



# Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet

“ A Society dedicated to the education and preservation of the Psalmodikon and Sifferskrift Music. ”



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## Music is Healing

Listening to music can make exercising seem easier, and even boost your speed and enjoyment. Songs with 120-140 beats per minute appear to have the biggest motivating effect. Of course, this is not where the psalmodikon would be suitable.

The psalmodikon or other stringed instruments produce soft soothing music and are often played in other circumstances.

Slow soothing music is of benefit during these times of the Covid-19 pandemic when many people have pent up emotional needs for connection.

Soft music has a calming effect and is often used to treat patients in pain, anxiety, depression, or trauma.

Music can help the brain to recover from a stroke or brain injury.

Reflective music helps to forget all else while listening – rewiring what has been lost in the brain with music.

Music can be a healing miracle!

*“Where words fail, music speaks.”*  
— Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875)

*“Music can lift us out of depression or move us to tears – it is a remedy, a tonic, orange juice for the ear,”* as Dr. Oliver Sacks wrote in *“Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain.”*

## Notes from Music-on-a-String

Beatrice Hole

I hope you and your loved ones are staying healthy and doing well. It has been a long eight months since our lifestyles changed due to the dreaded Coronavirus and the end is still not in sight. I am thankful that we have had a beautiful Summer and Fall season to be outdoors and to stay healthy.

Life is stressful for lots of people in many different situations. Many of my friends are musicians and are trying to earn a living during this pandemic. Their playing engagements have ceased, and their income has lessened. I have not heard of any psalmodikon concerts going virtual or otherwise though!

I enjoy staying home but I do not feel as connected to everything with so many of our usual activities cancelled and entertainment venues closed. I miss the fellowship with fellow Scandinavians, friends, and musicians. How will I survive the holidays without dining at several of the church lutefisk dinners???? Recently, with time on my hands, I have given much thought to taking a break from writing the Psalmodikon Newsletter on a regular basis and have decided to make this my last issue for a while. I plan to use this “stay at home” time to recharge and seek new ideas. I have been writing the Psalmodikon Newsletter for over 20 years and have covered many topics and experiences.

My writing of a newsletter began upon the advice of a dear friend, who said, “to keep an organization going, you must write newsletters to keep folks interested and informed. It is the adhesive that will hold your group together.” And thus the circle of psalmodikon friends and enthusiasts grew!

Over all these years, I have maintained an average of 100 subscribers, statewide and abroad. Everyone has become a dear friend and

supporter of my mission to keep the psalmodikon alive. I have a large collection of psalmodikons, and a huge file of psalmodikon history. We have made a CD recording of psalmodikon music and a songbook of psalmodikon melodies. I cannot just walk away and forget. We are in this together like one large family.

I will continue to keep you informed.

So, for the time being, there will not be a Psalmodikon Newsletter in March 2021, unless someone steps up to write one. I will be right here, close to home and enjoying a little respite and seeking new ideas of how to keep the Psalmodikon from becoming a “ne’er forgotten” instrument.

Remember, we have all enjoyed the satisfaction of re-introducing the psalmodikon to Scandinavian folks and others, a tribute to our ancestors and the importance of our heritage. We brought the psalmodikon to life again!

Until next time.....

*“May you always have a song in your heart and music at your fingertips!”*



*There are days when a good SCREAM makes you feel better!*

# Sympathy to Joan Saathoff

Joan's husband, Harley, died on 31 August 2020 at the age of 85.

Harley and Joan were married for 60 years and blessed with two children and six grandchildren. They are members of Zion Lutheran Church in Hudson, Wisconsin.

Harley and Joan will be remembered for their interest and support of the psalmodikon and were active members of the Psalmodikon organization.

Harley loved working with wood and made a beautiful psalmodikon for his wife, Joan. Joan is a member of the Nordic-American Psalmodikon Quartet and participated in the one and only historical recording of psalmodikon music played in four-part harmony.

We send our sympathy and thoughts to Joan and family during these days of sadness.

## Photo from the Past

I wonder if this lady is getting bored of staying at home to avoid a virus and decided to go sit on the lawn on a very cool autumn day, making music with her psalmodikon!

*"Music, once admitted to the soul, becomes a sort of spirit, and never dies."* — Edward Bulwer-Lytton

I believe music never dies, but it sure has fallen on hard times during this coronavirus pandemic, simply because of its reliance on a shared experience. — BH



## Olea Crøger

*A pioneer in collecting folk music*

Olea Crøger (1801–1855) was born in Heddal, Norway, the daughter of a parish priest and a mother who taught her songs and music. As an adult, she was a music teacher at Kviteseid Seminar, one of Norway's first public teacher's colleges.

One of her hobbies, was to collect old folk songs and ballads in the Telemark area.

Olea was also known to have been one of the first to systematically collect disappearing vestiges of Norwegian folk balladry and contributed them to various publishers for larger musical collections. It was her intention that her own name appear as co-contributor to the work, but often

her name was merely acknowledged in the preface. Consequently, Olea's work was often under-appreciated.

I noticed that several sheets of the music were written in Sifferskrift, which was common in those times. Perhaps the songs in her collections were not intentionally written for use with the psalmodikon. But, unknown to us, we may have been playing songs from her collections in the songbook, "Choral-Melodier for Psalmodikon" (1840) by J. M. Lindeman. Olea's collected ballads comprised a good part of Ludvig Mathias Lindeman's publications along with the names of Jørgen Moe and Magnus Brostrup Landstad.

# Memories of Rodney Sjöberg

Beatrice Hole

In the Spring 2020 issue of the Psalmodikon Newsletter, I wrote an article and photo of Rodney Sjöberg of Trollhättan, Sweden. I was saddened when I received notice that he had died on 20 June 2020 at the age of 90. Rodney was a psalmodikon enthusiast most of his life. His interest started at the age of

10 and from then on, he continued to collect psalmodikons of all shapes and sizes. Rodney started the Psalmodikonförbundet which holds meetings throughout the Nordic region. He was their chairman for most of his lifetime. He was a deeply knowledgeable and excellent teacher and leader. The Nordic Psalmodikon Association has designated Mr. Sjöberg's collection of psalmodikons and documented historic research to UNESCO and have it classified as a World Heritage Site.

I have many fond memories of

my visits to Sweden. I first met Rodney in 1995 when he invited the psalmodikon and I to be a special guest of their Annual Meeting in Östervåla, Sweden. This is the area where Johan Dillner and many others were actively playing the psalmodikon in the early 1800s. How special that was!

It was a visit I will never forget. I met so many wonderful psalmodikon playing folks (who are still dear friends today) and it was an unbelievably valuable learning experience in psalmodikon history for me.

While there, I attended a class on "How to build a psalmodikon", and participated in many psalmodikon services and meetings, and had delicious food.

Rodney was also in the process of putting the finishing touches on a little museum to display his large collection of psalmodikons, music, and history files. It was a special honor to assist Rodney in arranging his collection of psalmodikons in

the new cabinets, setting up displays of psalmodikon history and music.

The dedication and open house of his psalmodikon museum was held on Sunday, the same weekend I was there.

It was during this visit to Östervåla that I got the idea to start a psalmodikon organization when I returned home. It was in 1997 that the Nordic-American Psalmodikonförbundet was created because of my first visit to Rodney's psalmodikon organization.

Good memories last forever.



**Left:** Setting up the new museum. **Right:** Rodney Sjöberg playing his psalmodikon during the museum open house.





## ITEMS FOR SALE

### PSALMODIKON SONGBOOK (revised edition)

Written in *Sifferskrift* and 4-part harmony for psalmodikons. Includes 95 easy-to-play tunes of hymns, folk songs, and Christmas favorites. \$15.00 ea. + shipping

Send orders to: Beatrice Hole

### CD of the PSALMODIKON QUARTET \$15.00 pp

Featuring favorite hymns and folk tunes played on the psalmodikons of the Nordic-American Psalmodikon Quartet.

Send orders to: Beatrice Hole

## PSALMODIKON KITS FOR SALE

Pre-cut psalmodikon kits, accessories, and read-made psalmodikons are available at Musicmakers in Stillwater, Minnesota.

Kit instructions, assembly videos, and "How to Play the Psalmodikon" can be found at:

<https://www.harokit.com/blog/category/psalmodikon>

Kit description:

- 1 string
- 32" long x 3.5" wide x 2.25" deep sides
- Rosette included
- Solid Spruce Top
- Cherry sides and ply back
- 1.5 pounds

Price:

Psalmodikon finished	\$199.00
Psalmodikon - DIY Kit w/string	\$119.00
Violin Bow	\$55.00
Music for Psalmodikon Book	\$22.50

## *Greetings from Readers*

Hi – Norway has been lucky so far with low number of infections. I tuned into CNN on my computer, and watched the protestors, rioting, and fires in Minneapolis. Did not sleep much that night as I feared for the safety of the Ingebretsen's Scandinavian Store, on Lake Street, where I used to work.

Enjoying the activities of summer. Take care, stay healthy and enjoy the rest of the summer. — Beth – Norway

Hei Beatrice, Just a little line telling you we are in good shape and have no viruses at all. But the age is pretty soon 92, for both of us. We have not invested in a psalmodikon yet, but never know! We are OK, but tired. I do not drive but we walk with our sticks – forwards! Have a nice summer and greetings to all at Mindekirken. — Ingrid and Bjørn – Trondheim, Norway

Dear Beatrice, Sorry about the passing of Mr. Rodney Sjöberg, the founder of Nordiska Psalmodikonförbundet. He died a couple of days before his 91st

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Check the date on your mailing label which indicates if your dues are current.

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birthday. I will write an obituary in the next edition of Psalmodika and by then I hope to get more information. — Best regards, Tommy Karlsson – Sweden

Hei – We remember Rodney with great gratitude. He was happy to share his great knowledge of the psalmodikon and inspired the rest of us to pass on the knowledge. We share in the grief, of a good friend and shine peace over his memory. — Gunilla och Lars Eric – Sweden

Beatrice — It was sad news to hear about Rodney, but he was an old man and quite demented at the end. I have found his obituary online, so I am enclosing a copy to you. — Helena – Sweden

Hi Beatrice, As you may know, many of the functions and social activities were shut down early in March also in Norway. We have never reached the Covid-19 victims the same death rates as you lived to see in USA. We have serious restrictions in our way of living, except that we have to keep one-meter distance to people in the stores and we wash our hands with Antibac whenever we move outside home. We keep an eye on what is happening in America and have read of the riots and the street battles in Minneapolis. We do hope the very best for you in the weeks and months to come. Thank you for Psalmodikon Newsletter. I have already read most of it! — John – Norway

Hi – Hope everything is okay with you. I have mentioned once before to you about Olea Crøger and her psalmodikon collections from about 1850. I am now sending you some information about Olea Crøger. I am not sure how many melodies for psalmodikon she collected. Hope you like it. — Alf – Hamar, Norway

Beatrice,

Thanks for the latest Psalmodikon Newsletter. Always fun to hear from you. — Göran Carlström – Sweden



# The Norwegian Harp



sicians have revived this historic instrument that fell out of use long ago.

In Norway, the harp is listed as an endangered instrument. Only nine of the original Norwegian harps remain in Norway, dating back to 1681 and 1776. In seeing the photo, I think they resemble a psalmodikon with a frame. Most of the harps are constructed from spruce or pine, with birch or maple necks. The sound boxes are carved from one piece of wood, with an attached back. Sizes vary from 36" to 48" high. They have from 12 to 20 strings, spaced about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " apart. No one knows

In the 1970s Sverre Jensen who lives in Norway, found a Norwegian harp and built his first instrument. Today there are several people who are actively playing and promoting the harp. They have gathered historic information, arranged music suitable to play on the harp, and make presentations to various schools and organizations. They organized the Nordic Harp Society to keep folks interested and informed. They also hold annual meetings that draw groups of avid music lovers from around the world.

Once again, in 2020, the traditional crystal-clear sounds of the Norwegian harp are being played in Norway.

From an 1825 story of a Norwegian harp playing at a wedding dance in Østerdalen in Norway to the present day, when several mu-

how the Norwegian harp was originally played so the musician must learn to play whichever way it sounds best to them.

*Thanks to Jean Akre for bringing to my attention this story. — BH*

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