



FIDDLE

Touring with Jazz Fiddle Music in Europe & the United States

by Cristina Seaborn

This year was the most I've ever been on tour performing jazz fiddle music and it's been great. Networking with musician friends over twenty years has created many tours. In addition to help from musicians, booking takes a cold call, and asking friends for advice on places to perform in their community.

My Swedish fiddle friend Frida Rosén and I met in the Black Hills in 1998. I brought her Swedish folk fiddle band Plommon on tour to the midwestern U.S. twice, along with several other Swedish musician groups. Maria Larsson and Andreas Risan have had several tours to the U.S. We created a project called *Strings Across the Ocean* where we help each other tour.

In April, we had a two week tour of Sweden with a four piece band from Minnesota, including myself on fiddle; Paul Imholte on guitar, harmonica, mandolin, hammer dulcimer; Rick Walter on banjo; and Joe Meyer on upright bass. Three musician friends in Sweden helped organize this tour of for us: Frida Rosén Babarick, Maria Persson, and Andreas Risan.

We started in the town where Ikea was born, Almhült. There is an Ikea Hotel, Ikea Museum, Ikea Activity Center, and international schools for the children of the employees of Ikea. We had several shows in the public schools where we performed in the gym for twenty minutes, and then Paul Imholte and I called a barn dance. The music teacher translated the dance calls into Swedish for the students, though the students are learning to speak English.

Can you imagine working out, then going to the bar to have a drink and listen to live music? That's how the Ikea Activity Center is set up. It's a really nice stage and lounge area outside of the workout facility. We sold the most CDs at this concert.

We decided to travel the same way the

Swedes do, by train, bus, and walking on foot. The sidewalks are made of cobblestone, so it was really bumpy dragging the rented upright bass on wheels five blocks from the train station to the hotel. We had a photographic moment in the cross walk that looked like the Beatles' *Abbey Road* album.



Cristina Seaborn, fiddle; Joe Meyer, upright bass; Rick Walter, banjo; Paul Imholte, guitar (and also harmonica, mandolin, hammer dulcimer)

Our big gig was the Vaxjö Country Roots Festival where we were the headliner, a real band from the U.S.! At the festival, the Swedish musicians sing with perfect American accents, and then speak to the audience in Swedish between songs. I almost forgot I wasn't in the U.S. during the song!

We performed at a remote restaurant in the country where the manager was from North Carolina in the U.S. The quaint FarmShack BBQ was in a town called Dammstorpövägen.

On May 1st there is a May Day celebration throughout Europe where they say goodbye to winter and hello to spring. This gig was in a forest where hundreds of

people were celebrating in Brekillevägen. In Sweden, the tradition is to have fresh food, live music, a bonfire, and sing traditional songs. We performed a variety of styles of folk music, including original songs. The audience sang along, knowing the lyrics to our traditional American tunes.

The Sweden tour had a nice balance of work and time off. We got to visit the Nobel Museum three times, which is fascinating. Each Nobel recipient is asked to donate an item. Malala donated the scarf she wore when she spoke at the United Nations. You can read about each recipient, including how their contribution fits in context to their culture and history. Alfred Nobel made his money from dynamite factories. Today there are 6 Nobel prizes that have been awarded 573 times between 1905 and 2015.

In Stockholm, we also went to a culture house and learned how to dance the polska at Skeppis Folkmusikhuset. There are probably ten jam sessions and dances going on at once in the building. The polska is a unique musical form created in Sweden comparable to how jazz was invented in the United States. The polska is written in $\frac{3}{4}$. The beat is counted "one and two and three and." This is not like $\frac{6}{8}$ time or $\frac{3}{4}$ time; it's a brand new



Polska from Dorotea (traditional)

The Polska is counted "one and two and three and." It not $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{6}{8}$ time. Here is a recording for you to hear though I play it much slower. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdwP7XDn3HQ>

feel. The second beat can be on time, come early, or be played late, depending on what part of Sweden you are from. The third beat is strong. The Swedes only count beats one and three on the polska, and that is how you dance the polska, floating or spinning on beat two. After the polska dance lesson, we taught American folk dance, which was well received.

We shared a concert performance with two other bands at the premier club in Stockholm, Stallet - Världens Musik. What a night of variety with folk, a Latin music



Barn darnc in a school gym

operetta, and a Joni Mitchell imitation band!

We also had a Swedish folk music jam session at the classic Sjötte Tunnan, which is a club in the basement below the street level, dark and cool. We concluded the tour at Kulturhuset Havanna in Malmö, co-teaching a workshop and dance with our friends Maria and Anders Larsson.

After the Sweden tour, the bass player and I went to jam with Kristen Korb, a jazz bassist I've been following on Facebook for a few years. She lives in Copenhagen with her husband, and tours in the U.S. and Europe extensively. Kristen is originally from Montana and studied jazz bass in San Diego. She sings while accompanying herself on the bass and does incredible solos.

I also performed in the Netherlands three nights, each concert with a different style of music. The first night started with a fiddle and banjo duo with Rick Walter, followed by a piano and violin duet with Robert Solone from Chicago. The second night was with a vocalist/harpist who had won Holland's *Got Talent*, Iris Kroes, and pianist Sofia Dragmet. The third night

was with Pato Banton, a reggae artist I've performed with since 1986! These gigs got booked by me directly contacting the artist and asking if I could perform with them, another cold call that worked out!

Touring in the U.S. as a jazz trio, I join Dave and Chappell Holt who call themselves the "jazzy side of Americana." We performed in jazz clubs, bars and house concerts throughout California, Oregon and Washington. We set up the Pacific Northwest tour a year in advance using the network of musicians found in Far West

Folk Alliance <https://www.far-west.org/schedule-2018.html>

Dave and Chappell had attended the Far West conference where you receive the contact information for the 1000 folk musicians who attend. We did cold calls

to jazz clubs in cities along the way, booking week nights, as well as weekends. We also called friends to see if they would like to host a house concert. The house concert is also a fabulous way to tour and provide

music in an intimate setting. Chamber music comes to life again with folk and jazz in your living room or backyard! The house concert tradition includes hosting the performers with accommodations for the night. There is a suggested donation, but a fee cannot be charged because of ASCAP, SESAC, and BMI dues not being paid by the homeowners. These are homes not venues.

It's amazing what a great tour you can design with one year advance planning. Musicians helping musicians out is a great way to organize a tour! Go ahead and make the cold call. Ask friends what is going on musically in their town. Develop your relationships with musicians over the decades and enjoy a life of touring and performing the world over!

Expert at fiddling and jazz improvisation, Cristina Seaborn holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in jazz violin performance from Berklee College of Music in Boston, and a Masters in Conducting for Orchestra from St. Cloud State University. She has produced an instructional video for fiddling through Mel Bay entitled Anyone Can Play Country Fiddle, CDs entitled Inside the Heart of a Musician, Seaborn Breeze, and Spirit Wind, and many arrangements for string orchestra of fiddle music, jazz, Celtic, Scandinavian, Cajun, and original. Cristina is a violinist and fiddler with over thirty years of experience. Her musical background includes influences in classical, jazz, Celtic, bluegrass and Texas swing fiddle. †



The Band enjoys an "Abbey Road" photo-op, bumping the rented bass across a cobblestoned road in Sweden