

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

My favorite time of the year has arrived. There is nothing as beautiful as the summer season.

To pass the late winter time, I decided I needed a new challenge and enrolled in a two-month long old-time fiddle playing class. I have always had the curiosity as to how the instrument was played.

We learned a new song each week and I was very pleased that I was able to play “Happy Birthday” on the fiddle for my 78th Birthday!

During these weeks of intense practicing on the fiddle, all the while I could feel the psalmodikon calling me and when classes were completed, I went back to the psalmodikon and it felt so good and comfortable. Just like going home again.

As in all things, we sometimes need to step away for a short while and take a good look to sense what really means the most in life and move on from there.

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

MY FIRST PSALMODIKON

Beatrice Hole

I can't recall how many times, since I've started playing the psalmodikon, have I been asked, “How did you get started playing the psalmodikon and become interested in this near-forgotten instrument”? It seems I usually give a quick answer such as I read a story about it or I purchased one of my own in 1991, quickly bypassing over the question.

Recently I gave it some thought and it seems my musical interest comes from a very supportive and encouraging family in the development of my so-called “musical career”. When I was a teenager, my daddy taught me how to play an old accordion that he used to play at barn dances. Soon after my parents purchased a piano, which I desperately wanted to learn to play and with the patience of one of my favorite Aunts, she taught me to play many of our favorite hymns in the old black Concordia Hymnbook. In spite of all this loving devotion to music, I still play by ear and have never had a music lesson to learn how to play by note.

“Life with the psalmodikon” began back in the autumn of 1991 when my brother Stanley, who is four years younger than I and lives in Afton, Minnesota called and said he had been visiting his neighbor and had learned about an old Scandinavian instrument called the Psalmodikon. Even though we are 100% Norwegian and grew up in a total Scandinavian community in Northwestern Minnesota, we had never heard of the psalmodikon.

Stanley said his neighbor, Ken Felland, had recently learned of this home-made instrument from a fellow worker at 3M, Harlis Anderson (who eventually became my mentor). Stan went on to say that for \$45.00, Ken

would build one for me and thought I should have a psalmodikon. I replied with why, what for, why not you, it is a waste of money as I do not know much about playing music, etc. Stan's comment to me was, “well if you can't learn how to play it, it will make a good conversation piece by just setting it on the coffee table”. And so Ken Felland and his brother-in-law, Milt Wicklander, made both a psalmodikon and a carrying case for me. And that is how it all began and why I am where I am today and so involved with the psalmodikon.

My “Life with a Psalmodikon” has taken me to places and situations I never would have experienced if it had not been for the loving attention of my brother and his insistence that I have a psalmodikon.

It has been a learning experience that has expanded my abilities in music and teaching. I've enjoyed my travels to Norway and Sweden to research the history of the psalmodikon which has enabled me to promote the psalmodikon, which is an important part of our heritage. To this day it keeps me very, very busy. I am thankful for a caring family that played a big part in my love of music to enjoy and to let others enjoy as well. 



Above: Beatrice Hole and Stanley Severson



L-R: Molly Beiningen, Milwaukie, OR; Rick Swee, Portland, OR; Beatrice Hole, Eden Prairie, MN; Jim & Linda Dalrymple, Portland, OR & Jean Akre, Kalama, WA.

WEST COAST PSALMODIKON PLAYERS

Beatrice Hole

The last part of June Rodger and I vacationed in Oregon and Washington. We had a great time visiting with family, friends and sightseeing. One of the highlights of the trip was attending a gathering with several members of the West Coast Psalmodikon Players. Jean Akre hosted the group at her home for a playing session followed by a Potluck Supper.

It was so special for me to meet these folks. Their psalmodikons were finely tuned and they make great sounding music. They have been playing together for several years and have a large repertoire of songs with some of their own renditions that sound very nice. I had the pleasure of joining in on some of the music and it was a great experience for me. 🎵

Trivia Corner

We've heard often quoted something like, "Music soothes the savage beast".

This is a very misquoted line from the play *The Mourning Bride* (1697) by William Congreve (1670-1729), in which the opening line is:

"Music has charms to soothe a savage breast."

MEETING WITH EDITOR

Beatrice Hole

While I was in Washington, I had lunch with the Editor of the Psalmodikon Newsletter and his family. He is married and lives in Mount Vernon, WA with his wife and seven-year-old daughter. As we finalized this issue of the Summer 2017 Newsletter, we realized that Kristen has been donating his precious time to assemble the Newsletter since 2011. Kristen does a great job putting together a very attractive Newsletter. We receive many compliments, and I appreciate his help immensely. 🎵



Above: The Editor and Beatrice are 3rd-cousins

OLDIES MUSIC & HIGH-TECH



Are you a fan of Oldies Music? Do you like the music from not just the 1940s or 1950s, but even the 1920s and 1930s, perhaps? Remember when CDs and MP3 were hardly even technologically imaginable, that is, the days of the 78s and 45s, or even the pre-1920 cylinders or piano rolls, the EPs and LPs?

For a number of years now, there has been a radio station, [KBRD](#) out of Olympia, Washington, broadcasting on AM with just that type of music. In fact, you can listen to their streaming broadcast right on the internet, straight from their [home page](#), nothing to install.



RICK SWEE AND HIS TRAVELLING COMPANION

Beatrice Hole

Rick Swee, a member of the West Coast Psalmodikon Players, was telling me he does much travelling with his psalmodikon. He has put together a very durable and attractive case to withstand the rough handling of the airlines, etc. It looks very attractive inside and out!



NORDIC FEST IN DECORAH

Beatrice Hole

I've always said that the Nordic Fest in Decorah, Iowa, which is held the last weekend of July, is the highlight of the year for the psalmodikon and me. My first invitation to participate in the Festival was in 1992 and I have been there ever since. Floyd joined me in 1999 and we have a great time of greeting and demonstrating this historical psalmodikon to the hundreds of folks who pass through the Museum during the Festival. This has proven to be a very effective way to reach many folks at one time.

We are pleased that we are assigned to demonstrate in the Norway House located within the Vesterheim Museum, which is air conditioned. We are there from 9-5 PM on Friday and Saturday.

We celebrate Norwegian Constitution Day on May 17th (*Syt-tende mai*) and our own Independence Day on July 4th. I think the following poem complements the celebrations so nicely.



LEFSE ON THE LAWN

Beatrice Hole

As each summer rolls around, we have the opportunity to play our psalmodikons for various occasions during the many summer celebrations.

The one I always look forward to is the Syttende Mai (May 17th) Service held in the historic Muskego Church located on the campus of Luther Seminary in St. Paul. This little log church was built in Muskego, Wisconsin in 1884 and later moved to this location.

This is a service to remember with thanksgiving the lives and accomplishments of the Norwegian pioneers who gave so much for us.

Prof. Emerita Gracia Grindal, leads a brief Service of Norwegian hymns, sung in the English translation, with prayers and the traditional scripture reading of Psalm 90.

The psalmodikon and I started playing for this service with Harlis Anderson



TWO FLAGS

Roseanna Gutterud Johnsrud

Two flags will I vow to forever be true,
Two flags with their colors of red, white and blue.
They glow with a glory of heavenly gloss,
In one shine the stars, in the other the cross.

The first is the flag of America's land,
The second, the flag of my forefather's strand,
And fairer than Juno and brighter than Mars,
Shines the flag with the cross, the flag with the stars.

My flag waves aloft o'er America's hills,
And steeples the mountains, and touches the hills.
And, by midnight sun lighted, o'er fir trees and moss,
Waves the flag of my fathers, the flag with the cross!

I do believe Providence felt it her due,
To give them each colors of red, white and blue.
I think heaven itself gently let down her bars,
And gave one flag the cross, and the other the stars.

Sometimes it seems, as they furl and unfold,
The stars turn to silver, the cross turns to gold.
And I feel I am closer to heaven because,
There's a flag with the stars, and a flag with the cross.

in 1992. We sing the old church hymns of long ago such as:

"The Leaves Upon the Linden" by Elias Blix and Ludvig Lindemann (1875);

"My Heart is Longing to Praise my Savior" by Lars Oftedal (1875);

"Oh, Sing Jubilee" by Vilhelm Koren (1874); and "Ja vi Elsker".

The words of all these songs have such a beautiful message.

But the highlight is when the service is done and we all proceed out to the lush greens of Spring to enjoy "Lefse on the Lawn". What a treat and fellowship!

HOW HYMNS ARE WRITTEN

Ruth Gibson, White Bear Lake, Minnesota, shares her book, *104 of My Favorite Hymn Stories* written by Warren Shiver in 2008. The following is one of the stories, of which Ruth has obtained permission for us to include in the Psalmodikon newsletter. Thank you to Ruth.

“Jesus Loves Me”

Author: Anna Bartlett Warner (1827-1915)

Composer: William B. Bradbury (1816-1868)

Anna Bartlett Warner and her sister Susan were the daughters of a prominent New York lawyer who lost his fortune during the 1837 depression. After his financial setback, Mr. Warner moved his family to an old house across the Hudson River from West Point. Both sisters remained unmarried and were gifted with the ability to write both secular and religious material.

The sisters were dedicated Christians and when they got set up in their new home across from West Point; they opened their home to the cadets and held Sunday school each week. Anna loved writing hymns, and she wrote a fresh one each month for her class. Their father’s loss of most of his assets in the depression made the sisters eager to help to supplement the family income. They turned to writing novels and children’s books. They collaborated together to write over 18 books over the next 22 years.

In 1860 they wrote a novel called “Say and Seal”. The main characters in the novel were: John Linden (a young man), Faith Derrick (his fiancée), and Johnny Fax (a young lad). Johnny the young lad was a victim of a lingering illness. Linden was Johnny’s Sunday school teacher. He and his fiancée

Faith spent a great deal of time with Johnny to provide for his needs. Toward the end of the novel, Johnny asks Linden to pick him up in his arms and hold him. Linden picked up the feverish boy and walked back and forth across the room. The swaying motion of walking seemed to calm and relax Johnny. Looking up into Linden’s face, Johnny said quietly, “sing me a song.” Linden began to sing softly, “Jesus loves me this I know.” A few hours later Johnny died. Rather than use an old familiar hymn for the funeral, Anna Warren wrote the hymn, “Jesus Loves Me” and it has survived over 100 years. Today this hymn is still taught in Sunday school and Bible school and knows no denomination. Almost anyone you meet could sing, “Jesus Loves Me” from memory.

Anna and Susan Warner’s literary careers brought both of them fame and fortune. Between them, they wrote over 70 books. Some of the best ones were written together. “Jesus Loves Me” was published in Anna Warner’s first hymnbook in 1862.

The music for “Jesus Loves Me” was written in 1861 by William B. Bradbury, the famous New York composer. This is the same music we use today, but Bradbury, while writing the tune for the lyrics, added the chorus: *Yes, Jesus loves me; Yes, Jesus loves me; Yes, Jesus Loves me, the Bible tells me so.*

After over 100 years, “Jesus Loves Me” has become the number one hymn in the world. It has been translated into more languages than any other song. Missionaries love it, because it is so simple, and easy to teach to their students.

Remarkably, a poem from an obscure novel is now one of the best-known hymns in the world.



Jesus Loves Me

Music: 'untitled' by William B. Bradbury, 1862. Copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2006 Revision.

Words: Anna B. Warner, 1860. Setting: William B. Bradbury, 1866.

$\text{♩} = 120$

1. Je - sus loves me! This I know, For the Bi - ble tells me so.
 2. Je - sus loves me! He who died For the Hea - ven's gate to op - en wide;
 3. Je - sus loves me! He will stay Close be - side me all the way;

- tle ones to Him be - long; They are weak, but He is strong.
 will wash a - - Him be - long; Let His lit - tle He child come in.
 hast bled and way died for I will hence - forth live come for Thee.

Je - sus loves me! Yes, Je - sus loves me!



ITEMS FOR SALE

PSALMODIKON SONGBOOK (revised edition)

written in *Sifferskrift* and 4-part harmony for psalmodikons

\$15.00 ea. + \$6.50 pstg

Send orders to: **Beatrice Hole**

PSALMODIKON QUARTET CD

\$15.00 pp

Send orders to: **Singsaas Lutheran Church**

Attn: Music CDs

P. O. Box 87, Hendricks, MN 56136

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

Greetings from Readers

Dear Beatrice,

Thanks so much for sending the Nordic American Psalmodikon Newsletter – both hard copy and electronically. Beautifully done! Thanks for the extensive coverage.

It was such a pleasure to have you and Floyd here and we appreciate you reintroducing the *virsikannel*/psalmodikon to our community. We will try to keep the instrument alive and perhaps we'll see you again here someday. — *Jim Kurtti*, Honorary Consul of Finland, Upper Peninsula of Michigan

Dear Beatrice,

Got your newsletter through Göran Carlsson, whom I know because I took part on their meeting few years ago and organized one in Finland. Unfortunately I am too busy with other instruments and my work to concentrate to *virsikantele*. But I would like to pay your attention to couple of things in newsletter.

Kannel is synonym to *kantele*, but it is true, that sometimes it has been used also as general name of musical instrument. That is not very common thing. *Kantele* lives very strong renaissance, but it was never dying, as you say. Though there was a period people were not that interested about it. Everyone in Finland knows *kantele*, but it is not so familiar. People don't generally listen *kantelemusic*. It is marginal.

Also people love to say, that *jouhikko* (bowed lyre) also was disappearing. That is almost true, but there was few people who knew and played it through the years. In next few months we should get a new edition of the beautiful book *The Bowed Lyre – Jouhikko*, written by Master Rauno Nieminen.



Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet & Newsletter

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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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Kantelemusic is normally written in ordinary notation.

Is it possible to publish this Psalmodikon issue on our web page? I think some people might be interest in it?

With warmes regards, — *Sauli Heikkila*, Editor in Chief, *Kansanusikki-magazine*, Helsinki, Finland

Dear Beatrice,

I saw your new Psalmodikon newsletter online. I especially liked your article on the *Virsikantele* and the *Kantele*!

— *Ed Hopf*, Baltimore, Maryland

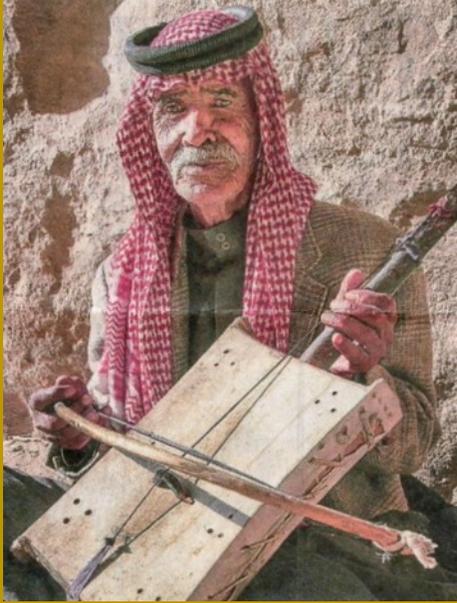
Hejsan,

My dad from Sweden owns a psalmodikon. We live in Denmark. Now we just wonder, is this a rare or quite common psalmodikon we have? Photos attached.

Thank you very much for Newsletter. My dad and I will read it. Kind regards, — *Alexander Soderlind*, Denmark

I just received information that the Nordiska Psalmodikonforbundet will be meeting in Forsa, Sweden on August 25-27, 2017. All are welcome. — *BH*

Ruth Gibson of White Bear Lake spotted a photograph in the *Wall Street Journal* recently (see below). Ruth visited the Petra Archaeological Park several years ago but did not see this instrument. It looks like an “ancient” one, very rustic and of course homemade! A lot of similarities — but then — where is the fret board or however you make the music? Notice that the bow appears to be homemade also. “The Rock Star” pictured calls the instrument a *rebab*. Very interesting.



ANNUAL GET-TOGETHER

Because I have not had any response to where or when we should have our Annual Psalmodikon get-together, I decided to have a gathering of Psalmodikon players at my home in Eden Prairie on Saturday, October 14th. Everyone is invited. I'd appreciate your RSVP so I can make plans accordingly. Hope to see many of you then!

— Beatrice Hole

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