

# Polska Music

by Seth Austen

Welcome to this issue of **Mandolin Sessions**. This month we continue our journey across Europe to Sweden. Swedish folk music is quite distinctive, played on either fiddle or nyckelharpa, a Swedish keyed fiddle with sympathetic strings. Perhaps the most unique Swedish tune is the polska, don't confuse this with the polka, they aren't related. The polska is in 3/4, but don't play it as a waltz. The strong beats are one and three, musicians will often tap their foot when playing the polska; one (silent two) three, one (silent two) three.

There are many variations on the polska rhythm, a village can have their own rhythm unique to the region. There are eighth note polskas which have a dotted eighth/sixteenth rhythm, with accents on the first and third beats as discussed above, and there are also sixteenth note polskas which are more even on all the down beats. We're going to play a hambo, this is a common type of eighth note polska. You'll occasionally hear hambos played at contradances.

The tune is "Varvindar Friska", the title translates as "Fresh Spring Breezes" and is a frequently heard tune throughout Sweden. On fiddle the bowing pattern for each measure of three beats is down (quarter note), up (quarter note), down-up (two eighth notes). You'll notice that this results in a down bow on the 1st and 3rd beats, which really helps bring out the rhythm for the dancers.

To mimic the fiddle bowing pattern on mandolin we'll play hammer-ons and pull offs for slurred beats rather than picking every note. There are some measures, 4, 10 and 12, where I pick every eighth note intentionally, similarly a fiddler would bow every note in these sections. The dotted eighth and sixteenth notes aren't played exactly as written in polskas, so I highly recommend that you listen to lots of Swedish music to get the proper feel.

Enjoy!

Seth Austen

# Varvindar Friska

trad. arr. Seth Austen

A min F E A min E

0 0 2 0 2 3 3 5 3 5 0 0 5 2 3 0 0 6 2

A min F E A min

5

0 0 2 0 2 3 3 5 3 5 0 0 5 2 3 0 0

C G A min E

9

0 0 3 0 5 5 3 2 3 3 5 0 3 2 2 6 2

A min F E A min

13

0 0 2 0 2 3 3 5 3 5 0 0 5 2 3 0 0