ from the district of Telemark.¹⁰

Plate 3. ‘Sarras’ (PB2/8)



dance. It soon became an independent entity. See also Jens Henrik Koudal, ‘Music, Dance and Symbol – a Riddle with Several Solutions’, in Ramsten (ed.), *The Polish Dance*, pp. 27–41.

¹⁰ I owe this information and the transcription (after Alf Tveit, *Dalen i Telemark*) to Per Åsmund Omholt at Telemark University College.

Example 2. Part one of ‘Sarres’ (TJH/79, top), and part three of the *telespringar* Halvor’ (bottom)

Hvidt’s version provides us with an interesting detail to contemplate: he writes the tune with an upbeat, a highly unusual trait in sarras tunes. None of the similar tunes discussed here have this feature, nor have I encountered it in other Scandinavian sources. It does, however, fit rather well with the way a *springar* is performed. Could this mean that the tune, adopted by Norwegian musicians already in the 1720s, was influenced by an existing local playing/dancing style? To complicate matters, this very same sarras, also with an upbeat, is found in a much later Dutch *Speelmansboek* from Maastricht, dated 1786–1824. Here it seems to have been used with lyrics, but the words were later crossed out. This particular book had been used as a ‘musical diary’ for almost forty years and is very similar to some of its Norwegian counterparts. So, if this *Speelmansboek* had not appeared on the scene, it would have seemed likely that Hvidt’s ‘Sarres’ originally came from Poland, perhaps passing through Sweden, before it was influenced by the Norwegian playing style and adopted as a traditional dance tune in Telemark. But apparently it must also have had a life as a Dutch song. By the way, one more of the sarras tunes in *Peter Bang’s music book* is known in Norway today, as a song tune from Valdres.¹¹ Conclusion: a closer look at sarras tunes may be worthwhile.

A melody travels well, but the name does not always reach the same destination. Perhaps this is not so peculiar; names and titles are not the

¹¹ See Hans Olav Gorset and Ånon Egeland, booklet text in CD, *For Borgere og Bønder*, NKFC D 500–25, 1990.

most important parts of a tune's 'soul'. Huldt-Nystrøm inadvertently provides an excellent example. One of the three melodies he initially identifies as Norwegian is 'Pols Dans' (PB2/5). Further research reveals that this tune is also well known elsewhere, and it is not exclusively Norwegian, even though a version in a minor key is presented twice in *Jacob Mestmacher's music book* under the name 'Polonoise' (JM/62 and 97). It also appears in Danish and Swedish sources, where it is called 'Serras', 'Zerra' and 'Pollo'. Suddenly the scope widens, and the Norwegian tune becomes multinational, belonging to the European treasure chest of melodies.

Before Norway's independence from Denmark, in 1814, and the resultant search for a national identity, there was little interest in writing down and collecting 'primitive' melodies. Therefore, any early occurrences of halling melodies and pols dances in written sources from the eighteenth century are welcome when the history of Norwegian traditional music is being forged. It is not just Huldt-Nystrøm who has studied these music books for this purpose. In his article 'Polish dance with walking and jumping dance', the prolific folk music researcher Bjørn Aksdal writes about 'The oldest notation of pols tunes'. He finds nine samples in one of 'our' sources: *Balterud's music book*. He must have made his selection looking for names such as 'Pols Dans' and 'Pols', for without much discussion he concludes: 'In many ways these melodies are stylistically quite similar'.¹² This is correct: the nine pols tunes Aksdal mentions are indeed alike, but they are also similar to the majority of the fifty or so other melodies Balterud calls 'Polonoise', 'Polonis', 'Poll', or simply 'P'. Altogether, sixty melodies in this source belong to the category of polsk/polonese/sarras.¹³ A few of them (including a couple of duets) are more complex than the others, but the majority are very much like the six rather simple pols dances Balterud calls 'Pols Dans' and 'Pols' and writes down, one after another, on page 101 in his music book. And this is intriguing: both the preceding two pages (pp. 99–100) and the following two pages (pp. 102–103) are full of tunes called 'Polonesse', spelled in a variety of ways.

¹² Bjørn Aksdal, 'Polish Dance with Walking and Jumping Dance', in Ramsten (ed.), *The Polish Dance*, p. 63.

¹³ I refer to my tune categories in Gorset, "The Pleasurable Passage of Time", p. 170.

Plate 4. 'Pols dans' (HNB p. 101)

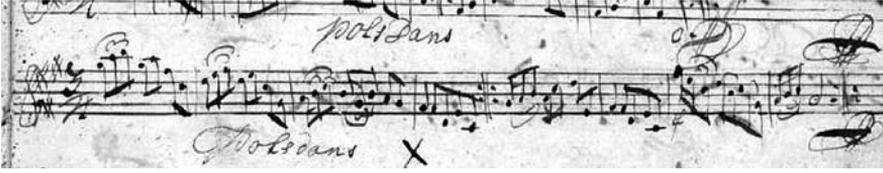


Plate 5. 'Pollonnesse' (HNB p. 102)



Why Balterud organises his melodies in this manner, we can only guess. However, from this it becomes clear that a strong focus on melody and form is necessary if we want to better understand the diffusion of pols tunes, especially in this area, very close to Sweden. Many of Balterud's tunes resemble Swedish *polskas*. Despite the almost constant state of war between Denmark-Norway and Sweden in the eighteenth century, music definitely crossed the borders.

HALLING

In *Fanitullen*, a highly praised textbook on Norwegian traditional music, the already mentioned 'Hallingen' from PB2, here claimed to be from c.1750, is called 'the oldest documentation we have for *slåtter* [actually instrumental works] in duple time in this country.' Later, the same author refers to a melody 'undoubtedly showing traits of a halling' written down after a rather unusual musical event in the year 1695 and published by the influential composer, music critic and author Johann Mattheson in Hamburg in 1740.¹⁴ Leaving aside for now the difficulty of ascertaining

¹⁴ Bjørn Aksdal and Sven Nyhus (eds), *Fanitullen* (Oslo, 1993), pp. 142 and 317.

the age of PB2, when exploring the early history of the halling, the author should also have taken into consideration two examples of similar music from NHC, probably also from the 1750s. These are both called 'Field-tantz', and are discussed in Huldt-Nystrøm's article. These four halling tunes may be the only ones we have from the early and middle part of the eighteenth century, in which case both the origin and context of these references become important.

The time and place of Mattheson's *Klippen-Concert in Norwegen* is thoroughly accounted for, even if certain aspects of it are difficult to take seriously. Reliable witnesses, among them the municipal musician and his apprentice, claimed to have heard a fascinating performance of music coming from inside a mountain on Christmas Eve. This took place in the vicinity of Bergen. The apprentice later became the municipal musician of Christiania, from where he sent a report of the incident (and fortunately also the music) to Mattheson through a mutual friend. Even though the identity of the performing musicians (goblins or trolls?) seems dubious, this remains an important source describing an early form of halling from western Norway. And if we trust the memory of the witness as well as his transcription, we have a tune, possibly from 1695, certainly from 1740, qualifying as the oldest halling we know.

The origin of 'Hallingen' in PB2 is more difficult to establish. If, as the author of *Fanitullen* has it, the book comes from Christiania, the total picture shows that halling tunes appear in early eighteenth-century sources from both eastern and western Norway, and in different contexts. The problem is that nothing can connect PB with Christiania before the late nineteenth century. It appeared in Bergen around 1850, was brought to the US by a new owner, and was donated to the music dealer and collector Carl Warmuth in Christiania in 1887. An accompanying apology was offered: the owner had failed to follow his obligation to find out more about the previous owner, Peter Bang, but he was convinced that the book originally came from Bergen.

As for NHC and its 'Field-tantz', we cannot be certain that this book was compiled in Norway. It belonged to the author, scientist, civil servant and collector Christopher Blix Hammer, a leading figure in the Enlightenment. His library, which also included music, later formed the basis of the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and

Letters in Trondheim. Like most other civil servants, he was educated in Copenhagen, and he brought books and music with him when he settled in Hadeland, north of Christiania. A book with dance music and accompanying instructions was acquired in Copenhagen in 1753. This he notes on its cover, even specifying the price. But his signature is conspicuously absent both in this *Danse-Bog* and in NHC. He did not write his name on the cover or inside the book, as was common practice at the time. Balterud, for instance, asserts firmly: ‘This book belongs to me, H. Nielsen Balterud’, and Mestmacher, Calmar, and Hvidt signed their books as well. Accordingly, if NHC was not written by Hammer, the two ‘Field-tantz’ tunes lose some of their significance, at least as an indication of halling dancing in Hadeland.



CONNECTION OR COINCIDENCE

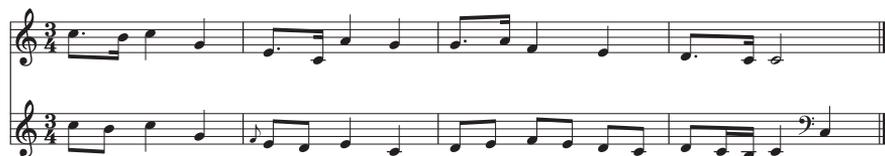
We have seen that tunes which today are regarded as Norwegian folk music are found in eighteenth-century sources under different names and labels. Possible stylistic differences between pols dances and polonaises have been discussed. Names often point to places, but it is wise to have an open mind. An ‘Englis’ (a country dance) is not always from England, and the polonaises, ‘Pol’s and ‘P’s do not all come from Poland, at least not directly. This is important: new impulses are absorbed, sometimes surprisingly quickly, as traits, forms and even melodic fragments became familiar to local musicians of all categories and classes. The melodies show similarity, but they do not always have a common origin. A foreign-sounding name may hide an interesting connection. At first, I considered that Martinus Calmar could not contribute to discrediting the dichotomy of art music/folk music, but his ‘Polonesse’ (C/43) certainly has melodic, rhythmic and formal features in common with several of the sarras tunes presented by Bang and Hvidt. This points to some sort of correlation, but not necessarily causal, between Calmar’s tune and the Norwegian telespringar ‘Halvor’. Looking at the manuscript as a whole, however, it does not seem likely that Calmar wrote this tune. We are left with this not very surprising fact: a sarras in one source may well be a polonaise in another. However, this must not obscure a better understanding of a musical

environment that swiftly accepted new material and adapted it to fit old forms without losing the essential melodic traits.

Plate 6. 'Polonesse' (C/43)



Example 3. Part one of 'Polonesse' (C/43, top), and part three of 'Sarras' (PB2/8 transp., bottom)



BACK TO THE SOURCES

The mere appearance of a tune in a music book is not enough to prove it was performed frequently, or for that matter, at all. Let us take a fresh look at the sources with this in mind.

As previously mentioned, Hammer was definitely a collector, and his interest in music may not have extended to actual performance. It is also possible that his collection of keyboard pieces, NHC, was compiled in Denmark. If so, the influence of this source on Norwegian music is debatable. There may have been other reasons why 'pol'/'Sarras Osandals Vise' later became a cherished folk tune in the Gudbrandsdal valley.

Calmar left his uncle, the municipal musician, as well as his musical career, to return to Christiania, taking with him a personal collection of favourites, probably reflecting musical life in the mining town of Kongsberg in the 1750s. It may have been tailor-made for a future professional, but in the end it was probably used for peaceful recreational evenings at

home. In fact, this is what the title on the cover indicates: *Part One of the Musician's Pleasurable Passage of Time*.¹⁵

Balterud's book was certainly assembled for professional work. Signatures and dates are scattered throughout the book. The dates may indicate when the tunes were performed, or perhaps when they were absorbed into the extremely varied repertoire necessary to serve the needs of high society, farmers and servants. Appearing after specific tunes, his signature seems to point to the proud composer, Balterud himself, but we cannot know for sure. Fortunately, we know something about his duties and his connection to musical life in the city of Christiania. Local historians contribute further to our understanding with colourful stories of wild parties with 'guests from the city' and 'minuet-duelling' with his extremely rich neighbour, Christopher Hareton, who also supplied a few minuets of his own for the collection.¹⁶

Peter Bang is still unknown to us as a person, and the date on the cover of the book does not correspond to the music inside. At least three scribes contributed, working well into the nineteenth century. 'Hallingen' (PB2/49), an important piece of evidence when writing the history of the halling, may not be from Christiania after all, but from Bergen.

Truels Johannessøn Hvidt's music book can be placed accurately, both socially and geographically. We are still left in the dark about Hvidt's identity, but the context and purpose of his collection is recognisable: a tutor is collecting popular melodies suitable for study and amusement, perhaps simultaneously teaching his student the art of musical notation. Hvidt's poem describes his favourite pastime, playing the recorder, definitely enjoying these particular pieces.¹⁷

We can hope that *Jacob Mestmacher's music book* reveals the musical taste of a wealthy businessman in a vital Norwegian city, but his German family background must be taken into account. His father, also a merchant, came from Germany, and his half-brother was an organist. It is possible that he contributed to the book. A few movements by Georg Philipp Telemann appear at the back of the book, and Mestmacher was

¹⁵ My translation of *Pars Prima af Den Spillendes Tids-fordriv [...]*. Unfortunately, the second part is not to be found.

¹⁶ Anders Heyerdahl, *Urskog's beskrivelse* [A description of Urskog] (Oslo, 1882), p. 56.

¹⁷ The two last lines of the poem: 'This is my inclination, I would like to learn this [to alleviate sorrow]. It is for myself, to pass the time with pleasure'.

apparently also fond of *murkys*, pieces in a German compositional style with a characteristic bass line of alternating octaves. This German influence is also to be found in other circles: *murkys* abound in C as well, indicating German influence among the municipal musicians of Norway.

CONCLUSION

Music books like these contribute to our understanding of the diffusion of popular melodies. They contain a powerful mixture of favourites from all over Europe and a few local compositions. They were personal objects, and in each of them great effort went into choosing and writing down tunes for future reference and/or delight. Better than printed anthologies, they provide us with valuable information about what amateur musicians actually played. It is reasonable to assume that citizens and students in southern Norway were acquainted with this repertoire. Bringing Balterud and the countryside into the picture also includes the farmers, at least the more prosperous ones. Many tunes are found in several sources, showing how they were known and appreciated by a diverse population in different parts of Norway.

The above investigation into the use of handwritten music books as source material for documenting early instances of halling tunes and pols tunes in Norway shows that conclusions must remain tentative and provisional, and some of the work that has been carried out so far needs to be revised in the light of new evidence. Although I have looked at more sources than are mentioned here, they do not seem to add more to the general picture. The challenge is rather to find new ways of studying and describing the transmission and adaption of melodies. What remains of a tune's essential qualities when it is taken into an existing musical environment? This begs a number of new questions, of course. In some sense, it is an artistic undertaking to decide what such an essential quality is. We still do not have satisfying 'scientific' tools to define one melody's similarity to another; this recognition is mainly based on a cultivated awareness of style.

I am convinced that we can learn more from these sources, but we need researchers who are familiar with both 'art music' and 'folk music' (to re-introduce the frontiers I disapproved of earlier). And here is some

basic advice for us all: follow the melody, not the title! We might just find more folk music than expected in these books, and we will certainly broaden our perspectives on popular music of the past.

INSPIRATION

Spending time with these music books made me appreciate the immediate appeal of most of these tunes, old as they may be. Collecting variants of these ‘hits’ made me want to create my very own, personal, versions, and there are plenty of reasons why this is a good idea. The nature of the manuscripts excludes an exact vision of only one perfect interpretation. A vision may be necessary, but we should look elsewhere for inspiration: when entire sections of a melody are omitted in one source, or heavily ornamented in another, it signals a free use of various conventions within eighteenth-century performance practice. This extends to taking liberties with forms and arrangements, adding extra parts and chords, etc. In fact, this has influenced my attitude to the interpretation of more conventional Baroque concert music as well. As an example, I will present a minuet from Balterud’s book. It is a charming melody as it appears as HNB/238:

Example 4. HNB/238



A little later it is ‘improved’ (HNB/282):

Example 5. HNB/282

Musical notation for Example 5, HNB/282. The piece is in 3/4 time and G major. The first staff (measures 17-21) features a melody with triplets and accents. The second staff (measures 22-26) continues the melody with a repeat sign and a final triplet.

It can be argued that a simple minuet like this does not need so much ornamentation, but it actually inspires me to add even more. Similar tunes can benefit from the same treatment. Today, this is common practice when we perform eighteenth-century music in a historically informed way. So why is it not acceptable in folk music? I believe that the eighteenth century's cultural environment, for all its diversity, still had an underlying unity – a unity that makes *Balterud's music book* (and to some extent the other sources) a coherent document, even though it seems (for us today) to include music from different musical worlds.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, musicians have challenged the established manner of performing older music, looking for 'authentic' or historically correct ways of playing Baroque music. Not content with reading about music, scrutinising scores and building 'old' instruments, they have also studied orally transmitted traditional music from many parts of the world to find inspiration. The folk music community has so far been slow in responding to similar challenges.

