



*Peter Hedlunds Nyckelharpskola*  
**Your Personal Trainer**

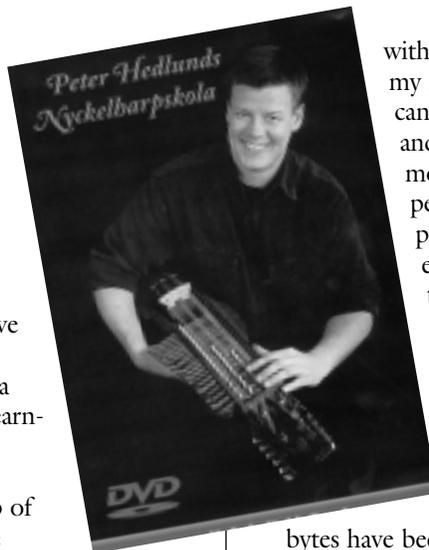
*by Rita Leydon*

Who would have guessed that a scant four years after I first dared to imagine myself learning to play that bizarre Swedish instrument called a nyckelharpa, I would be partners in a pioneering business venture with two time world champion of the instrument—Peter Puma Hedlund, the king himself? Not me. No sir. Never in a million years. Not on my map. But here we are, Peter and I, on the verge of releasing upon the, as yet unsuspecting, nyckelharpa community a revolutionary new type of learning tool.

Fireworks! Cizz ... Boom ... Bah!!

Spanning the centuries in a great leap of faith, we have joined together, in intimate exchange, the nyckelharpa and DVD—the information darling of the decade. An imperceptible eight hundred year age difference stands between the nyckelharpa’s roots and the appearance of DVD on the ever moving technological timeline. Can it work? What will the neighbors think?

Peter, ever the instructor, has dreamed for years of creating a teaching aid—utilizing both video and audio, with the inclusion of printed text and notes—that could optimally illustrate how one goes about learning to play his beloved nyckelharpa. I am a creative, visual arts, right brain, type



with a deep and long standing attachment to my Macintosh computers. We two volatile volcanoes chanced to meet a couple of years ago and our brains intermingled and found common ground in the delicious desire to bring a perhaps-not-so-wild idea to fruition. Our personal motives are, of course, quite different, being that we bring totally unique skills to the task, he as artist, me as producer, both of us resonating with yearning to create something where there was nothing before. To blaze a new trail. To reveal a new horizon.

It is now one year since we decided to do this and our project is just about ready for harvest. Gigabytes upon gigabytes have been delivered—on CD-ROM, DVD-R, and DLT tape—and are in the capable hands of a replication facility in western Canada. I am Nervous Nellie, pacing the floorboards, awaiting my shrink wrapped babies to be delivered to me in time for winging our way to the mid

June spelmansstämma at Österbybruk in Sweden for their official send off into the wild blue yonder.

Perhaps you are wondering what in the world I am talking about. I am talking about the first volume in a planned series of three nyckelharpa workshop volumes in DVD format. If you touch no

**Inside:**

**Spela Bättre** . . . . . 2  
**Swedish Music at Augusta** . . . . . 5  
**Gulamåla Viten** . . . . . 7  
**The Eric Sahlström Institute** . . . 9  
**CD Review** . . . . . 10  
**A Nyckelharpa Moment** . . . . . 13

*continued on page 12*

**SPELA BÄTTRE!***The Only Way to Improve Your Playing*

# Playing Harmony

*by Matt Fichtenbaum*

Harmony playing is an essential part of modern Swedish fiddling. For me, it is the harmony voice or voices that help give a tune its depth and emotional content. Playing harmony is less a part of nyckelharpa tradition, although today's players are playing more in small ensembles and using harmony. Recordings such as *Till Eric* and *Nyckelharpa Orchestra* are rich in multi-voice music. And the 1969 recording *Spelmanslåtar från Uppland* featured Gösta Sandström's skillful harmonies to Eric Sahlström's brilliant playing.

**Starting points**

For some people, playing harmony comes naturally. If you find yourself singing harmony in church, or in the audience at a concert, that's a good start. If you play guitar or piano and just sort of know when the chords change and what they are, that's good, too. And if a tune's sudden discord, bit of tension, or glorious chordal resolution reaches into your body and squeezes and brings tears to your eyes and chills to your spine, that may be best of all, for then you know why you want to play harmony and why you'll do anything necessary to get there.

**Music theory?**

It's true that an understanding of keys and chords does a lot to explain why a particular harmony part works. But if you don't already speak music theory, then it's an awfully dry, academic pursuit on the way towards being a harmony player. Better to learn it as you go, by finding patterns and relationships in what you play and collecting enough "Aha!" moments that you become enlightened.

**Words to the wise**

These are some points from thoughtful harmony players I've met in Sweden and in the U.S. They guide my own harmony playing, and I think they're worth mentioning here.

- The second (harmony) voice is there to support the melody; it is not a "tune" in its own right. Understatement is good.
- It's generally traditional for the harmony voice to spend most of its time below the melody. For me, this is part of "support, not outshine."
- The harmony voice's rhythm and "shape" should follow

the melody's. This is particularly important when playing dance music, as the dancers need solid, consistent rhythm in their music.

- Traditional Swedish style does not use as many chords as it might. "Simplify" is a good word in this context. If you're accustomed to French-Canadian accompaniment, with lots of "passing" chords, you'll find Swedish style very different. Besides, simplifying the chords used makes it easier and less confusing to get started as a harmony player.

**So let's play, already**

At its best, what one plays for harmony is subjective, intuitive, driven by feeling more than rules. Given a bunch of alternatives, you choose the one that best expresses how you feel and what you want to put into the music.

But at the start, when you're trying to raise your number of alternatives from zero to one, you can take a few things on faith and follow a few oversimplified directives. Please consider the next paragraphs as those guided first steps.

**Those chords, again**

I believe a good harmony part shows awareness of the tune's chordal structure by having its "important notes" match the current chord. The "important" notes usually fall on the beats, and for an eighth-note polska, the first and third beats are more "important" than the second. In between the beats, the harmony part can be freer, "connecting the dots" in a smooth, pleasing fashion.

But how do you know what the chords are, and which one is in effect when? A very good question. First, we speak of the key a tune is in. *Båtsman Däck* is in G, *Josefins Dopvals*, as Väsen plays it, is in F, and from the key, especially for major keys, we can infer the likely chords. And...

Remember arpeggios, the notes of a chord played in sequence? A lot of nyckelharpa tunes are assembled from arpeggios. This gives you two immediate bits of wisdom:

- The notes of the arpeggio tell you the chord currently in effect
- Any other note of the same arpeggio is likely to be a good harmony note.

I apply these motivations in *Polska efter Båtsman Däck*, the familiar tune from Ceylon Wallin. Measures 1-2 use the

notes G-B-D, the G-major arpeggio; for harmony, I just use the note below (except for the first note, where I start on a low G, the root note of the key of G, for appropriate solemnity).

Measure 3 is not so obvious. It's a scale run, not an arpeggio, and the notes on the beat are C, A, and F#, suggesting a D (or D7) chord. What to do?

Here's another, overly simplified, rule of thumb for scale fragments: when in doubt, try playing thirds, two scale steps below the melody note. I've shown that in Measure 3; it works, and it leads to a good note, the F# that harmonizes the A in measure 4.

To help find a likely chord candidate, you can try playing long single notes or double-stops as accompaniment. I can believe in either a G chord or a D chord for Measure 3, but I subjectively prefer staying on the G chord and switching to D in Measure 4, which seems like a more momentous place in the tune. The key word is subjective; find the way you like and play it that way. I've shown, in between the two staff lines, the chords that I hear.

In Measure 9, the notes on the beat are E and C, suggesting a C chord. I started the harmony voice on C, a

*continued on next page*

## Polska efter Båtsman Däck

in two voices, with arpeggio harmony

The musical score is presented in two systems of two staves each. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. The third system contains measures 9 through 13. Chord symbols (G, D, C) are placed below the staves to indicate the harmony. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in measures 9, 10, and 13.

**Playing Harmony***continued from page 3*

third below the melody, and followed the melody. Measure 10's notes are D and B, suggesting a G chord; again, the note a third below the melody is in the same chord. Measure 11 is like Measure 3, and Measure 12 is a G arpeggio. You can hear that the B part's second half strongly resembles its first half - the same chords work and the harmony voice basically does what it does in the first half.

Here's another suggestion while you're getting started. Play a third below the melody, until you land, at an important time, on a note that's not in the right chord. Again, you can find the "right chord" by experimenting with single-note accompaniment. Or a harmony note might just plain sound wrong, and that will inspire you to try another.

But wait a minute...

The careful reader, having noted the suggestion to "play a third below the melody," might well observe that much of the second voice as written does exactly that. Why not make this — playing a third away from the melody —

**Ur-polskan ("The primal polska")**

In two voices, with arpeggio harmony

The musical score for "Ur-polskan" is presented in two voices. The top staff contains the melody, and the bottom staff contains the harmony. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into six systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 5, 9, 13). Chords are indicated by letters C, G, F, and G. The score includes triplets and repeat signs.

the rule, and skip all that “chord” stuff of the last few paragraphs?

A good question. First, there are places that playing a third below the melody just doesn't work, and thinking in terms of the chords can help you understand where and why. For example, when the melody is on the root (first) note of the current chord, the note a third below is not in that chord and so it's not a good choice for harmony. *Båtsman Däck's* very last note is G, and the chord is a G, with notes G, B, D. If you harmonized that melody note with the note a third below — an E — it would sound odd, or at least non-traditional.

Instead, I harmonize it with the B a sixth (five scale notes) below. That B is one octave below the B that would be a third above the melody note, so we're still close to the concept of thirds.

Or, you might choose the other note of the G chord, a D, as a harmony note. Try that, and listen to how it sounds. G down to D is the interval called a fourth; G up to D an octave higher is a fifth. Fourths and fifths as harmony certainly sound different from thirds and sixths; some people find them eerie and not as sweet. Experiment and find out how your own ears react.

Second (yes, there was a first, three paragraphs back), being aware of a tune's chords is good background for harmonizing more complex tunes. Tunes in minor keys, for example, rich in opportunities to add a little weight or tension with a well-chosen harmony note. Or tunes that go beyond the basic three chords. *Hardrevet*, for example, in the B part.

### One more tune

I have followed the same approach to a harmony part for Ur-polskan, another common Uppland arpeggio bondpolska you may know. Rather than go through it in detail, I'll point out a few highlights:

- This tune is in C major, so the basic chords are different from those of *Båtsman Däck*. This is an appropriate time to point out that the basic chords for a tune in a major key are usually the ones built on the first, fourth, and fifth notes of the key's scale. In C, then, they're C, F, and G major.
- The melody starts out on C, and I start on the same note in the harmony. Then, I just wait one note to let the melody climb up the arpeggio, and follow it in the harmony, one note behind. Instant chord-appropriate parallel harmony.
- The first three notes of the harmony part are all the same. Instead of the expected two-notes-slurred on the second beat of Measure 1, I use two up-bows in succession to articulate the two notes.
- The melody has a few spots with interesting rhythm. The triplets in Measures 9 and 11, and the four sixteenths in Measure 14. Rather than having the harmony

exactly follow the same rhythm, I let it stay with the normal polska beat, strengthening the rhythmic foundation and allowing the difference between the two voices to be heard.

- Note that some of this tune's chord changes occur in the middle of a measure. You can use the harmony voice to make these changes more or less prominent, as you see fit.

### The harmony player's biggest problem

Playing harmony — playing the second voice in a tune — requires that there be a *first* voice to play with. And in this big land, with our rare and wondrous instruments, we don't always have that other player handy. What to do?

You can record yourself playing melody, and then play along with that. Or, you can play along with your favorite CD, or a recording you made at a lesson or workshop. Many of the ANA's allspel tunes can be found as sound files on the ANA web site. If you have a fiddler or flute player among your friends, maybe you can share your interest in Swedish music and come up with a new music buddy.

### Going forward

There's much, much more to be said about harmony. Style issues, music theory, common figures, whom we admire as harmony players and why. Maybe we can find more to talk about in a future issue of *Nyckel Notes*. In the meantime, enjoy these tunes, practice your arpeggios, think at least a little bit about chords. And please let me know what else you'd like to find in this discussion. 🐾



*Participants at a recent workshop with Sture Hogmark: left to right: Bart Brashers, Enid Bennion, Stewart Pugh, Virginia Thompson, Dave Mullens, Lynn Erickson, Sture Hogmark. Sitting are Karin Osborn and Trella Hastings.*

# Hillebola Schottis

trad. Uppland

The musical score for "Hillebola Schottis" is presented in a single system with eight staves. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 2/4. The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1: Treble clef, 2/4 time, G major. Measures 1-4.
- Staff 2: Treble clef, 2/4 time, G major. Measures 5-8. A first ending bracket labeled "1" spans measures 7 and 8.
- Staff 3: Treble clef, 2/4 time, G major. Measures 9-12. A first ending bracket labeled "1" spans measures 11 and 12.
- Staff 4: Treble clef, 2/4 time, G major. Measures 13-16. A first ending bracket labeled "5" spans measures 15 and 16.
- Staff 5: Treble clef, 2/4 time, G major. Measures 17-20. A first ending bracket labeled "5" spans measures 19 and 20.
- Staff 6: Treble clef, 2/4 time, G major. Measures 21-24. A first ending bracket labeled "9" spans measures 23 and 24.
- Staff 7: Treble clef, 2/4 time, G major. Measures 25-28. A first ending bracket labeled "9" spans measures 27 and 28.
- Staff 8: Treble clef, 2/4 time, G major. Measures 29-32. A first ending bracket labeled "13" spans measures 31 and 32.

# Gulamåla Viten, Harpa-Player From Valö

By Bertil Georgsson and Karin Alinder  
Translated by Sheila P. Morris

From *Nyckelharpan* 4/2000 [originally from Upplands fornminnesförening och hembygdsförbunds annual publication, 1943, under the title *Typer och tidsdrag från Uppländsk bygd*]

In Uppland, as is well-known, there have always been a lot of fiddlers. Around all of them, and especially around those who have stood heads above the rest, the flora of legend has grown full and luxuriant. Most of these stories are not just about the fiddler's music, but also about their ability to work magic and throw dust in people's eyes. It would almost appear that all these fiddlers were greater or lesser wizards. Like that giant among Uppland fiddlers, Byss Kalle, and also his contemporary, Gulamåla Viten, both nyckelharpa-fiddlers. The latter's life and fortunes will be told here, in short form.

Gulamåla Viten was actually named Jan Ersson and was born in the village Gålarmera (or Gålamera, in older census records) in Valö parish, in 1799. No trace of any Walloon ancestry can be found to account for his musical gifts, even if one goes back as far as the census books themselves, that is, to the mid-1700s, but of course that doesn't mean it isn't there. "Gulamåla" is an alteration of Gålarmera, and the added name "Viten" seems to have been acquired because he always rode a white horse when he travelled as a musician. It could even be so simple, as that the horse's name gradually got applied to the owner. ["Viten" means "the white one" in Swedish, like our calling a horse "Whitey"] Together with his father, he worked the family farm, passed down to the family's sons for generations, and which Viten eventually inherited himself. He was married two times, his first wife being Maja Ersdotter, the second Brita Persdotter. He had seven children in all. The clergy has not had any comments about him. He is mentioned in the census and other documents just like other people at that time. The frame around his life is every bit as simple and ordinary as possible.

As a farm manager, Viten made little or no impression on his time. When one caught a glimpse of the well-known white horse, one didn't think that it was the farmer from Gålarmera who was riding by. No, it was the fiddler and

wizard, "the hero of a hundred adventures", who travelled to some feast with his notorious nyckelharpa. Then there came a smile to many lips, a happy gleam in many eyes, or perhaps a thrill of fear ran up the spine, depending upon the sort of experience one had had in his company. Viten was cheerful and talkative, and if he met someone along the way, he stopped so often to have a chat that his horse apparently came to expect it and would stop on his own. And besides, one didn't dare do anything other than stand and talk as long as Viten wished, because he was actually more notorious as a wizard than as "härpa"-player [Uppland dialect often uses the broader "ä" in place of the more open "a"]. It is true that he was ordinarily viewed as good-tempered, even pious, but when he was out on a fiddler's journey, the piety vanished with the consumption of "three drops" of a liquid which is supposed to have been so strong that the drops "hopped around each other in the glass."

Even without these drops, he could apparently work magic. One time he was driving along in a convoy of other farmers on a trip to Gävle. Viten was day-dreaming a bit on his load, and what should happen than he ended up in the ditch. There was nothing he could do but ask the next driver in line for help, even though he happened to be an old antagonist. This man not only refused to help, but shouted angrily: "Drink a little less, you boozer, and then you could drive like other folks!"

But he should never have said this. An instant later his own load lay upside-down in the ditch.

As a musician, Viten was outshone by his contemporary, Byss Kalle. He most likely composed his own tunes like other musicians, but they show so much of Byss Kalle's influence that one cannot really speak of Viten as a composer in his own right. Two tunes have been named for him, however, namely *Gulamåla-polskan* and *Gulamåla Vitens vals*, both included in Ruben Liljefors' *Uppländsk Folkmusik*. Of these, the polska is certainly inspired by Byss Kalle. For example, it is a so-called sixteenth-note polska, a type the latter especially loved and lovingly used, unlike most other Uppland fiddlers.

In the stories which have been passed down to our time, Viten seldom figures only as a musician, but rather

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music and magic are blended together, often in humorous ways.

For example, one time Viten was to play for a group of Walloon smiths in Lövestabruk. Not suspecting anything, he started to play as usual, but to his surprise he soon noticed that there must be another magician among his listeners.

This person was amusing himself by “taking off” the strings of Viten’s harpa. This expression meant, the Viten could no longer get the strings to sound, although they were still on the instrument. Once Viten realized what was going on, he seems to have calmly taken something out of his breast pocket and stuffed it into the top of his boot. No one saw what it was, but it must have been effective, because after this the other was unable to work any more magic, and now Viten began to play so that the buttons and hooks were torn out of his listeners’ clothing.

Maybe this is the same story which Liljefors related in *Uppländsk Folkmusik* and which is repeated here: “So it is told, that Byss Kalle and Gulamåla Viten would play together for a wedding in Lövesta. While the ceremony went on in the church, the two musicians stood outside with their nyckel-harpas, ready to join in with the bridal-march when the wedding-party came out of the church. They had agreed not to fight with each other; but just as the wedding-party came out and the musicians began the wedding-march, the hairs of Byss Kalle’s bow began to fall out one after the other, until they were all gone. But Byss Kalle was prepared, he took out another bow which he had in his boot, and now everything went well, until they came to the family home. After everyone had had the best of everything, food and drink in great quantities, the dancing began, but right in the middle of the bridal-polska, Byss Kalle’s big bass string broke. He was ready this time, too. The big bass string on a nyckelharpa usually lasts for about ten years, and Byss Kalle had put on a new one shortly before the wedding. He pretended there was nothing unusual, and calmly replaced the string, and so the playing and dancing continued for a while, until one, two, three—Gulamåla Viten’s harpa fell to the floor in splinters. This made Gulamåla Viten angry—he sprang up from his chair and clapped his hands together in front of Byss Kalle. This caused him to become completely stiff, and not be able to move so much as a finger. He then asked someone nearby to take out a little flask which he had in his pocket, and give him a little drop from it. Once Byss Kalle had taken this, he came slowly back to life again, and it didn’t take long before the dance was in full swing again, and now with no further fighting, since Gulamåla Viten no longer had a harpa and he left the party and didn’t come back.

Gulamåla Viten’s life was certainly a difficult one: a

farmer’s hard-working life, interspersed with music and magic, long nights at parties and of course a lot of schnapps. If one lives his life so, he will soon be exhausted. He died in 1846, only 47 years old, while he was playing for a wedding in Håkanbo, a little village not far from Lövesta. It is said that the night before his death, he called out three

times for his mother and that the door to his room slammed open at his third cry. This is interpreted to mean that Viten had a premonition that his life would soon be over.

At the wedding in Håkanbo, it seems to have been apparent right from the beginning that “the magic power” around him was especially strong that day. His hat kept flying off, and only with the help of innocent children was he able to get it to stay on his head.

So the wedding went on its merry way, and after the dance Viten and a marksman, the so-called “Håkanbo-Jan”, ended up in one of the cottage’s rooms, where they continued to argue about which of them was the better magician. Jan was naturally also a little bit of a magician. They went so far as to place a bet

on this, in a particularly secretive way, namely with hands under the table and with much muttering of oaths and magic rhymes. It’s no wonder that the poor fellow who happened to be in the room with them and so became a witness to these events, suddenly thought that “the whole room was filled with little devils”. At last Viten sank down on the table, saying: “Now I have had enough.” Håkanbo-Jan then left the room, and all the little devils seem to have vanished at the same time. When people came into the house the next morning, they found Viten dead under the table.

According to another version, Viten was offered an extra-strong schnapps during the wedding, which inspired him to play like no one had ever heard before. He played as if possessed, the bow ran across the strings and finally broke with a final shrieking chord. At that instant, Gulamåla Viten is supposed to have dropped dead where he stood. Which is the true version cannot be determined.

In an old Bible, which Viten gave as a confirmation-present to one of his sons, Anders—who incidentally inherited his father’s musical gifts and became a skilled clarinet-player, “Anders Hanso of Kiln”—another of the sons, Knut, has written about his father: “Much mourned and Missed by his Old mother And Wife and Children who previously were toGether and now are aPart So that the one is here and the other is there beyond us.” His memory within his family seems to have been only the best. There he was not first of all a musician and magician, but rather a son, husband and father, the strength holding them together, which was bitterly missed when it suddenly disappeared. ♣

**Once Viten realized what was going on, he seems to have calmly taken something out of his breast pocket and stuffed it into the top of his boot. No one saw what it was, but it must have been effective, because after this the other was unable to work any more magic.**

# The Eric Sahlström Institute

by Sheila P. Morris

A year-long course in nyckelharpa! I think it was my second time at Ekebyholm that I first heard about this great opportunity. Esbjörn Hogmark stood up during the daily lunchtime announcements and started talking about the Eric Sahlström Institute in Tobo, and how they were starting a course on the model of Malungs Folkhögskola (Folk High School, like a school for the arts focussed on folk music, dance, and handcrafts), but with nyckelharpa as the main subject.

Well, I really wanted to go. I talked to my boss, and it may, in fact, be possible sometime, though not this upcoming year. But in the process of checking everything out, I learned a lot about the structure of the course, primarily from Ditte Andersson, one of the teachers.

The course contains different subjects and deals with more than only nyckelharpa-playing. The intent is that the course could be used as preparation for university-level work, but the extra subjects should be useful to any folk-musician. They are dance, singing, theory, and folk-music history.

Now, this is a topic that interests me greatly—as you may know, I am a strong proponent of the concept that learning the dances that the tunes belong to greatly enhances one's ability to play them with the right sort of rhythm and “svung”, or swing. Swedish folk-music is very syncopated, and every district has its own syncopation and style of playing. Learning the dances really helps the fiddler feel the correct style, and then they can watch the dancers and adjust tempo and other things accordingly. I believe that this even helps people who never intend to play for dancing, because it is these little details that make the music sound Swedish and not Irish or Old-timey or whatever.

How does singing help? Well, I don't know about the rest of you, but I find it much easier to learn a tune if it's already in my head, and singing or humming is a very portable way to practice! Anyway, it's fun. Swedes sing a lot, or at least the musicians and dancers all seem to, any chance they get. At parties, driving in the car, in restaurants... And this class includes the old Swedish art of tralling, or singing dance tunes without words.

Theory gives you a basis for creating comps and harmony parts, as well as for making your own tunes, and would once again show what it is that makes Swedish folk music sound the way it does. This class also covers things like how one interprets and styles a tune from written music, so that it still sounds right. Because the music is so idiosyncratic, you can't always play it exactly as written, but need to fill in

the sorts of little details that make a bondpolska a bondpolska and not a hambo. This course is not required, unless you plan to go on to the university level, but I think it would be a mistake to miss it. It is usually taught by Niklas Roswall.

History brings a sense of the scope of the traditions that we're trying to recreate. That's not to say that you have to play traditionally, but it's nice to know the background of what you're doing. This class naturally focusses on the history of the nyckelharpa and Uppland music. It is taught by Per Gunnar Ahlbäck, a much-respected instructor who has the ability to bring the history to life.

All of these “extras” make up less than half of the total course time, with the rest, naturally, being given to actually playing the nyckelharpa. Again, the focus is on traditional Uppland tunes, as these most fully utilize the resources of the instrument. They were made to be played on harpa, and bring out its unique tonality better than most other tunes can. Some tunes from other parts of Sweden are incorporated, as students coming from, say, Ångermanland or Bohuslän, would naturally wish to learn their local repertoire. But this serves a secondary purpose as well—it gives the students an overview of folk-music styles prevalent throughout Sweden, and it provides contrast between the different polska types. If you don't want your bondpolskor from Viksta to sound like Bodapolskor, you need to know what a Bodapolska sounds like and how it differs. Anna Abraham says that the year she went, they only learned one non-traditional, modern tune, as far as she remembers. There may be the occasional non-Swedish tune thrown in, again mostly for the purpose of providing context for the Swedish/Uppland tunes. Also, the occasional Norwegian or Scottish tune would employ different bowing-patterns, which can occasionally be used to good effect in any tune. While Swedish polska-bowing is a pretty standard pattern, it can add interest to a tune to vary the pattern sometimes, maybe on the second or third repetition, so it's helpful to have additional patterns in your arsenal.

The course also attempts to address individual tastes and styles. Different people want to do different things with their harpas, even in Sweden. Some people prefer Ceylon's style to Eric's, or want to work mostly with Österby tunes, or mostly with their own tunes. Some want to play absolutely traditionally, some prefer the more modern flavor of Väsen and Hullung.

So, how do you go about getting into this course, now that I've whetted your appetite? Write to Eric Sahlström Institutet, Bruksgatan 3, S-748 50 Tobo, Sweden or [esito-bo@algonet.se](mailto:esito-bo@algonet.se). They can send or e-mail you an applica-

**ESI***continued from page 9*

tion—e-mail would be best, as time is getting short for the visa process. You need to be accepted to the school before applying for a student visa/residence permit, which can take two to three months. Cost for the year comes to about \$4000 and includes housing, meals during the week (you cook for yourself on weekends), and all classes and lessons, though there may be additional expenses for materials and

such. You will be required to prove that you have the equivalent to the Swedish student stipend for living expenses, which comes to about \$6000 for the eight months of the course. This year's course begins Sept. 5, 2001 and finishes in late May, with a couple of two-week breaks during the year.

Of course, the main thing of the whole ESI-experience would be living, dancing, playing and singing together with 15 or so other nyckelharpa addicts for an entire year! ♣

## Review of “Bitar efter Lövstagubbarna”

**Björn Björn and Katarina Björn  
Tongång AWCD-40**

*By Rita Leydon*

Per-Ulf was all excited about his upcoming Tongång label release with Björn Björn. “It’s the best darn danceable music ever recorded on gammelharpa!” is how he described it to me, “I’ll send you a copy as soon as it’s done.”

The CD arrived yesterday and has been spinning non-stop since I ripped it open. “Bitar efter Lövstagubbarna” means “Pieces after the Lövsta Oldtimers.” Björn Björn and Katarina Björn are the artists. I haven’t met Björn, a previous world champion on gammelharpa, but I did see him compete at the VM last summer in Österbybruk, where he played a version of Tierpspolskan as I’d never heard it before.

Björn’s own words from the CD jacket: “I began playing harpa at age thirty. A little late perhaps, but I had played around with other instruments and American folk music before. I searched out inspiring players on the chromatic nyckelharpa, but it wasn’t long before I lost my heart to the gammelharpa. It happened in 1976 at a course in Österbybruk when I met Justus Gille and Viktor Vikman. That was it. I was sold. I slipped away from the course and spent my time instead drawing a silver-basharpa that was hanging on a wall. That’s how

it goes.

“In 1985 I married Katarina and we live since then on Gotland with children, cats, chickens, horses, dogs and lots of sheep. I build harpas of all sorts as time allows. When I play, the beat is most important and that the drone string growls. The melody and phrasing is driven by whatever bowing pattern is required to make good dance music.

Recording of this CD took place in April 2001, it contains twenty-four selections or “bitar” from the Lövstakub lineage. Shoulder lifting pieces that demand sympathetic rhythmic movement. Fifteen polskas, seven waltzes, and two schottises thrown in for good measure.

The gammelharpa sound gets under your skin, that’s

for sure. I remember when I first heard it, I thought it whiny and strident. A lot of gammelharpa music has flowed by my ears since then and I’m afraid that I have acquired a taste for the sound in spite of myself. How to describe it ... there is a mystery and other-worldliness to it. It doesn’t sound LIKE anything else.

The gammelharpa is not an instrument in identity crisis, it is very, very secure and in-your-face positive of its place in Swedish music.

How fortunate we are! ♣



# Upcoming Nyckelharpa Events

*Check the ANA's web page for the most current scheduling information*

## 23 - 27 (most likely) June 2002: Ekebyholm

Residence course the week following midsommar every year, from Sunday to Thursday, at Ekebyholm castle, just north of Rimbo, Uppland. This course was started by Eric Sahlström, and is the most well-known course for learning Uppland music. Most participants are nyckelharpa players, but it's open to fiddle players as well.

The course is for nyckelharpa players at all levels, and all but beginning fiddle players. Cost for 2000 was 3300 SEK, which includes tuition, room and board, lessons and evening programs. The application period is about 20 March to 15 April 2002. Don't send any money yet, as only 75 students will be accepted.

Fiddle teachers are selected from the likes of Sonia Sahlström-Larsson, Anders Liljefors, and Tore Lindkvist. Nyckelharpa teachers include Ditte Andersson, Peter Hedlund, Cajsa Ekstav, Sven-Olof Sundell, Esbjörn Hogmark, Leif Åhlund, etc. As usual, Eva Tjörnebo will be teaching Swedish folksongs. The course leaders are Sigurd Sahlström and Lars Lindkvist.

For more information, contact:

Lars Lindkvist  
 Aprilvägen 43  
 177 61 Järfälla  
 Sweden  
 Tel. +46-8-58 03 16 21  
 lars.lindkvist@jarfalla.se

## PLAYING TIPS

*by Sheila Morris*

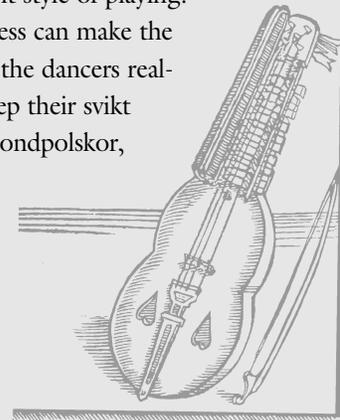
### Take it Easy!

A lot of really good players seem to think that faster is better. This might be true in some situations, but when playing for dancing, the dancers aren't impressed by how many notes you can cram into a two-minute dance. They *are* impressed by tunes played at a danceable tempo, with the correct 'svung' for the dance. Remember, it's harder for the dancers to move their feet than for you to move your fingers!

And, if you're playing with less-experienced players, be prepared to slow down a little for them. Pay attention to what they're doing—if they seem to be struggling, take it back a notch. Sure, it's fun to zip through a Byss-Kalle, but isn't it also fun to play with others? If you play faster than they can manage, you aren't playing *with* them, but *for* them. It becomes a concert instead of a jam session.

### Keep it Light!

Some fiddlers are easier to dance to than others—their music helps the dancers along. This usually involves having a sense of 'lifting' the dancers out of the floor rather than driving them down into it. Most polskor have a distinct 'lift' at some point and benefit greatly from a light style of playing. Too much 'down' stress can make the music feel heavy, and the dancers really have to work to keep their svikt going. In Uppland bondpolskor, this 'lift' comes on beat two.



## Your Personal Trainer

*continued from page 1*

controls and make no choices on your DVD player and just lamely sit and watch your TV screen, it takes two hours from start to finish. But that's not how you'll use it. The power of the DVD format is that it can utilize different languages and angles as well as jump instantly between locations. We take full advantage of this power. Peter speaks in Swedish and English. You can select to view the full figure angle or the closeup view of the left hand angle with the touch of a button on your remote control. You can instantly switch between slow tempo and normal tempo. Using this DVD volume as it is intended—while practicing and perfecting your own playing—you'll be occupied for a year.

This is not an entertainment product. This is your own private teacher working with you, showing you, again and again how it is done, allowing you ample time to work it out, patiently encouraging you. I am preparing a series of pages for my website (<http://www.ritaleydon.com>) to showcase the DVD and explain a bit about it. You are most welcome to stop in.

This has got to be one of the hardest and most intense passages of my entire creative professional career—and I'm no spring chicken. Never have I been so tested and so challenged and so exhilarated by a project. I won't bore you with details, suffice to say—I survived the flaming inferno and will go back into the raging heat for more.

I smile to myself because I can't help but see the similarity between this undertaking and the gestation and birth of a child. I have borne two, now aged 22 and 24. This

DVD title is my child as well. It is a product of all my energies. I have lived and breathed nothing else for months now and I am bracing myself for the postpartum blues that I know are coming. I'll wander around the house totally at a loss of what to do with myself—adrift and bobbing up and down until I can sink my teeth into the next project.

I haven't seen Peter for a while—what with him being in Sweden and me in Pennsylvania—although we have been in daily e-mail communication forever it seems. He's anxious to see what I have done with his dream. At the same time, I'm anxious to see his reaction to what I have done with his dream. It is after all, no small matter to entrust the realization of one's dreams to another. I know this. I understand this. I made sure I kept Peter painfully abreast of the highs and lows as I experienced them traversing the treacherous landscape from conception to actualization. The man knew just when to zap me a chirpy note to keep me from going under during the especially dark moments. He tells me he wants to have a **BIG CELEBRATION** to coincide with the first advance copy in his hands. I fired back that he'd better hold his horses until I arrive so we can do it together—no Rita, no party!

In the fall, production begins on the next volume. We are eager to see what sort of reception our effort receives out there in the world. Time will tell. I'm already imagining a few years down the pike—the lesson tunes on volume one will become old favorite standbys much like tunes we are all so very familiar with now. Peter's choice of tunes is unexpected, courageous and well reasoned. Just imagine having Puma as your personal trainer. On your own terms. Any time it tickles your fancy. Mmmnnn ... yes. ♣

## Bodin's C Major Polska

From Nyckelharpa Orchestra: Byss Kalle

The musical score for "Bodin's C Major Polska" is presented in four staves of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The first two staves show the main melody with a repeat sign at the end of the second staff. The third staff contains a more complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth notes. The fourth staff continues the main melody, ending with a repeat sign.

# A Nyckelharpa Moment

by Kimble Howard

It's all Bruce Sagan's fault. If it wasn't for him, I'd still be perfectly happy playing my other instruments. I'd still have that long-term wish of someday getting a hardangerfiddle. But no; he just had to open that big brown box sitting on the chair next to him and with that impish grin, pull out the most amazing instrument I'd ever seen. So I have to blame him for my downfall. Have to blame someone.

Here's what happened. Prior to the New Year I was just an ordinary musician playing violin and harp. For the past few years I'd been on staff playing fiddle for classes at the Terpsichore Dance Camp in West Virginia run by the Lloyd Shaw Foundation. Great people, great camp. This past year I noticed that Bruce was slated to join us on staff and I was thrilled. There are certain musicians I've always wanted to meet and he was on the list. I'd heard his name bandied around for years and I had the recording he'd made with Andrea Hoag, which I loved. Bruce was hired to teach Scandinavian dance and I was excited that finally I might get a chance to play the Scandinavian music I'd loved for so long. Kentucky not being a hotbed of Scandi immigration, chances to play are limited. Alas, I was slated to play for other classes and I was disappointed until I found that they'd scheduled both of us to play for advanced English. That's when it happened. The harpa moment.

Bruce offered to let me try his hardanger fiddle after I said I had been wanting one for several years. It was beautiful, but I knew if I played it I would be wanting one again. So I sighed and passed it back. Then it happened. As we got ready to play for the next dance he pulled out his new Sören Åhker nyckelharpa. That was it – the harpa moment! I could barely play for trying to watch what he was doing with this incredible thing. I had to have one.

When camp was over and I drove home, all I could think about was that harpa. I was obsessed. I discovered in the pile of CDs on the floor of my studio Olov Johansson's "Storsvarten". I'd never listened to it, much less knew I had it. Sorry Olov. I'd ordered Väsen's "Essence" album since Bruce recommended it to me and while I awaited its arrival I listened to "Storsvarten". Or rather I absorbed "Storsvarten". The obsession grew. It was terrible.

In less than two weeks after returning from camp I'd contacted Leif Alpsjö and ordered a harpa. Poor Leif. Knowing I was a fiddler and thinking I wouldn't be happy with less than the best he tried in vain to talk me into ordering one of Harry Hedbom's instruments. A year's wait?! But you don't understand. I have to have one now! He laughed and set one aside by Tage Larsson as I went to the bank to get a cheque cut in kroner.

It's been several years since I requested a transaction in foreign funds. It used to be you went to the main branch of the bank, walked upstairs to the International Department and told them what you needed. In fifteen minutes you left with a cheque in your hands. Those days have passed. The main branch of the bank is really in Pittsburgh so the customer service person has to call for the transaction. I had to spell Sweden to four different people, stared stupidly at the teller while he tried to take \$19,000 out of my paltry account instead of 19,000 kroner, spelled Sweden again, until I finally asked for the phone so that I might speak with the person at the other end. Then I had to wait a week, all the time not knowing if they'd actually gotten the transaction correct. Not a harpa moment.

I filled my time waiting for my harpa reading the past issues of *Nyckel Notes*. I say reading, but in my quest for knowledge I think it was again total absorption. The newsletter is a treasure trove of information and I thank all of those people who have contributed to it over the years. My copies, pulled off the internet are covered with notes, including questions I will have to ask more advanced players.

Finally, in what in retrospect was a very short time, I had my nyckelharpa. I returned from a memorial service in North Carolina with houseguests who had flown in from Orcas Island for the same event. They were leaving on a 1 pm flight so we had a late breakfast and then raced home to grab their suitcases. There hanging off the front porch was a large box from Sweden. I deposited it inside and went to the airport. On returning I had to teach so the box sat in the living room until I showed my last student to the door at 8 pm. It happened to be a night she wanted to talk.

When I opened the case my immediate thoughts were, "What have I done? Whatever made me think I could play this?" I stared for a few seconds and then I slowly picked it up and started playing. Josefins Dopvals flowed out. I got brave and started on another. This was weird. I could actually get songs out that sounded like real tunes. And it was so much fun! Then I thought that maybe she'd sound better if I tuned her after her long journey. Much nicer.

I'm hooked. How could I not be? I have no idea where this will take me but I'm excited to be a part of the journey. I've already played for the local Waldorf school where a particularly savvy ten year boy told me he'd had two awesome moments in his life. One was meeting the Dalai Lama; the other was listening to me play the nyckelharpa. I'll give him the Dalai Lama. And I'd love to adopt this kid. He just might turn out to be a nyckelharpa player? You never know. ●

*This schottis was taught by Ditte Andersson at the Nordic Fiddles & Feet camp at Buffalo Gap this summer.*

## Vill Fröken Köpa Löken För en Krona

Schottis

1

5

10

14

19

23

Takt 19, 20, 23, 24 ibland så här:

28

# Nyckelharpa Strings for Sale

*The American Nyckelharpa Association is pleased to announce the availability of strings for the nyckelharpa! ANA member Robert Krapfl has volunteered to handle string sales. We have five different products for you — two brands of playing strings and three versions of understring sets.*

## Playing Strings

The “playing strings” are the four largest strings, the ones that you actually touch with the bow. We have two brands to choose from, both manufactured in Sweden:

PRIM brand strings are made by an old Swedish string manufacturing company. Their fiddle strings are popular among folk musicians, and are available widely in the US. Their nyckelharpa strings are basically the same as their cello strings, except that they are the correct length for nyckelharpas instead of about a foot too long. All four strings are wound. The A-string is .020” (0.50 mm) in diameter.

JÖRPELAND brand strings are made by a gammalharpa player and artist named Ingvar Jörpeland. He makes strings for the gammalharpa too, but the ANA carries only strings for the modern 3-row nyckelharpa. The set is called “Jerker Special”, which admittedly doesn’t sound so good in English. The man who first taught Ingvar to spin strings (Nils Eriksson) was nicknamed Jerker (YERKer), and the strings are named after him. The A-string is plain, and the rest are wound.

## Sympathetic Strings

We offer three versions of understrings, described more fully in the January 1998 edition of Nyckel Notes. Basically, the three sets can be called 6+6, 4+4+4, and 12-step. There’s actually some logic here:

### 6+6 is

- 6 wound strings .021” (0.53 mm) in diameter
- 6 plain strings .014” (0.36 mm) in diameter

### 4+4+4 is

- 4 wound strings 0.24” (0.61 mm) in diameter
- 4 wound strings .021” (0.53 mm) in diameter
- 4 plain strings .014” (0.36 mm) in diameter

### 12-step is

- 12 strings, varying from .025” (0.64 mm) to .014” (0.36 mm), by steps of .001”. The lower 6 are wound, the higher 6 are plain.

## Order Form

*Prices are listed for ANA members/non-members.*

*Price includes shipping in the US.*

*Add an appropriate extra amount for international orders.*

String Set	Qty	Price	Cost
Prim Playing Strings	_____	\$53/\$60	\$ _____
Jörpeland Playing Strings	_____	\$43/\$50	\$ _____
6+6 Resonance Strings	_____	\$20/\$25	\$ _____
4+4+4 Resonance Strings	_____	\$20/\$25	\$ _____
12-step Resonance Strings	_____	\$20/\$25	\$ _____
<i>(Make checks out to “ANA”)</i>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

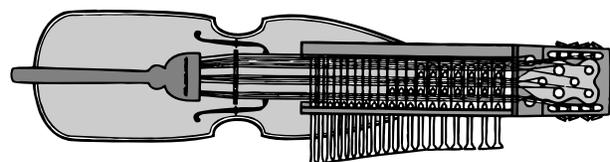
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

*Send this form, with a check made out to the American Nyckelharpa Association, to:*

Robert Krapfl  
4651 N Wolcott, Apt. 1, Chicago IL 60640  
rpk@signalinteractive.com





*Cajsa Ekstav drew a large crowd at a recent workshop in Seattle. Standing, from left are Deb Jones, Elizabeth, Lynn, Bart Brashers, Iain Morris, Virginia, Stewart. Front: Anna, Cajsa, Karin, Janet, Dave, Trella Hastings*

**Bart: Could you fill in the missing last names? Is that Anna Abraham?**

## Volunteer for the ANA!

The ANA is in need of a volunteer to be the editor of *Nyckel Notes*. *Nyckel Notes* is produced four times a year with help from members who contribute stories, photos, and help to proofread the text. Besides managing the web site and being the ANA's point person, Bart Brashers has taken the lead in organizing the newsletter and spurring all of us to meet deadlines. He would like to pare down the responsibilities and pass on the editorship to another person, so if you'd like *Nyckel Notes* to come out in a more timely fashion, please consider helping out! ♡

### The American Nyckelharpa Association

The ANA is a non-profit organization 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.

Membership dues in the ANA are \$10/year, which includes a subscription to this newsletter. Send to the address below, and please indicate if you play the nyckelharpa and if we can publish your name in our roster.

### ANA Web Page

Source of information about the nyckelharpa, nyckelharpa players, a history of the instrument, nyckelharpa events and more! The URL is: <http://www.nyckelharpa.org>

### Nyckel Notes

Published quarterly, edited by Bart Brashers and Matt Fichtenbaum. Send submissions to *Nyckel Notes* at the address below, or to: [nyckelnotes@nyckelharpa.org](mailto:nyckelnotes@nyckelharpa.org)

**The American Nyckelharpa Association  
P.O. Box 661, Lahaska, PA 18931-0661**

## CD Sales Switches Hands

There has been a change in personnel regarding the CD and book sales for the ANA. After Gail Halverson found her work load becoming too time-consuming, Kimble Howard volunteered to take over handling the sales.

Kimble noted, "It will take me a little while once I get the stock in from her to go over what we have and get in reorders from Sweden of the titles we are low on. There will be new titles as well which I'll let everyone know about so stay tuned!"

Orders should be sent to:

Kimble Howard  
Hill House Music  
1808 Lauderdale Rd  
Louisville, KY 40205  
ph:502-459-4892  
fax:502-473-7852  
[kimble@earthlink.net](mailto:kimble@earthlink.net)

## Call for Nominations

It's time to nominate two board members for the ANA board. The terms of Matt Fichtenbaum, Gail Halvorsen and Sheila Morris will be up at the end of December 2001. All can be re-nominated, though Matt has expressed a desire to step down. According to the ANA bylaws, a person can only serve five consecutive terms on the ANA board. A ballot will appear in the November issue of the newsletter. Please send nominations to:

ANA Nominations  
PO Box 661  
Lahaska PA 18931-0661

Or e-mail nominations to [ana.info@nyckelharpa.org](mailto:ana.info@nyckelharpa.org)