

TALENDE STRENGER / KERTO VAT KIELET
KNUDSEN & SYRJÄLÄ

1. Jarand Skinnarland 04:16
2. Melkutus & Pajatus 05:21
3. Eg va liten & Hiljanen suru 06:22
4. Rahapolskat 03:06
5. Paimenlaulu 06:21
6. Halling 03:37
7. Matts Näsi 02:59
8. Rykälintu 06:00

All tunes trad/arr Knudsen/Syrjälä, Melkutus & Pajatus also contains composition by Knudsen/Syrjälä

Recorded January 2023 in Kallio-Kuninkala

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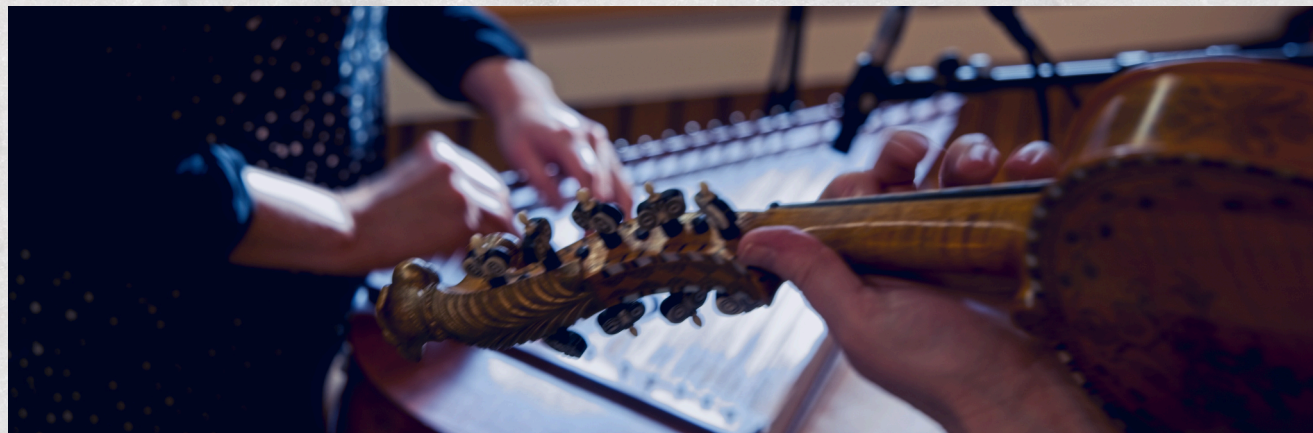
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Welcome!

We have been talking with each other, for hours and hours. In between, we have played and made music, with many strings. The strings of our instruments have been talking to each other and to us. Through this ongoing dialogue we have created our musical landscape. As folk musicians, our music has its roots in traditions. In this case, the traditions are geographically quite widespread, between Norwegian mountains in the west, to the Karelian woods and lakes in the east.

You are most welcome to enter our musical world!

Ragnhild & Pauliina



The tunes

1. Jarand Skinnarland

This version of the tune Ragnhild learnt from Magne Manheim (1916-1997), who was a main source for the repertoire used in the *hardingfele* group in Seljord, where Ragnhild plays. This is a *gangar*, a two-beat dancing tune in 6/8. The bowing pattern often adds to the polyrhythmic level in these kind of tunes. We have chosen to open the structure, in what became our duo's version of the tune.

2. Melkutus & Pajatus

These two tunes were originally played with the bowed lyre, *jouhikko* (in Finnish), *stråkharpa* (in Swedish) by Feodor Pratšu (b. 1856, Impilahti, Karelia). This kind of music, being part of the very old runosong culture, is based on repetition and improvisation.

We made our own playful version and we feel it is an exiting musical encounter, with the result being different every time.

3. Eg va liten & Hiljanen suru

The melody Eg va liten [I was little] has two very different texts, one about harmonious childhood memories; the other about a drinker and his wishes for his funeral. We combined it with a Finnish folk song Hiljanen suru [Silent sorrow], which tells about loneliness: first describing what it is like when you don't have anyone to share your sorrows with, finally turning into "Here am I, drinking and having a ride in the wide world, while my parents are sleeping under the blessed soil".

In this version the melodies, and the texts, although not spoken, meet and talk to each other.

4. Rahapolskat / Money polskas

This 2/4-polska tune set is from the master fiddler Erkki Metsäpelto's (1910-2004 Vimpeli, Southern Ostrobothnia) repertoire. In Finland there are also polska tunes that do not necessarily have the typical 3/4 -rhythm. These particular "money polskas" have been used in grand weddings when collecting money for the couple, which was an important ritual. Often the guests danced with the bride and the groom separately, and gave them money for each dance.

5. Paimenlaulu / Shepherd song

Collected from Everik Rähkönen (Ilomantsi, Karelia) in 1905, this *kantele* piece has followed or almost haunted Pauliina since her teenage years: this melody has fascinated her ever since! The title "Shepherd song" refers to music that the shepherds played alone, while looking after the animals deep in the forest for many days in a row.

6. Halling etter Johannes Holsen

Hardingfele player Sigmund Eikås taught this tune to Seljord Spelemannslag. The *halling* is a traditional solo dance where the point is to show off physical tricks, all in time with the music, ending up with kicking a hat down from a pole held up high. Several *halling*-tunes contain plucking of the fiddle strings. They are usually very rhythmical and full of energy, to inspire and encourage the dancers.

7. Matts Näsi

This polska is from Samuel Rinda-Nickola's note book (1809), which is a collection of fiddle polskas played in Southern Ostrobothnia during the late 18th century. It is a nice melody to play with the stick, so Pauliina brought it to the duo.

8. Rykälintu

This five-string *kantele* melody was originally played by Vilhelmiina Halonen (1840-1913) in Lapinlahti, North Savolax, close to Pauliina's childhood hometown. Vilhelmiina brought up a family with famous artists, and this tune was collected from her son, violin player Heikki Halonen.



The Artists

Ragnhild Knudsen (b. 1958) started off on the violin, but now plays mostly *hardingfele* and viola. As well as using the *hardingfele* solo both in traditional and more experimental settings, she has been part of different ensembles and projects, both in the classical and the folk music genre. In the folk music trio Glima, she is the main arranger. They play traditional Norwegian music on *hardingfele*, viola and cello. Glima has published three albums. Ragnhild works as a lecturer in folk music at Campus Rauland, part of the University of South-East Norway and as a fiddle teacher in Seljord, Telemark.

Pauliina Syrjälä (b. 1976) is a versatile *kantele* player, whose special expertise is the stick-playing technique, using a wooden stick as a plectrum. Through her artistic work, Syrjälä has revived the stick-playing tradition in Finland. She is interested in exploring different tone colours, utilising preparations, extended playing techniques and with different tools to play *kantele* (for example knitting stick and paintbrush). Syrjälä has published two solo albums including her own compositions. Besides solo work, Syrjälä plays with different ensembles, the duo being her favourite ensemble format. Syrjälä has completed an artistic doctoral degree (2020) at the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, where she works as a lecturer in folk music.

The Duo Knudsen & Syrjälä

After meeting and jamming at the Nordtrad conference, Ragnhild Knudsen (Norway) and Pauliina Syrjälä (Finland) formed their duo in 2015.

The musicians were immediately inspired by the unique soundscape of the Norwegian *hardingfele* (Hardanger fiddle) and the Finnish *kantele* together, with the rich and shimmering layer of overtones. Through musical encounters and hours of exploration, Ragnhild and Pauliina have created their own musical duo world based on friendship, interaction and improvisation, but also an interesting combination of elements emerging from Finnish and Norwegian folk music traditions.



The Instruments

Hardingfele



The *hardingfele* is a Norwegian folk instrument with 4 strings on top, and usually 4 or 5 sympathetic strings, that run under the finger board. The strings are tuned differently according to the tunes played, and one can find many different tunings. The instrument is often tuned higher than the violin, with the A-string in B or C, or something in between. They are often nicely decorated with mother of pearl and traditional patterns. The *hardingfele* is used in many districts in the south part of Norway, mostly as a solo instrument for playing traditional dance tunes.

Ragnhild uses her *hardingfele* made by Knut K. Stenkjøndalen, Bø i Telemark 1931, on most of the tunes. The fiddle maker Olav Viken in Valdres made the neck longer and added a 5th sympathetic string on the fiddle in 2000. This fiddle likes to be tuned high, and with the A-string in C, so the tuning used is C-F-C-G, from the lowest to the highest. This high tuning suits well with the *kantele* tuning. She uses a gut string on the A, and the traditional gut string wound with metal on the D.



On the tune Paimenlaulu Ragnhild uses a *hardingfele* made by Anders Aasen; nr. 56, made in 1981, tuned: D-F-C-G, to suit the G-minor tonality in the tune. This fiddle has a darker sound, more wood, and it requires another way of bowing.

Kantele

Belonging to the instrument family of the Baltic psalteries, *kantele* has been played at least for 1,000 years in many areas around the Baltic Sea. The instrument has different names depending on the location and language; also the size and shape of the instrument can vary. In Finland, the smallest *kantele* model has five strings and the biggest one 41 strings. The instrument Pauliina mostly uses on this album (tracks 1–7) has 20 strings, 15 steel strings and 5 wired bass strings. This particular *kantele* model was developed in 19th century and it is called Saarijärvi *kantele*. Traditionally, this kind of *kantele* has been played with a plectrum, most commonly wooden stick. Pauliina uses this technique as well as plucking the strings with her fingers.



Pauliina's Saarijärvi *kantele* is made by *kantele* maker Kari Kauhanen. On track 8, Rykälintu, Pauliina uses a special five-string *kantele* that has bronze strings (in Finnish "vaskikantele"). It is a replica of an historical instrument built by Ontrei Malinen in White Karelia in 1833. The instrument is made by Rauno Nieminen.

