

Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet

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



Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet | Tel: +1 952-934-4535 | E-mail: enstrengb@gmail.com | Web: www.psalmodikon.com

Notes from

MUSIC-ON-A-STRING

Beatrice Hole

The lovely days of Summer have passed and time again to write the Autumn Newsletter.

Where does the time go? A question I often ask myself.

- This was an eventful year for me as I turned a big 80, the age I used to think people were really old!
- I attended my 62nd high school class reunion. We all looked older!
- I “retired” from volunteering at the local hospital after being there one day a week for 38 years! My how time flies when one is enjoying life!
- I was introduced to the psalmodikon twenty-eight years ago. After traveling to Sweden and Norway to learn more about psalmodikons, I wrote my first Psalmodikon Newsletter in 1997 and still have over 100 members on the mailing list! I was told years ago that the Newsletters are the vital link to keeping small groups connected.

I thank everyone for their support and interest in carrying on the psalmodikon tradition. Without all of you, the psalmodikon would again become “a forgotten instrument”. We are the ones that are bringing our heritage to life for the future generation.

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

Dulcimer – The Other Instrument

Beatrice Hole

Often times, we as psalmodikon players are asked if we are playing a Dulcimer. The psalmodikon and the dulcimer do resemble each other but there is a distinct difference. And so, we go on to explain that in studying the history of ancient instruments, there is a resemblance in many of the ancient stringed instruments.

It is believed that the Norwegian *Langeleik* probably had a great influence on the dulcimer’s early development, since many of the *langeleik* instruments were brought to the Appalachian area by the Norwegian immigrants.

It is written that many years ago there was an elderly lady in Kentucky that played the dulcimer with a violin bow. She was known as the only “bower” around.

During one of our playing sessions, Floyd and I were playing songs on the “tandem” psalmodikon (the one with two keyboards and two strings). It was during this time that a visitor began telling us about his Appalachian Mountain Dulcimer. His was known as a more uncommon style dulcimer with a dual fret board and a peg box at one end of each fret board. This instrument was dubbed a “harmonium” or sometimes a “courting dulcimer”, since it enabled lovers to rub knees as they played duets and gazed into one another’s eyes.

Another visitor said that the dulcimer usually played common tunes such as ballads or hoe-down pieces (the toe tapping kind) and used a turkey quill pick. They sometimes played church ballads but for the most part the old church tunes had too many “quavers” in them to be suited to any instrument.

I had not heard that statement before!

A Brazilian Folk Instrument

Beatrice Hole

This interesting photo and note came from Lydia D. while living in Chile. She took a picture of this unusual instrument while traveling in San Paulo, Brazil. The instrument (she does not know the name of it) reminded her of a mixture between a few instruments and thought that it was interesting that they used metal pieces that look like little saw blades to make those little keys. It appears to have two strings.

Lydia is more familiar with the smaller instruments in the same

photo. They are woven and closed with a piece of gourd on the bottom. Some seeds or something similar are put inside, and once they are dry you can shake them to make noise. They are called “Caxixi” (*ka-shi-shi*). Lydia used these instruments as part of the music that accompanied “Capoeira”, the Brazilian dance/fighting art form that she participated in for many years.

Lydia is now living and studying in France.

I told her to be on the outlook for information on an ancient French folk instrument called the Epinette.



Where is My Camera?

Beatrice Hole

As I have done for the past 28 years, the psalmodikon and I entertain the visitors that pass through the Vesterheim Museum each day during the Nordic Fest in Decorah, Iowa. With the assistance of Floyd Foslien, we have a great time telling about the psalmodikon.

Like many other museums/festivals, Vesterheim is encouraging more children and youth participation throughout the weekend. Floyd and I enjoy the young folks as well. The response from children is so rewarding after they've had a chance to ask questions about the psalmodikon and then we do a "hands on" playing session.

I never have my camera available at the suitable time and so I missed this special moment of the Fest. I recall a darling little curly haired girl in a red jumper smiling as I played "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" for her and her family. Later she and her mother stopped by my table again and this time the little girl asked if she could sing while I played. Of course, I was delighted for her to do so. Then she walks around to the back of the table where I was standing and slipped in between my outstretched arms on the keyboard and sang "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" for everyone present. How precious is that!

If I only I could have had a camera at that moment!



New Psalmodikon Players



Hudson Report

Beatrice Hole

The annual get-together of psalmodikon players was held on 10 August 2019 in Hudson, Wisconsin. As usual, everyone who attended enjoyed playing all the old familiar tunes. We then practiced several special ones to be played for worship service on Sunday at the Mt. Zion Lutheran Church.

The psalmodikon players have participated at the morning worship for several years now and still the folks of the congregation are very complimentary and make us feel welcome.

It was a very enjoyable weekend and we always wish that more psalmodikon players would join us. Maybe next year if we take up the offer to go to Decorah, Iowa, more will come!



Left: Sisters Riley & Annie of Eden Prairie, Minnesota are excited about learning to play the psalmodikon at an early age. (5 and 3). The techniques of playing come so easily for the very young!

Below (r): As a result of her visit to the Nordic Fest in Decorah, Iowa, Bonnie H. of Chanhassen, Minnesota purchased her new psalmodikon made by Music-makers of Stillwater, Minnesota. She and Beatrice Hole have enjoyed playing together over the summer.

Another visitor to the Nordic Fest was Mary Lee R. of Kasson, Minnesota. She acquired her psalmodikon from Floyd Foslien and enjoys learning how to play her psalmodikon.

Below (l): Thea, Jean, and Laura Akre. During a visit to South Dakota by Jean and Beatrice, they helped teach the two younger generations of Akre ladies how to play psalmodikon.

We always welcome new members!



Fyllis Flanery

Our dear friend, Fyllis passed away at her home in Fridley, Minnesota on 12 September 2019 at the age of 99 years.

Fyllis was an aunt of Floyd Foslien and had acquired one of the Foslien psalmodikons. Fyllis enjoyed playing it for many years, either alone or with others. She hosted many enjoyable psalmodikon playing sessions in her home over the years.

In 1999 Fyllis attended the 3rd Annual Psalmodikon meeting in Decorah, Iowa, and became a member of the Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet at that time.

She was loved by many and will be missed. Blessed be her memory.





ITEMS FOR SALE

PSALMODIKON SONGBOOK (revised edition)

Written in *Sifferskrift* and 4-part harmony for psalmodikons. Includes 95 easy-to-play tunes of hymns, folk songs, and Christmas favorites. \$15.00 ea. + shipping

Send orders to: Beatrice Hole

CD of the PSALMODIKON QUARTET

\$15.00 pp

Featuring favorite hymns and folk tunes played on the psalmodikons of the Nordic-American Psalmodikon Quartet.

PSALMODIKON KITS FOR SALE

Pre-cut psalmodikon kits, accessories, and read-made psalmodikons are available at Musicmakers in Stillwater, Minnesota.

Kit instructions, assembly videos, and "How to Play the Psalmodikon" can be found at:

<https://www.harokit.com/blog/category/psalmodikon>

Kit description:

- 1 string
- 32" long x 3.5" wide x 2.25" deep sides
- Rosette included
- Solid Spruce Top
- Cherry sides and ply back
- 1.5 pounds

Price:

Psalmodikon finished	\$199.00
Psalmodikon - DIY Kit w/string	\$119.00
Violin Bow	\$55.00
Music for Psalmodikon Book	\$22.50

Reverie Harp

On my recent visit to Musicmakers Kits in Stillwater, I was introduced to the Reverie Harp, their newly designed kind of harp. They make and sell many different kinds of musical instruments, including the psalmodikon. They specialize in different kinds of harps but had no idea that the impact of their newly designed, Reverie Harp, would become their best-selling instrument.

The Reverie Harp is a type of psalter that Musicmakers designed specifically for therapeutic applications. The 22 steel strings are tuned using the "Pentatonic" tuning method, meaning there are no wrong notes to be played and that anyone can make beautiful soothing sounds.



Nordic-American Psalmodikonforbundet & Newsletter

President

Beatrice Hole

Eden Prairie, Minnesota

+1 952-934-4535

enstrengb@gmail.com

Vice-President

Floyd Foslien

Hudson, Wisconsin

ffoslien@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer

Joan Saathoff

Hudson, Wisconsin

har.jo.saathoff@att.net

Editor

Kristen Åkre

Jefferson, South Dakota

+1 253-341-8430

krisakre@gmail.com

The Newsletter is published using PagePlus X9 (www.serif.com) and is printed in Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

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 and annual fee for the Psalmodikon Web Site.

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

Send membership dues to: Beatrice Hole

6560 Leesborough Ave

Eden Prairie, MN 55346

St. Paul Display

If you have not had a chance to visit the Nordic String Instrument Exhibit at the Schubert Club Music Museum located in the Landmark Center Building in St. Paul, you should make an effort to do so. The instruments, including the psalmodikon, will be on display until May of 2020. This is a very educational display of historic Scandinavian instruments and we are grateful that the Schubert Club invited these folk instruments to be exhibited in their Museum.

We have just learned that the Schubert Club has expressed an interest in purchasing the "hands-on" part of the psalmodikon display for future use as they have been so well received!



It weighs 4.5 pounds (2.0 kg) and measures about 22" long and 12" wide (559 x 305 mm).

Caregivers all over the world are finding the Reverie Harp to be an invaluable tool. It is being used in children's hospitals, senior care facilities, memory care units where language is no longer an effective way to reach them, Veteran's hospitals, counseling clinics, hospice care and many other settings.

It is equally suited to provide care for anyone. Just 10 minutes of sitting quietly, cradling the harp against your chest and enjoying the soothing sounds can provide a wonderful respite from a stressful life.

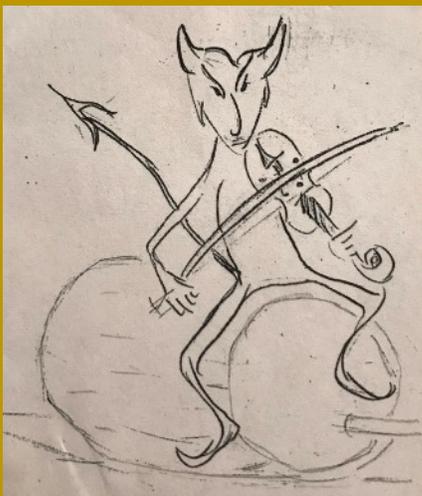
Musicmakers are now open to tour groups. More can be learned on their website:

www.harokit.com/reverie-harp



*Next to the Word of God,
Music deserves
the highest praise.
The gift of language
combined with
the gift of Song
was given to man
that he should proclaim
the Word of God
through Music.
— Martin Luther*

How many times have we heard that the early churches believed dancing was sinful and would not allow the violin to be played in church? It was said that the violin was an “instrument of the devil” and we know that was how the psalmodikon came into use. I thought this drawing depicted that thought very well.



Always be Prepared

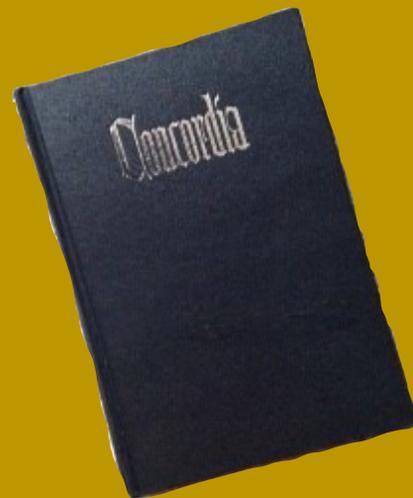
Beatrice Hole

I had the pleasure of returning to Erskine, Minnesota for my 62nd Class Reunion this Fall. It was good to see so many familiar faces and recalling stories from the many years that have gone by. It was sad to realize that from our graduating class of 32, eleven have passed.

I also enjoyed some of the small-town activities such as a Family Rummage Sale at the Senior Center, an early morning breakfast at the small café that is still in operation on Main Street, and the local Farmer’s Market. At the Farmer’s Market there was a young fellow playing his violin. At my request, he played one of my favorites, “[Ashokan Farewell](#)”. I so enjoyed listening to him play.

It was so special to attend the Sunday morning worship at the little country church I attended in my

youth. Things have not changed much. — They still sing from the old “black” Concordia Hymnbook. But now I’m known as the “psalmodikon lady” and always receive an invitation to play a couple songs on the old psalmodikon during the worship service. Therefore, one should always “be prepared” and have the psalmodikon handy.



NORDIC-AMERICAN PSALMODIKONFORBUNDET



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

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