

Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet

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



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Notes from MUSIC-ON-A-STRING

Beatrice Hole

Holiday Greetings to all!

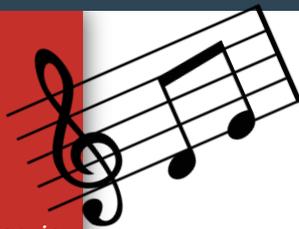
I just heard from my cousin Kristen in Seattle, and he said he would do the letter this time. I really appreciate his assistance.

The psalmodikon and I manage to keep busy at various venues and in different settings. Early this summer the Psalmodikon Quartet had the honor of entertaining for the Daughters of Norway Convention held at the new Radisson Blu Hotel at Mall of America.

Pastor Anderson of Eden Prairie is presenting programs portraying the life and work of Pastor Eric Norelius, an immigrant Swedish Pastor and founder of Gustavus College in St. Peter. Pastor Norelius often played his psalmodikon for worship in the early churches before they could afford an organ. So the psalmodikon and I have been accompanying Pastor Rod on various occasions as the psalmodikon fits in well.

Recently I gave a program on psalmodikon history at a local church Sunday Adult Education class. For this, I teamed up with Burton Gran, a friend who plays the auto harp. This was a different combination and was enjoyable. Hard to believe, but he and I have been making music together since we attended country school together. Back in those days we played our various instruments in the light of a kerosene lamp.

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

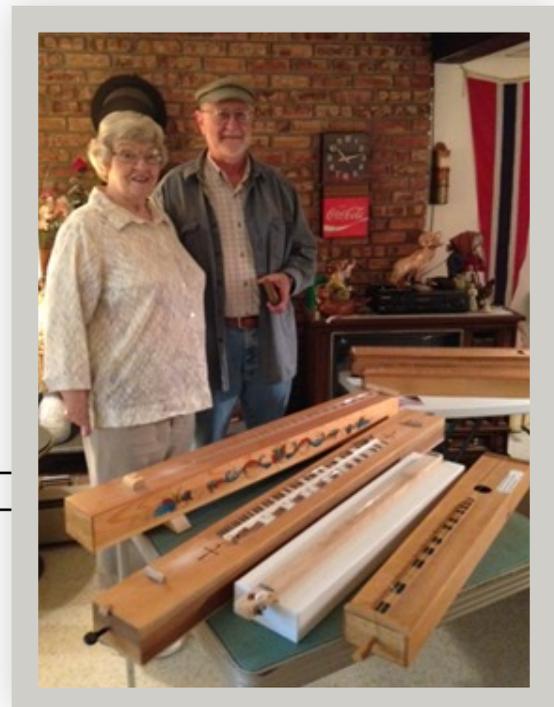


THE BJURLINS IN EDEN PRAIRIE

Beatrice Hole

In September I had a nice visit with Ron Bjurlin and his wife Ginger, of Alexandria, when they stopped by my house. They brought along a small Psalmodikon Songbook that Ron had received from his aunt, Ruth (Rosengren) Bjurlin, many years ago. The songbook measures 3-1/2" x 5" with 307 pages of Sifferskrift music and was still intact for as old as it is. Ron often wondered what it this little book was all about. He even asked a couple members of the Rose Ensemble and they had no knowledge of it. Later when a cousin got him interested in the psalmodikon, it started to make sense.

Ron visited the Museum in Glenwood, Minnesota, and they have two old psalmodikons on display. One of the instruments was used by Trond Brondahl when he sang hymns in the Indherred Church,



which is located about 10 miles from Glenwood, Minnesota. The psalmodikon belonged to Andreas Stone and was made by his brother David Holte before 1880.

Since then Bjurlin has made his own psalmodikon from a kit purchased at Musicmakers in Stillwater. He said he has not mastered playing with a bow but enjoys making music by plucking the string.

We welcome Ron and Ginger Bjurlin as new members of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet!





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

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	\$10.00
Tuning Peg	3.75
String	1.25
Fine tuner w/tailpiece	17.75

Send orders to:

Floyd Foslien

567 High Ridge Drive

Hudson, WI 54016

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.

Letters from Readers

Hi Beatrice,

Sorry I'm so late in paying my dues! The check I am sending is for 2014 and 2015.

I was interested to see the picture of the psalmodikon brought to America in the 1860's by Floyd Foslien's grandmother. I have the psalmodikon my great-grandfather, Ever Torgerson, brought to America in 1856. I also have the original bow. They are displayed on a shelf in my living room.

The Newsletter is so well done and I enjoy reading it. I have sent for the catalog and will purchase a "ready-made" psalmodikon that works better than my precious one on display.

Sincerely, Anne Farning, Onalaska, WI

Hi Beatrice,

We now have 8 players in our SON group! Thanks for helping us in the past! We would like to order 9 of the new Psalmodikon Songbooks. Please advise as to how much we will owe.

Thank you so much.

Linda Shoemith, Bettendorf, IA



Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet & Newsletter

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The *Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet Newsletter* is published in the Spring, Summer, and Autumn. We are always looking for newsworthy items and photos that you want to share with other readers.

The **\$8.00 membership fee** helps to cover the cost of printing and postage for the Newsletter, annual fee for the Psalmodikon Web Site, and annual meeting expenses.

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

Send membership dues to: Beatrice Hole
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Psalmodikons with Drone Strings

Floyd Foslien

In observing antique psalmodikons for a number of years, I have seen many with places where drone strings had apparently been. What I refer to as drone strings are strings that are not played directly by the player but which vibrate sympathetically with the “main” string as it is being played. This is the principle used in Hardanger fiddles which have four or more strings that are placed under the fingerboard and are tuned separately from the “played” strings. The sound produced by these sympathetically vibrating strings as their tuned note is played on the fiddle is unique.

Although I have observed many psalmodikons with the vestiges of drone strings, none have had strings actually in place. Each of these psalmodikons had items such as extra tuning pegs (or tuning peg holes), hooks for the other end of the strings, and nuts and bridges that have slots where extra strings would have been placed. I concluded that the idea of adding strings to a psalmodikon was tried by many builders but turned out in the end to be a failed experiment. This type of extra string-

ing has been observed in both Norwegian and Swedish antique psalmodikons.

I rebuilt an antique Norwegian psalmodikon earlier this year and the owner wanted it to appear as it had when it was being used many years before. Upon examination, I determined that this particular psalmodikon originally had 3 strings; one melody string and two drone strings. I rebuilt the instrument with the two extra strings and tuned them to match two notes on the melody string. One I tuned to open string #5 or “G” and the other to #1 or “C”. The resulting sound was quite remarkable and it surprised me that it added quite a bit of unique sound and volume to the little psalmodikon. I used the same tuning peg arrangement as was on the original so it is difficult to keep the drone strings tuned properly.

So, I thought if two drone strings make a difference, then four drone strings might even be better and using geared tuners would make keeping them properly tuned much easier. I find that the tuning must be matched very closely or they won't vibrate sympathetically. I proceeded to build a new psalmodikon with these ideas in mind and am very pleased with the resulting sound. I

have tuned the drone strings to #5 (G), #1 (C), #2 (D), and #3 (E). This tuning is one used for Hardanger fiddles although I have heard it said that there are as many Hardanger fiddle tunings as there are players. The drone strings need not be tuned to the same octave as that being played. A note played in a different octave will cause the drone string to sound in that octave.

I believe that the antique psalmodikons with drone strings were too difficult to keep properly tuned. A single steel peg turned with a tuning wrench is a difficult way to tune a string and keep it in tune over time. I think builders and players may have found it so difficult that they gave up and used the psalmodikon with the single string as originally intended and the extra strings were eventually discarded. Using a geared tuner with a 14:1 ratio makes it much easier to keep the strings in tune.

I have since built several more psalmodikons with sympathetic strings and continue to experiment with string sizes, string lengths and tunings. As I become more knowledgeable about drone strings, I will keep you informed on progress.



Greet the Folks at Home

*On the deck I stand at night,
when the stars above are bright.
Far away from friends and home,
lonely here I roam.*

*Swallows on their wings so high,
now in spring they homeward fly,
to the land where sunlight beams,
into my childhood dreams.*

*Greet my dear old mother;
greet my father, too, and
my little brother
when he welcomes you.
Had I wings to follow, happy would I be.
Dearest little Swallow,
greet them all from me.*

This is a beloved song that is sung and played often by all Scandinavians. Usually the verses are written in the Norwegian or Swedish language but I've also heard it sung in Danish. Once again curiosity got the best of me and I googled the song for more information. The following is what I found.

Hils Fra Mig Derhjemme was first published in Denmark in 1922. The lyrics were by a revue artist named Ludvig Brandstrup (1892-1949). The tune was by Elith Worsing (1892-1923).

Their names are not widely known in America. C. Bengtsson wrote a two-verse Swedish adaptation of *Hälsa dem därhemma* which differs considerably from the original.

The Sons of Norway Songbook from 1948 credits neither of them for the song, *Hils fra meg der hjemme*. In 1970 the Vasa Order of America published a songbook which listed the composer as "Edith" Worsing.

Some Norwegian recordings of the song acknowledge Brandstrup as the lyricist. The 1958 Capitol Records LP "Songs of the Norwegian Fjords" has a version that is very close to the Danish.

On the other hand, the Sons of Norway Songbook has a one-verse translation that makes a few changes to the text. This book also has the best-known English lyrics for the song: "A Sailor's Greeting".

Hils fra mig Der hjemme was at first regarded as a sailor song, but in America it became a beloved expression of the immigrant's longing for the home country. I and so many others enjoyed it to the utmost. Very well done!



WEST COAST PSALMODIKONS

The psalmodikon group on the West Coast (no name yet) had our last performance on May 18. We took a break for the summer. We met October 18 for the first time this fall. We are back to six as our youngest musician went off to college this fall. We started practicing for the Norsk Julesangfest which will take place at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon on December 14. Looking back through some old programs, this would be considered the 32nd or 33rd year this service has been offered to the public. Why do I say 32nd or 33rd? – Because one year was cancelled due to bad weather and the age of many of the attendees. We did not feel that people in their late 70s–90s needed to drive on ice. In 2006 the leader of this program retired and Karl Jurisons (a Latvian and organist) and I (a "Heinz 57" — no Norwegian blood) took over leadership of this program as we did not want it to be discontinued. I believe this is the 4th time our group has performed for the Julesangfest.

Our group consists of two from Washington State and four from Portland.

Jean Akre, Kalama, WA - Tenor
Brandon Swett, Longview, WA - Alto
Linda Dalrymple, Portland, OR - Base
Jim Dalrymple, Portland, OR - Alto
Rick Swee, Portland, OR - Soprano
Molly Beiningen, Portland, OR - Soprano

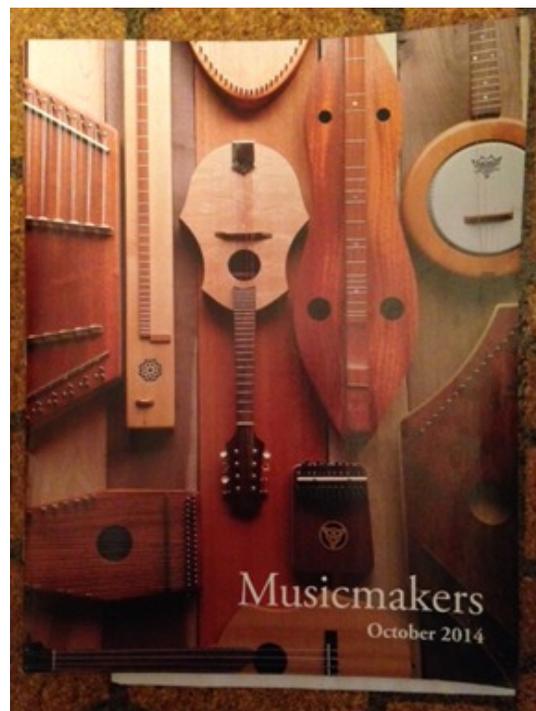
CHRISTOPHER HOGWOOD

I was reading of the recent death of Conductor Christopher Hogwood. Many of you might recall when Hogwood was known to the Twin Cities audiences for his association with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra from 1988-1992. As I was reading his obituary, I wondered if he had ever known of the psalmodikon.

Harpichordist Christopher Hogwood pioneered the performance of music by 18th-century composers such as Bach and Handel on historically authentic instruments. Hogwood was born in England and in 1974 he founded the Cambridge Academy of Ancient Music, a period-instrument orchestra whose musicians play on either original instruments or modern copies of instruments from the period of time the music was composed. For instance, the stringed instruments used strings made of animal gut, instead of the metal-wound strings

used in modern violins, violas and cellos. The result was a lighter, clearer sound now considered by some to better represent what the composers intended, or at least to provide an interesting new way to play familiar music. Generally they played Baroque and Classical music.

In a 2013 interview with Classical Music magazine, Hogwood said historically informed playing was just one way of doing things. "There's nothing wrong with playing things historically completely incorrectly," he was quoted as saying, "Music is not a moral business, so you can play absolutely in a style that suits you and pleases your public. It may be completely unrecognizable to the composer, but so what, he's dead." Hogwood redefined the musician's mission – to make the old sound new. He died at the age of 79..



Above is the front cover of the Musicmakers catalog from Stillwater, Minnesota. Note the prominent spot for the psalmodikon in the photo.



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