



Wasatch Accordion Club

January, 2012



The 2012 Las Vegas
International Accordion
Convention

September 24 - 27, 2012
AccordionStars.com

2011 Las Vegas Accordion Convention

WHAT A TIME!

Dave Marasco, *President,*
Wasatch Accordion Club

This newsletter contains
“sound bites” from some of the
workshops presented at the
2011 Accordion Convention.

Each presenter stressed the
need to: practice consistently,
use a metronome, and sing!

Much more follows—Enjoy!

Frank Marocco.

Master Class

Frank Marocco is known as a
master of both accordion
technical skills and musicality.

Marocco stressed the
importance of tempo: “When
you get nervous you play too
fast. When you speed up the
tempo for fast notes, you end
up going too fast and then end
up on the wrong tempo.”

Marocco suggests glancing
down at the keyboard so you
can hit the right note. This
technique is especially helpful
if you are working on a new
piece or if you are under
stress.

To Marocco, the key to a
professional performance is
threefold: practice, play
“under control,” and practice
until “all the notes come out
evenly and correctly.”

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Page 2: Alex Sevastian: Accordion Technique.



Page 3: Peter and Mady Soave: French Musette Style

Page 4: Gina Brannelli: Stage Performance



Madalyn Neu, Soundscape

Harmonious Ensembles

Neu believes that the most important aspect of working together is having the same goal. Soundscape's goal is to present the accordion as a serious concert instrument.

Neu suggests the following:

- Be responsible-- Know your part
- Think about skill levels before you add someone to your group
- Have the right equipment and set-up before the performance
- Be on-time for practices and performances
- Know and respect the personalities of other members
- Don't show off—it's a team effort

Finally, be on the same page re:

- Phrasing
- Bellowing
- Dynamics
- Perfection versus making it to the end of a song

Neu stressed kindness when giving feedback and grace when receiving it. "Conflicts and disagreements are normal."



Alex Sevastian.

Accordion Technique

According to Alex Sevastian:

"If you learn and practice music the proper way, you will remember it."

To Sevastian, consistency in fingering is critical. It is also critical to pay attention to how the fingers are connected to the instrument. Fingers should always stay on the keyboard. The more fingers that connect to the instrument the better. Lifting your fingers too much becomes a problem.

Both hands should be focused. Once you learn the correct position, you can build on that.

To develop good technique,

Sevastian said to use the metronome and practice slowly. He said to work with the metronome so that every beat and every offbeat is in place. He also suggests singing along with the beat.

Sevastian states that the key to improving is not to rush your practice. To him, the use of a metronome is the key to controlled playing. He also says not to get discouraged when you start using a metronome. "First attempts (using the metronome) are very hard."

Sevastian recommends striving for quality and (cont. page 3)

(Sebastian, cont.)

flawlessness in your playing. “If you make a mistake, slow down and do it until you can play flawlessly in a slow tempo. You will eventually be able to play as fast as you want.” He stresses that: “flawless playing” is the goal, even if you can’t play fast.

Be certain to analyze your playing to see if it matches the beat. To him, a good slow

tempo is 104. Try to maintain quality, sound, and beat throughout your practice.

Easy sections are tempting not to practice, but that is where you can get lost if you don’t remember the left hand.

In the hardest musical spot you should never speed up, you have to slow down—and articulate every note. “Every note has to be heard. Quality is what matters.”



Peter and Mady Soave.

French Musette Style

To Peter Soave, “music expresses the ‘artistic language’—which is life.”

Both Soaves stress that consistent practice is critical. In addition, since much of what is done musically is physical, a musician’s fingers must be strong and flexible. The only way to develop strong fingers and consistent muscle control is to practice.

Mady suggests practicing all types of music—not just what you want to perform. To them, good music is what you enjoy—one type of music is never better than another.

Both Peter and Mady Soave strongly urge “slow, consistent practice and the use of a metronome to ensure the correct tempo.”



Gordon Kohl “Enjoying Viennese Music”

Gordon Kohl said that a lyrical ballad tells a story that is phrased as playing. A lyrical ballad is not about being complex, but about playing a sweet melody. To do this, Kohl suggests that musicians must play “beautifully --one note at a time.”

Kohl suggests “building an arc” and then coming back down. He states that if you “play the music like you are singing” the true essence of the ballad’s phrasing will come through.

Gina Brannelli

Stage Performance



If you asked Gina Brannelli the three most important factors in a successful state performance she would say: practice, practice, and then practice more-- “until you are perfect.” To her, effective practice results in performance confidence that allows you to adapt when a “hiccup” occurs on stage. She offered the following ideas:

1. The first thing about a great performance is making certain you have no “bad places” in your presentation. Your stage presentation will depend on how much you’ve “practiced-out” any awkward places.
2. Practice in front of a mirror. Make certain your sitting position and standing position are correct. Check how you appear.
3. Remember to plan for setup time before performing. Organize yourself so you can take your time.
4. **BREATHE**—breathing means you are giving thought to what you are doing. Take deep breaths before you start your performance and remember to breathe when you are performing your music.

Brannelli said that performances could be enhanced with the following approaches:

1. Project different styles, i.e. use musical variations, such as long and short pieces.
2. For competition—be calm and in control. Exude confidence
3. Practice by playing to an audience
4. When performing for the general public, play music you can play perfectly. Do not select complicated pieces and make multiple mistakes
5. Appearance is very important—dress professionally

Brannelli uses the following strategies in her accordion school:

1. Students practice a piece for a year before using it in competition
2. Your first musical notes are critical—relax and take the stage “as your friend”
3. Warm-up before you play, but note--Brannelli never has students play their competition pieces right before the performance. Instead, she uses musical exercises.
4. Use different fingers to change registers. This makes your performance less “choppy.”
5. Each of her children sings. She believes singing is critical to understanding music
6. Practice must occur every day. For small children it is 30 minutes; for all others it is 1 to 2 hours/day

Gina Brannelli says: “Be ready—technically, musically, and in your appearance. And then tell yourself you have practiced; you are prepared; you have this one time to perform; and will do your best!”
