

Boulder Spelemannslag

Purchase of a nyckelharpa

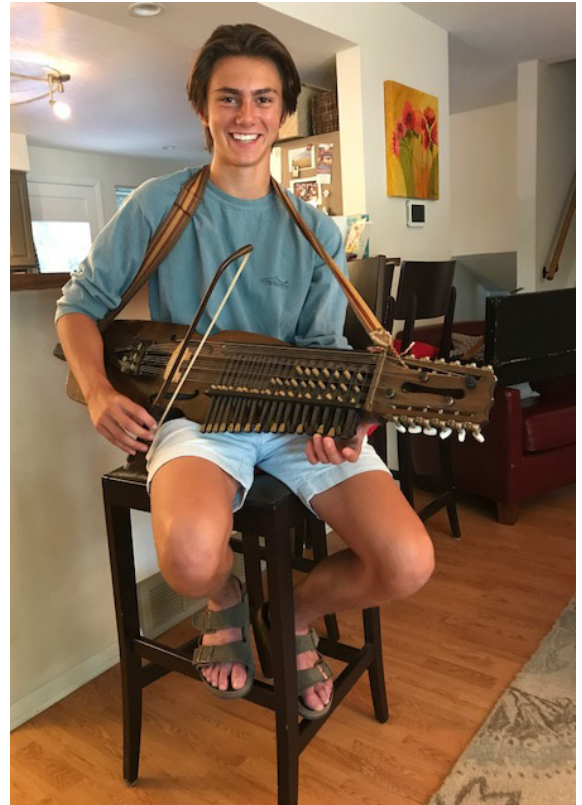
\$1000 Grant from the Alex "Tink" Wilson Legacy Fund - April 2017

The Boulder Spelemannslag is an ensemble of young musicians who play music for Scandinavian dancing, under the direction of Sharon Gillespie. The group relies on authentic folk instruments to create the beautiful Scandinavian music that enriches our community life.

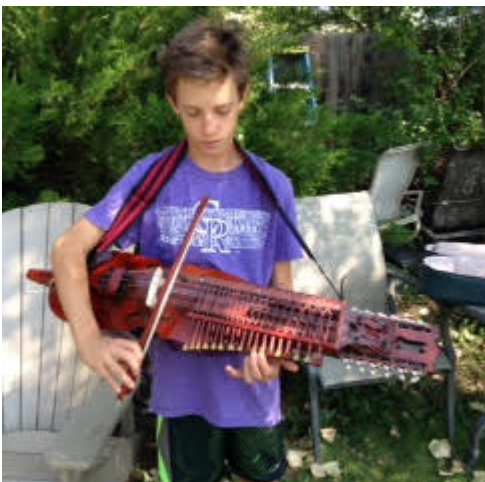
One of those instruments is the nyckelharpa, a traditional Swedish keyed fiddle where keys, rather than fingers, depress the strings to change the pitch. Depictions of this unique instrument have been found in a relief from Gotland dating from 1350 and in early church paintings in Italy from 1408.

In the past, the Spelemannslag has relied on instruments borrowed from local nyckelharpist Sheila Morris, who has also trained the players. The Alex Wilson Legacy Fund grant enabled us to purchase our own instrument, which will be used in all our performances for the dance community, the Shakespeare Festival and the Boulder International Festival.

There are currently 15 students in the Spelemannslag. Sheila will schedule their training so that there will always be at least one student ready to perform.



Spelemannslag member Bennett Ford playing a loaner nyckelharpa from Sheila Morris.



Spelemannslag member Liam Wood playing the new nyckelharpa

Here is the background of our new instrument:

"The nyckelharpa was built to order by Enar Magnusson, who lives in Obbola, Sweden, just outside of Umeå, between 5-10 years ago. Umeå isn't exactly in the center of folk-music Sweden, despite a large folk festival every year, and Enar's reputation is only recently starting to grow, but several professional musicians in Sweden play on Magnusson harpas. The quality is quite good—better than the price would suggest."

If the time ever comes that the nyckelharpa is no longer needed by the Spelemannslag, ownership will revert to the Alex Wilson Legacy Fund.

"The boys love playing and I hope that came through at the [Christmas] dance. I think they are up to a 10 tune repertoire," says Sharon Gillespie.