



Sons of Norway  
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## MiniPresentation18

**MYLLARGUTEN—  
A MASTER FIDDLER**

# Myllarguten—A Master Fiddler

In Norwegian folklore there is a supernatural creature called *Fossegrimen* (FOH 'seh 'gree 'mehn), who lives in the waterfall where he plays his violin. He is a master fiddler, and the most brilliant of the countryside fiddlers were said to be students of his. Fossegrimen's fee was always a leg of mutton or beef thrown to him in his hiding place behind the river's roaring curtain of water.

The most renowned of all fiddlers was Myllarguten (MIH 'lahr 'guh 'tehn), or "the Mill Boy" from Telemark (TEH 'leh 'mark). His real name was Torgeir Augundsson (TORH 'gayr 'AU 'guh 'sohn). Already, at the age of 8, he was an accomplished musician who played at weddings and other events where people danced. He traveled far and wide to listen to and learn from other good fiddlers and soon became the master of them all. He developed new techniques for playing and did things on his fiddle that his contemporaries thought impossible, even supernatural.

Ole Bull, the famous violinist, heard about Myllarguten and visited him to find out whether the unschooled country fiddler really was as good as people claimed him to be. They ended up in a fiddling contest where neither one was the loser. Eager to present the phenomenal country musician to the Norwegian public, Bull arranged a series of concerts for Myllarguten in Oslo in January 1849. Myllarguten skied the long way from his home district to Oslo, and he did not do it in vain. He conquered his audiences.

It must have been a peculiar event. On the stage, a folk musician who never had been to a regular concert; in the audience, city people who knew their Mozart and Gluck, but not the folk music of their own country. To them, the concert was a sensation, especially since this was a time when everything highly national was cherished. From that day on, the Hardanger (Hahr 'DAHNG 'ehr) fiddle was considered the foremost national instrument of Norway.

Myllarguten skied back to his native Telemark. With the money he earned on the concerts, he bought a farm for himself and his family. But he was no farmer and things did not go well for him. From boyhood on he had continuously traveled and played, always exposed to the seamier side of the festive events he helped to create. In those days, the fiddler was entitled to more than one drink to keep him going. No wonder alcohol became a problem for a man who was exposed to it from the age of 8!

It is told that Myllarguten suffered one major blow that influenced his entire life. He did not win the woman he loved. Her name was Ingrid (IHNG 'ridh). The day she married another man, the wedding procession, on its way to church, heard Myllarguten playing up on the hill, and his fiddle seemed to sob and cry: Ingrid! Ingrid! Norwegian folk musicians have played that tune ever since, and they call it "Myllarguten's Wedding March."