

CONTENTS

About the Author	4	Guide Button C	34
Introduction	4	Bass Note C	34
PART 1—GETTING STARTED		Chords.....	36
The “Squeezebox”: A Brief History.....	5	C Major Chord Button.....	36
Parts of the Accordion	6	Types of Chords.....	38
A Look Inside	7	Diatonic Harmony	38
The Bellows	7	Combining Bass and Chord Buttons	39
Buying an Accordion	8	Combining Left and Right Hands	41
Adjusting the Straps	9	From <i>Ode to Joy</i>	41
Practicing Tips	10	Alternating Bass.....	42
Standard Music Notation	11	<i>Ode to Joy</i>	44
Musical Alphabet, Clef and Staff	11	<i>Ode to Joy</i> (Key of F)	45
Lines and Spaces	11	Before You Play.....	46
Notes	12	Stretching.....	46
Ledger Lines.....	12	Right-Hand Warm-Ups	46
Beats, Note and Rest Values.....	13	PART 3—STYLES FROM HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD	
Bar Lines and Measures.....	13	Putting It All Together.....	48
Time Signatures	14	Children’s Folk Song	49
Rhythms and Counting.....	15	<i>Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star</i>	49
PART 2—PLAYING THE ACCORDION		The Waltz	50
The Right Hand.....	16	<i>Minuet in G</i>	50
Notes in C Position	16	Bluegrass or Old-Time	52
D Position.....	24	<i>Angeline the Baker</i>	52
E Position.....	25	Musette	54
F Position.....	26	Playing Minor Chords.....	54
Some Basic Music Theory	28	<i>Sad Café—1st Accordion</i>	54
The Major Scale	28	<i>Sad Café—2nd Accordion</i>	55
Keys and Key Signatures	29	The Tango.....	56
Movable Hand Positions	30	<i>Sophia’s Secret Tango</i>	56
Shifting the Right Hand.....	31	Conjunto.....	58
The Left Hand	32	<i>Tejas</i>	58
Left-Hand Position	32	The Polka	60
Button Chart, Note and Row Identification	33	<i>Dennis Murphy’s Polka</i>	60

Zydeco and Cajun62
 Zydeco Romp62
 Cajun 2-Step64
 The Irish Tradition66
 Air66
 Hornpipe.....66
 Reel66
 The Counter Bass.....66
 Embellishments67
 Air Alone68
 Air Alone (with ornaments)69
 Maggie’s Hornpipe.....70
 Maggie’s Hornpipe (with ornaments)71

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

7th Chords72
 The Blues73
 The 12-Bar Blues Progression73
 Improvising74
 Swing Eighths74
 Da Blues.....75
 Rock ’n’ Roll76
 Squeezebox Rox.....76
 Swing77
 The Swingbox Comps77
 Jazz78
 The Circle of 5ths78
 Tin Pan Squeezebox.....79
 Country and Western80
 A Cry in Your Beer Country Tune80

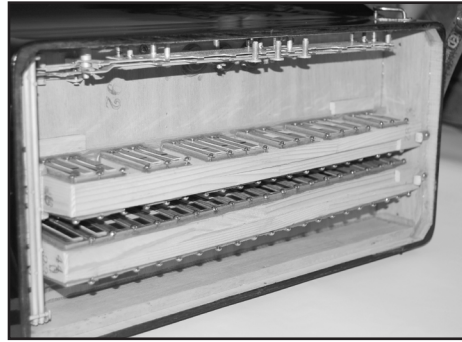
Latin American82
 The Clave Rhythm82
 The Montuno82

PART 5—APPENDIX

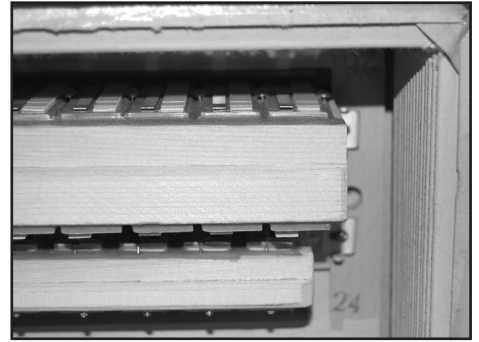
Playing with the Band84
 Amplifying Your Instrument85
 MIDI Accordions.....86
 Digital Accordions.....86
 Reed Settings—Accordion Voices
 and Registers87
 Tunings87
 Types of Accordions.....88
 Sizing an Accordion.....89
 The Care and Feeding
 of Your Free-Reed Machine.....90
 Do It Yourself Repair91
 Self-Maintenance91
 Great Musicians, Bands and Recordings.....92
 Resources93
 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.

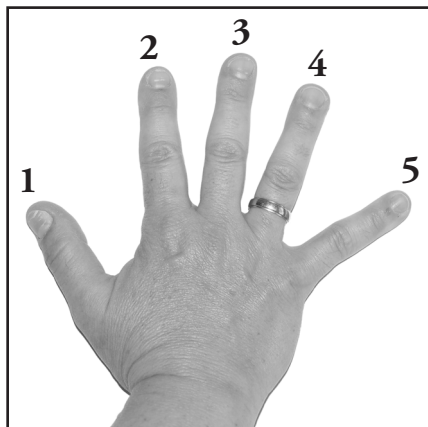
Bellows extended.

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.

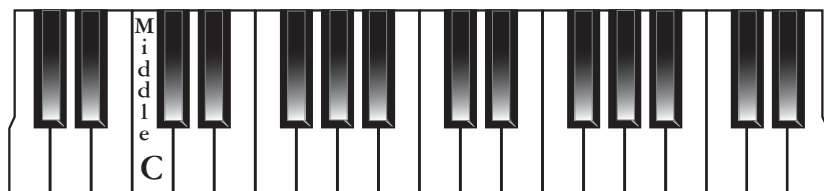
NOTES IN C POSITION

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



C played on the accordion.



The Repeat Sign



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

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

1 2 3 4 5 ← Right-hand finger numbers

D E F G A ← New note

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

D POSITION EX. 2


D POSITION EX. 3



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

 **Track 55**

F G A B \flat C D E F

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8(1)

ODE TO JOY (Key of F)
 Beethoven

 **Track 56**

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

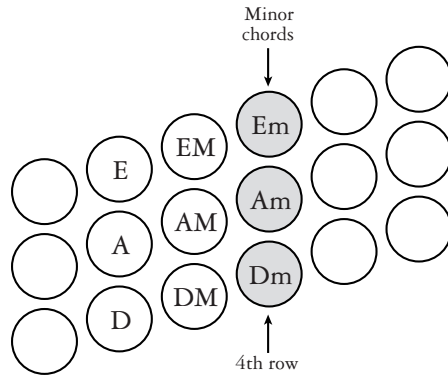
3 4 5 5 4 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 1

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 Track 69

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

Count: 1 & (2) & 3 (&) 4 & (1 &) 2 & 3 & (4 &)

This one just reverses the order of the two measures.

REVERSE CLAVE



Track 89

Count: (1 &) 2 & 3 & (4 &) 1 & (2) & 3 (&) 4 &

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

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

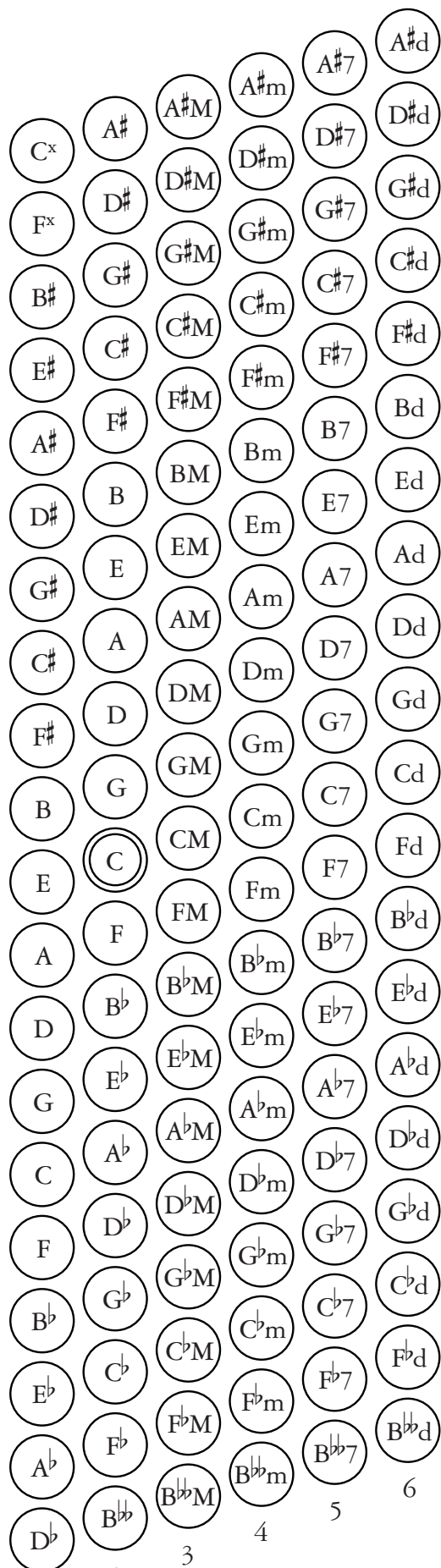
MONTUNO EX. 2



Track 91

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

BASS AND CHORD BUTTON CHART



Rows: 1

- 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)