

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8471

The Swedish fiddlers

Music from the Gathering of the fiddlers at Delsbo

Recorded by Gert Palmcrantz, Dag Haeggqvist, and Samuel Charters

Compiled and with notes by Samuel Charters



PHOTO BY ANN CHARTERS

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

M
1774
S974
1978

MUSIC LP

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8471

Side 1.

1. Livander's Polska (LivAnders Polska)
2. Polska after From-Olle (Polska efter From-Olle)
3. Pelle's Rullpolska (Pelles Rullpolska)
4. Mansens Polska (Mansens Polska)
5. Bridal March after Svensk from Osterby
(Brudmarsch efter Svensk fran Osterby)
6. Polska from Hotagen (Polska fran Hotagen)
7. The Miller's Polska (Mjolnarpolskan)
8. The Mats Gard Waltz (Mats gards valsen)
9. Polska after Erlandsson(Polska efter Erlandsson)

Side 2.

1. Waltz after Anders in Logarn (Vals efter Anders i Logarn)
2. Bridal March from Askeryd (Brudmarsch fran Askeryd)
3. Polska after Lapp-Nils (Polska efter Lapp-Nils)
4. Waltz from Roslagen after Albin Wallin
(Vals fran Roslagen efter Albin Wallin)
5. Polska from Lovsta Foundry (Polska fran Lovstabruk)
6. Gratlaten (Gratlaten)
7. Waltz from Boda (Vals fran Boda)
8. The Rattvikers' Walking Melody
(Rattvikarnas Ganglat)

*Originally issued in Sweden
Sonet SLPD-2039*

©1978 FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.
43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A.10023

*The
Swedish fiddlers
Music from the
Gathering of
the fiddlers at Delsbo*

Recorded by Gert Palmcrantz,
Dag Haeggqvist, and Samuel Charters

Compiled and with notes by Samuel Charters

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8471

THE SWEDISH FIDDLERS

Notes by Samuel Charters

The music of the Swedish fiddlers is today one of the most vital folk music styles of Scandinavia. Although it has been part of Swedish peasant life for many centuries the fiddle music has become newly popular, and there are thousands of musicians playing in every province of Sweden. Young musicians have absorbed the traditions from older instrumentalists and there has been a renaissance of the older styles. For a brief period in the late 1960s there was an interest in combining fiddle music with electric rock instruments in an effort to achieve the kind of fusion of folk and pop that occurred in England with groups like Fairport Convention, but recently there has been less concern with any kind of popularization and now few of the new musicians think of adapting the music to any other style. The fiddle has become so dominant as a folk instrument that it has almost completely replaced instruments like the clarinet, which were also popular, and other areas of Swedish folk music, particularly song, continue to disappear from the countryside. The fiddle music was traditionally played by men, while the women played the cow horns and pipes, and they also kept much of the song tradition alive. Today there are almost as many women playing the fiddle as men, and some of the finest performers on the horns are men.

In the older Norse mythology the figure of Loki played the role of musician and prankster to the Gods, and in the earliest period the fiddlers—known as *spelman*—and Loki were thought to have some connection. The word comes from the verb “*spela*,” which means to play, and it is the most commonly used term today to describe folk fiddlers. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century there were musicians playing stringed instruments, but much of the peasant dance music was performed on the bagpipe. However viol-type instruments were also common, and there was also an instrument which seems to have come into Sweden from Germany as early as the mid-1300s called the *key fiddle*. All of these instruments were depicted in paintings on the walls of village churches, many of which survive today.

With the introduction of the violin into Sweden from Italy in the late 1600s it soon took over most of the repertoire of the bagpipe, and the early legends that had clustered around the peasant musicians were now told about the *spelman*. It was felt that they learned their art from a water spirit called *Necken*, who seems clearly to be related to the old Norse Loki figure. *Necken* appeared to the fiddlers—and to ordinary people as well—from the edge of a stream or lake, naked, playing a melody on the violin that was so beautiful that the listener could be bewitched into following the spirit into the water where he would be seized and drowned. The *spelman* were thought to be able to get lessons from *Necken*, and especially to be able to learn the spirit's melody. In most of the stories the *spelman* was said to have gone to the river on three Thursday nights in a row, leaving his violin on the bank or hanging from a bridge. On the third night, when the fiddler came back he would find two fiddles lying, or hanging, side by side. He then had to choose between the two instruments, which looked identical. If he picked up the one that *Necken*

had left his soul would be lost and the spirit would rise from the water and take him away. If he chose his own, however, he would be able to play with magical artistry and he could play *Necken's* melody, which was usually called “*Necken's Polska*,” after the most popular country folk dance. The *spelman*, to trick the spirit, marked their own fiddles, usually with three drops of blood, or with a small bag of magic herbs and powders that was nailed into the sound box of the instruments. Some of these fiddles still can be seen out in the countryside. Usually they're a little smaller than an ordinary violin, but they have a triangular group of nails set into the back.



Hjort Anders (at left) and Viksta Lasse, two important fiddlers from the 1930s. Photo from Viksta Lasse

In parts of Sweden where there wasn't so much water the story was sometimes told that the fiddlers met *Necken* in the fields and that he taught them to play his *polska* in exchange for three drops of blood from the little finger of their right hand. After this the finger became stiff and the fiddler never could bend it again. This was perhaps a way for the peasants to explain why many of the fiddlers kept the little finger of their bowing hand stretched out stiffly as they played.

The "Necken Polska" was so beautiful that anyone hearing it couldn't sit still, and leaped up and joined the dancing. The fiddler, however, had to be careful. If he played the piece one chorus too many then he couldn't stop the music and as he went on playing the furniture joined in the dancing, the floor shook, and finally led by the fiddlers all the dancers whirled out into the forest to the nearest river or lake and they all plunged into the water and drowned. All of the stories, of course, are related to other European folk narratives about legendary musicians, but the fiddlers even today can take on an almost magical aspect as they play. Sometimes they still play in primitive barns or country houses, as they did in the earlier period, and if they play a piece particularly well everybody feels compelled to join in the dancing, and as people stamp on the light floor boards the walls begin to shake, the furniture jumps in rhythm with the stamping, and the fiddler becomes so excited that it's difficult to make him stop. At country dances there is always a healthy portion of schnapps present—called "String grease" or "tuning water" by the spelman—and this helps create the atmosphere.

Sometimes, in the old stories, the spelman decided to "given them the twelfth," which meant playing the "Necken Polska" one time too many; since eleven was the usual number of times it could be repeated safely. If he decided to do it he went and found someone, often a cook or a servant, and told them to stay out of the room when he started playing. Then after a time they should rush in and if everyone was dancing madly and he was bleeding from the nose as he played then they must take a knife and cut the strings of the violin before everyone either drowned or died of exhaustion. If the fiddler forgot to tell someone and he played the piece too often a stranger could still save everyone if he met them on their way to the lake and cut the fiddle strings.

Many stories still are told about the spelman and Necken, and many of the incidents took place at night, close to a water driven mill; so the bewitching melody repeated over and over again could certainly have been a squeaking millwheel. Other stories are more difficult to explain.

In the early period, when the peasant villages were so isolated and there was so little opportunity for social life the fiddler's role was very important, and skillful musicians sometimes had a permit to perform the music for an entire parish and their fees were set by local authorities. It was possible for a musician to make a kind of living playing, and if he had a small farm or a trade he could maintain himself and a family. It was a difficult life; however, for the most popular occasion for the fiddlers were the weddings, which went on anywhere from three to five days, and the fiddler was expected to play music almost continuously. Often the spelman brought another musician with him to help out, in many instances a son who was also learning to be a spelman, and in this way the traditions were passed on. The fiddler was expected to play special pieces for the bride, for the drinks that were ceremoniously brought on, for the meat dishes; and then play for dancing most of the night. To keep themselves going the fiddlers usually drank a great deal and if they were trying to maintain a farm at the same time three or four days away from home could be difficult at planting or harvest time. Some of the popular fiddlers had to be engaged as much as a year in advance for a wedding. Lapp-Nils, whose Polska is performed on B3, had this kind of reputation, and he usually came to the wedding a day early so that he could teach some of his melodies to the local spelman so that they could help him play.



Fiddlers at a gathering.

Photo by Ann Charters

Although this musical activity all went on before there was any kind of recording the spelman often kept notebooks of their melodies, sometimes drawing the lines of the staves themselves; then painstakingly jotting down their pieces so that they could remember them for the next dance or wedding. Many of the notebooks have been preserved in Stockholm's Music History Museum, and they are an invaluable glimpse into this period in Sweden's musical life. Most of the melodies come from European sources, and there are minuts and quadrilles, as well as marches and polkas, but there are also folk melodies, the polskas, scattered through the pages. The earliest book is from the mid-1700s, and in some of them there are songs as well as instructions for the dances. As some younger spelman have emphasized the musicians who could write down their melodies must have had some training so they weren't typical of the peasant spelman, but at the same time the books do suggest some of the rich variety of the fiddlers' repertoire.

In the mid-19th Century an evangelistic revival swept through the Swedish countryside, and the new church leaders began a systematic attack on the fiddlers, associating them with alcohol and dancing. All the stories about Necken were revived, but this time Necken was described as a form of the Devil, instead of the relatively friendly folk spirit the peasants had described before. It was said that if you watched a fiddler's arm as he played you could see small imps dancing, and that the Devil himself came to dances and lurked in the shadows in the form of a black dog. The spelman were asked



*The Gathering
of the fiddlers
at Hudiksvall, 1910.*

to repent, to give up their music, and renounce drinking and dancing. In some villages there were large bonfires, and the spelman burned their fiddles. This left a kind of musical vacuum in the countryside, which was quickly filled by the accordion; since no one could pretend that you needed the Devil's help to learn to play it.

It was a difficult period for the spelman and their music, but they had been part of the peasant culture for so many hundreds of years that it was difficult to uproot the traditions of their music. The accordion had many advantages as a folk instrument, but it was built as a diatonic instrument, and it was impossible to play a folk scale on it. Much of the fiddle repertoire couldn't be played on the accordion, and although many of the dances were adapted to the new instrument this has been a continuing disadvantage. Every summer there is a festival of folk accordion music at Stockholm's large amusement park, but almost all of it is arrangements of pop songs or show pieces like "The Lady of Spain," and the grand finale of the evening is a hundred accordionists playing the arrangements of the Count Basie Orchestra. The two instruments, the violin and the accordion, have continued to divide the musical taste of the countryside, neither of them displacing the other.

In the 1890s a revival of interest in peasant culture throughout Scandinavia gave the spelman back some of the respect they had lost during the religious movement. Collectors began travelling through the countryside to write down melodies and there was a new excitement in every aspect of peasant art and music. In the small town of Mora, in the province of Dalarna, which is one of the areas of Sweden that is richest in folk culture, an internationally known Swedish painter named Anders Zorn began inviting musicians to play for guests he brought to the summer house and studio he'd built there. In 1906, with the help of the most persistent of the music collectors, a jurist named Nils Andersson, Zorn organized the first gathering of the fiddlers in the forest close to Mora. There wasn't any kind of stage. The musicians stood on a farm wagon to perform, and there were as many women playing cow horns and birch trumpets as there were fiddlers. It was to be a contest between the performers, instead of a concert, and before they began playing one of the fiddlers, Timas Hans Hansson, who was the eventual winner, came up to Zorn and asked if they had someone judging who really

knew anything about spelman's music. Otherwise they should all go home. Zorn explained that Nils Andersson knew more about spelman and their music than anyone else at the time, and that they'd do the best they could.

Partly because of Zorn's reputation, and partly because of the interest that the Nordic Revival had raised the first gathering was widely reported in the press, and there was considerable excitement over it. It has sometimes been said that Zorn "saved" spelman's music, but the music was still a living tradition, and what he did was to give it a new creditability. In the next few years there were gatherings everywhere in Sweden, culminating in a national gathering, or stämen, as they're called in Swedish, in Stockholm in the summer of 1910. The gathering was under the patronage of the King of Sweden, and Nils Andersson was asked to invite the finest musicians from every part of the country. There was no competition, and the fiddlers performed in concert for much of Stockholm's music public. Their appearance was the final step in return of spelman's music to Swedish life.

In the years that have passed since the spelman have continued to play and there has been serious interest in their music. After the first few years the idea of competitions was quietly dropped; since there was really no way to judge the differences between two fiddlers playing in different styles, and in country areas the matter of judging became a very sensitive issue. The function of the music has changed and it is more performed for concerts or small informal gatherings than it is for dancing; though in the 1970s there has also been a revival of interest in folk dance. Since the 1920s the fiddlers have been performing regularly for Swedish Radio, and spelman like Hjort Anders from Dalarna, Viksta Lasse, from Uppland, Gössa Anders from Orsa in Dalarna, and today's virtuoso of the key fiddle, Eric Sahlström, became well known personalities in Swedish musical life. The young spelman have learned the local playing styles from phonograph records, from following older musicians to the gatherings, and from spelman in their own families, often an uncle, or their fathers. In the 1960s the fiddle music became part of the whole return to the earth movement which was as important in Sweden as it was in America, and young spelman became as much a part of city life as they had been in the countryside in the earlier generations. When Sweden's new king married in the mid-1970's the music that was played as he led his bride to the

castle was the traditional folk wedding march of Dalarna, played by a group of Dalarna spelmen who had been brought to Stockholm to take part in the ceremonies.

About these recordings—

The gathering of the fiddlers at Delsbo, held every year in the Hälsingland village of Delsbo on the first weekend of July is one of the largest in Sweden. Often more than twenty thousand people come to listen to the hundreds of fiddlers who gather. In the best tradition of spelmen's music the proceedings are very informal. There is a stage with loudspeakers—the stage a simple mound of grass in front of an old farm building—and spelmen play through the day, each spelmen's group playing three or four members. Around the stage, however, scattered through the forest there are musicians playing for each other and for small groups of listeners. Usually there are as many people wandering from group to group as there are sitting on benches in front of the stage. There is an old barn not far from the stage area and usually someone is playing there for dancing; though it also is spontaneous, and sometimes no one will feel like playing for an hour or so. Most of the music recorded was played on the stage, but later the microphones were set up in the bushes for the playing there. In the final editing of the tapes the emphasis was on the variety of the music—so that as many different styles as possible would be represented—and on the different traditions of the older and younger musicians.



Young fiddler with a key fiddle at a gathering in 1977.

Photo by Ann Charters

Side A

Band 1. *Livander's Polska*

Band 2. *Polska after From-Olle* (Polska efter From-Olle)

Band 3. *Pelle's Rullpolska*

All of the fiddlers playing together on the stage.

The day begins with a church service for the spelmen; then they march together from the church the half-mile to the playing area. As they march they play Delsbo's well known Wedding March. On the stage they stay together for half a dozen numbers, picking melodies that everybody knows. There is no leader; though one of the Delsbo spelman, usually Sven Hårdelin or his son Thore, motions with his bow so that they can begin together. It is Sven's voice that can be heard saying "en gang till," which means "one more time," in the middle of "Livander's Polska," telling everyone to play it all again. The musicians decide for themselves who will play the melody and who will play the second, or harmony, part, and there is generally a great deal of variation in the local styles that each of them play. For these pieces; however, which are called "allspel," meaning everybody plays, the musicians usually try to keep their playing as simple as possible so that the melody can come ringing out. As they play they shout to each other with pleased excitement; since they only get to play together like this two or three times a year at one of the gatherings.

The pieces that they play here are all polskas, which is the most popular form of melody for the spelmen. The pieces are in 3/4, with the accent coming on 3 and 1, the way the fiddlers tap their feet. Polskas may have come into Sweden from Poland during the religious wars, but there was also a Swedish tradition of pieces like them, and many of them can be traced to song melodies from the countryside.

Each of these polskas is named after the spelmen who either composed or arranged it. Liv-Anders and From Olle are almost legendary figures from an earlier period of spelmen's music, but their melodies were preserved by younger musicians who passed them on to still younger players, and the pieces are part of today's repertoire. Pelle's Rullpolska is named for its composer, Pelle Schenell, who was a school teacher and spelman from the village of Gnarp in northern Hälsingland. He was highly regarded for his colorful personality, and stories are still told about his musicianship even though it has been more than fifty years since he was an active musician. The term Rullpolska refers to the opening notes, which are played with what Hälsingland spelmen call a "rull" or roll of the bow. It is a fast arpeggio over all four strings which is popular in the Hälsingland style.

Band 4. *Mansen's Polska*

Östergötland's Spelmanslag. (Östergötland's
Spelman's Group.)

Östergötland is a province in west-central Sweden and the dance style, as this polska would suggest, is faster and more agitated than the more sedate dancing of other provinces. There is a brightness to the melodies, and they are played with very little ornamentation. The short bow stroke is also more typical of Östergötland.

Band 5. *Bridal March after Svensk from Österby*
(*Brudmarsch efter Svensk fran Österby*)

Sture Sahlström and Curt Tallroth, key fiddles

The key fiddle for centuries was associated with the province of Uppland, which lies on Sweden's east coast just north of Stockholm. It is one of Europe's earliest folk instruments, and it is also one of the most complex. There are paintings of the instrument on the walls of Swedish churches dating from the

1300s, and it has steadily evolved as the years have passed. At the end of the 18th century the instrument declined in popularity and its survival was threatened, just as during this period the bagpipe lost its hold on the countryside, but at the beginning of the industrial period Sweden imported thousands of Flemish workers to the small iron foundries in Uppland. The instrument had enough similarities with their own folk instrument, the hurdy-gurdy, that they adopted it and renewed its popularity. The instrument has drone strings as well as the playing strings that are stopped with the hand carved wooden keys, and it is the drong that gives the key fiddle its distinctive tone.

For many hundreds of years the instrument was limited as to the number of notes that could be played, but individual musicians kept adding to its range, and in the 1920s an Uppland musician named August Bohlin developed an instrument that was fully chromatic over a three octave range, making it possible for the instrument to play in any key. Shortly after Bohlin had built the instrument now played a young spelman named Eric Sahlström set out to improve the tone of the key fiddle, and he developed techniques that have given it a resonant, warm tone. Sahlström is also one of the most accomplished folk musicians in Sweden today, and he has given an entire new dimension to the key fiddle and its repertoire.

Sture Sahlström is one of Eric Sahlström's brothers, and he also is a gifted musician. He and Curt Tallroth, another accomplished builder of key fiddles, perform in the traditional Uppland style, with its strongly marked rhythms and its emphasis on the first beat of each measure. Weddings were the most important source of a spelman's income for hundreds of years, and every village as well as every fiddler has their own wedding march.

Band 6. *Polska from Hotagen* (Polska fran Hotagen)

Jonas Jonasson and Yngve Göransson, violins, Jämtland.

Jämtland is a northern province, and its music reflects the isolation and the difficulty of life in its mountains and forests. In the playing of these fiddlers there is an older, modal feeling in the harmonies, and a careful ornamentation of the melodic outline. This is a classic example of duet playing—called "parspel" in Swedish—from an earlier period in the Swedish folk tradition.

Band 7. *The Miller's Polska* (Mjölnerspolskan)

Upplands Spelmansförbunds Lag

This is group playing using more modern harmonies and with the more developed dance forms that came into the folk styles at the time of the Nordic Revival at the turn of the Century. The Uppland style, with its clearly defined rhythms and melodic clarity, can be heard here again. The musicians are members of the Spelmansförbunds Lag, which means the spelman's association's playing group.

Band 8. *The Mats Gard Waltz* (Matsgards valsen)

Fridolf Jansson and Erling Holström, key fiddles

This waltz was composed by the lead instrumentalist, Fridolf Jansson. The rhythmic difference between the polska and the waltz can be heard here, although both dance forms are in 3/4. The accent here is on the first beat of the measure, and the fiddlers tap their feet on one, instead of three, one, as in the polska. However, the piece is built of three eight measure sections, and in the third section the second musician accents the third beat of the measure as well. The melody is a series of sequential figures that build on themselves with the same kind of endless circling that is typical of the waltz itself.

Band 9. *Polska after Erlandsson* (Polska efter Erlandsson)

Gert and Annmarie Olsson, violins

Although this is modern playing by a talented younger couple it has roots deep in the older styles of playing. The melody is simple and direct, drawing from the song tradition that was an important source of the fiddler's repertoire. The second part; however, is very developed, suggesting the classical duet music that was played by more highly trained musicians in the countryside. Few of the peasant fiddlers could read music, but usually the church organists in the parish could perform from music, and parts books have been found in small villages for duet playing in a style that was developed from classical forms of the time, but also reflected a knowledge of local dance forms.

Side B

Band 1. *Waltz after Anders in Logarn*

(Vals efter Anders i Logar'n)

Nordjämtarnas Spelmanslag

The melody is in a distinct major mode, clear and open, with a swinging rhythm. The arrangement is modern in style, and the use of pizzicato in the harmonies played by the second violins reflects a more sophisticated rendering of the musical style of this northern province.



*Eric Sahlström,
leading performer
on the key fiddle.*

Photo by Sam Charters



A fiddler playing for a dance in an early folk painting.

Band 2. *Bridal March from Askeryd*
(Brudmarsch fran Askeryd, Smaland)

Ake Karlsson and Gunnar Andersson, violins

This is in the older duet tradition, with considerably more melodic embellishment. The march rhythm is clearly defined; however, and the harmonies are distinctly diatonic, even though this comes from an earlier period of spelman's music. Smaland is one of the southernmost provinces of Sweden, and these southern areas were strongly influenced by music from the rest of Europe. Most of this music was derived from classical forms, and there is less of the song-type melody and less modal harmony than is common in northern Sweden, where the contact was considerably less. Smaland was also one of the areas that contributed heavily to the stream of emigrants who left Sweden for the United States at the end of the last century, which would partly account for the more conventional style of American-Swedish folk music.

Band 3. *Polska after Lapp-Nils* (Polska efter Lapp-Nils)

Berit Henriksson and Lars Erik Vikström, violins

This piece, another duet for two violinists, also shows some of the differences between the style of a southern province like Smaland and a northern province like Jämtland, where Lapp-Nils was born. The harmonies are more modal in character, and even with the bright rhythm there is a kind of song-like quality in the melody. It is a virtuoso piece for both instrumentalists, and the second harmony is freely melodic in itself. The second violinist is not so closely tied to the harmonic form as in the Smaland style, and his part is a flowing

counter-melody. Lapp-Nils, whose real name was Nils Jonsson, was one of the most famous of the 19th Century spelman. He was born in 1804 and died in 1870, before any recording was possible, and before there was even an effort to document folk melodies, but other spelman had learned his pieces and they passed them on to younger spelman, and it is possible even today to get a clear impression of Lapp-Nils repertoire and playing style.

Band 4. *Waltz from Roslagen after Albin Wallin*
(Vals fran Roslagen efter Albin Wallin)

Band 5. *Polska from Lövta Foundry* (Polska fran Lövstabruk)
"Ö-gruppen Ceylon:" Ceylon Wallin, Gert Olsson,
Bengt Lindroth, and Stephan Olström, key fiddles
and violins

This is music from Uppland, and the similarities in style can be heard between this and the playing on bands A5 and A7. The dominant instrument is the key fiddle, and the rhythms and melodies have the characteristic openness and directness. The iron foundries that were established along the Uppland coast were small communities organized around the work of the foundry, but there was an emphasis on communal music and dance. The leader of this group is a fine key fiddle player in his late fifties named Ceylon Wallin. Although he lives now in the university town of Uppsala he grew up in one of the foundry communities. Albin Wallin, the composer of the waltz the group plays, was Ceylon's grandfather, and he also was a spelman.

Band 6. *Gratlaten*

Röjas Jonas Eriksson, violin

Röjas Jonas is one of the most important of today's spelman. He grew up in a spelman's family in a small village in Dalarna, but in his teens he became too ill to go on with his life as a forest worker, and he began to study the violin as a classical instrument. He traveled to Holland as well as Stockholm as part of his long training, and he soon became active as a music educator. He is now the director of a music school in the city of Härnösand, on the east coast nearly three hundred miles north of Stockholm. Although he had difficulty at first in adjusting his playing to the different idioms he is now able to shift from classical violin to his native spelman's music without losing the important distinctions between the two instrumental techniques. He has spent considerable time studying the relationship between the dance style of a village and its playing "dialect," and he has collected many melodies from other spelman. He has recorded extensively and is active in the national spelman's movement.

"Gratlaten," as he played it, was one of the most popular pieces performed at the gathering. What he tries to show is the change that a melody undergoes as it is taken over by the fiddlers from the village singers and is slowly altered to become a spelman's piece. The song is well known, and the title could be freely translated as "The Cryin Song." He plays the melody six times, changing it each time. In the first repetition he plays it simply, as the original melody. The second time there is subtle embellishment to the melody, gracing that a singer would not use, and a touch of double stopping. In the third repetition the rhythm has become more clearly rhythmic and the double stopping suggests the beginnings of a duet style. In the next repetition the duet is fully developed, and the last two times the melody becomes even more rhythmic and dance-like, and the embellishments become more florid. It is an interesting glimpse into the musical growth and change behind the spelman's repertoire, and he performs it brilliantly.

Band 7. *Waltz from Boda* (Vals fran Boda)

Band 8. *The Rättvikers' Walking Melody*

(Rättvikarnas Ganglat)

Björn Stabi, Röjas Jonas, Kjell Westling, Thore Härdelin, Petter Logard, Wille Grindsäter, and Johnny Hellberg.

Despite the new popularity of microphones and loud speakers the gatherings of the fiddlers are loosely organized, and the musicians are so pleased to see each other again that there is as much playing off the stage as there is on it. The spelman stand together under trees, against buildings, in the middle of the fields—three or four playing together with a group of listeners clustered around. Usually someone has a bottle and the playing off the stage is often looser and more exciting than the playing on it as new melodies are exchanged and fiddlers lean closer to each other, hearing the gracing and the embellishments as they play themselves. The term for this kind of music is "buskspel," from the words buskar, which means bushes, and spel, which means to play. These pieces were played in the buskspel that followed the gathering. It was late in the evening, the sun was falling, but there were still crowds of people drifting from playing group to playing group listening to the music. The fiddlers in this group are among the best of Sweden's younger folk musicians. Björn Stabi was a performer at the last Newport Folk Festival and recorded an album of spelman's music when he was in the United States. Thore Härdelin, Petter Logard, and Wille Grindsäter are widely known as a playing trio called "The Bearded Man's Gang," and the year before the gathering were given a Grammy award as Sweden's best new pop group, even though the music they played was entirely traditional.

The first piece, the "Waltz from Boda," is a popular melody and they shouted encouragement to each other as they played. Boda is Röjas Jonas' home village, and the version they play is close to his way of performing it. The second piece is a walking piece—a kind of easy march—from the small town of Rättvik, on the shores of Lake Siljan, also in Dalarna and not far from Boda. They called out the tune to each other by "trolling" it, which means to hum the melody with the characteristic inflections of the violin bowing.

This record was originally issued in Sweden Sonet SLPD 2039

A Note on Pronunciation—

Swedish has three letters not found in English—a, å, and ö. A is pronounced like a long O—like in open. Ä is pronounced like a short E—as in Edward. Ö is similar to the German letter, and is pronounced something like aer.



*Young fiddlers
at the Delsbo Gathering
Photo by Ann Charters*