

MUSICAL ANCESTRIES – SCANDINAVIA

Cast:

Bjorn Ranheim	BJORN HAGEN (Father)
Inga Ranheim (10 yrs.)	INGA HAGEN (Daughter 1)
Freya Ranheim (8 yrs.)	FREYA HAGEN (Daughter 2)
Johann Uhl (14 yrs.)	JOHANN ERIKSSON (Cousin)
Kathy Lawton Brown	NARRATOR

NARR: The Hagen's family adventure began with an email from Bjorn's sister, Leah, who lived in Norway.

BJORN: Girls! Would you come here, please.

GIRLS: Coming! // Yes, Daddy?

BJORN: Your Aunt Leah just emailed me – she's getting *married!*

GIRLS: *REEEALLY?!* // Gosh! // I'm so excited!

BJORN: She asked me to play for her wedding, and invited you, too! We've been talking about visiting Scandinavia. Freya, you're eight now and old enough to really get a lot out of it. Do you wanna' go?

GIRLS: (*over-talking a little*) Oh Dad! How exciting! // YES!!

INGA: What fun to see Norway, where you were born. When are we going?

BJORN: This summer – June 30th. The weather's perfect that time of year... and you'll see a real, traditional Norwegian wedding. So...yes?

GIRLS: Yes, yes, YES! // Please, Daddy!

BJORN: OK. Let's call her! It's only 10 AM – so it's 5 PM her time. Perfect!

GIRLS: Yay!! // I love Aunt Leah!

NARR: Bjorn's parents came to the US from Norway when he and his two sisters were quite young. His sister Nora married a Swede and moved to Stockholm. Their son Johann had visited the Hagens two years ago, so they included a visit to Sweden.

BJORN: OK. Here's the plan. We'll fly to Stockholm, visit Aunt Nora, Uncle Bo and Johann, and see some of Sweden. Then we'll take the train - with Johann - to Oslo for the wedding. Johann's folks will meet us there. You don't mind Johann being with us, do you?

GIRLS: Are you kidding? That's great! // I really like Johann, he's fun!

BJORN: Good. We're on! You will love Scandinavia! And even though we won't **go** to Denmark this time, we'll learn about it, because Aunt Leah's fiancé, Lars, is Danish. Even though the three countries have a lot in common, they have some important differences... there's lots to learn.

NARR: Historically, the region, located in the northern part of Europe, was called **Scandia**. Modern-day "**Scandinavia**" is now commonly thought of as **three countries: Norway, Sweden and Denmark**. Other nearby countries share related languages and cultural ties – Iceland, Finland, and the Aland and Faroe Islands. When all of them are grouped together, they're referred to as **Norden** or the **Nordic countries**.

Two of three *Scandinavian* countries – Norway and Sweden – make up the Scandinavian Peninsula, and the third – Denmark – is at the tip of the Eastern European peninsula, with Germany to its South.

To prepare for the trip, the girls dug into researching. At the library, Freya discovered a book that really grabbed her...

FREYA: Did you guys know that the **Vikings** came from Scandinavia? Look at this National Geographic Kids Book, "Everything Vikings!"

BJORN: Nice! But I thought you knew that from *How to Train your Dragon*?

FREYA: Yeah, but Dad... that was just a movie. *This* is a *real book* about it!

NARR: From then on, Freya couldn't get enough of the Vikings. She learned her ancestors were some of the fiercest warriors in the world from **700** to about **1000** – or the **Eighth to Eleventh Centuries**. They were merchant adventurers and incredible seafarers! They fearlessly explored completely unknown parts of the world.

FREYA: I'm so proud to be Norwegian! I'm telling all the kids at school *I'm a Viking!*

BJORN: I'm sure they'll be impressed. Just don't forget to ask them about THEIR ancestors! They may have great stories to share, too.

FREYA: (*thinking this over*) Yeah...they might. Good idea, Dad.

INGA: While you've been discovering your "inner" Viking, Freya, I found out Norway has **two main languages**, Norwegian and Sámi. And they study English, too. Remember? Johann sounds like he's an American!

NARR: Three months later, after learning tons about Scandinavia, they boarded the airplane, along with Bjorn's cello, which took special handling.

FREYA: (*surprised gasp*) Ooo! We're moving!

INGA: Bye-bye, St. Louis – Hello, Stockholm! (*giggles from both*)

NARR: They felt completely at home in Stockholm. Everyone was friendly and helpful. They met Aunt Nora and Johann (the girls were thrilled to see *him* again) and made their way home. They settled in and enjoyed a lovely Southern Swedish supper... **Kalops**. It's a tasty meat stew that has been cooked slowly for a long time. They talked and laughed and caught up on family news.

BJORN: What a great evening! So good to be here... thanks for your hospitality, Nora and Bo. After our long trip, we should get some sleep. We all have a big day tomorrow – the **Midsummer Festival!** Good night.

GIRLS: Good night!

JOHANN: Sleep well everybody!

NARR: The next day, they went to one of the most significant celebrations in Sweden, the Midsummer Festival. It's held on the **summer solstice**, the longest day of the year. The outdoor gathering features folk music with singing and dancing around a maypole.

INGA: Johann, what's that instrument over there with all the pegs?

JOHANN: That is called the **Nyckelharpa**. "Nyckel" is Swedish for key, and "harpa" means stringed instrument. Sometimes it's called the keyed fiddle. It has 16 strings and 37 wooden keys. You play it with a short bow in your right hand, as you press the keys with your left.

INGA: Cool!

FREYA: It sounds like a violin.

JOHANN: They do sound a lot alike, but if you listen closely, you can hear a difference in the tone, and a clicking sound from its keys.

BJORN: They also have *Nyckelharpas* in Norway.

NARR: Another highlight of Midsummer Festival is the traditional Swedish smorgasbord. Tasty choices are **gravlax** (which is cured salmon), pickled herring, small sausages, crispbreads and salads.

Most people wear traditional Swedish clothing, with each region having its own distinct appearance. With all the variety, though, one thing is universal, **midsommarkrans**. These are delicate flower crowns or wreaths that everyone wears throughout the event – women, men and children, even if they're not wearing traditional folk dress. When they put on their crowns, the family felt like they were *really* part of Sweden, now!

INGA: This is great! I'm sooo glad you planned for us to be here today, Dad!

JOHANN: Yes, Uncle Bjorn. Great timing!

BJORN: We should thank Aunt Leah! *She* timed her wedding for the 30th! It is good to have this week in Stockholm, though. So many exciting things to do!

JOHANN: Well sir, there *is* one more thing that we really DO have to do. This Tuesday, the **Sing-Along at Skansen** - the "**Allsång på Skansen**" - begins its season **at the Royal Djurgården**. We might even get on TV! SVT televises the whole 8-week series.

We all love to sing, and we're good at it, too, so I hope you don't mind... we got tickets for it!

GIRLS: No way! // Oh Johann! // What fun!

BJORN: That's great, Johann! How thoughtful of you! Thank you.

JOHANN: Thank my Mom and Dad – they bought 'em. We're all going...should be great!

NARR: The next day, with Johann as their guide, they rode the **Tunnelbana** (or the **T-bana** for short), an excellent underground railway system. They visited the **Royal School of Music (KMH)** and ran into a friend of Bjorn's. That afternoon, they made their way to the **ABBA Museum** where they had a blast exploring.

There, Johann introduced them to **Swedish Fika**. It's like a coffee break, but *far* more than sipping coffee and having a pastry. Fika is a deliberate pause from life's daily busy-ness. It's a moment of togetherness that invites family and friends to unwind and strengthen their bonds.

JOHANN: Isn't *Fika* a great idea?

INGA: Sure is - I see why you like it so much. Johann, I've seen so many outdoor spaces shared by everyone... is the entire city of Stockholm one huge park?

JOHANN: (*amused*) It seems that way, doesn't it? We call it ***allmansrätten*** - the right of everyone to access and enjoy nature's beauty. Forests, fields, beaches, lakes... they're open for the public to enjoy.

BJORN: We're proud of our St. Louis parks, but this is terrific.

JOHANN: Tomorrow at the sing-along, you'll see the Royal Djurgården. It's *really* beautiful.

NARR: Stockholm has many attractions, like the **Stockholm Nordic Museum**. Works from world-renowned Nordic artists are there, many of them tied to history and **Norse mythology**. Many also reflect the Nordic love of nature, and there's an emphasis on folk art.

One painting really touched Inga... Fritz Syberg's *Meeting an Evening on a Road*. Syberg helped develop Danish impressionism. Johann liked *Man Warping*, by Swedish impressionist Bruno Liljefors, who also painted many wildlife works. Bjorn remarked that Liljefors' brother Ruben was a composer.

Freya liked the traditional Scandinavian folk art. Colorful and set in imaginative patterns, it reflects nature, animals and folklore. Each country's folk art is a bit different from the others.

Sweden is known for its **Dala Horse**. Often bright red, these iconic symbols are found in many places, even painted on houses!

Denmark's folk art best reflects **hygge**...a feeling of comfort, coziness and warmth. Artists achieve that by using soft lighting, warm colors and natural materials.

Norway is known for its **Rosemåling**, or Rose Painting. Flourishing during the 1700s, folk artists still specialize in it today, decorating wood with lovely patterns of roses.

FREYA: My favorite is the Dala Horse! I want to get one to take home. Do they have statues for sale?

BJORN: Of course, Freya! Let's go to the gift shop and pick one out. Inga and Johann, find yourselves a memento, too!

ALL KIDS: Thank you!

NARR: That evening, they attended the Sing-Along at Skansen at the Royal Djurgården, where the entire family sang, laughed and had a marvelous time.

They went on tours and took a boat ride to the **islands of the Skärgården** – which is really an archipelago. (That means, underwater mountains whose exposed tops form islands.) It was gorgeous and fascinating. They soaked up as much of Stockholm as they could.

Then came the next chapter of their adventure...the train ride to Oslo!

JOHANN: Isn't this high-speed train awesome? The trip only takes 5 ½ hours... that's really fast! It's high-tech, too.

NARR: Leaving early, they enjoyed the breath-taking mountain scenery. Mountains and forests, waterfalls, rivers and lakes...nature put on her finest show for them. They even thought they might have spotted a small herd of reindeer!

Later, in the dining car, they spoke with a kind man and Inga mentioned the reindeer to him. His eyes lit up! He told them about a group of people whose culture IS herding reindeer for a living. Called the **Sámi**, they live further North in Scandinavia, in Finland and in Russia.

He shared that the Sámi are the *only* indigenous people in Europe! They have long, unbroken historical ties to the areas where they've lived, which go back thousands of years. Even today, those activities and livelihoods are a deep part of Sámi culture.

BJORN: Isn't this an experience of a lifetime? Here we are together, riding along in a state-of-the-art train through some of the most gorgeous scenery on earth, having a fascinating conversation. It doesn't get any better than this!

JOHANN: It sure doesn't, Uncle Bjorn. I'm loving every minute of it.

NARR: The train slowly pulled into the depot at Oslo, the largest city and the capital of Norway. It's also the kingdom's most active seaport. Many important museums, theaters, and cultural spots are in Oslo. The city is well-known for attractions

like the Vigeland Sculpture Park, the Holmenkollen ski jump, and the works of artist Edvard Munch. Oslo is also where the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded each year.

Just outside the train station, the family watched some street performers and purchased **potato lefse** from the street vendors. A popular snack in Norway, the soft, thinly rolled-out type of Norwegian flatbread tastes like a buttered potato. After they enjoyed the performance and the snack, they went to their hotel, a welcome sight.

BJORN: Alright, kids, let's settle in, take a quick nap, and then we have some sightseeing to do.

JOHANN: Where are we going, Uncle Bjorn?

INGA: How about the Viking Ship Museum - for Freya! They have GINORMOUS Viking ships!

JOHANN: How do you know about the Viking Ship Museum, Inga?

INGA: I Googled it on the train! *(everyone laughs)*

BJORN: There's plenty more Viking history here in Oslo, too. Let's start with the **Midgard Viking Centre** and then we can explore Oslo's biggest park, **Frogner Park**.

FREYA: I can't wait! Let's go!

BJORN: *(chuckles)* It looks like Freya doesn't *need* a nap! *(all laugh)*

NARR: The Midgard Viking Centre features fun exhibits that highlight various parts of Viking history, including the largest group of Viking Age burial mounds in northern Europe. Norwegian folklore states that kings were laid to rest there.

The Viking Hall is a special recreation of a royal guildhall (or gathering hall) from the Viking Age. Important chiefs and leaders lived and were buried in these. Across the street from the hall is the amazing thirteen-foot-tall wooden statue of a Norse God, *Heimdall*, holding a huge horn. In Norse mythology, he was the guardian of the rainbow bridge, leading to the gods' world. When *Ragnarok*, the end of the world, happens, Heimdall blows his horn to summon the gods.

After a guided tour, the kids enjoyed the playgrounds and participated in Viking games and activities, like using bows and arrows and playing log games.

INGA: I loved the Midgard Viking Centre, Dad! And the statue of *Heimdall* was so cool!

FREYA: I loved getting to shoot a bow and arrow!

JOHANN: It was awesome to see the Viking Hall and hear stories about the Vikings!

BJORN: I am so glad you enjoyed it. Let's head to Frogner Park.

NARR: Oslo's biggest park, Frogner Park, is home to the famous ***Vigelandsparken***, Vigeland Sculpture Park, the main highlight of the area. With over a million visitors each year, it's one of the most popular spots in Norway.

JOHANN: Whoa, these sculptures are amazing! And they were all designed by the same sculptor?

BJORN: That's right, Johann. All of the sculptures were designed by Gustav Vigeland, a famous Norwegian artist. The theme of the sculptures is *the circle of life*.

JOHANN: He lived around the same time as the famous Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch, didn't he?

INGA: Oooh, didn't Munch paint the famous *The Scream* painting?

FREYA: Will we get to see *The Scream*, dad?

BJORN: Yep. A visit to Norway wouldn't be complete without it, Freya! We'll visit the National Museum tomorrow before we go to the wedding. But let's go eat right now!

ALL: Yay! // Yeah let's go! // I'm starving!

NARR: Off they went to eat some Norwegian cuisine, including **lutefisk**, a famous fish dish. Claimed by both Swedes and Norwegians, lutefisk is also made in Finland and the United States, especially in Minnesota, where many Scandinavian immigrants enjoy it.

After dinner, they went back to the hotel, where Bjorn serenaded the children with a lovely Danish folk tune on his cello. He was playing it in Leah's wedding the next day. She'd specifically asked for this tune in honor of her future husband who is Danish.

Morning came quickly, and off to the National Museum they went. There was much to see, but they wanted to see Edvard Munch's work *The Scream* in particular. Then they headed back to the hotel to get ready for the wedding. Everyone was excited to see their Aunt Leah marry their future uncle, Lars. In no time at all, they arrived at the church.

INGA: (*whispering*) Why are we walking in behind the bride, dad? At home, the wedding guests sit in the pews and watch the bride come down the aisle.

BJORN: (*whispering*) It's different here in Norway, Inga. Here, a **Hardanger** fiddle player usually leads the bride and groom to the altar, followed by the wedding party and then all of the wedding guests. I have to go to the front to play now. Stay here with Aunt Nora, Uncle Bo and Johann... I'll see you after the ceremony.

NARR: The **hardanger fiddle (hardingfele)**, is a traditional Norwegian string folk instrument originally used in the farming and fishing communities of **Hardangerfjord** in western Norway. Traditionally played for songs, dances, and weddings, the Hardanger fiddle features four bowed strings and an additional four sympathetic strings located beneath the bridge. The sympathetic strings are not played directly; instead, they resonate in response (in sympathy) to the vibrations of the bowed strings. They add a richness and depth to the instrument's sound. Nationalistic composers like Edvard Grieg incorporated folk tunes played on the hardingfele into their compositions.

Bjorn took his place next to the altar so that he was ready to play the special Danish tune.

The wedding was simply beautiful. The children were mesmerized by the traditional wedding attire for the bride and groom.

Leah chose to wear a more traditional wedding dress made from blue wool, called a **bunad**. Carefully crafted by hand, the dress features beautiful embroidery of traditional Norwegian symbols. To complete her look, she added a lovely heirloom bridal crown, passed down in her family from generation to generation.

The groom also chose to wear a Norwegian bunad, which for men is a fancy wool suit. It includes a silk shirt, a vest, and short silk pants. A very stylish outfit.

At the end of the ceremony, an accordion player led the wedding party and guests out of the church.

FREYA: Wow, dad! That wedding was sooo beautiful! Aunt Leah looked like a queen with her pretty crown!

INGA: I've never seen a wedding dress made out of blue wool before. The embroidery was gorgeous.

BJORN: Leah's wedding dress is called a *bunad*. It is a traditional dress for Norwegians. The crown she wore is a family heirloom, Freya. Your grandmother and great grandmother wore it at their weddings.

INGA: I like that tradition! Will I get to wear it? What about Freya?

BJORN: If you want, of course you can wear it. Alright, let's go to the reception.

JOHANN: Where is it, Uncle Bjorn?

BJORN: Your Aunt Leah and Uncle Lars decided that we would all take a cruise on the Oslofjord. That's why I told you to bring a sweater - it gets chilly out on the water!

INGA: We are going on a boat???

BJORN: Yes! It is going to be splendid, and we will get to see some wonderful sights as we cruise the fjord.

ALL: (*said at same time*) How fun! // Yesss! // Awesome!

JOHANN: Hey, I learned about fjords in school. A fjord is a long, narrow sea inlet with steep sides or cliffs, created by a glacier.

BJORN: Very good, Johann! That's exactly right.

NARR: The cruise was everything they didn't know that they wanted!

The traditional food was delicious, with a shrimp buffet, fresh herring, smoked salmon with dill, red cabbage, sausages, and rye bread. There was also Danish food at the reception in honor of Lars' family. Dishes like **Brunede Kartofler** - which is caramelized browned potatoes, **Danish Kringle** - a pastry originally from the pretzel family, and **Agurkesalat** - Danish Cucumber Salad - they were all on the menu.

The wedding cake was the traditional Norwegian **kranssekake**, also known as the “ring cake.” It has many ringed layers that stack in circles, getting smaller as they go up. The circular cakes represent old Nordic traditions, family get-togethers, and the happiness that comes with celebrations. Tradition has it that the bride and groom lift off the top ring of cake and however many layers come off with it tells how many children the couple will have in their marriage.

Along with the kransekake, there was much dancing, laughter, and many stories.

JOHANN: Hey, why are the men cutting off the toes of the groom’s socks?

BJORN: That is a wedding tradition from Denmark. Some people say that if the groom’s socks are cut then everyone will know he is married, and some people joke that mending your husband’s socks is the first job the wife has to do in the marriage.

FREYA: Well, I’m not going to sew **MY** husband's socks together when **I** get married. He can do that himself!

(everyone laughs)

INGA: Everyone is clinking their glasses just like we do back home! That means the bride and groom have to kiss. Whoa, wait, Aunt Leah and Uncle Lars are standing on their chairs to kiss!

BJORN: *(chuckles)* Yeah, that is another tradition here. And if everyone stomps their feet the bride and groom have to kiss under the table.

FREYA: Ew! Too much kissing!

(Bjorn, Inga, and Johann laugh)

JOHANN: There is a lot of kissing at weddings, Freya.

BJORN: And watch what happens when the bride or groom leave the room. If the groom leaves, then the male guests all run up to the bride and kiss her on the cheek. And if the bride leaves, the females get to steal a kiss on the cheek from the groom!

FREYA: Double yuck! Triple yuck!

(Bjorn, Inga, and Johann laugh)

BJORN: (sees the dancers going to the front) **Oh we are so lucky!** All of Uncle Lars' family are going to dance the *Seven Jumps*, a traditional Danish dance. I remember seeing it when I visited there a few years ago. Remember, Johann? You and your mom were there with me.

JOHANN: Yes! I like how you have to hold your leg in the air forever! Well, it seemed like forever.

INGA: I love seeing people doing traditional dances, Daddy. They're all smiling and having a good time!

FREYA: Hey, there's the accordion again! We heard that at the wedding.

BJORN: Yes, Freya. The accordion is popular in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

NARR: After the cutting of the *kransekake* wedding cake, Bjorn led the children up to the deck to see some of the sights.

FREYA: I want to eat more *kransekake!* It tastes soooo good!

BJORN: That's another good reason to come out here on the deck...our stomachs need a rest!

JOHANN: What is that over there, Uncle Bjorn?

BJORN: That is the ***Bygdøy peninsula***. It has a lot of interesting museums and nice beaches like ***Huk Bay***. You can also check out the Maritime Museum there... old sailing ships are docked outside.

INGA: (sighs) I'm kind of sad. There's so much to see in Norway, and we just didn't have enough time to see it all.

FREYA: I want to stay forever.

JOHANN: Or at least another month.

BJORN: Yeah, Norway *does* have a lot to see. But think of this trip as a "first taste" - just enough that it makes you want to come back again. And don't forget our main reason for coming.

FREYA: To eat *kransekake*?

BJORN: (*laughs*) Close but not quite.

JOHANN: To see Aunt Leah and Uncle Lars get married!

INGA: Yes, Johann! The best part of the trip! Oh...and hearing dad play the cello, of course.

ALL: (*laugh*)