

ABQJournal Online » Timeless tales told throughout the ages

When people travel they often take their songs and stories with them.

Johanna Hongell-Darsee of Albuquerque has been tracking the origins of medieval European ballads for 30 years. She's found that the stories in the ballads traveled to different countries with similar story lines but with some variations in the characters.

There's a English ballad about a knight running away with a princess, Hongell-Darsee said. In Finland it's a ballad of a gentleman enticing a girl to ride off with him.

"That same ballad is in the United States and it's about a cowboy luring a girl in town and running away over the Plains," she said.

Flutist Hongell-Darsee and her husband, guitarist-bassist Scott Darsee, will present an evening of medieval ballads and runes tonight at New Encore Music and Things. Runes refer to the reciting or chanting of Finnish poems and songs as well as the letters of the Viking alphabet.

"Ballads and Runes"

With Scott Darsee and Johanna Hongell-Darsee

WHEN: 7 tonight

WHERE: New Encore Music and Things, 3929 Fourth NW

HOW MUCH: \$10 at the door

They'll also relate how those traditional ballads came to the United States from Europe.

Darsee said his wife's initial research was in the ballads of the Scandinavian tradition. She is a member of the Swedish-speaking minority of Finland.

"In Scandinavia they say the medieval ballads originated in France. I think it goes round and round and round. There's no way to know where they originated," Hongell-Darsee said. "Troubadours performed them, but few were written down."

The duo will integrate the music and the story of some ballads. For example, with the story of the cruel sister, they'll sing the ballad in English, then tell its story. From there they'll sing the Finnish version and tell its story, and finally they'll do the same format with the American version.

Hongell-Darsee said the cruel sister story is about a daughter who is about to wed a prince and inherit the kingdom. A jealous sister drowns her. At the wedding of the prince to the cruel sister, the other sister's ghost appears and reveals the details of her death.

Hongell-Darsee's research has taken her to India, where she encountered classical storytelling dances similar to the stories in the ballads from medieval Europe.

Cutline – Husband-and-wife musical duo Scott Darsee and Johanna Hongell-Darsee will present medieval ballads and runes tonight.

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