

THE ACCORDION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.

ACCORDION REVIEW



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Hello from the Editor

Welcome to 2014, a very exciting year indeed for the accordion.

Important dates for your diary are highlighted on page 7 with two of particular interest being the ASA International Festival in Melbourne on the October long weekend (more details in the next edition) and the AATA 20 year celebration with a Massed International orchestra to be held in Sydneys 'Club Marconi' on the June long weekend. This is a wonderful opportunity for accordionists of all levels to join up and I encourage you to participate and/or support these functions to promote the accordion and enjoy some wonderful music. (Don't forget to register by April 1st to be part of the AATA International Massed orchestra).

Fantastic news concerning the accordion occurred in Melbourne during February when Dino Kocic (on the cover) performed to a mesmerised audience, read about this on page 11.

A 'Gig Guide & Whats On' has been included on page 17, 18 after receiving requests for this information, and special thanks to Ross Maio for quickly compiling his gigs so they could be included in this edition.

An interesting article on the inside workings of the accordion may be found on page 22 titled 'Accordion Valves Explained'.

Thank you very much to everyone that kindly contributed to this edition and please keep the stories coming , happy reading.

Bye for now,

Cheryle Mills

Cover Page: Edin "Dino" Kocic promoting the accordion at the highest level. Refer page 11 for this story (also page 10 for feedback from a delighted audience member).



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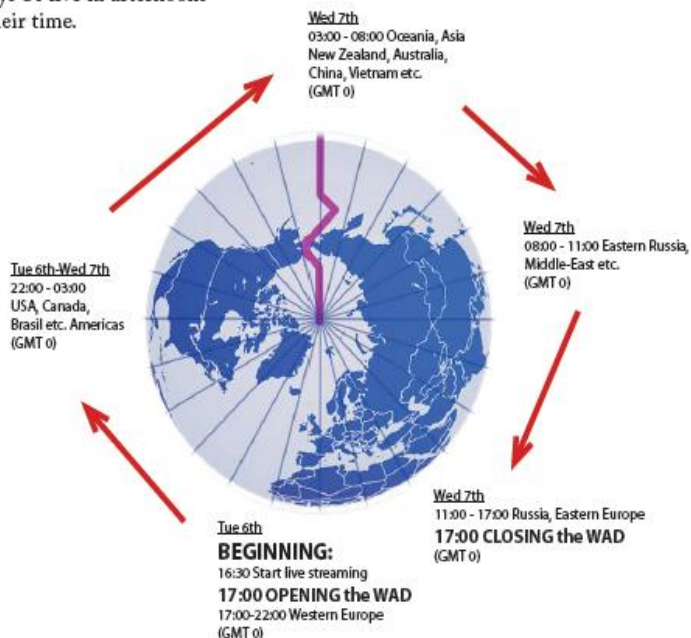
World Accordion Day 2014

Time Zones

Here is a general outline of the schedule so you have an idea when your time slot will be.

All times are GMT 0, so you can count approximately your time slot.

This schedule should be convenient for every guest and association as they will always be live in afternoons or evenings their time.



PRESIDENTS REPORT

Happy New Year to all ASA members and friends, hope 2014 is a joyous, musical year for everyone.

Plans are underway for the ASA International Festival in Melbourne this October. I have been conferring with John Kalkbrenner Sr., both he and Terezia are hard at work preparing the schedule, application forms, orchestra music etc. They will advise us in due course of the details concerning venue and accommodation for interstate/overseas visitors. If any ASA members have students thinking of participating in the competitions, now is the time to begin preparing.

As all NSW members are aware, we remain a very small group with no younger players on the horizon at present. If anyone knows of young accordionists wanting the experience of ensemble playing, please point them in our direction.

The other major event this year is the 20th International AATA festival in June. The six active ASA members in Sydney have all agreed to participate in the combined orchestra and also to perform as the Accordion Alfresco Ensemble. This event will take place at Club Marconi on June 7 -8. It is important to register for both competitions and orchestra by April 1.

The Accordions Alfresco CD is nearing completion with all tracks now edited and ready for mixing and mastering.

All the best

Rob Scott-Mitchell

Dates for your diary

**ASA
International Festival
Melbourne
October 3, 4, 5**

**World
Accordion Day
May 6—7**

**AATA
20 year celebration
International Massed
Orchestra
June 7th / 8th June
Club Marconi (Sydney)**

**Coupe Mondial 2014
27th Oct – 2nd Nov
Salzburg**

Xmas Cheer at Griffith

Scalabrini Village Griffith is so busy all year round like every senior citizen home. But at festive time they come alive with excitement as all families arrive with gifts, grandchildren together with Santa, making a surprise visit at mid afternoon to share the spirit of Christmas.

We had a lovely visit in song and music with the residents.

Best wishes for Easter to all our readers

Joe Staltare



News from the Wild West

As a former member of the Perth Accordion Orchestra, I try to keep the piano accordion in the public eye as much as possible, and go busking every weekend at a variety of markets.

The stallholders and public of European ancestry appreciate the accordion music so much, and even though the monetary rewards are sometimes small, I am laden with produce from appreciative stallholders; fruit, vegies, German breads and Spanish tortias. Playing in public also brings gig invitations, as well as providing colour and atmosphere to the markets.

It's hard work in all types of weather, and sometimes the instrument will protest at the exposure. However, it's a good way to meet people and to keep the piano accordion alive.

I recommend all accordion players have a go.

Kind regards,

Anna Miller (W.A.)



News from Victoria

February 28, 2014

Today I witnessed a phenomena where one person can hold a teenage crowd spellbound with virtuoso playing of the piano accordion namely Dino Kocic. Dino took part in the Victorian curriculum and assessment authority as part of the VCE season of excellence 2014 and won the highest award from his school, the Victorian University Secondary College Brimbank campus , St Albans.

Dino played variations on an Ukranian theme and right from the first note a hush came over the audience and were awed at the dexterity of those 10 fingers (maybe he used 20) and the beautiful phrasing of the piece by Palmer & Hughes.

The thing that really got the audience attention was the bellow shake in that arrangement, you could hear the audiences astonishment.

All the other participants where excellent and fantastic but for me being a frustrated accordion player Edin came up trumps.

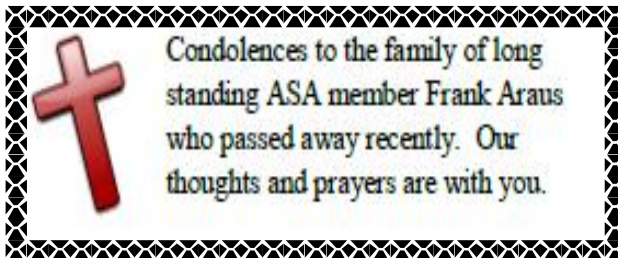
I hope that Edin has inspired some of the many school students who saw the concert (approx. 1000?) and maybe 1, 2 or more will take on this beautiful and challenging instrument.

Dino let there be more & more millions of notes coming from your instrument.

Kind regards,

Frank Berens

PS Please refer next page for an article and photographs of Dinos performance.



Fantastic news for the Accordion

Accordion in spotlight

Edin “Dino” Kocic, our accordion champion continues to delight audiences with his skills and a distinguished performing style, promoting accordion at the highest level.

As a great introduction to this article is information published on Victoria University web site.

Victoria University Secondary College

[Latest News](#)

(<http://www.vusc.vic.edu.au/latest-news.html>)

The article read:

Congratulations Edin Kocic

Monday 24th February 2014

Edin Kocic, one of our 2013 Year 12 VCE Music Performance students was recently awarded a place in the prestigious VCE Top Class Concert Season of Excellence. He will be performing on February 27th at the Melbourne Recital Centre at 1:30pm, representing VUSC. Chosen as a stand-out performer from last year's Y12 music students statewide, he will now have the exciting opportunity to play part of his accordion program to the public. Select students will be chosen from the Top Class concerts to perform at the even more exclusive Top Acts concert series at Hamer Hall later in the year. This is an outstanding personal achievement for Edin, and a tremendous honour for VUSC to have a representative on the highest stage in the Arts, from across the state, in VCE.

Well done Edin!

You can see Edin perform and cheer him on. For details contact Mr Gracey. You can purchase tickets from the VCAA website:

www.vcaa.edu.au.

On February 27th **Elisabeth Murdoch Hall** at **Melbourne Recital Centre** which features exquisite architectural design and world class technical facilities, with capacity of 1000 seats, was filled up.

The second concert started at 1.30 pm and after short speeches of the **student event VCAA manager** and **MC**, Dino was the first performer to open the concert with his rendition of **Variations on a Ukrainian theme** by Palmer & Hughes, chosen by VCE assessors.

It was very exciting to watch Dino relaxed, performing with dedication and passion on the stage of one of the most beautiful concert halls in Australia.

The performance was very, very good as it was expected, ending with effective bellow shake after which he received ovations and a long and loud applause.

"What a wonderful way to start the concert, having an accordion is like having a whole orchestra, and the band, and everything, all of them perform at once it's just so exciting" said Miss Jenny Marsh the MC of the day.



Six of his **VUSC** music teachers, together with two groups of current VCE students came to watch Dino's performance and cheer him up.

His proud parents accompanied by his accordion teachers, Prof. Iryna Stepko and Prof. Dragan Krnjeta, Accordion Society members Frank Berens and Ken were among his supporters.

President of ASA Victoria John Kalkbrenner, unfortunately was not able to attend the concert as he was hospitalized for medical observation.

The **Top Class** Music concerts feature inspirational students who received very high grades for their VCE performance examinations in 2013 which is managed by the Victoria Curriculum and



Prof. Dragan Krnjeta, Dino, Prof. Iryna Stepko

Assessment Authority.

It showcases exemplary soloists and group musicians, dancers, composers, actors and singers. The show is a must-see for VCE students studying these subjects, offering insight into what it takes to get top marks.

Dino, who studied VCE Music Performance whilst he was in Year 12, scored a perfect 200/200 for the subject.

Top acts, the pinnacle of the annual VCE Season of Excellence is an evening concert which presents a selection of performers from across the Top Class concert series in one stunning event. Dance, Drama, Theatre Studies, Music Solo and Group Performance and original musical works are blended together into a dynamic presentation.

Hopefully Dino will be selected for the Top Acts concert in May which would bring accordion one step closer to the concert halls where it belongs.

We would like to express our gratitude to all who came to support Dino and to those who unable to come, sent their best wishes by phone or email.

With regards to all ASA members and accordion supporters.

Mido and Silvia Kocic



L to R: Jason Portelli, Prof. Dragan Krnjeta, Dino Kocic, Mr. Shane Cole, Ms. Fiona Morris, Mr. Adam Grech, Mr. Andrej Vikkas, Mr. Neil Gracey

Elite Accordion Group South Australia

The Elite Accordion Group has had a very busy start to the year, with plenty of gigs.

In January we had three appearances at the Adelaide Schutzenfest, playing for the VIP cocktail party as well as large crowds on both Friday night and Saturday afternoon. It was quite hot but the audience was appreciative of the German and International music. The dancing group "Bund Der Bayern" also joined us for a few slap dancing songs, which are always a lot of fun.

The following weekend we were asked to play for a private function: the 50th wedding anniversary of a lovely Italian couple, Lucia and Giuseppe. Everyone was up and dancing to Italian waltzes and Tarantella's. We even learned the song "Santa Lucia", just for this occasion.

In February we were very pleased to be asked back (for the second year in a row) to the feast of St Gabriel Festival, this time with the 6:30pm prime time slot and being the finishing act for the afternoon/evening. It was a large audience and we played many Italian favourites.

There are no gigs scheduled for March or April which will give us an opportunity to learn some new music and practice for upcoming concerts.

It should be noted that our wonderful drummer Isolde turned 80 in December and still has plenty of energy for all these gigs! She is an amazing and very musical lady, who can also play accordion and clarinet.

Yvonne Smith



EAG ban members Margaret & Julie setting up for the wedding anniversary function.



Birthday surprise for our drummer Isolde

SNIPPETS, GOSSIP & NEWS



Hello from France

Hello from the other side of the world, a bit late but hope you all had a wonderful Christmas and a happy New Year !!

It has been pretty busy here in France, with uni especially, lots and lots of accordion practice, maybe a bit too much because by the end of every week, I go crazy !!

The uni held a concert on Thursday Jan 23rd where all students played 2 of their pieces.

I played the first two movements of a Suite from Franck Angelis, 'Solliloque' and 'Asia Flashes'. I share some pictures with you.

Hope to see you guys soon, most likely end of this year. Best of luck with everything, and practice hard.

Mathilde Auroux



Brief update on the AMEB accordion syllabus.....

New technical work for the syllabus has been submitted to the AMEB for review. However these will not be published until a full list of pieces for all of the grades and diplomas have been submitted which will then be reviewed and approved. Hopefully I will have a progress update for the next review.

Zeljko Bedic (Bedic Music Studio)

Accordionists

If you would like to play the accordion with others either in an informal or formal basis and live in or around Sydney then please give Cheryle a call on 0414915154 to discuss.

FOR SALE **THREE SONOLA ACCORDIONS**

- *Sonola Little Maestro child-sized piano accordion.*

15 ¼" keyboard, pearl blue, 41 treble / 120 bass, two reeds (LM). Mid-1960's. Excellent condition, has been recently serviced. Worth around \$1800.



- *Sonola AA7 full sized piano accordion.*

Late 1960's model. This accordion is in mint condition and looks like new, perfect working order, good tune, nice jazzy sound. Worth around \$2000.



- *Sonola SS20 Academy II full size piano accordion.* This is one of the last Sonolas, made in the Guerrini factory, and is identical to the popular Guerrini Superior II except it has a Sonola grill. 1970's model. Big powerful double cassotto accordion with super fast smooth keyboard, very responsive reeds LMMH, dry tuned. Good condition but may need some minor tuning touch ups. Worth around \$6000.

Looking for the best offer on each accordion. For more details, photos, videos or other information please contact

Paul or Yvonne Smith on email smith@melior.com.au; or
phone (08) 8339 4950



Gig Guide & Whats On

A Night of Tango - Omega Ensemble

One of the world's leading ambassadors of the classical accordion, James Crabb joins Omega Ensemble for a night of diverse and fascinating chamber music including works by composers such as Piazzolla, Britten, Franck and Stravinsky.

Recognised internationally as a passionate and acclaimed authority on the music of Astor Piazzolla, Crabb has an enviable legacy of collaborations and recordings to his name. Praised also for his breathtaking virtuosity and versatile musicianship, Crabb has performed internationally as a soloist with leading orchestras and ensembles. In a first-ever public event for Omega, hear us combine forces with this unique and intriguing instrument.

When: Monday 17 March at 7.30pm

Where: City Recital Hall Angel Place

Tickets: Adult \$65 Concession \$55 Under 30 \$29

*booking fees will apply

Bookings: (02) 8256 2222 or www.cityrecitalhall.com

Website: www.omegaensemble.com.au



Melbourne—Upcoming Events

July 13 2pm Annual Concert. Austrian Club, 90 Sheehan Rd, Heidelberg Mel Ref.19 F10

Sept 13 2-5pm Youth Concert. Uniting Church, 54 Serrelle St, East Malvern Mel Ref 68 K2

Oct 4 9am-5pm National Competition. Uniting Church, 54 Serrelle St, East Malvern “ ”

Oct 5 Presentation & Gala Concert. Austrian Club, 90 Sheehan Rd, Heidelberg

Dec 5 Christmas Breakup at Austrian Club.

Well known accordionist John Kalkbrenner performs every Thursday night and Heinz Dabernig performs Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights at the 'Hofbrauhaus' German restaurant, 18-24 Market Lane, Melbourne. Phone 9663 3361..



Vienna Accordion Festival—22 Feb- 23 March 2014

The accordion is much loved in Vienna and their Accordion Festival is already 15 years old. Fans of *Quetschn*, as they call it in Vienna, can look forward to traditional performances and experimental sounds. The focus this year is on Austria's neighbouring countries. Performances can be heard from 22 February to 23 March at various venues across Vienna. www.akkordeonfestival.at
<http://www.wien.info/en/music-stage-shows/pop-rock-jazz/accordion-festival?u>

Ross Maio 2014 Gigs

Please check with the venue to confirm performance times.

19 March 11.00am Music of Divas & Maestros Show featuring Helen Zerefos & Ross Maio @ Smithfield RSL Club.NSW <http://www.smithfieldrsl.com.au/>

27 March -07 April Cruising ASUKA 2: Perth-Port Louis.Mauritius.

13 April Nadia Piave Trio @ Coffs Harbour Regional Conservatorium, check with venue for times. <http://www.coffscon.org.au/>

17 April 11:00am Ross Maio Solo Cabaret @ Revesby Workers Club NSW.

30 April 7:pm 'More Maestros and Proteges' @ St George Auditorium Montgomery St, Kogarah. NSW

04 May 5:00pm **Tony Pantano & Ross Maio .Three Saints Festival @ Holy Cross Church @Wooloowin .Brisbane .QLD.**

17 May 12:00-3 :00pm Lawson Bowling Club Birthday Celebrations. Lawson.NSW

20 May 2014 11:30am The Great Divas & Maestros Show featuring Helen Zerefos, Ross Maio and special guest Stephen Fisher King @ Club Burwood, Burwood NSW.

28 May 9:30am Ross Maio Solo Cabaret @ Asquith Leagues Club. Waitara.NSW

8-14 May Cruising SEA PRINCESS: Suva-Sydney.

30 & 31 May 10:00am Italian National Day @ Griffith Central. Griffith NSW <http://www.griffithcentral.com/>

10 June 9am Inaugural Seniors Conference, St.Pauls Castle Hill NSW.

22-28 June Cruising SEA PRINCESS: Brisbane -Darwin.

29 June 6:00pm "Ode to a Crisis" Greek Festival of Sydney 2014 @ Factory Theatre105 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville.NSW

6 July The Great Divas & Maestros Show featuring Helen Zerefos, Ross Maio & Andras Racz @ Club Central Hurstville.NSW

12 August Ross Maio Solo Cabaret @ Ettalong Beach Memorial Club. Ettalong Beach NSW.

19 August 1pm Ross Maio Solo Cabaret @ Burwood RSL Club. Burwood. NSW.

3 September 9:30am Ross Maio Solo Cabaret Show @ Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL. Hurlstone Park.NSW

06 September 6:00pm Ross Maio, Gino Pengue & Emilio Lomonoco, "Sapori Napoletani" @ Mediterranean House. Fivedock. NSW.

18 &19 October 2:00pm-6:00pm. Bavarian Quartet @ Lae Yacht Club New Guinea

FMAE/MESA Accordion Event and Joan Sommers 80th Birthday Celebration - USA

by Rita Barnea

Accordionists are a special type of people. If you are one, you automatically know what I mean. We are people who love the accordion.... playing it, attending concerts, learning about it, socializing and performing with people who like accordions..... and we are accordion groupies, and we worship the amazingly gifted ones..... such as the late great jazz artist, Frank Marocco.



Then there are those who are not only all of the above but are even more. I am talking about Joan and Dan Grauman (picture left), who have a special gift of making friends and bringing them all together on "Planet Accordion", which happened to be annually in Mesa, Arizona for the past eight years.

The eight years of the MESA accordion event originally named the FMAE (Frank Marocco Accordion Event) provided a unique musical experience for musician and non-musician alike. It was eight years of memorable times including the special years when the legendary Frank Marocco shared his musical expertise in a way both kind and exciting. [Stas Venglevski](#) took over the baton with great skill after Frank's passing leader.

For the 2014 MESA event, in honor of her 80th birthday, [Joan Sommers](#) (picture right), Professor Emerita, University of Missouri – Kansas City Conservatory of Music, internationally known conductor and arranger, was invited to be the guest conductor and concert leader.

Everyone who attended left the MESA events with very special memories, new ideas, new friends, an encouraging and newly renewed enthusiasm for learning and performing, and a huge amount of gratitude to the devoted FMAE/MESA organizers, Joan and Dan Grauman.



PS ASA members who participated in the CIA World Orchestra 2011 in China will remember Joan Sommers as the conductor of the orchestra.

Arsenal's Laurent Koscielny Assists Maugein Accordions – France

by [Rob Howard](#)



The oldest French accordion factory, facing closure, has received an unlikely assistance in keeping it operational from Arsenal (Holloway, London) footballer Laurent Koscielny (pictured).



Accordion company Maugein was founded in 1919 but has fallen on hard times recently due to cheaper exports from China and Eastern Europe. According to The Guardian (UK) newspaper, Mayor Bernard Combes (Tulle) reached out to Koscielny, who is also from Tulle city where the Maugein factory is located.

According to the report, Laurent Koscielny has donated €600,000 and is part of an investment group whose aim is to keep the company open and as a result, save 20 jobs.

Play Your Accordion Without Pain', Two New Chapters Released

by [Harley Jones](#)

John Bonica (PT CMP NZRP) releases the 9th and 10th chapters of his book 'Play Your Accordion Without Pain'. An eBook, readers can enjoy the convenience of having the chapters e-mailed in Acrobat .pdf format.

This exciting eBook is being published chapter by chapter, with about one chapter being released each month. Released chapters to date are:

Introduction

Chapter 1 - An Overview

Chapter 2 - Learning to Read Your Body's Signals

Chapter 3 - Neck and Neck-Related Symptoms

Chapter 4 - The Shoulder

Chapter 5 - The Amazing Brain and What It Does For You

Chapter 6 - The Elbow

Chapter 7 - The Great Accordion Myth Uncovered

Chapter 8 - The Elbow Revisited

Chapter 9 - Wrist and Fingers

Chapter 10 - Caring for our Ten Precious Digits



There will be a minimum of 24 chapters. As a special introductory offer, you can purchase the whole book for US\$22 (or Euro equivalent) and be sent each chapter by e-mail as it is released. For more information, and to purchase the eBook:

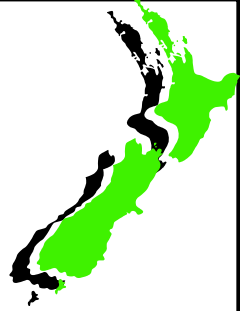
<http://www.musicforaccordion.com/eBooks/Bonica/index.htm>

NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND

CHRISTCHURCH ACCORDION ORCHESTRA

Friday 21/3/14

The Christchurch Accordion Orchestra will be visiting Auckland on their way to Dargaville. The North Shore Accordion Orchestras will be hosting a concert for them on Friday 21st March at the Takapuna War Memorial Hall, The Strand, Takapuna. The hour long concert will start at 7pm. Performers are Music Makers, Musicale, Auckland Accordion Symphonietta, and the Starlight Duo of Maurice Jones & Lionel Reekie. Gold Coin Donation.



NELSON MORRIS DANCERS

contributed by Peter Mayes from Nelson

At the moment I am involved with Nelson Morris dancers. We have, on a good day some 10 musicians including 4 accordions. Other sides are not so lucky, often struggling with just one musician. One side in Christchurch has recently folded because their accordion player could not afford the extensive repairs needed to her instrument. The Blenheim side folded when their one recorder player moved away. A new side has been formed but again they lack a musician.

Just about every side in NZ would welcome new musicians, see www.kiwifolk.org.nz for the contacts.

We have a big gathering here in Nelson from 7th to 12th January 2014 with all the NZ sides plus 2 from UK, 1 from USA others from Oz. Folk music being an oral tradition is performed without music but the tunes are available in print. Usually just a melody line and sometimes guitar chords shown. The accordion bass is just a 3 chord trick Um-cha um-cha

Tunes can be played in a very simple form or extemporisation is possible. There are no competitions but plenty of opportunity to 'play/dance out' usually finishing up at a pub. In England, the sides will often visit several pubs in a tour.

Search Morris Dancing on Google or wherever and you will find numerous examples. Nelson Morris have their own website and can also be seen on Youtube. Check out www.nyfte.org.uk, that is the National Youth Folklore Troupe of England which I founded in 1990. Please feel free to get back to me at any time. I will probably be in Christchurch some time towards the end of March so could take a workshop for your members.

ACCORDION VALVES - EXPLAINED!

*By Peter Anderson - Accordion Repairer - Melbourne
capt.accordion@optusnet.com.au*

If you venture to open up your accordion to see what's inside, what you'll see inside both keyboard and bass ends is the long wooden reed blocks, perhaps 2 or 3 or 4 in each end of the instrument. On the reed blocks you will see the aluminium (or occasionally zinc or brass) reed plates. And on each reed plate (except for the few smallest ones) you will see both a steel reed, and a valve, which might be of plastic or leather. The valves are often not well understood, but they are very nearly as important as the reeds in terms of permitting the reeds to sound loudly, clearly and instantly. In other parts of the world, the valves may be called ventiles or skins.

The nature of the free reed is that it only functions with air travelling in one direction, yet an accordion needs to make sound whether the bellows is being pushed in or pulled out. Hence each reed plate holds 2 reeds, one on each side. For each reed there is a valve on the other side of the plate which opens to allow the reed to sound, but closes when the bellows direction is reversed so as to not waste air through the reed not being played. Hence each reed plate has 2 reeds and 2 valves, unless it is a very small one in which case a valve is deemed unnecessary, the air wastage through very small reeds being negligible.

Looking at one of the reed plates on your reed blocks, the reed you can see (topside) is the one which will play when the bellows are pushed in. The topside valve will be shut, i.e. flush against the reed plate when the bellows are pushed in or the instrument is at rest. When the bellows are pulled out, the reed on the underside of the plate plays, the valve on the underside shuts, and the topside valve opens.

The valves are little flaps of either leather or plastic, and must have certain properties. They must be light so that they open quickly. They must not be too stiff, so that they open plentifully to allow the maximum air

not be too stiff, so that they open plentifully to allow the maximum air through the reed. They must have enough spring in them that they return to sitting flat against the reed plate when at rest. They must make a good air seal when closed over the reed slot. And they must have enough rigidity that when sitting flat against the reed slot with air pressure on them that they do not bend in the middle and get pushed by the air pressure into the reed slot. Plastic valves and leather valves both meet these criteria but nevertheless exhibit somewhat differing properties.

Plastic valves, comprising layered .002" mylar were pioneered by Hohner around 1950. Their lightness, speed of response, springiness and longevity is superior to leather, and plastic valves make an accordion rather brighter. However, plastic valves are more inclined to make unwanted noise under some conditions, to the point where they cannot be used on large reeds.

Leather valves have been used since the first accordions, though the techniques for obtaining leather with all the required properties were not perfected until the 1950's. Accordions pre-dating that use much poorer leather and this is one reason that earlier accordions don't perform as well as more modern ones. Leather valves if working well are quieter in operation than plastic ones and make for a more mellow instrument. But with time, leather valves will dry out, and curl or twist, and be disinclined to sit flat against the reed plate, which leads to buzzes and splutters as the air pressure tries to make them sit flat but doesn't succeed. Sometimes leather valves can be so curled that they won't even try to shut. In this instance, the reeds will play very weakly. Alternately, sometimes leather valves can stiffen with age and not allow enough airflow when open for the reed to sound as it should.

A poorly playing accordion with unwanted buzzes and grumbles is most usually due to the above mentioned problems with leather valves. I spend a great deal of my working time removing, straightening and regluing leather valves. The valves on the visible side of the reed plates are obviously fairly easy to work with, and I've worked out the techniques needed

to get the ones on the underside of the plates off and back on without removing the plates from the blocks. But it is possible to have the valves as perfect as they can be, and still get valve noise accompanying a change in bellows direction. Try to envisage a large reed vibrating as you pull the bellows open. The reed playing is on the underside of the reed plate, and the valve on the topside is open. Then imagine changing bellows direction and pushing the bellows in. The change in air pressure is trying to push the topside valve shut. However a large reed has enough travel that it is moving through the slot and out through the topside of the plate, and furthermore, a large reed has enough momentum that it will not simply stop in zero time. So the change in bellows direction is pushing the topside valve into the still vibrating underside reed. If the valve is plastic and being hit by a vibrating reed in this manner, the noise is quite significant. If the valve is leather, the noise is much less, though still noticeable. This is the reason that leather rather than plastic valves must be used on larger reeds.

This effect will vary from accordion to accordion. It depends of course on how rigid the reeds are, how thick the reed plates are, and how soft the valve leather is. And of course the player who does a lot of bellows shaking will be more troubled by this than one who never does.

Various makes of accordion have different idiosyncrasies relating to their valves.

- Chinese accordions which use leather valves (older Bailes and Parrots particularly) are notorious for the appalling quality of valve leather used and its consequent effect on how the instruments play.
- Delicia for a time used pieces of sponge rubber in place of leather or plastic for their valves, which just served to make an already crappy instrument even duller and less responsive.
- Italian makers were on the whole slow to adopt plastic valves. But the best Italian makes do now use plastic valves on the top 2/3 of the keyboard reeds, and leather on the lower 1/3.
- Hohner plastic valves, as noted, do tend to last forever, but the glue

holding them on does not. It is often necessary for me to reglue every plastic valve in a 1950's or 1960's Hohner. Further, for the larger reeds requiring leather valves, Hohner used / uses a synthetic leather called Vileda. It works brilliantly well for many years, but there comes a time when it stiffens and turns into cardboard, causing buzzes when hit by reeds, and poor reed response, as it becomes too stiff to open fully.

Leather valves sometimes have a bit of stiffness / reinforcing added, either in the form of a layer of plastic, or a little sliver of steel or plastic attached to the top of the valve. These slivers are called springs, and they are a good thing in that they do postpone curling problems with leather valves. Usually this is just seen on the larger valves.

A rather silly home remedy for curled valves existed for a time – dripping olive oil onto them. It doesn't work!!!! I've had to replace valves in many an accordion where this has been tried. It just glues the valves down or makes them stiff and slow.

Usually when overhauling an old accordion, I find that getting the valves right is about a third to a half of the job. The technique for straightening leather valves is not something I can readily describe, though I'm happy to demonstrate it to callers to the workshop. When I straighten valves in an accordion, they probably won't still be good in 50 years time, but ought to still mostly be good in 10 years. That is assuming of course that the valve leather is of good quality in the first place. I don't bother at all trying to work with pre 1950's leather valves (accordions of that vintage I generally rebuild with plastic valves), and when I overhaul a Chinese accordion, I've got a bucketful of Italian leather valves handy to replace quite a lot of the rubbishy Chinese ones.

Working with valves must certainly be one of the Black Arts! I've been repairing for 25 years, and only in the last few do I think that I have really mastered the subject. And I'm still hunting for a good alternative material to replace leather valves for large reeds, but it's so far eluded me and the rest of the world too!

Peter Anderson

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