

Nykken & Bear



KARI TAURING

Nykken

I have always been fascinated by the water entity called *nykken* in Norwegian (various spellings). My grandmother's father was Nykreim, home of the nykken. Living in the sea, the nykken has power to grant musical ability to the would-be musician (especially harps and fiddles) brave enough to seek instruction. The nykken aches for magical women whose runes are the secret songs of nature.

In the first ballad, Magnhild is rescued by a musician with the power to control nature. In the second, the rune-woman and musician face the danger together, and Heiemo needs no rescue. In the polska it is Freyja herself the sea-king pines after, a sentiment I fully comprehend.

1 Villeman og Magnhild

Norwegian ballad dance learned through recordings by Agnes Buen Garnås. Translation by Kari Tauring with help from Margaret O'Leary, St. Olaf College, 2008. A truly American version of this beloved song.

Villemann gjekk seg te storan å,
Hei fagraste lindelaui alle
Der han ville gullharpa slå
For de runerne de lyster han å vinne

Villemann gjenge for straumen å stå,
Mesterleg kunne han gullharpa slå

Han leika med lente, han leika med list,
Og fugelen tagna på grønande kvist

Han leika med lente, han leika med gny,
Han leika Magnhild av nykkens arm

Men då steig trolli upp or djupaste sjø,
Det gjalla i berg og det runga i sky

Då slo han si harpe til bonns i sin harm,
Og utvinner krafti av trollenes arm

English:

Wild man went down to the little stream
Hey, resting in the avenue of Linden trees
There he played his golden harp
For the runes he wanted to win

Wildman stopped the flowing of the stream
Masterfully playing his golden harp

He played with humor,
he played with cunning
The birds fell silent in on the green

He played with levity,
he played compellingly
He played Magnhild
out of the Nykken's power

That troll came up
from the bottom of the sea
Gjalping in the mountains,
ringing through the clouds

But the playing reached
into the bottom of his grief
the troll's spiritual
and physical strength was taken

2 Runarvisa

Medieval Norwegian rune ballad learned through recordings by Agnes Buen Garnås. Translation and arrangement Kari Tauring, 2010 with help from Margaret O'Leary, St. Olaf College 2008

“Græte du gull hell’ græte du jor
hell’ græte du fy’ at du skò åt mitt bor?”
- Æ de runir’, sille me vinne -

“Græte du åker hell’ græte du eng
hell’ græte du fy’ at du skò åt mi seng?”

“Eg gret inkje åker og eg gret inkje eng
og eg gret inkje fy’ at eg skò åt di seng”

“Eg gret inkje gull og eg gret inkje jor
og eg gret inkje fy’ at eg skò åt ditt bor”

“Men eg græte mei’ fy’ mitt gule hår
som rotne’ må i Valarå”

“Å eg græte mei’ mine systa’ ni
når eg kjæme’ etti’ so blive me ti”

Hesten han snåva i røde gullsraum
å Magnill ‘o drog av åt strie straum

Valdemann slo i breie bor
og straumen vænde til Øyafjord

Valdemann slo si harpe so hardt
de tagna kvør fuglen i skogen sat

Valdemann spana sin runa’streng
han mana dei møyar or dvalesseng

So runa han fram dei systane ni
å Magnill va’ den ti’end av di

English :

“Are you missing your gold,
do you grieve for your land
or has shame made you cry
living free with a man?
Oh the runes one day we will win.”

“Do you weep for your fields
and your pastures so green
or is sleeping with me
a shame to be seen?”

“I don’t weep for my fields
or pastures or lands
I feel no shame
in your bed Valdeman”

“I don’t weep for gold,
I don’t grieve for my farm
I don’t grieve or feel shame
living here in your arms”

“I’m ashamed of my golden hair
rotting away
In the bed of the river
where I’ll sleep some day”

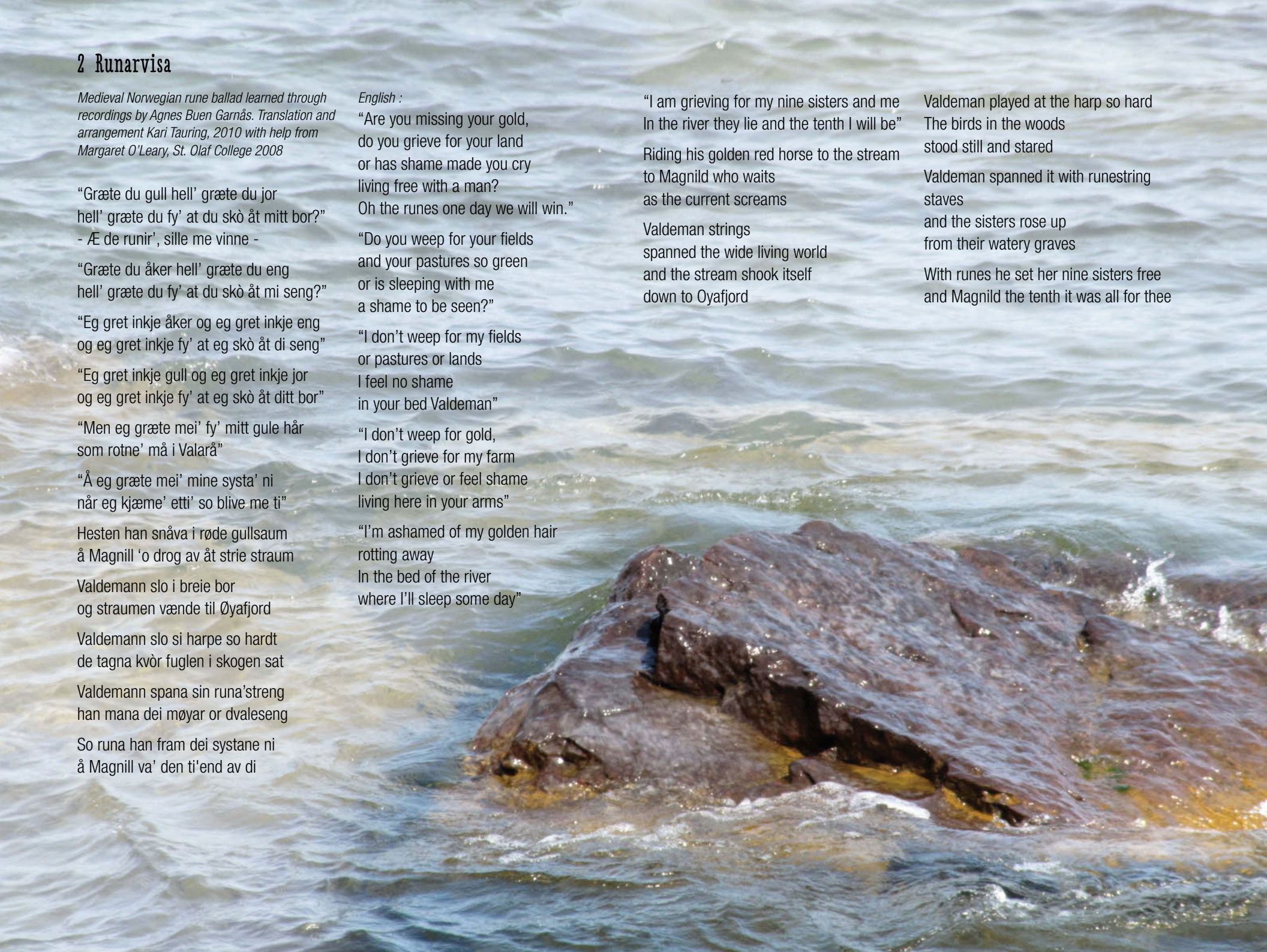
“I am grieving for my nine sisters and me
In the river they lie and the tenth I will be”
Riding his golden red horse to the stream
to Magnild who waits
as the current screams

Valdeman strings
spanned the wide living world
and the stream shook itself
down to Oyafjord

Valdeman played at the harp so hard
The birds in the woods
stood still and stared

Valdeman spanned it with runestring
staves
and the sisters rose up
from their watery graves

With runes he set her nine sisters free
and Magnild the tenth it was all for thee



3 Nedberge til Nykkenheim

Kari Tauring, 2012

From mountain's peak to water's edge
Mountain songs flowing to the sea
wave on wave from fjord to sea
to the shores that made me

Our family song carried back again
to jotun ears
By screaming gulls at midnight

I hear your songs in my songs
The ancient runos raging

Lullaby my baby, my mother, my grand-
mother, mitochondria into the Bronze Age

Haunting me, calling me, awaiting my re-
turn / I see your face in my face
Giant rock face of mountain child
Ymir, the first growing being,
the being of my genesis
there in rock and wave
and the sun that
will not set
and the sun that
will not rise

To the mountain I went – to the water I go
My fiddle strings and fingers pricked
bleeding drops on black wool

Water lapping up the Nykken's gift
Strain to listen, strain to listen

Great grandfather,
fathers of Nykken's home
Guide my melodies
Play along
with me

4 Heiemo og Nykkjen

Songdances from Norway learned through recordings by Kirsten Bråten Berg; translation compiled from various sources by Kari Tauring. A kvad is a poetic verse and a vocal style used to sing into nature; nature hears it and responds.

Heiemo kvad di song i li.
Vakna di kvede like dreng.

Det høyrer Nykkjen på havets skree
Fordi de heve sovet i for lenge

Heiemo kvad up on the hill
Her verses also wake young brave men
The Nykkjen heard it in ocean deep
For they have slept for oh so long now

Heiemo kvad di song i lund
Det høyrer Nykkjen den heieng hund

Heiemo sang in the sacred grove
Nykkjen heard it, that hell hound

Nykkjen told his steersman
Steer my ship now to Christianland

I will to Christianland go
The young maid I will get home with me
So go he into the house
With a high hat and plum cheeks

Nykkjen danced and Heiemo sang
Deg gladde del salt for stoggen bar
You welcomed the salt sea in

No må kvad gange heim til seg
No more singing, go home to bed
Heiemo I'll take you home with me

Heiemo, stop your angry rage
You shall sleep in the Nykkjen's power

Ho stakk til Nykkjen i hodlamot
She stabbed the Nykkjen in the chest
Og odden han rann i hjarterot
And the knife ran into his heart root

Here lie you Nykkjen for raven and hound
Naked you lie for raven and hound
And I still have my kvedarlunn
And I still raise my magic poet's voiceOg

5 Neckens Polska

*From Songs of Sweden, collected and
arranged by Gustaf Hägg, Schirmer Inc.
1909, lyric by
A. A. Afzelius, tune traditional Swedish.*

Djupt i havet på demantehällen
Näcken vilar i grönan sal.
Nattens tärnor spänna mörka pällen
Över skog, över berg och dal.
Kvällen härlig står i
svartan högtidsskrud,
När och fjärran ej en
susning intet ljud
Stör den lugn över nejden rår,
När havets kung ur
gyllne borgen går,
När havets kung ur
gyllne borgen går.

'Neath the waves on crystal
rock reclining lies the Neck in
his sea-green hall
While the maidens of the night
are twining veils of gloom
over hill and dale
Fair the evening stands
in festal, bright array,
Far and near no sound is heard,
no breeze astray
Breaks the calm o'er the
land that lies
When now the Sea-King
from his waves doth rise
When now the Sea-King
from his waves doth rise.

Aegir's daughters rock and waft him
slowly onward over the crystal sea
While their harp-tones
mournful, sad, and lowly
seek in distant waves to die
Though his eyes he lifts and scans
the sky above, not a single ray
reveals the star of love
Freya dresses her golden hair
He strikes his harp
to tell of his despair
He strikes his harp
to tell of his despair.

"Oh where are you in this
hour of gloaming thou the
fairest of stars for me?
You that once my earthly bride
went roaming through my halls
beneath the sea
When my heart would burn
while my harp I'd play,
fair and gentle you into
my bosom stayed
Where the cool river waters lave
The golden harp stood
silent on the wave.
The golden harp stood
silent on the wave.

"Far above this earth
has Odin set thee
Aye to shine in the highest heaven
To the singer who
can never forget thee
but thy name and form are given
When the Midgard serpent
shall awakened be,
Gods will arm and be redeemed
and then with thee
Shall I strike o'er the waters clear
My golden harp-strings
in a new-born sphere.
My golden harp-strings
in a new-born sphere."

Bear

From Bronze Age pictographs to the “bear shirt” warriors of Viking times to the many wonderful folk tunes named for it, the bear is a sacred animal in Norse tradition. The black bear of Minnesota is medicine in Ojibwe tradition and remains a symbol of the Northern experience.

For me, bear has shown up in dreams, imagery, and literally, in times of transition and upheaval as I take my worries to the woods. Asking me to go deep into the cave, to slow down and sit in the quiet, to face my own power and to face my deep fears, bear has carried hard lessons to me.

I have been waiting since May 2009 to bring the Bear Ritual piece to American audiences and my patience equals the power of this piece. I’m proud to honor these lessons in this selection of music and the mountains of my grandmother’s heritage that symbolize the power and majesty of the bear.

6 Seljefløyte – Willow Flute

Kari Tauring, 2008

Willow flute, down the hill we go
Rivulet cold water barely heard
off rocks, off shore, off the wind

Wind blowing soft through tube
crafted by my hand
just for today – just for this

Fairy sounds and late Summer light
still and quiet my reverie ends

Waiting in the changed air
rustle and sudden spring
two white tailed deer leaping
no longer waiting
for an encore

7 Bears Waltz

Traditional Norwegian learned from the recording “Masterpieces from Norway: Old Time Dance Music.”

8 Bjørndans

Story adapted by Kari Tauring from the article “Bjørndans ein rituel fra Trysil” by Martin Myhr given to Kari in 2011 by Mads Böhle along with historical recordings made in Trysil, Norway. Help with the translations from Sonja Lidsheim, Norway 2011.

Dær østa på Østerfjellet
dær tai tralei

Dær skøt’n Gammelbæsfar en bjønn
trai tralei

Dæm flådde’n og bare’n hematt
og så vart det bjønnsådd

Og etterpå så danse dæm så
trai tralei





9 Kinderspiel

*From Germany, learned from her mother
by Felicitas Maria Sokec, shared with Kari
over the phone in 2012*

There comes a bear from Konstanz here
A black one and a white one
He wants to bite Kari!

10 Fram Dansar ein Haugkall

Lyrics are derived from the poem "Haugtussa" by Arne Garborg 1895, tune by Olav Sande, Kyrkjebø, Sogn, 1899, collected by Norsk Folkedans Stemne, Seattle, WA 2008 with a translation by Christine Anderson. Arranged by Kari Tauring in 2011.

Fram dansar ein haugkall fager og blå
med gullring om håret som fløymer,
han giljar for Veslemøy til og frå,
og tonar i kring honom strøymmer.
Å hildrande du! Med meg skal du bu,
i Blåhaugen skal du din sylvrokk snu.

Out dances mound man
handsome and blue,
a gold ring on hair long and flowing
He seduces a young maiden to and fro
and all around melodies flowing
To bewitch just you, with me shall you
live, in the blue mound
spinning on a silver wheel.


In daylight hours I am the brown bear
who bounds in the forest wide
and bathes my fur in the deepest lakes

and wades in the swift flowing streams
and plays on the strand and master of the
land as far away as your eyes can see.

But when it rings, the midnight bell,
and day on the hill is gone
you'll hear my songs and graceful play,
lokking you into my arms
I will come to you from the wild ways
and sleep with you in my arms until I
wake.

Med du skal ditja i Blåhaug brur
i silke og sylv så det bragar
og aldri kjennast sår eller stur
i alle dei levedagar
Å hildrande du! Med meg skal du bu,
i Blåhaugen skal du din sylvrokk snu.

Yes you shall sit as a Blue Mound bride
in silk and silver it dazzles
and never will you know sorrow or care
in all of your long living days.
To bewitch just you, with me shall you
live, in the blue mound
spinning on a silver wheel.



11 Beginnings

*Kari Tauring, 2009. Additional vocal track
"Bjørnen Sover," Norwegian children's song.*

To me, this is the place of creation, my
genesis is tied, bound, derived from this
place. Not even the people, ancestors
names, but the very land, rocks and trees.
This is my ground zero, my Ginnungagap.
I'm half summed up
by the wholeness of this.
Can you see the sleeping giant?
Like the face of a child, the profile of Ymir.
Giant infant creating in your sleep,
creating from your sweat, generating life,
unconscious creation. A baby,
innocent and whole, pure and only,
everything and nothing.

The sound, the breath and sound,
your babble, the Universe...
just a baby, innocent, ancient, innocent.
Murmur – whisper – runo – sacred sound
first sound – begin

Yes – the water is salty
No – it does not freeze
Yes – I am baptized again
No – it is not the same
Yes – I do claim it, own it, acknowledge
No – I will not pass it all on
For there is sifting, healing to be done.

12 Bjørnlåten

*Traditional from Ore, Sweden. Learned from a
recording by Fred Fredrik (via YouTube).*

Tusen Takk

...to Drew Miller for putting good ideas forward and
supporting the process, propelled by the love of
this music and the desire for great art.
To Scott Nieman for steady drive, excellence of vi-
sion and a love of noises. And to David Stenshoel
for adding the strings that hold the fjords together.
Thanks to my husband Greg
and my sons Oskar and Jack for space to create
and being proud of me. I'm grateful to my
mother Grace Tauring, grandmother Myrtle and my
Songnefjord family for sharing this magical
heritage with me. To my fans and friends who sup-
ported this project through Kickstarter,
buying my work, attending classes and
performances, and hosting me in your cities across
this amazing country, mange tusen takk, alle sam-
men. My heart is so glad.

– Kari Tauring, February 2013, Minneapolis

Kari Tauring – voice, guitar, stav,
cow horn, seljefløyte
Drew Miller – Bass guitars, dulcimer,
baritone ukulele
Scott Nieman – Cittern, Greek bouzouki,
bass bouzouki, percussion
David Stenshoel – violin
Greg "Trax" Traxler – drum kit

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