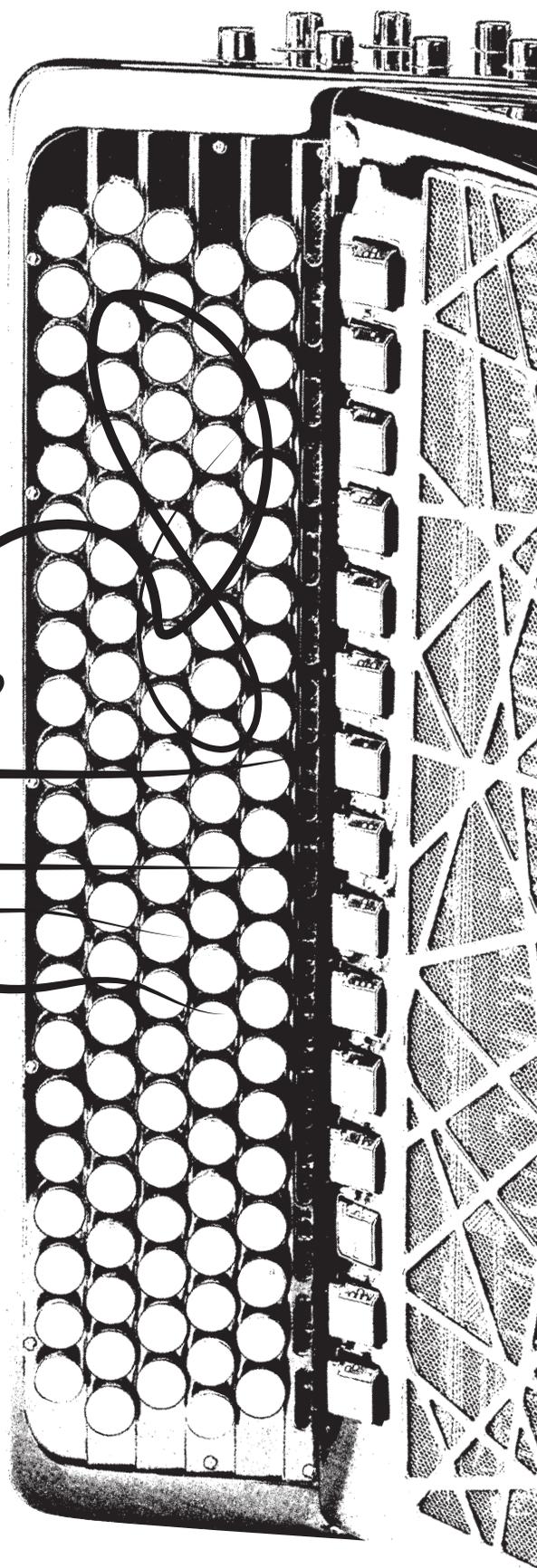


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articles and interviews about classical  
accordion literature, pedagogy and  
its artistic, professional perspectives



edited by  
claudio jacomucci

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# **MODERN ACCORDION PERSPECTIVES**

articles and interviews about classical accordion literature,  
pedagogy and its artistic, professional perspectives

Edited by Claudio Jacomucci

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*Contents*

Introduction .....	5
<b>The accordionist in the 21st century</b>	
by Frode Haltli .....	7
<b>European cooperation</b>	
by Vincent Lhermet .....	10
<b>Choosing the accordion in 2013</b>	
by Pascal Contet .....	13
<b>Quarter tone accordion</b>	
by Veli Kujala .....	19
<b>Perspectives on accordion pedagogics on academic level</b>	
by Geir Draugsvoll .....	22
<b>Development of the classical accordion in United Kingdom</b>	
by Miloš Milivojevic .....	25
<b>Developing awareness, improving the cultural condition</b>	
by Claudio Jacomucci .....	28
<b>Discovering traditions: integrating the contemporary accordion education in the world of New Music</b>	
by Sergej Tchirkov .....	32
<b>The position of the accordion in Polish musical culture “yesterday and today”</b>	
by Klaudiusz Baran .....	36
<b>One possible way for accordion</b>	
by Luca Piovesan .....	40

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## **Classical Accordion in China**

by Xiaoqing Cao ..... 43

## **Connection between accordion and the real music scene**

by Paulo Jorge Ferreira ..... 47

## **Rediscovering the 19th Century repertoire for free reeds keyboard instruments**

by Gorka Hermosa ..... 50

## **MYTHOS Accordion Duo**

interview with Bjarke Mogensen and Rasmus Kjoller ..... 53

## **New Polish literature for accordion and cello**

by Maciej Frackiewicz ..... 59

## **My ideal competition: the accordion surrounded by the arts**

by Paolo Picchio ..... 62

## **Pedagogics, competitions and perspectives**

interview with Massimiliano Pitocco ..... 65

## **Lithuanian Accordion Developments**

interview with Raimondas Sviackevicius ..... 68

## **The instrument that does not age**

interview with Krassimir Sterev ..... 73

## **At Viera Janárceková's**

by Harald Oeler and Judith Hampel ..... 75

## **Duo MARES, new repertoire for viola and accordion**

by Marko Kassel ..... 78

## **Composing for accordion**

by Iñaki Alberdi ..... 82

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## Introduction

The proliferation of a valuable literature for accordion solo, chamber music, concertos by well-known composers has given a major impetus to the “emancipation” of our instrument. Since the 1950s the pioneers of classical accordion<sup>1</sup> understood that—in order to be recognized by the contemporary music world—they had to rise awareness on the instrumental unexplored potential, and—at the same time—accordion education had to measure up to the expected musical development. The fruitful collaboration with composers led to a cultural elevation of the instrument laying the foundations for a more and more flourishing literature (both concert and pedagogic one); it led to a truly new way of perceiving the instrument creating a perspective that didn’t exist before.

That is how accordionists started to appear in important concert seasons, in significant projects and in prestigious institutions all over the world. Nowadays professional accordionists are no longer considered second class, amateur musicians and nobody is skeptic anymore about our instrument.

As matter of fact, a number of professional accordionists, in many countries, have evolved tremendously, they have reached important results, thanks also to a more and more highly qualifying education. The pedagogic literature and teaching experience has improved immensely in many countries. Our instrument is taught in the majorities of the conservatories and academies and there are even classical accordion “schools”, streams and styles.

Accordion manufacture has become a lot finer too: masters have enhanced their constructing techniques, applying a more acoustic criteria to “sound making”, both in pedagogic and professional instruments.

But there is an important aspect of the accordion scene that has not completely stepped out of the niches: the tiny world made of club-like communities, confederations, close-circuit societies, championships, cups, trophies, which doesn’t seem to follow the progress and the developments. This cultural provincialism is a big limitation not only for the “evolution” of the accordion but mostly for those students that are trapped in such a narrow-minded world. Many accordionists are attached to the “old accordion world”, living in a condition of cultural closure, isolation, with a lack of aesthetic awareness and artistic taste, ignoring what is going on in the “real” music world.

What is serious is that the mentality of the average accordionist is very much influenced by this “old conception”. This is a terrible mistake for a young instrument, with such a short history as the accordion is, because it doesn’t open any new possibility.

In the last years, some colleagues and I, have often reflected about this problem, especially because many of us sit in the jury board of accordion competitions, and we

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<sup>1</sup> The term “classical accordion” refers to the most evolved instrument of the family: the full range free-bass multitimbral accordion. No reference are meant to specific styles of music, except those formally and artistically more sophisticated and enduring types of music which may exploit its full potential.

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agreed that an expert–panel of accordionists could shed light on these issues by starting a constructive discussion and exchange, but in a propositive way and not only critical.

There are many amazing, innovative and absolutely progressive projects for/with accordion by many accordionists all over the world; they are new conception projects also with the use of new technologies, medias and with no distinction of genres. That is why we felt that publishing a series of articles and introducing some of young performer’s projects could be inspiring for young generations.

The authors of these articles are well–known performers, pedagogues and jurors of international competitions, organizers and directors of accordion festival/competitions and young accordionists who—beside their solid skills—have a clear and modern direction in their professional careers.

With this publication we want to share some ideas with those who consider our experience useful, without any intention to create associations, confederations or closed–circuit meetings. At the same time, I really hope that this is the first step of a future cooperation that can be expanded involving more committed performers, teachers, students and can give the practical contribution to the realization of common purposes.

Claudio Jacomucci

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## The accordionist in the 21st century

by Frode Haltli

I would like to share some thoughts on what possibilities there are for having a professional career as an accordionist in our time. Of course very many young talents are hoping to make a living from their playing, but do they have a realistic view on this, and are the environments and the mentors around these talents giving the right guidelines? I am mainly focusing on the transition from being a university level student to becoming a professional.

As a starting point, I will share from my own experience. I studied at the Norwegian Academy of Music and at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen where I finished my studies in 2000. I got a two-year Norwegian state grant in 2001 that encouraged me to continue working seriously with music. Since that I have not received any major grants. But I have to admit that a lot of state fundings have been important in direct and indirect ways: support for recordings, the annual ensemble support to my trio POING, travel support from the Foreign Ministry, etc. On the other hand, Norway is an expensive country to live in, and the physical distance to the scene in Europe and the rest of the world is always a day's project or more.

From 2011 I have had a small position at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo teaching mainly accordion students at master's degree level. I have thought quite a lot about how I can prepare my students for a professional career. It is unfortunately not enough just to be a talented, clever and hard-working student, even though that is the necessary foundation.

### *1. Play! (But not necessarily in competitions)*

First of all, it is important to have started a semi-professional career already while you're a student. This can be done in several ways, but I think it is important to start where you are situated: engage in your academy, meet fellow students, try to find people you like personally and musically! I still work closely with many musicians I first met as fellow students 15 years ago.

In this valuable period of your life as a musician it is also important to remember that the path is still being made: don't be too picky, and don't make your path too narrow! As well as concentrating on your studies, it is important to get out there and play some music, keep you eyes and ears open to other kinds of music than your main interest!

The accordion competitions are not important. They can of course be a place to get concert training with serious repertoire, and you might argue that they are crucial in setting and developing an international standard for instrumental skills. I can see that, but surprisingly few of the accordion "champions" reach a truly professional level where they actually can make a living out of their playing.

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Why is it so? Again, I think the horizon is too narrow if you are only aiming for competitions and adjusting your repertoire with that as a primary goal. A good "winning mix" of virtuoso pieces is not what usually counts in the *real* world. If you are a pianist or a violinist there is at least a professional market after the competitions where you in principle can make a living from playing the same repertoire, this is not the case with the repertoire played in most accordion competitions.

## *2. Be creative!*

I think there are two different types of musicians: the ones who remember the joy and curiosity from when they first started to play an instrument, and on the other hand the kind of musicians who have become strictly professional, who are doing their appointed job without the initial playfulness.

It is very hard to survive as a professional musician if you are in the second category! As a classical accordionist your repertoire is limited in comparison to the mainstream classical instruments. Your prospects for having a regular position as a performing musician are almost non-existing, there's no cry for classical accordion soloists either.

The only way to survive as an accordionist today is to be creative! You need to invent your own job, you need to always be ahead in your musical thinking, always planning new projects. You need to work with partners who have the same hunger as yourself (they could be musicians, dancers, artists, whatever). And you need to communicate to promoters and audience that what you are doing is something unique!

If you manage to look at this situation with an optimistic view, you realize that you have a wide range of possibilities.

## *3. Don't give up! Or perhaps give up?*

Optimism is crucial. There are periods in one's life where everything seems to go well, but there are definitively periods where all seems hopeless too. Work-wise it will often seem more practical to get a more regular job, and for most people that's probably better too. There's a composition professor here in Oslo that often advised his students: "Do not become a composer unless you have to!" In other words: if you're not sure you really want to become a musician, find another job! You really have to want it more than anything if you want to succeed as a musician.

But if you have chosen a path, you should try to follow it at least for a time. For a talented musician the crucial moment is just after you quit your studies. Most academies prepare their students very little for life after studies. Just like competitions, academies don't necessarily educate students to the jobs that exist in the market when you are left on your own. Academies don't teach you how to be creative and invent your own job. And this is a shared problem with other instrumentalists; the problem is the same for violin students that will not all be soloists performing Tchaikovsky with orchestras around

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the world, as for accordionists that cannot make a career on performing Lundquist or Katzer in recitals around the world.

After your studies: that's when the hard work begins. Students do of course not realize how spoiled they are: student days is the only time in life you can fully dedicate yourself to music. How will you manage after? The combination of rehearsing, getting the economy together, traveling, concerts, perhaps combine all of this with a family life...? My impression is that among those who survive as freelance musicians 2–3 years after ended studies, most of them love it and will continue a life in music.

In my case: my main work is as a freelance musician. Solo and chamber music, recording and performing live. Sometimes composing. Teaching some very gifted students. The hard work is not over, but hey: I have a job where I get to do what I want, I make my own decisions and priorities, I make music with great friends and musicians. Could it be better?



**Frode Haltli** (b. 1975, Norway) studied at the Norwegian State Academy of Music, then at the Royal Danish Music Conservatory in Copenhagen, graduating in 2000. In 2001 the Norwegian Concert Institute named him Young Soloist Of The Year, he was also placed 2nd in the International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition 1999 in the NL.

Concerts throughout Europe, USA, Canada and Asia. Directing his career into explorations of new music, he became associated with like-minded musicians mainly in Europe where the development of adventurous forms has grown throughout recent years. Haltli has established links with several composers, notably Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratkje who is one of several

who have written especially for him; others include Bent Sørensen, Rolf Wallin, Atli Ingólfsson, Hans Abrahamsen, Jo Kondo and Sam Hayden. He has cooperated with the Arditti String Quartet. His debut CD “Looking on Darkness” was released on the prestigious German record label ECM in 2002. In 2012 Haltli released “Arne Nordheim Complete Accordion Works” (Simax Classics) to great critical acclaim. He has played regularly with the trio POING, alongside saxophonist Rolf–Erik Nystrom and double bass player Håkon Thelin. They have commissioned more than 60 works from composers all over the world and recorded several albums. Since the release of the duo album “Yeraz” on ECM in 2008 Haltli has even toured regularly with saxophonist Trygve Seim. Frode Haltli has developed several transcultural music projects, in India, China, Japan, North Korea, Egypt. He has also played music rooted in Norwegian traditional music, notably with RUSK in which he is teamed with singer Unni Lovlid and violinist Vegar Vårdal. On his 2007 recording “Passing Images” (ECM), Haltli is joined by trumpeter Arve Henriksen, viola player Garth Knox, and vocalist Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratkje. Frode Haltli teaches accordion at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo.

[frodehaltli.com](http://frodehaltli.com)

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## European cooperation

by Vincent Lhermet

Accordion seems to be in fashion at the moment in the musical world, as if it has escaped being identified solely as an instrument for traditional music. Accordion now appears more often as a solo or chamber music instrument, within larger ensembles, as well as in the program of classical and new music festivals. The Scandinavian and German “accordion pioneers” of the 1960s and 1970s undertook the tremendous work of showing the expressive and technical possibilities of their instrument, and actively collaborated with composers. These pioneers are likely the origin of the current widespread use of the accordion in contemporary music, by having generated vocations in other countries among their own students and other artists, who subsequently convinced composers to write for them.

Since the 1990s, and more specifically since 2000, most of the well-known European composers have written at least one work for the accordion either as a solo or chamber music instrument. In addition, it is sometimes included in symphonic scores as an orchestral instrument (e.g. numerous works by Beat Furrer, Jörg Widmann) as well as chamber operas where the accordion tends to replace the piano. This polyphonic free-reed instrument offers the advantage of being easy to transport. The interest of internationally renowned composers in our instrument can be considered a “free permit” and can somehow be compared to the opportunity given by Ole Schmidt to Mogens Ellegard (when he wrote his *Symphonic Fantasy and Allegro* op. 20 in 1958) to install the accordion at the heart of the Danish new music world. Indeed, the names of those creators associated with the instrument help accordionists access large festivals or other venues, as well as convince other composers to create new works for them.

The development of the repertoire, as well as the gradual acquisition of legitimacy, cannot be separated from the heightened level of accordionists’ skill and mastery of their instrument. In Europe, doors have been opened for the accordion only from the 1970s by higher education institutions in countries such as Denmark (The Danish Royal Academy, 1970), Germany (Hochschule für Musik Trossingen, 1972), Norway (The Norwegian Music Academy, 1975) and Finland (The Sibelius Academy, 1977). It is important to remember that today, 25 of the 28 countries in the European Union, in addition to the remaining countries in the Schengen Area, provide higher education for the accordion.

Many young instrumentalists, both during their studies and after their graduation, create an atmosphere of extraordinary innovation in the field of new music by collaborating with young composers, participating in contemporary music contests and academies (e.g. Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition and Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music), performing in various ensembles, improvising and encouraging further progress by teaching the next generation of accordion players. This innovation, which is similar to that of other “small instruments” that are not traditionally

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included in a symphonic orchestra (e.g. saxophone), can be thought of as the result of the accordionists' awareness of the need to create conditions conducive to performing in public. This can mean that the performer must design, propose and implement a project completely independently, with many difficulties such as fundraising.

The creation of new works is of the utmost importance for encouraging future composers to consider the accordion as an indispensable instrument, for example in the orchestra. We also know that most of those projects in Europe emerge through grants from state governments or other public institutions. Unfortunately, this reliance on grants means that some pieces are performed relatively few times because they are not well known works. Accordion does not suffer anymore from a lack of musical works, but rather from a huge problem of circulation of the repertoire throughout Europe. Apart from the famous *Sequenza XIII* (1995), how many people know that Berio has used the accordion in ten of his pieces, starting from 1967? The same for Vinko Globokar (13 works), Georg Friedrich Haas (17), Adriana Hölzky (12), Toshio Hosokawa (14), Wolfgang Rihm (11), Uroš Rojko (22) or Jukka Tiensuu (16), if we consider the works available on their publisher's webpage? Easier access to information about the works, which does not mean distributing the sheet music without regards for copyright, would help accordionists acquire a stronger awareness of the accordion's wide repertoire.

The European Union currently offers many opportunities for people to circulate freely from one country to the other. For example, ERASMUS exchanges allow students to discover other cultures and different pedagogical approaches. Some masterclasses, accordion festivals and summer academies are also organized. There has been progress as a result of this free circulation: accordion is now taught at the Master of Music level (or equivalent) in more than 50 academies in Europe (EU and Schengen), and in several countries there has been a remarkable innovation in the field of accordion pedagogy as well as a rapid expansion of the repertoire. This progress notwithstanding, the lack of institutionalized cooperation among accordionists prevents the development of communication between academic institutions and their students. The sharing of information, experiences and cultures would be profitable for everyone: accordion playing would continue to strengthen its position on the world stage while continuing to bring together artistic and innovative talents from different generations and countries.

I sincerely hope that this publication proposed by Claudio Jacomucci will encourage the creation of a new European Accordion Cooperation or Association as a network for the exchange of ideas and further development of the accordion and its place in the music world.



**Vincent Lhermet** (b. 1987, France) is one of the most remarkable French accordionist of his generation. He graduated from the Sibelius Academy of Helsinki with the highest honors (Master degree of interpretation and teaching diploma, 2012) in the class of Prof. Matti Rantanen. He is the first accordionist to integrate the doctorate of performance program (PhD) at the Paris Conservatory under the guidance of composer Bruno Mantovani. He has distinguished himself several times internationally by winning the first prize in the Arrasate–Hiria International

Competition in Spain (2006) and by being ranked finalist in the "Gaudeamus Interpreters" International Competition of Amsterdam (2011), considered as one of the world's most prestigious contemporary music prize, open to all instruments.

Vincent Lhermet has performed in many countries as a soloist and chamber musician in concert halls such as the Muziekgebouw Amsterdam, The Music Center of Helsinki, where he showed the possibilities of his instrument in a repertoire that ranges from the Renaissance to the present. Few of his concerts have been broadcasted live or recorded by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE).

He has also studied with J. Mornet, O. Urbano, C. Jacomucci, M. Miki and S. Hussong and has participated to old music seminars with violonist K. M. Kenttala and cembalo players E. Mustonen, A. Karttunen, A. Mattila.

He has also collaborated with composers like J. Tiensuu, A. Schliinz, O. Räihälä, M. Murtoni, F. Narbo, the Society of Open Ears (Korvat Auki), and premiered their works at the Musica Nova, Musiques Démesurées and Rencontres Contemporaines festivals.

Moreover, Vincent has studied musicology at the University of Paris IV–Sorbonne, orchestral and ensemble conducting, cembalo and basso continuo at the Sibelius Academy.

Vincent Lhermet has been supported by the Paulo Foundation, the Sibelius Academy Foundation, the Foundation for the Promotion of Finnish music, the Rotary International Foundation. He is also laureate of the Banque Populaire Foundation.

He currently teaches classical accordion at "Pôle Supérieur d'Enseignements Artistiques" in Lille, France.

[www.vincentlhermet.fr](http://www.vincentlhermet.fr)

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## Choosing the accordion in 2013

by Pascal Contet

### *Introduction*

While the title may seem surprising or provocative, it eventually answers several questions and may incorporate different answers! I go very quickly to the most important issue, which brings us back to our childhood, to our teachers who have marked out the path, the path where an accordionist can find his way, the one of his desires, his wishes, where some of them, later, will find professional ways.

It is interesting to note that the current development of our instrument through the vector of original music composed for more than a century by a growing number of composers reinforces the idea that there is not a single accordion in Europe or in the World and that, there are several compositional streams with many ramifications. Some countries have a longer history, they are related to a classical music liking and to the instrumental teaching (Germany, Russia), while others remained for a longtime under the commercial influence (for example the dominance our national Musette Accordion and also of the world of “chanson” and “variété”); but this has changed nowadays. Nothing is immutable and the faith in change and development can move mountains.

I will limit my reflection to classic and contemporary aspects of the current instrument, choosing the so-called “serious”, “erudite” music or “seriously erudite”. I leave open an intimate question, giving every accordionist (or music lovers who read this article) the time to reflect on their deepest reason why they have chosen this instrument (their job) and to pose themselves the question: did I get a satisfactory development and what is still possible to build or to improve?

### *The accordion defines its social area*

Since its invention in 1829, we can see that, with each new generation, the approach to the instrument is experienced differently depending on the geopolitics of the countries. In France, in 1830, the accordion was the favorite instrument in the salons of the aristocracy and new bourgeoisie; young men of good family enjoyed to play and transcribe famous and fashionable tunes, whether they were imperial hymns, simple songs or arias in vogue.

Nearly a century later, the case of Germany is interesting as it was the trigger of current developments. Initially it all started in a small town, Trossingen, where a factory produced harmonicas and accordions since the nineteenth century. In the 1920s this town showed the way starting a cooperation with renowned composers. The company and the city of Trossingen have quickly realized that the equation teacher + performer + composer = compositions and spreading of an innovative and valuable literature.

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Just browsing the pictures of the books, you will immediately understand that it was a big craze and that the majority of German interpreters was at least aided by this educational project focused very much on the so-called "serious" music. Young performers later became brilliant teachers as they became Professors at the Conservatories and Academies in different regions of the country.

We can say that, after 100 years, the classic accordion continues its evolution. In 2013, it reaches its cruising speed and maturity to spread throughout the world of the so-called classical contemporary music. It looks towards its musical future more confidently than forty years ago.

Nowadays students—whether European, Chinese, Canadian, Russian, American, Australian or Japanese—have several options in choosing his studies or his teachers; it can simply choose the study of the literature which he feels more akin or he can opt for or others during his studies.

From the historical point of view, since its first steps in 1900 in Paris (an accordionist: blind Narcisse playing Bach) to the appearance of the first free-bass systems in the left hand built by Italian factories, the instrumental features of the accordion have inspired composers and performers.

I want to say is that in 2013, it is not by chance that we got to an outbreak and to an international development of the accordion in renowned festivals, retaining the collaboration with composers and playing in the major concert halls but it is the result of the work of our ancestors, who realized their dreams by the faith in their realities. At an early stage, they have undertaken upstream ways, aiming for a demanding accordion, less mediatic, probably less profitable than the lure of the rising showbiz; this accordion was conceived in the loneliness and the intimacy of an exciting journey which was for sure pioneering but unfortunately also quite insidious.

The accordion (basically a rebel) follows the different social revolutions. Affable, sociable, chameleon, its musical evolution and its features follow the courses of society. Since the salons in France during the July Monarchy, the Second Republic and the Second Empire, the accordion also pursues a huge industrial popularity elsewhere, in Austria, Germany, Russia. In 19th century, European migration to the USA, Argentina and distant destinations made the accordion an universal instrument. It became a privileged witness, the voyeur of lost souls.

We can equally observe and imagine that at the end of the Russian Revolution in 1917, the accordion gets to the point of embodying the instrument of the people "par excellence" (as later during the Cultural Revolution in China); so it is throughout this period and with the fall of the Eastern bloc in 1989 that we could listen to many virtuoso works, innovative, imprinted with a Slavic nostalgia, some of them based on traditional or folk themes.

Another perfect example of the integration of the accordion in the Soviet institutions: a demanding education integrated in the main Soviet Conservatories. Since 1989, it is also possible to choose different stylistic pieces from its rich literature (many

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new works by the composer Sofia Gubaidulina, Denisov and the younger generation such as Filanowsky, Kourdianski and others).

During the 1960s, as a counterpoint to the "German" and "Russian schools"—strongly rooted in the tradition—several novelty will emerge thanks to brave interpreters and to the work of new composers. We naturally think of the "Scandinavian school" actively represented by the great Master Mogens Ellegaard. Through his work, his talent as a teacher and disseminator of important works, we may now see the result of this intelligent and creative effervescence in the work of the new generations of musicians on a European scale, without excluding Polish, Finnish, Canadian, Dutch, to name a few.

If, like in France, Italy had more difficulties integrating the accordion in its institutional educational path, it is the love for the accordion by the composer Luciano Berio that has been decisive. During an interview in 1996, Luciano Berio clearly stated that the accordion was related to his mother, the memory of Naples and the concert tours with an accordion orchestra.

For his faithfulness, his openness to improvised music (as much as Jean-Pierre Drouet, Vinko Globokar and Sofia Gubaidulina), for its visionary quality as a composer (in 1962 the accordion is part of the instrumental organic of the opera *El mar, la Mar*), Luciano Berio is an important spoor in the acceptance of the accordion in the so-called "serious" music and in the production of demanding scores as he is finally composed the now famous *Sequenza XIII*. He also introduced the original sound of the accordion in his opera *Outis*, *Chemin V*, among other works). But it would be unfair to forget Franco Donatoni, Sylvano Bussotti, Alessandro Solbiati, Salvatore Sciarrino, Ivan Fedele, Marco Stroppa, Stefano Gervasoni, Mauro Lanza, Jacopo Baboni Schilingi or Gualtiero Dazzi which have been supported by talented, curious and ambitious performers.

It is of course difficult or even dangerous to mention only a few "schools" because there are many ramifications. One could even speak of the "Argentinian school" for the many works composed in 1976 by Mauricio Kagel and later followed by the Parisian-Argentinian Luis Naon, Martin Matalon, Sebastian Rivas, Gabriel Sivak, Beytelmann or as the Colombian Luis Rizo-Salom.

### *The pedagogical choice*

We also observe that since the 1990s, increasingly open and integrated pedagogies of prestigious foreign conservatoires created a new generation of international traveler coming from China as well as from the Balkans, Spain and Sweden. Back to their original countries, accordionists from the South of Europe (Spain, Portugal, Italy, France) have expanded the repertoire following the example of their teachers or their ancestors, persuading the composers to write solo works, chamber music and concertos. Different styles, different composers, sometimes less renowned than others but equally rich in original colors.

So why we choose the accordion? Because its continuous development allows it to build its own reputation as an instrument which I like to name "chameleon"; it is

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comfortable in solo as well as in chamber music, imperious with a symphony orchestra, it blows joy and creates depth together with dancers and dialogues with comedians and actors. It may still surprise us—and not only with written music—the one we would be tempted to believe important because it is composed, I mean the improvised music played together with other musicians who are researchers and collectors of sounds.

Discovering the accordion through the prism of a composer can be a wonderful moment, because to let these improvisations and sound investigations become music it may be really magical and revealing. So many times I “had” to improvise for composers who wished to hear a particular passage, rather than reading it from existing works for accordion.

This questioning have been successful in many new works in France by Bernard Cavanna, Bruno Mantovani, Franck Bedrossian, Philippe Hurel, Pierre Jodlowsky, Jean–Pierre Drouet, Alain Abbott, Philippe Hersant, Thierry Escaich, Roger Tessier, Richard Dubugnon Gerard Pesson, Colin Roche, André Serre–Milan, Gregory Lorieux, Claude Ballif, Claire–Mélanie Sinnhuber, Fabien Lévy, Gérard Grisey, Philippe Fenelon, Edith Canat of Chizy, Martin Matalon, Georges Aperghis, from classic composers like Jean Françaix to contemporary ones like Philippe Hurel, Jacques Rebotier, Marc Monnet, Ivan Fedele and the young and talented Yann Robin..., the list goes on and it is not finished.

*The coming-out from the studies and from the protective cocoon of our beloved teachers...*

*What about personal choice of repertoire?*

Back to France in 1992, after my studies in Germany with Elsbeth Moser and later with Mogens Ellegaard, I was often wondering:

- Why did I make that choice?
- What is the unconscious force that has motivated me?
- Should I continue the path, following the footsteps of my teachers?
- Should I take unknown paths, often uncertain, especially in France?

The fact that I never belonged to any "school" or national association, neither to the renowned French accordionist sponsorship—even though they were quite active in classical and contemporary music—was perhaps a betrayal to my former teachers which were worried about my independence, but the absence of a “German” or a "Scandinavian" tradition did not facilitate the task of returning to my homeland.

When I was very young, I remember being fascinated by the recordings of the concert player and teacher Alain Abbott even though I was not attracted by his accordion system. I admired him for being close to the Orchestra of the French National Radio and for composing several works with accordion. He worked with famous musicians and was at the heart of the music of his time with Charles Tessier, Claude Ballif..., even today it is important to emphasize his clever pedagogic work, and the sensitivity of his personal claim and emancipation.

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It is the conception of a new sensitive and singing accordion which opened my new horizons, closer to the French taste for classic contemporary music and to my musical ideals. Mogens Ellegaard, after a lesson in Graz, said to me few persuasive sentences about joining my country to start a close and systematic collaboration with composers; it turned out that Jean Pierre Drouet, Pascal Dusapin Rebotier Jacques Bernard Cavanna or Claude Ballif and Joelle Leandre answered positively to my requests of writing music for accordion and gave me advice for contacting this or that or some other composer.

In 1992, I gave myself five years to stay in my country and carefully observe if any change could occur after my hard work with composers who lived in Paris. Very quickly, thanks to them the doors of major festivals and radio stations opened and allowed me to choose an independent path made of amazing and enriching meetings, both on a human and musical level. For over twenty years I have been thus collecting and selecting a rich literature by composers of various styles and embodying different compositional streams, looking for different sounds, stylistic points of view, somehow far from the clichés that we have usually heard a thousand times.

#### *Share and communication between accordionists and teachers*

I would like to say that, in my opinion and especially in the opinion of my ears, the new accordion literature is not spreading and mixing enough internationally, you can see the borders or the voluntary barriers between the German, French, Scandinavian and Russian school. Why? Is it caused by the lack of information and dissemination? A nonexistent database? Or by the lack of meetings between colleagues? I remember that in the 90s I have attended in Castelfidardo various meeting with Lips, Ellegaard, Moser, Macerollo, Rantanen who did not hesitate to talk about their choices, their teachings, about the standardization of the accordion notation.

#### *What are the options for for higher education as a classical accordionist in France?*

Without the German-like pedagogic system that I mentioned at the beginning of the article, the French pedagogical cacophony has reigned for a long time but something is now settling here and there. In fact, by being a student of a particular teacher and participating to national competition, a young accordionist sets up his attitude without even knowing it. Lust for power and networks have operated on French territory without even taking into account the prestigious examples of other countries, known for their important and outstanding accordion pedagogy.

These national associations strengthened after the appointment of the teacher (highly contested since 2003) of the current accordion class at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse* in Paris. This is the result, the poor legacy of decades of wars and fights. Nobody in France and elsewhere can deny this isolation. A truly French inheritance: being selfish and not open to the foreigner and to the stranger who may

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eventually advise you and guide you through his experience. A sad fate for a diverse and growing accordion global expansion

Fortunately a glimmer of hope towards varied choices is represented by higher education centers: the main French conservatories enable students to attend Bachelor or Master course exactly like any prestigious European conservatory. For example, I was appointed from the *Académie Supérieure de Musique* in Strasbourg, it is a part of an exchange for students; it also occurs in Aubervilliers–La Courneuve, Toulouse, Dijon, and soon in Bordeaux.

Although the usual political temptation leads to centralize and attract young students to the capital and to the institutions in Paris, the future will show that the choice of repertoire, the choice of the teacher, openness and sharing links are required to complete an extensive training, in order to continue the emancipation of a universal instrument, so chameleon to social changes.



**Pascal Contet** (b. 1963, France) has studied at the Musikhochschule in Hannover (Elsbeth Moser), at the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen and at the Akademie der Künste in Graz (Mogens Eleegaard).

He has won numerous prizes, including those of the Bleustein–Blanchet Foundation, Yehudi Menuhin, György Cziffra, DAAD, Prize from the Samfundet Editions and “Prix Gus Viseur” (classical) in 2007. Since 1993, Pascal Contet has worked at developing a new repertoire for the accordion (more than 250 works) with composers such as Chengbi An (China), Claude Ballif, Luciano Berio, Bernard Cavanna, Jean–Pierre Drouet, Peter Eotvös, Ivan Fedele, Jean Françaix, Vinko Globokar, Sofia

Gubaidulina, Klaus Ib Jorgensen, Bruno Mantovani, Marc Mommet, Jacques Rebotier and many others. Whether the music be classical, contemporary or improvised, he is frequently heard with Barre Philipps (doublebass), Pauline Oliveros (accordion), Joëlle Léandre (double bass), Wu Wei (sheng), Jean Marc Montera (guitars), Tom Mays (electronics), Maguelone Vidal (saxophones), Paul Meyer (clarinet), Ophélie Gaillard (cello), Quatuor Diotima. He has also worked with conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Jean–Claude Casadesus, Susanna Malkki, Esa Pekka Salonen and James Wood, as well as performing as a soloist with the orchestras of Radio France, Opéra de Paris, Lille, Lorraine, Suisse Romande, and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra, Les Solistes de Lyon (Bernard Tétu), to name but a few. He’s a permanent member and soloist of the Ensemble Ars Nova, Ensemble 2E2M and Accroche–Note and he has often performed with the Ensemble Intercontemporain (Paris), Ensemble Modern (Frankfurt), and Ensemble Recherche (Freiburg). He has made over forty recordings for the labels Harmonia Mundi, In Circum Girum, MFA–Radio France, Signature/Radio France, Actes Sud Junior, Integral, Maguelone. His first DVD « Le Vent des Anches » (including a documentary) will be released by Zoomscope/Harmonia Mundi in 2009. Pascal Contet has been the artistic director of numerous accordion–related events (Malakoff 2003–2005), Parc de la Villette, Paris, 2006. His projects receive grants from several organisations including the French performing rights society (Sacem), the Ministry of Culture or the French performing interpret rights society (Spédidam) and he is also music expert for the Foundation Marcel Bleustein–Blanchet pour la Vocation in Paris.

[www.pascalcontet.com](http://www.pascalcontet.com)

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## Quarter tone accordion

by Veli Kujala

The term "quarter tone accordion" can mean many different types of accordions capable of producing quarter tones. The earliest example I know is widely used in Africa and has usually some tones tuned a quarter tone higher or lower in the bellows closing direction. There is also a rather new quarter tone accordion developed in Switzerland, which has a completely rebuilt right manual. It might be that also other systems exist, but in this article I am focusing on the quarter tone accordion I designed in collaboration with composer Sampo Haapamäki in 2005. It was manufactured in 2006 by the Pignini accordion factory and tuned by the Finnish tuner Tapio Peltola.

The concept of my quarter tone accordion is rather simple and economical to build: instead of a completely new instrument with re-designed keyboards my quarter tone accordion uses the body of the Pignini Sirius concert accordion. All the reed blocks of the right manual and two reed blocks of left manual are changed to quarter tone reed blocks. All the eight new reed blocks fit nicely in a small suitcase, so beside the lower costs of manufacturing my concept also gives the performer the possibility to transport rather easily two sonically different instruments and to play them in the same concert. Changing of reed blocks takes—after a bit practice—from 10 to 15 minutes, so it is possible to do it during the interval of a concert.

The range of right manual is designed to start from c1 in 8' register and after 63 upward quarter tone steps the highest note is quarter tone sharp g3. The 16' and 4' registers expand the complete range of right manual by two octaves from small c to quarter tone sharp g4. Because of the different range the quarter tone reed blocks must be a bit narrower on the thicker end and wider on the thinner end of the block than usual reed blocks. For the cassotto reed blocks it was necessary to install an extra fastening, because quarter tone reed blocks would not have fitted to the normal one.

The original plan was to have the upper half of left manual's range in quarter tones. The lowest two octaves had to be left in semitones, because the replacement of those octaves would be very difficult to accomplish over and over again. However it was not possible to install the 2' quarter tone reed block because of its extra thickness. In the construction of Sirius there is already carved more space to the edge of the bellows, so the bigger 2' quarter tone reed block had no possibility to fit in. At the end of the day it might have been quite a lucky coincidence, because otherwise the highest tone on left manual would be as low as quarter tone flat a3.

The main reason for building this instrument was Sampo Haapamäki's concerto *Velinikka* for quarter tone accordion and chamber orchestra, which I premiered in Amsterdam with Insomnio ensemble in 2008. In 2009 I composed and premiered a 45-minute-work entitled *Hyperchromatic Counterpoint* for quarter tone accordion and 5.0 surround. Two years later I premiered together with my wife Susanne Kujala the Double

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concerto for concert accordion, quarter tone accordion and chamber orchestra by German composer Joachim F. W. Schneider. Moreover there exist several solo and chamber music works by Finnish composers. The next bigger premieres will be Haapamäki's Double Concerto for quarter tone guitar, quarter tone accordion and the Tapiola Sinfonietta and Jukka Tiensuu's concerto for quarter tone accordion and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra.

I have also used my quarter tone accordion in experimental jazz music and improvisation projects. The first such project was the first CD "Some Kubricks of Blood" by Kalle Kalima K-18 (the band's name means in Finnish "no children under 18 admitted"), which was released by the TUM Records in 2009. The second CD "Out to Lynch" by this band consisting of guitar, saxophone, quarter tone accordion and bass was released in 2012.

The playing technique of this "new" instrument is of course basically the same than on the normal concert accordion. The biggest difference is caused by the distances, which are doubled: the same grip gives for example instead of an octave an augmented fourth or instead of two octaves only one octave. Because of the ingenious layout of button accordion it is still quite easy to span one octave on quarter tone accordion, even with my small hands. The player should just get used to have his/her hand spread all the time a bit more than usually and to move it a bit more back and forth.

The fact that the button layout stays same can be confusing at the beginning, but it is also possible to use it as an advantage: when I learned the first concerto *Velinikka*, I rewrote some of the very dense and very hard-to-read chord passages in traditional notation and just simply learned to play them as if I had been playing with a normal accordion. I have noticed a funny psychological phenomenon: because the distances between notes on the score don't seem to be so large, it is much easier to accomplish for example the leap from a1 to c3 on quarter tone accordion than the leap from small b to f3 on normal accordion although the leap is exactly the same one.

The quarter tone accordion is one possibility to expand perspectives of accordion particularly in contemporary music and free improvisation. Clever music composed for this new instrument can be a real ear opener. It works perfectly in chamber music functioning as a "living tuning fork" for other instruments making them to be more accurate with quarter tones. I really hope other musicians would also take on the challenge and learn to play the quarter tone accordion!

104 (1-gliss.) (0.5-gliss.) 1.5-gliss. ♩ = 72

*f* *ff* *f*

Example 1. Sampo Haapamäki: *Velinikka*, bars 104–107.

**Right manual (actual sounding pitches)**

**Left manual (actual sounding pitches)**

Example 2. The tone ranges of quarter tone accordion's registers.



**Veli Kujala** (b. 1976, Finland) has gained a solid reputation of an outstanding interpreter of contemporary music on the accordion. In 2010 he completed his Doctor of Music degree with distinction from the Sibelius Academy. He is a prizewinner of many international competitions for soloists and for composition in the field of classical music.

Kujala has performed as a soloist with ensembles including Avanti! Chamber Orchestra, Gävle Symphony Orchestra, Insomnio, Lahti Symphony Orchestra, the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra, the Tapiola Sinfonietta with conductors such as Stefan Asbury, Hannu Koivula, Ari Rasilainen, Dmitri Slobodeniouk and John Storgårds. He has co-operated with a number of contemporary composers and has premiered accordion concertos by Pekka Pohjola, Markus Fagerudd and Olli Virtaperko. Moreover he has premiered concertos by Sampo Haapamäki and Joachim Schneider for the quarter tone accordion; a new instrument, which he developed together with Haapamäki.

From the beginning of his career he has also been very active in the field of jazz and improvised music, with an open mind upon all genders of popular music, from progressive rock to tango, ethnic music to French chanson. Pipoka, Gourmet Sextet and Kalle Kalima K-18 count among the most relevant bands he is involved in.

Veli Kujala has performed in whole Europe, in major festivals and venues. He has also toured in the USA. Since 2005 Veli Kujala has been teacher of concert accordion and improvisation at the Sibelius Academy.

[www.velikujala.com](http://www.velikujala.com)

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## Perspectives on accordion pedagogics on academic level

by Geir Draugsvoll

It is said about Johann Sebastian Bach that he walked 200 miles to Lübeck to study the vocal music of Dietrich Buxtehude. Imagine to do so with an accordion on your back! Then the accordion development would have been even more isolated than today..., where exciting things happen from many different continents and cultures. Luckily, we have other—and easier—possibilities to share information than in Bach's time, and I am also happy to send my students on exchange in a little bit more smooth way.

From a cultural historical point of view, the classical accordion has a short, but intense, history. Developing rapidly from the first rather primitive prototypes, through models suited best for folk music until today's top tuned instruments used in the most renowned concert halls. Especially the last 50 years has seen a developing curve much more aggressively pointing upwards than almost any other instrument. While many instruments already centuries ago found their own shape and sonority, the accordion has had to take giant steps in a short time to try to catch up on some of the historical lost time. In many ways, we can say that the accordion has succeeded in doing so. We perform concertos, chamber music and solo works all over the world, and to see an accordion in a major classical concert hall is not such a novelty as only a few decades ago.

This is of course very positive. And we must enjoy surfing on this increasingly popular wave, which has taken many hours of work from the performers, teachers, instrument makers and enthusiasts to achieve. But at the same time—balancing on the edge into the classical world of music—it is also maybe time to reflect a bit on how we can stay there, and not only make a visit.

Most other instruments has had centuries to select what is good and what is bad. And even if there definitively is a great variety of taste between different schools for piano and violin, we can almost say that "evolution found its way". I am very sure that we will have the same story on the accordion, taking time into calculation. But in this fragile historic period for the instrument, it is perhaps the right time to—if possible—speed up evolution a bit by sharing knowledge in a more innovative way.

### *Distance Learning*

During the last years, the Royal Danish Academy of Music (RDAM) has worked intensively on exploring the possibilities of using advanced video conference as a supplement to the regular teaching. The project has demonstrated many new and interesting perspectives in using this new technology.

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Distance Learning does not replace regular classes, and it allows meetings to occur that would otherwise never take place. During the project, international relations have developed as a direct result of the work. Not only have existing partnerships been strengthened but new partnerships have developed.

The project has furthermore demonstrated that students are not afraid of new platforms and new ways of acquiring knowledge. They seem to embrace the new technology and its many possibilities.

Until now, not many academies have the required equipment for making Distance Learning. And even less of these has accordion as main subject. However, I find it highly important that this project is taking place, and developing in its own time. We have tested this technology with SIBA and Lithuanian Academy of Music, and with a few adjustments—mostly concerning sound and camera angles—this will become an important contribution to the development of accordion pedagogic.

### *Pedagogics on academic level*

Like most other instrumentalists, accordionists also would like to become soloists. And this is the inspiration which is making us practice for hours and hours, to make us able to reach the required level and become a part of the musical jungle. However, most of us will also teach during our professional life, and it is therefore just as important to have a pedagogic education as well.

For beginners and middle level, there are already several innovative ways of learning the accordion. But when it comes to pedagogy on academic level, it is another matter. Not only on accordion, but also on most other instruments. It seems to be a normal opinion, that it requires different instrumental and musical skills on academic level, and therefore less pedagogic tools. Indicating that if you are a good player, you must also be the best pedagog at an academy. This is of course not true, also since many of the best instrumentalists are not taking pedagogic classes.

To put focus on this, RDAM is preparing a post graduate education called "Accordion pedagogics on academic level". This is meant for accordionists who have already started their career, and faces a possibility to teach at an academy. The role model for the accordion department, is an "elite singer pedagogic" education, which has educated a number of singers with great success the later years. It is meant as a part time study, which allows students to maintain a professional career during the two years it is supposed to last. Within the frames of a study like this, it would be obvious to invite experienced lecturers from other academies. Hopefully, the students then would get a first hand knowledge about the Scandinavian accordion tradition, as well as a basic knowledge of other important traditions.

If more and more academies would become interested in these—or similar—projects to join forces and knowledge, we can develop the general understanding on what is important to preserve from our history for the present and for the future; to

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"speed up evolution" and at the same time maintain the local characteristics and traditions which has made the accordion such a popular instrument.



**Geir Draugsvoll** (b. 1967, Norway) is considered to be one of the most important musicians on his instrument, the classical accordion. Through collaborations with many composers, Geir Draugsvoll must also be characterized as one of the pioneers on this young instrument, and he has premiered a large number of works. This includes concertos like "Fachwerk" by Sofia Gubaidulina, "Ad Astrum" by Anatolijus Senderovas, "Tropic of Cancer" by Magnar Åm and several others.

As soloist he has performed all over the world in festivals and concert-arenas like Concertgebouw (Holland), Alte Oper Frankfurt (Germany), Barbican Hall (London), Mariinsky Hall (Skt. Petersburg), Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory (Russia), Gasteig (München), Philharmonie Luxembourg, Lockenhaus Festival (Austria), Edinburgh Festival, (Scotland), Rheingau Festival (Germany), Mittelfest (Italy), Konzerthaus (Berlin),

Musikhalle (Hamburg), CCB (Lisbon) NGA (Washington), and many others. As soloist with orchestra, he has performed with London Symphony Orchestra, Mariinsky Orchestra, Münchener Philharmoniker, Russian National Orchestra, Norwegian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Kremerata Baltica, Moscow Soloists, Trondheim Soloists, and collaborates frequently with conductors like Valery Gergiev, Vasily Petrenko, David Geringas, Yuri Bashmet and many others.

Geir Draugsvoll is Norwegian, but now lives in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he is Professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Music.

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## Development of the classical accordion in United Kingdom

by Miloš Milivojević

In assessing my journey with the accordion in the United Kingdom, I must begin by acknowledging my beginnings in Kragujevac, Serbia, my home town.

Personally, one of the key lessons we were taught from a very young age was the concept of team work and creating a solid support network amongst fellow students and musicians. From the endless dedication, my teachers, an environment of respect and discipline balanced with camaraderie was created, enabling us to reach successes we only ever dreamed of. I have always been a fan of competitions, and entered my first one when I was nine years old. Programs would be carefully chosen by teachers to suit the requirements of the particular competition as well as to improve the skills and overall development of students.

The preparation process would normally take a couple of months, and lessons would increase in intensity and focus closer to the competition date. Being one of the main European centers for classical accordion, Kragujevac attracted players from all over the world. Every year students were privileged to attend an International Summer School where they would be able to work with eminent professional players. On every night of the week we were able to attend an array of concerts and witness first hand some extraordinary performances. This experience would serve to educate us in the many and varied approaches of playing a wide range of repertoire.

I have never looked at competitions in a competitive way and have always made comparisons between music and sports. Musicians give their life to music and enjoy every note they play. When it comes to competitions, I feel strongly that healthy competition is a way for students to develop various aspects of their professional development from an early stage: maturity will grow through musical, technical and artistic exposure.

It is very important to understand the difference between music and sport and how different it is to be competitive in these two worlds. I do understand that it can be very difficult to deal with various situations after one doesn't do well at the competition—or at least not as well as one would have hoped—but that doesn't mean that they were not judged correctly. More than anything it doesn't mean that the performer has not developed.

I have won over 20 national and international competitions, including Klingenthal, Castelfidardo and Grand Prix. From the age of 16 I have been entering only senior categories even though my chances would be much higher if I had still continued to compete with juniors. Together with my teacher Vojin Vasovic, I decided that it would be valuable to perform with older musicians, to learn from them, artistically and musically. I have never regretted this, even at the times when I would be awarded with the 2nd, 3rd and 6th prize. I felt honored in being able to stand on the platform with fantastic musicians from whom I could learn so much.

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One can only benefit from discipline, continuous practice and respect for teachers who are spending their time refining the development of a young generation of players, students whom they believe have potential. In addition, competitions enable musicians to hear new styles of music, from classical to contemporary. They give the opportunity for performers to find out what they really love playing and for them continue to grow as musicians.

London life. During my studies at the Royal Academy of Music, Professor Owen Murray inspired me to develop professionally by learning about composition techniques and sound quality. It refined my ability to critique music, and subsequently I found a totally new sound world in the instrument. Working with other instrumentalists I noticed how excited they were not only with the possibilities of the instrument but with its dynamic range and the effects that one can produce. It has to be said that these collaborations are the best way to understand other instruments, and to learn and be inspired by other instrumental techniques. I feel strongly that the future of the instrument is in chamber music.

Although we all know that classical accordion is still considered to be young on the concert platform, our repertoire covers pretty much every period. Some periods sound better than others, but all are perfectly playable nowadays.

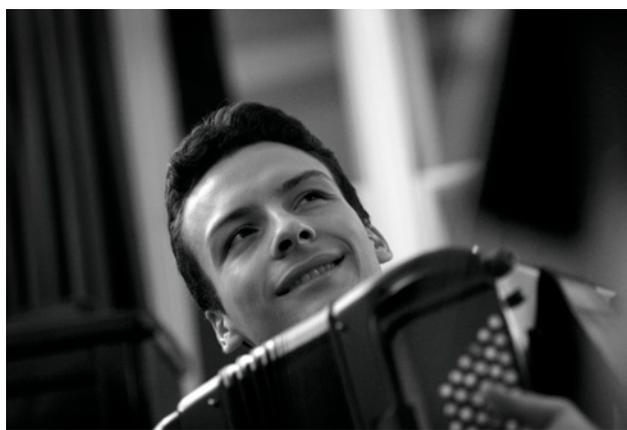
Accordion players have to become musicians first of all, then accordion players. Knowledge of the classical music repertoire is an essential way to learn the difference between styles. The Accordion world will become much more successful once established players start to collaborate, and composers include the accordion within their compositions more often. Contemporary music is one of the strongest growth areas in our repertoire, as both composers and performers use ever more creative instrumental techniques to create original pieces for the instrument. However, it is imperative to combine both contemporary and classical music in order to show the versatility and sophistication of the instrument.

I have been told many times by eminent classical musicians how surprised they were by listening to Scarlatti sonatas on the accordion. In 2007 I entered a competition at the RAM open to all instruments. My program consisted of Scarlatti Sonatas, Mendelssohn's Organ Sonata and Magnus Lindberg's *Jeux d'Anches*. I became the first Accordionist to be awarded this prize. In his final speech, Professor J.F. Attwood, (current RAM Principal) mentioned that both Scarlatti and Mendelssohn were performed in a fresh manner. Players also need to be very inventive with programs suggestions. For the Derek Butler prize I was chosen to represent the Academy, showing that the accordion is completely accepted. The finalists were a violinist, a pianist, a cellist and myself. It is powerful evidence that the future for the accordion is a bright one given that I was awarded the Derek Butler prize in 2008 at the Wigmore Hall.

I can report that both myself and my accordion colleagues in the UK are in demand throughout the year both as soloists and chamber musicians. On average I schedule 80–100 performances per year.

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On the concert platform, the accordion very often attracts more interest than other instruments. When working with other musicians we need to be creative, inventive and open-minded to the possibilities of various artistic approaches. In doing so, I find it beneficial to think of ourselves not as only accordionists or musicians but as artists primarily. With this attitude we can merge music with dance, drama and the visual arts, assimilating everything and creating memorable and perhaps even original world-class performances.



**Miloš Milivojević** (b. 1984, Serbia) is a first prizewinner at International Competitions in Germany, France, Italy and Denmark. In July 2007 he became the first accordionist ever to win the RAM Club Prize at the Royal Academy of Music.

After completing his studies in Kragujevac Music School with Vojin Vasovic, in 2002 he moved to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music with Owen Murray where he obtained the Postgraduate Diploma in July 2009 and was awarded with Dip RAM. Miloš has performed in venues such as the Wigmore Hall, St John Smith Square, St

Martin in the Fields and St James Piccadilly, University of London Senate House, Holywell Music Room, National Portrait Gallery Colston Hall Bristol, Keble College Oxford, and has performed at the Foundation Day awards ceremony in front of HRH The Princess Royal. Appearances at the festivals include: Park Lane Group Young Artists, Cheltenham International Festival of Music Aldeburgh Festival Britten-Pears Orchestra, Oxford Chamber Music Festival, Berio Festival, Northfolk & Norwich Festival, Deal and Chichester, Swaledale, Hexham, Belef, Nomus and Grad Teatar Festival.

He has premiered works by Anthony Gilbert, Howard Skempton, Elena Firsova, Stephane Altier, Patrick Nunn, Ben Foksett, Tom Lane, Elena Vorotko, Carlos Duque, Mark Bowden, Emily Hall, Chris Mayo, Anna Meredith, Philip Venables, and Robert Percy and has given the UK premiere of Sequenza No.13 by Luciano Berio. In masterclasses he has received guidance from many distinguished musicians, including Nicholas Cleobury, John Williams, Steven Isserlis and Gorgy Kurtag. Miloš is also a keen chamber musician. He is a member of the London Tango quintet, Kosmos Ensemble and AccordDuo. Internationally, he performed in Russia, Slovenia, Hungary, Italy, Iceland, Serbia and Montenegro, Spain and Canary Islands, Malta as well as Australia and New Zealand. He also gave live broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM, ABC and Serbian National Radio and television network. In March 2008, Miloš Milivojević was the Winner of the prestigious Derek Butler London Prize at the Wigmore Hall.

In January 2010, he made his concerto debut at the St James Piccadilly playing Charles Camilleri Concerto for Accordion and Strings with Filarmonika orchestra, conducted by Brian Schembri.

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## Developing awareness, improving the cultural condition

by Claudio Jacomucci

When I was fourteen, one day I was invited to dinner at my aunt for meeting an important guest, a relative of her family who claim to be “the inventor” of classical accordion. At that time I was eager of participating to international accordion competitions. I played for him Zolotaryov’s Partita and a four-parts Bach’s fugue. After having listened to those works, he started an excited monologue. He talked about his youth, spent in a village in the mountains playing folk tunes on accordion and about how his academic studies in compositions and conducting led him to demonstrate that the accordion he developed could be the modern evolution of the ancient keyboard instruments. He used to play many baroque works including Frescobaldi’s Toccatas, Bach’s The Art of Fugue, and he composed few original works for accordion, thanks to which he achieved the respect of Pierre Boulez, György Ligeti and Sylvano Bussotti. He was Salvatore Di Gesualdo (1940–2012), indeed the pioneer of italian classical accordion, the most savant, intellectual accordionist I ever met.

The feedback he gave to me that evening was very sharp, almost brutal. He said that I was totally misled and with no future. He said “the accordion world is a subcultural ghetto full of incompetents, ignorants, charlatans, cheaters, amateurs which only care about the accordion market and the market of students. Competitions have been organized for manufacturers to sell their instruments to the teachers; these “races” are very useful for teachers—jurors who ‘buy’ and ‘sell’ their students. The music they play in the accordion circles is primitive and worthless; a real musician would laugh about it. Stop playing accordion, go to school, study hard, one day you will eventually come back to the accordion with different aims.”

I was shocked and totally demotivated but I went on with my plans. Much before finishing my official studies I was already working with composers and other instrumentalists. Even though I didn’t like his self-referential attitude and the fact that he was quite isolated from the other progressive classical accordion schools, I am deeply grateful to Salvatore Di Gesualdo for what he said to me that evening, because, I gradually started noticing that—to a certain extent—he was perfectly right. He was aware that accordionists need to develop their cultural condition, to grow as musicians and artists and that being a classical accordionist is not just about playing a free-bass accordion.

For several years I refused to be in touch with the accordion world, I was disappointed and absolutely not interested in it. I was curious about many things and excited about the musician’s life and I have experimented with many directions: I played solo concerts, chamber music and concertos but I also worked in radio, theatre, dance shows, multimedia works and operas, I recorded movie soundtracks, accompanying silent movies, playing classical and contemporary music in weddings and funerals, playing with non-classical musicians (improvisers, jazz, folk and many other musicians). It took quite a long time to understand which was my way. It became clear after years of traveling

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around, attending a musical and artistic environment and studying, listening to and experimenting with all kind of music.

Meeting and working with inspiring personalities such as Luciano Berio, György Kurtag, Franco Donatoni, Luis De Pablo and many other composers was very important for my development as musician. It was an enlightening experience as much as studying Carnatic Music (South Indian Classical Music), training as an Alexander Technique teacher and investigating the baroque performance praxis of amazing musicians like Frans Brüggen, Ton Koopman and Anner Bylsma.

The most creative involvement has certainly been the collaboration with the choreographer Kathleen Delaney. At the beginning, in 2002, we made a piece on John Zorn's "Roadrunner" with Basquiat's images associated to the choreographic scenes of an accordionist and a dancer. We presented the musical–dance theatre versions of Stravinsky's "Petrouchka", Eliot's "The Waste Land" and others. But then we felt the need of creating our own works, right from the beginning of the compositional process, creating syncretic compositions, where music, dance, video, electro–acoustics have an interactive role. Our main projects are: *Infernal Circles* (a work inspired to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, premiered in the S. Patrick well in Orvieto, (60 meters underground), *Cool Memories* (an homage to the French philosopher and photographer Jean Baudrillard), *Aracne* (a work inspired by the ancient possession rite of "tarantism" from the South of Italy, and based on the original film by Gianfranco Mingozzi and Ernesto De Martino), *Tensegrity* (a piece where 4 dancers literally "play" the 8–accordions ensemble, placed at the perimeter of the stage, and musicians react to the dancer's movements in space by performing precomposed sound modules and varying the parameters – dynamics, pitch, speed, duration). We also founded together the "Italian Accordion Academy" which is a pedagogic and performing project. We have developed specific procedures for accordionists based on the Alexander Technique, a body–mind discipline which applies to daily practice in a very constructive and effective way. We involve students in the realization of concerts and performances, integrating them in the creative process together with professional musicians and other artists such as dancers, choreographers and composers. Since few years I also teach Accordion Bachelor and Master courses at the Pescara Conservatory.

This is my personal experience. I think that each of us has to venture into a unique journey, made of curiosity, exploration, intuitions and hard work. Nowadays accordionists have many more possibilities for their professional careers than in the past. Instead of following the footsteps of our ancestors or other accordion idols, students should make sure to develop solid skills, find clarity in their intention (whatever the intention is), trust their directions and use their full potential in order to invent their future.

A musician needs to be polyhedral: it is natural that musicians devote most of the time to daily practice, training skills, playing the instrument, but in order to evolve as musicians and as individuals they need to enhance their general knowledge and also to be able to connect with their own artistic inspiration through an awareness that has to be cultivated as much as technical skills. That is why along the educational path students must be creative and openminded and not following blindly precomposed formulas.

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Academies and conservatories are fantastic places for studying, meeting experienced teachers, having exchange with other students but only very few students have their own interests and passions. They are so busy with dozen of subjects, exams, deadlines, rushing from one class to another and collecting credits. This hyper-education is very similar to nothingness, everything tends to be superficial and there is no time for creativity, for an experimental approach, students are not searching for anything, everything is given to them. One may spend the best years for creativeness behind certificates, upgrades, masters promising career opportunities. But, when this studies are over it is probably too late for making choices; very often students don't have enough experience, they only know a small portion of the universe of music. The musical preparation of students should be more open to all genres and styles, not only to western classical and contemporary written music. Students should be involved in professional projects while they are studying so that everything they study find its practical application and they learn to deal with the situations.

Competitions are valuable tests, they provides students with a strong motivation in preparing programs and training dexterity, much more than exams. But in competitions there is no space for difference, everybody have to stick to the rules, playing certain type of works (mostly known only by accordionists or written by accordionists). You may only repeat a preconceived schema and try to be the best. Even if you win the most difficult contests in the world, you won't win any concert tour with a symphonic orchestra, any debut concert at Carnegie Hall, or a contract with Sony. You only get a cup, a trophy, some money and at the most you'll be invited by some accordion society. In these competition (except few innovative ones) there is no space for creativity and no support for a professional career. Very few accordion organizations follow and support individual developments and are able to bring a fresh audience to their events presenting artistically relevant projects, not only celebrating the virtuosic idols that only insiders may appreciate.

There are many "highly educated" accordionists (Bachelor, Master degree and winners of international competitions) who have no projects, no perspectives about their future. All they do is playing some gigs with some tango groups or doing other commercial stuff. Many students start teaching not because they are devoted to teaching but because it is the only way for them to get a job.

There is no teacher, no academy, no competition that will prepare students to be musicians, artists or teachers. They need to make their own experience, developing themselves because only then will the real learning start, from their practical experience, without giving for granted that they are formed musicians, they must be ready to unlearn, relearn and rebuild their tools in order to create something new. New ideas needs new techniques, new aesthetics.

What I want to say is that "Modern Accordion Perspectives" are strictly related to individual paths; there are no "accordion protocols" for living as a musicians, no matter if you want to be a music school teacher, a top virtuoso soloist, an orchestral-ensemble performer or whatever you are able to do.

A solid technique, a broad music knowledge, a developed awareness of your limits and possibilities, together with curiosity, devotion, self-discipline, dexterity are all

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important qualities for being a musician, but yet, you need something more to open doors where you only see a wall. This extraordinary sense for creation that Vaslav Nijinsky used to name—quoting an ancient Irish poem—*The god that makes fire in the head*.



**Claudio Jacomucci** (b. 1974, Italy) was graduated with honors as an accordionist from Grenoble Conservatory (France) in 1992. In 2000 he graduated as an Alexander Technique teacher from the ATCA in Amsterdam. He also studied Carnatic Music at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam. Winner of international contests such as *Grand Prix International d'Accordéon in St. Etienne* (1988), *Trofeo Mundial de Acordeón (C.M.A.)* in Cuenca (1990), *Premio Città di Castelfidardo* (1990) and *Arrasate Hiria* (1994). He has premiered a number of new works collaborating with composers such as L. Berio, F. Donatoni, G. Kurtag, L. De Pablo, B. Porena, M. Pagliarani, L. Garau, G. Manca, D. Nicolau, M. Ruiz Gil, F. Mencherini, G. Tedde, C. Crivelli, A. Naito, F. Barriere, M. Seloujanov, O. Schneller, P. Marzocchi, R. Vaglini, D. Glaus, R. Gubler (who often dedicated their work to him) and as a composer himself. He has been performing in Europe, USA, China, Mexico, Russia in many festivals and institution such as Cornell University, USA / Berlin Philharmonic / Het Concertgebouw, Amsterdam / Salle Messiaen, Paris / Teatro alla Scala, Milan / Gaudeamus Foundation, Amsterdam / Synthese

Festival, Bourges / Nuova Consonanza, Rome / Sala Chavez, Mexico City / Beethoven Haus, Bonn. He is the founder and teacher of the Italian Accordion Academy in Urbino, and he teaches at the Conservatory of Pescara (Italy) since 2011. He gave masterclasses at Paris Conservatory, Royal Academy of Music of London, Conservatory in Barcelona, Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Yoliztli Academy in Mexico, Danish Royal Academy of Copenhagen, Tianjin's Conservatory (China), Conservatorio "S.Cecilia" in Rome, Music Academy of Cracow and Wroclaw (Poland), Conservatory of Enschede, Tilburg and Arnhem (Netherlands). He has also played with Francesco Dillon (cello), Joel Rubin (clarinet), Terry Riley (piano), Stefano Scodanibbio (doublebass), Michel Godard (tuba), David Moss (voice), Kálmán Balogh (cimbalom), Pierre Favre (percussion), AlterEgo Ensemble and as a soloist with the "La Scala" Symphony Orchestra Milan, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Haydn Orchestra Bolzano, Filarmonica Marchigiana, Sinfonietta del Teatro Lirico Cagliari (Italy), Romanian Radio Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of David Robertson, Daniel Harding, Vittorio Parisi, Yoichi Sugiyama, Ola Rudner, and others. Since 2002 he works with Kathleen Delaney exploring the frontiers of music–theatre–dance–multimedia. His solo CDs are published by Blowout Records, as well as other CDs are published by Schott Wergo, W&B Music, Bridge Records, Stradivarius. His performances were broadcasted by RAI Radio3, RadioFrance, ORF, DeutschlandRadio, RNE2, Vatican Radio, SFB, RSI, Radio Unam–Mexico, Romanian National Radio. He was invited as a jury member by international accordion competitions such as Castelfidardo, Klingenthal, Arrasate and Moscow. His book *Technique I for button accordion* about the modern accordion technique is published by Bèrben. The book *Mastering Accordion Technique: a new approach to accordion playing based on the Alexander Technique*, written together with Kathleen Delaney, has been recently released.

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## **Discovering traditions: integrating the contemporary accordion education in the world of New Music**

by Sergej Tchirkov

It has been a long way for the accordion to reach its current position. Nowadays many music universities and conservatories offer degree in accordion as a major and the instrument often appears at the most prestigious stages both as a solo one or as a part of various ensembles and orchestras. There are also a lot of other instrumental performance schools that have thoroughly worked out academic accordion teaching courses. On the other hand, many skilled and even advanced accordion students are not aware of the role their instrument potentially could play (and sometimes it really does) in the composition processes which are taking place nowadays. Many of them have been mistakenly taught to consider the great virtuoso schools of the XIX and XX centuries as the highest point for a performer, ignoring the fact that musical life today has changed, on one hand, following the path which was established in XIX century and sometimes led to an exaggerated, even dominant role of the performer towards the composer and the music composition itself, it doesn't make any artistic sense. On the other hand, newest discoveries do not contradict music practices of earlier pre-classical epochs, whether in the course of history of western music or non-european cultures.

Contemporary composition approaches, however, require sometimes very special performance skills and devotion. Discoveries occurred in the past decades helped to create a variety of methods for shaping and organizing sound, to perceive the sound and to create the sound itself. The use of electronics and computers allowed a further study of the structure of sound and it is important even for purely acoustic compositions. Researches carried out by musicians helped to rediscover the richness of ancient and early music, making evident lots of parallels between composition thought of early ages and contemporary music thinking. For many young composers, there are no structural difference between “traditional” tempered scale and microtonal one, between the sound of piano and various noises. Whenever a composer intentionally links two sounding events whichever they might be, a composition might occur.

This has required certain changes in music education systems all over the world. A lot of music conservatories have opened additional new music departments, institutes of contemporary music have been established in many high schools. However it is rather unusual to find an accordionist working there as full time teacher, taking an active part in the researches which are being carried out there.

Since in many universities the general level of accordion students can be compared with the one of other instrumentalists, it is important nowadays to find the self-awareness of our instrument and the role it plays in music life of today. Comparing to other instruments, the accordion still has to discover its potential; if this was earlier considered as an obstacle, now can be turned into an advantage: young age and absence of dominant tradition. Indeed, the history of the accordion as a tool for professional music making

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doesn't count centuries but decades, which are notorious for close collaboration between composers and performers. As a result, lots of interesting works for this instrument were created; compositions by Berio, Gubaidulina, Sciarrino, Huber, Lindberg and many others are becoming “classical” repertoire nowadays.

Thanks to these collaborations the accordion has been fully accepted by most of the concert academic stages. Here it must be said, unfortunately, that these oeuvres are not often heard in the international accordion competitions. Very often the choice of competitor's program is limited to a set of traditional (even if originally meant for accordion) compositions. But the composers do not leave us the chance to stop at this point, as the term “academic” itself is constantly changing, and new or, on the other hand, very old practices are sometimes essential to the further development of music. Here we come to a point of misunderstanding between the composer willing to try new approaches to the meaning of instrument itself and a performer who might even be happy to take part in the premiere of a new work but who advises the composer to demonstrate the “best” qualities of his or her instrument, not to mention that often a performer even considers a piece of music as a way to express oneself and simply speaking to show off.

An educated professional accordionist faces another set of choices. Yes, a variety of oeuvres by different genres and epochs can be played very convincing and without significant losses, even if they are arranged for accordion. It is also important the exploration of a work on other instruments than it was originally composed for, sometimes it opens new colors and it helps to refresh it. The quality of accordion arrangements has increased as well, thanks to many prominent accordion virtuoso efforts. However, every time one is up to perform a composition originally written for another instrument, one should ask himself: why this composition should be played on my instrument? Do I intend to breath a new life into it? Has it been proved by reliable sources that the composer wouldn't mind this piece to be performed on other instruments than the one it was composed for? Etc. Unfortunately, quite often the only arguments are those that the piece “fits well into the program”, or “I feel like playing it”, or “the piece is meant to be a success”.

Does the above stated that the accordionists should not play any transcriptions? Of course, it doesn't. Moreover, a whole lot of works especially those of baroque and pre-baroque era which were meant to be performed on *klavier* (keyboard) leave a lot of space for interpretation: if Frescobaldi himself pointed out in the preface to his “*Fiori Musicali*” that it was to be performed on organ or harpsichord (whose acoustic and expressive means are totally different) why not to try this kinds of music on accordion, using its wide range of dynamic, polyphonic and sound qualities? It is even possible to imagine an Historical Informed Performance on accordion and here is no contradiction if one is aware of the roots and sources of baroque music practice.

Still, working on original repertoire remains a priority for every instrument. It is inevitable to continue to discover new worlds of sound in close collaboration with composers. In order to create a genuine interpretation and not only playback of what it is

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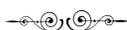
in the score one has to learn to understand the very basics of what the composer's approach might be.

Composition is a much more complex process that “expressing oneself”, because “oneself” is too limited. Every composition or a piece of improvised music should be approached as a unique living universe, which develops according to its own laws. This awareness is crucial for every musician who doesn't want simply follow and take for granted various clichés about expressiveness of someone self in music. Indeed, why my “self” should be interesting for the audience? It is the common devotion to the music by composer, interpret and audience which renders a work of art possible. If any of these links are missing, no art action would occur. It is thus very important for a performer to be able to learn to study every single work as if it required new uncommon playing techniques, new approaches – to start from a blank sheet of paper, so to say. Some very brief observations on the topics which every advanced student should be aware of to achieve this flexibility are given below:

1. Every sound the instrument can produce can be important and it might be the composer's intention to make them audible even if normally we try to avoid them as much as possible. This refers not only to the tones themselves but to all kinds of air sounds, the sound of mechanics, buttons, convertor and switches.
2. The accordion is a combination of modern technology (mechanics) and very ancient culture of eastern reed instruments like chinese Sheng and japanese Sho. Thus, it can be treated as Toshio Hosokawa has called it “European Super-Sho”.
3. It also can “breathe” which does not necessarily mean that the air button must be set into action. The accordion has its own lungs: the bellows that reacts to every movement of the performer, which creates alterations to the sound. For some compositions the gestures, the movements of performer's body are essential. Others, on the contrary, require performer's immobility and even stiffness.
4. Contemporary and baroque (pre-baroque) music practice often have a lot of on common. This refers to meter and rhythm, timbral balance, improvisations and more. It is highly advisable that a student studies examples of early music, to get the impression of how does it sound on period instruments.
5. There are various approaches to notation. The music can be notated in a very precise way, or the score can only contain some instructions on how to realize it. Sometimes, the score does not give any definite information on what would result in sounds but is rather a guide to performers gestures, state of mind and perception. It is therefore important to ascertain what method of notation has been used and why it has been used in the work.
6. The use of Extended Performance Techniques is not specific for new music. It can be found already in baroque music (Monteverdi, Farina, Biber and more). The term itself is vague enough, because it depends on every composition which techniques are considered to be extended. It is therefore important to analyze the use of these techniques in the given composition and their place in its structure.

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One might get the impression that suggested methods could be a step back from the achievements of great performance schools and that they are an attempt to simplify the performers work. This would be absolutely wrong and one-sided point of view. What seems to be really important is to bring composer, performer and audience as close as possible, in a way it might even remind of pre-classical practice when there was no division between composer and performer and almost all the music performed was contemporary music. Being versatile, flexible and able to work on different composition styles, finding the best solution even for the most challenging work has always been the highest noblesse of anyone who takes part at any music practices. This is especially vital for those who serve this purpose as a link between the author and audience – the performers.



**Sergej Tchirkov** (b. 1980, Russia) studied accordion at the Rimsky-Korsakov Special Secondary Music Lyceum. He graduated from the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory in 2003, class of Professor Alexander Dmitryev. In 2003–2005 he took a postgraduate course and qualified as a teacher in accordion performance and chamber music. Sergej has attended seminars on composition conducted by Sergej Slonimsky, Gerard McBurney, and Ernst-Helmuth Flammer. In 2004 he received a scholarship from the European Centre of Arts Hellerau (EzdK) where he also studied improvisation with Anton Lukaszeviece. Sergej Tchirkov has been awarded prizes at many international competitions including such as

Coupe Mondiale, Lasse Pihlajamaa competition, Città di Castelfidardo. Sergej has collaborated with composers such as Pierluigi Billone, Ivan Fedele, Helmut Oehring, Klaus Lang, John Palmer, Hanna Eimermacher, Dieter Schnebel, Martin Schlumpf, Matthias Müller, Boris Filanovski, Sergej Newski and more, and premiered numerous works featuring the accordion. He has performed at various new music festivals including Sound Ways, Territoria, Moscow Forum, Dresden Days of Contemporary Music, Pythian Games, Musical Spring in St.Petersburg, Northern Flowers. In 2002 he was guest performer at EXPO 2002 (Switzerland). Sergej has played both as a soloist and a member of an orchestra, including with the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, St.Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Musica Aeterna ensemble, Neue Dresdner Kammermusik, Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin and more, under the direction of Valery Gergiev, Teodor Currentzis, Timothy Redmond, Federico Mondelci, and Alexis Soriano. He has been a member of following ensembles: Pro Arte Foundation eNsemble (St.Petersburg), Zero ensemble (Zürich), Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble, Studio of New Music (Moscow), CNMRG computer and new music research group (St.Petersburg), AJO-ensemble (Bodo). Tchirkov has been a guest lecturer at the Zürich University of Music and Theatre, Gothenburg University, EMS Stockholm, Perm State Pedagogical University, and the Kazakh National University of Arts Astana. He has been an adjudicator at several composition and new music competitions. His thesis on John Palmer's DRANG for accordion solo has been recommended as an education tool for higher schools of music. He is an expert of the Pro Arte Foundation music programs and a member of the expert council of the St. Petersburg Contemporary Music Centre "ReMusik.org". Since 2011 he has taught at the International New Music Academy organized by the Moscow Contemporary Music Ensemble in the town of Tchaikovsky. Since 2012 he has worked and lectured at Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory.

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## **The position of the accordion in Polish musical culture "yesterday and today"**

by Klaudiusz Baran

The state of Polish accordion studies and the position it currently holds in the Polish musical culture depends on several factors, which had and still have an impact on it to a greater or lesser degree.

### *Education*

The accordion was first introduced in the Polish educational system in the 1940s. Teaching of the second degree began much later, not before 1959, although it already had features of professional education. Finally, in 1964 the accordion class was opened in the National Academy of Music in Warsaw (currently The Fryderyk Chopin University of Music).

According to recent studies, in over 90% of music schools of the 1st and 2nd degree in those years, there were accordion classes where about 5000 accordionists studied, which accounted for 8% of all the students of music schools. We do not have this kind of research analyzing the current situation, but according to my observation, the current state of things, the number and intensity have not radically changed, and this has significantly improved the quality process, i.e. the qualifications of teachers, improvement of instruments, raising the level of education.

At the academic level, all of the 9 Polish music universities have accordion classes. Currently about 100 students are educated as accordion performers. The academic staff includes 7 Professors, 7 Associate Professors, 7 Doctors and 5 Masters.

Emphasizing the position of accordionists in the system of art education, it is interesting that among the management of music schools, a huge part of it, are accordionists. However, at the universities 3 rectors, 5 vice-rectors, 3 deans and 5 vice-deans are recruited among them, not to mention a number of other important functions, including scientific ones. This is a clear signal proving the strength and position of accordionists in the Polish musical educational system. Also thanks to this, the rank of academic achievements as well as the impact on other areas related to education at all levels, puts the group of these people in an important position.

### *Literature*

The origins of the original Polish accordion literature are inextricably linked with the start of professional learning of this instrument in music education. The demand for

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original works was a natural path of development for the instrument. So initially they were pedagogical pieces of music and with the introduction of the accordion to higher education degrees, they became concert works, often of a virtuoso character.

The first authors were Czeslaw Grudzinski, Adam Mitscha, Zbigniew Penhersi, Andrzej Hundziak, Tadeusz Natanson and the author of a large number of pedagogical and concert compositions with accordion, both solo and with chamber orchestra – Bronislaw Kazimierz Przybylski. Many compositions for children and youth are created as well as concert pieces for accordion solo, chamber, both for homogeneous ensembles as well as mixed with other instruments and concertos with chamber and symphony orchestras.

Renowned artists such as: Andrzej Dobrowolski, Zbigniew Bargielski, Boguslaw Schaeffer, Piotr Moss, Henryk Derus, Zbigniew Wiszniewski, Wieslaw Cienciala, Slawomir Kaczorowski, Stanislaw Moryto, Marian Gordiejuk, Wojciech Nowak, Edward Sielicki, Andrzej Tuchowski, Magdalena Dlugosz, Zbigniew Baginski and others began to show interest in the instrument.

In my opinion, Andrzej Krzanowski holds a special place in Polish accordion literature. At the beginning of the 70s he created a new kind of quality, distinct language, changing the way of thinking and perceiving what the accordion really was. Breaking with the tradition of the instrument's sound, romantic lyricism and sonorism, in comparison with modern techniques of implementing measures and the production and development of sound were ahead of Krzanowski's time.

It turns out that even today his works are still "modern" and up to date. Composers–accordionists are a separate group which also includes Andrzej Krzanowski. This group brilliantly connects composing with an excellent knowledge of the instrument's capabilities. The following people are in the group: Bogdan Dowlasz, Krzysztof Olczak, Bogdan Precz, Michal Moc, Mikołaj Majkusiak, Marcin Bortnowski as well as Julian Kwiatkowski.

More recently, the youngest generation joined the group of authors exploiting the accordion in their work, but also mature, renowned authors who discovered the accordion again, such as Marcin Blazewicz, Krzesimir Debski, Pawel Szymanski, Cezary Duchnowski, Aleksander Kosciów, Dariusz Przybylski, Wojciech Blecharz Hanna Kulenty, Jakub Opalka, Rafal Janiak, Wojciech Ziemowit Zych.

The creation of new compositions has almost always been associated with the activities of musicians who influenced the composers with their art and worked closely with them. These pieces of art were often written for existing instrumental formations. The 1960's and early 1970's is when the Warsaw Accordion Quintet was active under the direction of W.L.Puchnowski. Later there was a very rich activity and long-term cooperation with many composers, first of all, by Zbigniew Kozlik as well as Elzbieta Rosinska and Janusz Pater. Since the 1990's the most results have been achieved by the activity of Jerzy Madrawski, Marek Andrysek, myself and a group of young performers such as: Maciej Frackiewicz, Pawel Zaganczyk, Eneas Kubit and others. Currently, this cooperation has gained a new quality and a measurable number of excellent compositions

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for accordion solo, varied chamber music compositions accompanied by orchestras created by the most renowned artists.

### *Musicians-Performers*

The first professional presentations of accordion music in Poland are associated with the creation of the original literature on this instrument, as well as making music in homogeneous ensembles, especially accordion quintets. In 1961 Włodzimierz Lech Puchnowski established the Warsaw Accordion Quintet. A few years later more groups of this type were formed, such as the Silesia Accordion Quintet and the Poznan Accordion Quintet. The repertoire of these bands was based largely on transcriptions and slightly on original literature. The intense activity of these groups lasted till the end of the 80s.

In the meantime, a huge qualitative change and the creation of literature intended strictly in accordance with the times, as well as modern trends in contemporary music was involving the aforementioned Andrzej Krzanowski, Zbigniew Kozłik and Janusz Pater, Elzbieta Rosinska, Bogdan Dowlasz and Krzysztof Olczak. That is when the accordion began to appear at major music halls in the country, as part of new music festivals as the Warsaw Autumn, Musica Polonica Nova Musica Moderna and many others. Coexistence in concert stages, as well as the composers' interest in the instrument and its executive possibilities gave rise to the creation of groups like "Lodz Trio" (acc., fl., guit.), Poznan Accordion Duet, Warsaw Accordion Trio (2 acc., batt. ).

The next generation of instrumentalists, in contrast to earlier ones they were educated in playing instruments with a button keyboard system; among them some winners of national and international competitions such as Pawel Paluch, Marek Andrysek, Piotr Dziubek and myself. In recent years, they were joined by artists such as Rafal Grzaka, Maciej Frackiewicz, Pawel Zaganczyk, Eneasz Kubit, Pawel Janas and others.

Their executive art, participation in the most prominent festivals (Warsaw Autumn, Musica Moderna, Musica Polonica Nova Premieres Festival, Bravo Maestro, Cross-Culture, Forum Lutoslawski Chain), concertos with orchestras (all orchestras including the National Philharmonic Orchestra and the National Polish Radio Symphony), under the direction of distinguished conductors (Jerzy Maksymiuk, Reinbert de Leeuw, Lucas Vis, Daniel Raiskin, Agnieszka Duczmal) in cooperation with the most prominent chamber ensembles instrumentalists (Julius Berger, Ivan Monighetti, Roby Lakatos, Konstanty Andrzej Kulka, Krzysztof Jakowicz, Vadim Brodsky, Krzysztof Jablonski, the Royal String Quartet, the Szymanowski Quartet, Silesian String Quartet), resulted in a positive change in the perception of the accordion as a full-fledged concert instrument.

It is worth mentioning groups which are renowned both in Poland and internationally, such as Motion Trio, Kroke, Bester Quartet, Klezmafour, Acoustic Acrobats, Tangata Quintet moving on the border between classical music, entertainment, improvisation, klezmer.

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Many of these artists have been awarded by music critics, by the music industry and ministerial cultural organizations (Fryderyk 2003, Passport of POLITYKA 2013, medals for cultural achievements *Gloria Artis* and many more).

The potential of the accordion, its artistic capabilities, the growing importance of the Polish music scene and composers' interest in it may indicate that the dynamism which it grows with and activates the environment allows us to be optimistic about the future of the Polish accordion art.



**Klaudiusz Baran** (b. 1971, Poland) was graduated from the Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw, class of Professor Jerzy Jurek. He continued his studies at Conservatoire “Paul Dukas” in Paris, class of Professor Max Bonnay. 1<sup>st</sup> Prize at the “All–Poland Accordion Competition” in Katowice (1993), the International Accordion Competition in Castelfidardo (1997) and the International Accordion Competition in Paris (1997). He participated in many festivals, such as: “The Warsaw Autumn”, “Lutoslawski’s Forum” at the National Philharmonic in Warsaw, “Musica Polonica Nova” in Wrocław, “Musica Moderna” in Łódź, “Crossculture 2009” in Warsaw, “EXPO 2008” in Saragoza, Accordion Music Festivals in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kragujevac, Vilnius, “Tango Festival” in Buenos Aires, and many others. As a soloist he cooperated with the National Philharmony, National Orchestra of the Polish Radio, Sinfonietta Cracovia, AUKSO Orchestra, Capella Bydgosciensis, Camerata Academia, Vratislavia, Dresdner Philharmoniker under the baton of such conductors as Reinbert de Leeuw, Lucas Vis, Daniel Raiskin, Reinhard Petersen, Jerzy Maksymiuk, Agnieszka Duczmal, Hector Guzman. He gave

concerts together with such artists as Roby Lakatos, Ivan Monighetti, Julius Berger, Susana Moncayo von Hase, Andrzej Bauer, the Royal String Quartet, and others. In March 2009, as part of the “Amber Road Festival” in Kalisz, together with a German cellist Julius Berger and the Kalisz Philharmonic Orchestra he had an opportunity to perform the piece “Sieben Worte” by Sofia Gubaidulina under the baton of Adam Kłoczek – in the presence of the composer, who also participated in it. He is a member and founder of such ensembles as: Tangata Quintet, with which he was twice nominated for the Fryderyk Award (2004, 2005), Machina del Tango and DesOrient. In 2003 his CD was released by the SonyClassical record company with solo and chamber works by Astor Piazzolla, the album won the award of the Phonographic Academy – “Fryderyk 2003” – in the category “Best Album – Chamber Music”. He has premiered almost 20 new works so far. He performed solo, in chamber ensembles and with symphony orchestras in Poland and abroad. He is invited as a lecturer to the international courses of music interpretation (Poland, France, Serbia) and as a jury member of national and international competitions (Poland, Italy, Slovakia, Serbia). His students have been awarded over 50 times at international, national competitions, and interdisciplinary competitions, in solo and chamber categories. He is accordion professor at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw. From 2012 he is Vice–Rector for artistic affairs. He has been decorated with the Bronze Medal for Merit to Culture – *Gloria Artis*.

[www.klaudiuszbaran.art.pl](http://www.klaudiuszbaran.art.pl)

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## One possible way for accordion

by Luca Piovesan

My name is Luca Piovesan, I'm thirty years old and I live in Venice. Nowadays I mainly perform new repertoire by young composers but my path to contemporary accordion has been quite long, so maybe sharing my personal experience can be of some interest.

I've started from lessons with very old fashioned school teachers and my experience on accordion competitions was really uneven. Luckily about six years ago I had two great turning points in my accordion life: I have been studying at the Italian Accordion Academy and I started working with ensemble L'arsenale.

At the IAA I learned the contemporary accordion techniques and I went into a world of new sounds, also from other instruments and genres. There I had the opportunity to attend masterclasses with some of the best teachers in the world (Claudio Jacomucci, Matti Rantanen, Jean-Luc Manca, Yuri Shishkin, Iñaki Alberdi, Geir Draugsvoll), and I was also tuned into the Alexander Technique, on the use of the body in practicing and performing.

Meanwhile I began collaborating with Ensemble L'arsenale from Treviso, a group of young musicians focused on performing new music and working with composers, often young ones. I had the great opportunity of experimenting with on my instrument in a group where the accordion was a totally new entry and in an absolute freedom of possibilities. Every composition was a new bet on the sound of the accordion within the whole ensemble. I was lucky, as recently the ensemble also started becoming rather known in the contemporary music world, so the level of works is increasing monthly.

At the same time I took advantage of new contacts with composers to push them to write new pieces for solo accordion, beginning a truly fascinating trip into new sounds (and new difficulties!). The result is my last disc "Sul Tasto" containing only new pieces for my instrument (some with electronics). I really think that working with composers is one of the best way of developing as a musician.

That's why I started my project [accordion4composers], a totally free pdf book on how to write for our instrument. The pdf and his audio samples can be downloaded freely from my website and everybody is kindly invited to help me developing this project giving feedbacks and asking specific questions. The result is a improving project with periodical releases freely spreading the knowledge of accordion within the composers' world.

Today I'm working as a free-lance accordionist. I have performed in venues such as Harvard University, Tokyo Opera City Hall, and the MATA Festival in New York, and have premiered about one hundred of new pieces. I have worked with the Grammy nominated, New York-based, Metropolis Ensemble and with Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart. I've been in residence at Harvard University at Fromm Festival in Spring 2013.

As a result of these experiences I have the strong feeling that the accordion is a treasure trove of sonic possibilities. But the feedback from other musicians and managers

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is that accordionists themselves can often be problematic, insisting on some sounds or repertoire that if compared to other “classical” instruments would be easily depicted as “folk” or even worse, “kitch” (I want to point out that I think that the folk roots of accordion have to be respected and protected but we can’t go on saying that this is our main contemporary repertoire! “Tradition is keeping alive the fire, not adoring the ashes”...)

In my opinion one of the main issues is that we still lack a large and good repertoire to be pointed at (how disappointing can it be every time somebody knows I’m an accordionist and the comment is “Oh yeah, I love tango!”).

I deeply believe that competitions and festivals can and must strive to promote new music and performers of the highest level (e.g. the mandatory piece should be a work of new music premiered by the participants and commissioned for the competition). They can also bring this new repertoire to non-musician audiences: for example, by replacing cash awards with paid concerts in prestigious venues. We need to bring the music we play both to lay audiences and to our own colleagues: other musicians. In this context it will become very important that the juries of competitions consist also of musicians of different instruments in order to have feedbacks from possibly very different points of view.

In Italy, we also have a big pedagogical problem: a majority of instructors ignore original, new repertoire for accordion and it seems they do not want to open their horizons to more renowned schools and teaching methods.

A higher quality of teaching and a better knowledge of original repertoire could soon bring young accordionists to integrate with other music students, especially in chamber work inside the academies.

So in my opinion, these are good ingredients for improving the accordion world: select good teachers; listen to lots of good music; promote new music; work a lot with other instrumentalists and composers; use competitions for promoting accordion to lay audiences and good venues; so... let’s go out (in the real world, not only in accordion festivals) and play something new!

I think that we can still produce a lot of new music for our instrument. New music and new sounds are in the pens of composers we can meet, so let’s just stop practicing the thirty-something variation of Brehme’s Paganiniana and let’s go out and find them! New music and new sounds are in our fingers and bellows every time we try not to imitate someone else.



**Luca Piovesan** (b. 1982, Italy) graduated with honors in accordion from the Milan Conservatory and in Literature from Venice University. He also holds a diploma in sound engineering and founded the recording studio “BlowOutStudio”. His principal teachers have been Elio Boschello and Claudio Jacomucci. He attended international masterclasses with Mika Vayrynen and Matti Rantanen (Finland), Yuri Shishkin (Russia), Iñaki Alberdi (Basque Country), Jean-Luc Manca (France), Krassimir Sterev (Austria).

He has performed in the United States (Harvard University, Boston University, Minneapolis University, Mata Festival in New York); Japan

(Tokyo Opera City Hall, Yokohama Hall); Austria (Impuls Festival); Slovenia; Canada; Switzerland (Settimane Musicali di Lugano); Netherlands (Deventer International Accordion Festival) and all around Italy.

Piovesan has been awarded with many international recognitions, among them: the “Grolla d’oro” and the international competition TIM.

As a soloist, Piovesan has premiered a number of new works, some of which are included in his two solo CDs: “Musica Ricercata” and “sul Tasto”. In the last couple of years he has been very active promoting and diffusing awareness of his instrument in the realm of contemporary experimental music. His project “*accordion4composers*” is available for free download on this website. He has held lectures and seminars at the Conservatorio Pollini di Padova, Boston University, Composit New Music Festival in Rieti.

As accordionist of Ensemble L’arsenale he has collaborated with: Venice Biennale; Metropolis Ensemble (New York); Acme Ensemble (New York); Ecce Ensemble (Boston); Neue Vocalsolisten (Stuttgart).

He’s based in Venice.

[www.lucapiovesan.it](http://www.lucapiovesan.it)

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## Classical Accordion in China

by Xiaoqing Cao

The accordion was introduced into China in the 1920s. It went through a long process of popularization from 1950s to 1970s. It has grown rapidly since the reform and opening up in the 1980s, especially after the chair of Accordion was set up in 2004 at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, the highest conservatory of China. A great progress has been made both education and in performance. However, its overall level still needs to improve because of the late start of classical accordion in our country, though there is no lack of Chinese players who have won medals in the accordion competitions of the highest international level. Thus our accordion colleagues have yet to make unremitting efforts!

In the 1950s, the Accordion was set up as a specialized course in many conservatories. However, piano and Stradella–bass accordion had been used in China all the time, and the accordion was performed mainly in popular and cultural events. Influenced by the general cultural policies of China between 1960s and early 1980s, there was hardly any academic communication between the Chinese accordion circle and foreign countries.

The cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries have become more active and frequent since the reform and it opened up in the 1980s. It was Prof. Mie Miki, a Japanese accordion performer, the first person to introduce free–bass accordion in China in 1983. She presented Baroque music, original accordion works and modern music for accordion, which broadened the vision of our accordion performers and colleagues. Afterwards, the desire of learning free–bass accordion was motivated in the Chinese accordion circle but there was a large gap in the accordion manufacturing technologies between China and foreign countries because Chinese manufacturers had never produced free–bass accordions. Only the accordion factory “Parrot” tried to make several 185 free–bass piano accordions (45 Keys on the Right Side, on the Left Side 185 button with Stradella–bass and Free–bass manuals), on the model of the accordion used by Mrs. Mie Miki, which was already used by several students from Tianjin Conservatory of Music. At the beginning Chinese teachers and students encountered many difficulties in playing the free–bass accordions and in learning the original works; they were all new things to them. The task facing them was very tough: there was no accurate guidance neither pedagogical methods, as a result they could only try to master the techniques instinctively. On one hand, everyone was aiming to learn new performing skills, on the other hand, there was still a big gap in the methodology. During this period, Mrs. Mie Miki offered her help, who had been to China twice to give lectures (1984 and 1986) and introduced many accordion works which are studied in the European conservatories. Meanwhile, she introduced the development of accordion teaching and education in Germany. However, the levels of Chinese teachers and students were relatively low at that time because of the late start. As a result, there was a certain barrier

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for them to communicate directly with the expert (on the academic ideas and the growth of accordions in the world). What they wanted to learn about were very superficial problems, and they had questions in many aspects, such as the various ways of using the bellows, the knowledge of the styles when performing Baroque music on accordions, the ways of performing modern works and the understanding of music notation, etc.

In the process of their exploration of studying, the first national accordion competition in China was held in Sichuan Conservatory of Music in 1987. Of course, the competition was still mainly about traditional accordion playing (piano Stradella–bass accordion), but there were several players using the free–bass accordions. At that time, the Chinese accordion circle still had resistance to the modern works, in other words, they still had problems in understanding those works. The serial composer Yao Shengchang wrote a composition called “*Little Suite*” for the competition, which was mistaken for a piece not composed by a Chinese, and which brought a great dispute. Anyhow, the competition promoted the communication among the accordion circle across China. Meanwhile, Chinese players had a chance to participate in the International Accordion Competition of Klingenthal in 1987, which was the first time for Chinese players to participate in a big international accordion competition.

In the early 1990s, the first Chinese accordion student was sent to Europe for further study, which further widened the communication channels between China and the accordion advanced countries. In 1990, Yuri Shishkin held the first button convertor accordion concert in China, which allowed us to learn about this instrument. In 1993, China held the First Accordion Festival, during which the world–class accordion artists, such as Professor E. Moser from Germany, Professors F. Lips and V. Semionov from Russia, etc., were invited to perform and give lessons, giving the Chinese accordion circle a new perspective on the different styles and on accordion performing skills. With different kinds of accordion activities carried out, China was setting off the wave of learning button convertor accordion. Curious about the bayan, many students switched from the piano Stradella–bass accordion to the button convertor accordion. They met many common problems in the learning, such as the choice of B–Griff and C–Griff, the specific technique of this instrument and the choice of the repertoire etc. Both teachers and students started from scratch and hoped to perform on the button convertor accordion as quickly as they could, which led to some problems afterwards. For example, some of them could only perform one or two pieces instead of systemically mastering the complete methods and techniques, and some lacked systematic and reasonable methods of learning accordions etc., which were caused by their just having enthusiasm and lack of scientific and systematic learning after the long–term closing and the unexpected opening up afterwards. With the international exchange strengthened increasingly, more accordion performers have come to China to give lectures and the experts in producing accordions introduced various brands of accordions to music schools and conservatories, which promote the growth of accordion in China. During this period, there had been continuously Chinese students who went to Germany, Russia and Ukraine etc., to study accordions. They participated in various international competitions and showed up prominently. In 1997, Chinese players won the highest prize of the Artist Group in

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Castelfidardo International Accordion Competition, a very important competition Chinese players had reached the highest international level in both the accordion performance and the understanding of accordion works, which greatly increased the enthusiasm of learning the classical accordion in China. In 2001, Chinese first overseas student majoring in Accordion achieved the highest degree “Solisten Diplom” in the major of accordion performance in Germany.

In 2004, the highest Conservatory in China, the “Central Conservatory of Music” in Beijing set up the Accordion Major, which is an important symbol of the growth of Chinese classical accordion. A number of Chinese young players have won medals in the major international accordion competitions since 2005, achieving remarkable results. However, the basis of classical accordion is still weak in China. Also there aren’t any further specialized requirements in the overall guiding theory of accordion performance, such as in the aspect of performance precision, the accordion chamber music and the Chinese original works, which have great potential for development. Since the classical accordion started late in China, it is required that the teachers and students who are engaged in it at the conservatories have the dedication to carry forward this career. Although many teachers and students have made great efforts on it, there is still a certain gap between us and some foreign countries. Even when compared with some other specialties of the conservatory, there is a large space for us to improve, such as the aspect of a systematic mechanism of the early-stage talent cultivation and sustainable development, and the scientific teaching planning, etc.

In addition, the important tasks facing our accordion teachers and students are how to allow Chinese audience to understand and accept the precise ways of performing classical accordion, and how to promote the development of accordion chamber music and the cooperation with Chinese traditional musical instruments.

The growth of classical accordion in China is a long-term and arduous task, which requires the collective attention and efforts of both Chinese and international accordion circles, because the development of Chinese accordion is also an indispensable part of the international accordion. We believe the growth of Chinese accordion will promote the development of accordion in the whole Asia and even the world on a large scale.

Nowadays we are wondering whether we can further develop Chinese accordion by considering and solving the following problems:

1. What are the necessary conditions that Chinese classical accordion need to develop in the future?
2. Chinese composers will compose more original accordion works which are mostly suggestive.
3. We’ll cultivate new generation of Chinese accordion performers.
4. We’ll start a research project exploring the Chinese roots of the accordion in order to attract people’s widespread attention and gain their recognition of this instrument in China.

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5. The concept of producing accordions will be completely renovated in the accordion manufacturing industry in China. Chinese brands of accordions with world-class levels will be produced to meet and enhance the performing level of Chinese accordionists.

All the above are the issues that we should think about for the development of Chinese accordion.



**Xiaoqing Cao** (b. 1965, China)

Cao Xiao Qing is the first Chinese musician ever to win the first prize in major international competitions such as the "Accordion Grand Prix" (Baden-Baden, Germany, 1997 ), "Premio Citta' Di Castelfidardo" (Italy, 1997).

He was given the opportunity to study in Europe by the Chinese Culture Ministry and, in 1992 he was sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to study abroad at the University of Music and Drama in Hannover, Germany. In 2001, he was awarded with the "Master Soloist Diploma,". Professor Cao maintains a busy schedule performing solo concerts, chamber music concerts and also giving lectures, in many countries including Germany, Italy, France, Austria, Spain, Switzerland, Denmark and Serbia. He has worked as a jury member for several international competitions (Castelfidardo, Klingenthal, Arrasate, Moscow).

Professor Cao taught in the University of Music and Drama in Hanover from 2000 to 2004 and in 2001 he was appointed as visiting professor of the Tian Jin Conservatory of Music. Since 2004, he is teaching accordion at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing where his excellent teaching is well regarded and widely recognized. His students have been highly successful in top international and Chinese accordion competitions, winning a total of 33 gold medals and 67 first prizes. Among them, eleven are the first occasions when Chinese competitors won awards in international accordion competitions. In view of his outstanding contributions to education, Professor Cao was sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Education in its "Supported by Program for New Century Excellent Talents in University" and has been awarded the "Bao Gang Educational Outstanding Teachers' Award" by the Bao Gang Education Foundation.

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## **Connection between accordion and the real music scene**

by Paulo Jorge Ferreira

Along my career as musician, professor and composer I've had the privilege of being in contact with great artists, which has given me an effective knowledge of the music reality in Portugal and around Europe.

Normally, as a musician, I've been well accepted by other musicians (non-accordionists) within the projects I've been involved in. I have to confess that many times those instrumentalists, conductors, composers revealed an almost complete lack of knowledge about the potentialities of the accordion, but after listening the instrument, most of them showed interest and will to participate in projects with concert accordion. Actually at the moment I have much more regular contact with violinists, clarinetists, pianists, conductors, composers, than with accordionists. This is due to the direction that my musical life took about 15 years ago. At that time I started playing on a regular basis with instrumentalists, orchestras, contemporary music groups, and since then my musical orientation followed a completely different professional course, and by consequence my vision of music became much larger. I got to the conclusion that to enter in this musical universe, any accordionist needs to be at the same level of these instrumentalists, which is very difficult due to the artistic level needed to be successful in the working market.

The accordion is an instrument that when played with quality always arouses a genuine interest from the public. In order to rise the artistic standard of the accordionists worldwide, it is necessary that the quality of the instrumental education in Conservatories, Academies and Superior Schools have the same professional level of all the other instruments. My experience as a teacher allows me to realize that many of the accordion teachers are completely inadequate to the professional music world, being unable to direct their students according to the modern perspective of the accordion, making it complicated for the instrument to be integrated in the present musical panorama. In order to motivate students to become professional musicians, they need to feel the artistic acknowledgement from the other colleague instrumentalists, teachers of other instruments, during their academic education, and so that this can happen. I consider that there is a main factor that is the type/quality of the repertoire taught in the accordion course in music schools. It is not justifiable that in the present day, the chosen repertoire is not the most adequate, because there is already a quite interesting repertoire quantity/quality.

In my opinion there are too many accordion events/festivals/competitions around the world but rarely they are made in the philosophy of rising the instrument value. Obviously this situation doesn't benefit the accordion. On the other hand, I think we shouldn't mix the two concepts of accordion (classical and pop/folk) in the same event/festival/competition because it will confuse more the public who wants to adhere and get to know only one of the styles. Another not less important point is the fact that these events are generally addressed to a restricted audience (accordionists) and not conceived in a global way to conquer other audience. As far as international competitions are

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concerned, generally there isn't a musical criterion aiming a real development of the instrument and its repertoire. In my opinion, the programs of these competitions don't make much sense. It is at least strange that in a qualifying round of an accordion competition, the candidate has to present a baroque work! I defend that the repertoire to be executed in an accordion competition should be completely original for the instrument. It would be unthinkable that in any international piano competition, for example, there would be a candidate playing original repertoire of classical guitar or harp!!! Another aspect to be reviewed, no doubt, is the constitution of the jury, that should be composed by musicians, composers, professors (occasionally not only accordionists) that follow a modern and innovative music line, with an active professional life. So, to sum up, the organization/directors of the accordion contests must have a modern vision of the accordion and, on the other hand, they should know the professional music world in a way that the participants in these contests may take advantage of the artistic conditions that promote their musical growth and that the experience will motivate them to see a possible future life as professional musicians. As a teacher, in the last years, I've been participating with my students in interpretation competitions (all instruments), being a very enriching experience, from my point of view. In some occasions these students reached first prizes, but above all, it was registered an appreciable quality level comparable with other instrumentalists, professors of other instruments, unequivocally resulting in the valorization of the accordion.

The type of repertoire to be presented in concerts by an accordion soloist or by an ensemble is a very important and always discussible aspect, since this factor can greatly influence a bigger or smaller adherence to the instrument from the audience. Personally I defend performing original accordion repertoire in any kind of event where the instrument is presented. I think that the repertoire originally written for accordion is an identity vehicle for our instrument and an asset for the knowledge and divulgation of the accordion repertoire. Therefore the contact between accordionists and composers is extremely important for a greater knowledge of the instrument, consequently for the creation of new accordion repertoire. Composers always like to introduce innovative aspects in their works. Being the accordion a new instrument with sonorous characteristics and tone effects that captivate any composer, we can take advantage of this argument and, in benefit of the instrument, ask the composers to write for accordion. Obviously the bigger the number of well-known accordion interpreters is, the bigger will be the motivation of the composers to write for the instrument.

Many accordionists live in closed circuits, without perspective of integration with other instruments, which leads to a restricted vision of music, and consequently to a lack of dynamic and projection of the instrument. In the accordion there isn't much space for error, due specially to the negative connotation of the instrument, many times related to lower quality music. All those who propose themselves to valorize the classical accordion, have to do it in a very intelligent and professional way so that the instrument will always be presented with quality and the image of the concert accordion will be more and more credible. Like this we'll be able to reach little by little a higher artistic level, making

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possible a more regular presence of the instrument in prestigious music halls around the world.

The accordion is a modern instrument that can transmit incredible sensations/emotions, its sonority is amazing, its music relates to present life, it is not a "classical" instrument, predictable, that makes us fall asleep... I have the strong conviction that with skills, commitment and will power of all those who want a different course for the accordion, we will reach the level of quality and artistic dignity we all wish.



**Paulo Jorge Ferreira** (b. 1966, Portugal) began his musical studies at the age of five with Professor José António Sousa. His accordion course was accomplished in Vitorino Matono Musical Institute, having posteriorly finished his superior studies in the Castelo Branco Superior School of Applied Arts.

He has performed solo and chamber music concerts, both national and internationally, namely in France, Mexico, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Macau, Spain, Hungary, Holland and Germany. He has performed in some of the most important European concert halls like the Musik Werein,

Muziekgebouw Amsterdam, De Single, Odéon Theatre de L'Europe, Teátrum House of Future, Berliner Philharmoniker, among others.

He has been invited as a guest musician by symphony and chamber orchestras, for example, Beijing Orchestra, Gulbenkian Orchestra, Portuguese Symphony Orchestra, Porto National Orchestra, Lisboa Sinfonieta, Remix Ensemble, and as a soloist with Esart Ensemble, Remix Ensemble, Cascais and Oeiras Chamber Orchestra, working along with conductors such as Stefan Asbury, Jürgen Hempel, Lawrence Foster, Peter Rundel, Martin André, Emílio Pomarico, Carl St. Clair. He collaborates on a regular basis with Remix Ensemble, the Gulbenkian Orchestra and Porto Symphonic Orchestra Casa da Música.

With Pedro Santos he has an accordion duo (Duo Damian), with Carlos Alves one of accordion and clarinet (Artclac), with Catherine Strynckx one of accordion and violoncello, with Ana Ester Neves (soprano) a duo of accordion and voice, and a quintet with a string quartet. Simultaneously he has also been developing the activity of composer, writing works for solo instruments, chamber music and orchestra. He lectures in the Applied Arts Superior School in Castelo Branco, in Castelo Branco Conservatory and in Lisbon Conservatory. Some of his students and chamber music groups have won first prizes in national and international accordion and chamber music competitions. Paulo Jorge often participates as a jury member in international accordion competitions. He is the artistic director of the *Folefest*, an accordion festival and contest. In 2004, it was published by "Numérica" a solo CD titled "Percurso".

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## Rediscovering the 19th Century repertoire for free reeds keyboard instruments

by Gorka Hermosa

Classical accordionists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been more concerned with creating an original repertoire of contemporary compositions than with recognizing the past of their instrument. One of our biggest problems is that we do not have so much original repertoire and even less tonal repertoire; so, what we propose in this little article is to get to know our past better, to dig up our forgotten repertoire, to create new professional perspectives for the accordionists of the 21st century.

The main problem when we think about the past of our instrument is to consider that the predecessor of the classical accordion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was only the “toy” called diatonic accordion, an ineffective instrument to do serious music.<sup>1</sup>

The accordion is a keyboard aerophone free reed instrument. The first instrument of this type was the portative organ built in 1780 by Franz Kirsnik (1741–1802) and Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein (1723–1795). After this invention, there was a deep development of this kind of free reed keyboard instruments and thousands of patents of similar instruments were registered. All of them should be considered predecessors of the classical accordion. The two 19<sup>th</sup> century instruments which are more similar to the modern accordion are the concertina and, very specially, the harmonium, an instrument extremely similar in sound to the classical accordion. I invite anyone who doesn't agree with this assertion to listen the recordings of great harmonium players such as Joris Verdin.

The earliest classical works for a free reed instrument were the seven *concertinos* for jew's harp, mandora and string orchestra (1764–1771) of the great contrapuntist Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736–1809), a teacher for Hummel, Moscheles and Beethoven among others.

Between 1840 and 1870 the most important English composers wrote for concertina. During this period, we have some works for concertina solo by concertinists such as Giulio Regondi, Richard Blagrove, Catherina Pelzer, George Case, Joseph Warren... Nevertheless, the biggest development took place in the repertoire for concertina and piano, with works written by these same concertinists and by important composers who wrote works for Regondi and Blagrove such as Bernhard Molique, George Alexander Macfarren, John Barnett, Julius Benedict, James Harcourt, Edward Silas... Other chamber music was written by Macfarren, Molique, Warren, Case or Silas. There also were concertos composed for concertina and strings by Bernhard Molique and Franz Bosen.

But the most reputable free reed instrument was the harmonium, which was accepted in the classical world from its beginning, being included in the conservatories during the 19th century. The first composer to write for this kind of instrument was

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Haydn's student Sigismund Neukomm in 1824 (*Duo C-Dur n°227* for harp and orgue expressif), but the first really important composer who wrote for it was Franz Schubert in 1827 (*Schlachtlied* for chorus and piano or physharmonika).

Among the composers who wrote for harmonium solo are Neukomm, Czerny, Berlioz, Smetana, Saint-Säens, Rossini, Bizet, Alkan, Meyerbeer, Cesar Franck, Liszt, Guilmant, Busoni, Bruckner, Boëllman, Elgar, Janacek, Reger, Karg-Elert, Vierne, D'Indy, Massenet, Dupré, Nielsen...

The harmonium also found its place in chamber music: the type of ensemble for which more pieces were composed was piano and harmonium (Neukomm, Czerny, Saint-Säens, Lefébure-Wély, Widor, Guilmant, Gounod, Franck, Liszt, Sibelius, Karg-Elert, Janacek, Alain...). Other ensembles were also popular like violin and harmonium (Liszt, Karg-Elert, Grainger, Zamacois...); duo of harmoniums (Richard Strauss, Grainger...); harmonium, piano and strings (Saint-Säens, Liszt, Gounod, Dvorak, Sibelius, Richard Strauss, Bruch, Grainger, Pedrell, Berg, Schönberg...) or other chamber instrumentations (Rossini, Widor, Liszt, Johann Strauss Jr., Grainger, Schönberg, Bruch, Hindemith, Richard Strauss, Kagel...).

One of the genres in which the harmonium was used most, was in vocal music. The harmonium worked very well accompanying the soloist voice (Liszt, Bruckner, Puccini, Gounod, Chapí, D'Indy, Reger, Pedrell, Schönberg...). It was also included in choral music: many composers wrote for voice (choir or soloist and choir), accompanied by organ, piano or harmonium (Schubert, Berlioz, Gounod, Faure, Liszt, Gounod, Puccini, Busoni, Bruckner, Grieg, D'Indy, Cui, Chapí, Fauré, Reger, Sibelius, Franck, Pedrell, Janacek, Vaughan Williams, Kodaly, Kagel...) or by different instrumental ensembles that included a harmonium (Gounod, Saint-Saens, Rossini, Liszt, Böellmann, Reger, Leoncavallo, Janacek, Schönberg, Weill, Kagel...).

The harmonium was also used in orchestral compositions (Liszt, Smetana, Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Webern, Schönberg, Berg, Elgar, Honegger...), in ballets (Richard Strauss, Shostakovitch, Ibert, Maderna, Penderecki, Ligeti...), in great works for chorus and orchestra (Berlioz, Liszt, Bizet, Dvorak, Fauré, Puccini, Webern, Stravinsky, Martinu...) and in operas (Massenet, Verdi, Dvorak, Richard Strauss, Hindemith, Weill, Stockhausen...).

In the 1930s, the harmonium started an inexorable slump with the arrival of the electronic keyboards, and became practically extinct since mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, so his repertoire fell into oblivion and it has hardly been played in the last 80 years.

During the classicism, something similar happened to the repertoire for harpsichord, viola da gamba or lute but during the romanticism, pianists, cellists and guitarists rediscovered this repertoire making the rebirth of these old instruments possible in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and so, their original repertoire was retaken.

The accordion is the heir of this harmonium repertoire and we have the responsibility to rediscover it. It is shocking to realize that some of these works, by really important composers, have not yet been recorded. This is the great challenge that opens before us: to retrieve and record this almost forgotten repertoire. An idea for new

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perspectives for modern accordion could be to propose, for example, the recording of complete works for harmonium by Liszt or other great composers for Deutsche Grammophon or other big record labels.

Rather than our prerogative, we should consider it our duty, since when we hypothesize about what the recognition of the current concert accordion would have been if it had really existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the answer would probably be: very similar to the recognition that the harmonium had.

The ones who have more interest in all this repertoire will find a complete repertoire list in my next book “The accordion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century”, and those who want to listen to some of these works could find them in the CD “Los acordeones del s. XX” recorded recently by my students. They played works for harmonium by Saint-Saëns, Janacek, Franck, Berlioz, Elgar, Liszt and Almagro, works for concertina by Harcourt and Regondi and the first recording of the oldest original piece known for diatonic accordion: the *Thème varié* by Louise Reisner of 1836.



**Gorka Hermosa** (b. 1976, Spain) is a very multifaceted musician: accordion player, composer, teacher, writer, publisher. He has completed his accordion degree at the Conservatory of Vitoria (Spain). He introduces the accordion in unusual and extraordinary ensembles (among other, with the hurdy-gurdy, the flamenco guitar, the harpsichord or the bass clarinet) and opens new stylistic paths for the instrument when he integrates elements from jazz, folk, pop and flamenco in his music. Pablo Zinger (Piazzolla's pianist) said: "Gorka Hermosa's music impressed me for his originality, his atmosphere and his virtuosity: makes of the word crossover an intense reality. He's a very talented musician to look very close". He played as a soloist with Spanish National Radio and TV orchestra, he often appears in Spanish TV and radio shows and gives concerts all around Europe. He has premiered more than 20 works for accordion by Spanish composers. He has also played with musicians such as Paquito D'Rivera (Grammy Awarded), Javier Peixoto (Madredeus), Pablo Zinger, Ara Malikian, La Mari (Chambao), Luis Auserón (Radio Futura), Carlos Soto (Celtas Cortos),

Nacho Mastretta, India Martínez... As classical composer, his works are often played in U.S.A., Brazil, China, New Zealand, Madagascar, Russia, Lithuania, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Portugal, Spain...) by accordionists such as G. Masefield, A. Verettenikov, I. Aizpiorea, M. Levickis, A. Selivanov, Y. Amerikova, H.C. Jacobs and R. Ruggieri. He has published 3 CDs, mostly with his compositions, and has made more than 20 recording collaborations. He has written 4 books about the accordion and has given conferences about the history of the accordion in Macedonia, Italy and Spain. At present he is the accordion teacher of the “Jesús de Monasterio” Musical Conservatory of Santander.

[www.gorkahermosa.com](http://www.gorkahermosa.com)

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## MYTHOS Accordion Duo

interview with Bjarke Mogensen and Rasmus Kjøller

**Claudio Jacomucci:** *You grew up in a rich environment for classical accordion: the huge artistic and pedagogic inheritance of Mogens Ellegaard, the teaching of James Crabb and Geir Draugsvoll must have been a tremendous source of inspiration and motivation for your professional goals. Could you tell us about your important steps as individual musicians, what was the bridge that led you from student life to the professional one?*

**Bjarke Mogensen:** I grew up on a quite desolate Danish Island called Bornholm.

It was quite a coincidence how I started playing the accordion. The music school where I lived had limited spaces on most instruments. My parents were quite late with putting me in the music school program so most of the other instruments were occupied at that time. I wanted to play the guitar but I could only choose between the recorder and the accordion which, I at that age, thought was a disaster. Today I am quite happy that I chose the accordion after all! My first teacher was actually from the first generation of pedagogues in Trossingen, Germany, so I can easily say we came across many accordion aesthetics not only from Scandinavia.

Only later on in my early teens I got to know the tremendous importance of the Ellegaard's heritage and I was drawn to it quite fast and went to Copenhagen to study with Geir Draugsvoll and James Crabb.

For me it has been a very slow and gradual progress making a living as a performer. I enjoyed being able to draw inspiration from all kinds of musicians, from classical, pop and the avant-garde scene and even professional actors from which I had the pleasure of working with. I still consider myself a student and I always try to learn not only from the older generation but also from colleagues of my own age. The level is evolving extremely fast on our instrument. The earlier generation of accordionists probably did not have the same privilege that we have today since they were struggling with far more prejudice towards the instrument. We still have to overcome some basic obstacles though, but in my opinion the situation has become far better as the repertoire grows and the instrument get international recognition in the highest musical institutions.

**Rasmus Kjøller:** My way to professional life has until now taken many different and unexpected routes. The years on Bornholm, which was also the very early start of our duo. Later, when I got the great possibility to get James Crabb as a teacher, first as a private teacher, which was a dream at that time, later both in pre-academic school and at the academy. My inspiration came from the teaching, concerts and CDs and also to be a part of the environment at the academy was in many ways a very huge source of inspiration.

Then I changed to Geir Draugsvoll as teacher, which moved me further again. It was for me the right time to change and all what I learnt with James was developed further at this point. To have two teachers who have studied together and who are working

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together as a duo, my experience is that the goal of the teaching is the same, though the approach to this goal is done in two different ways.

During my academy time I have also had another focus, which was the pedagogical approach to the instrument. To learn how to communicate my knowledge about how to learn playing the accordion was and still is a very big part of my life, and an inspiring part as well. I find it so very important to remember that the word “play” has many aspects and colors.

I have been fortunate to work with brilliant skilled teachers and musicians and conductors during my studies and concerts activities, which also includes collaborations with pop singers, actors and theatre performances. When all this is said, I still consider myself a student of the music, though I am finished at the educational wise. It is important for me to still have the curiosity in my development as a musician and as music pedagogue.

**CJ:** *Your repertoire for accordion duo has a peculiar outlook, you combine modern music (written for you by danish composers) with transcription of romantic and post-romantic masterworks. You have recently published a CD with great russian music such as Stravinsky’s “Petrushka”, Borodin’s “In The Steppes Of Central Asia”, Tchaikovsky’s “The Nutcracker”, Mussorgsky “A Night On The Bare Mountain”. What is your main interest and aim with the MYTHOS Accordion Duo project?*

**Duo:** It is difficult to describe a particular goal for our duo. At the moment we try to seek out as many possibilities as possible for a classical accordion duo. That includes working with composers of all generations and styles. So far we have commissioned around 12 new works, which we try to include in our concerts as much as possible. We want to establish the accordion-duo in the classical chamber music environment and make people aware that the potential for the finest music making is just as big as any string quartet or piano-trio etc. Basically we just play the music we like and find interesting. Arranging works is also a great part of our duo and its great fun to see how surprised people can still be when you perform a well-known orchestral piece on accordion-duo. Most of our audience finds out that the work can actually gain some musical qualities in this particular instrumentation. To get the instrument and the sound of the instrument recognized in the general public, and that they connect the sound of the word of the instrument to a good experience.

**CJ:** *You have won the first prize of important chamber music competitions in Almere (Netherlands) and at the Danish Radio in Copenhagen. As soloists you also won competitions which don’t belong to the tiny world of the accordion because they are open to any instrumentalists. Could you tell us about these experiences? Does accordion competitions make any sense nowadays? What are the weak spots of an accordion competitions? What should be changed or improved in order to provide a real recognition for a musician career?*

**Duo:** When it comes to accordion-competitions there is a few issues which could still be improved. First of all we are not great fans of the conventional competition as a whole but they can be an effective motivation for young students. There is a problem with the fact that in most accordion-competitions the promotion value is very low. If you

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compare the major competitions like “The Queen Elizabeth Violin Contest” and the “Tchaikovsky Piano Competition”, there are much more serious prizes and programs for the participants. In the perfect world a competition should be directly connected to an agency or management who would work actively to help and guide the winner into a successful career. We prefer competitions with freedom to choose the repertoire you want to play. Few things are more demotivating than playing a test piece you don’t like. A competent jury, which is open to new repertoire of different styles would also be a welcome initiative. There is a tendency of rewarding a safe choice of music in most accordion-competition, which has a greater focus on technical brilliance than actual musical values.

**CJ:** *Since few years you also work as a teacher (chamber music and pedagogy) at the RDAM. What do you think about the future of young pupils and what are, in your opinion, the fundamental basics for a good and complete education as accordionists in order to develop their creativity?*

**RK:** To play an instrument in general, it is important to be skilled in as many of the musical aspects as possible. To build up these areas takes time and has to be repeated many times together with the pupils/student in the class and also when the pupils/students are practicing at home. And a great deal of praising the child but also to require hard work from the child.

To name just some of the areas to develop is the: 1. Music theory and ear training skills 2. Guiding and nursing the musical skills of the pupil, so they develop separately 3. Technical skills in all its aspects. 4. Knowledge about the physical problematics while playing the classical accordion to avoid physical damage in the bag and shoulders and arms etc. This can be all kind of game playing, Alexander technique, Pilates, Yoga, running and strengthen the parts of the body to be healthy.

And more to come, this is a short list of some of the main areas.

The teacher has to *believe*, that in *every child* there is a musician. It is important to teach the child with the same approach and professionalism as the teaching at the academies. No less can do it. It is the uttermost importance that this is the goal for every teacher. It is not enough having 1–2 talents in the classes. They would be there anyway. It is to lift the ground level up as a whole. This is an enormous work and it is not possible to do all this it at ones. It has to come gradually over years.

**BM:** The future seems good for young accordionists. The repertoire is expanding a lot and the recognition of the instrument is much better than 20 years ago. Nowadays most composers find it quite natural to use the instrument in the field of serious composition. It is my opinion that we should always try to stay connected to the rest of the musical world and don’t try to isolate ourselves in an “accordion-society”. The festivals and competitions can easily become narrow-minded and lose focus on the most important aspects, such as the chamber-music with other instruments.

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**CJ:** *What kind of “modern accordion perspective” do you see in the future?*

**RK:** The classical accordion has the world in front of it. It is an instrument, which is so fortunate to have the potential to be a well-established and recognized instrument. We need to show and tell the audience and musicians that this is one of the most beautiful instruments ever made and that the potential and capability is wide.

**BM:** I think it still has a great future and it will motivate young people to reflect a little bit to find their own way of doing things. Lack of good original-repertoire pushes a lot of accordionists to be creative. I am delighted to see musicians that are making their own arrangement and compositions or specialize themselves in improvisation or even certain types of original folk music. I hope it is a tendency that we will see more of. Perhaps the positive side of being a young instrument in classical music is that we HAVE to make our own path which often includes exciting detours.

**CJ:** *Which aspects of the evolution of the classical accordion (and accordionists) should be further improved and enhanced?*

**BM:** I think there is still a big work ahead for us concerning pedagogical material since the accordion is still young in the classical family of instruments. It is difficult to say if we should strive for being trained the same way as, for example, an academically trained pianist or cellist. The outcome of is much more certain on those instrumentalists that are heavily rooted in the classical repertoire. My wish is that more and more accordionists strive for being interesting and openminded musicians beside being virtuoso performers. I also hope manufactures of instruments will be more curious about the performers needs and not the other way around as it is today, where ordering a new instrument is sometimes similar to risking the chance in a lottery.

**RK:** In many ways the instrument has reached its form and shape. To improve and perfect the technical part could be worth considering. Here I mainly think of the left hand and the registers. Rethink it again and find the shortest way from the button to the opening mechanism. Though, this is easier said than done.

It is also important to consider to be more aware of the reeds and to have a high standard of the reeds. The sound of the instrument is what the audience and other musicians remember and this is a part of the acceptance in the music society.

**CJ:** *Could you tell us about your future projects?*

**Duo:** We are currently finishing our second album, which is a tribute to Gustav Holst's 100-year-old orchestral work “The Planets” and it will be coupled with the “Helios Overture” by the Danish composer Carl Nielsen. We have used a great deal of time making the arrangement of these masterpieces and we are looking very much forward to present them to our audience.

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Furthermore we have commissioned a handful of new works by composers Erik Hojsgaard, Jesper Koch, John Frandsen, Timothy Baxter and Oren Boneh. We are corporation with the Danish actor and narrator Henrik Koefoed about “The Nutcracker” with the music and the text from E.T.A. Hoffmann, as a family Christmas concert. We did it on a tour in 2012, and we are remaking it again in December 2013. We have made school concerts with *Petrushka*, also with narrator, which have been a big success.



**MYTHOS Accordion Duo** is one of the leading ensembles on the Danish chamber music scene. The duo has received several awards, including 1st.prize in the Danish Radio Broadcast Chamber Music Competition 2011 and the 1st prize of the Almere International Chamber Music Competition 2012 in Holland. When, in 2011, Bjarke Mogensen had his solo debut at the Carnegie Hall in New York, he actually brought along his MYTHOS partner, Rasmus Schjærff Kjøller, and they bowled the unsuspecting audience over with their own faithful concert transcription of the entire score of Stravinsky's

music for the ballet *Petrushka*. A CD, containing the MYTHOS *Petrushka* along with their brand new transcription of Holst's *The Planets*, is expected to come from Orchid Classics in the Spring of 2013.

**Bjarke Mogensen** (b. 1985, Denmark) made his debut at 13 as a soloist in a German TV broadcast, where he played with the Munich Symphony Orchestra. At 14 he both won the Gold Medal and the Talent Prize in the Berlingske Tidende Music Competition and was awarded the Jacob Gade Grant. His popular breakthrough in Denmark came when he won the DR TV soloist competition "Spil for Livet", and the same year he received the Victor Borge Music Prize.

In 2011, Bjarke Mogensen had his solo debut at the famous Carnegie Hall in New York City, and in 2012 he was the first accordionist ever to receive 1st prize in the prestigious European Broadcast Union "New Talent" competition in Bratislava.

Bjarke Mogensen studied with Geir Draugsvoll at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen and graduated with flying colours; today he actually teaches chamber music at the Academy. He has given solo concerts in many parts of the world, from New York to Moscow, from Iceland to Turkey. He has performed chamber music with violinists Augustin Dumay and Gidon Kremer and the cellist Andreas Brantelid. As a soloist he has worked with orchestras such as the Moscow Virtuosi, Kremerata Baltica, Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and the Copenhagen Philharmonic, conducted by maestros such as John Storgårds, Lan Shui, Rolf Gupta, Leos Svarovský, Beat Furrer and Vladimir Spivakov.

A long succession of collaborations with prominent living composers has resulted in many new compositions – concertos, chamber music and solo works – dedicated to Bjarke Mogensen. Already during his student years he released 4 CDs of solo works and concertos; the labels were Orchid Classics and Dacapo Records, and those CDs met with rave reviews.

During his student years at the Royal Danish Academy of Music with the Professors Geir Draugsvoll and James Crabb, **Rasmus Schjærff Kjøller** (b. 1983, Denmark) has received many grants and scholarships; in 2012 he was awarded the annual “Small” Léonie Sonning Music Prizes. Furthermore he has been studying in Toronto with Joseph Macerollo and he has played in masterclasses with Matti Rantanen, Mika Vayrynen and Claudio Jacomucci. As a prize winner in international competitions he has played in festivals around

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Europe, i.e. Paris, Heidelberg, Malmö and Vilnius and cooperated with New Music Ensemble Ars Nova in Malmö (Sweden), the Jutland Ensemble, the Esbjerg Ensemble and the Royal Danish Orchestra. He had his Carnegie Hall debut in 2011 with MYTHOS, classical accordion duo, and in October 2013 he will debut at Het Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. As a performer, Rasmus S. Kjoller openness to music from the whole palette of genres, from the classical repertoire over contemporary music to tango and pop/rock, and he often collaborates with composers from today's music and the pop/rock scene. Rasmus performed in a production of Jarry's absurd theatre piece "Ubu Roi" (1896) that in 2008 was nominated for the highest Danish theatre award, the Reumert Award, and he was likewise seen and heard in "The Apple Tree of Fortune" at Anemone Teatret, a tiny but renowned Danish venue. There he arrange, composed and played all the music. Rasmus shows a deep professional interest in the pedagogical approach to his instrument, the classical accordion, and a Kodaly-based accordion teaching book is beginning to take shape; currently he teaches at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen.

[www.mythosduo.com](http://www.mythosduo.com)

[www.bjarkemogensen.com](http://www.bjarkemogensen.com)

[www.accordeon.dk](http://www.accordeon.dk)

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## New Polish literature for accordion and cello

by Maciej Frackiewicz

I choose this topic because since few years I have the huge pleasure to cooperate with the amazing Polish cellist Magdalena Bojanowicz. After my own experience and the arising reflections by working with composers and performing concerts, I inferred that one of the most interesting connections with accordion is his fusion with string instruments. In my opinion, the relationship accordion–cello is really special, it is an instrument that can interact with accordion like no others thanks to its wide tonal range.

An important contribution to the development of this formation was made by the Polish composer Zbigniew Bargielski who wrote one of the first pieces for accordion and cello titled *Labyrinth*. In this piece, originally written for cello and piano, the composer has re-written the accordion part and made some changes in the cello part as well.

This was the first piece for accordion and cello, and one of the first in general which is still performed and has become a reference in the literature for accordion and cello. *Labyrinth* was premiered by Elsbeth Moser and was also frequently performed by Mogens Ellegaard who also worked in close cooperation with the composer. It has been recommended by the Austrian section of the ISCM World Music Days in Oslo in 1990.

It is interesting that since the launch of the first Polish work for accordion and cello, arose in 1987, Polish composers haven't payed attention to that instrumental combination for a long time. For the following Polish piece we had to wait 10 years: Marian Gordiejuk wrote *Dialogues* in 1997 (and then also *Con vigore e con dolore* in 1999 and *Dialogues II* in 2000).

Another considerable work is *In my head....* (2004) by Wojciech Blecharz (Voytek Blehash). It was the first time he was using the accordion in a work; after that I have commissioned him to write a solo piece called *Hypopnea*. So far he has written six pieces including an accordion solo and one opera titled *Transcriptum* which features two accordions. Although *In my head...* was repeatedly presented during some important concerts, Blecharz consider this piece as scenic music for the theater, as it was commissioned by the Washington Ballet Met.

Another extremely important piece is *Prelude, Postlude and Psalm* (2007) written by Hanna Kulenty, a very highly regarded composer in modern music world. I think that her interest for the accordion represents a significant impact on the development of our instrument. Kulenty calls her style "European trance music" which has also a very sharp tone where structures are often obsessively repeated and the listener feels a relief when these figures suddenly terminates.

In 2009, my Duo was awarded with a scholarship for recording an album of contemporary Polish music for accordion and cello. The urgency of getting new compositions became an unprecedented driving force, so we started commissioning young Polish composers new compositions for our duet.

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The first was Dariusz Przybylski with his *Discours*, a kind of capriccio which punctualistic interventions combines the fragments based on a sort of melodic playing in both instruments. The composer—through juxtaposing the accordion's and cello's sound effects—had achieved lightness and freshness, which is mined with cleverly matched technical solutions in spite of the seemingly dark color and beaten specificity of both instruments. The composer also combines in an interesting way a variety of styles where we can find echoes of early music.

Another piece was written by Mikolaj Majkusiak. His *Rhythms of doubt* recalls minimal and repetitive music with various echoes of rock. Bartosz Kowalski's *Fifth blue* begins with the improvisation of two tonal patterns, repeated exactly by the cello while the accordion creates a background of a tonal piece (C minor) in a world music-like style.

Wojciech Ziemowit Zych wrote *Cooperative II* as an attempt to re-explore the sound of the accordion together with another instrument, the cello. It is also an attempt to build common narrative possibilities in using idiomatic sounds and techniques of both instruments. The score includes a lot of extended cello techniques, as multiphonies, harmonic tremolos, smooth bow movements, beats, and so on. He tried to find common sonorities between cello and accordion, as well as mixing the whole sound of accordion with noise (whispering with unstable and changeable colors).

Later more works were created, among them, *After hours of muttenes* by Rafal Janiak, *cROSSFADE* by Cezary Duchnowski (with live electronics) and *Satin* by Aleksander Nowak.

This article is a short summary of polish works for accordion and cello. After 25 years from Bargielski first piece for this duo, polish composers wrote 21 pieces, 12 were written after 2009, when our duo started to commission works.

Polish accordion literature has been enriched of very different pieces suitable for a wide range of performers. Some of these works may also be integrated into the pedagogical literature, like Naklicki's work for younger pupils, Kowalski and Majkusiak's for older ones.

Many composers are still wishing to write new pieces for our Duo so I believe that in few years we could be proud of a really serious Polish literature for accordion and cello.

I hope that in the next few years those works will also be well-known outside the circles of composers; if other Polish and foreign accordionists will have the great pleasure of presenting them, that will be a success for me and for Polish accordion.



**Maciej Frackiewicz** (b. 1988, Poland) was graduated with distinction at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Warsaw with Klaudiusz Baran in 2012. He has also studied with Iñaki Alberdi (in 2010–2011 with an Erasmus Scholarship) at Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya in Barcelona and at the Hochschule für Musik in Detmold (Germany) in 2011.

Maciej attended several master classes in Poland and abroad with the most important musicians in accordion world: prof. W. L. Puchnowski, Claudio Jacomucci, Stefan Hussong, Teodoro Anzellotti, Iñaki Alberdi, Yuri Shishkin and also with the cellist Julius Berger. He won numerous international prizes such as the International Accordion Competition in Arrasate (Spain, 2012), Poprad (Slovakia, 2003), Competition of the 20th and 21st Century Music for Young Performers in Radziejowice, organized by Polish section of ISCM (Poland, 2009), International Accordion Competition “Carlo Cividani” in Val Tidone (Italy, 2010), Special prize at XIV International

Competition of Contemporary Chamber Music in Cracow (Poland, 2010). In February 2008 he was one of 7 finalist who has played on the national final of the 14th Eurovision Grand Prix for Young Musicians. He performed “Aconcagua Concerto for Bandoneon and Orchestra” by Piazzolla with the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Lukasz Borowicz. In 2010 he represented the Polish Radio in Bratislava (Slovakia) at The International Forum of Young Performers (IFYP). He is collaborating with Young Circle of Polish Composers Union, and also with famous Polish composers such as Krzysztof Penderecki, Pawel Szymanski, Cezary Duchnowski, Dariusz Przybylski, Wojciech Ziemiowit Zych, Wojciech Blecharz. He received scholarships from Polish Children’s Fund, Musical Safety Pin J&S Pro Bono Poloniae Foundation, Societe Generale, Marshall of Podlasie district and Minister of Culture. He was awarded the “Młoda Polska” Ministry of Culture Scholarship. In 2012 he received the DAAD prize for the best foreign student in HFM in Detmold. He has performed as a soloist with the Polish Symphony Orchestras under conductors such as Paavo Järvi, Lukasz Vis, Emin Güven Yaslicam, Young Chill Lee, Lukasz Borowicz, Slawomir Chrzanowski, Michal Klauza, Krzysztof Jakub Kozakiewicz czy Zygmunt Rychert. He was first accordionist in the history who has played as a soloist with the National Warsaw Philharmonic. In March 2011 he has premiered the Concerto for accordion and orchestra (work that is dedicated to him) by Dariusz Przybylski with the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra Katowice. He has premiered the 1st Symphony by Andrzej Krzanowski with the National Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Lukasz Vis. He has appeared in a number of festivals in Poland and abroad: “Warsaw Autumn”, “Musica Moderna” in Lodz, “Two Days and Two Nights” in Odessa (Ukraine), “Festival of Polish Music” in Cracow, “Musique au Leman” in Thonon Les Bains (France). In 2010 and 2012 he performed recitals of new pieces written for him during festival “Musica Polonica Nova” in Wroclaw (Poland).

He recorded for Polish Radio, TVP Kultura and WDR 3.

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## **My ideal competition: the accordion surrounded by the arts**

by Paolo Picchio

Music competitions acquire a true value if they represent a real opportunity of growth and dialogue for those who attend them. In order to be successful, competitions should not be "judged" only according to sterile numerical data about, i.e. how many participants were registered and how many have really participated. The real data should be "how much new knowledge and culture" has been interchanged. As it is logical to be, competitions should be won by the best, which should be taken as a model and example for all the determined musicians who have set a goal and want to succeed it. But the excessive and competitive exasperation (which is already a worrying form of closure) often tends to block the possible cultural exchange. Competitions must be open and accessible by all people, they can not be made by "swingers", namely a group of teachers who grant favors each other. The aim should be the achievement of a "tension upward in the scale of skill" so those who have a lower level must go back to their homes with the desire to improve themselves, without getting discouraged or confused. That's why a serene and welcoming environment, in my view, is a fundamental requirement: the rules of competition lead necessarily to a selection, nevertheless they should be taken as an occasion of integrate different musical environments.

The second reflection brings me to consider the economical factors. The competition of my dreams is a competition mainly for ensembles. Many categories for orchestral or chamber music, where musicians present all kind of repertoires, using all the instruments and technological means (classical and traditional instruments, electronics, computers, loops, human voice exploited in all of its forms, processors, sound, images and video effects, etc.). I dream a competition with few soloist categories and a lot for ensembles. It is obvious that on this paradigm we should take into account several factors. The first is about the real possibility that young musicians have in their studies to create groups or ensemble, to use certain technologies and to cooperate with other artists (who work with images or recite texts or poems, etc.); this depends on how their school is structured (also economically) and inserted into a vibrant artistic context (this is often found only in big cities). If this first condition exists, the second issue is about financial resources. Participating to a contest with a jazz sextet or with a group or with a folk group with dancers, it is not so cheap. But if one day such kind of competition with many artistic expressions including the accordion was possible, it would represent the "ne plus ultra" for cultural exchange, it would stimulate the participants to grow and expand their reach, to integrate musicians and other artists coming from different geographic/cultural background. To put it in a word, I'd call the "incorporating competition" (on the contrary the risk is that competitions are exclusionary).

If it were really possible to organize a competition of this kind, two of the probable consequences that could follow, should be touching two thorny issues in competitions: the repertoire and the composition of juries. In a competition that favor the wholeness,

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the artistic project, the creativity and the inventiveness, the cultural value, there is obviously less space for excessive virtuosity for its own sake. In the same way, according to the criteria listed above, the Jury should be composed by musicians and artists from different backgrounds, not only by accordionists. As it is logical to be in a soloist competition where everybody performs technically difficult works (often musically insignificant), a non-accordionist juror would be disoriented and could take some blunder.

In the competition that we have defined as "incorporating", the music rises the first place, the art (which is also and above all "communication" with the listener) becomes the battleground. And this opens the door to further consideration: the relationship between the competition and artistic/work perspectives. Today it's very difficult (for all instruments) to succeed as a soloist. But many young accordionists are members of various chamber ensembles, working with poets, actors, they are invited to record movie soundtracks, to support images, etc. Here is the competition that prefers the artistic expression of the whole, a competition which has a strong relationship with a real and possible career for young accordionists. And if I participate in a competition where I can listen the artistic offer of many other talented artists (independently of final placement that I will have in the competition), I'll go back home full of incentives and ideas. When the winner is the cultural exchange, I won't go back home angry, maybe saying "I haven't been understood" or "the big powers have unfairly favored somebody else" or "they will not see me again". I will say instead "this time it did not go well, but it was such an enriching experience that in the future, I won't miss it for any reason".

I would like to finish by indicating, in my opinion, "the rams' heads" of the accordion, namely the strengths that make our instrument superior to others (I have to specify "in my opinion", because this is a racist judgment):

1 – polyphonic and portable instrument;

2 – multitimbral instrument that can change and mix different timbres;

3 – instrument that generates an infinite number of "magic" through the bellows.

The young talented accordionist must remember these "rams' head" and he has to use them in order to "break through" as a musician.



**Paolo Picchio** (b. 1968, Italy), musicologist, accordionist, arranger and composer, art director of the International Competition and Award "Città di Castelfidardo".

Graduated with honor from Bologna University (D.A.M.S.) in musicology. He was also graduated as a flutist from the "Istituto B. Gigli" in Recanati (Italy).

He taught music theory, harmony, history of music and accordion in several music schools. He was invited at the O.K.U.D. Istra International Summer Courses in Pula, Marseille Conservatory, Summer Courses in Lourmarin (France).

He held several conferences concerning the accordion in Italy, Croatia, Czech Republic, France and Slovakia.

He regularly writes and publishes articles on several magazines (Suonare, Fisarmoniae, Accordion World Wide, Orpheus Award).

He participated as a jury member at several national and international competitions (Pula/Croatia, Aubagne/France,

Pianello Val Tidone/Italy, Poprad/Slovakia). From 1992 he's the art director of the International Accordion Competition in Castelfidardo.

Since 1994, he is also the Artistic Director of the International Award "Astor Piazzolla" taking place in Castelfidardo. He is one of the founding members of the "Centro Studi sulla Fisarmonica of Castelfidardo" and the Vice President of the Associazione Italiana di Fisarmonica Classica "A.I.F.C".

He was also promoter and teacher of the "Giornate Internazionali di Studio sulla Fisarmonica" di Baragiano (1998–1999).

In 1997 and 1998 he was the teacher of the "Accordion construction" during professional training courses organized by the Provincia di Ancona and the European Community.

Paolo is the arranger of all Astor Piazzolla's works performed by Milonga Quintet.

He is the author of the book "Original Accordion Literature" section in the book "Castelfidardo e la storia della fisarmonica". In 2003, his thesis titled "The Accordion as a Concert Instrument" was discussed at the University of Bologna as part of the history of musical instruments. Paolo Picchio's thesis covered a wide range of contemporary accordion music, analyzing some 40 accordion compositions of famous and lesser known composers during the period, 1960 to 1998. Since then, Paolo Picchio has developed the thesis into a new published book titled "La fisarmonica da concerto ed il suo repertorio" (Ed. Birarelli), soon also available in English.

[www.accordions.com/picchio](http://www.accordions.com/picchio)

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## Pedagogics, competitions and perspectives

interview with Massimiliano Pitocco

**Claudio Jacomucci:** *In your experience as teacher and as organizer of an international accordion contest, do you notice an enhancement of the motivation in the students who participate to competitions?*

**Massimiliano Pitocco:** Indeed, participating to great contests is fundamental for the student's growth. I cannot say that it is decisive but—beside the result—the good thing is that they may reach the highest technical and musical standard which they would never reach during the academic studies in schools and Conservatories.

**CJ:** *Are music programs of accordion-competitions appropriated to the recent developments in pedagogic and performing standards? Are teachers supporting and providing students of a critical sense about their choices in music education? Are virtuosity and easy-effect music still dominating the way accordionists think music?*

**MP:** I think that music programs of competition are generally appropriate even though sometimes rules are not clear. What does “baroque piece”, “melodic piece”, “polyphonic piece” really mean? These strange request may be found only in accordion competitions. For example, “the cyclic sonata”: I have noticed several time that students have not been properly considered because the sonata they were playing was an “old fashion” piece, played too many times. It's just ridiculous! Imagine if during a piano competition somebody plays Chopin and the jury doesn't admitted him to the final round because Chopin is overplayed! Well, I leave this reflections to you...

Rules should be more clear about it so that students can play any music work, from any period.

**CJ:** *Are jury members usually competent on high-level contests nowadays? Does it make any sense when juries are only composed by accordionists?*

**MP:** Juries must be composed by accordionists, active concert performers or somebody with a great professional experience in the past. Certainly, the presence of some non-accordionist musicians or music reviewers could contribute to outline a more musical profile of the candidates. Accordionists are strict in judging technical skills but they are less rigorous with music issues. I totally disagree with juries composed by accordion factory's managers, directors of magazines or publishers, or—even worse—by musette or jazz accordion teachers. In a great piano competition, like Busoni or Tschajkowski Contest, the jury is carefully selected, you would never find any “Fazioli” or “Steinway” manager or a pop music teacher sitting among their jury members! In the festival that I have organized in Rome “Contemporary Accordion”, I have invited seven accordionists and two internationally renowned musicians. In my opinion, the judging has always been coherent and impeccable.

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**CJ:** *Are accordion organizations (competition's promoters) really connecting young musicians to the “real” music scene and to the professional world?*

**MP:** Unfortunately not. I believe we have to work a lot on this aspect. We need to create a net with many organizers and promoters so that the winners of the accordion competition may be easily connecting with important concert seasons. I also believe that if our competition are named “World Cup”, “World Trophy”, juries will never be competent, programs will be questionable and so on, we will never reach the standard of all the other instruments, and it will be quite a difficult task to convince a concert manager or other organizers to support the career of an accordion competition winner.

**CJ:** *What are the main professional perspectives in the “real” music world (out of the old, narrow-minded, closed-circuit, club-like accordion world) for every music style and scene?*

**MP:** My suggestion to young performers or to all recently graduated students is to make up their minds about their wishes. Do they want to be teachers or do they wish to be concert performers in classical or light music? That should be clear before starting a professional career. For this purpose I strongly suggest students to extend their knowledge and studies, whatever are their wishes for future. It would be extremely important.

When I was an accordion student, for example, I studied composition to be more familiar with harmony, counterpoint and fugue. I also studied organ which is very close to accordion. I was not only graduated as an organist but I went deep into baroque philology issues, studying the ancient Italian literature with Luigi Tagliavini, baroque interpretation with Ton Koopman and Micheal Radulescu, romantic interpretation with Lionel Rogg e Daniel Roth. I often had the chance to practice on ancient harpsichords. These studies showed me a broad panorama, not only made of accordion but also and especially made of music. It has deeply changed my way of looking and listening to music. I strongly recommend to any classical accordionist to expand their musical interests (conducting, chamber music and so on).

If you want to be a teacher it is a good idea to study pedagogy and didactics. If you want to play light music I suggest to study of jazz. Limiting your studies to the accordion may be a bit simplistic.

The good things is that nowadays if you have a Bachelor degree, you have easily access to any Master Course (2 years) and you don't have to start a 10 years course from the beginning as it was before Bologna's reformation and in my case.

The last real advice is to not mix up too many different musical styles in your career.

**CJ:** *What about your next projects?*

**MP:** On accordion, I'll play some solo concerts with a monographic program by J.S. Bach. In October I'll play at the Venice Biennale a version for double-bass and accordion of “In Croce” by Sofia Gubaidulina (edited by Daniele Roccatò). More concerts are scheduled with the Symphonic Orchestra of Lecce playing “Seven Words” by Sofia Gubaidulina and with the new accordion trio “Fatum” (with Angelo Miele and Giuseppe

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Scigliano). I also planed the recording of a new solo CD with a monographic program by J.S. Bach.

On bandoneon, after the production and performance of the show “Concierto de Tango” with the Miguel Zotto Dance Company, I’ll produce a new tango show in the season 2014/2015. Concerts with the “Decarissimo Astor”, a project by the “Four for Tango” group with the actor Enzo Decaro. From November again for the third consecutive year, the tour with “Maria de Buenos Aires” by A. Piazzolla with the Opera House in Bucharest where I’ll be “the bandoneon”.



**Massimiliano Pitocco** (b. 1969, Italy) studied accordion with Alessandro Di Zio in Pescara and with Max Bonnay in Paris. He was graduated as an accordionist from the Superior National Academy of Music in Paris in 1992, at the Academy of Music "Ville de Paris" in 1993. He also graduated with honours in Organ from Pescara Conservatory with Professor Giovanna Franzoni in 1992 and in Accordion in Bari Conservatory in 1994. He also studied Composition with Edgar Alandia. He has attended masterclass with F. Lips, V. Zubitsky, J. Mornet, M. Ellegaard, and as an organist with T. Kopman, D. Roth, L. Rogg and with M. Radulescu in Cremona where he studied for two years. He won a lot of international competitions, like the first prize in Castelfidardo (1986 and 1988) and the second prize at the "World Cup" (C.I.A.) in Switzerland (1989). He is often invited to conferences and masterclasses, as well as presiding over the juries of the most important international contests as Castelfidardo and Klingenthal competitions. He played in the most important theaters such as Monaco, Frankfurt, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, Brussels, Hamburg, Lisbon, Belgrade, Vienna, Paris, Lyons, Luxembourg,

Budapest, Berlin Konzerthaus, Tonhalle in Zurich and Lucerne, Mexico City, Sydney, Tokyo, Yokohama, Morocco, Brasil, USA, and in the most important theaters in Italy (Parco della Musica in Rome, Venice, Bellini Theatre in Naples, Politeama Theatre in Lecce, Verdi Theatre in Trieste, Pergola Theatre in Florence, Verdi Theatre in Milan, Massimo and Biondi Theatre in Palermo, Piccinni Theatre in Bari, Comunale Theatre in Bologna. He also plays the Bandonion and he has been interested in tango music, particularly in A.Piazzolla's music and in 1998 he founded the Four for Tango quartet, in 2000 the TrisTango and later in 2006 the Sextet “Viento de Tango”. In Switzerland, in 2002 he played and conducted the opera "Maria de Buenos Aires" by A.Piazzolla–H. Ferrer, winning an outstanding success both from public and critics.

He cooperated and still cooperates with great musicians and actors such as Milva, Luis Bacalov, Ennio Morricone, Ivan Fedele, Sylvano Bussotti, Gidon Kremer, Nicola Piovani, Vinicio Capossela, Michele Placido, Sebastiano Lo Monaco, Leopoldo Mastelloni, David Riondino, Adolfo Margiotta. He recorded a lot of movies and Tv soundtracks as well as lots of compact–discs for record companies like Dynamic, Wergo, Sculture d'aria, Riovalto–Ducale, Wide, Azzurra and MAP. He the accordion professo at Rome Conservatory "Santa Cecilia", and gives masterclasses at Portogruaro Festival and Pescara Music Academy.

His students, Cesare Chiacchiarretta, Dario Flammini, Giuseppe Scigliano, Adriano Ranieri, Gianni and Walter Di Girolamo, Angelo Miele, Saria Convertino, Samuele Telari have been winners of the best accordion competitions in the world and they work as teachers in several Conservatories.

[www.massimilianopitocco.com](http://www.massimilianopitocco.com)

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## Lithuanian Accordion Developments

interview with Raimondas Sviackevicius

**Claudio Jacomucci:** *You are a very active musicians as you combine solo and chamber music performing with teaching at the Lithuanian Academy of Music. You also have a quite long experience as organizer of some successful festivals in Vilnius and Palanga. Where does this big motivation come from? Tell us about your fundamental steps from your student's life to the professional one.*

**Raimondas Sviackevicius:** In my case the motivation and all this enthusiasm is probably a bit different than normally in other accordionists' cases as I was involved in accordion life from very early childhood. Somehow it came very naturally, I almost never asked myself why. I only asked how. And after many years of doing that staff I still do not find easily a quick answer if I wonder what for or why should I do one or another thing. It could sound very boring but it is really my inner feeling, passion and biggest part of my life, which I think would be enough boring if I would not do this.

When I was a child my father Ricardas Sviackevicius, who is the person which gave me that genetic feeling probably, always tried to turn my interest to music and accordion as a general instrument. When I started to attend piano lessons from 5 years old, all teachers felt that I was enough musical to undertake professional studies. My piano teacher was very sorry that my father after two years lessons redirected me to accordion; let's say that pianists don't show much sympathy for the accordion. I remind you, that at that time (Soviet time) it was forbidden to play accordion under 9 years old in state music school (also because there were no small size instruments).

Talking shortly about my childhood, it was enough successful, many different competitions, concerts, etc., a lot of daily practice at home which sometimes was really hard, especially when friends were bicycling, playing football, etc. But probably all that good people around, which taught me a lot and showed me different things and possibilities, gave me the motivation to continue. Another very strong motivation in my childhood was being close to great artists: in our house, very often, many well-known professors like V. Semionov, F. Lips, A. Dmitriev, O. Sharov, A. Rizol, W. Puchnowski, V. Cuchran and many others (mostly from Soviet Union, which was the only possible way at that time) had conversations, discussions where I was always present. Some of them also gave me lessons. I was surrounded of accordion world's people because my father started to organize international accordion festivals already from 1986 (the same festival which I am continuing at the present time).

Going a bit further with my studies, it was nice to have the chance to study with Zita Abromaviciute at the Lithuanian academy of music. No so many people abroad know her, but she was really wonderful person, real musician and teacher from inside. The main thing for her (which is the most important thing for me nowadays) is the sound and the way we produce it. I remember the lessons with her as the most beautiful pedagogical experience, always searching, experimenting with the body, developing every lesson and teaching me to be self-critic, objective and independent.

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The studies with great persons such as Bogdan Dowlasz (Poland), Matti Rantanen (Finland) and Friedrich Lips (Russia, studied in The Hague, Netherlands) made my motivation even stronger to keep working, to go forward and to promote the instrument. When I was really strongly influenced by new, modern, contemporary music, during my studies in Helsinki, it was a big reason to work with composers in Lithuania, there I found a big field of empty, unrealized ideas as many wonderful composers who were never been well informed about accordion; they just missed this instrument. Here I understood the importance of building a new repertoire in Lithuania. This motivated me again very strongly to work.

And finally, when I realized that the accordion festival, which I saw from my childhood as a very “accordion oriented” event, only addressed to the same small circle of accordion people, I understood that it had to be changed. My activity as an organizer came from the big need of changing the festival format and because this is a good way and possibility to present the accordion from its best side. Changes, in the organization of Vilnius and Palanga International Accordion Festivals, were really good in all senses; people met the accordion in different unexpected art areas, some of them were shocked, some of them interested, touched but finally the accordion in Lithuania has nowadays a much stronger position as a serious instrument. Organizers of classical instruments festivals and concert seasons understood that accordion could be inserted in all main programs, that it is a professional instrument which has great possibilities.

**CJ:** *I have personally seen a massive participation and involvement of the young generation of performers in your festival in Vilnius. You have built up a multifaceted image of the instrument, presenting all kinds of artists with no stylistic borders (from the very experimental projects, improvised music, music theatre, to classic chamber and symphonic music, tango and other traditional music projects). What do you think about the traditional, old-fashioned competitions and festivals and the influence they have on young talents?*

**RS:** The first part of question partially answers to itself. Yes, as mentioned before it is important to have a vision of the accordion, to build it as professional instrument, to present its image as wider as possible. I think following those ideas I already changed the opinion of skeptics looking on that, but of course it's very subjective and let's say, temporary. It's necessary to work on it continuously, searching new, untraditional solutions, experiments, multi-art connections, to be attractive in a professional way. Organizing the festival I always keep in my mind the wish to show the instrument in the widest panoramic view. That's why we have so many different styles and genres and mixture of all kind of music starting from classical, contemporary with orchestras, string quartets, acc & electronics commissioning new premiere works by Lithuanian composers (which I always have in mind like an axe) and to modern jazz, mainstream jazz, fusion, theater performances, tango or good quality entertainment accordion music. To have all these genres is not so difficult and nothing new but the idea is always to present high quality projects, fresh ideas and new subjects. Generally we could call it – attractive accordion music.

Here we could mention opposite sides of this attraction. There so many different tries to

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be attractive in a very fast way, to become a “star” in few minutes in TV Got Talent Show playing pop, or distorted classical melodies in a primitive way, having in mind the result of becoming a pop star. It is somehow like fast-food, we are misleading ourselves when we see the advertisements of those colorful and “healthy” hamburger. Those who makes this promotion know our psychology and they also know that we will eat it, believing that it is OK. Even if we understand that it’s not real meal, sometimes we use it, maybe because it is fast and we always are hurry. With pseudo talents, who are tricking on masses of people playing with one finger nice tunes from the stages or TV screens, it’s somehow the same. They reach a fast result, they became popular in few seconds and they think that’s the way for accordion. The biggest tragedy is that to turn audience’s attention from that to the serious accordion image is much more difficult. In some countries the serious accordion culture has been destroyed by that kind of making the instrument “popular”. In our country I see the same problem: young people are smart, but also very jealous. When they see colleagues doing that pop promotion, they suddenly think “why shouldn’t I try this too?”. To find a motivation to work on baroque, classical or contemporary music, studying it professionally is much more difficult.

Talking about the traditional, old-fashioned, close-circle competitions and festivals there are again very controversial subjects. It is a very good thing that for sure all competitions create the motivation to prepare, to participate, to win, to travel, to meet friends, to know teachers, etc. All these things are for sure very positive and stimulating for young people to work, giving them motivation in practicing hard works. Another thing, talking about close-friends competitions, where everybody sees the tendencies and influences of the jury members or the organizers on the results, is of course deception. The winners of such a non-transparent competitions (also planned in advance) do not appear like real winners to their friends and colleagues who see them in very negative light.

That’s why organizing international accordion competition in Vilnius I improved the judging system where everything is very clear, open and the score is shown publicly in real time. In this way we can avoid any kind of misunderstandings or conflicts and also teach some jury members to judge with bigger responsibility.

Other very important things that must be changed in competitions are the repertoire and the requirements. In order to have our instrument on top, to teach young people right things, to promote good quality music, involving students to develop it, these are all important things for the prestige of the accordion. The quality of our repertoire is very important. If we start to work on it from the beginning, it will work for sure very well. Students in music academies are sometimes shocked by the works they are asked to study, because most of them never tried to perform any good modern work, but only played bad music which shows superficial effects and fingers’ skills. Accordion competition requirements must be close to professional piano or other classical instruments competitions, for the best image of the accordion.

**CJ:** *What kind of “modern accordion perspective” do you see in the future?*

**RS:** “Perspective” is a very abstract expression, especially “modern accordion”. It is really one of the most complicated instrument traveling through all genres, styles and changing

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its image, changing opinion about it, comparing it to other instruments. Other instrument don't have such a problem: violin, piano or clarinet know where they must be. Accordion, as a music instrument, is constructively already modern and enough perfect. The problem of its perspective belongs to people who work professionally, who have good visions, who understand that problems globally, not only thinking about personal interests. If accordion education from children music school to Academies will spread right and useful things, if young people will have chances to realize their innovative projects (which unfortunately depends also very much on the economic situations of the countries), if motivated young people will work on new repertoire for accordion, the perspective and future of the accordion should be really wonderful. Nowadays it is important to improve all these steps having in mind the main thing – accordion as a professional instrument.

Classical accordion evolution must be improved, as mentioned before, with professional teachers in all levels of teaching and paying the biggest attention to the new repertoire which only professionals could develop in the right way and involve in that process their successors.

**CJ:** *Could you tell us about your future projects?*

**RS:** Future usually belongs to us, but very often plans are changing depending on very strange and different things. This is why I am not so enthusiastic to tell future plans. Looking on it in general I have big plans both as performer, commissioning large works for accordion, performing with very different musicians as well as organizing international accordion events in Lithuania. I have many nice ideas presenting high level music, wonderful artists from around the world.

As a teacher at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre I always have the vision of influencing my students with good music, to push them to work seriously, to motivate them to continue my work, always with newer ideas.



**Raimondas Sviackevičius** (b. 1975, Lithuania) was graduated with MA from the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre of Vilnius in 1999. In 1998–1999 he studied at the Academy of Music in Lodz (Poland), with Prof. Bogdan Dowlasz. In 1999–2000 he studied the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki (Finland), with Prof. Matti Rantanen. 1999–2001 he pursued post-graduate studies degree at the Royal Conservatoire in the Hague (Holland), with Prof. Friedrich Lips and Johan De With. He has performed as a soloist with the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, Kaunas Symphony Orchestra, St. Christopher Chamber Orchestra, Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra and Klaipeda Chamber Orchestra. He has given recitals, appeared in original programmes at the festivals Sugrizimai, St. Christopher Summer Festival, Druskomanija, Klangspuren, Venice Biennale, Gaida, Jauna muzika, Druskininku vasara su Ciurlioniu, Turning sounds 4 and Muzikos ruduo as well as W. Lutoslawski Modern Art Forum in Lublin, Musica Moderna in Lodz

(Poland), Bayan and Bayanists in Moscow, accordion festivals in Sanok (Poland), Chelyabinsk (Russia). Performing actively as a soloist he also plays chamber music and participates in various formations and unconventional groups playing experimental and avant-garde music as well as jazz. In 2004, he joined the contemporary music ensemble Gaida, and since 2009 has been actively involved in the Lithuanian Ensemble Network.

The list of his partners includes BSM Trio (cello, accordion, violin), The New ARTrio (accordion, percussion, electronics, vocals), with the guest star Sainkho Namtchylak (vocal), ACCOsax Trio (accordion, saxophone, percussion), Sviackevičius–Kirsenska Duo (accordion and tuba), as well as Chordos String Quartet, Disobedient Ensemble and many others.

He was a member of jury at the international competitions in Klingenthal, at the A. Krzanowski International Competition (Poland), Premio Città di Castelfidardo, Val Tidone International Music Competitions and Stefano Bizzarri Int. Accordion Prize (Italy), Coupe Mondiale (Slovak Republic, Hungary, New Zealand, Croatia, China).

Since 2000, Sviackevičius has been teaching accordion on a faculty at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre in Vilnius.

Sviackevičius closely collaborates with Lithuanian composers, commissioning and performing new works for accordion. Since 2006 he has premiered a number of new concertos for accordion and orchestra by composers like Zibuokle Martinaityte, Feliksas Bajoras, Jurgis Juozapaitis dedicated to Sviackevičius was premiered at Muzikos Ruduo festival in 2007, and in 2009, Pazaislis Festival hosted a premiere of “Elegy for Those Who Left Their Homeland” for accordion and string orchestra by Giedrius Kuprevičius.

Recently, beside his performing career Raimondas Sviackevičius has been actively involved in organization of various accordion events, and since 2008, he has been an artistic director of International Accordion Festivals in Vilnius and Palanga.

[www.sviackevicius.com](http://www.sviackevicius.com)

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## The instrument that does not age

interview with Krassimir Sterev

**Claudio Jacomucci:** *How did you come across classical accordion and contemporary music from your original country, Bulgaria, where accordion has such deep roots in traditional music?*

**Krassimir Sterev:** I never thought or think of classical accordion. I just wanted to play the accordion. As a child I had the possibility to chose an instrument and it was simply clear that I want to play the accordion. Even today I cannot say I play classical accordion. What is classical accordion? We can discuss this. I actually hope that the instrument will keep being modern, maybe this was the reason I did chose the accordion. This instrument somehow does not age.

**CJ:** *You are very active, beside performing as a soloist, as a member of chamber music formations, ensembles and orchestras such as Klangforum Wien, Vienna Philharmonic, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Ensemble Kontrapunkte, musikFabrik. Could you mention few experiences that happened to you during the cooperation with musicians and composers that made you change your point of view on accordion playing?*

**KS:** Thru all this kind of work I have sure developed a lot. It is probably a complex process. Sure I listen in a different way today. I maybe make a musical phrase in a (hopefully) better way. As every musician, I have learned how to play with others. How to create my sound in a way to mix well, or better with other instruments. Maybe I have learned thru the work more about sound production.

**CJ:** *What do you think of the classical accordion repertoire generally played in academies and competitions? Does it represent the present of the original accordion music?*

**KS:** Sure there is great literature played in academies and competitions. Everyone could say these pieces represent the origin of the accordion and the other not, but for me most important is if a music is played with love – if that's the case, then... GREAT! Everyone should feel free to do his own way and if we have the freedom, we (all together), even in different ways, will develop a great accordion and accordion future. There are so many different styles and ways of playing music and the accordion can be part of so many of them. What can be better than this?

**CJ:** *Is it more important for students to spend years and years to learn the conventional repertoire or should they be more involved in creative processes? How?*

**KS:** The answer of this question is in the question. Music is a creative process. If you are creative it does not matter where you are, in a school, theater or on the street. You will develop! Maybe in different ways, but you will anyway reach something new, because you are creative.

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**CJ:** *What kind of “modern accordion perspective” do you see in the future?*

**KS:** Well, I hope we can spread out the accordion to other planets, solar systems and galaxies. If we are successful. then we did it. Here we have to think of new technologies, materials, maybe playing the "accordion" only with mind if needed. maybe producing sound or vibrations in other kind of atmosphere..who knows.. but..something like this ..I want to see

**CJ:** *Which aspects of the evolution of the classical accordion (and accordionists) should be further improved and enhanced?*

**KS:** The accordion had the ability to reach masses of people. If that was not the case, I probably would not have heard the instrument, would not have fell in love with this beautiful sound. I think that sound is the keyword. Accordion manufacturers and developers should always be careful about what kind of technology to use/invent and so on. And interpreters should then create the best possible sound. It is so easy to say it...

**CJ:** *Could you tell us about your future projects?*

**KS:** George Aperghis "Situations": I'm reading this big ensemble work right now. Some works for my microtonal accordion (quarter tone accordion) will be composed by young composers.



**Krassimir Sterev** (Bulgaria) where he started his musical education in Plovdiv. He continued his studies at the Music University in Graz, Austria and also in Denmark, where he held a scholarship from the Royal Danish Academy of Music and finished his studies as accordionist in a soloist class. His musical development was strongly influenced by teachers like Mogens Ellegaard, James Crabb and Georg Schulz.

Krassimir Sterev internationally performs as a soloist and member of chamber music formations, ensembles and orchestras and participates in many renowned festivals. His engagements also include performances in various theatre and dance theatre productions and projects specifically developed for children. Since 2003 Krassimir Sterev has been

a member of Klangforum Wien. He has also worked with the Vienna Philharmonic (under Pierre Boulez and Daniel Barenboim), the London Philharmonia Orchestra and the RSO Wien, with Ensemble Kontrapunkte, MusikFabrik and Ensemble Phace amongst others and is part of Trio Amos.

Krassimir Sterev also focusses his attention on the development of a special repertoire for accordion. Many composers have written new pieces for him (amongst others Bernhard Lang, Pierluigi Billone, Bernhard Gander, Olga Neuwirth, Aureliano Cattaneo), which he also premiered.

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## At Viera Janárceková's

by Harald Oeler and Judith Hampel

In one of the oldest buildings of Bamberg (Germany) lives the contemporary composer Viera Janárceková (born in 1951, in Svit, Slovakia). As she opens the heavy wooden gate with a heartfelt smile for us, we immediately feel welcomed by this alert and open-minded person. We follow her being astonished by the court of the medieval house and find ourselves at her living room table with coffee and cake. Some music instruments, especially the grand piano in the middle of the room, pop into our eyes. Viera Janárceková would permanently like to have an accordion in her collection of instruments for trying out her compositions. Since the composer intensely experiments with the instruments she is writing for and, besides, is always looking for new sounds and noises.

She tells that first, she had not taken the accordion seriously during her study time in Bratislava (in the 1970s), because it was pinned in the folk music department. Only when she heard Gubaidulina's works "De profundis" and later "Silenzio", she noticed how much more the instrument can do. The overtones of the accordion particularly excite the composer. She tells us that when the minor second is played you can vividly hear strong beat frequencies which give the impression of quarter tones.

Inspired by Sofia Gubaidulina's pieces Viera Janárceková wrote chamber music work for accordion for the first time in 2003. In the "Three Windows Duo" for violoncello and accordion we look "with the ears" out of three different windows. To make no claims of being complete with describing musical works, we want to give a small impression of the heard music.

The first movement of the piece, named "Sky Stripe", sounds spherical and meditative. Long resting, almost infinitely seeming sounds of the accordion rich in overtones are interwoven with the flageolet tones of the violoncello, until it is not possible to distinguish one instrument from the other anymore.

In the "Street Scene", the second movement of the piece, this quiet atmosphere is interrupted by the juggling, fluttering cello. The accordion steals in with clusters and turns upwards until it is at an end. All over again the two instruments interact, moving towards or away from, imitating and ignoring each other before the music sounds peacefully and becomes silent.

In the last movement, the "Trace Tango", we hear a diminished Tango, often only vaguely perceptible on the basis of some scraps of melody. Viera Janárceková says about the dance that she danced, i.e. composed, it "sometimes also against the rhythm". Thus she bristles the tango, whose traces lead her back to her childhood where she heard it in the parental radio, with shifts of rhythm and displaced accents.

Already one year later, in 2004, the composer wrote another chamber music work in which the accordion again is present. In the piece "wabi sabi" for violin, violoncello and accordion in two movements, she seems to take up the atmospheric mood from the "Sky Stripe" of the "Three Windows Duo" and intensifies it. Floating light flageolets and sul ponticelli of the string players, whose overtones are taken up by the accordion, leave

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behind all earthly concerns.

Long persistent pentatonic planes of sound with occasionally used motives remind of the oral organ “Sho” well known from the Japanese court music. Viera Janárceková masterfully mixes the accordion under the strings and creates in the first movement of “wabi sabi” a character of infinite breathing. This mood turns as the cello and the accordion suddenly slide into low positions. Now, the instruments are treated more crudely and more wildly: hitting and scratching on the strings, hard pizzicati, percussively used cello with stubborn rhythms, finger repetitions on the accordion, fast runs and so on seem to dive into hell. However, everything clears up again and the part ends in bright height.

In contrast to this, the second movement begins mincing and with sharp rhythms, interrupted by passages of almost romantic expression. Diverse techniques of playing the instruments over and over again lead to new eruptions of sound. Pressed chords on the accordion up to grating noises on the strings, indifferent and clear, delicate and harsh sounds result in a big range of sounds and noises.

In her current pieces Viera Janárceková deals more and more with multiphonics. Thus, in the “concert for accordion, clarinet and string orchestra“ (premiere on 6/12/2013) she connected the overtone wealth of the accordion with multiphonics of the clarinet. So that undertones and overtones of the instruments meet each other and form a whole acoustic pattern.

With the accordion Viera Janárceková, the “sound discoverer“, has found a not yet fully explored distinctive instrument, which traces she follows in more and more pieces of her oeuvre. In her works “Three Windows Duo“ and “wabi sabi” the accordion plays already its own, unique role which lies far away from tonal substitutability of other instruments. She remains loyal to her musical language and treats the accordion skillfully as an instrument of the present from the first up to the last tone.

List of works Viera Janárceková in which the accordion appears:

“Concerto for accordion, clarinet and string orchestra” (2013)

“Ungleiche Zwillinge”, for organ and accordion (2013)

“Vier Tangomutanten”, for accordion and cello (2012)

“Bezirzungen” for accordion (2011)

“Fata Morgana”, for accordion (2009–10) (not yet premiered)

“Obertonschatten und Tiefenschärfe”, for cello, bass-cl, trombone and accordion (2008)

“wabi-sabi”, trio for violin, cello, accordion (2004)

“Three windows Duo”, for cello and accordion (2003)

[www.janarcekova.de](http://www.janarcekova.de)



**Harald Oeler** (b.1977, Germany) began his accordion studies with Prof. Hugo Noth at Academy of Music Trossingen. Later he continued with Prof. Stefan Hussong at the Academy of Music of Würzburg in 2001, where, upon completing his performing arts degree with distinction in 2005, he was accepted into master class and additional jazz studies. Harald Oeler won national and international prizes, including the 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize at the Third International Accordion Competition Tokyo/Japan, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize at the 2005 German Music Conservatory Competition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize at the International Accordion Competition Arrasate/Spain, and in 2008 the 1<sup>st</sup> Prize at the International Accordion Competition in Klingenthal with Duo Animé. He was working together with some of the highest esteemed artists of Germany such as Anette von Hehn, Thomas Hoppe, Stefan Heinemeyer and the jazz musicians Joo Krauss and Prof. H.P. Salentin. Harald Oeler was awarded a scholarship by the German National Merit Foundation and has received support from Yehudi Menuhin Foundation *Live Music Now*. Nowadays he pursues a very active career as a concert artist and lecturer in Germany and internationally. Beside the performance of old music, also

contemporary music and the collaboration with young composers such as Henrik Ajax, Axel Rudebeck and Seiko Itoh plays a central role in his concerts. Currently he is working on a new chamber music CD, which combines contemporary and baroque music by Astor Piazzolla and Antonio Vivaldi. Since 2009 he is teaching at “Maximilians University” in Munich and “Music Academy of Symphony Orchestra” in Hof. In 2012 Harald Oeler was a guest professor at “Normal Shenzhen University” in China.

[www.haraldoeler.com](http://www.haraldoeler.com)

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## **Duo MARES, new repertoire for viola and accordion**

by Marko Kassl

Duo MARES, consisting of Esra Pehlivanli (viola) and Marko Kassl (accordion) was founded in 2004. Esra had contacted me for a concert at the prestigious Grachtenfestival in Amsterdam, a series of concerts taking place around the wonderful Amsterdam “grachts”, the characteristic dutch canals. At this house–concert there would not have been a piano, so Esra looked for a movable instrument and, well, who would blame her for choosing the accordion in the end?

The combination of those two instruments is extremely rich: the accordion, capable of combining and melting with practically all kinds of imaginable instruments, in certain registers melts so well with the viola, that, at some points, both instruments cannot be distinguished from each other! At the same time both instruments are so strong in their own characteristics that they can become completely distinct in other passages.

When Esra and me prepared for our newly founded duo’s first concert, we decided on an extremely varied program ranging from J.S. Bach to Igor Stravinsky to Astor Piazzolla to Isang Yun, a program that embraced a couple of centuries of musical history but which was made up exclusively of arrangements!

As there were just a very few other accordion–viola duos in history, there naturally was not a big repertoire of original music for that combination. So after some time of tilling foreign soils in terms of arranging all kinds of music from Renaissance to Classic to Romantic to 20th century to Tango—and thus having quite some success with the audiences—we decided to start working with composers in order to create a broader original repertoire.

Of course it is always a big pleasure to play music by the greatest composers of music history and to sometimes even add something fresh and new by our arrangement but it always stays this: an arrangement! In our opinion the combination of viola and accordion is simply too interesting and its sonorities are too delightful and versatile and rich to limit ourselves to music written for other instruments initially.

Every composer we ever contacted was struck by the aural possibilities of the combination viola and accordion. Already in the first three pieces Duo MARES received we could notice that every composer sees other strong points and possibilities in our combination.

The very first composition written for us was by the Slovenian grand seigneur Ivo Petric: he wrote the 15 minutes piece “Duo Concertante” (2006), a work of grand Romantic sweeps and opulent sonorities in a harmonically rich polyphonic texture.

Right after that we received Turkish composer Selim Dogru’s “Elegy” (2007) for viola, accordion and tape, a work that integrates electronic sounds with the authentic instruments viola and accordion in a purely natural way and preserves the warmth of

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acoustic music even in the electronically structured moments.

The third piece was Bruno Strobl's "Broken Waves" (2007), where the Austrian composer dives deeply into the sound possibilities and extended playing techniques of viola and accordion, thus creating sound worlds that in this form only those two instruments are capable of.

Ever since Duo MARES continues generating new repertoire for viola and accordion written by internationally acclaimed composers, until now there are around 30 compositions dedicated and premiered by this duo or still waiting for the first performance. Amongst others there are pieces by Roderik de Man, Peter Koeszeghy, Chiel Meijering, Gerhard Stäbler, Frank Zabel, Sinta Wullur and Anne la Berge.

An especially big interest of Duo MARES is to incorporate other art forms into the performances. There is a couple of pieces for the duo with live electronics, live video or theatrical elements, the biggest step into that field until now the duo had with its project "Volume Nuevo+" which was laureate at the Jur Naessens Music Award 2009. This project incorporates contemporary dance, theatre, live video and electronics; the music consists of pieces written for Duo MARES.

Many of the compositions got recorded, 2010 ClassicClips published the CD "Volume Nuevo" containing exclusively pieces composed for the Duo MARES, music by Chiel Meijering, Ivo Petric, Sinta Wullur, Bruno Strobl, Gerard Beljon and Nico Huijbregts.

In 2012 the turkish label Cagsav Müzik released the album "Richness of the Tones", its program consists mainly of original works by turkish composers. None of them had composed for accordion before; so it was a thrilling experience working with them and seeing what they heard in the accordion as well as the particular combination of accordion with viola.

Amongst others this album also contains the premiere recording of the first ever double concerto for viola, accordion and symphony orchestra, Selim Dogru's "Devil's Diary" (2008). This 15-minute, single-movement concerto shows the two solo instruments in a constant struggle against an evil world symbolized by the symphony orchestra.

While typing these lines another double concerto for Duo MARES is on its way: German composer Frank Zabel's Double concerto for viola, accordion and symphony orchestra (2012/2013) in three movements was commissioned by the Neue Philharmonie Westfalen and will be premiered 12th may 2013 with the Neue Philharmonie Westfalen under its general music director Heiko Mathias Förster.

Yet another step to a broader acknowledgment of the wonderful combination of viola and accordion.

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**List of compositions for Duo MARES:**

- Altay, Gökce:** Perpetuum Mobile (2009)  
**Beljon, Gerard (1952):** Bye ... (2009)  
**Berge, Anne La (1955):** Plight for viola, accordion and Max/MSP (2011)  
**Danner, Wilfried Maria (1956):** “Verwerfungen” Fragmente, Bruchstücke (2010/2011–2012)  
**Dogru, Selim (1971):** Elegy for viola, accordion and tape (2006)  
**Dogru, Selim (1971):** Devil’s Diary for viola, accordion and symphony orchestra (2008)  
**Graan, Danny De (1973):** NEW WORK for viola, accordion and electronic (2013)  
**Grimminger, Matthias (1965):** Collage. 5 Notturmi (2009)  
**Huijbregts, Nico (1961):** Falsche Tango (2007)  
**Janson, Erik (1967):** Getanzte Zerfetzung (2012)  
**Koeszeghy, Peter (1971):** PEARL (2012)  
**Kolat, Yigit (1984):** Exlibris (2008)  
**Kunstein, Andreas (1967):** Almost a Tango! (2010)  
**Man, Roderik De (1943):** Tangente (2011)  
**Meijering, Chiel (1954):** Bumelen gehen (2007)  
**Meijering, Chiel (1954):** Amber and Cream (2007)  
**Mex, Henry (1962):** Slices on Bratschak (2012)  
**Mirza, Pervez (1937):** NEW WORK (2013)  
**Noordegraaf, Arnoud (1974):** NEW WORK for viola, accordion and live video (2013)  
**Özdemir, Tolga Zafer (1975):** Karadeniz (2008)  
**Özmen, Onur (1981):** Veda (2007)  
**Petric, Ivo (1931):** Duo Concertante (2006)  
**Petric, Ivo (1931):** Variationen auf ein Thema Bartoks (1954) [authorized arrangement]  
**Stäbler, Gerhard (1949):** Black Tiger Tango (plus) (2006/2011)  
**Strobl, Bruno (1949):** Broken Waves (2007)  
**Theiler, Christoph (1959):** Danse Dérangée (2012)  
**Toker, Hakan Ali (1976):** Notenbuch für Pernille E.Bertelsen (2009)  
**Wullur, Sinta (1958):** Moods and Modes (2009)  
**Zabel, Frank (1968):** Verwerfungen II (2008)  
**Zabel, Frank (1968):** Double Concerto for viola, acc. and symphony orchestra (2012/13)

**Recordings of or with Duo MARES:**

**Volume Nuevo** – Classic Clips 2010 – Duo MARES

(works by C.Meijering, I.Petric, S.Wullur, B.Strobl, G.Beljon, N.Huijbregts)

**Richness of the Tones** – A.K.Müzik 2011 – Duo MARES

(works by H.A.Toker, T.Z.Özdemir, M.Sun, G.Altay, M.C.Özer, O.Özmen, Y.Kolat, S.Dogru)

**Falsche Tango** – Vindu Music 2010 – portrait CD of composer Nico Huijbregts

**Past & Present Tracks** – Visisonor Records 2012 – portrait CD of composer Roderik de Man



**Marko Kassl** (b. 1976, Austria) studied with Mika Väyrynen, Roman Pechmann, James Crabb and Mie Miki. With her he finished his post-graduate studies at the Folkwang Hochschule Essen/Germany.

Kassl was awarded a scholarship by the Richard-Wagner-Verband and a sponsorship award from GWK Münster/Westphalia. He was also a price-winner in the JAA Accordion Competition in Tokyo and the international Pro Loco Camalò Competition in Italy.

As soloist and chamber musician Marko Kassl performed in festivals and venues like

Grachtenfestival Amsterdam, Ankara Festival, Mersin Music Festival, Donaueschinger Musiktage, at the Duisburg Theater, Philharmonie Essen, Köln Philharmonie, Festival Musica Eterna Dubrovnik, Chamber Music Festival Utrecht and Ljubljana Festival.

He is intensively collaborating composers who have dedicated works to him: Stefan Heucke, Roderik de Man, Wilfried Maria Danner, Sinta Wullur, Ivo Petric, Bruno Strobl, Chiel Meijering, Philemon Mukarno, Juan Felipe Waller and Nico Huijbregts. In 2008 he premiered with Esra Pehlivanli playing the viola Selim Dogru's "Devil's Diary" for viola, accordion and symphony orchestra.

He is also involved in interdisciplinary projects – for example at "AUD-VIS" an avant-garde silent movies project of Filmbank Amsterdam. He was musical director at Georg Kreisler's "Heute Abend: Lola Blau", which toured theaters like Stadttheater Walfischgasse in Vienna/Austria. Duo MARES (with Esra Pehlivanli – viola) were laureates of the 2009 Jur Naessens Music Award with their interdisciplinary project "Volume Nuevo+", where they incorporate contemporary dance, theatre, live video and electronics.

He has recorded several CDs: "Heimat" (ClassicClips, 2008) features world premiere recordings of music for accordion and piano, "Spielzeug" (Karnatic Lab, 2009) with Fie Schouten/bass clarinet and Koen Kaptijn/trombone, "VOLUME NUEVO" (ClassicClips, 2010) by Duo MARES in a selection of compositions written specially for this duo, "Richness of the Tones" (Cagsav Müzik, 2012) by Duo MARES playing original compositions by turkish composers, amongst others it also contains the world premiere recording of Selim Dogru's double concerto "Devil's Diary" for viola, accordion and symphony orchestra. Kassl also recorded for diverse portrait-CDs of composers like Nico Huijbregts' "Falsche Tango" (2010) or Roderik de Man's "Past & Present Tracks" (2011).

Marko Kassl also recorded for radio-stations like Deutschlandradio, WDR (both Germany), TRT (Turkey), Ö1 (Austria), RTV Slovenia and Concertzender (the Netherlands).

He teaches at Detmold Academy of Music in Germany.

[www.marko-kassl.de](http://www.marko-kassl.de)

[www.duomares.com](http://www.duomares.com)

[www.esralto.com](http://www.esralto.com)

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## Composing for accordion

by Iñaki Alberdi

The following summary is a selection of 24 works (of a total of more than 50). These works, premiered during the last 20 years, have received the support and the boost from players, conductors, record labels, reviewers, specialized magazines, teachers, publishers, radios and programmers in general, for being admitted in the professional sphere of contemporary music.

I will describe next works divided into four categories: music for accordion, chamber music with accordion, music for accordion plus orchestra and music for accordion orchestra.

### Music for accordion solo

#### **Sofía Martínez (1964)**

Work: "Lluvia" – 1998

Manuscript / No Edition

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi. 30/06/1998

Site: Festival de Música y Danza de Granada

Recording: JJMM – Banco de sonido – BS 025 CD

This is a brief minimalist work, written having the structure in mind and based on Federico García Lorca's poem "Oh lluvia silenciosa..." with clear references to Manuel de Falla with a hidden musical extract of his "Amor Brujo". This work imitates the sound of the rain while falling on the strings of the piano, a very poetical idea that the composer shows with a great originality. Martínez developed a link between Granada and the different sources that inspire the work.

#### **Ramon Lazkano (1968)**

Work : "Aztarnak" – 1998–2000

Publisher: Le Chant du Monde

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi – 16/11/2001

Site: Ernest Lluch Kultur Etxea – San Sebastián

Recording: Verso – VRS 2023

#### **Antonio Lauzurika (1964)**

Work: "Trama de aire y de Sombras" – 2000/01

Publisher: Manuscript

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi – Barcelona

Site: Casa Grogga – Barcelona – 12/2002

#### **Zuriñe Fernández Gerenabarrena (1965)**

Work: "Izpi" – 2000/01

Publisher: Hauspoz

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi – 20/08/2001

Site: Quincena Musical de San Sebastián

Recording: Verso – VRS 2023

*Izpi* is a flash of light through a brief articulation that progressively can turn into constant or flashing light. Gerenabarrena converts the articulations into vibrant and intense sounds providing also a theatrical, or at

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least, a visual act of the performer in relation to the instrument through the effort made by his own to create a sound from the scratch, from the air.

**Joan Guinjoan (1931)**

Work: "Sonidos de la tierra" – 2007–2011  
Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi 12/11/2008  
Site: La Pedrera – Barcelona  
Recording: Verso VRS 2135

**Sofia Gubaidulina (1931)**

Work: "Kadenza" – 2003/11  
Publisher: Sikorski Musikverlage Hamburg  
Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi – 22/12/2011  
Site: Iesu Church – San Sebastian  
Recording: Et'cetera KTC 1433

*Kadenza* is developed out of the performance of "Under the Sign of Scorpio" delivered by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in the "Quincena Musical de San Sebastian" in 2010. Shortly after it, we worked at her residence next to Hamburg with the aim of turning it into a work for solo accordion. Its melodic strength makes *Kadenza* a strong and flexible work allowing the player to externalize its expressive capacity through long phrasing and a wide dynamic range.

**Félix Ibarrodo (1943)**

Work: "Arinka" – 2003  
Publisher: Manuscript  
Premiere: Jean Marc Fabiano  
Site: Marseille

**Jesús Torres (1965)**

Work: "Itzal" – 1994–1996  
Publisher: Tritó  
Premiere: Ángel Luis Castaño – 14/03/1996  
Site: Teatro de la Caja. Festival Internacional de Primavera. Música del Siglo XX, Salamanca  
Recording: JJMM – Banco de sonido – BS 025 CD Iñaki Alberdi

With *Arinka* and *Itzal* I have had an ongoing relationship since the time when they were composed. For *Itzal*, Torres contacted me with the aim of recovering the performance of the work. This way it begins our professional relationship. Shortly after the recording came some orders for different ensembles.

With *Arinka*, it's the composer who is not convinced at all of the value of his work, but at the end we concluded it is a very new concept and effective sound processing on accordion. In *Arinka* the expression is linked to the rhythmic impulse and, for this, the use of extremes in dynamic range and the wide tessitura of the instrument are very accurate tools for the success of the work.

**Jesús Torres (1965)**

Work: "Cadencias" – 2004/13  
Publisher: Tritó  
Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi – 12/10/2013  
Site: Festival Internacional de Música Contemporánea de Tres Cantos.

**Chamber music with accordion**

**Pascal Gaigne**

Work: "Alphabet" – 1998 (acc/perc/sax)  
Manuscript / No Edition

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Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Oïasso Novis – 25/11/1998

Site: Semana de Música Contemporánea de Leioa

Pascal Gaigne, in a clear reference to an Eastern philosophy, composes a work with three movements where the base of the percussion is combined with the saxophone and the accordion as if they were a single instrument. A work which combines wind instruments with the flavour of chamber music, and with an unusual perspective for the accordionist of his own instrument. This allows him to explore new applications for the accordion. Moreover we also premiered works by Isabel Urrutia, Maite Aurrekoetxea, Jöel Mera or María Eugenia Luc.

### **Pascal Gaigne**

Work: "Avant la Nuit" – 2003 (acc/string quartet)

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Solistas de ORTVE – 18/01/2003

Site: Teatro Monumental de Madrid

Gaigne writes this work in allusion to dodecaphonic and serial music. The accordion seems to float above the sober theme of the strings. The rhythm is used as percussions that, at the same time, are pitches and colors. On the other hand the work is constantly infused with the melody which begins with.

### **Jesús Torres (1965)**

Work: "Accentus" – 2001 (acc/piano)

Publisher: TRITÓ S.L.

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Ananda Sukarlan – 28 / 02 / 2002

Site: Shauspielhaus Accordion Festival – Vienna

Recording: Verso – VRS 2023 Miguel Ituarte

### **Gabriel Erkoreka (1969)**

Work: "Soinua" – 2001 (acc/piano)

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Ananda Sukarlan 28/02/2002

Site: Shauspielhaus Accordion Festival – Vienna

Recording: Verso – VRS 2023 Miguel Ituarte

*Accentus* is a work of major importance and that treats both instruments in a really new way. Torres melts the accordion and the piano through the power of expression of the bellows: the piano percusses and the accordion makes the sound last, resonate. Time stops in central *hoquetus* where both instruments concur rhythms, accents and resonances.

*Soinua* starts off from a very different approach. It emphasizes the opposite peculiarities of each instrument for setting antagonic dialogue. The accordion sings, twists and exaggerates its expressive and pitch capacity while the piano appears sober and resonant through harmonic columns.

During this period we also premiered some works by David del Puerto, Victor Rebullida, Aureliano Cattaneo, Luca Mosca and Antonio Lauzurika.

### **Joan Guinjoan**

Work: "Fantasía del Trencadis" – 2006 (2 acc)

Publisher: EMEC

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Iñigo Aizpiolea – 20/01/2006

Site: David Josefowitz Recital Hall – London

### **José María Sánchez-Verdú (1968)**

Work: "Arquitecturas de espejos" – 2008 (2 acc)

Publisher: Breitkopf & Härtel

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Iñigo Aizpiolea – 08/08/2008

Site: Chillida Leku – Quincena Musical de San Sebastián

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The duo established in 1998 with Iñigo Aizpíolea lets us start with the restructure of an existing work: Joan Guinjoan's *Fantasia del Trencadis* is an orchestral passage from the Symphonic Suite of the opera ballet *Gaudí. Arquitecturas de Espejos* (2008), by José María Sánchez-Verdú (1968), lives in the silence while searching for "shadows" in the sound, textures and sound levels.

**Gabriel Erkoreka (1969)**

Work: "Kin" – 2003 (acc/cello)  
Publisher: Oxford University Press  
Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & David Apellániz – 5/11/2003  
Site: Festival BBK de Bilbao – Guggenheim Museum Bilbao  
Recording: Verso – VRS 2023

With the accordion and the cello Erkoreka wants to make a clear allusion to the sheng and the qin, two traditional chinese instruments. This work reflects the fragility of both instruments by composer's personal language, which gives a strong character to the work.

**Alberto Posadas (1967)**

Work: "Versa est in luctum" – 2002 (acc/sax/cello/perc/electr)  
Publisher: Manuscript  
Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi (acc), David Apellániz (cello) and Oiaso Novis  
Site: Santander

This work aims to stand up the role of electronics and its connexion to the instruments. It has a very elaborate and rich language in every musical aspects, excepting theatrical, and this is very enriching because of the creation of new sounds, little distinguishable from individuality but very interesting as a whole.

**Jesús Torres (1965)**

Work: "Double" – 2005 (ac/basscl/fl/perc/piano/cello/vln)  
Publisher: Tritó  
Premiere: Ensemble VOX21 – 03/04/2005  
Site: Festival "Mostly Modern Series" – Dublin  
Recording: Verso – VRS 2090 (Ensemble Residencias)

**Jesús Torres (1965)**

Work: "Cuentos de Andersen" – 2006 (acc/piano/vln/cello/ narrator)  
Publisher: Tritó  
Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Trío Arbós  
Site: "Círculo de Bellas Artes" – Madrid 05/2006  
Recording: Verso – VRS 2090 (Pedro María Sánchez – narrator)

*Double* is the chamber version from the concert for accordion and orchestra. The accordion part remains intact, but its instrumentation is more like a material restructuring rather than a reduction.

*Cuentos de Andersen* shows us Torres's most classical and nearest version during 40 minutes long. They are fantastic and imaginative tales, and the last one, *El Traje del Emperador*, has Waltz as an axis.

**Music for accordion & orchestra**

**Jesús Torres (1965)**

Work: "Concierto para Acordeón" – 2005  
Publisher: Tritó  
Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi ORCAM – Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid 21/06/2005  
Conductor: Luis Aguirre  
Site: National Auditorium – Madrid

This work has been classified by experts as one of the most important works of the second half of the XX and XXI century from Spanish repertoire. Finalist at the "International Rostrum of Composers (IRC–

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UNESCO)" it is an absolutely brilliant work, colorful, dramatic and shocking. An orchestra plays during its 19 minutes and includes six cadenzas for accordion and important developments of its orchestral part without soloist sections.

**Gabriel Erkoreka (1969)**

Work: "Akorda" – 1999

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & BOS – Orquesta Sinfónica de Bilbao – 13/05/1999

Conductor: Juanjo Mena

Site: Teatro Ayala de Bilbao

Recording: Stradivarius STR. 33811 (ORCAM & J.R. Encinar)

**Ramon Lazkano (1968)**

Work: "Itaun" – 2003

Publisher: Le Chant du Monde

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Hermitage Orchestra – 22/10/2003

Conductor: Alexis Soriano

Site: Hermitage Saint Petersburg

Both *Akorda* and *Itaun* are works for accordion and orchestra. In both works, the accordion plays with the orchestra and participates with distant sounds and evocative traces from the past. The accordion is not omnipresent but without it nothing sounds the same. This helps to understand, from another point of view, the sound of the orchestra with the accordion and to establish a space for sound and time by acoustic perception of the materials represented.

**José María Sánchez-Verdú (1968)**

Work: "Memoria del blanco" – 2013

Publisher: Breitkopf & Härtel

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Orquesta Sinfónica de Córdoba (2013)

Conductor: José Luis Temes

Site: Teatro de Córdoba

**Joan Guinjoan (1931)**

Work: "Suite para acordeón y orquesta" – 2013

Publisher: Tritó

Premiere: Iñaki Alberdi & Orquesta Sinfónica de Barcelona y Nacional de Catalunya

Conductor: Pablo González

Site: Auditori de Catalunya

These two works are currently writing and I am collaborating closely with its composition.

In *Suite para Acordeón y Orquesta* everything originates from the accordion, it is the soloist. Guinjoan's childhood melodies and songs are the motives for this suite, like in his work for solo accordion, and they have been developed with a detailed and a great knowledge of the accordion. The composer started in the music with the accordion and this, and an intense study of the repertoire for the instrument, allows him to understand and feel its expressive origin and their technical capabilities.

**Music for accordion orchestra**

**Zuriñe Fernández Gerenabarrena (1965)**

Work: "Ekia" – 1997 (Accordion Orchestra/Choir)

Publisher: Manuscript

Premiere: Orquesta de Acordeones Txanpa, Coro Eskifaia (Conductor: Maite Oca)

Site: IGLESIA DE LA MARINA – Hondarribia 1997

Conductor: Iñaki Alberdi

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*Ekia*, more than 20 minutes work, is written for an ensemble of fifteen accordions, bass accordion, mixed choir and soloists. The composer shows an enriching way to deal with the accordions by using the instrument's pitch and sound capacity, sound spatialization and the filling with the voices. This work is divided into clear sections according to the different materials showed, but, in spite of that, it is an only gesture work, where the sound treatment becomes the thread from beginning to end.

**All scores without edition, recordings and more information at: [www.ialberdi.com](http://www.ialberdi.com)**

(Translation: Rosalía Cabanilles)



**Iñaki Alberdi** (b. 1973, Spain) starts the accordion studies when he was 14 years old, mainly due to his family tradition. One year later, he meet Carlos Iturralde, and it's in that moment when he discovers the long possibilities of the accordion and specially his motivation for making music. After some years he became the only European accordionist to win one of the most important competition: the "International Accordion Competition of Moscow", and also the "Coupe Mondiale". At the same time, he studied four years with the Professor Friedrich Lips at the the Russian Academy of Music and one year more with Matti Rantanen at the Sibelius Academy (Finland). In the last ten years he has collaborated with more than 30 composers, such as: Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luis de Pablo or Joan Guinjoan. For the first time the accordion has been included in different orchestral seasons thanks to Iñaki Alberdi; Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid, Orquesta de Radio y Televisión Española, Joven Orquesta Nacional de España, Real Filarmonía de Galicia, Orquesta Sinfónica de Bilbao, Orquesta de Cámara Nacional de Andorra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Euskadi and

Orquesta Sinfónica Ciudad de Málaga, them has been conducted by José Ramón Encinar, Adrean Leaper, Josep Pons, Juanjo Mena or Pedro Halffter. Some of the places where he has performed are: the Fenice Theatre, Arsenal Hall in Metz, Royal Academy of Music, Duke's Hall, San Petersburg's Symphonic Hall, the Nation Auditorium in Madrid, the Theatre of the Cairo's Opera or the Auditorium in Barcelona. Another of the most important point of reference in his career is chamber music. In his last recording "Música de cámara actual" Iñaki Alberdi shows at the same time the great versatility of the accordion with other instruments and the important contribution he has made to the accordion repertoire with the new generation of composers such as Jesús Torres, Gabriel Erkoreka, Ramón Lazkano, David del Puerto, José María Sánchez-Verdú, Zuriñe E. Gerenabarrena and musicians such as Miguel Ituarte, Josetxo Silguero, Pilar Jurado and David Apellániz. He teaches accordion at Musikene Higher School of Music of the Basque Country in San Sebastian and ESMUC Higher School of Music of Catalonia in Barcelona.

[www.ialberdi.com](http://www.ialberdi.com)

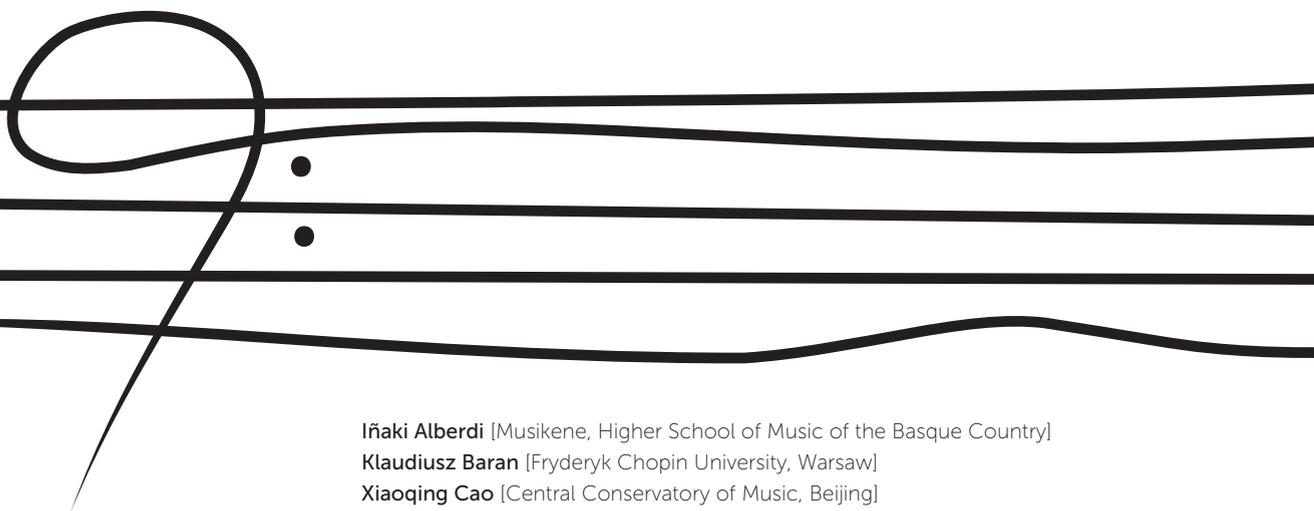
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An expert panel of the most well-known classical accordionists, professors, skillful and progressive musicians of the youngest generations and several accordion festival organizers, introduces a discussion about the current situation of the accordion on a professional, academic, pedagogic, artistic scene.

It illustrates, on an international level, the "possible ways" for young accordionists, looking at the future of our instrument and at the main professional perspectives and at the strategies to emancipate young musicians in the real music world, and considering the importance and the role of conventional accordion organizations, contests and festivals.



**Iñaki Alberdi** [Musikene, Higher School of Music of the Basque Country]  
**Klaudiusz Baran** [Fryderyk Chopin University, Warsaw]  
**Xiaoqing Cao** [Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing]  
**Pascal Contet** [Académie Supérieure de Musique, Strasbourg, France]  
**Geir Draugsvoll** [Royal Danish Academy of Music, Copenhagen]  
**Paulo Jorge Ferreira** [Applied Arts Superior School, Castelo Branco / Lisbon Conservatory]  
**Maciej Frackiewicz** [Poland]  
**Frode Haltli** [Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo]  
**Gorka Hermosa** [Santander Conservatory, Spain]  
**Claudio Jacomucci** [Pescara Conservatory / Italian Accordion Academy]  
**Marko Kassl** [Detmold Academy of Music, Germany]  
**Rasmus Kjøller** [Royal Danish Academy of Music, Copenhagen]  
**Veli Kujala** [Sibelius Academy, Helsinki]  
**Vincent Lhermet** [Pôle Supérieur d'Enseignements Artistiques in Lille, France]  
**Miloš Milivojevic** [Serbia/UK]  
**Bjarke Mogensen** [Royal Danish Academy of Music, Copenhagen]  
**Harald Oeler** [Maximilians University, Munich]  
**Paolo Picchio** [Italy]  
**Luca Piovesan** [Italy]  
**Massimiliano Pitocco** [Rome Conservatory]  
**Raimondas Sviackevicius** [Lithuanian Academy of Music, Vilnius]  
**Krassimir Sterev** [Bulgaria/Austria]  
**Sergej Tchirkov** [Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory]

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