

A history of cross-cultural exchanges in Finnish and Swedish diddling

*Juniper Hill*

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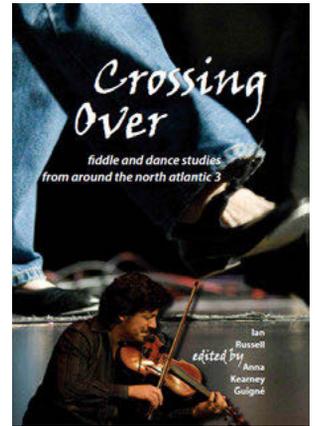
**Crossing Over**

Fiddle and Dance Studies from around the North Atlantic 3

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## A history of cross-cultural exchanges in Finnish and Swedish diddling

JUNIPER HILL

From peasant folk dances to jazz fusions to Japanese animé on the internet, the story of changes in Finnish and Swedish diddling reveals a long history of cross-cultural exchange. Over the last 500 years musical ideas have travelled across the Baltic Sea, the Bay of Bothnia, and the Atlantic Ocean to the opposite reaches of the Pacific Rim. Though the exchange of musical ideas across cultures may have increased in speed and frequency with the advent and dissemination of recording technology, jet travel, and the internet, it is certainly nothing new. As James Clifford argues:

The processes of human movement and encounter are long-established and complex. Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contact, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of people and things [...] Intercultural connection is, and has long been, the norm [...] Stasis and purity are asserted – creatively and violently – against historical forces of movement and contamination.<sup>1</sup>

Romantic nationalist ideas about the folk, as propagated by Johann Gottfried von Herder, were such an assertion against the adoption of foreign cultural elements in European cities,<sup>2</sup> and led to lasting misconceptions about folk culture and folk music as ethnically pure and untainted by foreign influences. In actuality, missionaries, conquerors/imperialists, royalty, settlers, merchants, sailors, and musicians have been travelling across the seas and oceans throughout the last millennium, carrying with them melodies, dances, terminology, and aesthetics.

In this paper, I illustrate three epochs in the history of Nordic diddling characterized by profound musical exchanges: the journey of Polish dances from Poland to Sweden and Finland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the introduction and appropriation of jazz from the USA to the Nordic countries in the twentieth century; and an internet phenomenon connecting Japan, Finland, and individuals from across the world in the twenty-first century.<sup>3</sup>

### *Rallatus and Trall*

Diddling, also known as liltling or mouth music in English, *rallatus* in Finnish, and *trall* in Swedish, refers to singing using vocables or nonsense syllables. The style is

usually lively and rhythmic. Prior to the advent of recording playback technologies, instrumental dance tunes would be diddled on occasions when instruments were not available to accompany dancing. Diddling also occurred historically in participatory song and dance games, and in friendly song competitions between boys and girls in which the last line or two of an improvised verse would be diddled.<sup>4</sup> Judging by the available archive recordings of *rallatus* and *trall*, the most popular genres for diddling in Sweden and Finland were polskas and polkas, and to a lesser extent marches.

Unfortunately, there is very little documentation of Nordic diddling practices before the introduction of recording technology; early scholars seem to have been primarily interested in collecting songs with ballad or epic poetry texts and not nonsense syllables. The earliest known written mention of diddling in Finland appears in *Lyhykäinen Neuvo Hyviin ja Sijvollisin Ihmisten Tapoin; or A Little Advice on the Customs of Good and Civilized People*, from 1761, which maintained that *trallotta*, to diddle, was inappropriate for civilized indoor behaviour.<sup>5</sup> However, documentation exists of the fiddle music and dances that share the same repertoire as seventeenth-through nineteenth-century diddling. Thus I will begin by chronicling the journey of the main diddling repertoire, *polska* and polka, from Poland to Sweden to Finland.

### **Crossing the Baltic: Polish origins of Nordic diddling repertoire**

The terms *polska* and polka, as well as *pols* and polonaise, derive from the word ‘Polish’ in various European languages. Polish-labelled dances and dance music were composed and performed not only in Poland, but across central and northern Europe. As Polish genres were danced, played, and newly composed in other European courts they were initially conceived of as either having some link to Poland or containing Polish musical characteristics. This labelling of the dances and dance music genres as Polish – which preceded the romantic nationalist movement by nearly two centuries – reflects a growing awareness of ethnic identity and local language in sixteenth-century post-Reformation Renaissance Europe.<sup>6</sup> Sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Polish dance music was distinguished by its descending rhythmic density within each measure (♩ ♪ ♫ ♬). In the sixteenth century it was common for some central European court dances to consist of two parts with the same melodic material played in duple time in one part and in triple time in the other part. When a duple-time melody was transformed into triple time, the melody was condensed in the beginning of the measure in Polish dances, instead of towards the end of the measure as was common in other genres.<sup>7</sup>

These Polish dances originated amongst Polish peasants, but were appropriated by the Polish court, and from there spread to other courts in Europe, such as the French court (where the polonaise developed), the Danish court (where King Christian IV, 1558–1648, employed Polish court musicians), Prussian courts, and the Swedish court. The Swedish and Polish courts were joined in late sixteenth-century by the Swede Sigismund August, who succeeded his Polish aunt on the Polish throne in 1587, was crowned in Sweden in 1593, and ruled both countries until 1599. Sweden and Poland were ruled together by the Vasa dynasty for 80 years, leading to intense cultural exchanges between Sweden and Poland, precisely when

the Polish dances were fashionable.<sup>8</sup> The Polish dances popular in the Swedish court were adopted by the Swedish bourgeoisie, and eventually the upper class dances were adopted by Swedish merchants and peasants. Finland was a part of the Swedish kingdom from roughly the twelfth century through 1809, and as such Western and Southern Finland received ongoing influxes of missionaries, merchants, and settlers from Sweden, who brought with them the Polish dances.

By the eighteenth century, the *polska* was an established and important component of peasant wedding celebrations in Sweden and Western Finland.<sup>9</sup> *Polska* music and dancing continued to be prominent in Swedish and Finnish peasant life through the early nineteenth century. Though *polskas* dwindled in popularity with industrialization, urbanization, modernization, and mass mediaization, they have featured prominently in twentieth-century Swedish and Finnish revival movements and are practiced today in folk dance clubs, folk music festivals, and folk music education programmes.

Along the route of their cross-Baltic journeys, the Polish dances gradually became acculturated into Swedish and Finnish folk culture. Indeed, they were appropriated into local Nordic traditions to such an extent that they almost entirely lost their former associations with Polish music and culture. As Polish musicologist Ewa Dahlig-Turek observes, 'outside Poland, in the new environment, rhythms once defined as Polish got new meaning, new performance context and new form. In fact, they are no longer Polish.'<sup>10</sup> Polish melodies, rhythms, dances, and terminology travelled from Poland to the Nordic lands, but not necessarily all in one piece. As melodies travelled, they were often adapted into local styles, sometimes adopting new rhythms and even new metres. At times the names of dances and genres were preserved but not the actual contents or styles. Swedish and Finnish *polskas* came to be dance genres in triple time in moderate tempo with emphasis on beats one and three. The rhythmic characteristics of modern Swedish and Finnish *polskas* vary according to local style: the three beats of a measure may be symmetrical or asymmetrical (for example, a shortened one and lengthened two beat, or lengthened one and shortened two beat) with eighth-note or triplet subdivisions. Nordic polkas are faster dance tunes in duple time subdivided into eighth and sixteenth notes. See Figure 1 (opposite) for a musical transcription of a Swedish *polska* as diddled by Måns Olsson (1865–1961) and Figure 2 (overleaf) for a musical transcription of a Finnish polka as diddled by Anita Lehtola from the band Loituma.

Thus, Polish dance music underwent a transformative journey not only across countries and seas, but across social classes and back again. Rhythms, dances, and musical genres that were once deemed symbols of Polishness came to be considered the quintessential folk heritage of different regions in the Nordic countries.

### **Crossing the Atlantic: jazz fusions**

The next major cross-cultural influence to impact Swedish and Finnish diddling came from across the Atlantic Ocean. Jazz was brought to the Nordic countries in the 1920s and 1930s by ocean liners carrying Nordic emigrants returning home, and by gramophone, sheet music, radio, touring British jazz musicians, and touring

HILL *Finnish and Swedish diddling*



Figure 1 'Lap Nils Polska' as diddled by Måns Olsson

African-American jazz musicians. Sheet music preceded any live or recorded aural examples of jazz to the Nordic countries. In Finland, the word 'jazz' first appeared in 1919, but the early Finnish jazz, or *jatsi*, bore little sonic resemblance to American jazz; it tended toward melancholy melodies, minor keys, no swung rhythms, little improvisation, a resemblance to the foxtrot, and racist, exoticizing, supposedly, African imagery. The first live sounds of jazz were brought to Finland in 1926 by an American cruise ship carrying hundreds of Finnish-Americans returning to their homeland. Amongst the passengers were several Finnish-American musicians who had formed a jazz band on board – their subsequent tours around Finland had a major impact on the early development of Finnish jazz.<sup>11</sup> Sweden, less isolated from mainland Europe than Finland, received more direct infusions of jazz from touring African-American musicians:

One could perhaps say that jazz came to Sweden on Wednesday the 25th October, 1933. That was the day that Louis Armstrong gave his first concert in Stockholm, before a large, youthful audience that was completely captivated by his playing [...] Louis Armstrong signalled the beginning of a new age, the start of the first musical revolt among young people. Even the newspaper critics could not stem the tide with their supercilious and prejudiced comments

– ‘music from a madhouse’ and ‘ape language from the jungle’ and other similarly exaggerated epithets [...] For many people, Armstrong’s concerts in Sweden (six in all) were a decisive turning point. The audiences included many musicians who would be responsible for creating the Swedish jazz of the 1930s and 1940s [...] The event also broke with traditional patterns. Previously Sweden’s cultural influences had mainly come from Germany and Central Europe. From now onwards the younger generation would look to the West for inspiration.<sup>12</sup>

Subsequently both Sweden and Finland developed their own jazz traditions. Musicians secured state funding for jazz by the 1960s in Finland and the 1970s in Sweden. In the 1970s formal jazz education programmes sprung up in both countries, and in the 1980s the prestigious Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and Royal College of Music in Stockholm opened jazz departments.<sup>13</sup> Jazz became established as one of multiple musical idioms in Nordic urban soundscapes.

In the 1960s and 1970s fusions between jazz, rock, and folk music became popular. Swedish and Finnish jazz musicians were inspired by trends in the USA and the UK, such as free jazz and fusion. Particularly influential were Don Cherry (who worked in Sweden for long periods) and his incorporation of non-Western music elements into jazz compositions, the fusion style of Miles Davis, and the folk

Basic Melody



Diddled with rhythmic embellishments

The image displays two musical staves for a Finnish polka melody. The first staff, labeled 'Basic Melody', shows a simple melodic line in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The second staff, labeled 'Diddled with rhythmic embellishments', shows the same melody with a more complex, syncopated rhythm and numerous eighth-note patterns, characteristic of a 'diddled' or 'fiddle' style. Both staves are written in treble clef and end with a double bar line and repeat dots.

**Figure 2** A Finnish polka as diddled by Anita Lehtola

rock fusion of the British band Fairport Convention. Paul Austerlitz observes that ‘rock, free jazz, fusion, and all manner of other trends arrived fast, almost at the same time, so while they were often seen as diametrically opposed in the U.S., these styles dovetailed in Finland.’<sup>14</sup> Nordic jazz and rock musicians were inspired to tap into elements of folk music from their own local traditions. In Finland, bands such as Piirpauke and Karelia began incorporating ancient Finnish epic songs (*runolauluja*), shepherds’ flutes, and other traditional Finnish instruments into their genre-defying jazz-rock-folk-tinged improvisations. In Sweden, the radio programme *Jazz and Folk Music: A Musical Adventure*, sponsored by the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation and the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research, was one of the most significant experiments in Swedish jazz-folk fusion. The programme was intended for Sweden’s entry for the *Triumph Variété* international contest in Monte Carlo in 1965, and subsequently won first place for best radio entertainment.<sup>15</sup> In this radio programme, four Swedish jazz musicians, Bengt-Arne Wallin, Jan Johansson, Georg Riedel, and Bengt Hallberg, were invited to create their own arrangements using the actual audio field recordings of traditional Swedish folk musicians housed in the archive of the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research.<sup>16</sup> The programme was released on LP in 1965 as *Adventures in Jazz and Folklore*, and re-released on CD by Caprice Records in 1995.

Of the thirteen tracks on the recording *Adventures in Jazz and Folklore*, two feature field recordings of traditional Swedish diddlers. Track 10, ‘Jämtländsk brudmarsch’ (bridal march from Jämtland), arranged by Bengt-Arne Wallin, utilizes a recording of diddler Erik Axel Näsström (1871–1961) from northern Jämtland, Sweden, who learned the wedding march from his grandfather Olof Zachrisson (1778–1871).<sup>17</sup> The arrangement begins with an unadulterated playback of the original field recording of ‘Jämtländsk brudmarsch’ by Näsström, who is allowed to diddle the entire tune once through without intrusion. The second time through Näsström’s diddled march, a military style snare drum enters, followed by timpani, playing up a march feel. Clarinet, bass clarinet, and flute enter playing legato harmonic accompaniment in a light classical style. The recording of the diddler then fades out, a ride cymbal with a heavy swing rhythm takes over, and saxophone and guitar interpret the melody of the bridal march in a jazz swing style. The saxophone takes a few improvised solos in a straight-ahead jazz style with occasional melodic references to the original folk melody. The orchestra then fades out to a military style snare drum, which fades out to a replay of the original bridal march diddled by Näsström. The overall effect is more a juxtaposition than an integration of folk, light classical, and swing and straight-ahead jazz.

One of the most musically brilliant and captivating folk-jazz fusions on *Adventures in Jazz and Folklore* is Jan Johansson’s arrangement of a diddled *polska*. On the second track entitled ‘Lapp-Nils *polska*’, Swedish jazz pianist Jan Johansson (1931–1968), an exceedingly creative musician, created his arrangement using a field recording of a *polska* diddled by Måns Olsson (1865–1961) from Jämtland. Måns Olsson learned it from Johan Olsson Munter, also known as Munter-Johan (1844–1917), and from his uncle Lapp-Nils who learned from Nils Jonsson (1819–1886).<sup>18</sup>

The producer of *Adventures in Jazz and Folklore*, Olle Helander, recounts the creation of Johansson's arrangement:

[Jan Johansson's] three contributions were recorded entirely without the help of a written score – just solo improvisations framed by spontaneous collective playing [...] Jan Johansson's version of Lapp-Nils *Polska* was mixed directly in the studio. Through the loudspeaker we played the tape of the diddler, Måns Olsson, to get acquainted with the tune. Then we played it a second time while the musicians added their own variations and – not least! – their accompaniment to the swinging old-timer from way up North. The result was amazing! Rupert Clemendore, West Indian conga drummer on the session, stubbornly insisted that it must have been one of the other jazz musicians, possibly Jan Johansson himself, who had previously recorded the 'scat singing'!<sup>19</sup>

The arrangement begins with the original field recording of Olsson diddling Lapp-Nils *polska*. The *polska* is in triple time with triplet subdivisions, giving it a swing feel that is quite compatible with jazz swing rhythms, and, although the majority of the measures have symmetrical beats, the intermediary cadences (measures four and twelve) have a lengthened first beat and shortened second beat, creating a syncopated feel that is also compatible with jazz syncopation. (See Figure 2 for a musical transcription of Lapp-Nils *polska* as diddled by Olsson.) Jan Johansson's quintet (piano, guitar, double bass, drums, and bongos), enters on Olsson's second repetition of the *polska* tune with quirky unobtrusive accompaniment. The field recording then fades out and the jazz musicians take turns playing their own fairly faithful renditions of the melody, retaining the triplet *polska* feel in their swung rhythms, maintaining the triple time signature, and playfully incorporating the chromaticism and accidentals of the original version into their variations. Eventually the *polska* melody is abandoned in an increasingly chaotic collective jam in which the only discernible remnant of the *polska* is the triple metre. Finally, the original diddling returns from amongst the sonic chaos, which respectfully fades in volume to give centre stage to the diddler (which, to my ears, sounds surprisingly good with this unorthodox accompaniment). Johansson's arrangement of the Lapp-Nils *polska* became relatively popular and well-known amongst certain folk and jazz circles in Sweden, and also led to an increased popularity of the original archive material and the diddler Måns Olsson.

While Johansson and his quintet creatively and successfully incorporated and explored many elements of folk diddling, they remain rooted in a jazz idiom (albeit a freer jazz idiom of the 1960s). The next musical example illustrates how contemporary folk musicians incorporated elements of jazz into their diddling.

The urban folk music revivals of the late twentieth century in Sweden and Finland emphasized an authenticity of process (how music is made) over an authenticity of product (how the resulting performance or recording sounds).<sup>20</sup> This ideology authorized and encouraged contemporary folk musicians to improvise, compose, and create their own variations of traditional material. Of all the Nordic

countries, the contemporary folk music scene in Finland took the most extreme approach, challenging genre boundaries and demanding freedom for contemporary folk musicians to express their own music in their own way and to incorporate whatever musical and extra-musical influences had touched their lives.<sup>21</sup> The result in Finnish contemporary folk music comprises extensive fusions. For example, I surveyed 67 live concerts of contemporary folk music in Helsinki in 2003–2004, and found that while 98% of the concerts contained elements of Finnish folk music material, 35% of the concerts contained avant-garde/experimental musical elements, 27% incorporated elements from Scandinavian folk music, 27% included other Finno-Ugric traditions, 25% incorporated jazz, 19% brought in non-Nordic folk musics, 15% drew upon non-European folk/traditional musics, 10% combined aspects of European classical music, and 9% integrated African-American derived popular music styles.

One of the relatively long-standing bands in this eclectic Finnish contemporary folk music scene is Loituma, which incorporates subtle elements of jazz into its diddling.<sup>22</sup> Loituma started out as a course band comprised of students from the Folk Music Department of the Sibelius Academy, which uses innovative pedagogy to encourage creative musical explorations.<sup>23</sup> Originally founded in 1989, the primary band members are Anita Lehtola (voice, 5-string *kantele*, or zither), Sari Kauranen (voice, *kanteles*), Timo Väänänen (voice, *kanteles*) and Hanni-Mari Turunen (voice, fiddle, 5-string *kantele*). Their 1995 album *Loituma* (rereleased in the USA as *Things of Beauty*) contains an all-vocal rendition with diddling of ‘Ievan polkka’ (or Eve’s Polka).<sup>24</sup>

‘Ievan polkka’ is a traditional Finnish folk melody that was recorded in 1938 by Finnish popular singer Matti Jurva, with new lyrics written in the 1930s by Eino Kettunen in the Savo dialect of Finnish (which is regarded as funny sounding by many Finns), telling a humorous courtship story with sexual undertones.<sup>25</sup> As was common in historical courtship singing games, the last couplet of each verse is diddled. In ‘Ievan polkka’ each of the six verses ends with diddling on the syllables ‘Salivili hipput tupput täpyyt / Äpyyt tippit hiljalleen’, which are all nonsense save for the last word *hiljalleen* which means gradually or little by little. However, these nonsense syllables are given sexual innuendo because of their placement after lines such as ‘tanssimme laiasta laitaan’ (we dance to and fro), ‘laskemma laiasta laitaa’ (which Pekkilä translates as ‘we move to and fro’ but which also carries the connotation of ‘go down/lie down side to side’) and ‘huhkii laiasta laitaan’ (grind to and fro).<sup>26</sup>

Loituma’s version of ‘Ievan polkka’ combines a traditional Finnish polka song with diddling, with an arranging style popular with twentieth-century collegiate a cappella groups and with jazz scat singing. The recording is entirely a cappella, with the accompaniment provided by Timo Väänänen (the only male in the group) singing an imitation of a walking bass line and Sari Kauranen and Hanni-Mari Turunen singing sparse riffs and ostinatos that outline basic harmonic progressions, all using nonsense syllables (an arranging style that reminds me of the a cappella groups that were popular on my college campus in the USA). At times the three accompanying

singers render their lines more or less staccato or legato, and occasionally join the lead singer to sing the melody and text in unison for the final half of a verse for contrasting effect. The lead singer Anita Lehtola sings the first three verses, diddles the song melody three times, and concludes with the last three verses. As Lehtola diddles the polka melody, she varies the syllables and rhythms. The first two versions of the diddled melody contain numerous additional subdivisions (e.g., two eighth notes become four sixteenth notes, quarter notes become eighth notes). These rhythmic subdivisions are emphasized and occur more frequently at the beginning of measures – a rhythmic practice common in early Polish dances, described above. (See Figure 3 for the basic melody and an example of the melody with diddled rhythmic variations.) The third time that Lehtola diddles the melody, she departs drastically from the Finnish diddling style to embrace a jazz interpretation style. Using fewer rhythmic subdivisions, swung eighth notes, dips and slurs, a slightly raspier vocal timbre, and nonsense syllables with more of the consonants b, g, v, and d and less of the consonants p, r, y, k, and t, Lehtola transforms her interpretation of the polka from a Finnish diddling style into jazz scat singing. The incorporation of these jazz elements into the Finnish folk melody is fluid and relatively brief, but musically highly effective and memorable.

These examples, Jan Johansson's incorporation of a diddled Swedish *polska* into a jazz quintet improvisation and Loituma's appropriation of jazz scat singing into a diddled Finnish polka, illustrate how early and mid-twentieth-century influences from across the Atlantic resulted in creative explorations and new cross-idiom fusions.

### **To the opposite shores of the Pacific: an internet phenomenon**

After one of my field research visits in the Nordic lands, I returned home to Los Angeles and, inspired by performances of Swedish diddlers and my lessons in Finnish diddling, I decided to enter into the competitions at the local Topanga Banjo and Fiddle Festival as a diddler. Diddling is not common at the Topanga competitions, which cater more to young fiddlers, bluegrass and old-time banjoists, mandolinists, flat-picking guitarists, and the occasional spoons or jug player. After a brief argument among the judges as to whether I should be entered into the singing category or the miscellaneous instruments category, I was allowed to diddle my set on the main stage of the festival. The medley that I diddled consisted primarily of American old-time tunes. However, in my residency at the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department, I had become acquainted with some of the musicians from Loituma and their music, and I was exceedingly fond of 'Ievan polkka'. I decided to include it in my medley at the Topanga competition, reasoning that since polkas do occasionally appear in American repertoire, since 'Ievan polkka' was in a major key in duple time, and since 'Ievan polkka' was relatively obscure (or so I thought), that it could pass for an American tune. After my performance (which, unfortunately, did not win), a group of young teenage American girls came rushing up to me, squealing with delight that I had diddled that song and demanding my autograph. I was completely flabbergasted that the 13-year-old girls from Los Angeles were so

excited about, and indeed even knew of, a traditional Finnish folk song released on a small local label (Kaustinen Folk Music Institute) by a band that was far from mainstream even in Finland. That was my awakening to the transnational internet phenomenon that Loituma's diddling had become.

In the spring of 2006, someone uploaded a flash animation of a Japanese animé character combined with an audio sample of an excerpt of the diddled section of Loituma's 'Ievan polkka' to the internet.<sup>27</sup> The animation contained 4–5 frames of a girl spinning a vegetable identified variously online as a leek, Welsh onion, or *negi*. The animated character, known as Orihime Inoue, and her leek were taken from the Japanese animation series *Bleach*. This short animation became known primarily as 'Loituma girl', and occasionally as 'Leekspin'.<sup>28</sup>

Within a short period of time, 'Loituma girl' became massively popular across the globe. The band Loituma – shocked by their sudden popularity eleven years after the release of the album – received massive amounts of fan mail, had to hire a manager, and had to rerelease their recently sold-out album *Things of Beauty* (adding a special video of a live performance of 'Ievan polkka' on the June 2006 album reissue).<sup>29</sup> The Loituma girl phenomenon was recognized as a Global Hit on the BBC/Public Radio International radio programme *The World*.<sup>30</sup> According to the publicly edited online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, which has a separate entry for the Loituma girl phenomenon, variations of the video and/or music have been used as ring tones and for commercials by transnational corporations and local companies in the UK, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Romania.<sup>31</sup>

Individual internet users from Japan, the USA, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Russia, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, and many other countries created and uploaded onto the internet their own versions of 'Loituma girl'. By February of 2009, YouTube hosted 3070 video clips identified with the term 'Loituma', 1940 video clips containing the phrase 'Ievan polka', 2330 video clips with the misspelled name 'Levan polka', and 1110 video clips entitled 'leekspin'.<sup>32</sup> Some of these variations have been viewed millions of times, for example, the view count of 'Loituma TECHNO!' is 5,595,754.<sup>33</sup>

These thousands of variations of 'Loituma girl' present an astonishing flourishing of grassroots creative appropriation and remaking of commercial material, as well as transnational creative dialogue. The video clips contain a broad spectrum of variations. The visuals have been altered by: subtle changes in the animation background, the representation of the girl character, or the object being twirled (one video shows a giant leek whirling a small girl); a complete substitution for new animation, such as an anthropomorphic donkey named Dolly with an audience of claymation sheep, various monsters, and other cartoon characters; the insertion of movie characters or historical figures twirling an object, such as Star Wars figures Han Solo and Chewbacca twirling lifesavers, and Stalin or Hitler twirling rifles; homemade videos of real life people twirling leeks or other objects; the pasting of Loituma's recording to unrelated scenes, such as a comedy scene with actor Jim Carrey; homemade videos of people dancing to Loituma's diddling; and complete departures from the original theme containing abstract video collages or montages,

or new narratives. Variations of the audio track of the diddled 'Ievan polkka' melody comprise either remixes of Loituma's recording or newly performed renditions of the 'Ievan polkka' melody. Remixes of Loituma's recording span a variety of electronic dance music genres, from techno to breakbeat to jumpstyle to hip-hop to house – most containing a sample of the original Loituma recording (sometimes unadulterated, other times filtered, speeded up, or otherwise electronically manipulated), over various synthetic drum beats, soundscapes, and bass lines. Newly performed covers of Loituma's 'Ievan polkka' vary from diddling accompanied by hard rock, punk, or other styles; to purely instrumental performances of the polka melody by a variety of instruments including keyboards, French horn, and guitar; to sung versions of the melody with new lyrics. Many of these variations were created as responses to and in ongoing dialogue with previous audio and video variations of 'Loituma girl'.

The YouTube platform has provided a virtual space and community in which consumers from around the world can reclaim a small amount of creative agency, individually expressing their own responses to music and video, and creating their own variations instead of passively consuming them. It has also facilitated an extensive exchange of dialogue in words (in online comments and discussions), music, and video beyond national and cultural entities between individuals from across Europe, North America, and Asia.

### **Conclusions**

In summary, analysis of cross-cultural musical exchanges in the history of Nordic diddling reveals long-standing and rich practices of intercultural musical sharing and dialogue that have been occurring for centuries. Dynamic cultural exchanges between the lower and upper classes combined with alliances amongst European courts facilitated the exchange of Polish dance music repertoire from Polish peasants to Polish courts, across the Baltic to Swedish courts, to Swedish merchants and peasants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Missionary work, migration, and imperialism from Sweden to Finland resulted in shared repertoire and practices in diddling from at least the seventeenth century onwards. In the 1920s and 1930s, African-American jazz traditions were brought to the Nordic countries by sheet music, radio, and ocean liners carrying returning emigrants, touring British musicians, and touring African-American musicians. In the 1960s and 1970s, jazz fusion and folk rock fusion bands from the USA and the UK inspired Nordic jazz musicians to incorporate local folk music, including diddled *polskas* and polkas, into their arrangements. By the 1990s, urban post-revival folk musicians in Finland felt free to incorporate jazz and other international styles into their diddling. In the twenty-first century, an anonymous joining of Japanese animé with Finnish folk diddling inspired a global internet phenomenon of creative variation and self-expression.

Thus, cross-cultural exchanges have shaped diddling throughout its documented history. These cross-cultural exchanges have been facilitated by imperialism, court politics and fashions, trade, immigration, travel, printing technology, recording technology, radio, and the internet. The nineteenth-century

romantic nationalist ideas about folk music as being nationally bounded or ethnically pure were a misconception: Nordic diddling and folk music in general, though manifesting regional variations and local styles, has never been bounded by ethnicity or nation. Furthermore, new widely available recording technology, sound and video editing software, and internet platforms such as YouTube have allowed an unprecedented exchange of musical and visual ideas across continents, which has served not only to popularize Nordic diddling around the world, but provided thousands of individual media consumers with the artistic agency to contribute their own variations and expressions.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late 20th Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 3–7.

<sup>2</sup> William A. Wilson, 'Herder, Folklore and Romantic Nationalism', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 6, no. 4 (1973), 819–35.

<sup>3</sup> This essay draws upon extensive field research in Finland and shorter field research trips in Sweden, as well as analysis of archive recordings, commercial recordings, and internet materials. Although the term Nordic technically encompasses Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands, I have not conducted research on the musical traditions of the latter four; thus, the use of the term Nordic in this paper refers only to characteristics and practices that are common in both Sweden and Finland.

<sup>4</sup> Anneli Asplund, 'Tanssilaulua ja Laululeikkiä', in *Kansanmusiikki*, ed. by Anneli Asplund, Petri Hoppu, Heikki Laitinen, Timo Leisiö, Hannu Saha, and Simo Westerholm (Helsinki: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 2006), pp. 129–43.

<sup>5</sup> Asplund, p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> Ewa Dahlig-Turek, 'On the History of the *Polska*', in *The Polish Dance in Scandinavia and Poland*, ed. by Märta Ramsten (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv, 2003), pp. 11–25.

<sup>7</sup> Ewa Dahlig-Turek, 'On the History of the *Polska*', p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Ewa Dahlig-Turek, 'On the History of the *Polska*', pp. 11–25.

<sup>9</sup> Petri Hoppu, 'The *Polska* at Finnish and Swedish Peasant Weddings in the 18th and 19th Centuries', in *The Polish Dance in Scandinavia and Poland*, ed. by Märta Ramsten (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv, 2003), pp. 145–54.

<sup>10</sup> Ewa Dahlig-Turek, 'Rhythms of Swedish *Polskas* and Their Relation to Polish Folk Dances', in *The Polish Dance in Scandinavia and Poland*, ed. by Märta Ramsten (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv, 2003), pp. 155–64 (p. 164).

<sup>11</sup> Paul Austerlitz, 'Birch-Bark Horns and Jazz in the National Imagination: The Finnish Folk Music Vogue in Historical Perspective', *Ethnomusicology*, 44, no. 2 (2000), 183–213; Juha Henriksson, 'A Short History of Finnish Jazz', The Finnish Jazz & Pop Archive, [www.jazzpoparkisto.net/finnish\\_jazz.php](http://www.jazzpoparkisto.net/finnish_jazz.php) [accessed 21 February 2009].

<sup>12</sup> Lars Westin, 'Jazz in Sweden – an overview', in *Music in Sweden* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute, 1998), [www.visarkiv.se/online/jazz\\_in\\_sweden.htm](http://www.visarkiv.se/online/jazz_in_sweden.htm) [accessed 21 February 2009].<sup>13</sup>

Paul Austerlitz, *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005); see also Westin, 'Jazz in Sweden'.

<sup>14</sup> Austerlitz, *Jazz Consciousness*, p. 155.

<sup>15</sup> Dan Lundberg, 'Swedish Folk Music: From Village Greens to Concert Platforms', in *Music in Sweden* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute, 1998), [www.visarkiv.se/online/swedish\\_folkmusic.htm](http://www.visarkiv.se/online/swedish_folkmusic.htm) [accessed 21 February 2009].

<sup>16</sup> Matts Arnberg and Olle Helander, liner notes, *Adventures in Jazz and Folk Music*, in the series Musica Sveciae/Folk Music in Sweden, CD, Caprice Records, CAP 21475, 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Ville Roempke, liner notes, *Vall- trall- & Lapp-Nils låtar*, in the series Musica Sveciae/Folk Music in Sweden, CD, Caprice Records, CAP 21489, 1996. The original recording of 'Jämtländsk brudmarsch' by Näsström can be heard on track 1 of *Vall- trall- & Lapp-Nils låtar*.

<sup>18</sup> Ville Roempke. The original recording of this *polska* diddled by Olsson, entitled 'Lapp-Nils *polska* after Munter-Johan', and can be heard on track 35 of *Vall- trall- & Lapp-Nils låtar*.

<sup>19</sup> Olle Helander, liner notes, *Adventures in Jazz and Folk Music*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>20</sup> Owe Ronström, 'Revival Reconsidered', in *The World of Music*, 38, no. 3 (1996), 5–20; Juniper Hill, 'From Ancient to Avant-Garde to Global: Creative Processes and Institutionalization in Finnish Contemporary Folk Music' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, UCLA, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> See Juniper Hill, 'Rebellious Pedagogy, Ideological Transformation, and Creative Freedom in Finnish Contemporary Folk Music', in *Ethnomusicology*, 53, no. 1 (2009), 86–114; and "'Global Folk Music" Fusions: The Reification of Transnational Relationships and the Ethics of Cross-Cultural Appropriations in Finnish Contemporary Folk Music', in *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 39 (2007), 50–83.

<sup>22</sup> By the time I was doing my fieldwork (2002–2008), the band Loituma performed infrequently, but the individual members remain active in various solo and other projects.

<sup>23</sup> See Juniper Hill, 'The Influence of Conservatory Folk Music Programmes: The Sibelius Academy in Comparative Context', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 18, no. 2 (2009), 205–39.

<sup>24</sup> Loituma, *Loituma*, CD, Kaustinen, Finland: Kansanmusiikki-instituutti (Folk Music Institute), KICD 36, 1995. Re-released in the USA by Northside as Loituma, *Things of Beauty*. Northside Records 6010, 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Erkki Pekkilä, 'Herder and Loituma girl: Geography, Space, and Virtual Reality in the Mediation of Modern Folk Music', paper presented at the International Council for Traditional Music World Congress in Vienna, Austria, July 2007. I am grateful to Dr Pekkilä for providing me a copy of his paper.

<sup>26</sup> Pekkilä; 'Loituma *Things of Beauty*: Notes on the Songs Lyrics in Finnish and English', Northside, [www.noside.com/nsd6010note.html](http://www.noside.com/nsd6010note.html) [accessed 22 February 2009]. Note that the English translations of the lyrics on the record label's website are only approximate and do not convey the sexual connotations that appear in the original Finnish.

<sup>27</sup> YouTube [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) [accessed 22 February 2009].

<sup>28</sup> Pekkilä; Marco Werman, 'Global Hit', *The World*, radio programme, BBC and Public Radio International, 18 August 2006, [www.theworld.org/?q=node/3625](http://www.theworld.org/?q=node/3625) [accessed 21 February 2009]; YouTube, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) [accessed 22 February 2009].

<sup>29</sup> *Things of Beauty* by Loituma, Northside, [www.noside.com/Catalog/CatalogAlbum\\_01.asp?Album\\_ID=45](http://www.noside.com/Catalog/CatalogAlbum_01.asp?Album_ID=45) [accessed 22 February 2009]; Pekkilä.

<sup>30</sup> Werman, 'Global Hit'.

<sup>31</sup> 'Loituma girl', *Wikipedia*, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loituma\\_Girl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loituma_Girl) [accessed 22 February 2009].

<sup>32</sup> YouTube.

<sup>33</sup> 'Loituma TECHNO!', YouTube, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_mdMb6bRXt4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mdMb6bRXt4) [accessed 22 February 2009].