



# MUSIC AND THE WORD

Juanita Nolz

**W**hen I give a psalmodikon program I often refer to Psalm 150 — Verse 1: *Praise the Lord!* – Verse 2: *Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp.*

I recently saw a devotional in a Newsletter of the Singsaas Lutheran Free Church, Hendricks, Minnesota. I thought this was very appropriate in relation to music and scripture.

**Music** — My walk with God through Lent is like experiencing the universal language of music. “In my heart there rings a melody....”

**Notes** — Life is a series of individual steps, each one having a value of its own. “One step at a time, Dear Jesus, is all I’m asking of Thee....”

## GJENVICK SEEKS RETIREMENT

Hi Beatrice, I’m wondering if this might be a good time for you to bring the banking procedure back home? We are in the process of selling our home and moving into a Senior Residence community. I have to take into consideration that at 86 things begin to change—much as one hates to admit it—but we have to face reality, too. We are not traveling much anymore, as you know we haven’t been to an Annual Meeting for some time. So I think it would be well if you could find someone willing to take over the treasurer work at this time rather than have the abrupt change should something happen to me that I couldn’t continue. — **Larry & Deann Gjenvick**, New Berlin, Wisconsin

Larry and Deann are Charter Members of the Nordic-American Psalmodikon-

**Sharps** — Feelings vary. Some days moods are high. “Get all excited; go tell everybody that Jesus Christ is King....”

**Flats** — Some days moods are down. “O sacred head, now wounded; with grief and shame weighed down....”

**Chords** — Everybody must work in harmony to achieve and accomplish a goal. “Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me....”

**Song** — When hearing music in familiar song, the heart and soul soars. “Christ the Lord is risen today. Alleluia!

Dear God, we thank you for the gift of music and all that it adds to our lives. Praise you for sending your Son to die for our sins and then rise again. **Amen.**

forbundet. They lived in Cedar, Minnesota, and attended the first meeting on September 13, 1997. Larry offered to be the Treasurer and also to organize and print the Psalmodikon Newsletters. Several years later they moved to Wisconsin but continued to be faithful supporters of the organization.

We want to thank Larry and Deann and appreciate all the support and advice they have given us over the years. We wish them continued good health and happiness and will keep in touch. —BH

Joan Saathoff, Hudson, Wisconsin, has volunteered to be the Treasurer of Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet. Joan has been a member since 2004 and also plays in the Psalmodikon Quartet. — Thank you Joan!

## A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS GIFT

I have come to know Ann Bormes, of Bloomington, MN through the Norwegian Lutheran Church (Mindekirken). At a recent Julebord, Ann was anxious to tell me about one of her Christmas presents which was a psalmodikon she had received from her husband, Gary. They had first heard the psalmodikon being played at the Vestreheim Museum in Decorah several years ago. Ann said she always liked to hear and say the word "psalmodikon". She said it had such a nice sound and seemed so Norwegian. Last summer they attended Norway Day at Minnehaha Falls and again she heard the psalmodikons being played. Gary decided to contact Floyd Foslien and he made a psalmodikon in time for a Christmas gift to Ann.

We hope Ann and her new psalmodikon will soon join us at our meetings!

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# CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

The following is a Christmas letter from the Lauensteins of Örebro, Sweden. Many of you will remember them from their visit here in 2000 and on our subsequent visits to their Psalmodikon meetings. The following photo was taken in 2000 as Lars-Eric and Gunilla played on their “tandem” psalmodikon. I am always reminded of them when I hear the song, “Shall We Gather at the River”. They played it often and well.



## Dear Friends

It's always enjoyable and interesting to read your Psalmodikon Newsletter. You have developed your organization in a fantastic way since the start in 1995!

Our organization has changed somewhat but we keep on making music in our own way! This summer and autumn I have spent much time for the “Nyckelharpa”. We are a group of eight players and we meet twice a month and play together. In October we had four concerts in different churches. For the moment my psalmodikons are hanging on the wall, but some time I will play on them again!

You can see them on the attached picture.

In August Gunilla and I sold our house in Åsbro and moved to Örebro. Now we live in an apartment in the central part of the city. For us it's a big change of life style. We have lived in villas for 49 years! Our new address is Drottninggatan 33, 702 22 ÖREBRO.

We wish you both a blessed Christmas!

— Gunilla and Lars-Eric Lauenstein

“ JULHÄLSNINGAR ”

## AN IMMIGRANT MUSIC LESSON

by Jon Ronning, © 2012, Oxcart Chronicles; Reprinted with permission.



In *Old World Wisconsin*, his classic book on ethnic groups in Wisconsin and their customs and traditions, author Fred L. Holmes wrote: *"The nostalgia of exiled peoples has enriched the world of music and literature. I sensed this keenly one evening as I approached a vinefestooned farm home in the tobacco district of southern Dane County and heard from the open window the soft tones of a monochord. It touched me as the vibrant appeal of a lonely heart."*

Above Left: WIPPs; Above: Kathy Pedersen

The sounds that Holmes described were coming from a simple one-stringed instrument that is played with a violin bow. The instrument is called a psalmodikon. It is believed to have been introduced in Norway in 1825 by a man called Lars Roverud. The State Church of Sweden and Norway had banned the use of any instrument used for dancing as inappropriate for church services. This meant that the violin, which was a popular instrument for merry making, could not be used in church.

The psalmodikon is little more than a long box with a fretted finger board. Numbers are written next to the frets and matched to the notes on a piece of sheet music. The instrument was inexpensive to build and could be played by a person with little musical training. The slow, melodic quality of the instrument worked well with the hymns of that time. Many small rural churches could not afford an organ so the psalmodikon was an ideal substitute. It was used to accompany church hymns and for teaching music to children in the schools.

When immigrants came to the United States some of them brought along the psalmo-

dikon. They were used in rural churches facing the same money problems as rural churches in the old country. Eventually the instrument was replaced by church organs and dropped into obscurity by the late 1800s.

Thanks to the efforts of Kathy Pedersen and members of the West Immanuel Psalmodikon Players (WIPP), the once forgotten instrument is alive and well in our area. The first Wednesday of each month a group of nine ladies meets at the West Immanuel church in the Town of Alden. "We play for fun," Kathy said with a smile. "We don't practice too much because we don't want to get too good!" Members of the group have played at area rest homes, churches, and other functions. They have also participated in Syttende Mai festivities in nearby Woodville.

Kathy is a member of the North-American Psalmodikonforbundet. This organization is dedicated to the education and preservation of the instrument and its music. She has compiled music books con-

taining old hymns and songs for the psalmodikon. She also serves as music librarian for the group. "This is an immigrant instrument," said Kathy. "This is a lesson in our history." Fred Holmes would not likely recognize the sounds that come from this psalmodikon group. Unlike the simple monochord sounds of the past, the West Immanuel group plays four-part harmony enriching the sound of many of their compositions. I had the pleasure of listening to six of the group members practice on a recent afternoon. As that famous Norwegian orchestra conductor "Guy Lombardoson" said, this could very well be "the sweetest music this side of heaven!"



(L-R): Mary Swerkstrom, Nancy Swenson, Jeaneen Staples, Lenore Olson, Kathy Pedersen, Caroline Lenselink.



## A LUCKY FIND IN A THRIFT SHOP

Hei!

This is dedicated to a lady living in Eden Prairie: Three days ago an older man phoned me from a recycling shop some 10 minutes away. He knew that I was interested in Psalmodikon, and wanted to tell me that a woman had visited the recycling shop a few days before, handing over two such instruments. They had been stored in an attic room in an old house for many, many years. There is no inscription on them telling exactly how old they are, but probably more than a hundred years. Now they were part of a decedent estate. The instruments were neglected and dusty, lacking the string. On seeing them I decided to buy both of them, so now they are mine!!! I will try to repair them and play on them later. What sort of string is needed? A violin string or a guitar string? If so, is it an A-string or an E-string that is the better?

Tonight is a dark, rainy November evening. But there are lots of things to be engaged in, so I am not at all bored. Outside is 5 inches of snow that fell three weeks ago, but it is slowly melting, reminding me that there is always a spring after the long, dark winter.

A happy Psalmodikon owner,

— Dr. John Langtind, Reksteret Norway

## IN REMEMBRANCE

On December 7, 2012, I received word that the daughter of Psalmodikon member, Betty Foslien, has passed away. On behalf of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet, we offer our condolences to the entire Foslien family upon this great loss of Kristi Johnson Leason.

Friends and relatives,

Some of you dear people know this news and some of you don't. My daughter, Kristi, age 44, passed from this life to join her heavenly Father and Jesus last week on December 5th.

Kristi had complications from a gastric bypass making her very weak and liver disease then on August 29th she had a brain bleed leaving her with memory loss and mixed up thinking and talking. She was in St Cloud hospital 3 1/2 weeks and to St Paul Rehab for brain injury at Bethesda for 3 1/2 weeks. From there she went to Mayo Clinic in Rochester for 3 1/2 weeks. She spent the last 3 1/2 weeks at the Minnewaska Lutheran Nursing Home in Starbuck. She was very weak and hadn't walked and trouble with thinking clearly.

I spent all but 14 days with her in the past 3 months. We knew she couldn't get well and she just wanted to come closer to home. Her brother, Jim and wife Lori live in Starbuck and have been a blessing staying with Kristi loving her, teasing, talking, laughing, and praying. We all know she is in a better place. She is well and smiling right now.

Kristi donated her body to science at the U of M.

Her children are Megan, age 12 and Daniel age 14. They are living with their father in the Sauk Rapids area and seem to doing okay. Who knows how any of us are feeling!!

The celebration of Kristi's life will be held next Saturday, December 15th, at Calvary Lutheran Church on 5th and Douglas St in Alexandria at 1:00.

Please keep her family in your prayers as we remember her joy and our sadness in missing her.



Maple fret board w/frets	30.00
Sitka spruce top material:	
small psalmodikon	17.00
tapered psalmodikon	22.00
Cherrywood violin bow	28.00
Rosin	5.00

## ITEMS FOR SALE

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**PSALMODIKON SONGBOOK** (revised edition) written in Sifferskrift and 4-part harmony for psalmodikons  
**\$19.00 pp**

**PSALMODIKON QUARTET CD** **\$15.00 pp**

*Send orders to:*

Singsaas Lutheran Church

Attn: Music CD's

P. O. Box 87,

Hendricks, MN 56136

<http://www.countrychurchmusic.com/>

### PSALMODIKON COMPONENTS

Psalmodikon Pattern	<b>\$10.00</b>
Tuning Peg	<b>3.75</b>
String	<b>1.25</b>
Fine tuner w/tailpiece	<b>17.75</b>

*Send orders to:*

Floyd Foslien

567 High Ridge Drive

Hudson, WI 54016

[www.ffoslien@sbcglobal.net](mailto:www.ffoslien@sbcglobal.net)

### Notes from Floyd:

These are usually the most difficult components for builders to obtain. I can, however, provide all of the other component parts required to make *psalmodikons*, if the builder is unable to make them or find them locally. You may contact me for prices.

I also sell a complete kit of parts to make a *psalmodikon* for \$130.00. This kit instrument is modelled after an antique Norwegian *salmodikon* (Norwegian spelling) similar to one used by Lars Roverud. He was the "Father" of the Norwegian *salmodikon* and is credited with using transposition sticks to allow playing in various keys without re-tuning so this kit includes a transposition stick. The parts are cut to size and need only to be glued together, sanded, and finished with varnish or lacquer.

## NORDIC-AMERICAN

### PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET



MUSIC-ON-A-STRING

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