

**Ludvig Mathias Lindeman (1812–87):
The Man Who Taught the Norwegian People to Sing**

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Ludvig Mathias Lindeman had such a profound influence on the hymnody of the Norwegian Lutheran Church that it has been said that he is the man who taught the Norwegian people to sing. This past year marked the bicentennial of his birth.

Christianity had been introduced to Norway before the year 1,000 and Norway had been a Lutheran nation since 1537. As a part of the United Kingdom of Denmark and Norway, the Divine Service for both countries followed the Ordinance of 1537 and the Ritual of 1685. Identical hymn books were used in both countries. A distinct Norwegian hymnody began to come into existence after Norway again received her own constitution on May 17, 1814 (which is known to the Norwegian people as “Syttende Mai”). As Norway reassumed an independent identity, she also developed an independent hymnody within the church.

Foremost among the authors was Magus Brostrup Landstad (1802-1880). He was born in Finnmarken, Norway and ordained as a Lutheran pastor. He was asked to prepare a national hymnbook (hymn texts only) for the Church of Norway. The book (*Kirkesalmebog*) was authorized for use in 1869 and quickly was adopted by the congregations. Concerning the hymn selections, Landstad wrote:

If we are to get a new hymnal, we must meet on the common ground of faith in love. We must not cling to our preconceived notions; not let ourselves be influenced too strongly by our own tastes, not by our own desires, as tho we were the only ones entitled to a hearing... But the sickly subjectivity, which “rests” in the varying moods of pious feelings and godly longings, and yet does not possess any of the boldness and power of true faith—such as we find in Luther’s and Kingo’s hymns—this type of church hymn must be excluded.¹

Seven of Landstad’s original hymns appear in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*.

Foremost among the composers was Ludvig Mathias Lindeman. He was born two hundred years ago, on November 28, 1812, in Trondheim, Norway as the seventh of ten children. His father, Ole A. Lindeman, was the organist at Our Lady’s Church in Trondheim and the editor of the first Norwegian chorale book (hymn tunes only) in 1835. This book contained strictly regular even-note melodies. This was a departure from the original Reformation-era rhythmic melodies and precipitated a controversy regarding the form of melodies which lasted for nearly four decades until his son, Ludvig, published a definitive edition of hymn tunes for the Church of Norway.²

At the age of twenty-four years, Ludvig M. Lindeman became a theological student at the University at Christiania (Oslo). He attended theological lectures, but his musical commitments demanded most of his time. In 1840 he succeeded his older brother as cantor and organist at the Church of Our Savior which, since 1950, has been known as the Oslo Cathedral. This position also included serving as choirmaster for the boys’ chorus which led the singing

¹ John Dahle, *Library of Christian Hymns* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1925), 193-194.

² Carl F. Schalk, *God’s Song in a New Land* (St. Louis, Missouri, Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 119.

during the services. He held this position for forty-seven years until his death. During these years he became a recognized organist throughout Europe and England. With his son, Peter, he founded the first music conservatory in Norway, which today is known as the Oslo Conservatory. Beginning in 1849, he also began to teach liturgics at the university's theological seminary.

These positions brought him into direct contact with many of the men who eventually would shape the Norwegian Synod in the United States. In addition to receiving instruction in the classroom lectures, theological students frequently attended services at the Church of Our Savior where Lindeman was organist. They heard his music and listened to the choir which he directed. Among his likely students were H.A. Stub (1848), A.C. Preus (1848), N.O. Brandt (1851), G.F. Dietrichson (1851), H.A. Preus (1851), and J.A. Ottesen (1852). He also would have been the instructor for U.V. Koren (1853) and Laur. Larsen (1857).

At this time, in the mid-nineteenth century, there was a growing interest in the folk music of Norway. Lindeman demonstrated his interest in these folk melodies already in 1840 when he published *Norske Fjeld-Melodier (Norwegian Mountain Melodies)*. In 1848, Lindeman received funding from the university to visit the Norwegian mountain villages and document "the people's hymn singing." His first trip was to Valdres. In 1851 and 1864, he made two additional trips to Telemark, Hordaland, Bergen, Hallingdal, and Gudbrandsdalen. In 1871 he made a short journey to Trøndelag.³ On these journeys he collected the melodies from the elderly, the fiddlers, and the *klokkers* who led the singing in the churches. After recording more than 2,500 different melodies, Lindeman harmonized and published many of them along with some original compositions. His first collection, *Ældre og Nyere Norske Fjeldmelodier (Older and Newer Norwegian Folkmelodies)* was published in 1853 at the same time as the organization of the Norwegian Synod.

Landstad's hymnbook had been authorized for use in 1869. Three years later, Lindeman's chorale-book (*Koralbog*) was published containing the musical tunes for Landstad's hymn book. Lindeman's *Koralbog*

... includes old chorales in use in the churches in Norway at the time together with many new melodies, mostly folktunes [sic] Lindeman had found. Although he did not favor the return to the original rhythmic forms of the chorale tunes, Lindeman put new life into the singing of hymns in the church by replacing the deadly uniform rhythms and slow tempos with dotted rhythms, more rapid tempos, and rests at the end of phrases rather than fermatas. The introduction of many new folk tunes was also important. His harmonizations were radical, which made for greater interest, but also led to criticism.⁴

As the romanticist of Norwegian church music, Lindeman promoted the folk tunes of the mountains and the valleys of Norway. He considered it inappropriate to change the tunes which currently were being sung by the people. "He made use of quarter, dotted quarter, and

³ Store Norske Leksikon, found at <http://snl.no/Ludvig_Mathias_Lindeman> accessed: 28 December 2012.

⁴ Madus A. Egge, "Norway," in *Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship*, ed. Marilyn Kay Stulken (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 40.

eighth notes (instead of the accustomed half-note style of notation) to restore life and rhythm to singing."⁵ As such, hymns sung to his tunes incorporate a distinctive Norwegian "lilt."

Even though his tunes were the music of the people, the publication of his chorale-book was not readily received by the *klokkers* who led the singing in the churches in the mountains and valleys of Norway. Until this time, melodies were sung very differently from one locality to another. "Parishioners sang from memory, adding ornaments to the melody as each felt inspired. Organists, when there was an organ in the church, filled in the slow tempos with their own trills and interludes."⁶ As the publication of the chorale-book standardized the tunes, it also limited the freedom and license of the local *klokke* to alter the melody. This may help to explain the reluctance of the Norwegian *klokke* to make significant use of the psalmodikon which was a one-stringed musical instrument designed to pick out a musical tune.

In Norway, Lindeman's chorale-book continued in use until the publication of a new hymnbook for the Church of Norway in the 1920s. Landstad's compositions also left a legacy in the United States. The early immigrants were accustomed to the hymn tunes known to them from Norway. The later emigrants were familiar with Landstad's hymnbook and Lindeman's tunes. This created a clash of preferences. There were those who favored the older rhythmic hymn tunes to the newer hymn tunes of Lindeman. U.V. Koren, who took a leading role in the publication of hymnbooks for the Norwegian Synod, advocated a return to the rhythmic tunes of the Reformation. However, twenty-five of Lindeman's tunes appeared in the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary*. The 1996 *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* associates thirteen hymns with Lindeman's hymn tunes.

Two of Lindeman's three most popular tunes carry the words for the hymns "Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain" (*Naar mit Øie træt af Moie*) and "Alleluia! Jesus lives" (*Fred til Bod*). His most famous composition is associated with N.F.S. Grundtvig's hymn "Built on the Rock the Church Doth Stand" (*Kirken den er et gammelt Hus*) and is still used by Scandinavian, German, and American congregations.

Ludvig Lindeman died on May 23, 1887. His influence on Norwegian hymnody was so great that at his funeral service it was said that he had taught the Norwegian people to sing.

⁵ C.T. Aufdemberge, *Christian Worship: Handbook* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 679.

⁶ Egge, 38.