

# NORDIC AMERICAN PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

AUGUST 1998

## 2 ND ANNUAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 19, 1998

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### Making a

### Psalmodikon

When Beatrice Hole mentioned that she had plans for the making of a Psalmodikon - something made me want to see if I could indeed make my own Psalmodikon. Selecting Spruce for the top and bottom and pine for the sides I constructed not one - but two Psalmodikons - one for Deann and one for myself. The original plan was modified only in the way the strings were attached to the tuning pegs.

Daniel Larson made the gut strings for the Psalmodikons and the instruments are unusual in that there are two strings on each instrument.. See the photo at far right.

Larry Gjenvick

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The 2nd Annual meeting of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet will be held in Granite Falls, Minnesota on Saturday, September 19, 1998.

The meeting, workshop, programs and dinner will be held in the Conference Room at the Super 8 Motel located on Highway #212 in Granite Falls.

*THE ANNUAL  
MEETING -  
A TIME OF  
SHARING,  
LEARNING,  
ENJOYMENT  
FELLOWSHIP!*

For those of you who want to stay overnight, the

Super 8 Motel is offering a discount for lodging when you mention that you are with the Psalmodikon folks. For Reservations call toll free 1-800-800-8000 or (320) 564-4075 directly to the Super 8 Motel in Granite Falls.

The meeting will start at 1:00 PM with a greeting from the Mayor of Granite Falls followed by a brief business meeting.

Daniel Larson of Duluth, will present his story of how he goes about making the sheep-gut strings, which everyone will find to be very interesting.

The remainder of the afternoon will be spent practicing Psalmodikon music and fellowship. Dinner will be served at 5:30 PM followed by a musical program in the evening



Psalmodikons made by Larry Gjenvick

at 7:30. Hopefully there will be some Psalmodikon players willing to perform during the program. In addition to the Psalmodikon music, Kathy Dantzer-Olson from Dawson, Minnesota will be performing on the Langeleik, a Norwegian folk instrument and Laurie Dikkon of Granite Falls will be entertaining the group with some "peppy" accordion music. It will be a fun-filled day!!

The Lutheran Church in Granite Falls has asked that some of the Psalmodikon players participate in the Sunday morning worship service also.

Both the afternoon and evening programs are open to anyone who would like to come. There is much to be learned from attending these meetings and entertain-

ing as well. So spread the word, bring a friend, the more the merrier~!!

It would be helpful to the staff to know how many to plan for on Saturday the 19th. Please contact by a note either to Larry Gjenvick, 1775 - 214th Avenue N W, Cedar, MN 55011-9254 or Beatrice Hole, 6560 Leesborough Avenue, Eden Prairie, MN 55346-2823 and let them know you will be there for the meeting. Please do this no later than September 10th. Thanks for your help to make this meeting a memorable event.

## NOTES OF INTEREST

Paul Knivslund has been busy building Psalmodikons for all the interested folks that would like to have a Psalmodikon of their own. Just recently he completed making **NO. 25!** That one went to Mrs. Millard Johnson at Wolverton, Minnesota. Welcome to our group, Mrs. Johnson

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From Beatrice Hole:

Recently Rodger and I had the pleasure of meeting and visiting with a very unique craftsman, Daniel Larson of Duluth, MN. His business goes by the name of "Gamut Musical Strings" and they sell strings all over the USA and even to some of the foreign countries. He gave us a most interesting tour of his work place, which was an education in itself. Daniel told us how he acquires the sheep gut, the whole process of curing, shaping and drying the strings into different sizes for the various instruments, even Psalmodikons!

Daniel has offered to be a guest on our program for the Psalmodikonforbundet on September 19th. He will be demonstrating as well as showing slides on this most interesting occupation of making sheep-gut strings. We are so fortunate to know of someone right here in Minnesota that is still involved in this very old skill.

Invite your friends for this most interesting program.

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A warm welcome to all of the new members of the Psalmodikonforbundet. Our group is a unique way of preserving and passing along to future generations a piece of our heritage that otherwise could be lost.

It's also never too late to become a member - and don't forget a gift membership - several have become members via this way. Membership is easy - an annual dues of \$5.00 brings you our little newsletter several times a year with informative articles and news about our Annual meeting.

Just send your \$5.00 membership fee to either Larry Gjenvick or

Beatrice Hole.

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We still have a few copies of the Video Tape program with Beatrice Hole demonstrating the Psalmodikon. We will have them at the Annual meeting at a nominal cost.

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Is the music coming from your Psalmodikon sounding a bit dull? Perhaps you are in need of a new string. They do seem to become "dead" after quite a bit of playing and a new string works wonders!

A steel guitar string .016 can be purchased at any music store or perhaps you would like to have an authentic sheep-gut string as was used on the original Psalmodikons. These may be purchased from Daniel Larson at Gamut Music Strings, 26 N. 28th Avenue East, Duluth, MN 55812 (218) 724-8011.

Or better yet, if you want to save postage — strings will be on sale during our Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet on September 19th in Granite Falls.

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Are you getting tired of playing the Psalmodikon with a violin bow? Here is a fun little folk tune that works real well to pluck the melody.

### PÅL SINE HØNER

1 1 3 | 5 5 3 | 6 6 4 | 5 5

4 4 2 | 3 3 1 | 2 2 7 | 1 || Repeat

5 3 | 1 1 3 | 2 2 1 7 5

5 3 | 1 1 3 | 2 2 1 7 5

1 1 3 | 5 5 6 6 4 | 5 5

4 4 2 | 3 3 3 1 | 2 2 7 1 ||

Written in Sifferskrift for Psalmodikon av Beatrice Hole - 1997

The melody is written without timing because this is a well-known song.

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## NOTES FROM MUSIG-ON-A-STRING

My mentor, Harlis Anderson, often said as his life was coming to a close “I wish I could have another ten years—there is so much left to do with keeping the Psalmodikon tradition going”

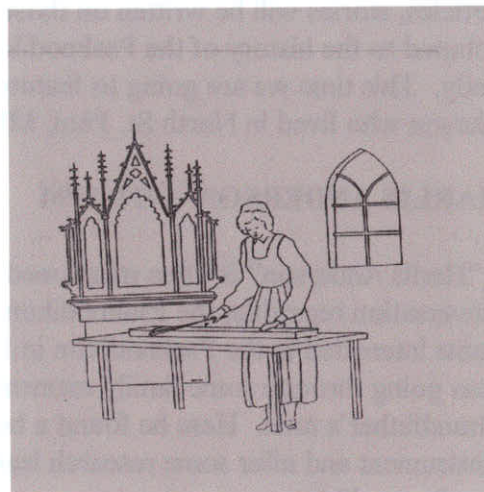
Not only did he pass the 1867 Psalmodikon on to me but also his knowledge of music, history, etc. And so I have felt that it was now my turn to “carry on the tradition”. I have found my new “career” to be very interesting and yet I feel I have some pretty big shoes to fill. I always meet so many fine folks and receive so much support as I travel about giving programs and demonstrating on the Psalmodikon. But often times I think of Harlis and wish he could be “reaping the benefits” along with me.

Harlis would have been proud to see all the young campers at Skogfjorden (the Norwegian Language Village) near Bemidji, MN play those Psalmodikons! In June I was invited up there to teach a class on Psalmodikons. Preparation was a project in itself as I had to write all the curriculum (most of it was stored in my head and not on paper) plus rewrite music into Sifferskrift to enable them to play in the authentic manner. I brought along all eight of my Psalmodikons and what a delight it was to see those young folks taking turns and with eager little fingers placed on the fretboards practicing their favorite tunes. And to think they had the courage to put on a program for all their peers in the evening!

At the end of June I was invited to participate at the Hjemkomst Festival in Moorhead, MN. What an honor it is to be playing the Psalmodikon right next to the Hjemkomst ship that was built in a neighboring potato warehouse and then making the voyage all the way to Norway. I grew up in that area of the Red River Valley and so it is like “old home” week to me as I visit with all those in attendance. But I often think of how many times Harlis wrote letters to the Hjemkomst people asking if they would need some Psalmodikon music. Now I have the pleasure of receiving an invitation every year!

The Nordic Fest was always the high point of the year for Harlis and I. Now I make the trip solo but in a sense not. For there again there are all those won-

derful people to support me as someone joins me on stage to sing along (often times in Norwegian) or accompany me with a guitar, auto-harp and even the



longeik! It warms the cockles of my heart as the audience, on their own free-will join the Psalmodikon in singing “My God, How Great Thou Art”. If only Harlis could be there to hear that!

But most of all — Harlis would not only be amazed but very proud of all you folks that make up our Psalmodikon organization. What a great response we have had in membership and I want to thank all of you for sending in your Membership dues so promptly. There is always room for more so tell your friends about us and invite them to become members of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet, too. Remember, you do not need to own a Psalmodikon to be a member. Velkommen og Tusen Takk til Alt!

A lot of my time is taken up with correspondence, some as a result of the Internet, and that makes each day so exciting. I want to thank each of you for your letters and phone calls as well as those of you who keep me informed on your latest findings in our search for more Psalmodikon history. My file is starting to bulge!

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in Granite Falls on September 19. In the meantime - - keep practicing!!

In the previous Newsletters stories have been written about folks that have contributed to the history of the Psalmodikon from the beginning of time. In a series of future articles, stories will be written on those that have contributed to the history of the Psalmodikon more recently. This time we are going to feature Harlis Anderson who lived in North St. Paul, MN.

### **HARLIS ANDERSON 1911-1994**

The name "Harlis Anderson" is often mentioned when there is conversation regarding the Psalmodikon. Harlis became interested in the Psalmodikon in 1979 when he was going through some family mementos from his Grandfather's attic. Here he found a battered old instrument and after some research learned that it was a Psamodikon.

This Psalmodikon was 33" long, 3-3/4" wide and 1-3/4" high. Underneath the unvarnished, hollowed out "two by four" was the inscription "Petter Halvorson Anderson - 1867", the name of Harlis' uncle. Harlis repaired a crack in the wood and added a bridge and a string. He learned that this Psalmodikon was made from Linden wood, a surprising choice, as most Psalmodikons were made of pine with a top of spruce. The Psalmodikon had been played by Harlis' father, a Norwegian immigrant, who was a Klokker at his church in St. Ansgar, Iowa.

Harlis was a self-taught musician and soon was playing this Psalmodikon. Rather than using sheet music, he remembered his songs by writing the title of the song and then the first three numbers corresponding with the numbered frets on the Psalmodikon. The rest was by ear and memory. Some of Harlis' favorite songs to play on the Psalmodikon were: "Beneath the Cross of Jesus", "The Old Rugged Cross", "Aftensolen" and "Hils Fra Mig Der Hjemme"!

At the 1990 Nordic Fest in Decorah, Iowa, Anderson unveiled an original composition given the title of "The Vesterheim Waltz". "O how I love Decorah, that's where the memories are....." Lyrics were written later by Beatrice Hole. This song is now registered with the Library of Congress copyrights office in Washington, D.C.

Harlis would often perform at the Sons of Norway

Lodge meetings, Senior Centers, Churches, Museums and festivals in the area. He was retired from the 3M Company and devoted much of his time to the Psalmodikon. If he wasn't playing the Psalmodikon, he would be building or restoring Psalmodikons that were in need of repair and make them playable again. In 1992, Harlis teamed up with a playing partner, Beatrice Hole of Eden Prairie, MN. He was quoted as saying, "we have an important story to tell and we do it with beautiful music".

During the time that Beatrice and Harlis teamed up as a duo, they also made a "one and only" tape recording of Psalmodikon music. This was done for the purpose of allowing others to hear what beautiful music comes from a Psalmodikon and also to be used as a teaching tool or as a source of reference. These tapes are still being sold today.

Through lectures and concerts, Harlis Anderson took this historical Scandinavian instrument of the 1800's and educated listeners to the sounds of the past. He was a firm believer that the Psalmodikon was part of the pioneer church culture that is almost forgotten and that we should not let it become a thing of the past.



**Harlis Anderson 1911-1994**

Note: A copy of the "Vesterheim Waltz" will be available at the Annual Meeting in Granite Falls.

## News from Sweden

As we were pondering what material to use for page #5, the postman came to our home with an envelope from the NPsF (Nordiska Psalmodikonförbundet). Inside, there was a letter as follows:

“Dear Larry & Deann,

Thank you for sending me your paper. It is very nice to get it for our Psalmodikonförbund. Therefore I will from now on send a paper directly to you.

Yours sincerely,

Helena Ödvall, Editor”

Included in the packet was their newsletter and a copy of their program for their Annual Meeting which was held August 14-16. Wow! Wouldn't it be exciting to plan a trip to Sweden and join them in their meeting some year??

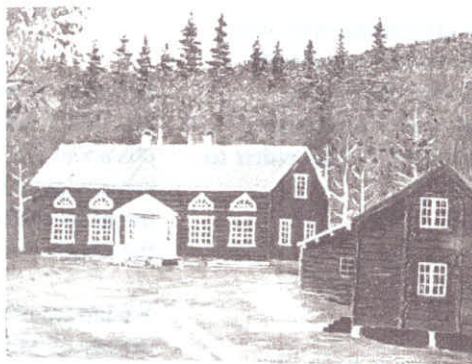
We will have all of this at the our Annual Meeting in Granite Falls - - meanwhile brush up on your Swedish language so you can read through the newsletter. Below is a reproduction of the front cover of their newsletter.

### Psalmofika



Tidskrift för NPsF –  
Nordiska psalmodikonförbundet

Årg.4      Nr.1      Juni 1998



Välkommen till stämma i  
Värmland

*NORDIC-AMERICAN  
PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET*

Return Larry & Deann Gjenvick  
Address: 1775 - 214th Avenue N W  
Cedar, MN 55011-9254

Mailing  
Address:

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PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET

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## *Notes from the Editors:*

Your mailing label shows (1998) if you are current with your membership dues. It's never too late to send in your \$5.00 membership. This pays for the cost of reproducing the newsletters and the postage to send them and the remainder will help with the costs of the Annual Meeting. Send either to:

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

or:

Beatrice Hole  
6560 Leesborough Avenue  
Eden Prairie, MN 55346

One more item regarding the Annual Meeting — perhaps a few of those who plan to attend (that's all of you of course) might bring a dozen cookies or treats to share during coffee break time.

### What's a Psalmodikon?

For those of you who may be receiving your first copy of our newsletter, have never seen a Psalmodikon or are just curious about this strange sounding name we invite you to become acquainted with this unique musical instrument that traces its origins almost to antiquity. The name comes from the Greek word "Psalms" (a Psalm) and "Ode" (a song).

Variations of styles of the instrument can be found in the history of many countries, but in the Scandinavian Countries during the 1800's the Psalmodikon was basically a hollow narrow wooden box with a string stretched over it and is usually played with a bow but may also be plucked.

Through such organizations as our Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet and the Nordiska Psalmodikonförbundet in Scandinavia, we try to foster interest in preserving and passing along this fascinating piece of our heritage.