

SPRING 2010

NOTES FROM MUSIC-ON-A-STRING

By Beatrice Hole



Greetings from the editor -

I have enjoyed the winter but now it is getting long and what better thing is there to do than think "spring" and write the newsletter.

It was good to hear from so many of you during the Christmas holidays. I thank you for your greetings and keeping in touch!

As of this writing, I am waiting to hear from the psalmodikon players in Sweden. They are now finalizing their plans to come to Minneapolis this fall for a joint annual meeting. Our psalmodikon club was only four years old when they came in 2000. Many of you have joined since then and will now be able to enjoy the great experience of their visit. I recall how we arranged for home stay in my neighborhood and every morning they would all gather at my house for breakfast. In addition to the Friday night gathering and workshops, I also arranged for concerts in several churches plus a tour of the Swedish settlements in the Lindstrom area. The Swedes not only bring their psalmodikons, but also their accordions, nyckelharpes, etc. So we had wonderful music wherever we went!

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It was a learning experience for all! Perhaps we could follow the same format for their visit this fall. I will appreciate your offers of assistance in planning their visit.

We are in the process of making revisions for a second printing of the Psalmodikon Songbook. It is quite exciting to see how the psalmodikon interest keeps growing. Floyd Foslien is busy making psalmodikons as well as selling patterns and components enabling folks to make their own. Then, of course, they need a psalmodikon CD and a Songbook. The psalmodikon is alive and well!

The song for this newsletter comes by the suggestion of Dr. John Langtind of Orkanger, Norway. "Easter Morrow Stills Our Sorrow" is a very familiar Easter hymn that I remember from my youth.

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

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Please check your mailing label. If it shows 2009, your **\$8.00 membership** is due for the year 2010. Proceeds are used to cover the cost of Newsletter printing, postage and also to defray the cost incurred at the annual meetings.

Send membership dues to: Beatrice Hole
6560 Leesborough Ave
Eden Prairie, MN 55346

Do not forget to make your bid on a psalmodikon made by Rodney Sjöberg.

FOR LUTHERAN GANG, THIS LEFSE AND LUTEFISK MEAL IS GOLDEN

Minneapolis Star Tribune - 12/09

The Lutherans drove their Oldsmobiles and Fords through the small Wisconsin towns and up the dirt road to the old Pederson place and parked beside the rough-hewn cabin. The Pedersons were there, of course, and the Nelsons. There was at least one Erickson, some Sjöbergs, a Heide or two and even a Watnemo. Several of them were pastors and you could tell because everybody was civil and there were no unseemly jokes.

It was toasty inside from the wood stove and all 67 adults were wearing their Scandinavian sweaters with so many geometric designs that when people moved around it almost made you dizzy. The lefse went quickly, but there was plenty of pickled herring. A few people sipped a little bit of Aquavit. The snacks would hold them until the real event, the annual pilgrimage to the lutefisk and meatball supper at Immanuel Lutheran Church at New Richmond, WI just up the road. This all started, 50 years ago, a gathering of Augsburg College friends, but it morphed into much more.

Dwight Pederson, who can remember that as a kid, the boys served dinner wearing little aprons with fish on them, is something of a church supper gourmand in a land where church suppers have a season. He had already been to a few lutefisk feeds this year. There is a little contest to see who can go to the most. "Last year we went to 13", said Herb Nelson.

Dwight took a head count and went to buy the tickets for the church Lutefisk supper. Back at the cabin, Nelson, a newcomer to the event, began to play a Norwegian instrument we will not try to spell here. "Now, this isn't going to sound like a violin," he said, and he wasn't lying. Everybody sang a Norwegian hymn, their voices low and somber, and then another. "OK", someone mumbled at the back of the room. "That's enough, now."

After all, there were meatballs in their future. Slabs of white fish and butter, served under hot lights in the middle of the dark, still Wisconsin countryside. Elaine hope's this tradition carries on for another 50 years. "So, you younger generation, we're counting on you".

GREAT CHANCES TO BID AND GET A NEW PSALMODIKON

Rodney Sjöberg, chairman of the Nordiska Psalmodikonförbundet of Sweden, has donated two psalmodikons to their club to be put up for auction and the club will get the cash received. Rodney usually prices the instruments that he builds, at 1000 Kr each. The psalmodikons will be constructed per Rev. Johan Dillner's instructions and are therefore soprano instruments.

You can e-mail your bid to kellybelly@comhem.se

i.e. 200 kr #1 psalmodikon

200 kr #2 psalmodikon

This way I can tell everyone who bid in the auction chain who bid the highest. **The last date for bids is March 15, 2010.** Imagine what value it will be in a few years! A beautiful psalmodikon made by the founder of the Association who also has been the chairman since its inception!

Göran Carlström

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SYTTENDE MAI SOCIETY

The fall meeting of the St. Croix Valley Syttende Mai Society was held on November 19, 2009, at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Stillwater, MN. For the program, jazz singer Peggy Larson performed Norwegian melodies and herding calls.

Before the delicious lunch was served, a psalmodikon and a membership to the N/A Psalmodikonförbundet were given away as a door prize. The psalmodikon was built and donated by Dwight Pederson, a society member. Kathy Pedersen and Beatrice Hole demonstrated on the psalmodikon before Herb Nelson announced the lucky winner as: **Mike Ludvigsen of Burnsville, MN.**

ITEMS FOR SALE

PSALMODIKON SONGBOOK written in Sifferskrift and 4-part harmony for psalmodikons. **\$19.00 pp**

VIDEO "HOW TO PLAY THE PSALMODIKON"

Instructions on how to tune and play the psalmodikon. Sifferskrift music is included to play along with the video. The video also gives psalmodikon history and makes good program material for a presentation about the psalmodikons. **\$15.00 pp**

Send orders to:
Beatrice Hole
6560 Leesborough Av
Eden Prairie, MN 55346

PSALMODIKON QUARTET CD **\$15.00 pp**

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Singsaas Lutheran Church, Attn: Music CD's
P. O. Box 87, Hendricks, MN 56136
www.countrychurchmusic.com

Psalmodikon Pattern	10.00
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Maple fret board w/frets	25.00
Sitka spruce top material	12.00
Cherrywood violin bow	25.00
Rosin	3.50

Send orders to: Floyd Foslien
567 High Ridge Dr.
Hudson, WI 54016
ffoslien@sbcglobal.net



Photo: Emile Holba

Ice transformed into music

Courtesy Nordic News

2/17/2010 // At the Ice Music Festival in Geilo, the timing of the concerts is set by the moon and the music takes its resonance from the weather. Innovative use of nature's own materials is front and centre at this one-of-a-kind music festival.



Every year world-class musicians and other artists gather at the [Ice Music Festival](#) in [Geilo](#).

Blocks of ice become musical instruments

The musicians play instruments made of ice. Large blocks of ice are cut from the frozen lake and then sculpted with amazing skill into harps, drums, horns and guitars. Up to a week's worth of effort goes into crafting the instruments before they can be played.

Sounds never to be heard again

It is impossible to know in advance what the music will sound like during the festival because the winter conditions determine the quality of the ice and the sounds produced by the instruments change along with the temperature.



Not surprisingly, tensions run high from the time the preparations begin until the concert is over. Never again will exactly the same sounds be heard by an audience.

Under the direction of the full moon

The timing of the Ice Music Festival is also determined by nature, as it is always held during the period of the first full moon of the year. The moon is stunning at this time of year since this is when its orbit brings it closest to the earth – that is, 50,000 km closer than its apogee. When the skies are clear, the lunar light makes unparalleled stage lighting.



[Terje Isungset](#), who was born in Geilo, is one of the founders of the Ice Music Festival. For over 20 years this musician and artist has brought unique musical experiences to audiences worldwide with his percussion instruments. During this year's festival he launched and performed pieces from his new CD entitled "Winter Songs", his sixth musical work based on instruments made of ice.

Ice sculptor Bill Covitz

The professional [ice sculptor Bill Covitz](#) from Connecticut, USA, came to Geilo this year to create and play a two-metre tall ice harp. He was also responsible for designing and decorating the festival venue. Covitz has played a key role in the festival since its beginning and in the past has sculpted unique instruments such as an ice marimba, an ice guitar and an ice Hardanger fiddle.



Back to the cycle of nature

Water is the quintessential natural material. It is also an important principle of the festival that as much material as possible is returned to nature after its use. The musicians merely borrow the snow and ice, and after entertaining their audiences with magical performances, they return their instruments to the

natural environment. The next year, new melodies will be played on new ice instruments.

CHEESE SLICER FACTORY BANKRUPT

The Lillehammer factory which has produced the famous Norwegian cheese slicers is bankrupt following a dramatic fall in sales. Thor Bjoerklund patented the Norwegian invention in 1925.

In addition to the paper clip, the cheese slicer is the most well-known Norwegian invention.

FROM THE SALMODICON TO THE

SNOWMOBILE: how fashions change

Windom, MN

Haldo Einarsen Grotte farmed north of Windom. He came from Selbu, Norway in 1887 in the company of his brother and his brother's family. It was a tightly knit family. When Brother Ole's daughter Marit got married, everybody, mother, father, Uncle Haldo, went off to live with her and her new husband.

Uncle Haldo brought with him his most precious possession, his Salmodicon. He had carried the instrument all the way from Norway. He had made it there. It was the symbol of his art and of his religion, and it marked his place in each.

Grotte was one of the Pietists, a splinter group of Lutherans whose beliefs were both democratic and severe. The group argued for the place of the laity in the government of the church. It despised the bitter attacks of some preachers on unbelievers, urging instead that they should be treated with sympathy and kindness. It called believers to a life of devotion and moral uprightness.

On the other hand, the group rejected public amusements. There should be no theater, no dancing, no public games. There should not be fancy rhetoric from the pulpit. There should not, even, be music instruments in the church.

The Pietists did sing hymns, but they did so a capella under the leadership of a klokker, an honored laymen with a strong voice who knew the melodies.

Grotte was a klokker. His Salmodicon was his rehearsal instrument, the thing which made his music compatible with his faith. He used it to refresh his memory of the melodies before he went off to lead the local congregation in worship.

It is a very simple instrument, a hollowed rectangular box without ornament of any kind, across which a single cat gut string was sounded with a horse hair bow. The bottom of the box slides out so that a set of scales marked on what look like rulers can be stored.

Grotte's instrument was given to the Rev. Joseph Nystuen of the American Lutheran Church here in 1976. Nystuen has fitted it with a cello "A" string and a violin bridge, and has been teaching himself to play it. He gave us a couple of measures of "Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee," on it the other day.

A low pitched, raspy, and primitive, but surprisingly strong, sound came forth.

Nystuen paused in his dolorous melody. "They'd really whoop it up with a number like this," he said wryly.

The Zion Society was meeting in the basement of the church the day Rev. Nystuen brought out the *Salmodicon*. He went down to show it to the members. The Zion Society itself is a reminder of the past. The women who belong to it are almost all gray haired, and their missionary group is one of the last of its kind. Many of its members would, as children, have been brought up in the Pietist tradition, but they were singing a hymn to the slow and deliberate accompaniment of a piano as Nystuen entered.

He told them all something about the instrument he was carrying and asked if they would sing a hymn with him as he played it. There was some groping for a suitable piece, something both Nystuen and the singers know. They settled on a tune Grotte himself might have led, a Norwegian hymn with a strong folk melody. There were two or three false starts, over which everybody could laugh, and then the Salmodikon caught the tune and buzzed and scratched it out.

The sweet voices of the women caught too and rose in spirited celebration of earlier times, when you were of the New Land during the week, but on Sunday, in the presence of God, the Old Country, the old language, the old ways came comfortingly back. There may be a day again when the klokker leads the plain singing.

The St. Francis Xavier Catholic church, which is as contemporary in its attitudes toward adornment as Grotte's Salmodikon is out of date. The church is made of the simplest materials, and is decorated in the plainest way, dark wood furnishings, and white walls. The whole is carried out of the ordinary by the shock of vivid blue carpet at the altar and by a series of long, narrow stained glass windows along the long walls of the sanctuary at the roof line. You have to look heavenward to see them.

When you do, what you see is not conventionally religious at all. The windows are mainly abstract representations of the four seasons, touched only briefly by a few starkly modern representation of humans; a boy flying a kite in the spring, a farmer on a tractor in the fall. The window there that invites the world most abruptly into the church is the winter window which shows two snowmobiles. Snowmobiles in church! What would Haldo Einarsen Grotte have thought?

Well, this much is true: Grotte's unaccompanied singers have passed their way, but his simple instrument endures. There is also this: Grotte, like the rest of us, would have conceded it: that God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.