

# NORDIC AMERICAN PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

JANUARY 1998

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## ANNUAL MEETING NOTES

Mark your calendars now to reserve the date of September 19th for the 2nd annual meeting of Psalmodikonforbundet. It will be held in Granite Falls, MN. It is hoped that many will be able to attend and there is a possibility that we will have visitors from Sweden attending our meeting. Your input is needed to help plan this year's events- **let Beatrice know what you would like to do, see and experience.** A Saturday evening dinner and program is a possibility ; workshops and "jam sessions" and perhaps playing at Sunday morning worship services!

**More on page 6...**

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## YEAR END MUSINGS BY BEATRICE HOLE

The Psalmodikon and I have wound through a whirlwind finish of a very busy 1997.

What a terrific year it has been with all the places we have given programs and the wonderful people I have met. The interest continues to grow and so I am also kept very

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*"the highlight of year was getting the NORDIC-AMERICAN PSALMODIKON FORBUNDET organized."*

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busy handling correspondence from all over the USA, Canada, and the Nordic Countries.

Already, many performance dates have been scheduled for

1998 with one even scheduled for the year 2001. (I guess the new violin bow I received for Christmas will get plenty of use.)

In addition to the many performances during December, the Psalmodikon and I had the honor of accompanying the Gregorian Singers, under the Direction of Monte Mason, as they sung a beautiful old Norwegian hymn during an Advent Service at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Minneapolis. Another first was when I was asked to provide Psalmodikon music for a Reviewal and Funeral service for an elderly Norwegian lady. A very fine tribute to her many years of carrying on her heritage and traditions. The visits with the young people are always so rewarding as they listen attentively to my story and then try a "hands on" attempt at playing the "one-stringer". It is so important to keep the young children interested in



Beatrice Hole & Lydia Drogemueller play the Tandem Psalmodikon at the Nordic Brunch 1997

our traditions as they are the ones who will carry them into the future.

But the highlight of the year was getting the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet organized! That was a dream come true for me and I eagerly look forward to our association for the years to come. We have had a good response with the Membership Dues and some are still coming in. If you think of someone else who would be interested in joining, it still isn't too late to send in the \$5.00 membership fee. Some folks are giving a membership as a gift. I am sure many of you are busy practicing and learning new songs. Maybe we could have a "jam session" before the next scheduled meeting.

Probably the biggest event for musicians is the **Nordic Fest** in Decorah, Iowa, which will be held on July 24, 25, and 26. If anyone would be interested in helping me demonstrate in the "air-conditioned" Bethania Church during the day, I would really appreciate that. Also, I would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in joining me for a few musical selections on stage at the Viking Theater on Friday and Saturday afternoon. They only give me a 10 minute slot but I think it would be really great if we could have several Psalmodikons playing there this year!

The best to each of you in 1998!

Beatrice Hole "Music-on-a-String"

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Beatrice,

I received a Psalmodikon (one that Harlis Anderson made) from my sister, Valborg Fisher, a few years ago. She also gave me your recent Newsletter. Very interesting.

My Dad brought a Psalmodikon from Norway in 1888, it had been given to him by his Aunt in 1883. She also gave him the music book for it. **I'm enclosing one page from it.** (see page 3)

My older siblings remember the instrument but, the youngest of 6, do not remember seeing it. So that instrument disappeared somehow.

I have played this new Psalmodikon at several occasions, in schools and Sons of Norway socials and it has a nice tone.

My Dad said that it was permissible to play the Psalmodikon in the churches but a violin was a sinful instrument and outlawed.

I also have a Hardanger, all inlaid with mother of pearl, made in 1895. I purchased it in Skein in 1971.

My wife and I play for our Sons of Norway folk dances in Bismarck so are kept "on our toes".

I am now 87. My wife 82 and (we) are very thankful for good health.

I think you have started a very interesting project. Keep me posted.

Ha Det Godt. Hilsen

Sig Peterson, Almont, North Dakota

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### LETTER FROM RODNEY SJOBERG, TROLLHATTAN, SWEDEN (Freely Translated)

Psalmodikons have been a hobby of Rodney Sjoberg since he was 10 years old. He was successful in forming a group of Psalmodikon enthusiasts from Sweden and Norway about 11 years ago and continues to serve as their "President". In addition to collecting Psalmodikons, he also holds Psalmodikon building classes and also makes the "authentic" gut strings. In 1997, he made 45 Psalmodikons and renovated 12 of them. He

also sent 100 gut strings throughout Sweden and Norway.

Rodney was very pleased to hear that there is now a Psalmodikon Society in the USA!

Questions: Are most owners Swedish or Norwegian?; Do any speak Norwegian or Swedish?; What models of Psalmodikon are being built and played?; What kind of strings are being used?; Do you play the same notes as we do?

"Just think if we could have a chance to be with you in 1998! Cultural and musical cooperation is fun."

Sjoberg's plans are to seek grants to participate and the rest in the stars to come to the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet. Health and strength are also needed"

Their group (Norway-Sweden Spelstämman) will be meeting in Varmland, Sweden, August 1998 and invite the group, from America, to come. "Think of visitors from USA for this? That would be great"

"Happy New Year and happy greetings to the USA Psalmodikon Society!"

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A letter was received from Leif Lochen of Vagamo, Norway, who is also on the Board of the Nordiska Psalmodikonforbundet. He recently held a course in building Psalmodikons and making gut strings near Lillehammer. He, too, sends the invitation to attend the "Salmodikonstamma" in Sweden in 1998. Anyone interested???????

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PSALMODKON NEWSLETTER FROM SWEDEN  
Beatrice Hole reports that Helena Odvall of Langhem, Sweden, Editor of the Scandinavian Psalmodikon Newsletter, continues to send her their publications. It is very interesting to read of their efforts in carrying on the Psalmodikon tradition. If anyone is interested in seeing one of these publications (written in Swedish) you may contact Beatrice.

Beatrice continues to receive much Psalmodikon information from Scandinavia that she is sure we could learn a lot from, if only we were able to translate these articles more thoroughly. If anyone knows of someone who would be willing to help with translating - let Beatrice know. Beatrice's phone number is (612) 934-4535 and her address is: 6560 Leesborough Avenue, Eden Prairie, MN 55346.

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Lloyd Garthus of Sask., Canada writes that he is interested in information on tuning and playing. See Page 4 for some information that may help many of us.

Tab. 1. a. No. 2. Mel. Af dybeste Nød { fader = se } til Gud. (Ev. Chr. Psalms. No. 531).

5—1.  
2

1 |  $\overline{7}$  1 | 2 2 | 1 2 |  $\widehat{3}$  4 | 3 2 | 1 1 | 2. |  $\widehat{1}$  : || 1 | 2 4 |

Be = bar, o Her = re i vort Sind din him = mel = send = te Læ = re; Og le = be  
At vi paa Guds Frygt læg = ge Vind, Og Tro = ens Frugter bæ = re.

3 1 | 2  $\overline{7}$  |  $\widehat{6}$   $\overline{7}$  |  $\overline{5}$   $\overline{5}$  | 2 3 | 4 2 |  $\widehat{1}$  5 | 3 2 |  $\overline{7}$  1 | 2. |  $\widehat{1}$  ||

dig til Bæ = be = hag; Og ber = ved mod = nes Dag fra Dag, til Him = lens Fryd og Gæ = rel

Tab. 1. c. No. 3. Mel. { Af Dybsens } Nød raaber jeg til dig. (Ev. Chr. Psalms. No. 268).

3—1 M.  
2

5 | 1 5 | 6 5 | 3 4 |  $\widehat{5}$  5 | 6 7 | 6 4 | 3 2 |  $\widehat{1}$  : || 4 |

Bæ mig, at jeg saa man = ge = lund 3 Daar = habs Id har le = = vet; Gud

### TRANSLATION BY ARDITH K. MELLOH FROM A CHORAL BOOK OF 1863

(To assist in understanding Psalmodikon music)

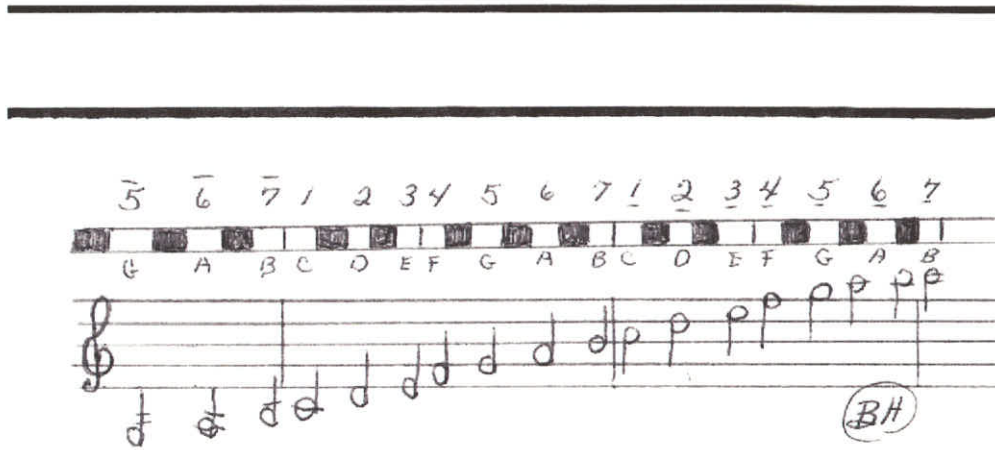
The numerals over which a dot stand are sung twice as fast as those without a dot, and numerals over which there are two dots are sung twice as fast as those with one dot. This applies to all the parts although the dot appears only over the soprano part. A numeral which has a dot after it is sung a half time longer than one without a dot. The five signature numerals are not numerical notation, but must be observed: +2 +3 +6 +7 means major key, and -2 -3 -6 -7 means a minor key. The capital letter in front of the signature gives the key. It is also the key note: if it is in C Major, then 1 is the same as G. The other numerals derive their meaning from this. A line over a numeral, as  $\overline{1}$   $\overline{2}$ , means an octave lower, and a line under a numeral, as  $\underline{1}$   $\underline{2}$ , means an octave higher.  $\dot{1}$  is like a quarter note;  $\dot{1}$  like a dotted quarter note;  $\dot{1}$  like an eighth note;  $\dot{1}$  like a sixteenth note;  $\widehat{11}$  is a half note;  $\widehat{111}$  is a dotted half note, and  $\widehat{1111}$  is a whole note. A "+" raises the signs in the measure, a "-" lowers the signs; | is a bar; 0 is a rest. A measure consists of the numbers which appear between two upright lines | | which are called measure lines. All measures in a given psalm must be of the same time length. Two dots :|| near the end of a line is called a repeat sign and means that the melody shall be sung again from the beginning or from a preceding repeat sign. When numbers are bound together with a bow  $\frown$  it merely means that one syllable of a word shall be sung on the numbers that are bound together, as  $\frown 2 2$ , which are held as one note.

TUNING THE PSALMODIKON by Beatrice Hole

Some of you have raised the question as to the tuning of your Psalmodikon. Perhaps I have misled some of you. I first started playing on a Psalmodikon designed by Harlis Anderson, which he copied from an old Psalmodikon he owned from 1867. On the left end of that fretboard was printed the letter "F" and also the number "5". And so on the Psalmodikons made by Harlis Anderson, the open string was tuned to "F" below middle "C". That also seemed to give the instrument a more mellow tone. Of course, I didn't give it too much thought as I usually played alone and I had no music written for Psalmodikon use today. Thus the songs that I have written and shared with some of you follow this tuning method where middle "C" equals number "2" on the fretboard.

After more research and corresponding with the Psalmodikon players in Norway and Sweden, I find that their smaller sized Psalmodikons are usually tuned to "G" below middle "C". Consequently, "C" equals number "1" on the fretboard. This is where the Transpositional Sticks, used by Norway's Lars Roverud, come in handy for my use now that I have started playing some of the songs I have received from Norway and Sweden.

The following diagram is how most Psalmodikons are tuned and the music written accordingly:



WE LEARN BY DOING

Not many years ago I began to play the cello. Most people would say that what I am doing is "learning to play" the cello. But these words carry into our minds the strange idea that there exists two very different processes: (1) learning to play the cello; and (2) playing the cello. They imply that I will do the first until I have completed it, at which point I will stop the first process and begin the second. In short, I will go on "learning to play" until I have "learned to play" and then I will begin to play. Of course, this is nonsense. There are not two processes, but one. We learn to do something by doing it. There is no other way.

John Holt

We too can play the Psalmodikon - just keep doing it!!!

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Frd Hopf of Timonium, MD sent in a Psalmodikon pattern that he received from the Musikmuseet in Stockholm. He also informed that the Psalmodikon is also found in the Baltic countries but with different names. In Estonia, it is called a **MOLDPIL**, and is used for playing hymns. In Lithuania, the Psalmodikon is known as the **MANIKARKA**. In Latvia, it has two names: **VIENSTIDZIS AND GIGA**. And in Finland it is called the **VIRSIKANTELE**.

David Hovde of West Lafayette, IN has sent an article which he obtained from the Mercer Museum in Pennsylvania and is entitled "**TRUMPET MARINE**". (so we might also have another name for the Psalmodikon) The following are some excerpts from the article as it sheds light on the history and development of this instrument that found it's way to the Scandinavian countries and is now part of our heritage and tradition.

**Trumpet marine:** (Fr. trompette marine; Ger. Trumscheit, Nonnengeige, Marien Trompet, Trompetengeige; It. tromba marina) A bowed monochord equipped with a vibrating bridge in common use from the 15th century until the mid-18th. In its fully developed form the instrument is capable of sounding all of the pitches of the harmonic series up to and including the 16th partial. In the Hornbostel-Sachs classification the trumpet marine is a bowed lute (or fiddle).

The history of the trumpet marine may be divided into two overlapping periods: the first extending from 1450 to 1650, the second from 1550 until the late 19th century. During the first half of the 15th century a vibrating bridge was added to the drone string of the dichord as a means of enhancing the tone or increasing the volume. At this time the dichord was common in two forms: a long instrument of approximately two metres which was played with its lower end resting on the ground and a shorter instrument held against the breast with its open d projecting into the air. The instrument with the vibrating bridge eventually became known as a Trumscheit and existed concurrently with the dichord until the mid-16th century when the latter disappeared. For some 75 years, from about 1650 until about 1725, the trumpet marine seems to have been a popular instrument. Besides the hundreds of examples constructed during this time, over 300 pieces, including some concerts, sonatas and suites were composed for the instrument. The trumpet marine was often used in Swiss collegia and instruction was given on it in some Scandinavian schools.

In spite of its wide acceptance, critics of the instrument were plentiful l- mostly directed at the older form on the instrument. By the mid 18th century its decline was apparent.

In its most popular form the trumpet marine averages 190 to 200 cm in length and consists of a hollow, open ended resonator with an attached solid neck. The neck ends in a pegbox surmounted with a head, shield, or scroll and has a tuning device, peg or machine head. The belly is usually of pine and the staves, of which there are most often five or seven, are of pine, maple or a similar hardwood. The belly is braced with several lateral slats or ribs, and the staves are reinforced with cloth, paper or strips of old parchment. Other less common features include the "guidon" used to adjust the distance of the free foot of the vibrating bridge from the belly; a rose or soundhole; sympathetic strings; inlays of hard material under the vibrating bridge; or other acoustical treatment. One end of a thin string is attached either to the bridge or to the main string below the bridge. The other end is fastened to a peg in this area or guided to the peg on the upper body or neck of the instrument.

A skilled performer is capable of producing a variety of effects. He can, for example, alternate the trumpet-like timbre with the normal sound of the harmonics, or can expand the usual playing range by means of auxiliary pitches, to two full octaves. The music is liberally ornamented. Since all of the pitches were traditionally stopped with the thumb or one finger, even short trills can be technically demanding. Regarding the difficulty of the instrument, it was noted that 'one meets few ....who play it well, because the thumb or another finger must run with a certain measure of speed....which is not easy to imitate'. ...'with practice one will master it'. (Note: Space limitations made editing of the article necessary. Hope this part was enjoyed and informative)



*NORDIC-AMERICAN  
PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET*

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Address:

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## *Notes from the Editors:*

We have had a good response to the paid membership request. If your mailing label includes the date 1998, the \$5.00 dues are paid for this year. It's till not too late to send in your \$5.00- send either to:

Larry Gjenvick  
1775 - 214th Avenue N W  
Cedar, MN 55011-92545

or:

Beatrice Hole  
6560 Leesborough Avenue  
Eden Prarie, MN 55346

We have designed a simple membership card that is included with this newsletter for those who have paid their memberships for this year. Look for it! Your mailing label shows (1998) if you are current with your membership dues.

we are still working on the Video Tape reproduction- we will keep you informed.

One more note regarding the Annual Meeting of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet. We hope that you will mark your calendars and attend if possible. September 19th will be the main attraction day and more details will come in the next newsletter planned for summer. All events will take place at the Super 8 Motel where a conference room has already been reserved for our use. Also, the Super 8 will give attending members a discount on rooms - when you make reservations, make sure you mention that you are attending the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet and ask for the discount. For your information:

Super 8 Motel 844 Highway 212 West  
Granite Falls, MN 56241-1253  
Telephone: (320) 564-4075

**See you there! Have a good year! Practice those tunes!**