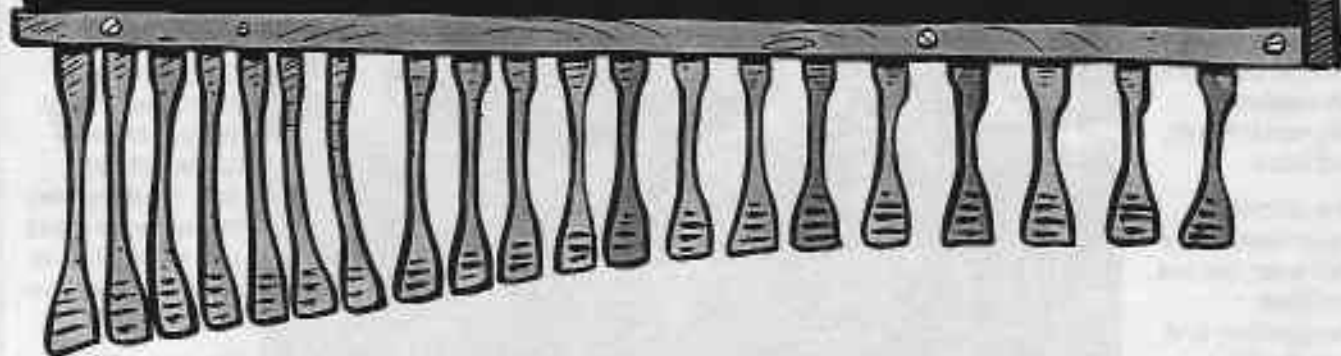


THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN NYCKELHARPA ASSOCIATION

# NYCKEL NOTES



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## The Eric Sahlström Institute

by Bart Brashers

Saturday 23 January 1998 brought the inauguration of the Eric Sahlström Institute in Tobo, Uppland, Sweden. Tobo is the town where Eric lived, and is in the center of the "nyckelharpa district" of Sweden. ESI is Sweden's first Folk Music Institute. Finland has four, and Norway has five.

Guests started arriving at about 10:30, including Eric's wife Anna and brother Sture. Eric's children (Sonia, Sigbritt och Sigurd) are all teachers and according to a new Swedish law were



The Building housing the Eric Sahlström Institute, Tobo

required to be at work.

The festivities got underway at 11:00 a.m. with *kulning* by Susanne Rosenberg and Marie Axelsson, and a nyckelharpa tune by Olov Johansson. Gunnar Ahlbäck welcomed everyone, and was followed by speeches by and Jan Ling (chairman of ESI) and Ann-Cathrine Haglund (county governor). Then the teachers (from *Kungliga Musikhögskolan* (the Royal Music Academy) played as some teachers from the Royal Dance Academy danced. Hasse Gille then played a fanfare

on the *nåverlur* (birch bark horn) followed by presentations by representatives from a Finnish and a Norwegian Folk Music Institute. The formal ceremonies finished up with the teachers from *Kungliga Musikhögskolan* playing *Spelmansglädje*.

Lunch was then served, followed by *rundvandring* (to

wander around) through the building to various events and exhibits: nyckelharpa and fiddle making, *låtstuga* (informal concert) by Björn Ståbi, dancing by

Strömsbergs folkdangille to Hasse Gille's music, information table with sales by the Eric Sahlström *Minnesfond* (Memorial Fund), and more.

The official inauguration was then over, but the unofficial inauguration and open house started at 6:00 p.m. with soup, salad, bread and coffee. A superb dance and music evening then followed. The list

of attendants sounds like a who's-who of Swedish folk music: Björn Ståbi, Kalle Almlöf, Gunnel J Mauritzson, Susanne Rosenberg, Olov Johansson, Cajsa Ekstav, Anders Mattsson, Sven Ahlbäck, Peter Hedlund, Eilika Frisell, Thomas Fahlander, Marie Stensby Jönsson, Ville Roempke, Ole Hjorth, Arne Forsén, Mikael Marin, Sture Sahlström, Sture Hogmark, Roger Tallroth, Harald Pettersson, Jonas Simonsson, Marie Axelsson, etc., etc. The last one to go home left at 4:00 a.m.!

ESI is the result of the efforts of Esbjörn Hogmark and Åsa Södergren, along with Gunnar Ahlbäck and Göte Herlovson from the *Eric Sahlström Minnesfond* (Memorial Fund) and Jan Ling.

They aim to make the ESI a center for folk-music, folk-song and folk-dance in Sweden and the world, and to elevate the nyckelharpa to its proper place in Swedish culture. They want all Swedes to be able to come in contact with their folk traditions, to learn about them and make them "their own." The institute will serve as a center for teaching nyckelharpa, for archiving and research into the nyckelharpa, and for development and building of nyckelharpas.

In addition to shorter courses and conferences (weekend to week-long) they have as a goal to establish a longer course in conjunction with the Swedish *Folkhögskola* system, similar to the famous course at Malung but with nyckelharpa as the focal point. In fact, Jonas "Jalle" Hjalmarsson (one of the teachers at Malung) will be working part-time this spring for ESI, to help set up the formalities.

The first to use their new locale was the Stockholm Spelmanslag -- a weekend course with 32 participants and 2 teachers. They gave good reviews to the



Don't those chairs out front look inviting?

location and the organization. Also scheduled was a meeting of people who organize Spelmansstämman (events like our Nyckelharpa Stämman, only much bigger) to exchange ideas and experience to see what they can do better.

We warmly welcome and support the ESI, and look forward to many years of great work! Imagine being able to go study

nyckelharpa for a semester or a year, like many Americans have at Malung....

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## The Uppsala Oktoberstämma

### *History of the Uppsala Oktoberstämma*

by Sture Hogmark

The Uppsala Oktoberstämma, or October Folk Festival, celebrated its 50th Anniversary this year! The first regular Oktoberstämma, organized by Svenska Ungdomsringen, was held at Norrlands Nation in 1947, after having organized two spelman competitions in 1946 & 1947 there. From 1948 through 1981 the stämman was held in the University Assembly Hall.

Since then it has been held in several other halls, including Uppsala Slott (Castle).

The Oktoberstämma was the absolute high point of the year in folk music circles, at least in Uppland. The Oktoberstämma was always the last stämma of the year, the finale, and has always been held the last weekend in October. Under its most intensive period, from 1960-1975, the hall was packed, with as many as 1500 people in the audience. There were no more stämmas after this one until May of the next year. Nowadays there are many Vinterstämmas, but they are of fairly recent origin.

People came to the Oktoberstämma from all over the entire country. Typically, famous "fiddlers" from other provinces were invited to come and perform together with Eric Sahlström, Viksta Lasse, Ivar Tallroth and other well-known Uppland players as the main attraction of the stämma. This attracted many people that did not normally listen to folk music. The Festival was always featured in the local papers, with many serious articles about the events, unlike the style of articles written on folk music today. At that time the stämma was held on Saturday and finished with a special catered dinner, where of course a lot of music was played. It was necessary to make reservations to attend the dinner.

The Förstämma (Pre-stämma) was started at the end of the 1970's, so that those that had traveled a long way could meet with those from around Uppsala the night before the stämma and play music (jam), dance and play for dancing. The Förstämma has always been amazingly popular. There is usually hardly any place to stand, never mind trying to sit in peace and quiet and play music. The main thing has always been to meet fellow folk musicians from far away parts of the country.

The Förstämma was first held at Stockholms Nation, but has also moved around and been held at many different places, including Wiks Slott (castle), Tunasalen in Uppsala, Odinsborg in Gamla Uppsala, etc. Nowadays the Förstämma is held on Saturday and the main Stämma on Sunday, with good public attendance (400-500 people), but nothing like it was during the high point in the late 70's.

### ***This Year's Oktoberstämma***

by Lynn Erickson

In October the days are crisp and clear, the nights are cold, and the leaves are beginning to fall. The 25-26th of October were the dates this year, with the Förstämma on Saturday night at a restaurant called Skarholmen on the shores of Ekoln, a lake about 10 km south of Uppsala. This is the more informal, and usually a bit wilder, stämma with no official concerts of any kind, just buskspel in every corner of every room, and a

spel-list for those who wish to put together a group to play for dancing. The dance floor was quite good, packed with dozens of twirling couples. One large room next door to the dance floor, a cafe during the day time, contained at least a dozen small groups each playing in their own world of music. We played for hours with a group of 6-10 nyckelharpas, including Sture Hogmark and Gudrun Pettersson, in one corner of the room. While playing, you could sort of concentrate on the music in your own group, however, when you stopped playing and just listened, the sound was almost deafening!!! Overall, it was a great evening for music and dance!

The next day, starting at 2 PM in the afternoon (to let people sleep in...), the official Oktoberstämma began at Norrlands Nation in downtown Uppsala with a large Allspel. Sonja Sahlström, daughter of Eric Sahlström, led the Allspel of almost 100 musicians in famous Uppland tunes such as Vendelpolskan, Tobogubben, and many more...The feeling of playing these fantastic tunes in the midst of so many musicians, including Bosse Larsson and Sture Sahlström (Eric's brother), was truly powerful!!!

After the Allspel, the afternoon was open with the usual buskspel in many rooms, both upstairs and downstairs, along with a Spel-list again for those who like to play for dancing and of course those who like to dance! I danced for the first group or so and then found my way to where Sture Sahlström and Sven-Olov Sundell sat and played in a spel-circle. We played many Sahlström and Uppland tunes in general for several hours, until it was time to head upstairs for the afternoon concert.

The concert typically begins with the younger generation of folk musicians, continues with some of the more well-known players and then concludes with an hour long performance by the main group for the concert. Last year's main attraction was Väsen. (I was lucky enough to be here last year as well!) This year, several younger fiddlers started off the concert, followed by Sonia Sahlström and Bo Larsson. Then it was time for the main attraction of the day.

The main group this year was Norrtelje Elitkapell, a very well-known group that has been around since the mid-1970's. The leader is Mats Andersson, a professional music teacher and virtuoso on piano, clarinet, fiddle and nyckelharpa! Another famous member of the group is Peter "Puma" Hedlund, a master nyckelharpa spelman. A wide variety of instruments were played, including fiddle, nyckelharpa, clarinet, bass fiddle and even a saxophone. The music they played was a blend of new and old - quite stimulating! There must been at least 400 people at the concert, absorbing the energy given off the players!! It was a fantastic experience and a great way to end a marvelous weekend!!



Ditte Andersson

## ANA Business

### **Time to Renew!**

Look on the address label on this issue, above your name, to see your current renewal status. If you haven't renewed, please do so. \$10/year is all! Feel free to renew for several years at once, if you'd like. Just send a check to:

Bart Brashers  
The American Nyckelharpa Association  
PO Box 45126  
Seattle WA 98145-0126

### **Election Results**

Congratulations to Gail Halverson, Matt Fichtenbaum and Sheila Morris, newly elected board members. They will each serve a two-year term, which started the 1st of January. They join Bart Brashers and Becky Weis, in the middle of their two-year terms.

### **Local Events**

The ANA wants to help put on more nyckelharpa events in *your* area. All it takes is an idea, a plan, and a budget. If you want to bring a Swedish nyckelharpa player to your town to teach and play, just propose it to

the board. We've already heard the beginnings of an idea about a second Nyckelharpa Stämman, on the West coast, possible also with Ditte Anderson. As is usually the case in these situations, we lack people to organize and put on an event, not the resources to do it. So volunteer your time for the nyckelharpa cause!

### **The 1998 Nyckelharpa Stämman**

This year's Stämman will be held in the New York City area, and will feature Ditte Anderson. Ditte is a great player and teacher of nyckelharpa, and also sings very well. Her Scottish-accented English is very good, and she has a great sense of humor. She is a professional music teacher and *spelman*, and has taught harpa at Ekebyholm and Osterbybruk, among other places. Her training includes a 4-year degree from *Musikaliska Akademin*, the music academy in Stockholm.

The weekend will feature a workshop and jam session on Friday afternoon/evening, an all-day workshop on Saturday, a dance on Saturday evening, a brunch and workshop/jam session on Sunday, and a Sunday evening concert. More complete information will be listed in the next issue of Nyckel Notes.

Mark your calendars now!

### **Roster Additions**

Here are some more additions to the Roster of Nyckelharpa Players in North America. Please join me in extending a warm welcome to our new members!

Add these to your Roster, on the blank page. I'm planning on putting out a new edition of the Roster, with all the names in it, in the Fall.

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## Spela Bättre!

*The Only Way to Improve Your Playing*

by Matt Fichtenbaum

### Eklundapolskan Number 2

The great Uppland fiddler Viksta-Lasse composed ("made") many tunes, including three 16th-note polskas that bear the name *Eklundapolskan*, numbered "one" through "three." Many people count Eklunda Nr. 1 (in A minor) among the first tunes they learned, and Nr. 3 (G major) is also a popular tune on both nyckelharpa and fiddle. Eklunda Nr. 2 is less common - it's in F major and is more challenging technically. But it's a great tune and a really good practice piece for left-hand position shifts and smoothness in playing.

I first tried to play Eklundapolskan Nr. 2 "because it was there," and as an exercise. It turned out to be an approachable tune and quite well suited to the harpa. And you can impress your fiddle-playing friends.

#### Hearing the tune

I believe you really need to hear a tune before you try to learn to play it. If you don't already know what this one sounds like, and don't have access to a friend who plays it, listen to Göran Hogmark's fiddle recording of it on *Hogmarkarna*, available from the ANA. Göran plays it very well, with a touch of Bingsjö style - he lives in Dalarna - and much personal expression. I of course play my version, whose origin lies in the way Bosse Larsson taught it as a fiddle tune at Scandinavian Week in 1990.

#### Getting ready

This tune is in the key of F, which is a much friendlier key on nyckelharpa than on fiddle. But it's a fiddle tune at heart, and where the fiddle has both an A string and an E string, we have only the A string. We're going to give the left hand a bit of a workout, with position shifts and an occasional stretch.

This is a good time to warm up on the F-major scale. Start on the open C string and play up two octaves to the high C, the 15th key on the A string. Don't worry too much about fingering; think instead about which keys belong to the scale and which don't.

#### Style

Sixteenth-note polskas have an even rhythmic pattern and a subtle but clear phrasing in three. Make the phrasing evident, by slightly stressing each beat (and avoid stressing the backbeat as if it were a reel!) and maybe even giving the first beat of each measure a little extra emphasis.

#### Clues

*Eklundapolskan Nr. 2* has two parts, or *reprises*, each has sixteen measures. It is common that players repeat the first part but not the second, as shown in the notation (page 12). The numbers above the notes show the left-hand fingers I use. Open strings' fingering isn't shown, neither is the fingering when a phrase occurs the second time. The default bowing assumption applies, but not always: a group of four 16th-notes is played with the first two slurred, the second two separate.

#### Playing it

I begin with the left hand in normal position, with nothing unexpected until the fourth-finger jump to the high A at the end of measure 1. I sometimes hold the first note slightly longer, as if it were dotted.

The next checkpoint is when the first finger moves down to C in measure 2. I stretch my hand, and then move it down during the open-string A so as to get the B-flat with the first finger. From B-flat to D in measure 3 is a bit of a stretch, as is the jump up to high B-flat with the fourth finger, but all up, the first line is pretty logical.

There are a few ornaments shown (with little "turn" symbols); the first is in measure 3. I play the given note and the note above it quickly, and then the first note again.

The second line is pretty straightforward. I slur the two eighth-notes at the end of measure 7 and the two at the beginning of measure 8, only because I like the way it sounds. Feel free to experiment.

The third line is a repeat of the first. The fourth line is well-behaved, except for the jump to high B-flat with the fourth finger in measure 15 and the first-finger jump from F to E at the beginning of measure 16. Practice these; it only gets easier.

Feel free to double the last F an octave lower, with the first finger on the C string. That's a good reason to take the melody note with the third finger as shown - that F-F octave is likely to be already in your bag of tricks, using those fingers.

Don't forget to repeat this part. It's traditional, and it postpones having to deal with the difficulties of the second part.

### **Second part**

The second part leaves little doubt that this is a fiddle tune, and the nyckelharpist's skill and cunning come into play. Measures 17-18 require that you're comfortable stretching first finger on C to fourth finger on A. Once you play C, hold that key in for the rest of the measure; that way, you need only actively work the third and fourth fingers.

I bow these measures as shown, with the four notes of the third beat all bowed separately. I like the sound I get that way, and I can start each measure with a down-bow. Speaking of sound, try to be precise with the high notes (F and A in measure 17) and to emphasize them a little more than the lower notes in between.

Measures 19-20 have the same shape, but this phrase starts on B-flat, and I find the octave B-flat to B-flat too big a stretch. The fingering shown moves the first finger up to D as soon as possible, which lets you play the rest of the phrase straightforwardly. Be prepared to move it back down to B-flat for measure 20.

Measures 21-24 lie pretty logically, without any surprises in the fingering as shown. Then this part's second half is almost like the first half, so you're home. Measures 25-32 are almost a repeat of 17-24, which may account for this part's not being repeated.

### **More technique**

A tune with so many notes can be challenging to play smoothly, connectedly. One important step is to begin each note cleanly, with defined bow pressure, but then lighten up so that the duration of the note "sings" rather than "grinds." Another step, and you've heard this from me before, is to play groups of notes - the four sixteenths of a beat, say, or all the notes of a whole measure - as flowing phrases rather than individual notes.

Practice! Listen to the tune on a recording. Start at a relaxed tempo, and play in control. When you make a mistake, start again at the beginning of the measure or the phrase. And, now and then, increase the tempo until the tune falls apart. The more you work, the easier it will get and the better the result will be.

## **Midsommar in Lid**

by Sheila Morris

One of the highlights of my trip to Sweden was getting to experience a village Midsummer celebration, thanks to my "cyber-kompis" Ami Tärnström. Ami and I "met" when I answered a request she had posted on a nyckelharpa bulletin-board on the Internet. We began a correspondence, finding we had a lot in common. When she heard I was coming to Sweden, we began making plans to meet, but it seemed that it might be impossible, as the days I had unscheduled were after she and her family would have left for their summer cottage.

I happened to mention that I hadn't figured out where I should spend the Midsummer holiday. This is a really big deal in Sweden, and I wasn't sure whether to go to one of the big events in Dalarna, or the one at Österbybruk, or what. She wrote back "Have I got a plan for you! Why don't you spend the weekend with my family? We always go visit our friends in the country!" I thought that sounded just lovely.

Then I found out that Ami's friends were Eva Tjömebo (my favorite Swedish folk-singer) and Ingvar and Lena Jörpeland! Pretty exalted company, I thought. I'll be to shy to play, with them around! But Ami assured me that they were "just folks", and anyway, who could pass up an opportunity like that?

As it happened, I ran into the whole group of them at the Nyckelharpa Stämman at Österbybruk, the weekend before Midsummer, so I didn't feel so much like a total stranger when we got to Eva's lovely eighteenth-century farmhouse near the tiny (pop. 200) village of Lid, in Södermanland. A complete list of the twenty or so guests would sound a bit like a "who's who" of today's Swedish folk-music, but I had already begun to suspect that "folk-music culture" pretty much supersedes "national culture" every time, and this experience only confirmed that idea. Although Swedes have the reputation of being slow to warm up to strangers, it was exactly like similar gatherings I've been to in the US -- like a weekend dance/music workshop, for example. Everyone was very welcoming. Most people spoke at least some English, and they were very good about explaining what was going on. And I got many opportunities to perfect my "I play nyckelharpa because I like the way it sounds, I learned Swedish so I could take the course at Ekebyholm" routine. I'd just finish telling one person when someone else would come by with the same questions.

Once everybody had arrived, greeted each other, played for awhile and had a little bit to eat, all the instruments were loaded into a van for the trip to town,

while the rest of us walked the short distance. When we arrived at the village green, there weren't very many people there, but everyone soon showed up. Apparently, the town has gotten into to habit of waiting until they see Eva's party arrive, and then assembling for the festivities, musicians being notoriously casual about time.

Our little clump of twenty musicians made up about ten percent of the total population of the town, as we played "Äppelbo gånglåt" and "Brännvinsmarsch" while they put up the Midsummer pole. Then about half of us ducked out of the circle, while the rest played and Eva sang for the ring-dances and games around the pole. Seeing Lena Jörpeland hopping like a frog with her two sons did a lot to erase my remaining feelings of awe at the company in which I found myself!

There were a few more allspel tunes, and then coffee and cakes (musicians eat free!). It was a gloriously sunny day, and it seemed as though everyone was having a good time. Eventually we piled the instruments back in the van and started back to the farmhouse. I took a brief detour through the church with Per-Ulf Allmo (responsible for many of the photos of harpa players on CD covers and elsewhere), in order to look at the particularly fine 14th-century wall paintings.

Once we were all reassembled, the party started in earnest. It was a *kalas*, or pot-luck, so there was lots and lots of food, most of which looked somewhat different from what you'd see here in Colorado. Everyone kept saying things like "Ellge bakes the best knäckebröd (crisp bread), be sure to get some," and "Oh, and you have to try some of this, it's **very** Swedish!" As this last statement seemed to apply to almost everything, I quickly amassed a huge plate of food and took it out to the long table that had been set up in the front yard. Swedes do their best to live outdoors all summer, as near as I could tell.

But, before you can eat, there has to be a toast and a *snapsvisa* (drinking song). That was the cue for everyone to bring out a bottle of their favorite brännvin. Then we fell to, and ate and drank and sang and ate and played music and drank and danced and ate..... I figured out early on that I'd better not empty my glass every time someone sang a song, and it was a good thing I didn't! This went on for about six hours, when we adjourned to the back porch for dessert and more drinking and singing. After awhile we moved indoors, as the dew was coming out and making all the harpas cranky. So we played some more music, a lot of it being a preview of the Jörpeland's new CD, and a few of us danced (there wasn't room for more than one or two couples to dance, but we did it anyway!). That's the way to dance a bondpolska, let me tell you--at

midnight on Midsummer's eve, in someone's living room, completely surrounded by nyckelharpas!

I faded out early -- late hours are not conducive to following conversations in a foreign language. Their English lasted longer than my Swedish, but my brain was pretty tired after all the excitement. Luckily, Eva's farmhouse is plenty big to house all those visitors. Otherwise, there wouldn't have been quite so much drinking -- you do **not** drink and drive in Sweden. Also, having everyone stay over ensures that the party keeps going on the next day, and gets all that food eaten up!

When I woke up, Leif and Ingvar and Gunnar were sitting out in the yard, singing and playing. For all I know, they were there all night. The three of them have a wonderful line in *sjömansvisor* (sailor songs and chanteys), mostly in Swedish but with a few in excellent English. Though they did have a little trouble with the word "gin", which is spelled the same but pronounced "yin" in Swedish. I felt compelled to comment on this, and for the rest of the day Ingvar would look at me intently whenever we passed, and say, very carefully, "Gin! Gin, gin, gin!"

Sometime in the late morning, everyone started packing up for the hour's drive to the spelmansstämma in Julita. On the way, I got to see an actual wild moose (älg), and several foxes. The stämma itself wasn't such a big event--it was raining off and on for most of the day, but we managed to have our picnic lunch anyway, and got in some good playing on our own. Ami spotted a reporter she knew, and so we got our pictures in the paper, just because we had met on the Internet! They thought that was fascinating! And of course, I had to explain why I play the nyckelharpa. Again.

Eventually, I had to say *farväl* to all my new friends, except for Ellge and Karin, who had kindly offered to drive Peter and me back to Stockholm, and let us sleep at their place, so we could catch the bus for Ekebyholm the next morning. Truly a memorable Midsummer for me!

## Bearing Witness: A Grand Day in the First State

by Rita Leydon ©1997

Oh, what a grand day! A bit on the cool side for late September. Atmosphere so dense and humid I can feel it brushing against my flushed cheeks as I move through it. A low canopy hangs protectively over

Wilmington, shielding the shipyard from the sun -- an extension of mercy on the well wishing throng which has come to bear witness. The throng, several thousand strong, I'm sure, has each and every one arisen early this day. Calendars marked long before -- launch Kalmar Nyckel, 8 a.m. Holding the day in reserve. Time out from routine. A date with the tides. Our various private births, deaths and marriages are pivotal milestones, to be sure, but these commonplace events don't hold a candle to the unique communal observance unfolding under the heavens on this particular Sunday. Those present can feel in the very marrow of their bones that this is a once-in-a-lifetime expression of collective creative human willfulness. A magnificent point of unity around which all our various immigrant woes and triumphs can circumambulate. A just cause for pause and celebration.

Present and partaking are gentle kinsmen from many walks of life. The polished, dignified and well-heeled. The rough, coarse and weather-beaten. Visionary dreamers. Shoulders-to-the-grindstone toilers. Silent admirers. Loud and raucous boosters. Generous philanthropists and pocket change contributors. Politicians, musicians, dancers and musketeers. Old Salts and stow-away wannabees. Pirates, captains, Hook and Peter Pan.

A single-minded focus permeates the crowd -- the fitting observance of a launch, the giving to the waters, of a thoroughly new wooden three masted tall ship, the Kalmar Nyckel. A launch such as this one may have been relatively commonplace in the 1600s, but in our high tech, wired and impersonal 1990s it is decidedly an infrequent occurrence. Serious ships are no longer handmade like this one. Serious ships do not sport gilded carvings of lions, dolphins and such around their periphery. Serious ships are not built by zealous keepers of the flame... or are they? Here, in this place, the citizens took it upon themselves to build a ship, explore a sliver of their history in the form of one sea worthy three masted wooden vessel. This seemingly impossible task came to fruition by creative and imaginative problem solving. Kalmar Nyckel was built largely by skilled volunteers under the direction of a Master Shipbuilder. Today, Kalmar Nyckel is a tangible reality. Silent

testimony to the power of hunger and big dreams. She is a very serious ship.

I got up at five. Dressed in my Vadsbo costume. Vadsbo is a parish in northeastern Västergötland in Sweden. Long black woolen skirt, front protected by a handwoven cotton apron in pale colors, a crisp full-sleeved white linen blouse, and a sky blue tight fitting embroidered vest with scalloped petals encircling the waist. Just right. Then I braided my hair extra nicely. Ready to go. The original Kalmar Nyckel brought the first Swedish settlers to North America in 1638 and is the inspiration for today's full size recreation. She was a Swedish Lady and I am a Swedish girl. As such, I choose to honor this occasion by dressing



Rita Leydon

appropriately. I will be Rita, the Wandering Troubadour. My musical companion is my nyckelharpa (keyed fiddle) whose familial roots reach 500 years into the depths of Sweden's past. Like Kalmar Nyckel, the nyckelharpa is currently basking in the glow of rediscovery and adulation. Both nyckels ("nyckel" means "key") are connections which represent and exemplify something that was and is grand and wonderful in our collective Swedish and human history. Ship and instrument are in a state of ascension. Resurrected and found to be alive with much to contribute. Anachronisms no longer.

With nyckelharpa hanging around my neck and pausing to play a tune every few paces, I find, to my delight, that I can wander anywhere I please. Obstacles fall away as I approach. Crowds part to

embrace me. Smiling faces turn in my direction. "What is that?" "Such a lovely sound!" "My Mormor played nyckelharpa. I haven't heard the sound of it since I was a little girl in Skåne." "Oh, please don't stop!" I am an ambassador, a representative of my culture and musical traditions. This is my gift to the ship. My way of honoring Kalmar Nyckel and those who caused her to become a reality. Some mistakenly think I am part of the official agenda. I am not. This is simply my way of being here. Sharing my heritage. Surely the original Lady ferried a few humble troubadours in her day. Sailors are notoriously fond of music. Something about the sea and its rhythms.



There are standing areas and sitting areas at the shipyards this day. The sitting areas are of varying degrees of specialness, related to monetary sacrifice as well as political level, I suspect. Red velvet ropes attempt to organize various VIPs. I consider myself a VIP. Aren't we all? My attire and purposeful demeanor are my ticket of admittance. Powerful stuff. I look as if I belong, and therefore, I do.

The patient Lady has been freshly repositioned and rigged in preparation for her launch today. The protective and utilitarian scaffolding that enveloped her during construction is gone. She is fully exposed and quite vulnerable, wearing only a fresh coat of paint. Like a silk chemise, the paint hides nothing, yet upholds the Lady's dignity all the while flaunting her unmistakable allure. She is exquisite in form and line. A sensuous and voluptuous feast for all our admiring eyes. Kalmar Nyckel is ready. A monstrously large winch attached to an enormous yellow bulldozer is poised to ease the Lady into her bath. Last minute details are tended to by folks scurrying here and there. Touching up paint. Straightening the soloist's garment before she officially glides onto the stage and into the adoring gaze of her public. We want perfection. First impressions are important. Speeches are spoken. Words tripped over. Orations full of consonants and vowels drift like snow over our expectant faces. The ship's godmother bestows gifts. An ominous sky kindly retains the rain drops it longs to shed. The tides rise on cue.

I am on the outer tip of a small promontory on the upstream side of the ship, beyond the velvet ropes. I can almost reach out and touch Kalmar Nyckel. Milling about me are members of the Coryell Militia. They are part of the program, the cannon crew. Period dressed enthusiasts who ignite black powder with delicious pomp and circumstance any chance they get. Gentlemen as well as ladies. Delightful folks, I discover, residing in Bucks County, just like me. Black powder is explosively serious stuff. All unnecessary bodies are meticulously cleared away prior to detonation. Quivering in my boots I witness the expulsion of one hapless soul after another, fully expecting to be next. Top Gun, a severe, yet dignified gent with puffed out chest studded with rows of shiny brass buttons, a black beat up old tri-cornered hat crowning his probably bald head, strides purposefully over to me, looks down a long nose at the damsel with the funny instrument and foreign period dress. Eyeing me coldly he gruffly declares "You can stay." Thus, summarily spared expulsion, I stay in the garden and witness the historic launch amongst the brave Militia and a contingent of fearsome Vikings huddled by their long boat. I am, in reality, Hilde the Viking Troubadour. What's one more Viking?

The much anticipated moment of release is silent but for an audible collective inhalation, the hushed sound of moving air as all available oxygen in Wilmington is momentarily engaged. Kalmar Nyckel elegantly slips into the water and doesn't disappoint. On her deck are scores of able bodies, her creators, her builders, her near and dear. Each one with a personal tale of attachment and devotion to a wooden ship built in Delaware in the 1990s. We, the witnesses, hold our breath for the duration of the easement, then thunderously exhale with relief and exultation at the safe passage of our Lady's first leg. The crazed dream of a few lone visionaries in the tiny First State has blossomed and become this glorious ship. The distance between dream and reality covered by true grit and common passion.

The Christina River is abuzz with leisure craft vying for close proximity to the action. Coast Guard keeps all comers at bay. Zealous keepers of the invisible line around the Star Attraction. A fire fighting boat displays its prowess by blasting all eight hoses skyward simultaneously -- a veritable birthday cake of sparkles. Kalmar Nyckel is well pleased. She smiles.

What do I care about this boat? What is she to me, a lover of undulating landscapes and firm foundations? As an American, born in Sweden, this boat is a solid piece of my heritage. I too, have felt the pangs of uprooting and the agony of relocation. I too, have suffered the joys and attendant sorrows of yearning for and forging a meaningful relationship with the land of my origins. I admire and respect the vision, courage, brave dignity, perseverance and sacrifice that went into the creation of this fine vessel. My respect is larger than flag-waving Swedish sentimentality, for the endeavor is truly one of human effort propelled by pristine passion. Symbolic of embers that smolder in hearts of men and women desiring to improve their lives -- be it the 1630s or the 1990s. My sympathetic strings resonate. I marvel at the eloquent craftsmanship she inspired then and now. The blistered, callused hands that willed her into being. It is in my nature to gravitate towards extreme acts of passion. Kalmar Nyckel is an extreme expression of passion. She causes my breast to swell with pride at simply being a member of the human race.

Kalmar Nyckel is a grand ship. A tall ship. Not quite finished yet, but she will be within a year. Her dream is to sail the North Atlantic to Sweden salty swell by salty swell, nautical measure by nautical measure, propelled only by the winds and currents that choose to bestow blessings on her effort. A maiden voyage extraordinary in the 1990s, yet commonplace only a few centuries ago. I harbor a budding fantasy, a germinating seed dream. So new that I'm neither familiar nor comfortable with it. Haven't tried it on for size more than once or twice. A foggy free form flirtation titillating my inner

recesses. An apparition of immodest proportions. The very idea frightens me as it thrills me. I desire to be among the hands on board. I desire to know and feel such a journey. I desire to know how big the ocean is. Wave by wave, whitecap by whitecap. Surely there is room for me and my nyckelharpa.

## Recordings and Books for Sale

See the enclosed catalog for our full offerings. Due to the increasing number of recordings and books we carry, we have decided to not include a full listing with each issue any more. Instead, only the newest items will be listed in each issue. A full listing will go out once a year, and is always available for the asking. Just contact either Bart or Gail, or visit the ANA Web site which will always have a full listing. Addresses and the Web site URL are on the last page of this newsletter.

## Upcoming Events

### Mar/Apr 1998: Nyckelharpa Workshop in Seattle

Bart Brashers will teach the 3rd in a series of nyckelharpa workshops "before he leaves Seattle". The exact date hasn't been set yet, but it will likely be in late March or early April. Contact Trella to influence the choice of the date! For more information, contact

Trella Hastings  
4650 89TH Ave SE  
Mercer Island WA 98040  
206-232-1912  
mullensd@accessone.com

### 12-19 Jun 1998: Scandia Camp Mendocino

Scandia Camp Mendocino takes place in the lovely redwood forests about 11 miles inland from the town of Mendocino, California. Days are filled with dance, music and culture sessions, evenings are party time. We live in rustic wooden cabins in the forest and dine on gourmet food.

From Föllinge, Sweden: dancers Ernst Grip & Beret Bertilsdotter, and musicians Mats & Ulf Andersson. From Hallingdal, Norway: dancers Karin Brennesvik & Halgrim Berg, and musician Harald Knutsen. Becky Weis will teach **nyckelharpa**.

1998 Fees(Tentative): Dancers - \$475, Musicians - \$445. Work Scholarship (8 available) - \$225. For more information, contact

Nancy Linscott  
53 Presidio Avenue  
Mill Valley CA 94941  
(415) 383-1014 [Pacific time]  
NancyLinscott@compuserve.com

or

Roo Lester  
(630) 920-0159 [Central time]  
DancingRoo@aol.com

### 27 Jun - 4Jul 1998: Ditte Andersson at Buffalo Gap

Scandinavian Week happens every summer on the week that includes the 4th of July weekend. The current venue for the week is Buffalo Gap. It is in West Virginia 2 hours west of Washington D.C., convenient to Dulles airport. All cabins have beds with bedboards, electricity, indoor plumbing, and places for storage. The dance pavilion is one of the best dance spaces in the country. There is also a private lake with sand beach and a delicious log sauna.

From Uppland, Sweden: **nyckelharpa** teacher **Ditte Andersson**. From Småland, Sweden: dance teachers Magnus & Susanne Gustafsson, and music teachers Toste Länne, Marie Länne Persson and Anders Svensson, as well as Magnus. Bruce Sagan will teach beginning **nyckelharpa** as always. Roo Lester, Larry Harding, Andrea Hoag, Loretta Kelley and Gay Kohl will also be there. For more information, contact

Judy Barlas  
MFAC  
P.O. BOX 7151  
Ann Arbor MI 48107-7151  
313-327-3636 (East Coast time)  
jbarlas@pilot.msu.edu

### 10-12 Jul 1998: The ANA Nyckelharpa Stämman

This year's Nyckelharpa Stämman will feature **Ditte Andersson** from Uppland, Sweden. It will be held in the New York City area, most likely in Manhattan. The weekend will feature a workshop and jam session on Friday afternoon/evening, an all-day workshop on Saturday, a dance on Saturday evening, a brunch and workshop/jam session on Sunday, and a Sunday evening concert. More complete information will be listed in the next issue of Nyckel Notes, or contact this year's Stämman organizer:

Tim Newcomb  
579 Hampshire Hill Rd  
Worcester VT 05682  
802-229-4604 (H) 802-229-4907 (W)  
tnewcomb@aol.com

# Nyckelharpa Care

by Bart Brashers

## Resonance String

In the last issue of *Nyckelharpan*, the newsletter of *Föreningen Nyckelharpan* (the Swedish Nyckelharpa Society), Sture Möllerman wrote an article about nyckelharpa strings. I was intrigued by his choice of gauges for the understrings (resonance strings). In the past, I've heard of only two schemes, both of which make use of guitar strings. They are (listed from lowest string to highest string):

	Type	Diameter (inches)	Diameter (mm)
G <sup>*</sup> , A, B <sup>o</sup> , B, C, C <sup>*</sup>	wound	0.021	0.53
D, E <sup>o</sup> , E, F, F <sup>*</sup> , G	plain	0.014	0.36

and

	Type	Diameter (inches)	Diameter (mm)
G <sup>*</sup> , A, B <sup>o</sup> , B	wound	0.024	0.61
C, C <sup>*</sup> , D, E <sup>o</sup>	wound	0.021	0.53
E, F, F <sup>*</sup> , G	plain	0.014	0.36

I prefer the second alternative -- I find the D and E<sup>o</sup> sound bad (too loose) if I use plain strings. I don't think there's enough tension to make the pitch stable.

Sture got D'Addario brand guitar strings, with the following gauges:

	Type	Diameter (inches)	Diameter (mm)
G <sup>*</sup>	wound	0.025	0.64
A	wound	0.024	0.61
B <sup>o</sup>	wound	0.023	0.58
B	wound	0.022	0.56
C	wound	0.021	0.53
C <sup>*</sup>	wound	0.020	0.51
D	plain	0.019	0.48
E <sup>o</sup>	plain	0.018	0.46
E	plain	0.017	0.43
F	plain	0.016	0.41
F <sup>*</sup>	plain	0.015	0.38
G	plain	0.014	0.36

You can of course use other brands than D'Addario, and it's up to your individual tastes as to whether you get bronze or steel. I just purchased a set of understring from my local "folksy" music store for \$15 plus tax (\$1 for the plain strings, \$1.50 for the wound). Changing your understrings is a cheap way to make your nyckelharpa sound a lot better. It's amazing to me sometimes, when I see older nyckelharpas with their original strings still on them. Just think of how much

better twenty dollars and some time would make them sound!

After changing his resonance strings to the above configuration, and changing his playing strings using Prim brand cello strings for the lower three playing strings along with a "Jerker Special" brand A-string (0.55 mm, 0.022 inch) he once again got the tone he loved from his 1981 Eric Sahlström nyckelharpa.

In the past I've used plain guitar strings that were 0.021 inch in diameter for the playing A-string with good results. I found the 0.022 inch strings too hard, but that's a taste issue and depends a lot on your particular instrument.

For the playing strings, I really like Prim brand nyckelharpa strings. They are all wound, even the A-string, to produce a much more even tone from string to string. Here's their product numbers, along with the available gauges:

A	552810	Soft (0.45 mm) Medium (0.50 mm)
C	552820	Medium, Orchestra
G	552830	Medium
C	552840	Medium

Go to your local music store that carries Prim brand strings, and ask them to order nyckelharpa strings for you. I think they are very similar to Prim's cello strings (they even come in cello string envelopes, with a gold sticker that says "Nyckelharpa" stuck on) except for two very important features. They are the right length for a nyckelharpa, instead of about a foot too long; and the colored thread that's wound around the string at the ball end stops sooner. In the past when I've used cello strings, sometimes the thread-covered part was so long that it would reach past the bridge, to the vibrating part of the string. Obviously, this dampens the string, which is not tolerable. I've had to tie a knot in the string and use that knot as if it were the ball end to attach the string to the fine-tuner. It works, but it doesn't look very nice, and the tail sticks up and gets in the way so you have to cut it off and then you have a sharp end of a string to poke yourself on instead...

If your local music store or violin shop doesn't want your business and won't order nyckelharpa strings, call Armin Barnett at 206-632-2819 and he'll mail them to you for \$60 plus shipping, and tax if you live in Washington.

After changing your playing strings, you should really take the time to intonate your nyckelharpa (see the Nyckelharpa Care column in the first issue of Nyckel Notes, Oct 95). It makes it sound so much better to have your intervals be in tune! Sure it's scary the first time you intonate a nyckelharpa, but you get faster at it with experience. I do it each time I change my strings. Last time, it only took me 25 minutes.

# Eklundapolskan Nr. 2

by Viksta-Lasse

2 3 2 1 2 4 3 3 4 3 1 2 1 2 1 1 2 2 1 2 4 3 3 1 3 2 1

3 2 3 4 1 3 4 3 1 3 4 3 1 3 1 3 3 2 3 4 1 3 2 2 3 2 3

2 1 2 3 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 3 1 4 3 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 1 3

1 3 1 3 1 4 1 4 1 1 3 1 3 1 4 1 4 1 1 1 2 3 1 3 1 4 1 4 1 1 1 2 3 1 3 1 4 1 4 1

1 3 1 3 1 4 1 4 1 3 1 2 3 2 3 4 4 3 2 3 2 1 3 4 3 2 1 3 4 3 4 3 1 1

1 3 4 3

transcr Matt Fichtenbaum '97

### Polska från Kumla

*Trad.*

Musical score for 'Polska från Kumla' in 3/4 time, key of D major. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody features eighth and sixteenth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes in the fourth measure. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff includes a repeat sign at the beginning. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line.

*Trans. Bart Brashers Jan 1998*

### Polska efter Skomakare Viger

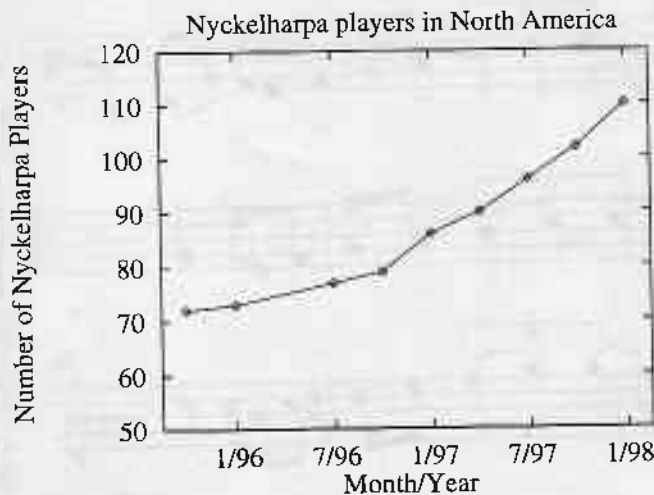
Hambo

*Trad.*

Musical score for 'Polska efter Skomakare Viger' in 3/4 time, key of D major. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff includes a repeat sign at the beginning. The fourth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line.

*Trans. Bart Brashers Jan 1988*

# Editor's Note



### Member count

There are now 110 nyckelharpa players in North America, of which 8 are in Canada.

The ANA now has 140 Members, 83 of which play nyckelharpa. 6 of our members live in Scandinavia, and 6 in Canada.

### Grattis! (Congrats)

Congratulations are due to not one but two(!) ANA board members on the occasion of their engagements. Becky Weis and Garry Nord got engaged last fall, and will be married late this summer. Bart Brashers (your humble editor) and Margaret Sigalove got engaged just before Christmas, but haven't set a date yet.

### The Future

I've gotten some comments lately wondering what will happen to the ANA when I graduate, so I thought I'd let you know my plans. I plan to finish my Ph.D. this June, and, after some vacation in New Zealand, move to Carrboro, North Carolina. Carrboro is a 'suburb' of Chapel Hill, where Margaret is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Early Childhood Special Education.

The ANA will continue to be a Non-Profit Corporation registered with the State of Washington, but I plan to get a PO Box in NC for the official ANA mail. Keep a lookout for the announcement of a new address.

The Web pages will still be at the same URL for at least another year, but will then be moved to a permanent site.

Vänliga Hälsningar,

- Bart

# ANA Information

## The American Nyckelharpa Association

The ANA is a non-profit corporation dedicated to fostering the nyckelharpa, its music and its dance in North America. We sponsor and produce music and dance workshops across the country featuring the traditions of the nyckelharpa.

## The ANA is on the World Wide Web

For those of you with Internet access, check out our home page, where you'll find color pictures from the Nyckelharpa Stämman, pictures of Swedish and American nyckelharpa players, a nice history of the nyckelharpa, fliers for our events, and lots lots more. The URL is

<http://www.atmos.washington.edu/~brash/ana.html>

## Nyckel Notes

Published quarterly (Jan, Apr, Jul and Oct), edited by Bart Brashers. Send submissions to "Nyckel Notes" at the address below, or preferably via e-mail to [brash@atmos.washington.edu](mailto:brash@atmos.washington.edu)

**Deadline for the next issue: 31 Mar 98.**

### The American Nyckelharpa Association MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W)  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Do you play nyckelharpa? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, can we publish your name in our roster (sent to other nyckelharpa players)? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

How did you first get interested in the nyckelharpa?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form and a check for \$10 (individuals) or \$25 (institutions) made out to the ANA to

The American Nyckelharpa Association  
 PO Box 45126  
 Seattle WA 98145-0126