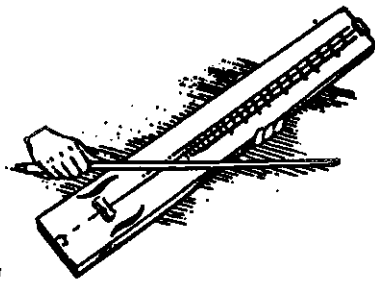


April 1997



NOTES FROM MUSIC-ON-A-STRING

The long dark days of Winter have been good in that they allowed me to spend considerable time doing more research on Psalmodikon history. Now after a brief respite in the Florida sun, I will put my thoughts into a Newsletter. I am happy to have heard from many of you in response to the November 1996 Newsletter.

THE DATE IS SET! MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

As I mentioned, in the last Newsletter, my dream is to organize a group of Psalmodikon enthusiasts. And, as usual, everything has a way of falling into place. The folks at Mindekirken, the Norwegian Memorial Church, in Minneapolis have so graciously offered their facilities for a meeting place. The date has been set for the weekend of September 13 & 14.

Preliminary plans are to start our get-together about noon on Saturday. Times will be set up for a business and organizational meeting, music demonstrations, workshops, and of course, fellowship & food.

Paul Knivslund, a wood worker, who is skilled in building Psalmodikons, has promised to be there to assist those that need help on a construction problem or maybe want to make a Psalmodikon of your own in the future. Wendy Storhoff and Lydia, (my friend who is only 11 ar gammel) will be on hand to give music instruction and demonstrations. Another highlight will be a chance to see my tandem Psalmodikon, a new addition to my collection! My husband will be there to serve the coffee. We will bring the afternoon to a close with a dinner at a favorite restaurant or maybe a Potluck could be arranged. (Wouldn't it be fun if some of you musicians that play the fiddle, an accordian, etc. would bring them along and we could have some good listening music during the evening, just like they do at the Psalmodikonforbundet in Sweden and Norway ?)

It would be good if you could arrange to spend the night in town as I volunteered some of us to provide Psalmodikon music for the Sunday Worship Services at Mindekirken. The English Service is at 9:00 am and

the 11:00 am Service, in the Norwegian language, is very special, too. The remainder of the time you will be on your own to visit some of the highlights our fair city has to offer!

As I said, these ideas are only in the planning stage but I am hoping for a good turnout. Please contact me if you plan on coming and I will provide you with complete program details as September gets closer. Please encourage your spouse, family and friends to attend. (Even if they have only a remote interest in the Psalmodikon). You do not have to be a musician to feel welcome. *Ingen er for gammel til a laere!*

We need to have some Media coverage and I am hoping many of you can help in that way. I will need volunteers to take on some responsible positions, if we are to get a Psalmodikon group organized. **Let me know real soon if you can attend which will be of help for me in making the plans.**

HELPFUL HINT: This is for those of you who are in need of a carrying case for your Psalmodikon. I recall during my visit to the Psalmodikonforbundet in Ostervalla, Sweden, that the people from Norway made their own Psalmodikon cases for the trip. The one idea that remains strong in my memory is the fellow that cut off the leg of a worn pair of jeans, sewed up one end, added a carrying strap and behold -- he had a very durable carrying case. Actually, anything will do from a beautiful hand-crafted wood case to a plastic molded shot-gun case purchased at a discount store.

EVERYONE IS RUSHING TO THE WEB!

A few years ago when I first started looking for more information on the Psalmodikon, the word alone could not even be found in the encyclopedia. Great strides have been made! The PSALMODIKON is now on the Web! The Psalmodikon is listed as part of the Minnesota Online site, courtesy of the "Minnesota Folk Artists Directory".

<http://www.mnonline.org/artsentertainment/folkarts/>

The local printshop is running a half-price special on making copies this month, which makes it possible for me to afford to send out a two-page Newsletter this time. As of now, I have about 75 mailings, but nevertheless my out of pocket expenses add up very quickly.



(1777-1850)

LARS ROVERUD

DET NORSKA PSALMODIKONETS FADER

(The following was translated from Psalmodikon information I've received from friends in Norway and Sweden.)

One of the most original figures in the periods of church music was Lars Roverud. His father had hopes that he would study theology, but because Roverud studied to become a musician, his father disowned him. By 1807 he was earning his living as a teacher of violin, piano and music theory. Roverud was one fire-soul with many ideas. He was determined that people should learn music for their own personal enjoyment. One of his pupils was Halfdan Kjerulf, (1815-1868), who went on to be a composer and the first national romanticist in Norwegian music history.

The 1789 publication, "A Look at Music Conditions in Norway", tells of the concern about the poor quality of music in the church. Most churches do not have an organ and the songs were being directed by a Klokker, of which "1 in 50 knows a note of music". The old established traditional song culture was described as, "they sing according to their own taste in an off-key loud voice, often times with screaming louder than the Klokker and not suitable to a cultured ear in God's House". There was a conflict between the old and new ideas within the church. This publication occupied Roverud strongly and it is not strange then that being a schooled musician, he decided to take it upon himself to better the situation. In Roverud's publication of 1815, "Music Conditions in Norway", he points out the unfortunate condition in that most of the churches are missing a suitable instrument to lead the singing and also an unschooled Klokker.

In 1819 Roverud travels to Leipzig, Germany to study class teaching. He then travels to Denmark and learns

of the need for improved church singing there also. Here he meets J. W. Bruun, (1781-1836) who is using a simple musical instrument (a one-stringer) similar to a Monochordet, whom already the Greek Philosopher Phytagors had occupied himself with. (The instrument was not being readily accepted because it was difficult to play). Roverud returns to Norway to set up a Music Academy where he can teach 20-30 pupils at one time. On a trip to Kristiania in 1825 he sees the Danish "one-stringer" in Herr Winther's Music Store. Roverud can see the possibilities of this instrument if he could make the tune more beautiful and easier to play. With the help of mathematician, Christopher Hansten, they design a raised catchboard using a mathematical system of measuring the "stair-steps". For a greater range of notes, Roverud designs four long flat boards, to be placed above the catchboard. These are called Transposition tables. Roverud has now developed a clear and easily understood way to play notes in the most used major and minor kinds of tones and anyone with a musical ear would be able to play correctly. Roverud made bigger Psalmodicons of the same type, in alt-tenor and bass to teach four-part singing. Even a contra-bass Psalmodicon was tried, but they were very troublesome and uncomfortable to use.

In 1828 Roverud travels to Stockholm to study vocal music. He tells Johannes Dillner (1785-1862) about his Salmodicon and how simple it is to play and also for teaching, using the numerical method. (Sifferskrift).

Finally in 1835 Roverud receives official permission and authorization from the Foundation of Education of the Royal Resolution, to use the Psalmodikon, along with the Sifferskrift method, for the betterment of church singing. His first commission is the parish of Gudbrandsdalen & he's received with great enthusiasm by the children and adults. The evangelistic movement created a new interest in the Psalmodikon for use in the churches and also in the homes and schools. The immigrants even brought the Psalmodikon along with them to America. Because of their popularity, there were many sizes and shapes of Psalmodikons. The Psalmodikon never became great in the line of folk instruments, and their use started to decline after 1930.

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