



# MUSIKMÖTEN I HEMMET

## Recapturing Aesthetic, Emotional and Social Spaces:

Ethnography and Music-Therapy in Elderly Disabled Persons' Homes.  
Report from a Music-Therapeutic and Ethnographic Project in Ystad

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Photo: Marika Yamoun, Gitte Pålsson, Home-nursing staff.

## Summary

The aim of the Ystad Project – *Musikmöten i hemmet* (music-get-togethers in home settings) – was to offer music-experiences to elderly disabled persons incapable of leaving their homes, and, by way of combining music-therapy with meticulous ethnography, to instigate methodological and artistic development of home-nursing practices. The methodological development is based on our combined professional competences in the areas of pedagogy, nursing, music-therapy, and ethnography.<sup>1</sup>

Once a month eight senior citizens with different disabilities hosted a one hour long music-get-together in their own homes. All but one of the participants were well beyond the age of 90. Their nursing staff, and in some cases relatives, friends and even neighbors, also took part in the get-togethers. From September to December 2016, and with a re-visit in the spring of 2017, the elderly persons had each six visits by singer-songwriter and music-therapist Gitte Pålsson and ethnographer (and amateur musician) Erik Nagel. The music-get-togethers were documented in sound-recordings and written field notes.

The basic idea of these get-togethers was to accomplish musical experiences based in music-therapy. Mainly Pålsson lead the singing and played the guitar and accordion, whereas Nagel accompanied with song and fiddle. Also various rhythm- and percussion instruments were used; with two of the senior citizens even piano and grand piano. Individual repertoire was based on each elderly persons own preferences. Musicking and conversations took turns, and all the participants accepted the invitations to take part in creating music with song, play, and instrumental improvisations. Also rhythmic and dancing (due to disabilities performed while sitting in chairs; we clap our hands, hold hands, and dance with our legs, feet, arms, hands, fingers, and so on) were among our routines.

From the outset two of the senior citizens declared that they would only listen, but as the project proceeded they became more physically active in musicking. A similar development took place among relatives and nursing staff. Nurses, neighbors, and relatives (young as well as old) have been dancing, singing and playing.

<sup>1</sup> This report was written for the elderly participants in the project, for their relatives, nursing staff, and funders. Theoretical foundation and analytical procedures will be accounted for in other fora, in which the ethnography will be subject to conference-presentations and seminars.

## The origin of the Ystad Project

Everybody has the right to take part in cultural life; in many homes for elderly and dementia-patients song and music are scheduled events. However, one group of elderly disabled persons who are neglected in this respect are those who are part of home-nursing programs. Clients in home-nursing programs are, due to disabilities, often unable to leave their homes. Hence cultural activities should come to these senior citizens' homes. This was the idea that grew from a conversation between music-therapist Gitte Pålsson and Charlotta Blom, Department Manager of Cultural Affairs in Ystad Municipality.

Gitte Pålsson and ethnographer Erik Nagel had cooperated for some time on the issues of music and elderly persons, and we had some ideas about combining our professional competences. Charlotte Blom found support for a pilot-project with the Committees of Cultural Affairs and of Home-nursing Programs in Ystad. These two committees decided to grant funds for *Musikmöten i hemmet* (Music-get-togethers in home settings) for clients in the home-nursing program. The regional organization Musik i Syd agreed to contribute 50% of the costs for the project.



Between September and December 2016 Pålsson and Nagel have visited eight senior citizens who are in the home-nursing program. All but one of the elderly persons are well beyond the age of ninety. They have accepted the invitation to be part of the project. After a preliminary assessment the politicians of Ystad decided that the senior citizens should be granted a follow-up get-together in the spring of 2017.

For each music-get-together Pålsson and Nagel have brought along a diversity of music instruments (accordion, fiddle, guitar, and various rhythm- and percussion-instruments), and a sound-recording device. Apart from enriching the daily lives of the senior citizens and their relatives and nursing staff with music, the Ystad Project has also aimed at methodological development and to explore new pathways for the nursing professions.

## **Conclusions**

The results of the project can be thematized as follows:

### **1. The recapturing of one's aesthetic spaces:**

to be part of live music when physical disabilities sets limits to one's possibilities to take part in activities away from home has been important to the participants. Awareness of their individual musical preferences, without any "good or bad, rights and wrongs", and the continuity in the music-get-togethers has supported the elderly persons in recapturing aesthetic spaces previously abandoned due to physical disability. In one's own aesthetic space a person is timeless her- or himself, in the instant of musical encounter. In that space no one has age or disability, no one is a client or a patient.

### **2. The recapturing of emotional and social spaces:**

due to the music-get-togethers the elderly persons' loneliness and emotional isolation has been temporally disrupted. With the help of music, conversations, narrations, and social interactions they have in different ways been able to recapture more or less abandoned emotional and social spaces. They have experienced a significant social role as hosts; the music-get-togethers have been occasions for intergenerational interaction, and probably a well needed support for their relatives. In addition, relations between the senior citizens, relatives and nursing staff have acquired new dimensions and prospects.

### **3. Music-therapeutical:**

music-therapeutical progress has been evident. Actively listening, musicking and conversations about favorite music has allowed for each elderly individual's personality to flourish and come to the forefront, while disabilities have become irrelevant. Continuity has been an important element in that respect. In this connection we wish to point to a problem: the elderly persons' homes are equipped with music-units out of function. Music-therapists consider frequent listening to one's favorite music being of outmost importance. Equipping the elderly persons' homes with functioning music-units would be a considerable achievement.

#### **4. Educational:**

the music-get-togethers have made room for the senior citizens' social, emotional, and musical competences, while disabilities have been pushed to the background. Nursing staff and relatives have experienced how music can help deepening the relations to the elderly, and support dialogue and communication with dementia-patients. Musicking and conversations about memories, life, the arts, and music has enriched the social life of elderly persons, their relatives and their nursing staff.

#### **5. Research and development:**

the above mentioned themes hold potential for development of competences among nursing staff, musicians, music-pedagogues, and music-therapists. If nursing staff are trained in using music-therapeutic tools, and are given opportunities to develop their music-communicative skills as part of their profession, they can contribute to improved quality of life for the elderly as well as increased job satisfaction.

The ethnographic material created during the project will be utilized for research, education, and development.

### **The implementation**

Below we will offer a few narrative glimpses from our field-notes and sound-recordings. The entire ethnographic material is vast, and will be utilized in different contexts for papers and presentations in seminars. The participating senior citizens, their relatives, and their nursing staff, all appear under assumed names.

Gitte is a trained rhythm-pedagogue, music-therapist, singer and musician, whereas Erik is trained as a folklorist and ethnographer, and an amateur musician; hence our division of labor; during music-get-togethers Gitte has the leading role, and when we write Erik is in charge. We have routinely documented our work with written field-notes and discussions after each get-together. From the second occasion on, each get-together was monitored in its entirety with a sound-recorder, and the recordings have afterwards been subject to re-listenings, transcription of chosen sequences, more re-listenings and analyses. This analytical process will continue.

In this report we present examples to illustrate the individual course of

events from each senior citizen's series of music-get-togethers. The project has been a pilot study and a collaboration project; since it has not been done before in this form (the combination of music-therapy and ethnography), we have experimented our way ahead. For inspiration we are indebted to Georg Drakos and Narrativ etnografi (<http://www.narrativ-etnografi.se>). It has been our intension to meet each elderly person on his or her own terms, and proceed from each individual's musical preferences. Thus we have not had a rehearsed program for concerts in home-settings, rather we have proceeded from the elderly persons' wishes and spontaneous impulses of the moment. We have improvised from our own repertoires and abilities, which of course have been enhanced in the interaction with the senior citizens. They have taught us a lot, and not only about music.



As soon as possible we tried to activate both the senior citizens, their relatives and nursing staff in musicking together, but we also emphasized that it was all right to just listen; whoever listens is also part of what is created. It was the live music that inspired the elderly persons to take part in playing. They showed this with gestures, mimics, humming, singing, and rhythmic movements. We brought along various rhythm- and percussion-instruments, and one of the elderly persons had a piano, another had a grand piano.

It has been important for us to de-dramatize the musicking, we have emphasized that what is important is to have fun together, not to perform according to any formal standards of correct ways of playing and singing. Finally a few words about the nursing staff; we have encountered young and old, men and women, and they have all shown great enthusiasm for their senior citizens. Only a few of the staff are mentioned in this text (under assumed names, of course), they have listened, they have been playing and singing, and they have been of outmost importance for creating relations between ourselves and the elderly persons. Some have com-

mented upon their experience; they have told us that it has been a learning experience, and interesting to be together with the senior citizens in totally different contexts; because even if the physical environment – the home of the elderly person – has been the same as usual, the music-get-togethers have brought about a totally different way of being with the senior citizens. The music-get-togethers have facilitated a re-focusing from disabilities, nursing, and bodily in-activity, to active music-making. As one of the male nurses pointed out: “It is so much fun when they are active!”

Yet another aspect of this is that the nursing staff and the senior citizens have been given opportunities to learn to know each other in ways rarely possible in the everyday nursing routines. It is obvious that the Ystad Project contributed to new dimensions and new possibilities in the relationships between senior citizens and nursing staff.



## **Maria**

Maria is the first senior citizen we visit when the Ystad Project starts in September. The summer hasn't ended completely, we sit on her veranda, singing and playing, and small-talking, in order to learn about her favorite music.

She has a piano, but does not play it anymore, it needs tuning, and one key is mute. On the wall above the piano hangs a series of silhouette-pictures of great composers, music has obviously been an important part of Maria's life. Nurse Theodora had noticed this and encouraged Maria to enlist for participation in the Ystad Project.

Maria tells us anecdotes from her life; in her teens she had a crush on the coal-black chimneysweep-apprentice, so her parents invited the chimneysweeps for dinner. But oh-my! The shy boy appearing on their doorstep in the company of his parents was newly washed, wet-combed, pink like a sucking pig, well-dressed, and not at all exciting! That story leads Maria to the memory of when she met her husband to be; it was on a dance, jitterbug, and the boys sometimes threw the girls over their backs, thus exposing the girls' garters. He asked for a dance: "But you cannot throw me over your back!" she warned him. "Of course not!" he replied. "But he did so anyway! And since that day it was him and me!"

Jitterbug and swinging tunes is one lead into Maria's joyful music-realm. But soon we learn that she is also very fond of ballads, her repertoire covers many ballads by Evert Taube, and also more recent songs, such as Afzelius/Rodriguez "Sång till friheten" ("El día feliz que está llegando"). Yet another of her favorites is Olle Adolphsson's "Grön kväll i Margretelund".

The music-get-togethers with Maria grow playful and swinging. She, and her nursing staff, play tambourine, xylophone, and pentatonic percussion. She sings her favorite ballads, and while taking a tambourine she happily says to nurse Danuta, who has not previously attended a music-get-together: "you can take this one – you'll have to have something!" and places resolutely a set of percussions in Danuta's hands. With Maria it is not an option to keep in the back and just listen to a concert in her home – here we play together!

On one occasion Maria accepts Gitte's invitation to play a duet on the piano. Avoiding certain keys they enjoy a playful improvisation, and Maria wishes to get hold of a piano-tuner so she can play again. In between songs Maria shares exciting anecdotes from her long life. We learn about her porcelain figurines, and about the colorful paintings by her late brother. At our last get-together we give her a booklet with her favorite songs, she keeps it in an envelope marked: "*Musikmöten i hemmet*". She documents most of our music-get-togethers with her camera, and in January we receive letters with photographs from the past autumn's get-togethers with Maria.

## **Berit**

Whereas it has been high spirited with Maria, the atmosphere with Berit has been more thoughtful and melancholic. At each get-together she tells us that we are expected and longed for. Even her guests – her son and her neighbors whom she has invited – say so. And it is obvious that she

has had her guests help rearrange the furniture prior to our music-get-togethers. Our hostess sits in her wheelchair, her guests in the sofa and armchairs next to her, while we, the visiting musicians, are placed in fine chairs in front of them all, as if on a stage. The rearrangement of furniture, the crystal glasses with soft drinks, the bowl with sweets, all show that Berit and her guests are staging a special occasion.

Apart from ballads Berit also wishes to hear spiritual songs, she looks them up in advance in her huge songbook. Both she and her guests are happy to take part in the musicking, with song, percussion, and rhythm-instruments. Music has been a vital part in Berit's life and in her family-life. Many years ago, when he was a boy her son played the fiddle. She liked that.

Berit is very fond of the accordion, and so was her late husband. Clad in his fine uniform he has a good view of the get-together from the framed photograph Berit has placed on a bookshelf so that they can keep eye-contact during musicking. And sure enough she winks at him when we play "Min soldat ... någonstans i Sverige". She smiles tenderly when we tell her that we noticed.

And then there is the fiddle, her favorite instrument. She is delighted when her son asks if he may try if he can still remember how to play it. He ends up playing an improvisation with Gitte. And later on, with his strong barytone voice, he leads us all in Evert Taube's ballad "Fritiof och Carmencita". In this case the music-get-togethers help mother and son reunite in a shared aesthetic space. That day Berit in her wheelchair raises her head and says: "it is so good with music – it is wonderful – you can feel it in your whole body, you feel much lighter, much happier – whatever it is that grows inside you, it is awakened to life!".

When we play Fritz Kreisler's "Liebesleid" on fiddle and guitar tears come to Berit's eyes. Nurse Andrea places a confirming hand on Berit's shoulder, fetches her a paper napkin, Berit wipes off tears, Andrea's hand rests on Berit's shoulder. The atmosphere is attentive, devout, and quiet.

## **Gunvor**

Gunvor also stages the music-get-togethers as special occasions. It is important for her that mineral water is served in beautiful glasses. She sits

in her armchair, framed by flowers, and by her own painted portraits, as well as the photographic ones of grandchildren, and their children, portraits of her son and daughter, who both passed away some years ago, portraits of her father and of her late husband. Gunvor radiates a century long life of rich experiences, of lived successes and losses, a friendly wisdom and tenderness for her nursing staff.

At our first visit she says that she will listen, but she will not sing or play. She wishes for a concert in her living room. We, musicians and nursing staff, sit in a semicircle facing Gunvor.

After a few get-togethers Gunvor starts singing along in her favorite ballads "Två solröda segel" ("Red Sails in the Sunset"), "Brevet från Lillan" (letter from a little girl), that both reminds us that to begin with her father, and later on her husband, were naval officers and often away for long periods of time. And she starts playing on a xylophone that gets it's place on her walker. Her curious improvisations on this instrument shows that she little by little becomes confident with the instrument and with the music-get-togethers with us. She reveals that she once played the piano and sang in a choir, was a soloist even. She has an infallible sense of pitch.

Gunvor appreciates that we bring a lot of different instruments. She wishes to hear Kreisler's "Liebesleid" ("Love's Sorrow") on the fiddle and the guitar. "I en sal på lasaretet" (in the hospital) triggers a story of a period in Gunvor's childhood when she was hospitalized, and Tove Jansson's "Höstvisa" ("Autumn Song") becomes something of a signature tune for our music-get-togethers with Gunvor the fall of 2016.

Gunvor is deeply moved by "Jag står här på ett torg" (Lars Forsell's Swedish version of Boris Vian's "Le Deserteur"), as well as by Ture Nerman's "Den vackraste visan om kärleken" ("The Most Beautiful Song about Love"), both anti-war songs familiar to older generations.

At our get-together just before Christmas her son-in-law and his new wife are visiting. Gunvor tells them that we are going to sing together, and that they are expected to join in. Now it is no longer as when we first met; someone singing and someone else listening. Gunvor's music-get-togethers has become occasions when good friends sing and play together.

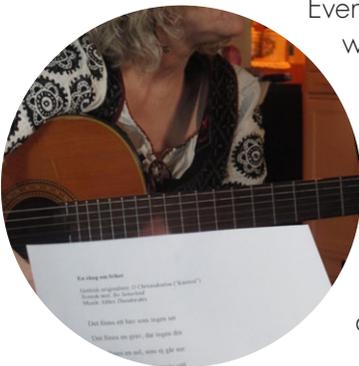
## Bertram

It was Bertram who first reminded us of Ture Nerman's "Den vackraste visan om kärleken", and Lars Forsell's "Jag står här på ett torg". Once an engineer, he's an educated humanist with a great interest in jazz and Latin-American music, his bookshelves are full of music- and art-literature, his walls decorated with portraits of jazz-musicians, with international folklore, and modernist painting. He does have a music centre and many records, but as it turns out, when Bertram wants to play his favorite music for us, the unit doesn't work.

At our first get-together Bertram says: "It will be good with live music, that's always nice!" Later on he tells us that he does a lot of thinking between our get-togethers; he thinks of poems, of song-lyrics, and of musicians whom he likes to have conversations about, and whose songs he would like to hear again, like Noël Coward's "I'll see you again". That song he heard for the first time in a bar in Switzerland, and it made a great impression on him. For our next visit Gitte has rehearsed the song, and it becomes the one that we sing to conclude our music-get-togethers with Bertram. We prepare prints of his favorite lyrics, so that he can study them between our visits.

Bertram's prime interest is to listen, to think about, and to talk about music. He listens carefully to music that interests him, and it happens that he interrupts in the middle of a tune if it doesn't.

With Bertram we have a lot of conversations about songs and performers, about his books and his art collection. He likes to joke and tells the nurse: "I'm gonna be manager for these two, and I'll make a lot of money!"



Even if his voice doesn't carry him all the way he likes to "talk-sing" what he calls "a piece", some song he has been thinking about. When we have sung the anti-war-song "Den vackraste visan om kärleken" Bertram's eyes are filled with tears; we are all moved by the lyrics. Nerman's poem is captivating and reminds us that it is exactly 100 years since it was written as a comment to the horrors of the ongoing

world war; in 1916 it was a mass grave in Flandres, today it is Aleppo and Syria. "I often get moved" Bertram comments, and nurse Laura replies: "You were not the only one to get eyes moist with tears from this song".

Together with the nursing staff, and at one occasion even with his daughter and son-in-law, Bertram improvises on percussion and xylophone when we play a swinging "Autumn Leaves", or a captivating samba. But his passion is for listening, and for reflections and conversations about music.

On December 2, during coffee break (Bertram always serves us coffee and pastries), Bertram in a clear and loud voice suddenly cuts through the polyphony of murmuring voices, declaring: "I am sad!" – Erik: "You are sad?" – Bertram: "because this is our last moment, this autumn!". When we return after New Year for a final music-get-together, we ring his doorbell in vain; Bertram has passed away. The final months of his life were enriched with music-get-togethers, with conversations and musical creativity; he enriched the get-togethers, and us, with his strong sense of integrity, humor, thoughtfulness, emotional profundity, and presence.

## Hannah

Hannah has been a kindergarten teacher. She lives on the second floor. From the street we can see her head among a row of toy pets in the kitchen window. The pets are her friends, she tells us, and they'll eventually join us in the sofa when we make music.

Hannah can barely remember us between our get-togethers, sometimes she doesn't remember what we did just a few minutes ago. She gets whimsy and worried and asks what's going on, and what we expect from her. She is a tiny lady, skinny, and often cold. She talks and laughs a lot, but with failing memory its difficult to keep a coherent conversation going.

But when we sing and play together she is amazingly focused and present. Music is a language with which she re-enters a recognizable aesthetic space, and in which she communicates with great fluency. She responds directly to invitations to turn-taking, she takes initiatives of her own, improvises energetically on the xylophone, she dances and sings in harmony with accordion and fiddle. The whimsy energy transforms into

focussed musical co-operation. In her recaptured aesthetic space, and with a feeling for pitch, rhythms and beats, she confidently takes on the role of the conductor, the composer, and the improviser – she creates music! – and gets hot and takes off her cardigan.

After some gettogethers it seems like she vaguely recognizes us, she seems to be less worried, less whimsy, and even more focused when musicking.



## Orvar

We are early for our first meeting with him and we wait outside the apartment building where he lives. A couple, it turns out to be his neighbors above, ask us who we are waiting for. Then they tell us that Orvar used to play a lot of music, but that was a long time ago, now it's all silence. It's a warm day and they promise to keep doors and windows open so they can hear when we play for Orvar. Somewhat wondering we ring his doorbell.

Orvar has a grand piano in his spacious two-room-apartment. It stands solemnly abandoned in a corner. He hasn't touched it since his wife passed away and the dementia-disease struck him. It was so long ago. Nurse Marika says she has never heard him play.

At our first get-together he sits in his armchair in front of the television-set with his back to the piano. We explain why we are there, and he starts talking about his own and his wife's common interest in music; their conversations about Bach and Glen Gould's Goldberg-variations. Orvar says that his wife was very serious about music – you shouldn't play in a careless manner: Glen Gould rushed it! He shares anecdotes about the aging Franz Liszt whom, he says, was a lousy piano-player! He played all wrong!

We feel intimidated; as musicians we are far from that level of proficiency! However, we play for a while. Orvar in his armchair listening. All of a sudden, in the middle of a folk-tune (Josefin's Waltz), the tall man

gets up, wobbles, gropes for something to hold on to, reaches for his walker, excitedly gesturing to his visitors to leave way. Is he angry? Did we play that bad? We fear that he will fall over. Eventually he makes it to the piano-stool, almost falling to the floor when trying to sit down, hits a few keys, and from the grand piano sounds Rimskij-Korsakov's virtuoso-piece "The flight of the bumble-bee"; Orvar's fingers know their way on the keyboard. – Then he loses track, plays a few bars of another piece, loses track again, starts restlessly messing with the music-sheets on the rack, tries another piece – and gives in.

At our second get-together he starts singing "Les feuilles mortes", the french original of "Autumn leaves", he sings "Nellie Grey" and "Molly Malone" and other American and Irish ballads, and these songs become part of our common repertoire. As our visits continue it becomes evident that Orvar has started playing again, in between our get-togethers. Had he previously abandoned that aesthetic space, then he is now recapturing it. And as we proceed he unleashes captivating boogie-woogie, blues and short classical pieces on the grand piano; he plays straight through without losing track, and without music sheets.

Initially he seems quite absorbed in his own music, but little by little he starts playing with us, he listens, and alternately accompanies and leads the music. Occasionally he and Gitte perform duets-improvisations on the grand piano, he improvises on xylophone accompanied by fiddle and accordion. Or he and Gitte sit closely together, her left hand on the fretboard, while he strikes the guitar-strings with his right, and Erik behind them accompanying on the fiddle. At this point Franz Liszt, Glen Gould, and Orvar's wife's demands for perfection are totally forgotten.

## **Ebba**

Sitting in her chair Ebba receives us with suppressed emotion, she is tired and low-spirited, but when the accordion and the fiddle come out of their cases she lightens up a little. She has done a lot of dancing in her days, she says. She won't sing though, but is pleased to listen.

In between the songs we start conversations about the aerial photos on her walls; it was the farm where she grew up; with mother and father and all the animals. Then she married; on a shelf are photographs of their daughter, and of Ebba's late husband.

From our first get-together we feel that Ebba is mourning, but it is only later on that we understand in full. Ebba says she loves music, it cheers her up, and during our conversations in between tunes she laughs. Still, there is an atmosphere of sorrow around her, something is on her chest.

Our second music-get-together with Ebba is a turning point. It is October 6 and Gitte sits opposite to Ebba and sings Tove Jansson's "Höstvisa" (Autumn Song), then a conversation about the approaching winter unfolds. Laughingly Ebba recalls when she and her husband were young; every winter they travelled to her brother-in-law in the northern of Sweden to go skiing. Gitte asks about the beautiful doll and the teddybear next to Ebba in the sofa; those memories, the emotions, make Ebba burst into tears. Apparently Ebba feels very lonesome with the grief for her daughter who died 18 years of age, only a week after her graduation, before she had a real adult life of her own. It must be more than half a century since the accident, Ebba is 93 years old, she remembers as if it happened only yesterday.

Gitte and Ebba sit close opposite to each-other, close enough for their knees to meet, they take each-others hands, and for a long period of time they embrace. In between sobbing Ebba manages to say a few words about her bereavement – verbally confirmed by Gitte. In the background nurse Osman and Erik quietly utter words of acknowledgement. The atmosphere in the room is tense, warm, and caring. After a while Ebba lets go of Gitte, who then starts playing Topelius's elegiac "Röines strand". Ebba starts crying again, Gitte stops playing the guitar, but continues singing while she and Ebba embrace each-other. In the background Erik supports the melody by gently picking the strings of the fiddle. Then follows another song about the loss of loved ones. Eventually Ebba stops weeping. One ballad reminds of the previous conversation about farming, about the animals; the cats, the dogs, the horses – Ebba gets excited, laughs when thinking about the memories of horse riding; the ladies take each-others hands and "sit-dances" a quick galloping-dance, and then to a waltz on fiddle Ebba starts beating the rhythm with her feet, now she is actively musicking, happy even, and Gitte sings a quick: "jungfru, jungfru...", whereupon Ebba burst out: "this was a lot for one single morning – but it was fun!", and after a melancholic Bosnian ballad she laughs: "imagine – if only one could have such mornings all the time!"

The atmosphere again turns melancholic with an instrumental performance of "Konvaljens avsked" ("The Lily-of the Valley's Farewell") on accordion and fiddle. Gitte tells of a loss in her own family, and sings her own "För att du inte är här" (Because you are away), and dedicates this homage to Ebba's daughter and to her own relative. Both ladies have eyes filled with tears. This ballad is about the loss of a dear person, and about life on a farm in southern Sweden, and it leads the conversation back to the photographs of Ebba's home and family.



Ebba keeps holding Gitte's hand. With her other hand Gitte plays "Två solröda segel" ("Red Sails in the Sunset"), and "Tangokavaljeren" on the accordion. A burlesque southern Swedish ballad about work in the beet-fields leads the two women into a dialect-conversation about "beedoor" (beets), and about farming in the past and now. Ebba remembers and laughs with joy. We finish off with a few joyful waltzes, and when we prepare to leave Ebba says again and again: "thanks a thousand times!"

At the following music-get-togethers with Ebba her bereavement occasionally surfaces, but she is no longer overwhelmed with grief, her loss is mentioned now and then, by herself with a sigh, or by one of us as a sad fact. Ebba turns more active in musicking, she moves her feet and fingers rhythmically when we play and sing, the get-togethers are concluded in a cheerful mood, and we can't leave without a long holding of hands and a hug. To Ebba the music-get-togethers have opened not only aesthetic but also social and emotional spaces.

## Gullan

It is with pride in her voice that Gullan tells us that the two grand-grandchildren have announced to their preschool-teachers that they will take the following day off because they are going with grandma to grand-grandma to make music. And the atmosphere turns merry when Gullan's living room is crowded with guests of all ages (the daughter with

her grand-children, the lady-friends, and Gullan's sister) playing and singing together; preferably dancing-tunes of Gullan's own choice, tunes she has danced to "soo maaany times!" Her friends and her sister are excited about the get-togethers and a bit jealous, they ask if we can come and visit them as well, but in this case it is to Gullan's advantage that she is in the home nursing program.

Hosting has always been important to Gullan. These days she is most of the time alone with her dog; with the music-get-togethers she clearly re-captures an important role as hostess, and her music-get-togethers always end up around her kitchen table full with pastries and thermoses. But it is also stressful; she gets whimsy, again and again she needs to check if the dog is outside or inside, if the coffee is brewing, and so on. She also suffers from restlessness, anxiety, and pain.

On two occasions, Gullan has no other guests than us and the nurse. She is then more focused on musicking, and less worried about hosting. She tells us that she used to play the accordion, but that was a long time ago, now she doesn't even remember where the instrument is. In the long run Gullan probably would benefit from music-get-togethers not hosting so many guests.

### **Ethical and ethnological considerations**

One of the ideas behind this project is that the ethnographer is not a detached, neutral observer of social interaction, rather he or she is an acting part in the interaction studied. In the Ystad Project the creative interaction between senior citizens, their relatives and nursing staff, as well as the music-therapist and the ethnographer is in focus. This is an important democratic aspect, underlining that we are all, whatever our social position, equally taking part in the creative process, even though we have different roles to play. The responsibility of the ethnographer is to document and analyze the process, and to communicate this to the other participants, and to the funders. Consequently, neither disabled persons, nor their relatives or their nurses are objects of scrutiny; they are acting subjects, whose participation contributes to the creation of knowledge and methodological development.

The majority of participants have agreed to have their names and photographs published. However, in this report, and in our future publications about the Ystad Project, the participants appear under assumed names.

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## **About Gitte Pålsson and Erik Nagel**

Our collaboration grew from playing music together. Then Erik was offered the opportunity to tutor Gitte's Master thesis "Etnopoetisk transkribering av musikinteraktion i demensvård. En metodutveckling" (Ethnopoetic Transcription of Music-interaction in Dementia Care. A Methodological Development), Stockholm 2016, at the Royal College of Music. From this collaboration grew a wish to offer our joint professional skills to the benefit of disabled persons.

Gitte Pålsson is a Swedish and Latin-American singer-songwriter, lecturer, rhythm-pedagogue, and music-therapist. She runs her own business: Gitte Pålsson Musik- och Scenproduktion ([www.gitte.nu](http://www.gitte.nu)). Pålsson has worked many years with social care-taking and nursing professions.

Erik Nagel has studied drawing, pedagogy, ethnology/folklore, and archiving. He has worked as an archivist, as a teacher, social worker, and tutor, primarily in the field of psychiatric care. Nagel holds a PhD in Ethnology and Folklore from Stockholm University. He runs his own business: Skapande etnografi: musik, ord och bild (Creative Ethnography: Music, Words, and Pictures) (Skapande etnografi - Musik, ord och bild | Facebook).



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