

# SCANDINAVIAN SCENE

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ON THE PLEASURES OF  
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

SCC HISTORIES: JON MALMIN

VESTERHEIM'S ONLINE  
FOLK ART CLASSES

AND MORE...





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# FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear SCC Members,

As many of you have heard by now, PLU's president and Board of Regents have made the short-sighted decision to end the Nordic Studies program, along with a few others and to remove 30+ tenured faculty

positions. I find these decisions infuriating. I believe strongly the university's leadership is cheating society, students, and itself.

To add this this, on Wednesday, April 14th, I sent the SCC Council the following letter:

Dear SCC Council Members,

The poet Theodore Roethke writes in his poem "The Waking" that "I learn by going where I have to go." I came to the Scandinavian Cultural Center nearly 4 years ago, August 2017, not knowing what I was going to learn but knowing I was coming here. I learned much. Again, I reflect on those words now: I am going to keep learning by going where I need to go. This letter is a difficult letter to write but I know it is time for me to go.

So I am writing you in love and care to let you know that I am resigning my position as Director of the Scandinavian Cultural Center at Pacific Lutheran University, effective as of **May 31st, 2021**. I reached this decision in December 2020 but I have withheld it from everyone save the Dean of Humanities, Prof. Kevin O'Brien, and my Nordic Studies colleague Prof. Troy Storfjell in order to protect the SCC during the FJC process. Kevin and Troy and I have spent many hours crafting a proposal to keep the Center safe and productive and we feel that we have arrived at one that does the best possible for the Center and its membership under the circumstances.

I leave the Center in a better state than I found it. The collection has been inventoried, controlled, and located. I have streamlined the SCC's event calendar. I have documented the Center director's work in a Director's Handbook. I have taken control of the finances, controlling and tracking expenses. I have increased connections with students at PLU, which will be important for future work. That does not make the parting any easier for me or for you. When I feel uncertainty I turn to poetry, particularly Swedish poets. So I want to share a poetic excerpt with you that I have turned to again and again over the past year, from Swedish poet and Nobel Literature laureate, Thomas Tranströmer's "Vermeer":

*It hurts to go through walls, one becomes sick of it  
But it is necessary.  
The world is one. But walls ...  
And the wall is one part of one's self  
One knows it or knows it not but it is so for everyone  
Except small children. For them, no wall.*

*The clear heaven has stood against the wall.  
It is as a prayer to the void.  
And the void turns its face to us  
And whispers  
"I am not empty, I am open".  
(my translation)*

I take this difficult time and decision as door that is open, open to possibilities and challenges. And I think it so for you as well. I know that you are likely to be saddened, angered, and uncertain, particularly in a time when PLU has turned its back on its Nordic and Scandinavian roots. But I hope you can also look at this time as a time of opening and transformation – after all, as Swedish folklorist Barbro Klein writes, "All tradition is change."

I want to thank you all for your warm welcome, deep commitment to the Center, your advice, critiques, encouragement, and openness to new and different ways of approaching the Center's work. I know that I have also made some of you upset over the years; but I could not say I was a good director if I had not done so.

I will miss you deeply after I have left. I hope you continue to fight the good fight for justice and righteousness, and the representation of the diversity of human experience.

Med vänliga hälsningar,  
Jason M. Schroeder, PhD

However, I am delighted to let you know that Nordic Studies Professor Troy Storfjell, my dear colleague will take over as a half-time Director of the SCC, which means that PLU's Nordic heritage will continue. Dean of Humanities, Prof. Kevin O'Brien, Prof. Storfjell, and I developed proposals that would keep the SCC safe and PLU's Nordic heritage in the fore. It is far from ideal for the Center and the Nordic Studies students, but for now, it is the best we could hope for. So, Onward – may the SCC prosper. I know this changes are difficult and unpleasant (to say the least) and that uncertainty is no fun, but “all tradition is change” and the change can lead to exciting and wonderful new paths and knowledge.

mvh,  
Jason





## ON THE PLEASURES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: A MESSAGE FROM THE INCOMING DIRECTOR

There's a Norwegian saying that I've been thinking about lately, *borte bra, men hjemme best*. Away is good, but home is best. And I guess the point of the saying is that, while it can be exciting and enriching to travel abroad, it's always best to come home.

In a sense, I feel that in assuming the role of Director of PLU's Scandinavian Cultural Center, I am coming home. My life has always involved intersections between the Pacific Northwest, home to my mother's family since the 1870s, and Scandinavia, where my father and his family have lived since time immemorial. My professional life, too, has largely consisted of teaching Norwegian language and Scandinavian or Nordic culture to Americans, many of whom have been of Scandinavian descent. This is an area that feels familiar in many ways. There is something of home about it.

There's another saying, though, a Sámi one, that I've also been thinking about. *Jodi lea buoret go oru*—it is better to be on a journey than to stay put in one place. It's a sort of nomadic counterpoint to the settler Norwegian sentiment expressed above. And this saying, too, seems oddly appropriate to this transition.

Because, although I'll still be involved in teaching about Scandinavia and the north, I am moving from

doing that single-handedly in the classroom to doing it collaboratively, with the membership of a cultural center. This will be new territory for me, but I'm looking forward to it. I guess I must have picked up some of that nomadic wanderlust from my forebears, too.

The university's decision to discontinue Nordic Studies and Norwegian was profoundly saddening. But it has been at least somewhat ameliorated for me by the exciting opportunity of moving into the position of SCC Director. I have lots of ideas of my own, and Jason has been doing an amazing job of filling me in on the duties of the position. But I am also looking forward to collaborating with the Council and membership to chart a course for the Center that will enable it to continue playing an important role in the cultural life of Scandinavian Americans in the area, at the same time as it grows and adapts to the changing realities of life at PLU and in the Pacific Northwest. There will be plenty of the familiar comforts of home, but also much of the invigorating energy of traveling to new places and adapting to them—the best of both, of journeying to new horizons while still keeping one foot in the old traditions.

It's time to get started.  
Troy Storfjell



# SCC HISTORIES: JON MALMIN

For 40 years, Jon Malmin has served as Director of the Normanna Men's Chorus and recently stepped down from that position. Alumni from PLU's past are very familiar with the name Malmin because of the Music Department legacy of Gunnar Malmin, who was a Professor of Music there. His son Jon, a 1964 PLU Chemistry graduate, was not known for his music, but gained a love for making music in his high school band, with a preference for classical style. Jon's mother was a pianist and also a composer, so "there was excellent music" in his family home. Olaf, Jon's brother, majored in music and was a Professor of Music at Augustana College.

There was no Norwegian spoken in the home of the Malmins when Jon was growing up. However, his father was an exchange Professor at the University of Oslo. The family went with him and traveled by boat to get there. Jon became seasick on the Oslo fjord and wasn't keen on joining the children's contest to eat pancakes with Lingonberries. He did participate despite his queasiness, and won the contest, only to hurl in various locations over the entire ship while being interviewed as the winner. His brother ate Jon's prize of the chocolate bar for him.

Jon went to elementary school in Oslo that year, not knowing a bit of Norwegian, but being a child, quickly picked up on it. To this day, he hasn't forgotten the grammar or the cadence and inflections of the language. This proved a good skill to have for Jon later in life.

While attending PLU, Jon's height and agility found him a place on the Basketball team. He also participated in the Mayfest Dancers, where he met a young

Jean Riggers, and took a fancy to her. They were told by one of the group advisors that they couldn't dance together "because Jean is too short for Jon". Jean had been planning to become a Social Worker, but ended up graduating with a degree in Secondary Education and married Jon on August 28, 1965.

It was in 1980 that Jon was asked to be the Director of the Normanna Male Chorus. In 1988, the Chorus sold out all the seats at the Tacoma Pantages Theatre for Sangerfest being held there. The concert was taped and the recordings sold by request of the surrounding community asking for them. It was very fulfilling to be a success in his own hometown for Jon.

The reputation of the Chorus grew and in 1990, after another outstanding performance at Sangerfest in Everett, they were invited to perform at the Ice Cathedral in Tromso, Norway. That July, the chorus,





along with spouses, flew non-stop from SeaTac to Tromso, a flight made just for them because the whole jet was booked. The 10pm concert saw the whole Cathedral packed. The Chorus wives had to sit way in the back, but witnessed a marvelous performance of mostly American songs, jazz to Spirituals, that brought a standing ovation from the delighted audience.

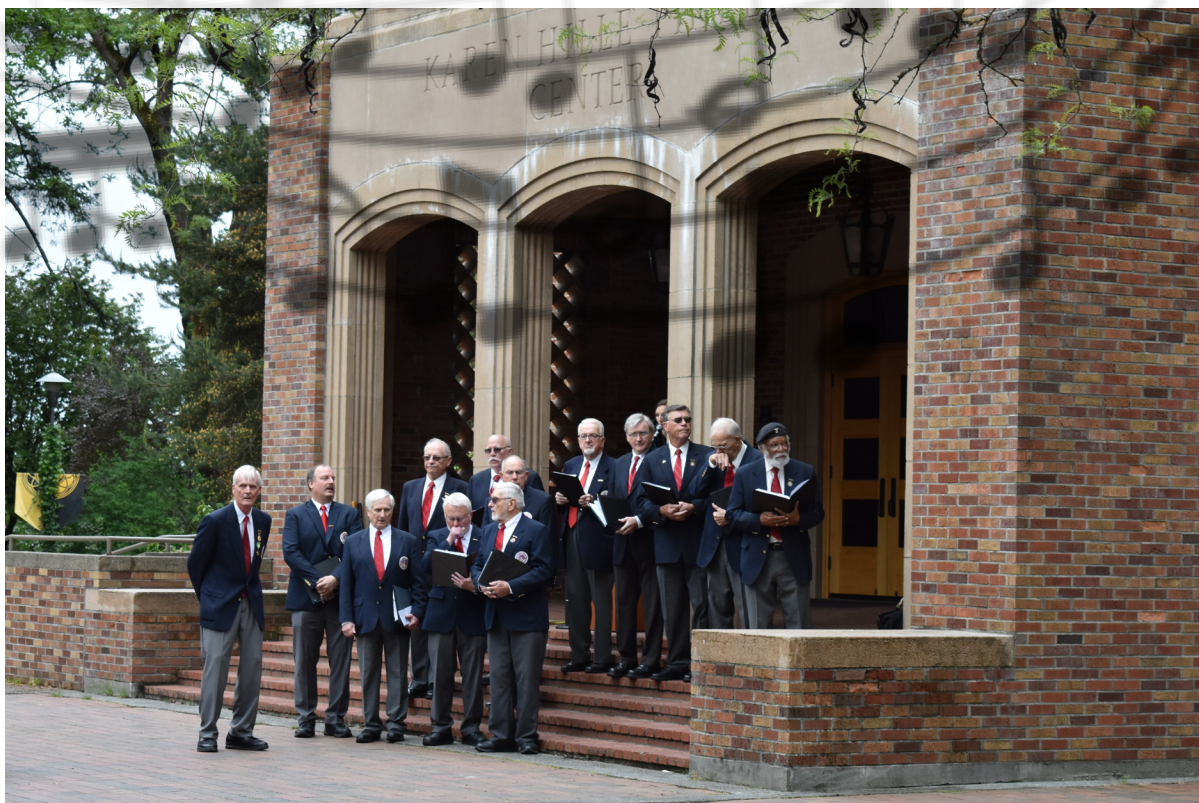
The Normanna Chorus concert in PLU's Lagerquist Hall 7 years ago was another highlight for Jon and Jean. As the Chorus sang the 'Proclaimer's Song' the audience joined in the singing, "raising the rafters" of the PLU Music Hall.

Over the 40 years with the Chorus, Jon estimates that they have presented over 1000 performances. Jean has been the pianist or organist for many of those, having started playing the organ at age 14 when her family church needed her, due to the altercation her Pastor had with the current organist. As Director of the Chorus, Jon has received the President's Award from the Pacific

Coast Norwegian Singers Association, and an Honorary Medal from Per Olaf Lund, Secretary of the Federation of Male Choruses.

For Jon and Jean Malmin, "keeping the wonderful tradition alive", which began in 1888, has been their goal. They have felt the chorus to "be like family" who are dear friends that have sung at all their daughters weddings. The blessing to sing for others, particularly the lonely folks in Nursing or Assisted Living facilities, "is a gift to give that we received in kind frequently".

For the future of the Chorus, Jon is looking to the newly appointed Normanna Director, PLU student Chase Alm, to grow the membership with younger men to continue the tradition. Jon plans to continue singing with the group and has been elected to be the Director of the 2023 Sangerfest that will be held in Tacoma, perhaps on the PLU campus. The spirit of service and dedication in bringing the delight and comfort of music is the Malmin legacy.



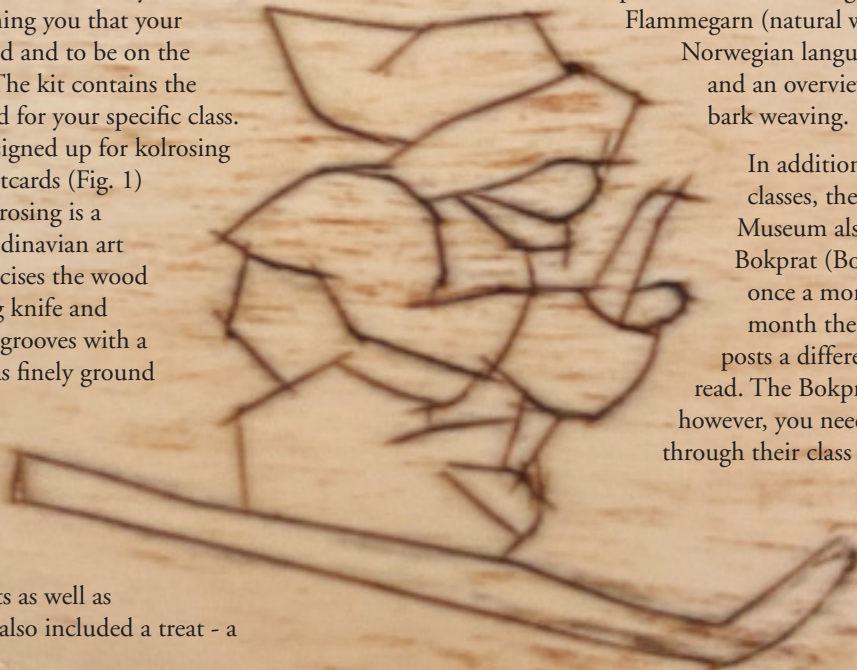
# VESTERHEIM'S ONLINE FOLK ART CLASSES

By Shan Rayray

The Vesterheim Museum has been offering online folk art classes since last summer due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I consider this one of the bright sides of the pandemic. I started taking classes in October and fell in love with them. The classes are taught by experts in each art and are entirely on Zoom. The Vesterheim announces new classes each quarter. You go to their website (click on Folk Art School, Find a Class, and then Folk Art Online), choose which classes you would like to take (most are on the weekends), add them to your cart, and pay the tuition. Cost of the classes varies. I paid \$60.00 for my Kolrosing on Wooden Postcards class and \$75.00 for my Heart Tin Punching class. Some classes can cost over \$100.00, i.e. Norwegian Language and weaving classes. Classes are open to members and non-members although non-members may pay higher tuition for some classes. About 10-14 days before your class begins, one of the coordinators will send you an email informing you that your "kit" has shipped and to be on the lookout for it. The kit contains the materials needed for your specific class. For instance, I signed up for kolrosing on Wooden Postcards (Fig. 1) in October (kolrosing is a traditional Scandinavian art in which one incises the wood with a kolrosing knife and then fills in the grooves with a pigment, such as finely ground coffee). My kit included all of the supplies I would need to complete multiple projects as well as the tools. They also included a treat - a

Nordic chocolate bar. A couple of days before the class, the coordinator sends out another email which includes the Zoom link. You attend the Zoom session on the date and time specified. All classes are on Central Time zone. Since I am on the west coast, I have had to adjust the time two hours earlier. The instruction is all live during the Zoom session. The instructor goes over information about the art you're learning and what is in your kit. Then they explain how to do the art step-by-step. Most classes have included video instructions and tutorials. A recording of the class session is sent out to all students after the class. In some classes, there are multiple Zoom sessions to allow enough time to learn the art/skill. There is a wide variety of classes offered ranging from rosemalling to Norwegian knitting to cooking classes. Some of the other classes I've taken besides Kolrosing include Heart Tin Punching (Fig. 2), Spoon Carving, Sami-inspired Embroidery with pewter wire, Plantefargning and Flammegarn (natural wool dyeing), Norwegian language classes, and an overview of birch bark weaving.

In addition to folk art classes, the Vesterheim Museum also offers Bokprat (Book Group) once a month. Each month the Vesterheim posts a different book to read. The Bokprat is free; however, you need to sign up through their class website in





order to receive the Zoom link. You also need to provide your own book and have it read by the day the group meets. A few days before Bokprat, the facilitator (in past Bokprats has been a professor in Nordic Studies from Luther College) sends an email with the Zoom link and questions to think about regarding the book. Then during the Bokprat, you are split up into breakout sessions to discuss the questions. Each Bokprat lasts about an hour and 15 minutes. I have

participated in two of their Bokprats and have greatly enjoyed them.

I am very grateful the Vesterheim decided to offer classes on Zoom. Otherwise, I would not be able to take as many classes as I have since I would have to travel to Decorah Iowa (location of the Vesterheim Museum) and stay for multiple days per class. I am looking forward to several more of their online classes this spring.





## IMAGES FROM 17. MAI CELEBRATIONS PAST





# 2021 FALL CALENDAR

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**All spring and summer events have been cancelled.**

The events listed here are all tentative at this point, but we hope that the SCC will resume somewhat normal operations this fall. So keep an eye out for the next issue which will let you know what is happening for sure.

Cooking classes are being scheduled so look out for those as well in future issues.

Open Hours should return this September as well.

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**Sept. 8 (Wed) ..... SCC Council Meeting, 6 p.m.**

**Sept. 19 (Sun) ..... Danish Sangaften, 1 p.m.**

**Oct. 13 (Wed) ..... SCC Council Meeting, 6 p.m.**

**Oct. 17 (Sun) ..... Danish Sangaften, 1 p.m.**

**Nov. 10 (Wed) ..... SCC Council Meeting, 6-7 p.m.**





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