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**Kulokk (koeien lokken) in Noorwegen
Leo Sings!**

Najaarssymposium 2015 'Tekst en Klank'

In 2008, I received my Masters of Arts Degree in Ethnomusicology from Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota. For my masters' thesis I researched the technique, repertoire and history of three European singing styles. This was very interesting research and some of the technical principals used in these styles are easily adapted to popular and sometimes classical singing of today. In this article I will share with you some of the information I gathered on the first style: Kulokk.

KULOKK (koeien lokken)

door Peggy Larson

Calls, growls, screams and melismas are some of the amazing vocal sounds heard in songs around the world. Today singers have easy access to these songs through recordings, internet, films and concerts. Each of these musical styles has unique vocal technique and musical characteristics. Choirs and soloists in the U.S. and Europe have expanded their repertoire to include world music but often sing the songs with a classical singing technique. Music schools in these countries are now usually able to teach the proper techniques of classical and popular Western music, but little is known or done about the techniques of the many styles of singing in the category "world music." It is necessary to provide more information about these world music styles to those learning them.

Today we are able to teach vocal techniques with much more awareness of physiological differences in popular and classical singing styles. Many of the techniques such as belting, which up until recently have been virtually ignored in voice training, are now being researched and taught. These techniques are often used in indigenous singing around the world. With knowledge of modern vocal methods, this research can be made with a deeper understanding of the techniques.

Kulokk

The first style I researched was from Norway, and is called *kulokk*. *Kulokk* or *lokk* is the Norwegian name for a style of singing found throughout Scandinavia, done mainly by young women to call the herds of cows down from the mountains. The word has two parts: 'ku', meaning cow, and 'lokk': meaning to call to you or entice. Also called *kulning*, *lockrop* or *kaukning* in Sweden and parts of Norway, it has been in existence since medieval times.

The calls can be heard up to five kilometers away. The calls are often musical, using melismas and modal lines. The farmer may first address the cows by name, shouting in a deep chest voice, then using wide vocal leaps, and lastly using melismatic phrases as high as an e^{'''}. Older lokks may have more unusual intervals than more recent melodies. Each singer has her own call and will improvise on it to suit the situation. Sometimes calls are soothing, sometimes encouraging, and sometimes short and angry, needing to command the cows to obey. Sometimes it will take longer to communicate with the cows, so the caller will improvise for a long time.



Woman herding cows to mountain pasture, rural Norway. Knute Nelson Collection, Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, Decorah, Iowa

in Noorwegen

The tradition of summer farming and *lokk* was alive in Norway up until the fifties, when it almost disappeared. Since the seventies there has been a revival of summer farming and *lokk* is again sung in the rural setting, but today it is primarily done in concert settings of folk, folk-rock, and improvised jazz. Well-known Norwegian singers of *lokk* are Agnes Buen Garnås, Eli Storbekken, Unni Lovlid and Berit Opheim. These artists have learned *lokk* from farm women and recordings.

The Vocal Technique of *Kulokk*

Singing *kulokk* demands very strong breath support. *Kulokk* sounds are usually intended to go very far, both in the high register and in the middle and low registers of the voice. The tones of *kulokk* have no vibrato, they are bright tones, often with melismas between the long tones. The lack of vibrato allows the tones to be carried far, and also to be recognized as human tones. The *budeine* (the women herding the cows) most likely developed their way of calling in response to what worked for their environment and cows. The melismas are a stylistic characteristic also found in Norwegian instrumental music. Not all *kulokk* melodies have melismas, but the original examples are consistently sung without vibrato. *Kulokk* has long been the inspiration for Norwegian composers, including the famous Edvard Grieg. These adaptations of *kulokk* melodies have been sung with a sweet classical timbre and with vibrato. The original singers of *kulokk* each had their individual sound and style, with a straight brilliant tone, showing the feminine power of the *seter* farm girls. Some *kulokks* use only high, long tones. Some *kulokks* are shouted or called, with no definite pitches. These would be in the mid-range or speech range of the caller. The

words have a forward focus with a bright tone quality. If the caller tries to call with a dark tone, it will not carry and it will also hurt the voice to try to produce the volume required. Other *lokks* combine spoken and sung calls, or have a great tonal range.

The larynx is in a high position for *kulokk*. This enables the singer to get a piercing tone quality without forcing. Anna Johnson recorded the laryngeal position of *kulning* in her article on the physiology of Swedish herding calls. She included a chart indicating the difference in laryngeal position for herding calls and for classical singing. This chart is below and will show the higher positioning of the larynx for *kulning*.



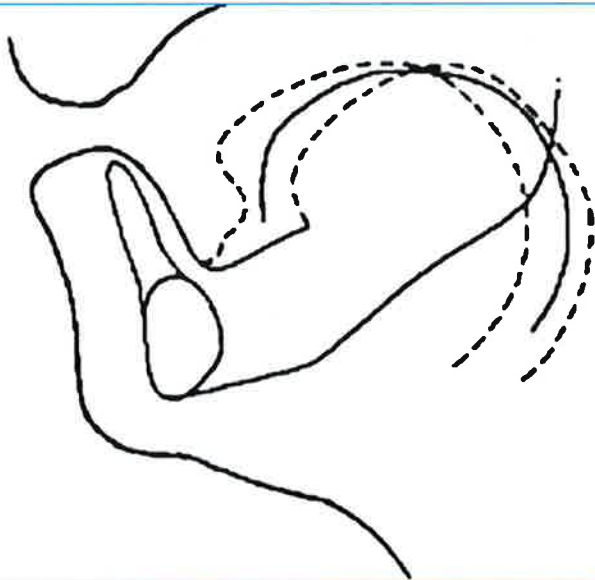
The first drawing indicates a high larynx and the second drawing a larynx in normal position

The vowels used are usually [ø], [u] and [i] sounds. "An [a] sound will not carry".

Nasality used at the beginnings of phrases helps to keep a straight tone with no vibrato, giving the tone a clear forward direction and better carrying quality. Anna Johnson did extensive physiological research including testing of sub-glottic pressure and sound pressure levels and radiographs (x-rays of the voice apparatus while the subject is singing). She found that *kulokk* had many differences from normal song as far as: tongue position, larynx position, a somewhat constricted pharynx, a lower jaw position for high notes and the formant frequencies of the vowels were much higher. One very important aspect she discovered was that the sub-glottic pressure was much higher for *kulokk* than for either opera or normal singing. In other words, much more breath support is needed for *kulokk*.

Lokk phrases always end abruptly, usually with a falling tone, or quick cutting off of the breath. This is to ensure that the cows know that it is a human that is producing the sound. It also helps to create an echo, which resounds further over the mountains. All the timbres of *lokk* are meant to be as loud as possible, so whatever works in any range will be the best method for that range.

To produce *kulokk* and *kulning* it is effective to keep the lips broad, as if in a wide smile. This helps the voice to produce more overtones. The tongue is compressed in the very high long tones. This means the tongue is pulled back somewhat, as if bunched together, but not pulled to the back of the throat. The same tongue position is used for an operatic tenor "squillo" sound.



The tongue in compressed positions.

In the Eastern part of Norway, non-tempered modal scales are used, such as the *Kulokk frå Marit Lillebuen Jensen*. This *lokk* is a famous recording of Jensen calling her herd, using ancient modal scales with many melismas. Tempered scales and more song-like *kulokk* is heard in

the western regions.

Here follows exercises to train *kulokk* and a transcription of a *kulokk* melody from Easter Norway. It is a simple call, a combination of calling words and then high melodies. It can be found on YouTube sung by Eli Storbekken (link is below, along with other YouTube references and a discography).

I hope this technical information is a useful introduction to this amazing vocal style. *Kulokk* is a rich and fascinating tradition, and so much fun to try! It is great to feel the power of your voice and even more rewarding when they cows actually come (because they do, I've tried it!!) I am in the finishing stages of a handbook on *kulokk* with many song samples and more in-depth information and exercises. It will be titled "Sing 'til the Cows Come Home" and I hope it will be out in the fall. Please watch for it!

Exercises for *Kulokk*

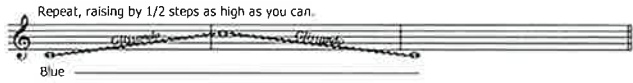
1. Begin with a bubbling exercise, making the lips buzz while singing a downward five-note scale. In order to do this the singer must keep the breath behind the tone at all times or the lips will not buzz. This is a good warm-up for training breath support.
2. Sing the word "blue" as you dip your body forward, as if falling into the sound. Glide up and down an octave and repeat, going as high as possible, making siren-like sounds. This is an excellent way to feel the possibilities of one's high range. The "falling over" into the sound frees up the larynx and the vocal folds can move freely.



3. Conduct a series of call and response calls and sounds, using high pitched calls, such as "Hey, you! Oh, my Gosh!, Wow!." Begin with everyday expressions, pitching them higher and higher.
4. Continue call-and-response using simple *lokk* sounds.
 - Prrrah!*
 - Si ku!*
 - O Stakkere Mine*
 - O Takkele*
 - Ha ku!*
 - Anderson!*
5. When singing *lokk*, the singer needs to use maximum breath support, and attempt all tones as loud as possible. If the singer tries to sing with less than total breath support, it will hurt. Practice blowing hard, as if trying to blow out a candle two feet in front of you. Notice that your solar plexus is extended and should stay out for the duration of the tone. This is necessary for good breath support. The abdominal muscles around the naval should gently go in when exhaling (Sadolin, 2000).
6. The singer should have a "long neck," as if it is stretched between the shoulders and ears. This gives space in the back of the mouth and enables the singer to hit the very high notes (Jenny Wilhelms, 2006). Try pul-

ling your head up away from your shoulders. Feel the space between the ears and the shoulders. Keep this position, especially on the very high notes.

- Sing four pitches with very bright vowels, keeping the "head voice" tone on all of the pitches. The vowels mainly heard in *lokk* are ee (as in peek) and eu (as in French adieu). The singer needs to find bright vowels that give her the optimum carrying tone.



- Do the same four note exercise, but add grace notes before the second, third and last notes. This is the student's first attempt at making the melismas of *lokk*. Work for flexibility and a relaxed yet carrying tone, without falling into a dark, classic-sounding tone quality.



Examples of *kulokk* can be found on You Tube.

Eli Storbekken: Kulokk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpDnJ3QuSrY>

Peggy Larson: Kulokk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vYWAucRDC4>

Kulokk, Nord-Odal

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l44PUvoL7ow>

Recordings of Norwegian Kulokk:

- Storbekken, Eli. 2000. *Nattergalen*. CD. Oslo, Norway: Ole Bull Akademiet #OBA003.

- Wittchen, Andrea. 198. *Music from Norway and Russia*. CD. #AJ990901.

- Opheim, Berit. 2007. *Eitt Steg*. CD. Norway: NORCD #9618, Second Edition.

Kulokk

Sing Freely

after Eli Storbekken
transcribed by Peggy Larson



Translation:
The first line means: O my poor ones come!
"Yri ki" - is a vocable, simply a sound.
O ku - means oh cow
Then "O my poor ones, come now my cows!"
Lastly "O my poor ones come now!"

This kulokk comes from Eastern Norway from the region of Røros.
Eli Storbekken comes from Tolga, which is in Osterdal, right south of Røros, and she learned it from a neighbor.



Peggy Larson singing kulokk at a lecture/concert in Minnesota