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ola grihamar / HARDINGFELE

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OLA O. REISHAGEN: MASTER FIDDLER

LA D. REISHAGEN was the son of Ola Gudmundson Hamre from the tenant farm Hamro, belonging to Midtre Hande in Vestre Slidre. He was born in 1884, and spent his childhood years with his parents at Hamro. He had two brothers, also named Ola. Around 1900, one of the brothers bought the farm Reishagen. After a while Ola moved in there and adopted the farm's name. His other brother emigrated to the USA while still quite young and settled in Minnesota.

In 1912 Ola married Ambjørg Sårrbu from Vang. They immediately emigrated to America, and later had a daughter. To avoid being mistaken for his brothers, he took the name Oscar and the surname Hamry after his father. They lived for a while in St. Paul before moving to Northfield and, finally, Fairbault, Minnesota.

He made a living as caretaker at St. Olav's College, and was also a member of the orchestra there.

Ola Reishagen's playing is faithful to the Slidre style, but strongly influenced by Jørn Hilme. His mentors were Ivar Ringestad and, most of all, Ola Neste, who had been taught to play by his cousin, Olav Moe.

In the US, Ola quickly became acquainted with Jøger Quale, who would often describe Ola as the best fiddler he had ever heard. Ola spent time with the Smedal brothers Eilev and Harald, but his closest friend was Gunnleik Smedal.

In 1939, Jøger Quale bought a phonograph, intending to record every tune that Ola knew. For a start, he visited Ola in Fairbault, set up his recording equipment in Ola's kitchen and recorded some 20 or 30 tunes. He made some recordings of Gunnleik Smedal as well. But he never got to record any more, because Ola died shortly after, taking suddenly ill at work and dying the same day.

In 1978, I had Jøger's son Thorwald make tapes of these tunes. The recordings met with enthusiastic response in Norway, so I let the Valdres Traditional Music Archive have copies.

When Thorwald and his wife passed away at the turn of the century, we had Randi Johansen in St. Paul, my wife Sigrid Olga's sister, obtain





Haldor Røyne



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Mikkel Kovnes



Harald Fylken

Harald Fylken



Eivind Mo



Olav Snortheim

