

# Matt Fichtenbaum Scholarship

at Nordic Fiddles and Feet offers financial assistance to fiddlers or nyckelharpa players, with preference given to those who are interested in broadening their musicianship through the study of harmony. Recipients may also apply for additional funds for travel.

For more information and to apply, visit [nordicfiddlesandfeet.org/scholarships](http://nordicfiddlesandfeet.org/scholarships).

Applications due: March 1, 2024



Matt was a beloved and influential member of our community for nearly 50 years. To honor his memory, his family has established the Matt Fichtenbaum Scholarship at Nordic Fiddles and Feet to support fiddle and nyckelharpa students at camp.

Matt's fascination with Swedish music and harmony began in 1976, when he and his wife, Judy, spent their Junior Year Abroad (10 years late) in Linköping, Sweden. Through a fateful series of encounters—amid Sweden's folk music revival—Matt found himself in a "Build Your Own Nyckelharpa" course. That

winter, Matt turned his "nyckelharpa kit" into a playable instrument. The next term, he took the playing course; the following term, he taught the playing course!

Matt's nyckelharpa followed him back to the U.S., where he soon added fiddle to his repertoire. He made contact with Tim Rued on the west coast, who was the other nyckelharpa player in the U.S. at that time. He also formed a long musical partnership and friendship with Jane McBride Orzechowski, a contra dance and Swedish music fiddler, having met her through the Swedish Folk Dance Club of Boston.

Matt was well known for his sense of humor. A workshop leader's request for an A to tune to was sure to be met, at some point, with Matt



NORDIC FIDDLES AND FEET  
GENEVA POINT CENTER  
MOULTONBOROUGH, NH  
JUNE 29 TO JULY 6, 2024



"Our next tune will be Gånglåt från Bananabo"

producing a sly grin along with a large letter "A" from his instrument case. His playfulness with words carried over into his harmonic sensibilities, which were light and supportive of the melody.

Matt was instrumental (ha!) to the development of the American nyckelharpa community. He served on the board of the American Nyckelharpa Association and

wrote extensively for the Nyckel Notes newsletter, contributing transcriptions, many Spela Bättre (play better) articles, and most of the early articles on the basics of how to play the nyckelharpa.

Matt was a longtime supporter of Nordic Fiddles and Feet and its predecessor, Scandinavian Week, including serving on NFF's board. Matt assembled the camp music syllabus for many years, always including an amusing cartoon. At camp he could frequently be found in the Dining Hall, playing one-on-one with another musician. He liked to switch to harmony, leaving the other musician "alone with the melody."

Matt was a graduate of Stuyvesant High School and MIT, where he earned degrees in electrical engineering. Though "computer science" wasn't yet a formal discipline, some of his graduate courses were early versions of that field. He had a deep, intuitive understanding of languages, exploring Swedish, Mandarin, and C++. He enjoyed sharing his love of words and numbers with his daughter, Rachel. As he scaled back his working life, Matt and Judy traveled to China, Australia, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Sweden. Matt was treated for multiple myeloma for the last seven years of his life. He passed away in May, 2022.

Nordic Fiddles and Feet, a weeklong music and dance camp at Geneva Point Center on Lake Winnepesaukee, offers daily classes in fiddle, nyckelharpa, Hardanger fiddle, singing, harmony, and Swedish and Norwegian turning dances with world-class instructors for all levels.



*Playing  
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