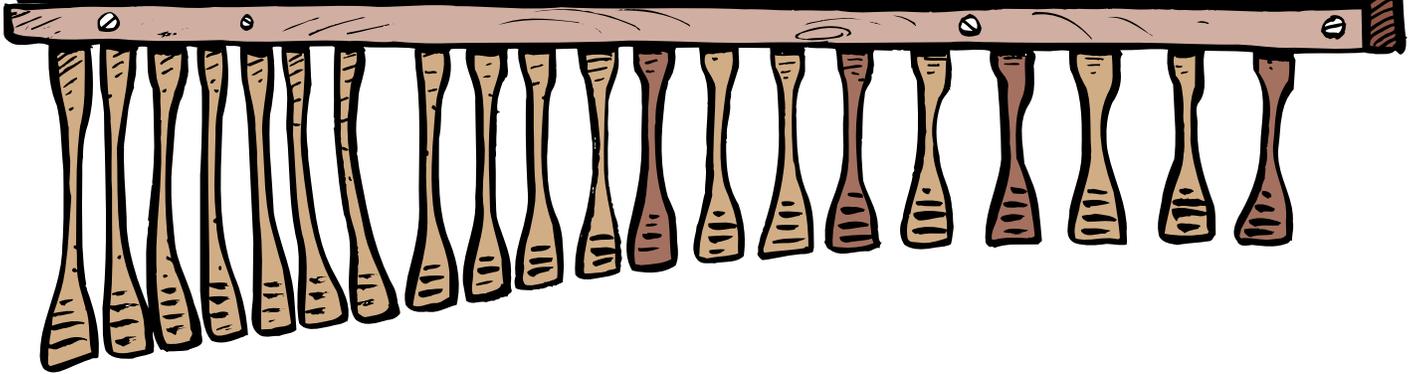


THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN NYCKELHARPA ASSOCIATION

NYCKELNOTES



My Sister's Wedding

by Rita Leydon

Ragna is my only sibling, a younger person than me by three and a half years. We're both in our fifties now. Parents gone. Two kids each. Grown and almost grown. Diametrically totally different—that's us. Always yearning to be closer, never really figuring out how. We work at it though and I feel happy when we manage to touch.

When Ragna met Richard she uncharacteristically started writing emails sharing with me the uncharted adventure she was cautiously embarking on. It was exciting. It was uncertain. It was thrilling and breathless. Most important, my sister was happy. One day at a time, week after week, month after month led to an agreement between the two to marry. No nonsense. Matter of fact. It was to be a Swedish Bahá'í wedding with music and dancing. Ragna asked us to play nyckelharpa and we were charged with the bridal march and a hambo. This was a huge honor and we were thrilled. We selected and practiced our tunes. A professional Swedish fiddler was engaged for the rest of the music. The wedding day came and went. But this story is not about that day. This story is about another day, some weeks later and 2000 miles away.

Chris and I ran the Colorado

Grand road rally, start to finish, in our little 1934 MG-K3 race car. A thousand miles over four days. Then we fished and hiked with our son Lars, a transplant from the east coast who guided his Mom and Dad with gentle patience and then waved us off with his big toothy smile.

We headed due south, towards Fort Garland. In the coddled eastern comfort zone of suburban New Jersey

where we grew up after immigrating from Sweden in 1960, such a place didn't exist. Such barren expanses and glorious mountain vistas and immense blue skies just didn't exist—were not on the charts and could not be conjured up. How our parents picked this place to retire to is a great mystery, although a serendipitous one. I don't know if Ragna has ever bonded with the place, but my own family has fallen head over heels bonkers in love with the whole shooting match!! Lost our

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Ragna (left) and Rita in 1960.

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Fun With String Tension

by John Wendell

Ever wonder why we can use cello strings on a nyckelharpa when the nyckelharpa is tuned an octave higher than a cello? This article will answer that question and more. Warning: the following uses formulas with variables.

Calculating String Tension

The tension (tightness) of a string tuned to a particular note is a function of three variables:

- **The length of the string, L .** In the case of a modern nyckelharpa this should be 400 millimeters, which is approximately 15.75 inches.

The note you are tuning the string to is expressed in the frequency, F , of the note. For example the A string, is usually tuned to 440 cycles per second (Hertz, or simply Hz). If you know the frequency of the A string and are using equal temperament you can calculate the frequency of any note by using the following formula:

- **$F = A \times 2^{s/12}$ (1)** where s is the number of semi-tones the note is removed from A. If the note is below A s is negative.

Example: The bowed C string on a nyckelharpa is tuned to middle C, which is nine semi-tones below A and has a frequency of $F_{ct} = 440_{\text{Hz}} \times 2^{-9/12} = 261.7_{\text{Hz}}$. If you are not using equal temperament then you can find the frequency by adjusting the equal temperament frequency using this formula:

- **$F = F_{ct} \times 2^{c/1200}$ (2)** where c is the offset from equal temperament in cents. For Bart's temperament (see ANA website) C is offset +6 cents, so $F = 261.7 \times 2^{6/1200} = 262.6_{\text{Hz}}$. I used Bart's temperament to illustrate here because in Bart's system A is offset by zero cents. If you want to try this using the Olsson method, where A is offset by -2 cents, then you have to consider the offset of a note relative to A. In the Olsson system C is offset by 4 cents which is six cents higher than the A offset, so Bart's temperament and the Olsson temperament yield the same frequency for middle C assuming both tune to the same A.

The last variable you need to calculate string tension is the unit weight (UW). This is an expression of the weight of the string for a particular length. We will use pounds per inch. If you have a very accurate scale you can measure this

yourself. Some times it is indicated on the string packaging. It can also sometimes be found on the manufacture's web site. D'Addario has this information available for all of their guitar strings at http://www.daddario.com/Resources/JDCDAD/images/tension_chart.pdf.

Given these three variables the string tension, T , is calculated as follows:

$$T = (UW \times (2 \times L \times F)^2) / 386.4 \quad (3)$$

Applications:

Playing Strings

Let us consider using cello strings on a nyckelharpa. Assume you want to use D'Addario Helicore Cello Light gauge strings which are popular with some players. The uniform weight of these strings are: A 0.0000879, D 0.000172, G 0.000364, C 0.000806 lb/inch. Full size cellos have a string length of 27.5 inches so this gives tensions of 33.3, 29.0, 27.4, 27.0 pounds of tension on the string. No let's see what happens when we put these on a nyckelharpa! We get A 43.7, C 30.4, G 36.1, C 35.7. Note that these are all substantially more tension than the cello except for the middle C. This should not be surprising since we are tuning the strings an octave higher, except the middle C, but the string is 4/7 as long (if it was 1/2 the length the tension would be the same). One alternative here, to even out the string tension is to use a thicker string for the middle C. If we use the Helicore heavy gauge D string, which has a UW of 0.000203 on our 'harpa middle C then we get a tension of 35.9 which is very close to the G and lower C. The ANA recommends using plain guitar strings from .018 to .022 inches for the A string. If we split the difference, the .020 has UW of 0.0000806 giving a tension of 40.1. This configuration gives a relative string tension profile very similar to other bowed string instruments, where the lower three strings are close in tension and the highest string has substantially more. Whether this is a good thing for your instrument depends of course on your instrument.

Resonance Strings

I am guessing here but it would seem to make sense to have the resonance strings be reasonably close in tension. The only way to do this is to use a different weight for each string which is the scheme advocated by Sture Möllerman. Consider for example the commonly used six and six string method. If you use D'Addario 0.021 diameter wound bronze strings for the six lower notes and 0.014 for the upper six notes with G# to G tuning by semitones with

Bart's temperament then the tension will vary from 9.6 lbs to 17.6 lbs. In contrast, using Sture's recommended strings the tension varies from 12.6 lbs to 15.9 lbs. It is possible to choose strings that are even closer in tension than Sture's recommendations by carefully selecting strings from the

D'addario catalog. . Again, I am guessing, but I suspect that string tension is by far the most important factor affecting how the strings resonate and not whether you are using wound or plain strings for a particular note (in contrast to *continued on page 5*

Calculating String Tension for Nyckelharpas

$$A = 440$$

Length in inches: 15.75

1. Set A= to your preferred tuning, usually 440
2. Set String Length, in inches, usually 15.75
3. Enter the temperament offsets for each note.
4. Enter the string weight in lb/inch

For weight of resonance strings see: D'Addario
 Otherwise check string envelope or manufacturer website.
 If you know the tension at a particular note and length see below.

		Hertz Equal	Cents Offset	Hertz Tempered	String Weight lb/inch	Tension lbs.	
Playing Strings							
C3	-21	130.8	6	131.27	0.000806	35.7	D'Addario Helicore Cello C Medium
G3	-14	196.0	4	196.45	0.000364	36.1	D'Addario Helicore Cello G Medium
C4	-9	261.6	6	262.53	0.000202626	35.9	D'Addario Helicore Cello D3 Heavy
A4	0	440.0	0	440.00	0.00008861	44.1	PL022, PL019

Resonance Strings							
		Hertz Equal	Cents Offset	Hertz Tempered	String Weight lb/inch	Tension lbs.	
G3	-14	196.0	4	196.45	0.00012686	12.6	
G3#	-13	207.7	-2	207.41	0.00011682	12.9	
A3	-12	220.0	0	220.00	0.00010801	13.4	
A3#	-11	233.1	2	233.35	0.00009876	13.8	
B3	-10	246.9	-4	246.37	0.00008944	13.9	
C4	-9	261.6	6	262.53	0.00008106	14.3	
C4#	-8	277.2	-4	276.54	0.00007997	15.7	
D4	-7	293.7	2	294.00	0.00007177	15.9	
D4#	-6	311.1	0	311.13	0.00006402	15.9	
E4	-5	329.6	-2	329.25	0.00005671	15.8	
F4	-4	349.2	4	350.04	0.00004984	15.7	
F4#	-3	370.0	-6	368.71	0.0000434	15.2	
G4	-2	392.0	4	392.90		0.0	

Total: 326.8 lbs.

Use the table below for the weight if you know the tension, length, for a note (give the note in Hz).

Tension - lbs.: 27
 Length - inches: 27.5
 Frequency - Hz: 65.4
 Weight in lbs/inch: 0.00080619

My Sister's Wedding

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hearts and scrambled our senses ... oops, I should speak for myself. Somewhere between Walsenburg and La Veta Pass it became crystal clear to me just why we were hauling truck and trailer over hill and dale to get to Fort Garland again. I announced to Chris that I wanted to play all the tunes from Ragna's wedding for Mom and Dad.

"I already knew that," he said. I looked over at Chris, startled.

"I didn't know it myself until just a moment ago." He just smiled.

Both Mom and Dad's ashes are sprinkled on the slopes of Mt. Lindsey and Blanca Peak. Dad sprinkled Mom from the belly of a WW II bomber and I sprinkled Dad from the same bomber several years later. So anyway, there they are on the slopes overlooking the home they built together with their own hands in the San Louis Valley.

It was very windy. It's always windy here. The sky was a perfect ice blue. Silhouettes of distant hills and mountains lined up along the horizon like old friends. Shapes etched in my psyche over time without any effort on my part. Maybe that's how birds migrate home over long distances—some sort of automatic imprinting of shapes and colors and light. Whenever I arrive at this place I feel at home. This is very strange for I've never lived here. Must be the knowledge that my parents are here.

We pulled off highway 160 between the mountains and the old homestead. Nothing but raw rugged southern Colorado as far as the eye can scan. Blue sky, the scent of sage, sand and wind. We mounted our instruments, faced into the wind and played our tunes—played for Mom and Dad so they could hear and be part of Ragna's wedding too. This marriage would have pleased them. Seeing their youngest child in an unhappy first marriage had long been a cause of distress. I was, of course, reduced to tears during a good portion of this exercise, while Chris was steady as a



Twin peaks of Mt. Blanca and Mt. Lindsey in Colorado stand at rapt attention as the Leydons play Ragna's wedding tunes.

rock. He's a good guy.

As we were winding down, a car pulled up and stopped. How convenient, I thought, as two ladies emerged. I asked one of them to take our picture with the mountain so I could show it to my sister when I got home, explaining the gist of what we were doing there by the side of the road dressed in our odd instruments. They had never seen the likes of a nyckelharpa before. They were sisters on a swing through the west to get to know each other better after their own mother's passing. And, get this, they were Swedish! Second generation, but still That seemed fitting. Small world. Sisters. Passing. Reaching out. Yearning.

The deed done, Chris and I packed away our instruments and headed for the local coffee shop where I gave Ragna a call to tell her where we were and what we had done. She choked up at the other end and said she had to get back to work. We turned our rig around and faced the 2000 miles between us and home.



One of the most important and rewarding things to do with one's nyckelharpa is to take it out into the world and share, and what better place than at a dance? Here are Chris and Rita Leydon with Bruce Sagan (left) at the Scandinavian dance organized by another ANA member, Joel Remde, held in Bound Brook, NJ every Thursday night. Live music rules!

String Tension

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the bowed strings where the surface affects how it responds to the bow).

Tone:

It is clear that the amount of tension on the bridge will affect how the nyckelharpa sounds. Simply setting your understring tuning up a semi-tone from G to F# and making it G# to G will add about 25 lbs. of tension. A typical nyckelharpa has around 300 to 350 lbs. of string tension, but by using different strings and tunings for the understrings you can easily add or subtract a 100 lbs. of tension. The conventional wisdom seems to be that less tension results in a mellower, softer sound but I really think that depends on the instrument. It is probably a good idea to keep the total string tension not more than 10% greater than the strings the builder supplied with the instrument

so as not to put more stress on the instrument than it was designed for, but this again is just a guess on my part.

String Tension Calculator:

Making the calculations for string tension using a calculator is tedious to say the least. I have constructed a spreadsheet for this purpose. To use the spreadsheet all you have to do is enter your temperament and the Unit Weight of each string and it will calculate your string tension. The D'addario publication found at the URL above will give you the unit weights for your understrings. The playing strings will require a little research and calculation depending on the brand. Most brands will at least give you the string tension for a Cello using the string with a conventional tuning and you can then use equation (3) and solve for UW. The spreadsheet also can do this for you – just remember that a cello string is 27.5" long and is tuned an octave below a nyckelharpa. The spreadsheet is available on the ANA website.

Mill Valley Stämman Report

by Sarah Kirton

The second San Francisco Bay Area Nyckelharpa Stämman was held March 24–26, 2006 with Edward Anderzon and Elin Skoglund teaching. This wonderful weekend was held at the Alpine Lodge, in a beautiful setting above Mill Valley, CA on Mount Tamalpais, a location held in reverence by the original inhabitants of the area. The area is just north of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. The Alpine Lodge is owned by a private hiking and nature club. Accommodations were on site or at motels in the surrounding area. Hiking was possible, and offered for Sunday afternoon—but the weather was so wet and windy that very few took up the offer. Breakfast was supplied for those staying at the lodge, and lunches were provided for all. The weekend was organized by Jill Myers of San Rafael, CA, Karen Myers (no relation) of San Carlos, CA, and Virginia Thompson of Port Townsend, WA.

Edward Anderzon, born in 1972 in Katrineholm, Sweden, became Riksspelman for the tunes of Södermanland in 2003. He teaches fiddle and nyckelharpa at the Music High School in Malmö, and has taught classes for many institutions and groups.

Elin Skoglund, born in 1980 in Väsby, Uppland in Sweden, became Riksspelman for the tunes of Uppland in 2004. She has taught many classes with Edward. The couple has recorded the CD "Låtar från ost," a well-received collection of traditional music from eastern Sweden.

We gathered early Friday afternoon for our first class amid Mount Tam's rain and later, fog. (The weather gods followed this up by a windstorm and more rain in the next

few days!) After check-in and an initial class with Edward, we broke into two groups, a slower group who remained with Edward, and another group, which went off with Elin for some more adventurous tunes. After dinner at a local Chinese restaurant we met at a local realtor's office for one of the true highlights of the weekend—a jam session. We rounded off the evening with a visit to Kopachka, a local international dance group, where E&E played a couple of tunes. Late in the evening, we returned to our lodgings—and those living at the Alpine Club got in a bit more jamming before bed.

By Saturday everyone had arrived—a total of twenty-one participants! E&E seemed delighted to see so many of us. Morning and afternoon sessions each started with all of us together for an initial tune teaching, then we split into two groups. The "slower" group spent more time on the tunes already taught, the "other" group reviewed tunes briefly, then went on to more difficult tunes.

Saturday evening was polished off with an entrancing concert and an enjoyable dance. The concert was inspiring, varied, and always alive. Edward did a great job of introducing tunes. Their dance playing was exciting, immediate, and moved the dancers' feet. It was also great listening. Elin is graced with fantastic and fluid melody playing. Her music moved and pulsed and breathed. Edward's harmonies were equally fantastic. He supported Elin's pulse and excitement with his own—it's harder to play good seamless harmony/backup than it first appears, and he does a great job of it. I

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Mill Valley Stämman

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came away with the sense that they spur each other on so that the duo is greater than the sum of the two alone—and each of them alone is really great! Edward and Elin alternated with workshop attendees in playing for dance. We got in plenty of allspel playing, and several small groups supplied a couple of tunes each.

The Sunday morning session followed the same pattern as on Saturday. We rounded the weekend off with a late lunch and then said our farewells.

We were happy to have a couple of complete newcomers in our midst on Saturday and Sunday—Dianne Dahlberg of San Francisco, who'd heard Karen Myers give a talk on the history of the harpa a few months earlier, and Rainey Peak, age twelve, who'd run into some harpa players at the Strawberry Music Festival in the Sierras the previous fall. Both were able to borrow harpas for the weekend and seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves. We were also happy to count Enid Bennion—a local music teacher—and her two harpa students, Sonia Pearson White and Jenny Wantuch in our number. We had a student from Connecticut, Barbara Dobay Ljungstrom, and Toby Weinberg and Ginny Lee from Syracuse, NY. It was nice to see Ginny, who used to live here. We also attracted a couple of fiddlers, who got through the weekend with little sign of resonance string envy.

Both Edward and Elin made good tune choices for their teaching; tunes which are not only fun to play, but will be useful in the future. Both paid attention to all students' needs, and were patient and flexible. It seemed that both felt it was a joyful thing to be here teaching. Talking to other students later, I collected some of the following comments: About Elin, who mostly taught the faster class—her tune selection was great, she gave us several variants for some of the tunes. She was happy to share her fingerings. The

tune she taught the slower class, a Vals by Ceylon Wallin, was appreciated for its use of drones, and the insight into the nature of using drones on harpa that her teaching gave them. About Edward, who mostly taught the slower class—a great teacher for slower students, “He put me on a new playing plateau!” good use of simile and metaphor in his teaching, great teaching techniques, helped a lot with the technique of drones and double stops. He stressed fingering, and gave out good fingerings. My informants wish other teachers would talk more often about fingering choices. It's easier to work out your own good fingerings if you have good examples to go by.

All went home with plenty to work on—a sign of a good workshop.

It's always seemed to me that a workshop with a visiting teacher has a different aim from a regular (weekly or bimonthly) class. A good workshop leaves you with a sense of inspired, frustrated aspiration. You probably can't play any of your new tunes with assurance—that requires time alone with your harpa. But more importantly, you have some new aims, which usually take one or more of the following three forms: You've got a good handle on some aspect of your music or playing technique that you didn't have before; even though you didn't “master” it during the weekend, you have a reasonable hope of doing much better with that aspect of your playing in the semi-near future; or you know what you want to learn to do next, even if you can't even begin to do it decently at the end of the workshop. But you now have a good idea how to begin to go about it. With the help of your handy recording device's flawless memory, you now have plenty to work on until the next workshop comes along. And, with any luck, you've also noticed some new things about playing your instrument that you figure you'll start working on in a year or two. Remember that noticing these things is a huge step in learning to do them later, when you're ready. Some of these things might even sneak into your playing sooner than you'd think possible.



Class photo of the 2006 ANA Stämman in California.

Water in the Works

by Bronwyn Bird

Are you prepared for disaster? Well you should be, because you never know when one might just sneak up on you! It is likely to be when you least expect it. Preventing disasters? Not always a possibility. The preparation is in how to deal with these unexpected mishaps. Here is my own little disaster story and how I overcame it.

Currently a student at Berklee College of Music in Boston, I was doing the usual thing. That is, playing out at a coffee house with my band. This particular venue is known as “Club Passim,” and it is located in Harvard Square. It is a vegetarian restaurant/folk music venue, and I highly recommend giving it a try if you are ever in the Boston area. Every Tuesday night they have a fantastic open mic evening, during which my band always tests out our latest arrangements. This particular Tuesday was no exception. We arrived as usual at 7 pm, tuned up our instruments, and sat down to relax and enjoy the music while sipping our chai teas. Having had a great rehearsal the previous Sunday and nailed down a fantastic rendition of “Cluck Old Hen” (a traditional bluegrass tune), we were not in the least bit nervous for our evening’s performance. What could possibly go wrong? Nothing ... or so we thought.

The disaster happened in literally one blur of a second. They announced us. “Blue Moose and the Unbuttoned Zippers!” and we took out our instruments. That is when the disaster struck. “Whoosh!” A flood of water cascaded off the table and directly onto the keybox of my nyckelharpa. I sprang up instantaneously, but it was too late. I was soaked and the water was in the works. Thinking fast I grabbed napkins and part of my shirt and immediately began attempting to dry everything off. However my attempts were in vain. The keys of the top row immediately swelled up and became unplayable.

The management considerably moved our number to later in the set, giving us some time to figure out what to do. Borrowing someone’s penknife, I opened up the keybox and took out each key individually. I dried off each key individually and even tried putting on some graphite in a final attempt to make them slide. It felt somewhat as though I was in the hospital with a loved one who was having an unexpected operation. Except I was the surgeon! All my attempts were unsuccessful. I realized

that the only thing to do would be to wait for the keybox to dry out, and that would take too long! However, I was determined not to give up.

The show must go on! But my nyckelharpa was unplayable ... or was it? In actual fact only the top row of keys were stuck. There was no reason why I couldn’t play on the C and G strings. Unfortunately this particular tune is played almost entirely on the A string. So I had a choice to make—either I could give up and go back home to my dorm room, or I could attempt to play the song an octave lower.

There was no time to try it out really. They announced us and we were up. I got up there and gave it a go. I was nervous and I was upset, but I was smiling from ear to ear, and we gave the audience the energy, enthusiasm, and pizzazz that they were looking for. The song ended and the audience roared in applause. The disaster was over.

Perhaps in the long run it was not really a disaster, but a blessing in disguise. It certainly provided me with an unforgettable memory, not to mention a great learning experience. What did I learn? 1) Never take your instrument out when there is any chance that a glass of water may be dumped on it. 2) Always carry a penknife with you. 3) Most importantly, practicing songs in different octaves really pays off! My advice to all of you is to practice playing all your tunes in different octaves. Become comfortable with it so that you can do it on the spot, because you may have to one day. Be prepared. You never know when some water might get in the works!



Finding Your Bow

by Peter Puma Hedlund

For the last ten years or so, a long time it seems, I've been searching and looking around for reasonably priced bows—cheap, basic, decent, serviceable bows. Good bows certainly don't grow on trees, at least not ready-to-play ones. It's been harder than I thought to find such bows, but I'm not one to give up. I figured sooner or later I'd come upon a solution.

I've consulted numerous nyckelharpa and violin makers over the years asking if they had an interest in making bows. Some were willing to give it a go, others not. A few succeeded in producing excellent bows, while others were less than successful. When the bows turned out really well ... well then the price shot

up pretty high. It takes time and skill to make a good bow the traditional way and the maker obviously wants to be paid fairly for his or her efforts. The long and the short of it was that a good bow will always cost you. If you want an excellent bow, be prepared to pay serious money. The challenge to find a good bow at a relatively low price languished unmet.

And then it happened.

Rita Leydon came to Sweden and visited me in Iste. She had come to shoot some film for her "Swedish Folk Music Treasures" series. She brought along a gift—a bow of all things! It looked like "Las Vegas," way too much, over the top, and was mostly intended as a fun item that could be used but not taken too seriously. It was 100% mystery carbon fiber of some sort, glittered in all possible colors and didn't look traditional in the slightest, if you get what I mean.

I thanked her and gave it a whirl. To my utter astonishment, it produced really good tone! The hairs were a bit tight for my taste and couldn't be adjusted, but since I know that hair tension is mostly a matter of what you're used to, it didn't bother me too much. The bow was light, weighed hardly anything at all. That was all right, I like light bows ... it could have been maybe just a couple of grams heavier, but the sound it brought forth was definitely good, strong, clear and precise.

Hmmm ...

During the evening I played some more with the bow, got used to the tension and the weight. After a while, I rather liked it and imagined using it on stage just for fun. It would sparkle and shine beautifully under the stage lights, I

thought. The bow was, in fact, great to play with. No problem at all.

The next morning it dawned on me that this was the solution to my bow quest. By sheer coincidence (read the ANA's Nyckel Notes number 34) Rita had come in contact with a bow maker in the US who'd figured out how to make good bows cheaply—in all imaginable colors, and in

any length or weight! I had searched all over Sweden for years without success and Rita solves my problem without even trying!

Hmmm ...

I asked Rita if she thought Ed Wilcox, who makes the Incredibows, would be interested in making more nyckelharpa bows.

"I'll check into it," she said. And that's how it started.

Working closely with Ed, Rita and I came up with several basic configurations, variations in length and weight to serve as our stock models, agreeing that a neutral black was appropriate for starters since it still looked sort of traditional. I mentioned before that the bow I received was on the light side, but there are folks who like a light bow, so we decided to retain the "featherweight" as an option. People come in all sizes and shapes, so bows must too. If someone wants something wild, something beyond our basic offerings, well, there is practically no limit to the custom options. Design your own bow! What could be better?

Nyckelharpa players everywhere now have available to them a source of excellent, relatively inexpensive, and virtually indestructible bows worth every penny of their price.

There are a couple of drawbacks with these bows, to be sure. I personally like to adjust bow tension depending on what tune I am playing—not possible with these bows. I can live with it, but now and then I miss this feature. In my previous life I was a carpenter and I like wood. Carbon fiber feels impersonal and artificial. On the other hand though, these bows are completely unaffected by humidity. If you don't mind getting your nyckelharpa wet, you could play in the shower!

Weighing the cost of these bows against what you get for your money, they are the best I've ever come across. I think that for most of us these bows are just great. I have two Incredibows now that I use every day along with my old trusty regular wooden bow—an old friend I would never part with. That my AuroraBowRealis looks really cool up on stage doesn't hurt either!



Scandinavian Fiddle

A plaintive Swedish bridal tune for a lost love

by Karen Myers

This tune by Byss-Calle (1783-1847) is from the Uppland tradition. There are several stories in Sweden of prosperous farmers who chose to marry their daughters to other farmers rather than to improvident fiddlers. At the wedding celebration, they might end up hiring the disappointed suitors to entertain the guests. Many lovely and sad tunes are attributed to these circumstances, and this is one of them.

Even though this tune has a known composer, it exists like all traditional tunes in numerous variants, of which the written music and recorded music referenced here are but snapshots. The title refers to the "West Marsh".

There are several details that make this tune appealing. To begin with, it has a short almost song-like structure (6 bars in the A part, 4 bars in the B part instead of the more common 8 each). The B part has the feel of a "chorus" to the A part's "verse". Combined with the two-bar phrasing throughout, you can almost hear the lament.

To add to the plaintive effect, this tune uses the technique of leaning on the note just above the target note and then resolving the tension downward. This is most clear in the ending of the A part, with the high A resolving to the

tonic (root) G, and in the striking figure that begins measure 3 of the A part.

The third measure of the A part is ambiguous harmonically. I have indicated an A minor chord for this discussion, but it doesn't really fit well into conventional chord structures. I hear the E natural as an emphasis on the 6th note of the scale, and that emphasis is carried for the whole measure until it resolves to the D, the 5th note (dominant) of the G minor scale. Along the way, it rests on the 2nd note of the scale, which is a leading note wanting to resolve to the tonic G, adding to the feel of suspension and tension. (See Scale Overview for a general discussion of scale terminology.)

Notice that the same melodic figure that begins measure 3 of the A part reappears at the end of measure 1 of the B part, where it has an entirely different role. In the A part, it increases the pull from the tonic, which we hear psychologically as a sigh which resolves. In the B part, it functions as an ornamental run to the stable related key of F. (The fundamental key is really G dorian (G minor with a lowered 7th), and it naturally modulates to the subtonic

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Västermarnspolskan

Efter Byss-Calle

Efter Leif Alpsjö & Dan Erixon 5/2005

"Tidlöst - Timeless", Tongång AWCD-49

Printed by Karen Myers

Chord progression for the first staff: Gm D7 Gm Am Gm D7

Chord progression for the second staff: 1. Gm 2. Gm Gm F

Chord progression for the third staff: Gm 1. Cm D7 2. Cm D7

Labels: *Fine*, *Da capo al fine*

Swedish Fiddle

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in F.) In this situation, the melodic figure is much less important, but it provides an echo of the A part which helps tie the two parts together.



Measure 3, part A

6th (of tonic) to root
(of subtonic)



Measure 1-2 Part B

Illustration 2: The same 4-note phrase heightens tension or leads to resolution, depending on the context.

This tune would not be out of place in an Elizabethan viol consort, for all that it was composed two centuries later. If Byss-Calle played it for his sweetheart's wedding, as the story goes, let's hope it helped to ease the pain.

The Planning of the West Coast Nyckelharpa Stämman, 2006

by Jill Myers

The idea of the stämman was born the first year I went to Ekebyholm, but it really became an obsession last year when I spoke to Ditte Andersson about the possibility of her teaching here this year and received the answer "YES". The experience of being amongst other harpa players of different levels and learning new tunes in Sweden, as well as jamming, was wonderful and I felt that it was time to bring this experience to our area again. Lynn Erickson, from Vancouver, and I were both at Ekebyholm last year and decided that the West Coast needed it. At home, I had been sitting amongst fiddlers in workshops, but longed to have the chance to have "my" instrument be the focus for a change!

Lesson Learned

One of the main things that I realize helped me enormously was that because of my lack of experience of doing anything like this before, I spoke to many of my fellow musician friends to get their input as to whether this was a good idea, whether they would attend, and who else I should talk to about this? The responses were very encouraging and without them the idea would not have come to fruition.

I sent an email to Ditte and confirmed that in fact she would like to teach here. I spoke to Virginia Thompson and Sheila Morris, who had both arranged stämmor, which I attended. Virginia sent me a list of things to consider such as

the teacher, location, food, lodging, dates, and other adjunct events that would increase the income for the event. I sent an email to Rita Leydon asking about the funding and support from the ANA and the way to go about things. She enthusiastically sent me all the examples of the budgets for the previous workshops sponsored by the ANA, so that I could submit something myself. I asked Karen Myers (no relation) if she could be the financial whiz, as I was aware of my limitations in that area. To my delight, she agreed!

Then came the big question about the dates! Up until that point I had not realized that there are so many things going on in music and dance, and to make sure that there was not too much competition with my event, I needed to find an "un-booked" weekend. In my conversations with Lynn she reminded me that the Spring Equinox Ball would be held in Vancouver in March and that I should talk to Janet Gabites to see if The Scandinavian Dancers of Vancouver would like Ditte to play at the ball. With all those things in mind I chose several possible dates and sent Ditte an email with choices.

At this point I realized that I was actually going to host a stämman and that I should start thinking about the location! Again, I found my answers by talking to people about my idea and one thing led to another and I made contact with the Alpine Hiking Club with a wonderful lodge on Mt. Tamalpais in Marin County. I reserved (I thought!) the

Club for the planned weekend. Little did I know that I had to make absolutely sure that my intentions were clear (immediately!) despite the fact that it was six months away

I found out that in the two-week gap in communication someone else (a member) had reserved the Lodge for the whole week! Panic! For a moment my plans seemed to be in jeopardy and I sent a frantic email to Rita, who calmly replied that I shouldn't give up and that I would find another place. It turned out that there was a little angel by the name of Mary Frey, who had been my first contact with the club, and that she was the member in question. We talked and Mary very kindly allowed us to share the Lodge during the day for the weekend. As it turned out, there would even be some lodging available for our participants.

At this point I emailed Ditte again, including the invitation to come over via Vancouver to play at the Equinox Ball and teach a workshop for the harpa players in that area, who would not be able to come here for our stämman. The flier was ready to go and an early version released. However, Ditte replied, informing me that her commitments had increased and that she would not be able to come over to teach for these events.

Major panic ensued! Emails were sent to several other potential teachers, with no positive results. People encouraged me not to give up. Finally, at midnight on a Saturday evening, I sent an email to Edward Anderzon, who enthusiastically replied the next morning that he would love to come over here to teach and could he bring Elin Skoglund, his wife, who also plays harpa.

Lessons Learned

- Plan ahead, but be prepared to come up with an alternative on short notice.
- Talk to anyone who will listen, you never know who will have a solution and give you the encouragement to keep going with your dream.
- E-mail people with questions and answer the ones you receive as soon as you can.

OK, so now things were set, as far as to the location and teacher. The Vancouver Dancers were delighted to have Edward and Elin play at the Equinox Ball, which was the 35th anniversary of their club and their 25th ball. In addition, Janet Gabites organized a harpa workshop for the next day. (That workshop hosted 16 musicians, including 9 from Washington.)

Now it was time to think about adjunct events and details for the Bay Area. Fred Bialy arranged for a house concert during the week leading up to the stämman. It was graciously hosted by Steve Friedland. I am very appreciative of Fred's help with this. We also planned a concert and dance at the lodge on the Saturday of the stämman weekend. Sarah Kirton helpfully agreed to organize the alspel and program for the dance.

One participant suggested that it would be a great addition to the weekend to have a jam session on Friday

evening. Since Edward and Elin and harpa students were already going to play briefly at my local international dance group that evening, I started thinking about where we could jam. Then I had a moment of inspiration and called George Cagwin, who is a long time folk dancer and friend and has an office right across the street from the dance. "YES," was the answer, and I was delighted!

Now for more details, such as lodging for out of town guests, registration, the new flyer, food and tasks that would need to be completed during the workshop. I went to two local motels that were not too expensive and got a discount for participants. I decided that no one would want to prepare food during the event and that I should make things simple. So I went to the local markets and priced snacks and got quotes for deli trays for lunch, and eventually ordered them from my closest one. The Friday evening meal would be at a restaurant and Saturday would be a pot-luck at the lodge.

I made up a schedule and sent a copy to Edward and Elin. I discussed the number of participants that would be coming, and the different skill levels. Edward and Elin planned everything for the teaching, adjusting as necessary, with obvious thought and good humor. They stayed with me, which saved lodging expenses, as well as gave me a chance to get to know them better. -- They were easy house guests and a delight to have around.

All this time Karen had been diligently working on the registrations, flyers, and budget items, and Sarah had been planning the program for the Saturday night dance after Edward and Elin's concert. I could not have done without them to help me. Communications of all sorts went back and forth between us and everyone involved. I talked about the dance and concert at the regular monthly dances and to friends that might come. At this point all that was left was for the week to arrive and the enjoyment to begin.

One other thing that helped was to have a sign up list of chores to be done during the workshop such as setting up for food etc, as well as having Peter Roberts, my sambo, be the person to pick up the food after I left to go up to the lodge. He also noticed when things needed attention during the workshop. It isn't a bad idea to have a non-musician available to help out!

All in all it was a very successful weekend and I think that the planning that went on prior to the event made the difference . . .

Our jam session, followed by playing a few dances for the Kopachkas, was a success, as was the concert and dance at the Alpine Lodge on the Saturday night. To my amazement and delight, a contingent of dancers from the South Bay showed up, despite the unbelievable rainy, windy weather. That involved a drive of at least one hour or more for them! And several lodgers that had the opportunity to hear the nyckelharpa for the first time. Comments were all positive.

And of course, Edward and Elin's teaching and music was wonderful!!!!!!

Puma Workshops in Jamestown

The super successful 2006 ANA stämman in California with Edward Anderzon and Elin Skoglund has come and gone by the time you read this, as has the satellite workshop up in the northwest corner of the country. “Tårta på tårta” is a Swedish expression which means “cake upon cake” ... in other words, an excess of good fortune.

To heap another layer on that cake, there is yet another tempting opportunity for nyckelharpa deepening and fellowship coming up this summer. By chance ... fellow ANA member (and two time World Champion) Peter Puma Hedlund has been invited back for the third time to appear and wow audiences at the annual Jamestown (NY) Scandinavian Festival. They really like him up there! The event organizers are very supportive of the nyckelharpa and its music, and they have full appreciation of Peter's value not just as an entertainer but also as an instructor, so they have opted to arrange time and space for Peter to teach a series of workshops during the festival weekend in addition to his performance duties.

If you are free that weekend (July 28, 29 & 30) and can make it to Jamestown (it's in the Niagara Falls corner of New York state), then this is a don't miss chance to meet and jam with fellow nyckelharpa players and like minded folks, enjoy a fine festival AND take workshops with a

master. Puma in person is a real treat, every bit as inspiring, exacting and patient as Puma on the three volume DVD instructional series that many of you have no doubt already purchased. Puma has come to the US numerous times and many in the ANA family have studied with him at one time or another ... and as we all know, there is always tons more to learn no matter how many times one has been exposed to a great master.

Here's plan: There will be three hour and a half sessions for nyckelharpa players (fiddlers welcome too) at \$20 each, or all three for \$55 — (Saturday 1pm to 2:30pm; Saturday 3pm to 4:30pm; Sunday 12:30pm to 2pm). In addition there will be two separate one hour Learn-a-Swedish-Tune sessions for musicians on any instrument, these sessions will be \$10 each — (Friday 5:30pm to 6:30pm; Saturday 6pm to 7pm). A five session package will be \$70. Contact Don Sandy to register. (email: dsandy@netsync.net / phone: 716-484-0415) Additional details or changes will be posted on the ANA website as we get closer to the event.

The Jamestown Festival (<http://www.scandinavian-jamestown.org/3scand.htm>) is real nice ... a joyful down home grass roots Swedish American event with lots of great food and entertainment, stuff for sale and a great big dance floor just awaitin' for some abuse. Hope to see you there!



The Twin Cities Nyckelharpalag

by Nelson Whyatt

The Twin Cities Nyckelharpalag has been around in one form or another since 1998, when a then unnamed group of beginners started to hold practices in a garage. It's hardly surprising that a nyckelharpa group got started here. Minnesota is known for its Scandinavians, and even though they're not as demographically predominant as many believe, they are well established. The Twin Cities metro area has many Nordic music and dance groups, and plenty of ethnic venues. There is the American Swedish Institute, with its ASI Spelmanslag, specializing in tunes from Dalarna, Sweden; the Twin Cities Hardingfelelag, focusing on the Norwegian hardangar fiddle; a Finnish band (Finn Hall), complete with tangos; a Danish band; and a variety of other individuals and groups spanning the Scandinavian spectrum. All the groups hold regular dances, and there are numerous festivals and gatherings, peaking in June with a deluge of Midsummer events. For anyone wanting to get involved in Nordic music or dancing, there are plenty of opportunities.

But what about the nyckelharpa? There were, in fact, harpa players here and there in the Nordic mix as far back as the 1970s, and the instrument was not unknown. Leif Alpsjö and Cajsa Ekstav had been in town spreading the word, and the ANA had held a stämman in Minneapolis featuring Anders Mattsson. The founders of the ASI Spelmanslag had harpas, although they no longer played them. One harpa player who was active ended up moving to Sweden, leaving a three-quarters size harp behind. Another, having no group to play with, stuck mainly with her fiddle. Still another, Becky Weis Nord, an accomplished instrumentalist, was that most rare creature, an experienced nyckelharpa teacher, and toward the end of the 1990s more students were showing up. Among them were two wild and crazy Scandinavian dancers who took up the nyckelharpa on a mutual bet, joined and encouraged by still another dancer who shifted from fiddle to harpa. The garage practices got underway and a "group" was beginning to form. Previously inactive harpa players now had somewhere to go. Loaner

harpas were made available for potential new students—Becky had a couple, and two of the early players, when they upgraded their instruments, kept their original harpas for beginners. The stage was set.

The Scandinavian dance community was the breeding ground for the nyckelharpa epidemic which followed. Here was a group of people who met often, who knew each other well, and who got wind of the new nyckelharpa activity. New players were recruited through such classic maneuvers as the old "would you like to give this a try? Here, let me help you" ploy. The fact that there was a teacher on site and loaner instruments available made such appeals difficult to resist. Practices moved from the garage to a suburban church. An early milestone was playing at a dance after Becky Weis's wedding, where the group was joined by some players up from Chicago. A sadder occasion was playing Kärleksvalsen at one of our member's funeral. A bit later a more



Here is our most recent photo. Left to right, Joe Alfano, Daniel Beal, Wes Peterson (Secretary), Bill Dahl, Nelson Whyatt (Past President), Elise Peters (Treasurer), Becky Weis, Cheryl Paschke (Board), Judy Kjenstad, Mary Crimi (Board). Not shown Leslie Seaberg (President), Marilyn McGriff, Mary Hegge, Tom O'Brien, Ron Mathisen, Karen Peters, Chris Von Wunder, Rob Krapfl and Carol Bell. There are another 10 harp players and 5 fiddlers and guitar players that are affiliated with the lag.

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Twin Cities Nyckelharpalag

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formal performance opportunity came along. A Norwegian group had heard about the lag, and wondered if we would play a short set at a dinner. We certainly weren't ready for public performance. We debated for maybe a minute, then went for it. We survived. These early performances were hardly polished, but they attracted attention and recruits. And so the Twin Cities Nyckelharpalag grew, spreading along lines of established connections.

Currently we have 16 officially active members: 14 nyckelharpa players, one of whom also plays accordion, and two fiddle players. We also have 16 "affiliate" members who keep informed of our activities via a mailing list and occasionally meet with us; nine of them have harpas. Our instruments come from a variety of makers, with Sören Åker in the lead—we have no less than 6 of his harpas amongst us. Other makers include Lars Hallengren, Esbjörn Hogmark, Tage Larson, Hasse Gille, Åke Ahlstrand, and Olle Plahn. A couple of years ago we sponsored a local nyckelharpa building workshop featuring Sören Åker, who we brought to Minneapolis. As a result, one of our active members and one affiliate member have instruments they built themselves (there were eight students in the workshop altogether, seven from Minnesota and one from Seattle). Aside from the oddness of our hobbies, we are a not altogether unrepresentative Upper Midwestern group. Many of our members have some sort of Scandinavian ancestry, often mixed, but there are Italian, Irish, English, German, and other lines represented as well. Our ages range from the 30s to the 60s; we're short of youngsters, but there are a couple of teenagers who have shown some interest. We are one of the larger nyckelharpa lags outside Sweden. It'll never get us on American Idol, but it's something.

One thing which has helped sustain our enthusiasm over the years has been a series of visits by Swedish harpa players who have conducted workshops, taught lessons, and generally reinvigorated the group at regular intervals. They have been wonderfully friendly and helpful, and have deepened our appreciation of Swedish musical traditions. The earliest visitor who worked with us as a lag was Olaf Johansson. He (with Väsen) appeared at a Nordic Roots Festival in Minneapolis, and the lag booked him for a workshop; he reappeared at a later festival and was happy to give another workshop. Cajsa Ekstav, of Trollrike Spelmän, has visited twice, and Peter "Puma" Hedlund has been over three times. Esbjörn and Sture Hogmark, Leif Alpsjö, and four members of the Nyckelharpa Orchestra have also spent time in the Twin Cities and worked with us, as did Sören Åker with a harpa building workshop. Sometimes the lag has piggybacked on operations like the Nordic Roots Festival, the Nisswa Stämman, or the American Swedish Institute, which brought the Hogmarks over for an Uppland Festival. In other cases we have sponsored visitors on our own, dipping into our treasury and raising money through dances and workshops to help them with expenses. This is an ongoing program for us, and we try to arrange at least one visit a

year. We have also done some visiting ourselves—nine of our members have spent time in Sweden studying the harpa, five of them at the Eric Sahlström Institute.

Another important factor for us is that at some point we reached critical mass. We have had enough players to sustain regular biweekly practices at members' houses. There are almost always enough players available to allow us to accept gigs. We can attract visiting Swedes to keep us on our toes. Amongst us we have enough knowledge and tools to do much of the day-to-day maintenance and repair harpas require—something quite reassuring for new players considering taking the plunge. But of course a sizeable membership means that we have had to work on the problem of organization. In the early days we had officers with assigned roles—a Music Director, an Artistic Director, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. This worked well for the young lag, letting us make use of the experience of more seasoned players. Later, as the group gained confidence and experience, we moved to a more open approach. On the one hand, we became more structured in a formal sense, incorporating as a non-profit group with a President, Treasurer, Secretary, and an elected Board. But the officers and Board see themselves as facilitators and follower-uppers rather than as leaders, and we have adopted the philosophy of "collaborative leadership." Anyone in the lag can volunteer as an "event leader" for a gig, taking responsibility for making arrangements, putting together a tune list, and the rest. Policy issues are discussed by the board, but significant decisions are made by the full membership. This looser approach seems to suit us. We have had our inevitable differences of opinion, but have managed to sail on without running aground.

We have ended up doing a lot of performing. We could have stayed with just practicing and jamming, but there was a strong feeling that we should perform. Beyond being fun, it would help recruit new members and also help fulfill our educational mission. We have small printed cards which we can hand out at gigs giving a quick description of the nyckelharpa and its history. There are always takers. Our secretary is the primary contact for people with potential gigs, but any member can bring a proposed job to the lag. A head count is taken, either on a practice night or via email, and if enough people are interested we take it on. We usually charge a fee, but give free performances where appropriate. Most of our jobs are in the Twin Cities metro area, but we have gone 250 northwest to Moorhead for the Hjemkomst festival and 275 miles north to Ely for a Scandinavian dance. On a number of occasions we have played informally at arts fairs at Stockholm, Wisconsin. Another Wisconsin destination has been the Scandinavian dance weekends at Folklore Village in Dodgeville, WI, which many of us have attended several times as individuals. A kind of cosmic convergence occurred in October 2000 when around a dozen harpa players from the Twin Cities and Chicago showed up for the same weekend and threw together a set of tunes for the Saturday night dance. And our Chicago connection was furthered last year when a contingent of the lag went down to play at the wedding of two of the Chicago gang. June is of course the big month for gigs, with the biggest event being

the Nisswa Stämman (this year being held June 10-11). The big winter event is the annual Scandinavian Ball held in late January, when the local Nordic dance groups rent a large hall for a long evening of dancing. Local bands play dance sets, a light meal and beverages are provided, and there is a Grand March at the beginning and an allspel at the end. It's a very full evening. And in the last year the nyckelharpalag has instituted a new performance evening just for ourselves—a "friends and family" concert (we do NOT call it a recital) with members performing solo or with accompaniment. Attendance is by invitation only, with no charge. This is a nice opportunity to try out new tunes and new arrangements before a friendly audience, and generally to let loose and have fun.

Regular performances have had a big impact on the lag. Gigs provide occasions for sociability, they motivate us, and they bring money into our treasury, but they also shape us. They can change practices from relaxed sessions into focused affairs, and they encourage continual learning of new tunes. This can be a problem for the less experienced players, who are not yet up to speed on the current performance tunes. We have had to consider the question of whether we should (a) aim at delivering high quality performances, focusing on experienced players who continually improve their skills, and possibly closing out less active players and beginners; or (b) continuing as an organization open to all interested players, regardless of skill and experience, letting each of the members find their appropriate role. We never seriously considered the first option; we have always been an open group, and we want to be a resource for anyone interested in the nyckelharpa. But there is no denying that it is more challenging for a new player to join the group now than when we were all beginners together.

As for tunes, we focus on the Uppland tradition, and started out with classics like Kärleksvalsen, Karolinermarschen, the Löfstabruk polketts, and polskas like Polska efter Båtsman Däck, Tierpspolskan, and Vendelspolskan, striving for that ever elusive bondpolska beat. Members are free to suggest new tunes, and we have a particularly active

Ceylon Wallin lobbyist. Many of our tunes, however, have been given to us by visiting Swedes in lessons and workshops, or have been brought back by members returning from Sweden, and we have played a fair number of newer tunes, including several by Peter Hedlund. We have worked on keeping our active tune list manageable, but for the most part have abandoned a formalized system. We try to balance the needs of experienced players, who want to keep learning new tunes, and beginning players, who can feel overwhelmed. Our current approach to encourage beginners is to hold on to a set of "foundation tunes" – good representative examples of the basic tune types – that we play at the start of most rehearsals, and which beginners can focus on. Beginners are welcome to join performances whenever they feel ready, and we include tunes they know. For tunes they haven't learned yet, they can simply not play (or can air bow, if they are more theatrically inclined). For experienced players there is the option of "small group" tunes. These are tunes chosen by a few people to work up on their own and play as a small ensemble during gigs. This adds variety to performances, and lets individual players go beyond the currently active lag tunes.

We would love to meet with wandering nyckelharpa players visiting the area. Bring your harpas and we can do some jamming. Email our secretary Wes Peterson at twin-cities@nyckelharpa.org, or call (952) 947-9542, to check on our activities. Our practices are normally held on the second

and fourth Tuesdays of each month, starting at 7:00. The location rotates among members' houses in no fixed pattern. And we would recommend a couple of regional events coming up later this year. The Nisswa Stämman is always great fun, featuring just about all the active Scandinavian musicians in the area (including us) plus visitors from Norden. The 2005 stämman will be held on June 10 and 11. See <http://www.brainerd.net/~pwilson/nisswastamman/> for developing details. In the fall, Peter Hedlund is coming for another visit. The current planning is for an evening concert at the Cedar Cultural Center on November 13, and a harpa workshop that afternoon. Again, Wes Peterson can provide updated info. Hope to see you there!



ANA member Enar Magnusson in Obbola, Sweden set us a picture of some nyckelharpas he has made. He can be reached via his website: www.nyckelharpan.se

Nyckelharpa Strings for Sale

The American Nyckelharpa Association is pleased to announce the availability of strings for the nyckelharpa! 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.

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.

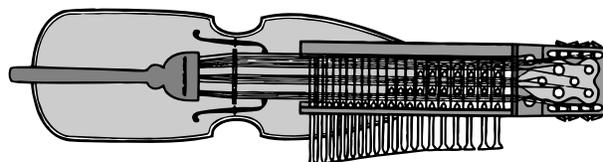
Price includes shipping in the US.

Add an appropriate extra amount for international orders.

String Set	Qty	Price	Cost
Prim Playing Strings	_____	\$53/\$60	\$_____
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>		Total:	\$_____
Name	_____		
Street	_____		
City	_____		
State	_____	Zip	_____
Phone	_____		
E-mail	_____		

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

Tim Newcomb
P.O. Box 51, Montpelier, VT 05602



Discovering the Nyckelharpa

by Barbara Dobay Ljungström

Thirteen years ago I attended the International Folk Festival in Falun, Sweden, with my husband to be, Bjorn and his brother, Lars, who lives in Falun and plays the fiddle. On the street I saw a family of about 6, in costume, playing nyckelharpas and dancing together. I was amazed and delighted.

Six years later, I married my Swedish sweetheart and he moved to America. We became active in our local folk music events, singing together, and I continued to play my auto-harp and my guitar.

Two years ago, when I retired from 25 years working at the Yale University Health Plan as a nurse-midwife, I began to have the time to live out some of my dreams. I bought a new guitar and began lessons. I dreamed of learning to play the nyckelharpa. Then, we went to Sweden, for the first time for the entire summer to our summer stuga in the Southeast corner of Sweden, far from the folk district in the North. We attended a spelmanstämman in Ystad where we saw nyckelharpas. I saw one advertised in the local paper, but someone else bought it before I could. Then I had some extraordinary luck. While visiting a dear friend in Onslunda, his neighbor, Bertil, who had moved to Skåne from Österbybruk, said that he had built two nyckelharpas, learning from Åsa Jinders father. I said that I longed to play this unique instrument.

The next day my friend called and said that Bertil wanted to loan me one of his instruments to take back to America for the winter. I was amazed at his generosity to a stranger and very grateful for his offer. When I arrived home in New Haven, Connecticut, I went on the internet and discovered the ANA and wrote to Matt Ficktenbaum. He invited me to visit him in Massachusetts. He showed me how to tune the nyckelharpa and gave me my first lesson, acquainting me also with Peter Hedlund's teaching DVD. So, I went home and tried to learn from the DVD.

The next summer when we arrived in Sweden we planned to stay for six months for the first time. Again I had good luck. In the local paper was an article about a music teacher in Tomellilla with a picture of her playing the nyckelharpa. So, I was able to take four lessons and finally felt that I was making some progress.

Kerstin Bengtsson turned out to be a great teacher, enthusiastic and supportive and so much fun to visit.

My husband and I also drove to a small church near Perstorp to hear Peter Hedlund play in concert and I bought his two new CDs, one solo and one with a group. Bertil agreed to sell me his nyckelharpa and I had a wonderful time practicing and learning some of the tunes from the CD, and also from an Åsa Jinder CD I borrowed from the local library.

Then in July, in the summer of 2005, I was able to attend a workshop with Peter Hedlund on the West Coast in Hunnesbrostrand for 4 days, and despite the language difficulty, I had a great time, got to play with others, and learned a bit more. My husband and I also were able to visit relatives and friends in the area. A part of Sweden I had not yet seen.

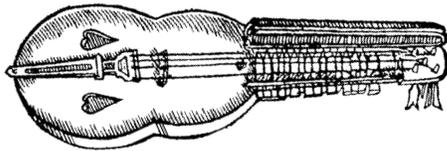
Then back to New Haven for the winter, I practiced alone and played a few tunes for our friends in the Swedish American VASA Lodge where we belong. Lonely again, I turned to the ANA website, the beautiful new one, and discovered another player in New England., Elizabeth Morrison, up in Southern New Hampshire. This year we have gotten together twice to get acquainted and play duets and practice. It has led to a wonderful friendship with Elizabeth and her husband, Steve, and we will host them in Sweden this summer!

Presently I am excited about attending a Stämman in Mill Valley, California, where I can combine it with a visit to my daughter who lives in San Francisco, and looking forward to summer in Sweden and attending the weekend in June for the Österbybruk event.

At age 64 I do not expect to become a virtuoso, but I am sure having lots of fun! My husband is a bit amazed and very pleased at my interest in Swedish music, and very patient when listening to the same tune played over and over again until I learn it. Here in New Haven I have a slow jam group of mixed instruments where I have made progress in sight reading tunes and have introduced Swedish tunes to the group. So, now that the nyckelharpa is one of the main challenges of my retirement years, you can see that it has led to many good times, travel and friends in both countries. Now, if I could only make such progress with the Swedish language!



It's the summer 2005 crop of Ekebyholm students from North America. L to R: Lynn Erickson, Laurie Hart, Rita Leydon, Bronwyn Bird, Jill Myers and unnamed fiddler seated in front.



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. Send submissions to *Nyckel Notes* at the address below, or to: nyckelnotes@nyckelharpa.org

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Rita's Notes

Good news! The ANA Board of Directors has a new configuration thanks to the spirited voting participation of the membership. After all was said and done the five folks who represent and serve you for the next while are: Rita Leydon (President), in Pennsylvania; John Wendell (Secretary/Treasurer), in Hawaii; Tim Rued in California, Bill Layher in Missouri, and Ben Teitelbaum in Colorado. That's quite a geographic spread! All of us thank Sheila Morris and Tim Newcomb for YEARS of behind the scenes service on the Board. Tim will continue for a time putting together the issues of Nyckel Notes ... but if there is someone out there burning with desire to take over this task I am sure Tim can be convinced to let it go.



Those of you who are without email addresses will shake your heads and say, Huh, what? How come I didn't get the chance to vote or even hear about it? You are a very small minority ... and we understand the disappointment ... but the ANA has moved on to embrace the inefficiency of the internet and we simply do not have the resources (read manpower / time) to hold our election on more levels than one.

A couple of behind the scenes changes are in process. One is that all ANA correspondence dealing with membership records and purse strings will be in the care of John Wendell in Hawaii instead of me in Pennsylvania. The other is that the ANA sales department (books, CDs, etc.) will move from my house in Pennsylvania to California and be under the care of Tim Rued. These changes will be essentially invisible to the membership as the current email addresses for those services will simply be redirected. (note: if you haven't checked out the stuff for sale pages on the ANA web site lately ... maybe you'd like swing by.)

I'm gearing up to fly off to Sweden to film three more "mature masters" for my documentary series on Swedish Folk Music Treasures. Bosse Larsson, Björn Ståbi, and Mats Andersson this time. Two fiddlers and a clarinet man. I am currently also working on my films with Styrbjörn Bergelt, Anders Liljefors, and Sture Sahlström. Alas, there are not enough hours in the day or days in the week. I am fretting over the annual challenge I have with harpabuilder Martin Westermarck ... once a year we agree to pick a difficult tune and learn it so we can play it together the following summer. Last year it was Viksta-Lasse's Eklundapolska #2, and this year it is Eric Sahlström's Beethoven Polska. I think I can ... I think I can!

Don't forget that we'd love to hear about your nyckelharpa adventures out there in the farflung corners of the world!

Rita Leydon, President