



- LEU'DD-

# The world of leu'dd

AUTHORS: TUULI MALLA & HANNA-MAARIA KIPRIANOFF  
SÄI'MM- SKOLT SAAMI NETWORK 2021

*The following interviews give three perspectives to the world of leu'dd. The same questions have been answered by leu'dd artists Hanna-Maaria Kiprianoff and Zoya Nosova, and musician, researcher Marko Jouste. Excerpts from interviews:*

*Marko Jouste: "Recalling events is also central because often the stories of leu'dds have to do with life of earlier generations, for example significant events or how a family has started." - -*

*Zoya Nosova: "I probably heard leu'dd before my birth when I was in my mom's belly. She had a good voice, a good memory and knew a lot of leu'dds." - - Hanna-Maaria Kiprianoff: "My biggest dream is that the next generation and the one after can also find the story with a melody, and continue that from generation to generation."*

**HANNA-MAARIA KIPRIANOFF, leu'ddjei.** Photo: Kati Eriksen

---

*How would you describe what leu'dd is?*

Leu'dd is a story with a melody.

*What is your first memory of hearing leu'dd?*

Very first I heard it in my childhood in the summer when grandma and grandpa's sister sat outside the barn. It was something exciting, I didn't know at the time if it was leu'dd



or maybe a lament (cry). It was scary so one would go around the corner but you couldn't not listen to it.

When I moved to Sevetijärvi as a grownup this childhood memory returned strongly when I heard leu'dd - oh yes, wow.

*When and how did you start practicing (or working with) leu'dd yourself?*

It was a little forced, I first felt it was something a bit alien, it had to do with Sámi Jienat choir in 2014. There automatically I had to start leu'dd. After that little by little it has become a strong part of life.

First reaction was: "Oh help, I don't know how to do this" and there it started.

*Is there a story in a leu'dd that is especially close to your heart? Can you tell us about it?*

Probably Ohssni leu'dd because it is the first one I have leu'dd. Maybe my own leu'dds that come out of the pen these days have become the most important ones, because they have my own story. One I have written about my great grandmother, it started as a leu'dd about her but as it took shape my grandmother and sister came in. It is a story about borders emerging to separate families without knowing what happened to each other. They are stories that I have heard, so it has been told. How the connection to those who have passed on is strong. At the same time while making bead embroidered stories they (grandmothers who have passed on) are sitting by the side.

*Do you have some wishes or dreams for the future about leu'dd?*

Yes, I wish for them to become even more part of everyday life. My biggest dream is that the next generation and the one after can also find the story with a melody, and continue that from generation to generation.

**ZOYA NOSOVA, leu'ddjeei (maiden name Semyakina)**

---

I was born in Zapadnya Litsa. All my family were from the village of Motovo except my grandmother who was born in Petsamo. The grandfather was **Nikita Andreevich Ageev**; he married **Marfa Evseevna Efremova**. My grandfather had many children. My mother had a lot of kids, too. I'm the eleventh child in the family and the only one left today. First we used to live in Titovka. It was the time of collectivization and collective farms. Then in 1940 we moved to Osmus collective farm on the Tuloma River. We stayed there till the end of the war. Now I am a pensioner and live alone. My children grew up, got



education and got married. They have kids. I have three granddaughters, a grandson and a great-granddaughter.

*How would you describe what leu'dd is?*

First of all, leu'dd is a song which is dedicated to some event, composed on some occasion, for example, when something happens. There is a song that tells how Russian valenkis (felt boots) appeared in Ristikent. **Anna Ivanovna Gerasimova** wrote a song about her grandfather and grandmother. There is a leu'dd about **Anisim Alexeevich** going to the village of Songel to meet a young girl there and to marry her. There is a Iovozersky leu'dd about two needlewomen who are namesakes. It was written by **Anastasia Tikhonovna Gerasimova**. Our mother tongue is not spoken anymore but leu'dds remain. Sometimes I sing them, just to keep them in my memory.

*What is your first memory of hearing leu'dd?*

I probably heard them before my birth when I was in my mom's belly. She had a good voice, a good memory and knew a lot of leu'dds. As far as I remember, my mother used to sing them all the time. I didn't compose leu'dds myself but started singing leu'dds when **Ula Grafi** had a project from 1998 to 2000 where **Anfisa Gerasimova** was supposed to teach Saami people singing leu'dds in the village of Verkhnetulomskiy. But she failed to do it. She gave me the text of leu'dds, I learnt it and started singing. I don't know why she couldn't do it herself. She just repeated: "I can't, I won't". It was a pity. She signed a contract and was paid for it. We learnt those poluzerskiy and natozerskiy songs as well as a song about **Anisim Alexeevich**. After that we went to the festival in the town of Olenegorsk where we got diplomas and gifts.

*Is there a story in a leu'dd that is especially close to your heart? Can you tell us about it?*

I like the one about Anisim Alexeevich Efremov. He is Marfa's relative. I adore this leu'dd. It tells that Anisim went to Songel siida to meet a girl and to marry her but at that time he had a common-law wife and a baby. People who used to live in Petsamo composed a leu'dd about it.

*Do you have some wishes or dreams for the future about leu'dd?*

Well, what dreams can I have? I do not compose leu'dds any more as there are no worthy plots. Where can I take them? Everything is different nowadays and I do not think about writing them. Maybe I shall do it in the future. I figure there are a lot of leu'dds. I know a really good one. It was written by **Feodor Sergin** and tells about a house which had no roof. Grandmother Aksiniya found out that Marfa was not in. She

asked the girl named Agafiya: “Did you see Marfa? Where did she go?”. Agafiya answered: “No, I didn’t see her and I do not know where she went”. Aksiniya got dressed and went to her sister Tatiana and asked: “Tatiana, sister, tell me if Marfa was here?”. Tatiana answered that Marfa had not been there. She visited other houses but failed to find Marfa. And suddenly she saw a house which had no roof and came into it. Marfa and her boy-friend were there. I like this leu’dđ but I need to learn the melody.

*Is there anything else you would like to say?*

Well, what can I say? I have nothing to add. I am rather old. I keep Saami leu’dđs in my mind. Sometimes when it takes me a lot of time to fall asleep, I start remembering the past. I like a leu’dđ about the Pomors. It is very interesting and dedicated to the Pomors who were at sea, came to land and stayed in the settlement of Titovka. They went to a sauna, bought some milk and home-made beer from the locals and kept an eye on the girls not to be kidnapped. The elderly, who wrote the leu’dđ, did not recommend the girls to pass by the houses where the Pomors stayed. They told the girls that the Pomors had shabby and torn sails; their boots were worn out and their oars were crooked and bad.

**MARKO JOUSTE**, musician and music researcher.

---

I work at the University of Oulu at the Giellagas institute. I have been working with Saami music in both approaches since the late 1990s. With the first band Vilddas we made three albums. After that Ulla Pirttijärvi & Ulda, and Suõmmkar which performs Skolt Saami music, have been active.



*How would you describe what leu’dđ is?*

From a researcher’s perspective leu’dđ is a musical and poetic expression of storytelling through which the Skolt Saami bring out their thoughts, emotions and communicate with each other. Recalling events is also central because often the stories of leu’dđs have to do with life of earlier generations, for example significant events or how a family has started. Leu’dđs mostly deal with other people whereas laments (crys) deal with personal and often heavy topics, although boundaries of topics are fluid. In broader cultural context leu’dđ is part of both Saami and Russia-Carelian tradition in the North-Western Russia. During the last decades leu’dđ has moved from within the community to also public performance situations, for example concerts and albums.

*What is your first memory of hearing leu'dd?*

I was sitting at the Tampere University Ethnographic archives and listening to all kinds of old recordings during an internship at the end of the 1990s. Saami material and leu'dd were also included. In 1998 I was part of organising Saami art event 'Vilda vuoigŋa davvin' at Tampere Telakka and we invited **Elias Moshnikoff** to perform together with **Henna Mäki**. 'Henna leu'dd' film had just come out. As I was talking to Elias about leu'dds at the archive it turned out **Anastasia Moshnikoff** had lived with Elias' family for a long time but Elias himself did not have the tapes. I promised to help and there started our about ten year collaboration. The publication was done as a group with Elias and **Seija Sivertsen**.

*When and how did you start practicing (or working with) leu'dd yourself?*

At the release event of 'Maaddaŋäŋji leeu'd' album the three of us leu'ddjed 'Ķikkâm lãddaž leu'dd'. As part of the publishing process of the album we discussed the content of leu'dds and I started to notate and analyse their melodies. That taught me a lot about leu'dd, especially listening to so many old masters from archival tapes. I thought that if I as a Finn can learn so much through them, also new Skolt Saami generations should be able to hear them. Returning material has been a central principle also in later work for example at the University of Oulu's Giellagas institute and at the Saami culture archive.

*Is there a story in a leu'dd that is especially close to your heart? Can you tell us about it?*

Anastasia also known as Näskk Moshnikoff's leu'dds are most familiar and dear to me because I have listened to them so much and heard so many related stories from Elias. The stories are impressive and they are performed poetically through various figures of speech and symbols. It is a wild idea that memories and traditions of a people can be performed by singing. Additionally many leu'dds contain humour because especially at the end of many leu'dds there is some kind of a remark in which the story is commented on from a surprising point of view.

*Do you have some wishes or dreams for the future about leu'dd?*

When I got to know leu'dd, the situation felt a little sad because most of the old masters of the archives had already passed away and at the beginning of 2000s there didn't seem to be young people to carry on the tradition. At the next decade there were already new leu'ddjers and all in all interest in leu'dd increased a lot. So this wish has already been fulfilled.

*Is there anything else you would like to say?*

Leu'ddje because that increases the amount of leu'dd in the world.

