

NORDIC-AMERICAN PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET

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

SUMMER 2014

VOLUME 17, ISSUE 2

Notes from

MUSIC-ON-A-STRING

Beatrice Hole

After a long winter, I said that if and when summer came, I would not leave my home and that is about what has transpired. But life goes on and it is time to write another Newsletter and tune up the psalmodikon. I've heard from many of you and happy to report that many are involved with summer festivals and programs. I have been practicing with the Psalmodikon Quartet as we have been invited to participate in the Daughters of Norway Convention in Minneapolis in July. It is always more fun to play with a group than alone.

I am pleased to announce that Musicmakers Kits, Inc. of Stillwater, MN are now selling psalmodikon kits and components through their beautiful catalog and also at their store. They are reaching a whole new group of interested folks and is a big help with the sales of our Psalmodikon Songbooks.

The 3rd Edition of the Psalmodikon Songbook has just come from the printer. There are only a few minor changes and it really is not necessary to replace the Songbook you already have.

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

YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS DUE IF 2014 IS NOT WRITTEN ON THE MAILING LABEL.

Little Cole Johnson teaches the children's Library Director how to play the psalmodikon.



I saw this cute little photo in the March 2014 issue of the Sons of Norway Viking Magazine and just had to find out who this Psalmodikon player is!

I proceeded to contact the Polar Star Lodge President in Yorkville, IL. Here is the letter I received as a result of my inquiry. What a small world it is!

Dear Beatrice,

You probably do not remember me, but I have communicated with you more than once since I have become interested in playing the psalmodikon. You led me to Floyd Foslien and have provided me with the Psalmodikon sifferskrift music. I have also had the opportunity to play with Kathy Pedersen and Carolyn Lenselink at the Concordia Norwegian Camp in Bemidji, MN. What a nice surprise I received when my husband, Ken Jonson, President of the Polar Star Lodge, asked me to respond to your inquiry about the little boy playing the psalmodikon in the Viking magazine. That

little boy is our grandson, Cole Johnson. He is four years old and is a very musical little boy. Although he cannot read the sifferskrift yet he certainly knows how it works and how to hold the bow. The picture was taken at the Yorkville Public Library in Yorkville, Illinois, as my sister and I were providing a children's program about the culture of Norway. The psalmodikon he is playing was made by his father (my son) Greg Johnson using the plans that we purchased from Floyd Foslien. He is now working on his third instrument. I could not resist sending the picture in to the Viking Magazine – and was delighted when it was selected.

My sister and I have talked about attending your annual meeting his year --- would you please forward the date to me. Thank you.

Barb Johnson, Yorkville, IL

PSALMODIKON HISTORY IN DENMARK

Not much has been written about this simple one-stringed instrument and its use in Denmark. The instrument was in existence for about five years as compared to over 50 years in Norway and Sweden.

J.W. Brunn worked for the Danish "Education Society" and wanted to simplify music teaching in schools. Brunn made an instrument that he thought would be useful for teachers who had no great musical ability. He suggested using the Sifferskrift method instead of notes for song teaching. For several years he gave music lessons and demonstrations to various churches and schools but his work seemed to be ignored. In spite of the great need to improve the singing in the schools and churches in Denmark, the instrument did not reach popularity as they had hoped. Some

reasons that it did not catch on was that the instrument was very primitive. The "octave" included 12 half-tones and this was confusing to beginners. The fret board was flat and not marked clearly and that also weakened the instrument's usefulness and restrained interest. It was during this time (1823) that Lars Roverud of Norway, visited with Brunn in Denmark and became acquainted with the one-stringed instrument.

In 1825 Lars Roverud recognized the Danish one-stringed instrument in Herr Winther's Music Shop in Christiania (Oslo) Norway. Roverud decided to simplify the playing and hired Professor Christopher Hansteen, a mathematician, to measure out the fretboard in half-step increments and mark the frets with numbers. Roverud also developed long flat numbered boards (transposition tables) for a greater range of notes. And from then on Roverud's idea became popular and the rest of the story is history as we know it today.

In 1849 there was a new attempt to promote a similar instrument in Denmark called a "Cantochord", but with little success. Thus it seems the psalmodikon period in Denmark had ended.

Membership dues are \$8.00/year which support the printing and postage of the Newsletter.

HAPPY 85TH BIRTHDAY TO RODNEY SJOBERG, FORMER ORDFORER OF THE SWEDISH NORDISKA PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET!!

BLESSED BE HER MEMORY



Hjordis Mae-Randine Helgestad, age 69 of Onalaska and formerly of Westby, died on March 29, 2014 at the Gundersen Health System.

She was born on June 17, 1944 to Henry and Mabel (Bjorge) Helgestad. She was baptized and confirmed at our saviors Lutheran Church. Hjordis worked for Trane Company for 40 years and traveled extensively including five trips to Norway. She was a member of: Sons of Norway, Norskedalen and Embroiders Guild where she enjoyed making and sharing her Hardanger. She always enjoyed participating in Westby's Syttende Mai celebration and working on genealogy.

Hjordis is survived by cousins, other relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by her parents.

We will remember Hjordis as a wonderful supporter of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet. She joined in 2000 and was always present at the Annual Meetings. She also did solo performances at other Scandinavian activities. Hjordis not only played the psalmodikon with a violin bow but sometimes she would pluck it, which sounded very nice. Her first psalmodikon was made by the late Paul Knivslund. We will miss her!

LETTERS FROM READERS

Hi Bea,

I sent the Swedish Psalmodikon Newsletter to my kids and grandkids. My daughter, Ingrid, who now lives in Boise, ID and is a pediatrician with a specialty in infectious diseases, responded with the following. Dick Lundgren, Minneapolis

Wow this is soooooo cool! I can read a lot of it I think. It makes me feel proud of our ancestors and makes me want to start up playing Psalmodikon again. Papa – if you can give me a year or two advance notice for the next forbundet meeting, I'll try to come!

Ingrid Lundgren med Ladan

LETTERS CONT.

Recently I received an e-mail from Ron & Ginger Bjurling of Alexandria, MN seeking information on a Psalmodikon Songbook he had received from an Aunt when they moved her into a care facility. The photos he sent of the songbook look like he received an old but very complete songbook.

Last fall the Bjurlings attended a concert in Glenwood, MN and the Museum had a display of two old psalmodikons. He sent to me photos of them and they too are in excellent shape.

I am anxious to meet Ron and Ginger at a future date and I always find it interesting to learn of more psalmodikons in our area. BH

April 2014

Dear Beatrice,

I can't thank you enough for sending the great pictures and all the valuable information.

Our Historical Secretary will be placing the pictures and the story of what the Psalmodikon is all about next to the two old Psalmodikons we have.

They will be on display in the beautiful almost restored and completed "Larson House".

Thank you again.

Joyce Wildt
5311 North Cook St.
McFarland, WI

The correspondence originated with a phone call from Joyce telling me she was preparing to display two psalmodikons and had a question regarding the string on a psalmodikon. Learning that she was from McFarland, Wisconsin, she is familiar with the Ladies Psalmodikon Quartet of the 1930's from same town. I then sent her photos and some news clippings, which she will add to the display. Beatrice H.

ITEMS FOR SALE

PSALMODIKON SONGBOOK

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 |
| 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 |

Send orders to: Floyd Foslien
567 High Ridge Drive, Hudson, WI 54016
www.fffoslien@sbcglobal.net

75. Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

(Melody with Descant)

Music: Traditional
 Text: Jane Taylor 1806
 Sifferskrift: Beatrice Hole 1996

Note: Melody is first line.

Second line may be played as descant or tenor part.

Third line may be played by alto, tenor and/or bass.

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|------------|---|------------|----------|--|----------|----------|------------|
| | 5 | 5 | 2 | 2 | | 3 | 3 | 2-2 |
| 4 | 2 | 2 | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> | | <u>6</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7-7</u> |
| -- | Twin - kle | | Twin - kle | | | lit - | tle | star, |
| 4 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | | 6 | 6 | 7-7 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----------|----------|---|--|----------|-----|------------|
| | 1 | 1 | 7 | 7 | | 6 | 6 | 5-5 |
| 4+ | <u>6</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> | | | <u>5</u> | 4+ | <u>5-5</u> |
| How | l | won - der | | | | what | you | are! |
| 4+ | 6 | 5 | 5 | | | 5 | 4+ | 5-5 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|---|--|----------|----------|-------|
| | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 7 | 7 | 6-6 |
| <u>7</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>6</u> | | | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> | 4+4+ |
| Up | a - | bove | the | | | world | so | high! |
| 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | | | 5 | 5 | 4+4+ |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|------------|----------|---|--|----------|----------|------|
| | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 7 | 7 | 6-6 |
| <u>7</u> | <u>7</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>6</u> | | | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> | 4+4+ |
| Like | a | dia - mond | | | | in | the | sky. |
| 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | | | 5 | 5 | 4+4+ |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|----------|----------|---|--|----------|----------|------------|
| | 5 | 5 | 2 | 2 | | 3 | 3 | 2-2 |
| 2 | 2 | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> | | | <u>6</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7-7</u> |
| Twin - kle | Twin - kle | | | | | lit - | tle | star, |
| 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | | | 6 | 6 | 7-7 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|----------|-----------|----------|---|--|----------|-----|------------|
| | 1 | 1 | 7 | 7 | | 6 | 6 | 5-5 |
| 4+ | <u>6</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> | | | <u>5</u> | 4+ | <u>5-5</u> |
| How | l | won - der | | | | what | you | are! |
| 4+ | 6 | 5 | 5 | | | 5 | 4+ | 5-5 |

Floyd Foslien of Hudson, WI has been making psalmodikons for many years now and each one each he creates seems to be better than the one before. Over the long winter, Floyd, was hard at work in his carpenter shop and this time he has created the most beautiful psalmodikon ever.

We have seen old psalmodikons that at one time has several strings alongside of the melody string. These served a drone strings and vibrated while sliding the bow over the single main string.

Floyd made two psalmodikons with drone strings. One has four extra strings and the other has six. They not only are very attractive psalmodikons (with inlay decoration) but the sound of these large instruments, with the drone strings resonating as the instrument is played, makes the most wonderful music!



NEW PSALMODIKON KIT AVAILABLE

There is a kit of psalmodikon parts available from Musicmakers Kits, Inc. in Stillwater, MN which you may wish to purchase if you want to build a psalmodikon. This kit follows the great tradition of all the instrument building kits made by Musicmakers and I am sure you will be pleased with the result. A reproduction of their catalog page describing the kit is reprinted here. The kit prices are reasonable and I encourage you to try it if you want to build your own psalmodikon.

If you are a builder who wishes to make a psalmodikon from scratch or build a different size instrument, I still am able to provide parts and components, too. The choice is yours. Floyd Foslien

FRETTED INSTRUMENTS

We've been experimenting over the years, developing interesting fretted instruments that you don't find in every music store. Our goal is to be a little different from the crowd, and then to "de-mystify" the art of instrument-making, helping people discover how rewarding it can be to make their own musical projects.

Our designs are specifically tailored to fit the home hobbyist. If you build from our pre-cut kit, you'll find that we have done most of the difficult shaping, drilling and fitting, leaving you with the hand-work of gluing, clamping, sanding, finishing, stringing, and decorating. It's a rewarding hobby, and we hope you find pleasure in adding your own personal touches as you build.

SCANDINAVIAN PSALMODIKON 1 String, steel



**Violin Bow
sold separately.**

**Choose a free Small Rosette.
(See page 24 for options.)**

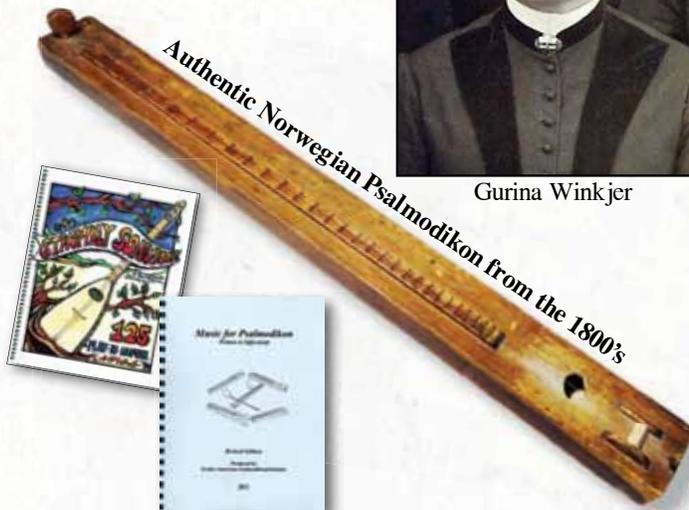
According to Beatrice Hole, who helped write the songbook (below) for playing this instrument, "the psalmodikon is a rare, one-stringed folk instrument of the 1800's that originated in Norway and Sweden...." People played it by either plucking the string or bowing with a violin bow, and they used it mainly to play hymns with small groups of rural worshippers who often met in homes. The instrument came to the US with immigrants, but was soon replaced by the organ as churches sprang up in areas where Scandinavian people settled.

We learned about the psalmodikon from Floyd Foslien, a local Norwegian living in Hudson, Wisconsin, whose great grandmother, Gurina Winkjer, brought her instrument (shown below) to America around 1860. We love the simplicity of it, as well as the beautiful sound. You play it using a numbering system called "Sifferskrift". If you have two or more people playing together, you can produce wonderful harmonies. In fact, the psalmodikon book shown below has 4-part harmonies all plotted out with numbers to match the "transposition stick" that comes with the instrument.

We also include instructions for numbering the instrument to correspond with our Strumbly songbook shown below. That book has 125 popular folk melodies, and it includes chord names but no harmonies.



Gurina Winkjer



Finished Psalmodikon **\$179.95**

In-the-White Psalmodikon **139.95**

If you don't have the time or tools to assemble this kit, but you would like the opportunity to decorate and finish it yourself, you may order it partially assembled (called "in-the-white"). This can be a fun piece to decorate with Tole Painting or Rosemaling.

Pre-cut Kit for Psalmodikon **\$89.95**
(8-12 hour project)

This is quite an easy kit to assemble, but some people may have difficulty installing the frets and sanding them smooth and flush with the edges of the fretboard. It is helpful to have a belt sander for that operation.

Blueprint not available

Accessories for the Psalmodikon

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Violin Bow | 49.00 |
| Padded Gig Bag for Psalmodikon | 65.00 |
| Music for Psalmodikon, book | 19.95 |
| Psalmodikon CD, "Country Church" | 15.00 |
| Strumbly Songbook | 19.95 |

800-432-5487

harokit.com

7

**NORDIC-AMERICAN
PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET**



MUSIC-ON-A-STRING
Beatrice Hole
6560 Leesborough Ave.
Eden Prairie, MN 55346-2823

Psalmodikon website: <http://www.psalmodikon.com/>