

GAMBA WATCH

The Newsletter of The Marais Project & Sounds Baroque



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Edited by Philip Pogson

Swedish Roots - final 2012 concert

At 3pm on Sunday November 11 the Sydney Conservatorium will be filled with the rare sounds of Swedish baroque and folk music. The event has long been a dream of Jenny Eriksson and lutenist Tommie Andersson. In this short interview Tommie and Jenny relate something of their Swedish background and the music they will perform in "Swedish Roots".

Philip Pogson (PP): Tommie, where in Sweden did you grow up and go to school?

Tommie Andersson (TA): I grew up in Bodafors, a small country town of some 2,000 people in the province of Småland, home of IKEA, Orrefors and Kosta Boda glassware and Astrid Lindgren (the author of Pippi Longstocking) and much more.



Tommie rehearsing on the theorbo

PP: What are some of the musical memories of your childhood?

TA: My home was not a musical one and the reason I started learning music at all was that a few boys in my class (in year 5) asked me to take up the guitar so we could form a band like the Beatles. I am still very fond of their music, but one thing led to another and I ended up making my living playing lutes instead. I do enjoy playing "Blackbird" on the theorbo occasionally!

PP: Jenny, what about you?



Knut Axel Eriksson
circa 1918

Jenny Eriksson (JE): Unlike Tommie I was not born in Sweden. My grandfather, Knut Axel Eriksson, arrived in Melbourne in 1924 (see picture). He was a sailor by trade. He never went back to Sweden.

PP: Did you grow up knowing much about your heritage?

JE: We knew Grandpa was Swedish of course, but there was not as much encouragement as there is today to keep up the original culture. However, each year

we received letters from a Swedish cousin who wrote to Grandpa which kept up the link to Grandpa's place of birth. When I first went to Sweden I got to meet this cousin and the rest of my family which was very moving. Interestingly, many of our Swedish relatives are fine amateur musicians and we often play and sing together when we are in the same country!

PP: Are your family musical?

JE: Dad tells me Grandpa played the mouth organ beautifully. Grandma, who was English, played the piano well and loved South American music. Both of my sisters are fine musicians and my Aunt was a music therapist before she retired.

PP: Tommie, what was going on in Sweden during the Baroque period?

TA: In the 17th century Sweden was a major power in Europe, covering the area of Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and the area in Russia where Peter the Great later founded St. Petersburg. Sweden also controlled some parts of northern Germany so the Baltic was a virtual Mare nostrum. Culturally, however, the court in Stockholm was far away from the centres of Paris, Rome and Venice and with wars and a small population, the frozen north did not produce any great lasting achievements.

Queen Christina of Sweden, who was very keen on the arts, enticed Italian and French musicians to visit in order to brighten up the court and the philosopher Descartes was her tutor (apparently very miserable and cold in Stockholm and soon died from pneumonia). Christina later abdicated, converted to Catholicism, and became a patron of the arts in Rome with composers like Scarlatti, Corelli, Stradella and Pasquini under her wing. At home, the Swedes continued to do what they did best: make war.



PP: Johan Helmich Roman, who will feature in "Swedish Roots", is often described as "The Father of Swedish music". What was his role?

TA: There were, of course, composers before Roman in Sweden but he was the first of any stature. Through his studies in England (with Pepusch) he got to know Bononcini, Geminiani and Handel and when he returned he was soon appointed Chief Master of the Swedish Royal Orchestra. He brought a wealth of music by the great composers of the time to the Swedish court which had a huge influence. He composed orchestral music, cantatas, assagios for unaccompanied violin and 12 flute sonatas; the Drottningholm music is considered his greatest work, written for a royal wedding in 1744. This is a personal favourite of mine; it has 33 movements and is similar in style to Handel's Water Music.

PP: Can you describe some of the key features of Swedish folk music?

TA: Swedish folk music is mostly played on the violin; other instruments include nyckelharpa (a type of hurdy-gurdy played with a bow, with roots in the middle ages), various pipes and bag-



pipe and (in the 20th century) the accordion. The music itself is often in a minor or modal key, with sometimes quirky rhythms and tempered notes (i.e. deliberately slightly sharp or flat).

JE: My most powerful memory of Sweden is the fiddle orchestras, they have a wonderful, raw, robust sound and people seem to love to play in them.

PP: Anyone who has spent time in Sweden will have come across the revered poet, Carl Michael Bellman. How will Bellman feature in Swedish Roots?

TA: Bellman is central to Swedish culture. He is unique in that he not only set music to his poetry, but also conveyed a dramatic portrait of his time and the life of ordinary people (including drunkards and prostitutes) in Stockholm. The four songs I have chosen for this concert give quite a typical picture of Bellman's output.

PP: Finally, you have been in Australia for a long time now Tommie. Do you miss "home"?



TA: In 2013 I will have spent exactly half of my life in Australia and I became a citizen a few years back, so I would probably consider Sydney "home" now. I also have a beautiful family here and plenty of interesting work. Having said that, there will always be things about Sweden that tug at me.

PP: Jenny, is there anything you want to add?

JE: Only that it will be a very interesting mix of music with at least one piece by Marais! We have asked one of my Swedish cousins and her husband to choose a folk song to finish the concert.

Seaven Teares consort

The concert by the Seaven Teares consort in August, promoted by The Marais Project, was a "sell out". Along with more traditional consort repertoire the event featured the world premiere of "Times Past" for consort and bass clarinet by jazz artist and composer, Paul Cutlan. This work was kindly commissioned by Father Arthur Bridge and Ars Musica Australis. Paul also performed in his own piece and several other works examples of which should go up on You Tube soon. We suspect that the combination of consort and bass clarinet is an Australian first - they sound fantastic together.

New viol ensembles in Sydney

In the past 12-18 months several new viol ensembles have formed in Sydney which is great for those music lovers who have a more adventurous bent. In addition to the "Seaven Teares" consort, "Josie and the Emeralds", another new viol consort, are doing a great job. Finally, Imogen Granwal, a member of Seaven Teares and sometime member of The Marais Project, has formed "Baroque Illuminata", an ensemble focusing on South American baroque music. Best wishes to all concerned.

Gambist Imogen Granwal has formed "Baroque Illuminata"

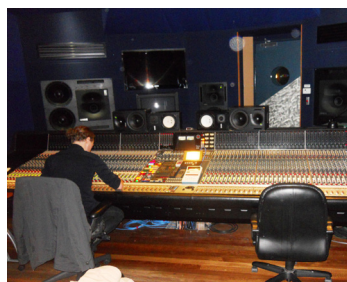


Sounds Baroque South Coast tour



Jenny, gamba and cow at Tathra Public School

Sounds Baroque, Jenny Eriksson's specialist ensemble that performs baroque operas in schools as part of the Musica Viva in Schools Program, has embarked on several tours this year including to the Southern Highlands and Far South Coast. While on tour Jenny met this very fine cow at Tathra Public School. It was made by the children as part of a local competition.

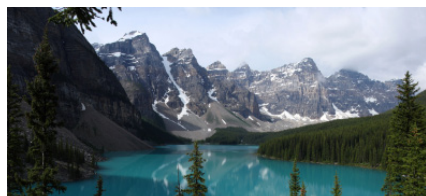


The desk at Studios 301

A new CD in the offing...

Rumours of a new Marais Project CD are true. For the past several months Jenny and the team have been putting down tracks for a new CD of songs at Studios 301. The recording, produced by Llew Kiek, features some 5 singers and various combinations of viols presenting a broad variety of songs from 1300 to the present - including Chattanooga Choo Choo! We think it is our best CD yet! The planned release is early 2013.

Bound for Banff



Banff national park

Where on earth is Banff? The Banff Centre in Canada is the largest arts incubator on the planet. The Centre's mission is to inspire creativity. Over 6,000 artists, creators, and thinkers from across Canada and around the world participate in Banff Centre programs every year.

Marais Project and Sounds Baroque Director, Jenny Eriksson, has recently been awarded a prestigious winter residency at Banff for January 2013. Jenny will spend the time preparing a program of virtuosic French viol music for our 2013 concert series. Banff is very cold in winter so she expects to pack her woollens!



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Sounds Baroque and The Marais Project both operate active Facebook sites with members from around Australia and the world. Log in to keep up with concerts, events and photos.

Artistic Director Sounds Baroque and The Marais Project – Jennifer Eriksson
Joint Managing Directors
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