

# NORTHWEST



August 2000



## Stämman Time Is Here Again

Once again it is time for the annual Northwest Spelmanstämman. The date is **Saturday, August 26, 2000**. Below is the information to date on this popular event, sponsored by the Skandia Music Committee.

It will again be in Woodinville at the beautiful home of Joan and John Anderson. The workshops will be from 1 - 2:30 and 3:30 - 5. At 6 there will be a potluck, jamming, and music and dancing, hopefully under the stars, on the deck. Bring something to cook for yourself on the grill (which will have be all fired up), and something to share with others.

Following is the planned schedule of music sessions, with one leader yet to be announced. Choose one session from each time slot.

### SESSION

1:00 - 2:30

Nyckelharpa  
Fiddle Repertoire  
Hambo Tunes

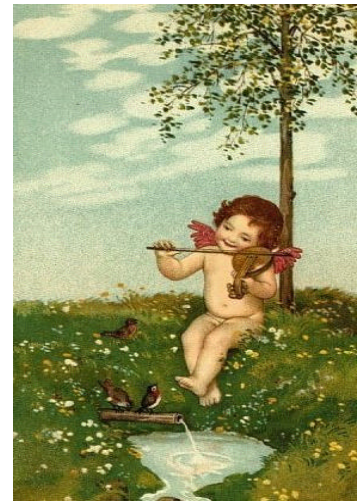
### LEADER (Moderator)

TBA  
Peter Michaelsen  
Members of the Hale-Bopps

3:30 - 5:00

Guitar session  
(Also for accompanying instruments and second fiddles)  
Jamming (for all instruments)  
Song Swap

Sue Thompson  
Kris Johnson  
Gina Boyd



**NOTE:** Directions to the Anderson home are on the following page. This is a **FREE** event, but donations will be gratefully accepted to help cover expenses.

For further info contact **Irene Myers, (206) 283-2735**, who is in charge of arranging the music sessions.

**On Sunday, August 27,** at 10 am there will be a **brunch** with **jam** (pun intended) at the home of Bill and Gina Boyd at 7728 21st Ave. NW, Seattle, (206)784-4783. Bring a food dish to share and play to your heart's content afterwards.

**Please Note:** **Non-musicians** are also invited to the events. Feel free to come and listen to the music or to dance on Sat. evening.

## **Directions to the Anderson home are as follows:**

Take State Route 522 East toward Woodinville and Monroe (From I-5 take Lake City Way - Bothell exit and go through Bothell. From I-405 take 522 Monroe exit).

Go **past** the 1st exit (Woodinville exit). Turn off on **NE 195th St. exit.**

Go right (**East**) on **NE 195th St.** to the top of the hill.

After you start downhill, take the **first right turn (160th Ave NE).**

Go one block and turn right at the sign "**Laurel Hills**".

Curve up the hill and take **second right turn (179th St).**  
It is the second house from the corner on the left, brick-faced with tile roof.

**15541 NE 179th St. phone (425)488-0460**

## **PRE-EVENT JAM SESSION FRIDAY, AUG. 25**

Everyone is invited to join in on **Friday evening August 25<sup>th</sup>**, at an informal gathering at 7:00 PM to jam at the **Wit's End Bookstore & Tea Shop** at **770 N. 34<sup>th</sup>** in the Fremont district, Seattle. It is near the Fremont Bridge and across from **ADOBE,** (software company), a big brick building, and near the interurban statue. The atmosphere is relaxed and refreshments can be bought there.

Call Irene at (206) 283-2735 for information.

## **ALLSPEL TAPES AND CDs**

Distribution of the three Allspel recordings is now being handled by **Gina Boyd, 7728 21st Ave. NW, Seattle, (206)784-4783.** Contact her for information or to order. The recordings are also now available on CD. Both tape and CD recordings come with the sheet music for all the tunes. Prices are \$10 for each tape or \$15 for each CD.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

**The Gordon E. Tracie Music Library** contains hundreds of pieces of sheet music for Scandinavian dance and fiddle tunes? You can have copies for a nominal printing fee. The library is housed in the Nordic Heritage Museum in Ballard. You can come to visit it or send inquiries to **Mary Mohler, Library Archivist: [vincejolviet@msn.com](mailto:vincejolviet@msn.com)** or phone her at **(425) 806-1424.** In addition there are hundreds of recordings you can listen to. Check with Mary for visiting hours.

Following is an article written by the late **Gordon E. Tracie**, Skandia's founder, in the 50's about the Hambo. This was long before the polska craze of today and when Skandia was in it's infancy. I thought it might be of interest, especially to those who came after Gordon's death. It came from the archives of the Gordon E. Tracie Music Library and is re-printed here through the courtesy and permission of the Skandia Music Foundation. Just keep in mind as you read this that it was written over 45 years ago.

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Hambo/Hambopolska

## HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE SWEDISH HAMBO

by Gordon Ekvall Tracie

Rare indeed is the folk dancer who hasn't heard of the Hambo. This top favorite number might well be called one of Sweden's most famous exports.

It is quite appropriate that the Hambo should be the dance which has come to more or less symbolize that northern land's contribution to Folk & Oldtime Dancing, for it bears the tradition of just about the oldest of all Swedish dances: the Polska. With a long and interesting history not unrelated to the entire field of Scandinavian folk culture, this unique dance warrants a bit of closer study.

The Polska as both a musical and rhythmic form has been known in Sweden for over three and a half centuries. (In triple (3/4) meter, it is not to be confused with the 2/4-time Polka, which is of much more recent origin and not native to the North.) The Polska is to Sweden what the Rhumba is to Cuba or the Jig and Reel are to the British Isles. Its characteristic three-count lilt constitutes the rhythmic framework for not only the multitude of folk dances and song games based upon it, but for the overwhelming proportion of all Swedish folk melodies as well, both in Sweden proper and in many sections of Finland. In Norway, where it is known as Pols, it finds expression in numerous traditional dances. Truly, this distinctive 3/4-time Polska-Pols rhythm may befittingly be termed "the pulse-beat of the Northland."

The term Polska appears in Swedish literature as long ago as the late 1500's. While the name itself unmistakably comes from Poland, the Polska as either a dance or musical form is believed by some musicologists to have existed previously in Scandinavia under another name -- indeed, that it may even actually have originated somewhere in the North. In any case, the Polska has played a cardinal role in Swedish music and dance since the beginning of the 17th century, reigning supreme as the "national dance" of Sweden for nearly 250 years, well into the 1840's the favorite of nobility and folk alike.

During such a long period it is natural that considerable changes occurred, and as a result the Polska has taken on many and varied forms. Oldest of these is the "långpolska" (long polska), a serpentine or line dance of the same type as that believed danced in conjunction with folk songs in the Middle Ages. Another form is the "slängpolska" (slinging or flinging polska), which is usually characterized by its being done in place rather than around the floor as in most dances. (Fyrmanndans, the Swedish Slängpolska for Four, is a living example of this.)

However, the Polska is chiefly known as a couple dance, for early in its history it became closely associated with the development of pair-dancing, as distinguished from the more ancient practice of dancing only in groups. As far back as the Middle Ages, European ring dances often concluded with a "swinging" of partners couplewise, a practice which gave rise to the eventual separation of this figure from the rest of the dance. In Sweden this partner turn was known as Polska, and as it achieved its "independence," it acquired -- in common with the then current Renaissance court dances -- a set of contrasting movements. This usually consisted of a slow first part which passed into a fast, gyrating second part. The former ("fördans"; fore-dance), originally in either 4/4 or 2/4 time, was often no more than simple pacing forward, while the latter ("efterdans"; after-dance) consisted of vigorous whirling roundabout. (This basic arrangement of alternating forward-moving steps and turning steps is still seen in the Hambo of today, particularly the old Hambo-Polska, described in the following pages.)

(cont. next page)

During the 1700's a further development in the Polska took place: the two figures separated, and the leisurely fore-dance (which had by then drifted into 3/4 time also) came to be called Polonaise, after the French, while the lively after-dance acquired the name Mazurka, from the Polish. But this was true for the most part only in the higher strata of society. Out in the country districts and among the "common folk" the first part gave way completely to the second, and the spirited latter figure -- now a fully independent couple dance in 3/4-time -- was referred to variously as Mazurka, Springdans, or, more often, simply the original designation, Polska. As far as can be determined it was solely a turning of partner with any one of various Polska steps.

As is the case with all things dynamic, the Polska never was (nor is today!) the same at all times or in all places. It varied both with the passing of years and with respect to geographical location. For just as there are today various kinds of Waltzes, such as Viennese Waltz, "box" waltz, "flat-footed" waltz, etc., so were there in Sweden any number of variations of the Polska, differing with the particular music used and the area in which the dance was done. These forms and variants run into the scores. Here are just a few of the many couple dances: Svängpolska (swinging or wheeling polska), Körepolska (trotting polska), Bondpolska (farmers polska), Boda polska (polska from Boda), Hälsingepolska (polska from Hälsingland), Snurrbocken, various forms of Slängpolska, and in Norway, several forms of Pols.

To this day, probably 80% of all the dance tunes played by Swedish folk musicians are in Polska rhythm. (In the province of Dalarna -- Dalacarla, the "cultural heart of Sweden" -- the percentage is even greater.) But though many of the old melodies survive among the country fiddlers, the greatest share of the dances originally done to them is lost forever, having succumbed to more modern innovations along the way.

That version of the Polska which has outlived all the others in popularity right up into the present generation, is of course, the Hambopolska, now generally known as simply the Hambo. Despite the catastrophic toll of folk traditions -- including such cultural legacies as rural costumes, folk music, and native dances -- taken as a result of the Industrial Revolution and the advent of "modernism," the Hambo has remained a popular dance throughout all parts of Sweden. It is today, as much as ever, dear to the heart of every Swede who knows it, as "the best dance of all."

The specific history of the Hambopolska is somewhat obscure, as is the origin of the word "hambo" itself. Some folk etymologists content that it comes from the place-name Hanebo, in the province of Hälsingland, where folk dancing has long enjoyed a particularly lively existence. "Hanebo-polska" is in fact not unknown in certain dance circles. More likely, is that it is a corruption of the German city name Hamburg. This is substantiated by the fact that in Swedish literature on dancing from the first part of the 19th century there are references to dances called "Hamburg-polska," "Hamburger-polska," and "Hamburska." ("Hamborgarpols" is a term still in use by folkdancers in Norway.) It seems likely that the name "Hamburg-polska" may have been used in Sweden to designate a "newfangled" way of doing an old dance. The original dance must have been an existent version of partner-turning Polska; the new styling consisted of prefixing it with a measured number of open pattern steps (such as Tyrolean waltz, Dal steps, or the like). Although the addition of these beginning "ornamentation" steps bears a striking resemblance to the older two-part Polska mentioned earlier, it is most likely that they were at the time an innovation from the Continent. Since Germany was one of Sweden's closest southern neighbors, it is not inconceivable that a German city, Hamburg, was given credit for this imported finesse which brought an old dance "up to date."

Whatever its origin, the Hambopolska soon "took over" as the most popular of the Polska couple dances in Sweden, completely displacing, in many areas, all of the older versions. With the need for differentiation thus eliminated, the word "polska" was gradually dropped, and the dance became known as simply the Hambo. In places where both the old and the new versions were still danced, however, "Hambo" referred to a polska with a definite number of introductory steps preceding the turn, and "Polska" to one without such pattern steps. In other instances, the name Hambo didn't become known except in connection with written music; traditional [..?.] airs remained "Polskas." Folk fiddlers, of course, customarily play by ear, and to this day in Dalarna the tunes which the fiddlers play for Hambo dancing are known only as Polskas, not Hambos. (There, incidentally, it is the practice at oldtime dances for every other tip to be a "Polska"!)

From the above account of the Hambo's history, it should readily be seen that the really important, actually vital part of this dance is the basic hambopolska turning step -- that which is done in closed position with partner. The open pattern steps which may precede and/or alternate with the turn are ephemeral in nature, and of far lesser consequence; indeed, they may even be dispensed with, without greatly detracting from the fundamental enjoyment of the dance.

Thus, though its "ornamentation," and even its name, may change from generation to generation and vary from place to place, the traditional, "time-tested," intrinsically Swedish element of the Hambo still remains: the incomparable Polska turn. May it never be lost to the folk dancing world!

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## Dalarna and Seattle both lose legendary fiddlers

Dalarna in Sweden and Seattle here in the U.S. have each lost a special fiddler in their folk music community. Each fiddler has made a significant impact and contribution among his peers. **Päkkos Gustaf**, from Bingsjö in Dalarna, died in July. His farm has been the site for the popular annual **Bingsjö Festival** for many summers. This festival draws thousands of musicians. On the other side of the world Seattle said goodbye to **Fiddling John Sears** in January. John played in many local groups, including the **Pioneer Trio**, founded by the late Gordon E. Tracie. The Trio provided Skandia's first live music. **Gustaf** specialized in polskas in the old tradition while **John** was primarily a gammaldans musician. Both were in their early eighties. Both leave a tremendous void in their music communities. (By the way, Päkkos is the name of his farm and Gustaf is his own name. It is common in Sweden to put the farm name in front of the other name.)

## **IMPORTANT: Spelmansnoter roster to be updated**

In this age of electronic communications, I would like to know which of you would be willing to receive the newsletter by e-mail or to read it online (on the web). Information updates can be added to the web. How many times have you misplaced newsletters with pertinent information? Now it can be as near as your computer. This will help cut down on expenses. We do not have bulk or non-profit mailing privileges!

I have also scaled down the list to one newsletter per married couple. Both names will be in the address. I would appreciate it if you would take the time to fill out the following form to help in the list update. Making these important changes will make it possible to put out the newsletter more often.

**NOTE:** Any newsletters that are returned due to address changes will have the names removed from the mailing list until I receive an update.

### -----Important: Roster Update Questionnaire-----

(Please check at least one of the following.)

I wish to continue receiving Spelmansnoter by regular mail.

I am no longer interested in receiving Spelmansnoter.

I am willing to receive Spelmansnoter by e-mail  or to read it online.

(temporary URL) <<http://members.home.net/trella/spelmansnoter/spelmansnoter.html>>

(PLEASE PRINT).

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY , STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to me, the editor, at: Trella Hastings, **4650 89th Ave. SE, Mercer Island, WA, 98040**, or you can e-mail me the info at <[trella@home.com](mailto:trella@home.com)>.

Trella Hastings, Editor  
4650 89th Ave. SE  
Mercer Island, WA  
98040

**Spelmansnoter goes online!**

**It's back!!!** Spelmansnoter has returned and changes are being made. Your new editor, Trella Hastings, has finally graduated from school and now has some time to devote to the newsletter. With your help in filling out the enclosed form, it can be a more regular item now. This is my first issue, so please be patient with my learning process. You will now be able to receive **Spelmansnoter** by e-mail or read it on the web! Temporary address is **<http://members.home.net/trella/spelmansnoter/spelmansnoter.html>**