

Medieval runes: The Hongell-Darsees will play and sing music from long ago

David Steinberg / For The Journal



If you were thinking of attending a concert whose theme contained the word “rune,” your first question could be: What’s a rune?

Albuquerque musician Johanna Hongell-Darsee has an answer for you.

A rune, in the music traditions of Sweden and Finland, “is a kind of chant, a poem sung with a chantlike melody,” Hongell-Darsee said.

It might have taken as long as several days to sing one rune, “but we do it in five minutes in our arrangement,” she said.

She and her husband, Scott Hongell-Darsee, headline a concert today at the Outpost Performance Space. Titled “Medieval Ballads and Runes,” the program features 21st-century arrangements of ancient songs from Scandinavia as well as ballads from around the world.

“Our idea is to take an old song and arrange it for modern and old instruments,” Hongell-Darsee said.

She sings and plays woodwinds, which includes a modern, plastic-reinforced version of an ancient flute made from a hollowed out willow shoot. Scott Hongell-Darsee plays modern flutes, guitar, bass and dobro.

The concert will have some music that was on an album the duo released last year, and other material from a CD that they have just started to record.

One section of a single rune will be performed in the concert. The section is about a mother looking for her daughter who was abducted by the Mountain King.

Scott and Johanna Hongell-Darsee

And special guests

WHEN: 8 tonight



Johanna and Scott Hongell-Darsee bring contemporary arrangements of ancient songs to the Outpost tonight.

WHERE: Outpost Performance Space, 210 Yale SE

HOW MUCH: \$20 at ampconcerts.org or at the door

“The mother is asking a tree, a road, the sun and the moon if they have seen her child,” Johanna Hongell-Darsee explained. “The tree, the road and the moon don’t want to help her because they have their own troubles. The sun agrees to help her.”

She will sing it in Finnish. The program also will offer ballads from Europe, India and North America.

The duo will be joined by five special guests, including the Irish singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Liz Madden.

“We’re honored that she is joining us,” Hongell-Darsee said.

The other four guests are sitarist Tej Bhavsar, percussionist Frank Bramlitt, guitarist-bassist Larry Otis and violist Alicia Ultan.