

NORDIC AMERICAN PSALMODIKON FORBUNDET

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

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PSALMODIKON
STORY ON
CABLE TV

Several times during the month of December, the N. W. Community Television will be scheduling a half-hour presentation on PSALMODIKON history and music. It will be shown in the Twin Cities area on channel 35 on Sunday evenings at 7:00 PM. It will also be shown over Channel 6, which covers a larger area out of the State of Minnesota. Beatrice Hole of Eden Prairie has been invited to participate in this program called - "SENIORS ON SCREEN". We will try to Videotape this program and possibly make it available for interested members.

PSALMODIKON MEETING IS HISTORY IN THE MAKING

The first meeting to organize a group of Psalmodikon enthusiasts turned out to be a huge success! The meeting was held at the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Minneapolis on September 13, 1997.

"we decided to unofficially call this group the "NORDIC-AMERICAN PSALMODIKON FORBUNDET"

For those of you who were able to attend the meeting, the following is a report of the big event. There were 20 that came from South Dakota, Iowa, and Minnesota. We must have made history! Whenever was there a time in America when 15 Psalmodikons were gathered together at one time and place, other than in a Museum? My only regret was that the afternoon flew by so quickly. Everyone had a very enjoyable time sharing the story of their Psalmodikons; gathering the facts and history of the Psalmodikon; and picking up some additional music to enable each one to go home and practice. Our next meeting should be very musical! The day ended with coffee and cake (in the shape of a Psalmodikon).

The youngest Psalmodikon Player present was eleven year old, Lydia Droegemueller, who has a Psalmodikon made by her Grandfather. She and I played a "duct" (Children of the Heavenly Father) on my very unique, Tandem Psalmodikon for the group. I was



happy that three of us (Wendi Storhoff, Diane Steen-Hinderlic and myself) could return to Mindekirken on Sunday to participate in both of the morning worship services. The Psalmodikons sounded very nice as the acoustics in the church are excellent. Jim Reilly, who is the Music Director of Mindekirken and a very skilled musician, gave us a very fine compliment in that he said "the Psalmodikons sounded just great and that they were so finely tuned". The items of business concluded that we decided to call this group the **NORDIC-AMERICAN PSALMODIKON FORBUNDET** and that we would meet once a year. We intend to publish a Newsletter at least twice a year to all members. The Newsletter will have articles relating to the history of the Psalmodikon; the evolution of the instrument and

the people who contributed to that evolution: and various other items of interest.

I am so happy that Deann and Larry Gjenvick of Cedar, MN have volunteered to be editors of the Psalmodikon Newsletter. I just received word from Eleanor Sandquist of Granite Falls, MN, that she would like to host next year's **NORDIC-AMERICAN PSALMODIKON FORBUNDET** meeting in Granite Falls!

I am so grateful to everyone who turned out for this very special occasion and to those who have so graciously offered their time and talents to make this become a reality. We all have to work together to preserve this "endangered species". My hope and dreams are that even more of you can join us next year. Psalmodikon enthusiasts are truly a delightful group of people!

Takk for alt. Beatrice Hole

Letters to the Editor

Dear Beatrice,

The first meeting of the Psalmodikon group in Minneapolis was so interesting and informative. It was great to see both the younger and the older generations showing a desire to learn more about playing "MUSIC-ON-A-STRING". How the Psalmodikon I have survived is quite amazing to me. From Norway to America in 1870, with later restoration by Harlis Anderson. Now, there is added incentive to learn to play it because of Beatrice's interest and encouragement. Hope to meet many more of you at our next meeting.

Best regards, Eugene Holm, Tulare, SD

Dear Beatrice,

It must have been dedication to a learning cause that took Orlan and I to Minneapolis early on Saturday, September 13 and driv-

ing through rain for about three quarters of the trip. Then, on the way back home, going through terribly dense fog and barely seeing any road for over half of the way for a round trip of about 440 miles. I'm church organist, so we needed to be back for Sunday morning and also our church was serving a fall soup dinner. We owe a vote of "thanks" to Beatrice for all her printed information that she was able to share with us, plus demonstration on Psalmodikon and her spoken words of encouragement - - -also her delightful lunch. It was nice to see people of all ages are so interested. Yes, it might be a possibility that I could be a part of something for the Nordic Fest, but at this time I do not play by ear - - - I always play by reading notes. This is how I play piano, organ and other instruments. So I would need to know the music pieces in advance in order to feel comfortable.

Thanks to Beatrice, her husband Rodger and everyone who attended.

PS: Does anyone know who did the lovely rosemaking we saw in the basement of Mindekirken?

Corrine and Orlan Landsgard, St Olaf, IA

Dear Beatrice,

Mange takk for getting us together in a historical place in order to learn more about a historical instrument. I'm so glad we played the next day in the services, too. Next time, more should plan on staying so we can have an even fuller sound in harmony.

Appreciatively,
Diane Steen-Hinderlie

MEMBERS ATTENDING SEPT MEETING

- Lydia & Sue Droegemueller, Plymouth, MN
- Shirley Erickson, Litchfield, MN
- Larry & Deann Gjenvick, Cedar, MN
- Beatrice & Rodger Hole, Eden Prairie, MN
- Eugene Holm, Tulare, SD
- Curtiss D. Johnson, Minneapolis, MN
- Paul & Betty Knivslund, N St Paul, MN
- Corrine & Orlan Landsgard, St Olaf, IA
- Edythe M. Rose, Minnetonka, MN
- Eleanor Sandquist, Granite Falls, MN
- Marlyn Schroeder, Mantorville, MN
- Wendi Storhoff, Minneapolis, MN
- Janet Svard, Plymouth, MN
- Diane Steen-Hinderlie, St. Louis Park, MN

Carol Hayes, Des Moines, IA

After church one Sunday morning, my five year-old granddaughter was intently drawing on a piece of paper. When asked what she was drawing, she replied that she was drawing God. "But no one knows what God looks like." I said, "They will when I finish this picture!" she answered.

Jacque Hall

CHORAL-MELODIER FOR PSALMODICON

to be used in

*Kingos, Gulbergs and the Evangelical Christian Psalmbook
for existing Psalms*

*Written in Stoffre in accordance with the Royal Resolution of 15 June 1835 authorized
Choralbook, together with instruction on use of Psalmodicon
of*

J. A. Lindeman

Assistant Curator to Leganger

5te betterment edition

Price: 35 Skilling

CHRISTIANIA

J. W. Cappelen Publisher

1866

FORWARD

By writing this introduction to the use of the Psalmodicon, I have the intention to my contribution of the betterment of church song in this country. Therefore, the Psalmodicon, for the common people is very superior remedy to teach themselves and learn chorals must be more and more widespread. This has not existed in our language and I have not known of ny introduction to the Psalmodicon before this and is long awaited.

In many places in the country, the Psalmodicon is of different shape and value. It is very important to have the right classification on catchboard. But for the songs it isn't so important to have a correct example. In the organization of the Royal Department of the Church and Educational System is Mr. Roverud, Songteacher at the Norwegian University of Theology Seminary, who we give credit to so many other impulses to the betterment of the church songs, also owes betterment of the Psalmodicon. To undertake himself to hand over a considerable number of Psalmodicons so that every Parish can have one for a sample, as could be used to model after wich another could be ordered.

With preparation of this introduction, I have taking into the consideration of Mr. Roverud's published Psamodicon, and followed the same treatment I have followed my own method as is: founded on many years experience, in what I have taught in music, partly as organist and cantor with our Saviour Assembly in Christiania, partly as teacher with usters Seminary, and have showed itself easy and understandable. As is difficult with musical objects, written to make it understandable, they too, in music, unconsecrated, so I believe this little publication, have attained my intention in this regard.

May 12, 1840 - Christiania NORWAY The Author

(1st paragraph of instructions for the Psalmodicon)

THE PSALMODICON IS A VERY SIMPLE LMUSICAL INSTRUMENT, NAMELY TO PLAY CHORALS ON. IT HAS THE GREEK WORD "PSALMOS"(A PSALM) AND "ODE" (A SONG). THE MOST SIMPLE AND LEAST EXPENSIVE PSALMODICON EXISTS OF A NARROW WOODEN BOX OF WHITE WOOD AND A BOARD OF WHERE TO PUT ON THE TACKS TO HOLD THE STEEL STRING. a SADDLE OR A TONE DIVIDED (CLASSIFIED) CATCHBOARD IS GLUED ON WITH A LITTLE ELEVATION, OVER WHICH A STRING IS STRECHED. THE STRING IS FASTENED ON THE RIGHT SIDE WITH A TACK, AND TWISTS ON LEFT SIDE AROUND A SCREW.

NOTE: Reproduction of the cover, first page and first paragraph of the Choral book of J. A. Lindeman.)

Exerpts from an article "PSALMODIKON - A DANISH TEACHING EXPERIMENT"
by Kirsten Ostenfeld (Translation from Danish) 1978

The origin of this instrument is unclear. It is mentioned in a Danish journal in 1823, giving credit to Swedish Dillner as the inventor. This Swedish minister, Johannes Diller, writes about it in 1829. Leif Lehen in Norway, 1827, wrote that the instrument had become known in Denmark's song life.

The Education Society was an organization in Denmark that had something to do with what was taught in the schools. J. W. Bruun was a teacher who wanted to simplify music teaching in schools. Bruun was a versatile man who experimented with geographical, astronomical and musical instruments. He made a psalmodikon, but the idea was not original. It came from a German article. But the instrument was not popular in Germany.

Bruun thought the instrument would be useful to teachers who had no great musical ability. The simple one stringed instrument could be played by numbers or notes. In 1823, J. W. Bruun sent out 15 Psalmodikons along with 150 song books and directions to various churches in Copenhagen. In 1824 he visited schools in Sjaelland and gave demonstrations. For years he tried to interest rural schools. He moved to Aarhus in 1827 and died there in 1836. He constantly offered free lessons on the instrument. But the song committee of the Education Society seemed to ignore his work.

The psalmodikon "lived" about five years in Denmark compared to forty or fifty years in Norway and Sweden. It was never more than a pedagogist experiment. One reason it never "took" in Denmark was the sparse writing about its existence. It was not even mentioned in the dictionary. In 1849 there was a new attempt to promote the instrument, this time called Cantachord, but with no success. So it seems the Psalmodicon period in Denmark was ended.

(A description of the Psalmodikon was also given in the article)

The instrument consists of a rectangular open box of pine or fir. The length is 1 alen (two feet) to 5/4 alen. "so long that a violin bow can lie there in", 3 to 4 inches in width and 1 1/2 to 2 inches in height. The instrument has both a cover and bottom, contrary to the Swedish psalmodikon where the bottom serves as cover (?). Bruun does not mention resonant holes so it is assumed that the Danish instrument had non. Bruun's instrument did not have an independent bridge, because one endpiece serves both as support and fastening for the string; the other endpiece functions as saddle.

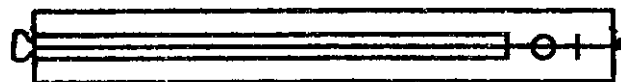
How to play it: The Swedish and Norwegian Psalmodikons are placed on a table with the bridge to the right and the saddle (?) to the left of the musician. It is usually stroked with a bow, but can also be plucked with the fingers. You shorten the string by letting a finger slide up or down or moving the finger from tone to tone. Bruun taught that a better fingering could be done by using the left had four fingers change off just like piano planing, not using the thumb at all.

Bruun says the range of the psalmodikon is a full three octaves. It can go from the lowest human voice to the highest bird- or mouse squeek.

In Norway and Sweden the psalmodikon was used in schools until the 1870's, also as a home or devotion instrument. Especially in Sweden where it has been used some places until today. It is a paradox that the instrument which orginated in Denmark but was mostly used outside the country. Bruun's instrument was the basic instrument from which the Norwegian and Swedish grew.



MUSIC-ON-A-STRING





*NORDIC-AMERICAN
PSALMODIKON FORBUNDET*

Return Larry & Deann Gjenvick
Address: 1775 - 214th Avenue N W
Cedar, MN 55011-9254



Mailing
Address:

PSALMODIKON FORBUNDET

Notes from the Editors:

Our interest in the Psalmodikon is quite recent. We attend a number of Scandinavian Stevne events and had met Beatrice Hole as she demonstrated the Psalmodikon. As is my habit, I often see something and take a "mental snapshot" of whatever it might be and then retire to my workshop and see if I can make "one of those things". Well, the Psalmodikon caught my interest and out of that came my first effort (not that I knew what I was doing) at making one. It's certainly not perfect but it does make some music - and thus through encouragement of Beatrice we decided to attend the gathering in September. And what fun, and inspiration it was.

As Beatrice told you, Deann and I volunteered to edit the Newsletter (be patient with us - this is our first attempt at anything like this)

There are costs involved in the preparation, printing and mailing of the Newsletter. We hope that because of your interest in the Psalmodikon and our fledgling organization you might help support the costs by a membership fee of \$5.00 per year. Return the form enclosed with your remittance. Please note that

since we are not a legally organized entity as yet please make any checks payable to **Larry Gjenvick**. All funds received will be held solely for costs involved with our Psalmodikon Forbundet group.

Larry & Deann Gjenvick

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

PSALMODIKON FOR SALE: Psalmodikon made by Harlis Anderson (No.13) in 1993. Used very little. \$175.00 or best offer. Call: Susan Mueller 612-934-4535

WANTED: Someone that is willing to translate letters and Psalmodikon history received from Sweden and Norway. Call: Beatrice Hole 612-934-4535