Folk Music in the Nordic countries

"Jag haver ingen kärare", from Småland in southern Sweden
Geography and history

§ **Large geographical region**, ca 1/3 of Europe
§ Generally very **sparsely populated**, only about 25 million people all together, and quite a lot of them condensed in the bigger cities.

§ **Two language groups:** 
  **Scandinavian** (Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic), who originally were just dialects of the same language, and 
  **Finno-Ugrian** (Finnish, Sami).

§ Quite a lot of **exchange of territory** between the states historically. Lots of wars, but also lots of cultural exchange.
Modality and instruments

All the “traditional” Western scales, especially in the more modern tunes

Also some of the “church modes”, dorian, lydian, mixolydian

In older styles, also use of semitones and some very special scales – herding call mode, Gorrlaus mode

Before 1600, many old specific instruments – simple flutes, willow flutes, bagpipe, Hurdy Gurdy, nyckelharpa (keyed fiddle)...

Pär, härjedal flute
Three layers of traditional music

"Relict" music – old styles that have survived from the pre-classical 1600-1800-period. Medieval ballads, Herding music, Finnish Kalevala music, Sami yoiking...

"Folk Music" – the popular music of the 17th to 19th century – both secular and religious. More or less affected by classical music. Polska/pols, quadrille, anglais, menuett

"Eurocordion music" – the popular music of the late 19th and early 20th century – polka, mazurca, scottish...
Modern development

Similar history in the 20th century: 1900-1968  
conservatism, preservation

1968 -> youth movement, left wing,  
experimentation, professionalisation, new ensemble  
forms, institutionalisation. Earlier in Sweden and  
Denmark, a little later in Finland, quite a lot later in  
Norway.
Traditional music regions

Eastern Sweden and Western Finland – polska with 16th subdivisions (Pär – Slägpolska efter Ola Lans)

Western Sweden and Eastern Norway – Polska/pols with triplet subdivisions, a lot of irregular rhythms. (Pär & Eva – Sparve Lille)

Western Norway – lots of open form music, 2/4 – 6/8, halling, gangar (Olle – Gorralaus)

Denmark – heavy influence by the ”eurocordion” music, very few pockets of really old music left.

(Pär – Første brudstykke, Fanø)

Northern Norway/Sweden/Finland – Sami music, vocal tradition

Eastern Finland – runo song