Accordéon Mélancolique
Meet the Dutch accordion duo who combine music and art.

Grayson Masefield
THE HEART OF A CHAMPION

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENT PRACTICE
Why consistency is more important than practicing for large chunks of time.

YOUR ACCORDION LIFE
Readers share the stories of their lives with the accordion and why they love it.
Welcome to our first issue for 2017. *Accordion Life Today* is scheduled to go out three times this year. The next one will be August 20, 2017 then December 20, 2017.

I had the honor of playing with Grammy-Award winner Zuill Bailey just a few weeks ago. An amazing cellist. Leading up to the concert, as I was practicing for his concert, I was reminded how important using effective practice techniques are. How we practice determines the success of our performance. Because of my schedule, I have very limited time to practice so I must make the most of it. Thanks to the many teachers and mentors who have contributed to my musical growth I was able to prepare quickly and efficiently for this concert after not playing for about a year.

I find many students play their music over and over as a means of learning without a specific purpose for each time it’s repeated. For our next issue, would you share the following with our other readers: what is your method or routine for practice? How do you practice?

Let me know your answer by emailing it to: submissions@accordionlife.com before the submission deadline June 20, 2017 and we’ll share your answer in the next issue. Look forward to talking to you again through *Accordion Life Today* - August 20th.

Kindly,

Patricia Bartell
Editor in Chief

p.s. Thank you to all those that are spreading the word about *Accordion Life Today*! We are able to start connecting many accordionists together as a family!
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THE COVER
GRAYSON MASEFIELD | 5X WORLD CHAMPION
Questions, comments and submissions may be sent to submissions@accordionlife.com.

Deadline for submissions to Accordion Life Today are as follows:

**Spring Issue (April)**
Submissions by February 20th

**Summer-Fall Issue (August)**
Submissions by June 20th

**Winter Issue (December)**
Submissions by October 20th
I was eight years old when a fast-talking salesman convinced my parents I’d be the envy of all if I learned to play accordion. As it turned out, my older brother was dating the town’s accordion teacher. So the die was cast! I continued to practice and study through high school, and then began teaching lessons for my instructor. I traveled about rural Nebraska, near Lincoln, to conduct Saturday classes for farm children. We met in town halls, firehouses and one-room schools. Meanwhile, I competed in annual Mid-America Music Association contests, working up through the classes and eventually achieving “Virtuoso” status.

Life happened, after that, and for about 40 years, during which the Titano Cosmopolitan my parents bought in 1958 was a periodic hobby for me. The world moved on, of course, while I periodically played the old contest numbers for my own amusement, and an occasional family gathering. Electronics came into the accordion world, and what was a languishing art became popular in accordion circles around the world.

I suffered with arm, wrist and shoulder injuries through the years and was unable to manage the acoustic bellows any longer. Then I discovered Roland V-accordions. My accordion life was resurrected and I once again was captivated by the urge to play. I joined the Albuquerque Accordion Club, and over the past two years have regained skill levels akin to my late teen years. My Roland 7x and I are good friends, and daily are united with great joy!

Although I never became the envy of any social group, due to my artistry with my “stomach Steinway,” I have achieved countless hours of personal enjoyment and musical challenge.

Musically yours,
Father Michael S.,
Corrales, New Mexico (USA)
M y musical journey began when I was a child, since I remember, I was always practicing the music. Every birthday my father gave me a little electronic keyboard. I should say that it was very easy for me to listen to a song and play it on the keyboard just by listening. I have not had the chance to go to music school because we don't have enough money for it. But any free time that I had was always spent practicing. When I was young, I received invitations from some musical groups and played with them as a paid musician. It was wonderful!

Here in Mexico the kind of music that the most of the people listen to is the “Norteño Style.” We listen to musical groups like Los Tigres del Norte, Ramon Ayala, Intocable, Pesado, etc. I live in the central part of the country, and most musical groups use the Accordion as the principal instrument. That was the reason for me to learn to play it by myself without a teacher. When there was a public dance I was always so exited just to watch all those great accordionists on the stage playing their instruments. I have a little repair center for accordions at home because my passion for the instrument is for more than just playing it. I love it and always share my knowledge of how to play it when I have the chance. I even have an easy method and I have called it BUTTON ACCORDION EASY LEARN, I am working on it to publish it in the GOOGLE PLAY STORE for free.

My advice to all young musicians is to always practice the accordion, each day, at least for one or two hours. That is the secret of all those great masters of the accordion. It is a wonderful instrument. And, of course, always read the Accordion Life Today magazine. It has a great advice for all those who are learning this lovely instrument and it is my little treasure too!

Thanks And regards from Mexico, Ricardo O., Hidalgo, Mexico

Back in about 1956 I knew I loved accordion music because of watching Lawrence Welk. I was ten. My family lived in a suburb of Minneapolis, but music lessons were hard to find and expensive. My father found a place run by Betty Ann McCall who, at the time, went on the road with the Fred Waring Band. She gave lessons to see if there were aptitude, and you could borrow a 12 bass accordion to learn on. I passed and went on to a little bigger one. Then by this picture in 1958, was a full sized. I was still 11 in this photo in school. She went back on the road so we had to find a different

Jack D., Tamarac, Florida (USA)
music studio in Hopkins, Minnesota ... the Sivanich School of Music. I learned from a great teacher, but when boys became more important than a clunky big accordion, I quit ... of course right after my dad had purchased a very expensive Titano instrument. To make a long story shorter, I sold it in 1968, when my son was born, to buy a washer and dryer.

I never played again until around 2006. I was now living in the Ozarks of Missouri. Our priest from Wisconsin had a huge accordion he didn’t use. It was like 27 pounds. Way too big for me, but I had saved some of my old sheet music, taped the bellows up with duct tape and began to relearn. In 2007 I realized I needed to find an instrument more my size. NO one in this part of Missouri had them. So on a trip to Minnesota I went to Accordion World in St Paul and selected my current Rivoli and love it. Mostly I love my old-time music from Minnesota, and with my Norwegian heritage it was my favorite. But, I had to expand and found some country and folk music. So the almost 40-year gap is history now. Just like riding a bike, our brain retains the memory. However I can’t seem to play without music nowadays. I’m 70, so I have to read music and sit. But I still love to kick my foot and tap to the beat of an old time waltz or polka dance.

My name is Eli Bass. Originally I came from Kiev, Ukraine. My dream is to dedicate myself to accordion.

In my family my father and my two uncles played accordion, so it was no wonder my grandmother sent me at the age of nine to learn accordion. I studied then at the children music school class of piano accordion for four-and-a-half years. I was a relatively good student, but the level was not that high.

Afterwards, due to the immigration I was not able to play accordion till I was thirty. I made a return and I have now played a B-System chromatic accordion for eight years. I am still not where I want to be.

Once I was hit by a car and collected the compensation. With that I was able to buy a double tone chambered Piermaria Super Prodigy and the Roland FR3-Xb. This was a dream come true after years of playing a Chinese Morelli accordion.

I love playing jazz and contemporary music, for it can present the accordion as a full-fledged instrument. I hate polkas, pop, folk, etc. For me it constrains the accordion within the old stereotype boundaries.

I possess a special love for the bass accordion (I own one, too), because it combines the accordion in my family together with our last name. I believe, the properly constructed and executed bass lines carry in themselves a great power. Also the bass accordion has not really been introduced yet to the world of bass music. My hope is one day to become the Jaco Pastorius of the bass accordion.

My general aspiration is to free myself from all the ballast, and go to Europe to study the accordion. I advise the same for all the beginners. Do not spare your means, but rather go and learn from the best; be it Fred Deschamps, Jacques Mornet, Franck Angelis in France or Renzo Ruggieri in Italy. Do not forget to get a degree in music as well. For the sake of survival in the real world, being an accordion virtuoso is not enough, but rather you need to be multi-faceted.

Eli B., Philadelphia, Pennslyvania (USA)
Leavenworth International Accordion Celebration

June 15-18, 2017
Leavenworth, WA
AccordionCelebration.org

Performances By:

Stas Venglevski
LIAC Dance Band
Mark Myking and Zydeco Rex
Northwest Accordionaires
The Portatos
Kim and Dan Christian
Sergei Teleshev
Lyle and Toby’s Polka Parade
Steve Albini

Events and Activities:

Accordion Competitions
Workshops
Free Performances at the Gazebo and Grange
Free Accordion Lessons
Accordion Parade on Saturday
Accordion Vendors
Accordion Bands
Jam Sessions in Restaurants
Volunteer Opportunities
Lots of fun for everyone!

Brought To You By:
The Northwest Accordion Society
Wow, what an incredible performance piece! The Three Dancers was a complex piece for both musicians and audience alike. If you like moments of dark and angst mixed with moments of sheer happiness and delight, this is your piece. I was amazed and bedazzled by the complex composition and extraordinary musicianship of all the performers. The parallel movements and glissandos created on the xylophones and violins created quite the suspenseful and dark feelings that Picasso must have felt during times of his life. The outstanding musicians that highlighted this concert were Grammy Award winning Zuill Bailey, pianist Piers Lane, violinist Tana Bachman Bland, double bassist Eugene Jablonsky, accordionist Patricia Bartell, soprano sax Christopher Parkin and percussionist Marty Zyskowski.

In this piece, Australian Composer Elena Kats-Chernin attempts to capture Picasso's painting of the same name. With all its complexities of mixed relationships, hardships and with its juxtaposed opposite of love and happiness all at the same time, she takes numerous individual movements and combines them into one 25-minute continuous, flowing piece. Her orchestration consists of cello, piano, violin, percussion, double bass, soprano sax and accordion. This piece is physically demanding for each one of the musicians, but it also requires that each member be in sync with one another. From the standpoint of the accordionist, I have the utmost respect for Patricia Bartell. This piece required great control of the bellows for the very long phrases and counterpoint movements. Close attention had to be given to time signature changes and extended chord progressions. There were also very fluid movements which required exact finger and bellow phrasing together. The emotion of the piece was brought to the forefront by Patricia’s heartfelt interpretation of Picasso’s rollercoaster emotions.

The Three Dancers left the audience highly exhilarated, yet yearning for more. It leaves one wondering what the next adventure or tryst might have brought in Picasso’s next story line. What an electrifying listening and visual experience -- one that I can’t wait to witness again.
Welcome back to training, Scale Hero! By now you have mastered most of the major scales for the treble as well as the major and harmonic minor scales for the bass of your accordion. Your mission today, should you choose to accept, is to learn the rest of the major scales for the treble keyboard of your accordion. These are the scales in the flat and sharp keys. Before we get started with this important mission, I need to share some secret intelligence that will help you with your assignment.

**ENHARMONIC ALIASES**

Look sharp, today we will be venturing into the flatlands. You already know that all our white keys on the treble side of the accordion have names based on the first seven letters of the alphabet. You probably also already know about sharps and flats. But just to make sure all our bases are covered, let’s talk about those sharps and flats. Every single one has an alias. They can go by one name or the other. For example: C♭ is also D♯. A♭ is also G♯. This is called enharmonics -- one note that has two names. For the purpose of today’s training, we will refer to these scales in their flat keys. Each one has an enharmonic sharp key which would be notated with sharps instead of flats. See Illustration 1 for which sharp keys these flats would be translated to. Got it? Awesome! Let’s get started!

**THE D♯ MAJOR SCALE**

Not the happiest note to start on: the key of D♯ Major has been described as one of grief, depression. Songs in this key include *My Heart Will Go On* by Celine Dion, *Against All Odds* by Phil Collins, *Love Somebody* by Maroon 5, and *Will You Still Love Me* by Chicago.

Illustration 2 shows the notation and keyboard diagram for the D♯ major scale. Note the five flats!

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**Illustration 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D♯ = C♭</th>
<th>E♯ = D♭</th>
<th>A♭ = G♯</th>
<th>B♭ = A♯</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G♯ = F♭</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They are $B^\flat$, $E^\flat$, $A^\flat$, $D^\flat$ and $G^\flat$. This scale uses different fingering than what we have used in most of our major scales until now. Start the scale with finger two on $D^\flat$ and finger three on $E^\flat$. Fingers one, two, three and four play $F$, $G^\flat$, $A^\flat$ and $B^\flat$. Fingers one and two play $C$ and $D^\flat$.

**THE E$^\flat$ MAJOR SCALE**

The key of E$^\flat$ Major carries a range of emotion – from cruel and hard to love and devotion. Songs performed in the key of E$^\flat$ Major include *Eye of the Tiger* by Survivor, *Skyfall (James Bond)* by Adele, *Save The Last Dance for Me* by Michael Bublé and *You Raise Me Up* by Josh Groban.

As you can see in Illustration 3, the key of E$^\flat$ has three flats: $B^\flat$, $E^\flat$ and $A^\flat$. Start with finger three on $E^\flat$. Fingers one, two, three and four play $F$, $G$, $A^\flat$ and $B^\flat$. Fingers one and two play $C$ and $D^\flat$.

**THE G$^\flat$ MAJOR SCALE**

The key of G$^\flat$ major epitomized the idea of triumph over difficulties as well as brilliance and clarity. It has been used for songs such as *Sweet Child O’ Mine* by Guns N’ Roses, *Sky Full of Stars* by Coldplay, *Good Life* by OneRepublic, and *Y.M.C.A.* by the Village People.

Wait ... What?!?! The notation in Illustration 4 shows six flats! There are only five black keys! What’s going on here? Well, let’s take a look. Our flats are $B^\flat$, $E^\flat$, $A^\flat$, $D^\flat$, $G^\flat$ and $C^\flat$. Ah. The last one is the culprit. Remember when I talked about enharmonic aliases? This is a prime example: even our white keys can be identified with enharmonics. In this case it’s $B$, which in this scale is known by the alias $C^\flat$.

Again, we have a new fingering for this scale. Start with fingers two, three and four on $G^\flat$, $A^\flat$ and $B^\flat$. Fingers one, two and three play $C^\flat (B)$, $D^\flat$ and $E^\flat$. Fingers one and two end with $F$ and $G$.

**THE A$^\flat$ MAJOR SCALE**

While the key of A$^\flat$ is generally associated with death and the grave, quite a few of the songs written using it are quite the opposite. For instance: *Happy* by Pharrell Williams, *Viva La Vida* by Coldplay, and *Stayin’ Alive* by the Bee Gees. I guess that goes to prove that stereotypes don’t have to confine you.

As you can see in Illustration 5, the key of A$^\flat$ has 4 flats: $B^\flat$, $E^\flat$, $A^\flat$ and $D^\flat$. Start with fingers three and four on $A^\flat$ and $B^\flat$. Fingers one, two and three play $C$, $D^\flat$ and $E^\flat$. Fingers one, two and three end with $F$, $G$ and $A^\flat$. Four flat scales down, one to go!

**THE B$^\flat$ MAJOR SCALE**

The key of B$^\flat$ is an optimistic key, magnificent and joyful, with hope for the future. The key of B$^\flat$ has been used for songs such as *A Thousand Years* by
Christina Perri, *Can You Feel The Love Tonight* by Elton John and *The Star Wars Main Theme* by John Williams.

This looks simple compared to the six flats of $G^\#$ major! As shown in Illustration 6, the key of $B^\#$ has only two flats: $B^\#$ and $E^\#$. This scale starts with finger two (or four) on $B^\#$. Fingers one, two and three play $C$, $D$ and $E^\#$. Fingers one, two, three and four end with $F$, $G$, $A$ and $B^\#$. You have completed the $B^\#$ major scale!

**UNTIL NEXT TIME**

Congratulations, you have mastered the majors! In the next issue of *Accordion Life Today* we will venture into the world of minor scales for the treble keyboard of your accordion. Until then, keep playing and being a scale hero! ■

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**“Where words fail, music speaks.”**

Hans Christian Anderson

Music has been part of history since the beginning of time. It has been part of nearly every culture, forever. Every single person has his or her own opinions and responses to music, and almost everyone enjoys music in some way. Within the last few decades, neuroscientists (brain scientists) have made great progress in understanding how the brain works. This was done by closely observing activity in the brain. Surprisingly, music was one of the biggest tools they used on their test subjects. They used music to stimulate the brain while studying. Although they saw plenty of interesting responses with all of their participants, they saw the most impacting feedback from the participants who were musicians.

**THE BENEFITS OF MUSIC**

However, you don’t have to be a musician to be greatly impacted by music. Studies have shown that people who listen to music may feel happier during their daily lives, feel less stress, have improved health, excel in a certain sport or hobby, sleep better,
strengthen learning abilities, and have an increase in memory recollection. I have had several days where I feel depressed, stressed or angry about something, and then I decided to listen to my favorite music. Usually, by the time I am into the first few songs, I already feel more motivated and happier.

MUSIC FOR THE YOUNG
A recent study has proven that a baby can hear music and be affected by it while they are in the womb. A fetus develops an auditory system anywhere between 17 and 19 weeks. Varying tones, such as the difference between female voices and male voices, have been proven to be detected from inside the womb. A fetus’s heart rate slightly elevates when music is played outside of the womb. Although, researchers have even noticed a reaction from the fetus when it was impossible for the music to be heard from the womb. This occurred when the mother listened to music with earphones. If the mother was listening to a song she really enjoyed, the baby’s heart rate would decrease. If the mother was listening to a song she really disliked, and was causing anxiety, the baby’s heart rate would increase in speed. Some studies have claimed that Mozart’s music helps the brain gain intelligence easier. Because of this, many parents will expose their babies and young children to the composer’s music, with the hope that their children will grow more intelligent and happy. Although other studies have said that any music is good for a child’s brain development, not just Mozart’s. Young children, including babies, have been proven to communicate better, be happier and show early signs of a more sophisticated brain when they were given music lessons.

MUSIC FOR HEALTH
Music also has been proven to help someone’s health. Researchers speculate that music will eventually become a cure for certain diseases that are currently incurable, such as Parkinson’s disease, or even strokes. There are music therapists whose job is to literally play music to patients for the sole purpose of helping patients feel better mentally and physically. Music therapy has been proven to aid people with autism, dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, chronic pain, emotional trauma and depression. Patients dealing with Alzheimer’s disease have shown the greatest breakthroughs with music. Music has been able to revive memories into Alzheimer’s patients, where nothing else would work. Music therapy is often the best part of a patient’s day.

MUSIC AFFECTS YOU!
Indeed, music activates every part of the human brain. It also has been proven that the sound waves of music literally penetrate every part of the human body. Who knew that our body could react to music in so many ways?

Read more articles online at AccordionLife.com
As soon as I returned from the Trophée Mondial de l’Accordéon, I was once again immersed in the writing of my articles and especially the ones that certainly mean the most to you: my technique and teaching. For good reason, last issue’s article was particularly relevant to many of you as the topic dealt with “Overcoming Mindless Practice.” Many of you have already responded to the statements of Clément, Jean and Jean-Paul and have sent me nice messages. I thank you for those.

In the last issue of Accordion Life Today, I referred to the various subjects dealt with directly by the statements of adults who had recently attended my internships, namely the inexhaustible subject of “reflexes, reflection, storage” or retaining the memory of your music during performance. In this article, I will give you a few concrete examples of solutions to the various problems created by the discharges of performance-induced adrenaline caused by unfortunate shadow zones of consciousness. All of this could be summarized in these few words, “one loses memory because one loses the contact with their keyboards.”

**THE SHOULDER STRAP ADJUSTMENT: #1 CAUSE OF MEMORY LOSS**

The reasons for this loss of contact are many (stress, bad practice method, adrenaline, etc. ...), but the main reason lies mostly in the shoulder straps of your accordion.

Most of the accordionists I meet have their shoulder straps in this unfortunate position. (See Photo 1) I have touched on this subject a number of times, but a good reminder seems appropriate, especially when I have a solution ready to offer you.

The demonstration is simple. When your shoulder straps are positioned under the armpits, as shown in Photo 1, you immediately tend to fix your instrument by squeezing your elbows against your body to minimize the movement of your accordion. On this subject, a small note: the magic of our instrument
resides in its capacity for movement. A little like the bandoneon, and for that, the movement is all the more important since it directly influences any musical interpretation and creates a style. The articulation and intonation of the Argentinian tango, for example, are directly generated by the bandoneon’s morphology, which imposes a way of moving the performer to reach the notes of the keyboards. Even if these movements were directly induced by the instrumental structure of this instrument, they are nevertheless necessary, primordial, even visceral in the interpretation of such a repertoire.

It is the same for our instrument! Movement is life ... why not adapt to this situation, learn to tame the movements of our instrument so that these movements become its qualities? ... And yours at the same time. That movement is, “Freedom of movement.” So, one of the solutions I mentioned previously: adjust your shoulder straps as shown in Photo 2.

To do this, it is sufficient to lengthen each strap, always paying attention that the right strap is significantly longer than the left (Photo 3) to shift your instrument to the left and thus allow the bellows to move freely outside the left thigh. Once this is done, attach the two shoulder straps to the center of your back as shown in Photo 2 with one or two back straps.

What if you don’t have a back strap? Substitute with a scarf, a belt, ask for assistance ... whatever you want ... but tie it up!

**FIXATION AND FREEDOM**

Do these two words seem paradoxical? They aren’t! By fixing our instrument as explained, we release the right shoulder to be free for movement. (Photos 4 and 5) At the same time, by doing this, we release the left shoulder, which has the double impact of guiding the left hand through the movement of the shoulder and not the fingers. Photo 6 demonstrates the release and freedom of the left shoulder. This allows the movement of the shoulder to raise the hand in the left keyboard without moving the fingers (Photos 7 and 8).

Photos 9 and 10 show the poor position of the fingers of the left hand when the shoulder is blocked by the left shoulder strap.

Another important advantage of left shoulder freedom lies in the use of the left bicep, which is 100% available to assume the movements of the bellows. (Photo 11) When previously blocked, the left shoulder forbade this movement and forced the left forearm to fend for itself in opening the bellows.
(Photo 14) This caused loss of force, control and precision of the movement of the bellows which negatively affects the power of the sound and the tension of the keys. Proper key tension is directly related to the force and control of the bellows due to the air pressure against the key valves. (Photo 11)

**ERGONOMIC SHOULDER STRAPS: A RADICAL SOLUTION**

I am well aware that the adjustment of the shoulder straps is delicate. There are times that you have to make holes in the leather to be perfectly at ease. You can’t always attach the back strap easily. The instrument is always tipsy whatever happens. You know me by now: I concocted a small pair of straps in “MacGyver” fashion, with the comfort that goes with them. Sometimes you just have to make it up. Now HOHNER carries them as ‘S- straps,’ which are ergonomically designed. (Photo 13)

The double back straps allow a total fixity of the instrument as in Photo 2. This system makes it possible to adjust your shoulder straps in a gesture, to the millimeter, adapted to the way you dress (thickness of clothes) and in a few seconds with the sliding adjustment seen in Photo 14. The thickness of the shoulder straps ensures absolute comfort at the shoulders. (Photo 15)

I will see you in the next issue of *Accordion Life Today* with new educational adventures,

Frédéric Deschamps

Frédéric Deschamps ■
They say, “The third time’s the charm,” so here I am back with more composers from the past and present that caught not only my eyes but also my ears. Instead of first introducing a famous composer from the past, we are going to take a look at a composer from the present and work our way back in time. I surprised you, there didn’t I?!

VIRTUOSO PETRI MAKKONEN

In Lisamli, Finland, the land of cold winters and warm saunas, in 1967, Petri Makkonen was born. At age eight he started learning to play piano accordion – mostly folk music. At the age most of us are starting high school, he started learning to play the classical button accordion from Heidi Velamo at the Sibelius Academy University of the Arts, in Finland. In 1994 he graduated from that very school after studying accordion and composition from M. Rantanen.

Some of his accomplishments include winning the Silver Disc for his composing work at the Moscow Accordion Festival in 2006 and the Best New Original Work for his composition, Tango-Toccata, in the Coupe Mondiale Accordion Contest in Shangaii, 2011. Some of his well-known virtuoso pieces include Disco-Toccata, Disco-Tango, A Flight Beyond Time, Tango-Toccata and many others. A virtuoso piece is a composition that requires outstanding technical ability to perform. His compositions have won very distinguished awards and are well known in the accordion world by other artists.

Petri Makkonen also lectures on the accordion at the Kuopio Conservatory and is the conductor of the Kuopio Conservatory Accordion Orchestra. He is known for presenting his work at accordion concerts and plays using several bands with different styles of music. In our current day and age, he is someone to keep our eyes on when we are looking for new, exciting and beautiful music to play.
MARVELOUS MOZART

Now we go way, way, way back in time. Not as far as when Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492, but to the year 1756 on a cold January morning, a soon-to-be famous musician was born. He was baptized the day after his birth and christened Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart; or as he preferred to be called later in life, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. For the rest of this article, however, I will refer to him as Mozart as to not make you blink at the sight of his monstrous name.

Mozart was born in Vienna, Austria to Leopold and Anna Marie Mozart, and was the last of seven children. Being inspired by his father who was a musician and watching his sister Maria Anna’s harpsichord lesson, Mozart started playing and composing music by age five. Both Mozart and his older sister traveled with their father and performed as child prodigies until Maria came of age to marry, and Mozart was left to travel alone with his father.

Mozart spent the majority of his life traveling abroad and composing many different styles of music, dependant mostly at where he was at the time he composed them. While pursuing his career he met and married Constanze Weber on August 4, 1782. In the next nine years they had six children of whom only two survived past infancy. His wife after death published his compositions and helped write the first biography on her husband. Many believe that she helped influence and support his musical career. Mozart’s most famous pieces are Serenade No. 13, Symphony No. 40, Overture to The Marriage of Figaro, Rondo Alla Turca and the Overture to The Magic Flute. He composed for symphonies, viola and piano. Many of his pieces are still being played. My personal favorite piece of his is Piano Concerto No. 21, 2nd movement of Adante, and my favorite symphony is Overture to the Magic Flute.

Mozart is said to have composed more than 600 pieces before he died on December 5, 1791 at the age of just 35. His exact cause of death is unknown. All that was recorded at the time was that he fell ill. Although his wife and doctors tried nursing him to health, their efforts did not move the inevitable. He will always be remembered as a musical prodigy. Even Ludwig van Beethoven was deeply influenced by his work.

By digging deeper into the people who composed the music we play, we gain a deeper appreciation for them. Not everyone can say they spent their life composing music, and we often take their work for granted. Music is a gift we are blessed to have. These men have created works of art for everyone to enjoy and experience. The next time you are playing one of their pieces, think of them and enjoy all of their hard work!
To keep the fun going, I think we should start this session with a little quiz. Actually this will be more of a refresher. The following can be answered as true or false. *Answers are at the end of the article.*

1. It is natural to want to communicate with the world around us. Music theory is a method by which we can standardize and communicate an understanding of what music is intended to sound like so other people can repeat it.

2. We use lines and spaces to identify notes, and these lines and spaces identify pitch (highness or lowness) of the notes.

3. There are two clefs or staves used to communicate music.

4. The grand staff looks like the image in Illustration 1 and connects or joins the bass and treble clefs.

5. Lower notes occur toward the top of the staves and the higher notes are found at the bottom of the staves.

**Illustration 1**

**NOTE VALUES**

Once you learn what note you want to play, you will want to know how long you hold or play the note. When you listen to music, you can tell some notes are held for a much longer time than other notes. So how do we communicate the length of time to hold a note? Do we write “long,” “very long,” or “short” next to the note? No, that just wouldn’t work. What
is the difference between long and extra long? Is there also an extra short? How short is that? No. We have another way of communicating the length of a note. Think of cooking and baking. Some measures call for a cup of flour and ½ cup of water, and ¼ cup of butter. So far sounds yummy, but you can’t measure notes in a cup.

Another example involves something more fun than cups and cooking. Money. We have ways we give value to money. For example, 5 x $1.00 is $5.00. Two (2) x $5.00 is $10.00. Or $10.00 is twice as much as $5.00. Two (2) x $10.00 is $20.00 and 4 x $5.00 is $20.00.

Okay, okay you get the point. So how is this related to how long to hold a musical note? Well we start with what we call a whole note. It looks like this:

The note itself is the slight oval. All notes can be on a line or in a space and they still are held (or played) for the same length of time regardless of where they are located. A whole note does not have a stem or line on either end of the note.

So, just like money and measuring cups, if there is a whole, there is probably something that halves the whole. In music we call this the obvious – half notes, and they look like this:

Half notes look like an open oval and have a stem going up or down. Generally notes with stems will have the stem on the right side of the notes and point up when they occur below the third space. Notes in the third space and above have stems pointing downward on the left side of the notes. So if we can divide a whole note into smaller pieces as in the example above, where two half notes have equal time value as a whole note, can a half note be divided? The answer is yes. Two notes equal to a half note are called quarter notes and look like this:

WHEN NOT TO PLAY
(or how to take a break without feeling guilty.)
There is an old saying, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” It works for Jill too. The same is true in music. All playing and no resting can make for boring music. So just like we have notes that are given a time value (quarter note = ¼ of a whole note, half note = ½ of a whole note, etc.), we have notations for when we rest. The duration of musical silence is even called a rest.

A whole rest looks like a brick or shaded box that hangs down from the third (3rd) line. It is equal to a whole note and looks like this:
A half rest looks like a brick or shaded box and rests on top of the third (3rd) line. It is equal to half note duration and looks like this:

A quarter rest is a distinctive squiggle line notation running vertically thru lines and spaces. Its duration is equal to a quarter note and it looks like this:

Thus:
One whole rest equals two half rests:

One half rest equals two quarter rests:

One whole rest equals four quarter rests:

WHAT NOW?
So how do we put all of this together into music? We know our lines and spaces. We know the lines and spaces name different notes of music from A thru G, and then they repeat again. We know some notes are played longer or shorter than others, and that we also rest for longer and shorter amounts of time. We do not yet have a context for these notes and rests. Just as we divide a day into 24 hours, and and hour into 60 minutes, and a minute into 60 seconds, we use new notations to give meaning to our music.

At the bottom of the page is an example of music. It has some notes we have not discussed yet, but you can see the use of quarter notes and half notes. The piece also uses some quarter rests. Some of the notes are called chords because we are playing more than one note at the same time, but those notes occupy the same time space as the rest of the chord. Just looking at the treble or G clef, I count 24 quarter notes and 11 half notes. Count and see if you get the same number.

As you can see, the piece begins with the Grand Staff linking the treble and bass clefs. Now skip and look at the vertical lines (up and down lines) that are fairly light and occur intermittently. These are called bar lines and divide the music into equal parts called measures or bars. This means the count or beats in each measure will be equal even if the notes are arranged differently.

PRELUDE
Op. 28, No. 7
Frederic Chopin
At the end of the piece (the last set of lines) is a light line followed by a dark line. This designates the end of the piece of music and is called a double bar line.

**LET’S ADD TIME**
*(The Time Signature)*

While there are similarities in music and spoken communication, there are also differences. When we speak or write, we divide our utterances into sentences. We have learned the components of sentence structure in school and spent hours trying to dangle our participles. A sentence can be very short or very long requiring a person to take a breath to complete the whole thought. In music, as we just saw, we divide our time into measures or bars. We may need to take many measures to convey a musical sentence, but the number of beats within each measure is the same. To know how to place those beats in the measure, we look at the beginning of the piece of music we referenced on the prior page.

Focus for now on the at the top of the beginning line after the Grand Staff. The 4 lets us know that in each instance or measure a quarter note will get one beat. The 3 lets us know that there will be three beats in each measure. Look at the measure that begins with a half note chord. In the treble section it is followed by a quarter note. One half note is equal to two quarter notes, and this measure would be counted as one, two, three. In the bass, the half note is followed by a quarter rest and is also counted as one, two, three. This pattern of counting repeats itself every other measure until the end of the piece. There are notes in this piece we have not discussed yet and will cover them and how to count them at another time.

The at the beginning is called a time signature and remains in effect for the entire piece unless another time signature is clearly introduced elsewhere in the music. There are many time signatures, but we will start with three of them.

This indicates that there will be four beats in each measure and that the quarter note or rest will get one beat:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{4} & \quad \text{4} \\
\end{align*}
\]

As discussed, the top number indicates there will be three beats in each measure and that the quarter note or rest gets one beat:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{3} & \quad \text{4} \\
\end{align*}
\]

This shows that there will be two beats in each measure and the quarter note or rest gets one beat.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{2} & \quad \text{4} \\
\end{align*}
\]

**CONCLUSION**

Until next time, please look at your music and write down how many beats are in each measure and what note will be credited with one beat. See you in the next issue of *Accordion Life Today*!

**ANSWERS**

1. True: as humans we strive to communicate, and music theory helps us to communicate the elements of music.
2. True: we use lines and spaces to indicate the note or notes we intend to play, hear, or communicate to someone else what to play.
3. False: there are many staves but the treble and bass are most commonly used in modern music.
4. True.
5. False: higher-sounding notes appear higher on the staff and lower-sounding notes appear lower on the staff.
In 2009, Grayson became the first person to win the Coupe Mondiale top classical category and the Coupe Mondiale Virtuoso Entertainment category in the same year. But 2009 had even more in store for him -- Grayson won both the Roland International V-Accordion Competition & Festival in Rome and of the Primus Ikaalinen International TV Competition in Finland.

In 2010, he won the Trophée Mondiale Classique World Accordion Championships. With that, he had won everything and retired from competition. He now teaches and tours extensively, performing both classical and variety programs. Due to his high skill level, musicianship and versatility, he is in high demand as a concert artist. Grayson also teaches the course General Mechanics of the Accordion, available on AccordionLife.com. Read on for our interview with him.

Photo: Grayson performing ‘Ka Mate’ by Gorka Hermosa at the 2016 Coupe Mondiale.
Grayson, you are a world champion. Tell me how you got your start with the accordion and what brought you to the level you are at.

I started the accordion at the age of four, my grandfather started an accordion import company; and most of my immediate family played. I must contribute my success to them and Frédéric Deschamps whom I studied with in France and who brought me to the international level.

About how many hours a day do you practice the accordion?

This is really dependant on what new pieces I have to prepare and which pieces and repertoire I have to maintain. It can vary from 4 - 9 hours with most of the time spent on classical (free bass) or contemporary works with less being spent on variety music.

How do you keep motivated to practice on days you don't feel like working?

Practise is the work of a musician. Like any job it can be enjoyable and sometimes it isn't. You just have to put it on and start playing. Goals are vital in this situation, and a plan to either learn a line/page or find a specific sound gives you something tangible to achieve.

Do you ever take a day off from your vigorous practice schedule?

Normally there will be one or two days a week where I have a reduced schedule or I won't play at all.

What styles of music are your forte?

I'm not really sure what my forte would be but I seem to gravitate to quite powerful, explosive and rhythmic styles in both classical accordion and variety.

You keep your body physically in very good condition. What do you say to those who don't believe you need to strengthen your body as much as you have, to play as well as you do?

It's not something that's obligatory but I think the benefits of exercise are numerous when you're spending most of the day sitting down holding an accordion. I enjoy exercise and sports and find that not being held back by any physical limitations (holding the bellows fully open/bellowshake, etc.) makes technique much easier and lets me practise for longer periods.

Have you ever had thoughts of quitting accordion? If so, what motivated you to continue?

It's definitely crossed my mind but I enjoy playing too much to seriously consider it.

If you could go back to a time when you were struggling with music and tell yourself one thing, what would it be?

Knuckle down and do the work. Building an overall technique (not just virtuostic) was years later, then it could have been because I only became serious about the accordion when I was 18.
Is a support system essential to growing musically to your level?
I think so. It's very rare for someone to reach a high level in any instrument by themselves. Family and teachers are vital but also the opportunity to see and hear high-level performances (on different instruments) for inspiration and new music.

Do you have any tips for aspiring accordionists or musicians who want to reach the championship level of playing? Or even for beginners?
When you're on stage, take that extra risk, don't be afraid to show the audience who you are, be confident in the work and practise you’ve done. Genuine emotions and engagement with the audience make a performance great.

What is your favorite piece that you have learned and performed with?
Most definitely Bach's *Passacaglia & Fugue*. No matter if I haven't played it for a year or two, everytime I use it again in my repertoire it feels like something special. I have a great admiration for the construction of the work, and I think its a piece that really shows the capabilities of the accordion.

You have performed and competed worldwide. What is one highlight of your career?
It's very difficult to pinpoint one highlight. I’ve been incredibly lucky to play in many countries, but I find that the highlights aren't normally the concerts. I think the highlights and privilege a performer gets is meeting so many different people from around the world, each proud to share their culture and show you the unique parts of their city and country.

Do you still compete? If yes, what are your plans for the future? If no, what are you currently pursuing?
After having won the Coupe Mondiale and Trophée Mondiale two senior categories, I decided to stop competitions. After that I have been finishing my bachelor’s and master’s degrees that I put on hold to study in France with Frédéric Deschamps, and currently I am performing and teaching.

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In this course, Grayson takes us on a scholarly journey through the workings of the accordion, the different systems of accordions, dynamics, articulation and several effects such as note distortion, vibratos, percussive effects and more.

Learn more at AccordionLife.com
In early February, Jean-Pierre Guiran and Cherie De Boer prepared to give a concert in Leeuwarden, a city of some 100,000 in the north of the Netherlands. The concert venue was near their home along the coast of the Wadden Sea, so they traveled by car with their accordions, Jean-Pierre’s Hohner Lucia III and Cherie’s Guerrini Classic with cassotto, the same instruments they have used for some 30 years. Most of the 50 or so concerts for the coming year are within driving distance, since they will take place in Dutch cities or in nearby German cities such as Bremen, Hamburg, and Düsseldorf. The real rehearsal had already taken place during more relaxed moments, but the concert preparation the day before the performance had given them a mixture of renewed energy accompanied by a “feeling of paralysis” according to Jean-Pierre. Their program, as usual, had not been set beforehand; just a half hour before coming on stage, this was determined by the atmosphere of the place, the people, the weather and their mood. A small box contained sheets of paper with little poems, anecdotes, and whatever they might tell the audience, and there were Post-it® notes with song titles. The program was made at the last moment by choosing a combination of sheets and stickers. Even then new choices were made during the performance, all contributing to a freewheeling approach that kept things fresh. Their audience was treated to a musical world tour: French café music, tangos and sambas from South America, merengues and calypso from the Caribbean, just to mention a few.

THE BEGINNINGS
Like many future accordionists, as a young girl Cherie heard the instrument on the radio and was attracted by its sound. She told her parents that she would love to play accordion, and luckily they found her both a teacher and a borrowed instrument. Within a year the one on loan was replaced by a
little, blue, Italian accordion paid for on installments. She stopped playing for a time during her teenage years, with the accordion under her bed, but later an accordion-playing friend encouraged her to take up the instrument again. Unlike Cherie, Jean-Pierre never saw an accordion until in his twenties. However, he had often heard accordion music on the radio in the Netherlands during its popularity in the 50s and 60s. The music played was mostly popular Dutch songs which he didn’t like so much, so he explored alternate musical sounds by teaching himself a little guitar and organ. Later, after seeing an accordion for the first time when in college, he borrowed one for a year and started playing and enjoying the instrument. He even started composing some of his first melodies at this time, including *Helena* and *Solitude Heureuse*, both of which have become familiar tunes to devotees of *Accordéon Mélancolique*. His organ background meant he was already acquainted with a piano keyboard, and the accordion’s left-hand buttons of bass and chords were reminiscent of playing the guitar. He was delighted to discover that the accordion felt like a complete orchestra in his hands!

**FIRST MEETING**

Here is a charming story from Jean-Pierre about how the two met:

“We met in the 80’s. Cherie just decided to play again after putting her instrument under her bed for years. There was a lot of change and experiment in society at that time, e.g., Women’s Emancipation. She was accompanying a girlfriend, who also played accordion in a female theatre group. Just when they had an “important” show, the girlfriend went ill. And Cherie didn’t feel confident enough to do it just on her own. That was how I came in, somebody knew me. But there was one problem, I was not a girl! The solution was this: we were sitting next to each other at the right part of the stage. But I was sitting just behind the curtain! Ha ha, it was fraud! But I let it happen. In the weeks following we generated interest in each other. (Me first!).”

At the time of their meeting, the 26-year-old Jean-Pierre was playing his accordion in restaurants with the 62-year-old gypsy violinist Lembosh Wilca. According to Jean-Pierre, “He taught me, the shy boy at that time, to play kneeling down for ladies in restaurants. But unfortunately he passed away shortly after. Requests for gigs kept on coming, and that was the moment Cherie made a big decision in her life: she quit her job at the municipality and restarted the study of playing the accordion. We started to offer us as an accordion duo, playing for parties and in restaurants.” Jean-Pierre and Cherie made a commitment to “squeeze” for a living and so, in 1984, *Accordéon Mélancolique* was born.

Both Jean-Pierre and Cherie agree that the most difficult part of playing the accordion is managing the bellows. They say that it is the bellows that make music come alive. However, accents with the bellows affect both the bass and melody lines of the piece, which is not always the optimal musical choice. But as an accordion duo they solved this problem by
dividing the parts, one playing the melody and the other the accompaniment. Their highly nuanced dynamics are readily evident in their recordings. The listener will also “hear” frequent intervals of silence. As Jean-Pierre has said, “... by using silence next to sound as building stones ..., even the most simple pieces receive an intense thrill and give rhythmic melodies an extra sparkle.”

In the late 90s, the duo issued their first CD *L’imparfait du Coeur*. The recording was highly successful—indeed, it was chosen as the best accordion CD of 1999 in Sweden by the accordion magazine *Dragspels Nytt*. This acclamation was the stimulus to begin performing public concerts, where audiences were eager to buy the CD. They found that giving public performances was musically fulfilling and financially helpful to support their family that now included two sons. For over 20 years, *Accordéon Mélancolique* has pursued a busy schedule of performance, recording and music publishing. Their music has been adapted for a number documentaries and films. For example, some of their pieces are heard in the acclaimed documentary *Picasso and Braque Go to the Movies*, co-produced by Martin Scorsese. In 2008, the Juilliard School of the Arts staged the dance *Because There Isn’t Any*, a work by Johannes Wieland, with songs mostly by Jean-Pierre.

**THEIR MUSIC**

*Accordéon Mélancolique* has also been active in the recording studio, and the duo now has seven CDs available. There is good news for accordionists wishing to play their music: each CD is accompanied by a book of sheet music published by Reba Productions in the Netherlands. The CDs and sheet music include duets and solos of pieces arranged or composed by Jean-Pierre. The arrangements are tunes from a number of music traditions around the globe, and even the original compositions of Jean-Pierre are inspired by a variety of musical genres. The CD and songbook *Les Invités* is quite typical, at least of the first five CDs, so it will be described in a little detail.

First, the collection includes several arrangements of world music: two klezmer pieces, a traditional Swedish folksong, Saint-Saëns’ *The Swan*, and three of Nino Rota’s themes from *The Godfather* movie. The other eight pieces are original compositions of Jean-Pierre: a Brazilian free clave *Bougainville*, a swing *Ma Chérie*, two Caribbean claves Padikiti Dikitika and *The Dancing Tortoise*, the harp waltz *Por el Camino Real* from Venezuela, and two French café pieces *Requiem pour une Rose* and *L’arrivée des Invités*. The book also contains Jean-Pierre’s Indonesian-inspired *Tanah Tumpah Darah*, which has a beautiful cantabile melody that floats above a driving kronchong rhythm. The subtitle, “her native country,” is a reference to Chérie’s birthplace, Jakarta. All of the songbooks are “Pour 1 ou 2 Accordéons,” and indeed they work nicely either for one or two players. Another possibility is to have a violin, flute, clarinet or other melody instrument play the Accordion 1 line.
The duo’s sixth and latest CD/Songbook, *Aquarelles*, became available last year. It is a little different from the others in being thematic. As its subtitle, *Waterworks*, suggests, the 15 original compositions of Jean-Pierre are all related to water in some way. Jean-Pierre describes *Aquarelles* this way: “It started all with a composition that we named *Mermaid*. Playing that song we had a strong association with water. And then the Yann Tiersen-ish pieces like *Quicksand* and *Water Cave* bubbled up. Minimal music pieces like *Aquarelle d’Amour* and *Ebb and Flow* arose while recording the CD. We have now lived eight years within walking distance of Wadden Sea in the north of the Netherlands, and before this we lived 25 years near a small lake in the middle of the country. My father was a sailor in the merchant navy and later worked at a shipyard. Finally, Cherie made a weeklong voyage over sea, from Indonesia to the Netherlands, a single day after her birth. So clearly, our bond with water is deeply engrained within us.”

All of the six songbooks are graced with Cherie’s paintings, making them possibly the most beautiful sheet music books ever published. She is mainly focused on impressionistic oil paintings on canvas, but also creates aquarelles and pastels. She finds similarities between her art and her music: sound and silence become color and no color, harmony in music is reflected by harmony in colors. The painting shown here is included as a two-page spread at the centerfold of *Aquarelles*. The piece *Swan & Swan*, including Cherie’s painting can be found on the following pages, reprinted here with the kind permission of Reba Publication.

More information about *Accordeon Mélancolique* can be found online at accordeonmelancolique.com. Their CDs and songbooks can be purchased directly from them, though for smaller orders it may be better to order from CDBaby www.cdbaby.com/Artist/AccordeonMelancolique to reduce shipping costs.

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Emma Carscallen is a senior at Moscow High School, Moscow ID, and co-authored this article as part of her Extended Learning Internship project on accordion. Duane DeTemple, a retired professor of mathematics at Washington State University, served as Emma’s Extended Learning Internship mentor; he played accordion as a boy and recently started to play again after an accordion-free gap of nearly 50 years.

**ENJOY THE MUSIC SWAN & SWAN ON THE NEXT PAGES!**
Swan & Swan

F#m  Em  Bm

Em  A7  poco rit.

E  Em  A  A7  D
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One of the most loving additions to the team of AccordionLife.com is little Miss Isabella Rosé. When she comes running through the door for a day at the studio, she brings smiles and joy to everyone she greets. This is one King Charles Cavalier that has won the heart of everyone who works with her.

Adopted into the family by Patricia Bartell, Isabella likes to help with the filming of the courses for AccordionLife.com. She has frequently made appearances during the filming ... causing much laughter and a retake of the shot. If you watch closely, she occasionally makes an appearance in the reflections on the accordions.

She is usually well behaved and quiet, but will sometimes sneeze in agreement to something Patricia has said during filming ... or she will be noisily chewing on one of her favorite treats. She loves soft blankets, stinky pigs’ feet treats, and asking Yev to take her for walks. One of her other favorite activities is running up and down the halls of the studio after a bouncy green ball.

There’s no doubt about it, this little girl loves being part of the team and makes sure to enthusiastically greet everyone every time she arrives at work. With her kisses, her smiles, and her expressive eyes, she is a most welcome addition to the team. You can see more of Isabella by following #accordion2isabella on Instagram.

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Originating from the need of a practical method for improvisation (not only intended for Jazz performers), this book is designed for those who have already mastered the basics. A majority of the time, Jazz classes primarily focus on theory as well as on its application, often neglecting or putting aside practice. But the theoretical framework can sometimes be so overwhelming that students may find it hard to get the major element of improvisation, the creativity. In the pages of this e-book, Renzo Ruggieri explains in detail the procedures which allow you to be introduced to the creativity in improvisation. Featuring practical exercises, this e-book will give you the tools to become a master of improvisation.

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No matter who you go to for advice on musical performance, the number one piece of advice you will always hear is “practice.” Naturally, this advice has a rather strong basis, but what does it mean, specifically, to practice? Could it be to work on a single part over and over again till you get it down? Does it mean to play scales and exercises to simply get better at your instrument? Whatever the case, according to the Oxford Dictionary, practice means ‘repeated exercise in or performance of an activity or skill so as to acquire or maintain proficiency in it.’ Generally, we think of this as repeated exercises and playing our pieces over and over. These aren’t the only ways to practice and hone your skills, but do help to improve your proficiency.

DON’T CRAM PRACTICE TIME
A common misconception about practice is that learning an instrument requires you set aside large blocks of time periodically to cram in quick development of single or multiple skills. While it is possible to improve a skill by putting a large block of time into it, the problem comes in the retainment of said skill and whether or not the amount of practice you’re doing is healthy or not. For instance, you may think that since you don’t have the time to practice for an hour every day, you will practice for two hours whenever you have the chance. In these sporadic two hour blocks, you may really nail your bellow shakes or another skill, but if you don’t touch back on that skill for a few days, you could easily forget what you practiced. Alongside this issue comes the possibility of fatigue from playing too much in one day or a few days. Whether it be the stress from constantly trying to make sure that what you’re doing is perfect, or that your instrument is simply physically draining, you need to keep yourself from overworking your body and mind. The best way to do this is to keep up consistent practice sessions between 20-40 minutes instead of spontaneous practice sessions that may be too lengthy.

THE BENEFITS OF CONSISTENCY
Perhaps the most important thing that comes with consistent practice is the added benefit of skills retained and remembered over time. Specifically, this refers to the idea that as you keep moving through practice consistently, skills are retained and used to develop newer skills at an ever-increasing rate, similar to an exponential line. Basically this implies that as you keep practicing, skills/pieces that you have learned and worked on will be retained and used over time to further develop more advanced and in-depth skills later on. Consistent practice ensures that your stored knowledge and information will be retained and used frequently because of the fact that their constant use in the development of new skills will...
prevent them from being easily forgotten or unused. Thus, skills and habits are developed in a way that ensures new ones are built off of old skills that are frequently used and not forgotten. The importance of such a development lies in the fact that the loss of important skills that are learned in the initial developments of the beginnings of one’s musical career are sometimes accidental, yet semi-common mishaps. The constant use and development of old skills further shies away from this possibility and only helps speed up your adeptness on your instrument. By itself, consistent practice is the easiest and most uniform way to improve and retain skills on your instrument of choice, or any life skill in general.

CONCLUSION
Consistent practice as a whole may not be the best explained method of practice, but whenever you’re instructed to practice just remember to keep it consistent. The most important part of growing as a musician is your ability to grow quickly and remember important skills that are key in everyday performance. By practicing consistently and retaining these skills, you are developing your strength as a true performer of the arts as well as being a talented musician. The most important part of improving your musical talent is practice, and by practicing consistently you’re sure to be on the road to success in no time!

Hi, I enjoy reading Accordion Life Today and picking up some of the tips offered (you are never too old to learn!). Anyhow I thought I would share a recent experience:

I was asked to play Christmas carols for a pre-Christmas luncheon function. I thought I would get into the mood so donned a Santa suit and arrived at the venue with my accordion on my back. Now I should mention that it is summer in New Zealand so the temperature was getting up to 25° Celsius. I met the organizer who was impressed with my outfit but when I mentioned it was getting a bit hot, and I may have to strip off later she told me in no uncertain terms that it was not that kind of function and the outfit had to stay on! Anyhow I got settled in and warmed up with Jingle Bells and Santa Claus Coming To Town ... big mistake, as warming up was the last thing I should have done. By the time I got to the First Noel, I was sweating profusely. During Silent Night, my glasses started to steam up. Fortunately, I had read Frédéric Deschamps’ article in your last edition where he suggest that us older players should not stare at the music - with steamed glasses I had no choice. As I was playing tunes that I had a rough idea how they go, I think I got away with it.

Just when I thought the worst was over, I decided to liven it up with Jingle Bell Rock and that was when disaster struck - my beard got tangled in the bellows! It could have been all over at that point, but I play a Roland FR7X and one benefit that Roland does not mention (major oversight) is that if you tangle your beard in the bellows you can still play using percussion orchestral sounds without using the bellows. I finally extricated myself from the bellows and finished the rest of the gig incident free. Next year I will go as a Christmas fairy ... lighter clothes and no beard.

Best wishes to all, Charles L.
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I'M NOT SURE IF IT IS THE FACT that nearly half of my DNA are genes from Germanic ancestors or if it's because Bavarian-influenced foods are just so satisfying, but pork with sauerkraut is my go-to comfort meal on a chilly day. With this recipe, I've toned down the sharpness of the kraut with a bit of sweet apple. Feel free to also add a generous handful of crisp-cooked bacon to the pot for a little extra something.

**Pork Ribs & Sauerkraut**

*A Hearty & Delicious Bowl of Comfort*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Tbl. Vegetable Oil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 lbs. Country-style Pork Ribs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 oz. Sauerkraut, drained but not rinsed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Tbl. Butter</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Medium Onion, sliced</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Golden Delicious Apples, cored and sliced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tsp. Caraway Seed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 C. Apple Cider</td>
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Wipe pork ribs dry, and season with salt and pepper on both sides. Heat oil in a Dutch oven set over medium-high heat until it simmers. Cook the ribs in the oil until seared and brown on both sides. Remove ribs and set aside.

Melt butter in the Dutch oven. Add the sliced onions to sauté until slightly limp. Add the sliced apples and sauté for two minutes more before adding sauerkraut and caraway seeds. Heat through.

Nestle seared pork ribs into the sauerkraut mixture and pour any of their juices and the apple cider over all.

Cover and cook at 350° F for 1 ½ to 2 hours or until the ribs are fall-apart tender.

*Guten Appetit!*
I grew up in Portland, Oregon, attended graduate school in California, and have lived in Pullman, Washington since 1970. I retired a few years ago after a long career as a professor in the Department of Mathematics at Washington State University.

I had accordion lessons as a boy in the early 1950s, somewhat reluctantly, at a time when accordion was extremely popular. I was very shy and pretty much avoided playing in public, though for a while I was in an all-accordion band with dozens of other kids. The band even played once for the Portland Junior Rose Festival crowning in front of a huge audience. I quit lessons sometime in junior high school, but for a while attempted to teach some beginner students on Saturday mornings. For the next half century, I never touched the accordion. However, somehow my friend, Tim, knew I used to play accordion and he, a piano player, wanted some help figuring out what to do with the left hand bass side of the accordion he had recently acquired. I agreed, and worked with him when he came over with his son who was taking violin lessons with my wife. Tim drew me back into playing with two gifts. First was Piazzolla’s CD Zero Hour, which blew me away. The second gift was the book of solos and duos Parade des Poules by Accordéon Mélancolique (see the article in this issue), filled with terrific pieces within my now rusty technical range. Though Piazzolla’s instrument was the bandoneon, the accordion still gave me a way to play tangos, which I continue to love. The rhythms and harmonies are fascinating, especially the compositions of Piazzolla himself. I have also acquired a broad interest in other world music, clearly an influence of the collections by Accordéon Mélancolique. I now play music from many genres, including Latin American, Klezmer, Balkan, Scandinavian, Irish, Scottish, and French musette. I continue to play accordion duets with Tim, but I also collaborate frequently with others on piano, clarinet, violin and cello.

Above all, enjoy yourself even as you work hard to master new skills. And don’t forget that music is not about playing notes but understanding how to convey musical expression with joy and sensitivity.

Playing solo is fine, but it’s often even more fun to play with others. And be sure to share your music by playing at open mics, retirement centers, family gatherings, parties, church or wherever.

Duane DeTemple, Pullman, Washington (USA)

I started playing accordion as a kid. When I was in grade school, I was performing at church and ethnic picnics. I won the eighth-grade school music contest. In high school I was pictured in the newspaper at a party I had played and received my
first brush with fame. In high school and college, I played accordion in wedding bands and also picked up the guitar, bass and keyboards. In my college years, I also began writing music.

I took time out from music to write a couple of books and began doing entertainment reviews for a San Francisco-based radio station. While going to review a band, the opening act had an accordionist in it and I struck up a conversation with the accordionist. She informed me she was starting an all-accordion band and asked if I wanted to join. I did. The band was Those Darn Accordions. While in the group, I became the publicist and came up with the idea to spearhead the effort to get the accordion named as San Francisco's official musical instrument. The measure passed in 1990 and garnered a tremendous amount of publicity for the accordion and the band locally, nationally and internationally. I then went on to establish the month of June as Accordion Awareness Month. Year in and year out, I facilitated tons of publicity and interviews with radio, TV and print nationally about the accordion. At the same time, one of the other members came up with the idea for Accordionista Raids. This is where all the members in the band would walk into restaurants unannounced playing Lady of Spain. I would then give a spiel about the accordion, who we were, where we were playing, etc. and then storm out playing Beer Barrel Polka. Some nights we would go into 15–20 places. This publicity campaign got us a segment on Good Morning America, a large piece in People Magazine, and features in newspaper cartoons and other places -- tons and tons of press for Accordionista Raids.

I then came up with the idea of the Lady-of-Spain-a-thon. This is where we would go to a public park and play Lady of Spain for 10 straight hours in an effort to raise money. In 1990, it was to raise money to go to Castelfidardo and perform in the International Accordion Competition (where we came in fourth out of two bands) and in '92, to perform at an accordion competition in Vilnius, Lithuania. The hook was, if someone would just donate $10,000 we would cancel the event and spare everyone from hearing Lady of Spain for 10 hours. I performed on the band’s first two albums and left in ’96 to concentrate on a solo career. In 2000, I started a polka band called The Squeegees as well as an Italian-American-music band called Bella Ciao. I began writing for both bands. Bella Ciao released two albums, Legends of the Italian Lounge and Festivo Italiano; both on my label, Festa Records. My first solo album is called Antipasto Rock and comes out in spring 2017. The album was recorded primarily in Genoa, Italy with some of the top musicians in Liguria as well as in San Francisco using many musicians I had worked with over the years. To the young musicians: don’t charge too little. No one will think you’re any good. It’s not just about how well you play, although it is important to have a degree of proficiency. It’s more about what you wear while doing it.

Tom T., San Francisco

I live on Vancouver Island and have been retired for several years now. My accordion life began in 1978, my brother had an old (circa 1935) Hohner accordion that lived in his closet. He bought it from a music teacher some years previous. I always liked accordion music, especially watching Myron Floren on the Lawrence Welk Show. So I made a deal with my brother and brought the accordion home. I thought to myself, I will either learn to play it or leave it alone; because at that time I found myself watching too much TV and needed a hobby. I decided I was going.
to learn this instrument. I could not read music and never played an instrument before. Here I was at that time 36 years old, wife, two children, working shift work and paying for a mortgage.

After bringing the accordion home, a few days later I went to a music store and bought myself Palmer-Hughes Accordion Book No.1. That was the real beginning. I was able to take a few lessons, but with shift work involved, it was difficult to schedule for them. I learned to read music somewhat, practice scales and learned some theory. I continued to buy Palmer-Hughes accordion books as I progressed. I got to about Book Five. Anytime I could get to a music store I would buy another accordion book as they would always have one or two songs I wanted to learn. I also got myself a regular time each evening and practiced for at least two hours. A year later (1979) I ended up trading the old Hohner in on a newer model -- a Hohner Musette IV. Wow, what an accordion compared to what I had. I still have it.

As time went by, I found out there was a seniors accordion band here in Nanaimo, BC. I was a senior by then and found that I could play with the group and joined the band. Sure had to learn a whole bunch of new music then. I’ve been with the band for about 12 years, and now I am the seniors accordion band leader. We entertain for many senior homes, villages and special groups for the underprivileged.

Within a couple of years learning to play accordion, I just had to open one up and see how they are made.

Such a precision instrument. In my accordion life I have bought and sold many accordions. I buy used ones at a reasonable price and do minor repairs and cleaning, then sell them for a small profit. Cleaning is the most important job if buying a used accordion and of course it should play with no sticky buttons or keys. All keys in each register should play evenly while squeezing the bellows in and out on each note. All keys should be level on the keyboard. I’m not able to tune them, although sometimes you can free up a stuck reed or register switch and get them working good again. There is nothing more frustrating than a sticky key, button or reed that will not work. If you have some mechanical ability it is a good idea to learn how to do minor repairs on your or a friend’s accordion. There are books out there on looking after your accordion.

Now as for my music favorites, I play just about all kinds of music: polkas, dance music, a couple of Latin American tunes, a bit of country and western, Schottisches, old time waltz’s, Scottish and Irish, Christmas music, Beatles, as well as some European and French music. I have several favourite pieces I play like, I Have A Dream by ABBA, Una Paloma Blanca, House Of The Rising Sun, Star Dust, Life In The Finland Woods, The Hey Polka and so many others. I play mostly for my own pleasure and friends. I’m not much for Classical Accordion. So a little variety of all music is what students should eventually learn. The best advice for learning the accordion is stay with it every day. Practice, patience, persistence along with good playing habits and then it will pay off in good playing. Practice the difficult sections of a piece. Get lessons too. Have a set time each day to practice at least for an hour. I do two hours just about every day. I also have a computer music program and write up many scores for our accordion band. This really helped in learning how to read, write and learn about music. I use Genie Soft Score Writer 4 program.
To sum up, I love the accordion and its sound. My biggest regret is that I wished I had learned the accordion at a young age, got into the repair business for the instrument and been more artistic in my playing. You can learn so much more a lot quicker at a younger age. As long as you can please your audiences you will be fine.

Bob Butchart, Nanaimo, British Columbia (Canada)

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Accordions are my passion, but construction is my livelihood. To finance my various passions I have been a building contractor in Napa, California, for the past 40 years. I first came into contact with accordions at the age of 10, when I became the first student of my first accordion teacher, who was 14 at the time. I took weekly lessons from her for four years, but upon entering high school, put accordions out of my life to pursue other interests.

Forty-two years later, I came to regret not keeping up with it, and got out my old accordion to see if I could still play it. Unfortunately, I had forgotten everything, so I started over. With the help of a good instructor I got back on the right track, and now play well enough to entertain myself and a few forgiving friends.

But the old accordion needed some repairs, so that kindled another passion, which is repairing and restoring accordions. While researching accordion repair I learned that there was very little written about it, and what had been written was not very clear, complete and useful, so as I gained repair experience I started accordionrevival.com to help fill that void and to help other accordionists learn to repair their own instruments. The website has grown into a fairly good repair manual and I have written approximately that much again that has not yet been posted, so the sum of it all, I think, will be a very good repair manual. To give it more substantial and durable form than that of pixels on a screen, I am putting it all into a printed paper manual that I hope will survive and be useful long after I am gone. I hope to publish it this year. I also noticed that there had been very little written about how accordions work, what various features and options are available, how to recognize them, and how to find the accordion that is right for each individual, so I wrote “Piano Accordion Owner’s Manual and Buyer’s Guide” to correct that problem. I re-read it recently, to see if my enthusiasm for it might have waned over the years, but I came away still thinking it is exactly the book I wish I had been able to find when I first became interested in accordions, when no such book was available. It distills into a small paperback book what it took me several years to learn.

I love French musette waltzes. My current repertoire is limited, but when I have time to learn more songs, French musette waltzes will definitely be among them. My advice to aspiring new musicians is to play what you like. Yes, learn your assigned music in order to develop the necessary skills, but also reserve some time to play just for fun.

George Bachich, Napa, California (USA)

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I began my musical studies in Copenhagen, Denmark and continued my studies when my family immigrated to Canada in 1951. I had started with piano but also included the accordion when I came to Canada. I graduated with a Piano Solo Performer Degree from the Royal Conservatory...
of Music in 1958. At the same time I became part of a very successful music studio established by my parents in St. Catharines, with more than 500 accordion students and 12 teachers working for us. My life revolved almost exclusively around the accordion as a teacher, solo performer, arranger and composer of accordion music. I was also a member of a group from the Canadian Accordion Teacher's Association that established an examination system throughout Canada for both Standard Bass and Free Bass accordion.

The years after 1969 turned out to be very good years as an accordion teacher. I managed to produce a total of seven Canadian Accordion Champions, who all competed in Coupe Mondiale, placing from 2nd to 6th place (2nd Leonard Turnevicius, 4th Mark Roberts). In the years between 1969 - 1984 I was the official Adjudicator representing Canada in Coupe Mondiale.

I wrote a method book for free bass accordion with R. Charles, which was published by Waterloo Music Co. It became a very popular method and sold all over the world. In addition to the method book, I wrote several solo pieces for my students, all which were published.

Although I'm now 83, I still teach and enjoy every moment of it. I am one of the fortunate persons who enjoy almost every type of music. As a youngster I was introduced to music from the Baroque period through to the contemporary styles. Now I can sit down and play a Bach Fugue with as much joy as improvising on some standard jazz tune. Both my parents were professional classical performers, so I was exposed to their music as they were practising every day. Later on I got interested in Jazz and Broadway Musicals and spent many years playing in that style.

As far as advice to young musicians starting out, make sure that you learn ALL the fundamentals well; spend much time on building a solid technique (even though you may find it boring to practice scales chords, etc.) It will come in handy as you progress. Also get to know music theory as it will make you understand the music you play better.

Boris B., St Catharines, Ontario (Canada)

Thank you again for sharing your ‘Accordion Life’ stories with us! We look forward to sharing more in the next issue of Accordion Life Today. In the meantime, you can share photos of yourself and your accordion on Instagram or Twitter using the hashtag #MyAccordionLife. We’d love to see them!
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