



WINTER IS COMING

ERIK ASK-UPMARK • THE NORDIC HARP

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Welcome to my second CD with traditional Swedish music, arranged for solo harp. The first one, Heaven's Polska (Himlens Polska) featured not-so-common tunes from the Swedish folk repertoire; the music on this CD however is generally more well known. This stems from the fact that over the years I have given lots of workshops abroad, and generally the participants want to learn tunes they will be able to play with other Swedish musicians if/when they end up at a Swedish session or *stämma* (folk festival, usually in the summer). I can almost promise that all the tunes on this CD will be familiar to Swedish traditional musicians, so please have a go at it! And if you *don't* play an instrument (yet), it is never too late to start – Swedish folk music is at its best when you are able to partake of the tradition yourself, either as a player or dancer, although listeners are very welcome too of course! If you do want to learn to play the tunes yourself, there is also a “Winter is Coming” sheet music book available. Finally, let me stress that no harps were injured during the shooting of the cover photo...

Enjoy! – Erik Ask-Upmark

1 ROSENBERG

A classic fiddle tune from Södermanland that in my view makes an excellent harp tune as well! It's included in a music collection published in the middle of the 1800s by Anders Gustav Rosenberg, one of the first big folk music collectors.

2 SISTER POLSKA

One of the two “sister polskas” played by the legendary fiddler Timas Hans Hansson (1846-1916) in Ore, Dalarna.

3 THOLSON SCHOTTISCHE

Christoffer Tholson (1864-1945) was a fiddler in Härjedalen and some of his tunes were written down by Einar Övergaard. In the collection, it is called a “halling” but I play it more as a schottische (*schottis* in Swedish).

4 BLOMGREN

A favorite tune of mine, after Johan Christian Blomgren (1800-1860), a cantor (church musician) from Hässlunda in Skåne who belonged to a famous family of musicians in the region. Often, the church musicians were the ones to preserve many of these tunes to posterity, since the fiddlers themselves usually couldn't read or write music.

5 IN VERNALI

A beautiful song celebrating the coming of spring, from the collection *Piae Cantiones* (1582).

In vernali tempore
Ortu laetabundo.
Dum recedunt frigora.
Nuntiat hirundo:
Terrae, maris, nemoris
Decus adest deforis,
Renovato mundo.
Vigor redit corporis,
Cedit dolor pectoris
Tempore iucundo.

Terra viret floribus
Et nemo virore.
Aves mulcent cantibus
Et vocis dulcore.
Aqua tempestatibus.
Caret, aer imbris,
Dulci plenus rore.
Sol consumptis nubibus,
Radiis patentibus
Lucet cum dulcore.

*The spring-time
Has come again.
The chill of winter is banished.
The swallow announces:
In land, sea, & forest
Beauty abounds,
The world is renewed.
Vigor returns to the body,
The torment of the soul vanishes
At this blissful time.*

*The land is green with flowers
And the forest is green.
Birds delight us with melodies
And sweet voices.
The sea is free of tempest.
The air is rainless,
And full of fragrance.
The sun scatters the clouds,
Its spreading rays
Shine with gentleness.*

6 POLSKA PRESTO

A very familiar tune in Swedish folk music circles, after the famous nyckelharpa player Byss-Calle (1783-1847). I call it “polska presto” since I generally tend to play it much too fast...

7 A THOUSAND THOUGHTS

“Jag går i tusen tankar” - “I wander with a thousand thoughts”.

As is often the case, a rather joyful melody set to some very, very sad lyrics!

Jag går i tusen tankar
Jag älskar den jag ej kan få
Så vitt i världen vankar
Och städse sörja må
Så mången sorg på hjärtat bär
För dig min vän så kär
Så många falska människor
Orsaken därtill är

*I wander with a thousand thoughts
I love the one I cannot have
So far around the world I travel
Constantly grieving
So much woe is in my heart
For you, my dearest love
So many false people
Are the cause thereof*

8 ÅREPOLSKA

This polska from Jämtland in the North is probably the closest we come to finding a jig rhythm in Swedish music, so prevalent elsewhere in Europe! This tune is after the fiddler Per Danielsson (1822-1922).

9 STORM MARCH

The fiddler and seaman Rasmus Storm collected many great tunes in the 18th century and wrote them down in his famous collection from around the year 1760.

10 LULLABY

One of the few traditional melodies that just about everyone in Sweden knows - and still use it in its original sense, lulling babies to sleep!

Lullabies are among the oldest of all tunes we know in Nordic music and it is impossible to say exactly how old they are, but their origins certainly go back to the Middle Ages, if not even earlier.

11 THE OLD FAVORITE

We continue the hit parade with a very popular tune - although some confusion reigns who actually preserved it to posterity. Most likely, you'll hear it being referred to as a polska from Småland after Magnus Theorin or Magnus Juringius - the truth is, it is actually from Västergötland and can be found in another personal music collection from the late 18th century, belonging to one Anders Larsson. I decided to call it "the old favorite" here instead!

12 SIR MANNELIG

My take on a well-known medieval ballad (how often can you put those words together?) about a knight's encounter with a (female) troll, courting the knight with different fancy gifts. But the knight spurns the troll and in the end she runs away, crying. Good thing for the knight he didn't meet a more belligerent troll! This tune has become very popular not least with re-enactors of the Viking and medieval periods, since it is very evocative of those eras, both thematically and musically. Most likely it is much younger but by all means, let your fantasies take wings!

Bittida en morgon innan solen upprann
Innan fåglarna började att sjunga
Bergatrollet friade till fager ungersven
Hon hade en falskeliger tunga

Herr Mannelig, herr Mannelig,
troloven I mig
För det jag bjuder så gärna
I kunnen väl svara endast ja eller nej
Om I viljen eller ej

Eder vill jag giva de gångare tolv
Som gå uti rosendelunden
Aldrig har det varit någon sadel uppå dem
Ej heller betsel uti munnen

*Early one morning before the sun arose
And the birds sang their sweet song
The mountain troll proposed to the fair squire
She had a false, deceitful tongue*

*Sir Mannelig, Sir Mannelig,
won't you marry me
For all that I'll gladly give you
You may answer only yes or no
Will you do so or not*

*To you I will give the twelve great steeds
That graze in a shady grove
Never has a saddle been mounted on them
Nor had a bit in their mouths*

Eder vill jag giva de kvarnarna tolv
Som stå mellan Tillö och Tärnö
Stenarna de äro av rödaste gull
Och hjulen silverbeslagna

Eder vill jag giva ett förgyllande svärd
Som klingar utav femton guldringar
Och strida huru I strida vill
Stridsplatsen skolen i väl vinna

Eder vill jag giva en skjorta så ny
Den bästa I lysten att slita
Inte är hon sömmad av nål eller tråd
Men virkad av silket det vita

Sådana gåvor jag toge väl emot
Om du vore en kristeliger kvinna
Men nu så är du det värsta bergatroll
Av Näckens och djävulens stämma

Bergatrollet ut på dörren sprang
Hon rister och jämrar sig svåra
Hade jag fått den fager ungersven
Så hade jag mistat min plåga

Herr Mannelig, herr Mannelig...

*To you I will give the twelve fine mills
That stand between Tillö and Tärnö
The mill stones are made of precious gold
And the wheels are silver-laden*

*To you I will give a gilded sword
That jingles from fifteen gold rings
And strike with it in battle as you will
On the battlefield you will conquer*

*To you I will give a brand new shirt
The lustrous best for to wear
It is not sewn with needle or thread
But crocheted of the whitest silk*

*Gifts such as these I would gladly receive
If you were a Christian woman
But I know you are the worst mountain troll
From the spawn of Näcken* and the devil*

*The mountain troll ran out the door
She wailed and she shrieked so loudly
"Had I gotten that handsome squire
From my torment I would be free now"*

Sir Mannelig, Sir Mannelig...

[13] THE COBBLER

A very special tune for me since it was one of the first folk tunes I ever learnt, many years ago...

[14] WINTER WALTZ

And finally a waltz I improvised one night in the bleak midwinter, far away from home. Usually Swedish tunes have a very romantic notion about the (sometimes all too brief) summer; winter, not so much - so I thought it fitting to end this CD with a winter tune!