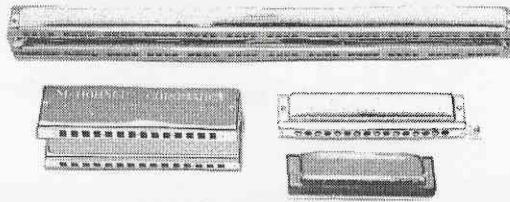


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Volume 13, Issue 4 International Publication Dedicated to the Advancement of Harmonica Education Winter 2006/2007

Editor's note. This article is written for those chromatic harmonica players (beginning, intermediate, and advanced level players), who would like to develop or improve their musical reading skills.

Developing Musical Reading Skills for Chromatic Harmonica Players

Note: This article is reprinted from Book 1, Beginning & Intermediate Level Chromatic Harmonica Players: Musicianship and Performance Skills By Richard Martin.

By Richard Martin

When most of us started to learn to play the harmonica, we usually learned to play the harmonica by ear (this is how I first learned to play the chromatic harmonica). If we were seriously interested in improving our harmonica musicianship and performance skills, we took the time to learn how to read music (by enrolling in a class for music reading in an adult education class or at a local college), or we tried to find a harmonica educator or instructor to teach us about harmonica musicianship and performance skills. Unfortunately, there are still a majority of harmonica players, young and old, who still have not made the effort to learn how to read music. Therefore, they cannot play from a musical score. Additionally, there are many other players, who have a little proficiency in reading music, but can only play easy musical arrangements written in the keys of C or G.

A number of harmonica players have told me that "learning to read music is too difficult, and there are too many things you have to remember to read music." Therefore, they use the **tablature method** of assigning arrows for blow and draw tones, and numbers and letters for each one of the musical notes. Then, they can learn where each one of the musical tones are located on their harmonica based upon the tablature method. However, I have found this method to be very time consuming, because I would have to take a sheet of music and mark all the notes with tablature before I can play the piece. *Since I read music*, I have found it easier to just select a musical score and sight-read it. However, this is easier said than done. *To become a good sight-reader, one must know how to read music, and then sight-read and play from many musical scores in many different music keys* (I do sight-read a lot when I teach sight-reading skills to my chromatic harmonica students, and when I play duets with my harmonica students. Additionally, I have improved my musical sight-reading skill because I have played different parts in ensemble music).

I have always felt, that musical notation is a "kind of tablature." Instead of using the arrows, numbers, and letters to identify the musical notes, I use the

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HARMONICA REVIEWS

“Classical Chromarmonica,” Willi Burger (EUCLED EC02)

By Pat Missin

This is the second CD from Italian-born German resident Willi Burger in the past year that I have had the pleasure of reviewing. As the title suggests, and as those familiar with Mr. Burger’s previous recordings would expect, this is an album of classical music showcasing the chromatic harmonica. The accompaniment is provided by the **Capriccio Harmonico Ensemble**, a string quintet consisting of two violins, viola, cello and bass. Featured are works from composers such as J.S. Bach, Rimsky-Korsakov, Gounod and Massenet, as well as more modern pieces by Gordon Jacob, James Moody, Astor Piazzolla and Ennio Morricone.

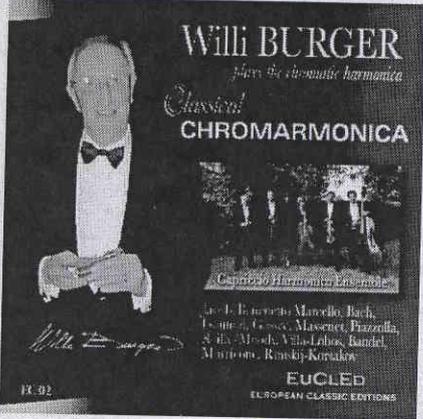
Burger is a true virtuoso, not merely because of his technical mastery of his instrument, but because of his overall sense of musicality, which enables him to breathe fresh life into pieces such as “Air on the G String” and “Flight of the Bumble Bee,” as well bringing a spirit of sheer fun to “Funky Beat.” This is a rare example of a 12-bar blues for harmonica and string quintet!

The string arrangements, mostly by Andrea Bandel (who also contributed a couple of compositions to the album) are superb, the harmonica and string quintet complementing each other perfectly. It is all too easy for a string ensemble to overpower an instrument such as the harmonica. However, this never happens here, even on tunes such as Morricone’s “The Mission” (from the film “Gabriel’s Oboe”), which call for powerful string playing. Thankfully, the recording quality is every bit as good as the musicianship, allowing the listener to hear all the nuances that could so easily be lost in the recording process. I enjoyed playing this CD at quite a loud volume, with my eyes closed, feeling the presence of the musicians almost as though there were right there, in my living room.

I have no hesitation in recommending this CD to anyone with an interest in classical chromatic harmonica. It is available from EUCLED S.r.l. CP 29FE Centro44100 FerraraItalyemail: euclcd@tin.it. Those with Internet access can hear some sample clips from the CD at: <http://www.harmonica.it/>.

WILLI BURGER

Classical harmonica player
Member of Examination panel for Diploma Harmonica Examination
National University of Singapore (NUS)



Classical Chromarmonica **New**
Jacob, Benedetto Marcello, Bach,
Gossec, Massenet, Piazzolla, Reilly/Moody, Villa-
Lobos, Bandel, Rimskij-Korsakov, Morricone

Willi BURGER, harmonica
Capriccio Harmonico Ensemble, string
quintet

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Willi Burger
harmonica

Music from Spain and South America
De Falla, Granados,
De Sarasate, Piazzolla,
Ibert, Villa-Lobos played on
chromatic harmonica

Marcello Parolini, piano
Jesus Eduardo Alvarez, guitar

Music from Spain and South America
De Falla, Granados, De Sarasate, Piazzolla, Ibert, Villa-
Lobos played on chromatic harmonica

Willi BURGER, harmonica
Marcello PAROLINI, piano,
Jesús Eduardo ALVAREZ, guitar

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