

Egil Storbekken

Conductor, Folk Musician and Composer

https://nbl.snl.no/Egil_Storbekken (translated by Google Translate)

(Music: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyunAFZXSZ5cxQ1iFmCvloA>)

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Born: May 24, 1911, Tolga, Hedmark

Death: March 19, 2002, Tolga

Parents: Farmer Jon Estensen Storbækken (1877–1945) and Dorthea Eriksdatter Østgård (1875–1924). Married 1952 to Edith Florhaug (1923–), daughter of Hans Florhaug (b. 1894) and wife Helga.

Egil Storbekken put in a great deal of work to disseminate Norwegian folk traditions, especially rural crafts and folk music. His name is especially associated with the tusso flute, which he launched based on older Norwegian wooden flute traditions around 1960. He also drew older instruments such as nap, buckhorn and willow flute and gave them new life through his own nap and lure conventions, local production and sales. He also published notebooks.

Storbekken grew up in a home characterized by music. The father sang and played fiddle and wooden organ (harmonium), while his grandmother Marit Storbækken was known in the village for his beautiful singing. Egil got his grandfather's old fiddle early on and spent some time learning from the fiddler Jon Skjølvold. Unfortunately, the old fiddle joined a fire on the farm in 1922, and it was the clarinet that became his first real instrument, when he joined Tolga Janitsjar a few years later. Here he also learned notes. Before he was 20 years old, he had also become an active member of the Tolga men's choir and of the youth team, and he joined the circle around Ivar Sæter, Tolga's great cultural personality.

In 1932, Storbekken went to Oslo, where he got a job in Østerdallaget's handicraft shop and became a student at Wang's business school. After graduating, he was employed by an insurance company on Tolga. When the spiritual leader Sæter with his undisputed position emerged in 1934 as spokesman for the party Nasjonal Samling, with a focus on national and spiritual values as his main message, many of the village's youths were gradually captured by this movement. This also happened to Storbekken, who joined the party in 1940. But he was strongly critical of the Germans' occupation of Norway, and during the war years it dawned on him what catastrophic consequences National Socialism had. In the autumn of 1943, he was deployed as a teacher in Vågå, and here he was arrested when the war ended. During the court settlement in 1946, he emerged as a in many ways naive idealist who had been seduced into choosing the wrong side.

After serving his sentence, he returned to Tolga in the autumn of 1947 and was well received. Soon he was conductor for Tolga Janitsjar, for men's choir and women's choir and for Nord-Østerdal orchestra, and he started Tolga spellmannslag. After a couple of years, he felt the urge to learn more and went back to Oslo. Here he became a student in choral conducting at the Conservatory of Music, at the same time as he took drawing and painting lessons at Damm's

painting school. Back in Tolga, he began to plan an annual farm meeting, where the old musical traditions associated with farm life would come to light. The first lure and lure convention in 1949 gathered a couple of hundred people, but already in 1952 the number increased to almost three thousand. The convention became well-known around the country, especially after part of the 1950 convention was broadcast on radio.

In the 1950s, Storbekken developed its own variant of the traditional wooden flute and gave it the name tussefløyte, a name that built on older terms such as German flute and tyssefløyte and at the same time gave certain magical associations. He made his debut on a flute on radio in 1952 and in the years that followed, received a number of inquiries about this instrument. This led him to soon start thinking about the production of flutes and other older folk musical instruments for sale. At the same time, he developed a new type of willow flute with tubes made of hard plastic, as a supplement to the traditional bark flute that could only be made and used for a few weeks in the spring. He also associated himself with the craftsman Torgeir Granmo, who was to be responsible for the production of nap and buck horns.

In line with his farmhouse, Storbekken built a small workshop and studio in 1955, which opens into the sales shed Bygdakunst. Here he and his wife established a sale for the old folk music instruments and other forms of rural art from Nord-Østerdal. Over the years, not a few lures, whistles and willow flutes have been produced and sold through the sale at national road 30.

Storbekken also made a strong name for himself as a composer and musician, and although the flute was his most important means of expression, he also mastered several of our older, traditional folk musical instruments. He traveled on many tours, including for Rikskonsertene and Folkeakademien, and he appeared on NRK a number of times. Of great importance was his collaboration with the Hindar Quartet in the 1960s and 1970s and the establishment of the orchestra Tolga-tusseladdene (1969–89), both of which led to a number of record releases. Among his young "tusseladder" was also someone who would continue and further develop his commitment to folk music - Tone Hulbækmo.

Storbekken started making his own melodies early on. In 1960 came Fjelltrall, which was a great success. Soon a number of similar compositions for flute followed, and much of this material was later released on sheet music. Storbekken later composed and arranged music in other genres, but always with roots in the local traditional music. Among other things, he wrote choir music, church music, orchestral suites and film music.

Although Egil Storbekken made a great effort in several areas of cultural life, he is primarily remembered as a folk musician, as the creator of the flute and for the pioneering work of highlighting the music associated with the old farm traditions in Nord-Østerdal. When he died on Tolga in March 2002, one of the 20th century's greatest folk music profiles passed away.