

Danish ballads for the celtic harp

Workshop, Gjøvik 2014

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Ballads are narrative in their very essence. In the Danish ballads we come across longwinded tales of cowardly knights, unfaithful ladies, dying queens, ghosts and ravens and other stuff that might make for an episode or two of Game of Thrones. In general there are three types of the traditional ballad : *Trylleviser, ridderviser og historiske viser*. (English : Magical ballads, ballads of chivalry and historical ballads).

The Magical ballads or elfin ballads cover the ballads that deal with the supernatural, ghosts, spirits and metamorphoses in general. In the workshop in Broby in 2011 we worked on the ballads *Svend Dyring* and *Svend i Rosengård* which are both very magical and unveil the superstitions of the medieval age and the renaissance.

The second type of ballads deal with chivalry and everyday events. The ballad "Tyge Hermansøn" which we will work on in this workshop belongs to this second group of ballads. In this ballad the knight Tyge Hermansøn misses out on the fair lady, Sidselille, because he dares not ride to the wedding because the rain is pouring down heavily and makes crossing of the river dangerous. He sends his bannerman to fetch the fair lady. He does his job so well that the lady ends up choosing the bannerman (Nilas Bendixen) in stead of Tyge.

Lastly we have the historical ballads. These ballads describe events that have actually taken place. They were the 8 o'clock news or the medieval facebook if you like. Here the lay person learned about what was happening on a national scale (e.g. The ballad : *Dronning Dagsmars Død* (the death of Queen Dagmar, or the ballad about Marsk Stig).

This workshop will focus on accompanying and playing the ballads on the celtic harp. The ballads were most likely sung while people danced in ring-formation as they do on the faroese islands today. This allows for the length of the ballads. But if we play them on the harp it quickly becomes repetitive since the ballads often has very limited melodic material. Often just two melodylines and a chorus or interspersed chorus lines.

In this workshop we will aim at untying the story of the ballad and binding it to the strings of the harp.

We will look at :

- 1) the melodic line, variations, stretching and compressing. Listening to the silence between the notes.
- 2) Bass lines or chords.
- 3) Modality and drone or bourdon notes.
- 4) Improvising the ballad.

Tyge Hermansøn

»Den ømskindede brudgom« ved N.F.S.
Grundtvig. Folkemelodi

1
Og det var om en løverdag,
det regned' under ø,
og det var Tyge Hermansøn,
skulle hente sin fæstemø.

Jeg vil ride ud imod så væn én.

2
Den herre ud ad vindvet så,
de bække løb så stride:
"Ej køber jeg så dyrt en mø,
jeg rider mig til kvide.

3
Men hør du, Nilaus Bendiksøn
alt med de lange skanker,
rid du i dag min brud imod,
sig hende mine tanker!"

4
Og det var Nilaus Bendiksøn,
han sagde ej ordene flere:
"Og skal jeg ride for dig i dag,
jeg gør for dig vel mere."

* The ride*

5
De klædte dem i silke fin
og så i gyldenskrud,
og så drog de til kirke brat
alt med den unge brud.

6
Og bruden stod for kirkedør
alt som en rosensblomme,
og hun bad dem til vandet se,
om brudgommen ej mon' komme.

7
Det svared' Nilaus Bendiksøn:
"Det nytter ej at bie,
hr. Tyge kommer ej i dag,
de bække løb så stride.

8
Men er her intet bedre råd,
så er jeg fluks til rede,
hr. Tyge har dertil mig sendt,
jeg i hans sted skal træde."

9
Han trådte i hr. Tyges sted,
i kirken og på bænken,
og så tog han den unge brud

såvel som brudeskænken.

* The wedding ends *

10
Og det var onsdag næst derpå,
der bækkene mon' falde,
da kom hr. Tyge Hermansøn
med sine brud'mænd alle.

11
Han kom da til den bryllupsgård
og til det skønne gilde,
det svared' da den unge brud:
"Rid hjem! du kom for silde."

(a tempo)

12
"Og hør du, stolte Sidselil,'
det er dog alt for meget
at ride langt for ingen ting,
og stygt har du mig sveget."

13
"Og hør du, Tyge Hermansøn,
det måtte du vel vide,
at ingen mø den svend er huld,
som ej i regn tør ride.

14
Var du en ærlig jomfrusvend
og havde haft mig kær,
du havde brudt den bølge blå
alt med dit blanke sværd."

15
(the sudden religious turn)

"Ja, så vil jeg i kloster gå,
en munk så vil jeg være,
såmænd, vid, stolten Sidselil' ,
I ser mig aldrig mere."

16
"Men falder dog din vej forbi,
når vand er lavt i bækken,
har jeg af oste fler' end to,
da får du en i sækken."

Jeg vil ride ud imod så væn en.

ENGLISH version :

The Coward Bridegroom.

Dan. Vis. IV. 254. Grimm p. 137.

1 It was upon a Saturday
The rain began to fall;
Sir Tyge, 'twas his wedding day,
In silence paced his hall.

2 Sir Tyge out of his window gazed
With frequent anxious look;
"My bride too dearly I should buy
"In crossing yonder brook.

3 "Now hark thee, Nilus Benditson
"Thou hast so tall a steed;
"I pray thee ride and fetch her home,
And help a friend in need."

4 "Gladly," said Nilus Benditson,
And archly spake aside;
"I'll play my friend a pretty prank,
"If I shall fetch the bride."

5 Off rode Sir Nilus Benditson,
And went the bride to meet;
There hung both silk and velvet green
Before his horse's feet.

6 All clad in silk and golden lace
Did friends and kinsmen ride,
And slowly took their way to church
Beside the gentle bride.

7 Awhile before the door she stood,
Like blushing rose her hue,
And bade them towards the water look,
If Tyge were in view.

8 "Nay" answer'd Nilus Benditson,
And prompt the words he spake;
"He dared not cross yon angry stream,
"E'en for his trulove's sake."

9 They placed her on the bridal seat
In all her costly gear,
And often out of the window look'd,
If came Sir Tyge near.

10 From silver cup both wine and mead
They pour'd for every guest,

And waited on till eventide
And th' hour to go to rest.

11 On bridal bed they left the bride
Sir Tyge there to wait,
And all in anxious hope and doubt
Three weary hours she sate.

12 The priests they stood around the bed,
And sang with all their might,
"No bridegroom comes to claim his bride
"Who sleeps with her tonight?"

13 Then forward brave Sir Nilus stepp'd,
And cast his silver'd shoe;
"'Tis I will sleep with her tonight,
"And faithful be and true."

14 They quaff'd in turn the wedding cup,
And hearty draughts they took.
The while Sir Tyge Hermanson,
Still fear'd to cross the brook.

15 'Twas not until the Wednesday morn
The stream began to fall,
And then came Tyge Hermanson,
And brought his bridesmen all.

16 Sir Tyge came to the wedding house.
And saw the pomp and state;
But answer'd him the youthful bride,
"Ride back, 'tis now too late."

17 "But listen, gentle Sidselille,
"A word I have with thee;
"Thou 'st wedded with another man,
"And foully cheated me."

18 "And hear, Sir Tyge Hermanson,
"A thing I 'd have you know,
"I will not such for husband take,
"As fears the rain and snow.

19 "Now had'st thou been a gallant man,
"And had my love at heart,
"Thou wouldest with thy naked sword
"Have dash'd the waves apart."

20 "In cloister 'then I'll go and live
"A friar of orders gray',
"And trust me, gentle Sidselille,
"I come no more this way."

21 "Yet if the stream should be so low,
"And I should see thee back,
"If I have cheeses more than two,
"I'll put one in thy sack."*

*St. 21. Whether this stanza is meant in kindness to her discarded lover, or in scorn, the reader will form his own opinion. The sack means the bag with which friars go about begging from door to door.

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