



Scandinavian Sources *music from the North of Europe*

'Grapevine' Spring 2001
An article by Hazel Young

About ten years ago I first encountered a dance called '*Hex*' which I found the most extraordinary "new" circle dance of them all. '*Hex*' was choreographed by June Watts but both the dance and the music feel very ancient, primeval even. The music is called '*Vilges Suola (White Thief)*' and comes from the CD *Gula Gula* by Mari Boine Persen (Real World CTRW13).

Mari Boine is one of the Sami people, who live in the Northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Her music is rooted in the ancient past, but the subject matter of her songs is often the conflict between the majority culture and her native people who have suffered centuries of oppression including the suppression of the Sami language and traditions. Other fine new dances have been inspired by Mari Boine's music, two quite different dances to the title track of '*Gula Gula (Hear The Voices Of The Foremothers)*', one from Helen O and one from Nanni Kloke. And a subsequent CD by Marie Boine, *Goaskinviellja (Eagle Brother)* (Verve World 521388-2) contains a track '*Cuvges Vuovttat, Duodalas Calbmi (Hair of Light, Solemn Eye)*' which was the inspiration for a powerful dance by Nanni Kloke that we know as '*Sparkling Eyes*'. The music of Mari Boine connects us with the voices of our foremothers, and when we dance '*Hex*' we transcend the barriers of time.

Varttina are a band from Finland who also mix ancient music (old rune songs) with modern folk and pop styles. They are fronted by four women who sing together with incredible fire. The dance '*Quest*' choreographed by Stefan Freedman is a firm favourite these days and the music is actually a welcoming song from Karelian wedding rituals '*Kyla Vuotti Uutta Kuuta*' which appears on their excellent CD *Seleniko* (Northside NSD 6022). They also recorded a song '*Travuska*' on their CD *Aitaro* (Xenophile XENO 4026) which we dance the steps to '*Ivouschki*' to (choreographed by Andy Bettis) - personally I prefer it to the original music. I recommend both *Seleniko* and *Aitaro*, but on more recent Varttina releases they have moved away from their folk roots to some extent and become for the most part a loud pop group (which is OK if you like that kind of thing: I must be getting old !!!).

I will digress here slightly to visit a secret garden! **Secret Garden** is a group, the brainchild of Rolf Lovland a Norwegian composer who teamed up with an Irish violinist Fionnuola Sherry to create an exquisite semi-classical musical mixture with beautiful melodies (often with an Irish influence), lush orchestration and a soaring sweet-toned violin at the forefront. They even won the Eurovision Song Contest for Norway in 1995 with '*Nocturne*'! But don't let that put you off: '*Nocturne*' is a gorgeous track, and a flowing, evocative dance from Friedel Kloke-Eibl. All the Secret Garden CDs are excellent, but be aware that *Dreamcatcher* (Philips 542496-2) is a compilation of best tracks from their other three CDs, but doesn't contain one of their most memorable melodies '*Serenade to Spring*' which is also the source for another lovely Friedel dance. Both '*Serenade to Spring*' and '*Nocturne*' appear on their first CD *Songs From A Secret Garden* (Mercury 528 230-2) which seems a good place to enter this magical secret garden.

Finally, I noticed in the last Grapevine some uncertainty was expressed about the source of the dance '*Through The World*'. This and many other dances from Nanni Kloke form a suite which comes from the Finnish Mass. It was described in detail in Grapevine Spring 1997 by Regina O'Neil. The source of the music is actually two CDs: the first *Pida Minusta Kiinni* (Finnospel FGCD 5055) contains well known dances such as '*Through The World*', '*Halte Mich Fest*' and '*Hymni*', while the second *Kuule Minuu Aeneni* (Finnospel FGCD 5090) contains the popular '*Hallelujah For The Whole Earth*'. These two CDs are best obtained from Nanni herself at National Dance Productions, PO Box 692, 2800 AR Gouda, The Netherlands. Funnily enough, one of my dancers disliked '*Hallelujah For The Whole Earth*' because she said it reminded her of the Eurovision Song Contest !! You can't win them all.

Next time, all those dances choreographed to Abba music
