

CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| About the Author | 4 |
| Introduction | 4 |

PART 1—GETTING STARTED

| | |
|---|----|
| The “Squeezebox”: A Brief History | 5 |
| Parts of the Accordion | 6 |
| A Look Inside | 7 |
| The Bellows | 7 |
| Buying an Accordion | 8 |
| Adjusting the Straps | 9 |
| Practicing Tips | 10 |
| Standard Music Notation | 11 |
| Musical Alphabet, Clef and Staff | 11 |
| Lines and Spaces | 11 |
| Notes | 12 |
| Ledger Lines..... | 12 |
| Beats, Note and Rest Values..... | 13 |
| Bar Lines and Measures | 13 |
| Time Signatures | 14 |
| Rhythms and Counting..... | 15 |

PART 2—PLAYING THE ACCORDION

| | |
|--|----|
| The Right Hand | 16 |
| Notes in C Position | 16 |
| D Position | 24 |
| E Position..... | 25 |
| F Position | 26 |
| Some Basic Music Theory | 28 |
| The Major Scale | 28 |
| Keys and Key Signatures | 29 |
| Movable Hand Positions | 30 |
| Shifting the Right Hand..... | 31 |
| The Left Hand | 32 |
| Left-Hand Position | 32 |
| Button Chart, Note and Row Identification | 33 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Guide Button C | 34 |
| Bass Note C..... | 34 |
| Chords..... | 36 |
| C Major Chord Button..... | 36 |
| Types of Chords | 38 |
| Diatonic Harmony | 38 |
| Combining Bass and Chord Buttons | 39 |
| Combining Left and Right Hands | 41 |
| From <i>Ode to Joy</i> | 41 |
| Alternating Bass | 42 |
| <i>Ode to Joy</i> | 44 |
| <i>Ode to Joy</i> (Key of F) | 45 |
| Before You Play..... | 46 |
| Stretching..... | 46 |
| Right-Hand Warm-Ups | 46 |

PART 3—STYLES FROM HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD

| | |
|--|----|
| Putting It All Together..... | 48 |
| Children’s Folk Song | 49 |
| <i>Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star</i> | 49 |
| The Waltz | 50 |
| <i>Minuet in G</i> | 50 |
| Bluegrass or Old-Time | 52 |
| <i>Angeline the Baker</i> | 52 |
| Musette | 54 |
| Playing Minor Chords..... | 54 |
| <i>Sad Café—1st Accordion</i> | 54 |
| <i>Sad Café—2nd Accordion</i> | 55 |
| The Tango..... | 56 |
| <i>Sophia’s Secret Tango</i> | 56 |
| Conjunto..... | 58 |
| <i>Tejas</i> | 58 |
| The Polka | 60 |
| <i>Dennis Murphy’s Polka</i> | 60 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Zydeco and Cajun | 62 |
| <i>Zydeco Romp</i> | 62 |
| <i>Cajun 2-Step</i> | 64 |
| The Irish Tradition | 66 |
| Air | 66 |
| Hornpipe | 66 |
| Reel | 66 |
| The Counter Bass | 66 |
| Embellishments | 67 |
| <i>Air Alone</i> | 68 |
| <i>Air Alone</i> (with ornaments) | 69 |
| <i>Maggie's Hornpipe</i> | 70 |
| <i>Maggie's Hornpipe</i> (with ornaments) | 71 |

PART 4—THE WELL-ROUNDED SIDE PERSON: PLAYING WITH A GROUP

| | |
|--|----|
| 7th Chords | 72 |
| The Blues | 73 |
| The 12-Bar Blues Progression | 73 |
| Improvising | 74 |
| Swing Eighths | 74 |
| <i>Da Blues</i> | 75 |
| Rock 'n' Roll | 76 |
| <i>Squeezebox Rox</i> | 76 |
| Swing | 77 |
| <i>The Swingbox Comps</i> | 77 |
| Jazz | 78 |
| The Circle of 5ths | 78 |
| <i>Tin Pan Squeezebox</i> | 79 |
| Country and Western | 80 |
| <i>A Cry in Your Beer Country Tune</i> | 80 |

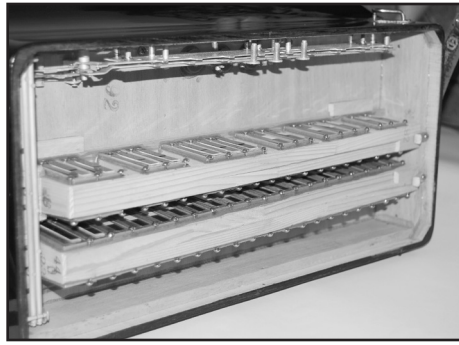
| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Latin American | 82 |
| The Clave Rhythm | 82 |
| The Montuno | 82 |

PART 5—APPENDIX

| | |
|---|----|
| Playing with the Band | 84 |
| Amplifying Your Instrument | 85 |
| MIDI Accordions | 86 |
| Digital Accordions | 86 |
| Reed Settings—Accordion Voices and Registers | 87 |
| Tunings | 87 |
| Types of Accordions | 88 |
| Sizing an Accordion | 89 |
| The Care and Feeding of Your Free-Reed Machine | 90 |
| Do It Yourself Repair | 91 |
| Self-Maintenance | 91 |
| Great Musicians, Bands and Recordings | 92 |
| Resources | 93 |
| A Note From the Author | 94 |
| Bass and Chord Button Chart | 96 |

A LOOK INSIDE

The mechanism inside the accordion through which air passes and creates sound is the *reed block*. It is very much like a harmonica, a block of wood with a series of holes. Along the tops of these holes are small slips of metal called *reeds* or *reed plates*. When air passes through, the reeds vibrate and produce sound.



Reed blocks.



Reed blocks up close.

THE BELLows

The *bellows* is the heart and soul of the accordion. It lies in the center of the instrument and is basically a folded, sealed paper pump that pushes and pulls air through the reed blocks to create sound. It is the mastery of this “push and pull” that allows you to create *dynamics* (changes in the loudness or softness of sounds), alter your *phrasing* (the musicality with which you play a certain line) and basically create your *own* sound.

Get the Feel for Your Bellows

It's time for you to get a feel for how the bellows works. Unsnap the bass straps (see page 6), top and bottom, and open and close the bellows several times. Using the thumb of your left hand, press the air button (page 6) and open and close the bellows several more times. Remember to always pick up the accordion while closed and begin playing from this closed position (see photo below).

Tip: You can use the air button to close the bellows when you need to start a new phrase.



Closed position.

Opening the bellows.

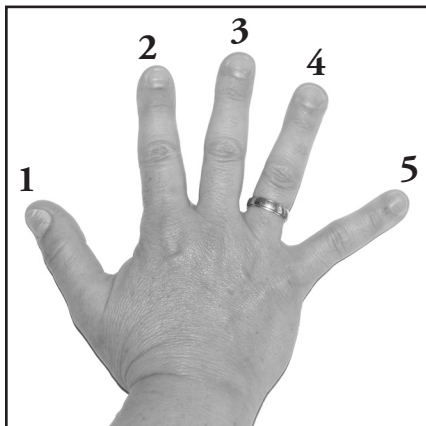
Bellows extended.

PART 2—Playing the Accordion

THE RIGHT HAND

All notes in treble clef (see page 11) are played by your right hand on the keyboard.

The fingers of the right hand are numbered 1–5, starting with the thumb (1) and ending with the pinky (5).



Right-hand finger numbers.

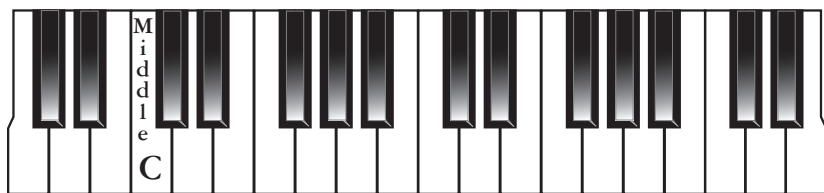
NOTES IN C POSITION

In this book, we will refer to a *position* as the distance of five consecutive white keys. A finger is dedicated to each key, starting with the thumb and ending with the pinky. The *C position* starts with the C note played by the thumb.

The C Note

If you look at the keyboard, you will notice that the black keys occur in groups of twos and threes. The first note you will learn to play is a C. The note C is the first white key that appears before every group of two black keys.

C on the Keyboard



C on the Staff



The Repeat Sign



The *repeat sign* tells us to go back to the beginning and play the same thing again.



C played on the accordion.

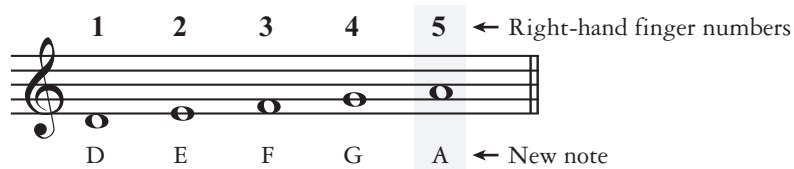
D POSITION

When you place your thumb on the D and let all four fingers rest on the next four notes, you are in *D position* (see photo to the right). There is a new note for the 5th finger, an A.

D Position on the Keyboard



D Position on the Staff

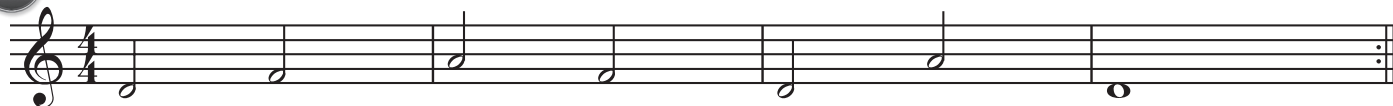


Let's play a few examples in D position. Use your own judgement about bellows direction and when to change it. It is a good idea to write these things into the music as you work them out.

D POSITION EX. 1



Track 22



D POSITION EX. 2



Track 23



D POSITION EX. 3



Track 24



D position on the accordion.

Let's see what happens when we transpose "Ode to Joy" to the key of F Major. In order to maintain the correct scale pattern we'll have to lower the B to a B \flat .

F MAJOR SCALE



F G A B \flat C D E F

W W H W W W

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8(1)

ODE TO JOY (Key of F)

Beethoven



3

Scale degree: 3 4 5 5 4 3 2 1 2 3 3 2 2

5

3 4 5 5 4 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 1

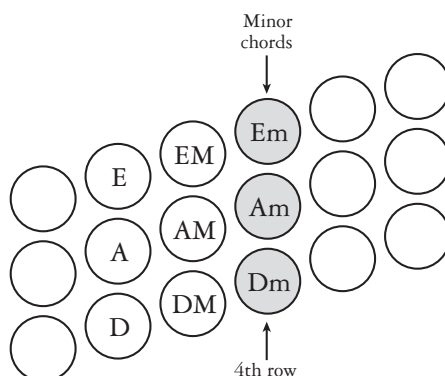
MUSETTE

The *musette* sound, characterized by a slight waver—an ever so slightly out-of-tune quality (see page 87, Tunings)—immediately transports

us to a small café in southern France. For our next example, you will need to learn how to play minor chords.

PLAYING MINOR CHORDS

We've already learned that minor chords can be made by lowering or flattening the 3rd of a major chord (page 38). Minor chords (designated with a lowercase "m") are played the same way major chords are, they are just a row over. Use the same fingering, just reach a bit farther with your 3rd finger. Another option is to use your 4th finger on the bass and your 2nd finger on the minor chord.



This next song is a *duet* (a piece of music with two parts to be played simultaneously by two performers). Learn the 1st accordion part (below) and play it with the 2nd accordion part (page 55) on the recording; then switch parts. Try using a multiple reed setting on this.

SAD CAFÉ—1ST ACCORDION



LATIN AMERICAN

The range of Latin American music is vast and varied. There are many styles: salsa, calypso, samba, bossa nova, reggae, etc. Its percussive, rhythmic element came to Cuba from Africa, while its harmonic qualities came from Spain. Put them together and the result is what we now call *Afro-Cuban* music.

THE CLAVE RHYTHM

An important part of Latin music is the *clave* (pronounced CLAH-vā) rhythm. It is a two-bar, repeating pattern that gives Latin music that “off-step” or syncopated feel. There are many kinds of clave rhythms;

below are two of the most common. Count and clap the rhythms aloud and you will instantly get that salsa feel. Notice that counting numbers below rests are written in parentheses.

FORWARD CLAVE



Track 88



This one just reverses the order of the two measures.

REVERSE CLAVE



Track 89



THE MONTUNO

Montunos are the next most recognizable pattern in Latin music. They are distinctive rhythmic patterns—played on the piano—that drive the band or orchestra.

How can we approach this on the accordion, you may ask? Use the same approach we have been using so far: Find the instruments or parts to emulate; figure out what makes them tick; and then adapt it to your own style.

For example:

MONTUNO EX. 1



Track 90



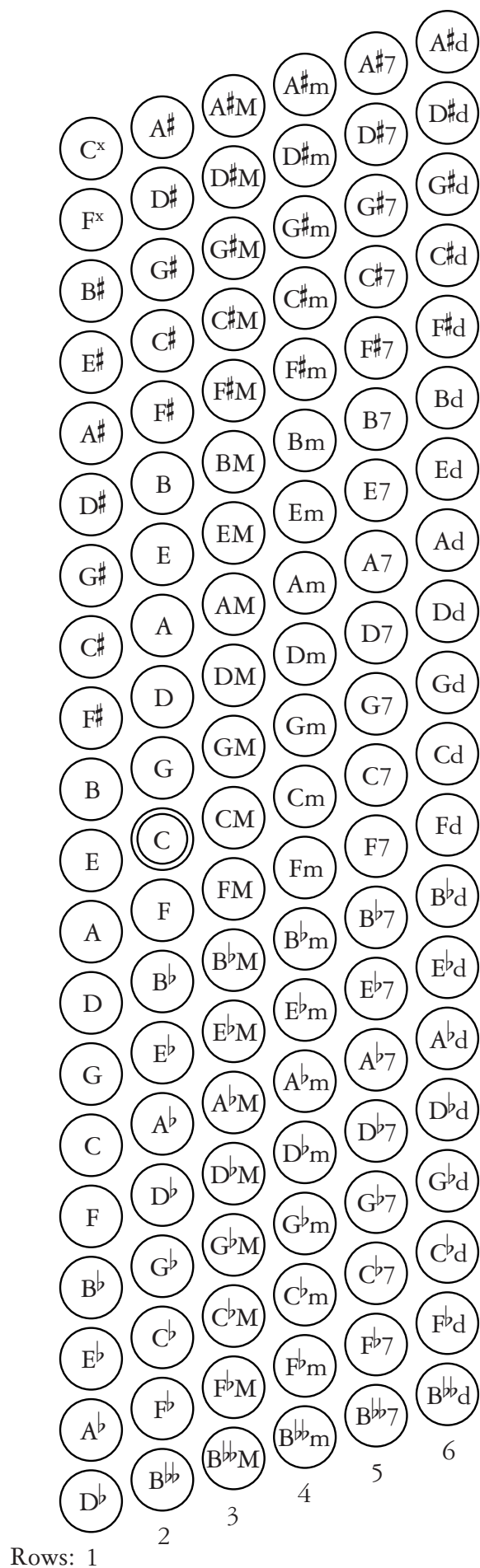
MONTUNO EX. 2



Track 91



BASS AND CHORD BUTTON CHART



1st Row—Counter Basses

2nd Row—Fundamental Basses

3rd Row—Major Chords (M)

4th Row—Minor Chords (m)

5th Row—Dominant 7th Chords (7)

6th Row—Diminished 7th Chords (d)