

Accordion Talk

March 2026



Upcoming club meetings

Apr. 18, 2026

May. 16, 2026

*Special performance
by Andy Mirkovich*

3200 SE Harrison St
Milwaukie, OR

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President's Message

Greetings, RCAC!

This newsletter is packed with a recap of the March club meeting, upcoming gig dates for RCAC musicians, a special note from RCAC Camp Conductor, **Joe Natoli**, musings on bellows control from **Doug Stickler**, and a reflection on the adventure of learning by **Courtney Von Drehle**. I asked each of these folks for these special notes to you all, and they delivered. I hope you'll enjoy what they have to say. Thank you, Joe, Doug, and Courtney!

I would like to make this newsletter a resource for accordionists of all skill levels. If you would like to contribute an article to the next newsletter, please reach out to me.

The March club meeting was great fun! Special thanks to **Beth McDonald** for leading music circle in March and for April as well!

See you at the next meeting, April 18. And mark your calendars for May 16th with special guest **Andy Mirkovich**!

~Amber Matz, President

Music Circle

Music Circle

Led by:
Beth McDonald

Songs:
*What Shall We Do
with a Drunken
Sailor, The Lonely
Goat Herd, Yakety
Sax, Star of the
County Down*

Thank you, Beth!



The March meeting of RCAC was opened with Music Circle led by **Beth McDonald**. Beth and Amber have been plotting some changes to music circle based on club member feedback and discussion during the February meeting. Our intention is to make music circle a more intentional time of learning to play better together. We hope to organize a group who might play at an upcoming Forest Grove Accordion Social event.

April Music Circle

Music Circle on
Apr. 18 will be led
by **Beth McDonald**

Songs:
*Puff the Magic
Dragon, Scotland
the Brave, Nursery
Rhymes Medley,
Love Story Theme*

Join us!



March Music Makers



Fran



Delette



Kasha



Wayne



Beth



Leonard



Mark



Coreen



Kathy



Marlene



Larry



Don



Bobbie & Lisa



Roxi & Bobbie



Wayne & Bev

Kasha—What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor?

Larry—Oh Danny Boy, Sh'Boom Sh'Boom
Life Could Be A Dream

Roxi & Bobbie—The Wild Rover, Lily the Pink

Lisa & Bobbie—Torghandlar walsen

Don—Teach Your Children

Wayne—Love Comes Softly

Bev & Wayne—Hochzeit der Calé

Bev—Slow Poke

Chad—La Mangave

Doug—Will Ye Go Lassie Go

Sue—That Tumbled Down Shack in
Athlone, Faded Love

Rick—Fleur de Paris, Eugénie de la Bastille
arr. by Larry Hallar

Beth—Along the Navajo Trail, Moon River

Kathy—Tranquillo Overture

Marlene—Lucille, Flight of the Angels

Coreen—That DA-DA Strain

Mark—Accordiana, España Cañi

Leonard—Luci E Ombre, A French Tune

Fran—Heidi's Waltz, House on Pooh
Corner

Delette—Springtime in Sweden



Rick



Doug



Sue



Chad

RCAC Camp

A note from camp conductor, Joe Natoli

I am delighted and flattered to have been invited back to the **Rose City Accordion Camp** again this year. Many thanks to all RCAC Board members who helped with that decision.

Last year was great fun as I got to know the organization, its history, the players, the facility, and the entire process of how this camp and concert are produced. But this year I felt a little more comfortable on my return after having already become familiar with all those important aspects of the camp.

In 2025, my goal was to create a program for all three orchestras that would be widely diverse and in 2026, I again used the exact paradigm, but now with a little more savvy of how to customize the parts for our players with whom I had previously worked. I might add that the musical diversity is even a little more pronounced this year with pieces in the Classical, jazz, Latin jazz, French, rock, ballad, and popular genres. Undoubtedly, a program cannot get much more diverse than that! Consequently, I think the orchestras and the audience will have a wonderful time performing and enjoying the music.

We are also employing a digital accordion this year for more realistic Classical, jazz and rock acoustic bass sounds, even though the rest of the orchestra will remain on acoustic accordions.

Participating orchestra members of all skill levels will have their skills stretched a bit and will learn some well-applied lessons about how to play all these diverse styles musically. After all, it's always about the music and communicating the passion of that music. So we will be very much focused on learning as much as possible about performing with great musicianship this year.

One example is Rockin' It! which is a very animated and aggressive rock original that I wrote for the large orchestra. At two points in the score, the players get to use bellows percussion and air buttons to provide percussion like rhythms that substitute for the live percussion sounds that we do not have. On the opposite side of the spectrum is the beautiful song Hallelujah where everyone gets a chance to play long fluid lines and counterpoint to bring that song's melody to life. So, I expect we will all have fun just making music this year and I am certainly looking forward to it.

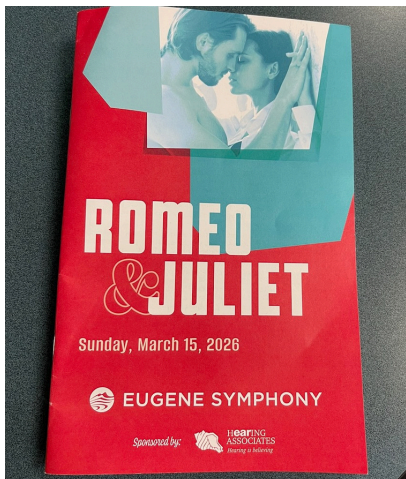
RCAC Playin' Around

European Take-Out Band

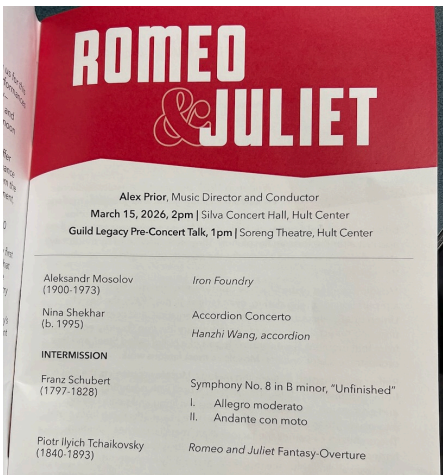
European Take-Out Band played two gigs (one of them on a very cold night!) at two McMenamins during the St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Pictured are **Susan Schwab, Bobbie Ferrero, Dennis McIntire, Roxi Klinger, and Kurt Spak.**



Accordionist featured at Eugene Symphony



RCAC members enjoyed this performance of the Eugene Symphony, featuring **Hanzhi Wang on accordion.**



Send Amber your gig photos!

Have you been playing your accordion around town? Send Amber your gig photos to be included in the next RCAC newsletter and website!

Bellows Control

by **Doug Stickler**

It's just my opinion, and I admit I'm biased, but I think we play one of the most expressive instruments around. Since most of that expression comes from the bellows, it's a key component to what makes our music worth listening to. So mastering control over the bellows should be high on our list of skills to work on.

If you're like me, when you play you have an idea in your head of what you want a song to sound like. The more we practice a song, the closer we come to achieving that goal. When we perform the song for others, the goal should be to transfer what we're hearing and feeling from us to the audience. That's sometimes easier said than done when our hands are shaking and our minds have gone blank with all the things we've told ourselves not to forget.

We all know bellows basics. Starting out, it was pull out for two measures, push in for two measures. It worked great and at the end of the song our bellows were always pushed in fully after playing the final note. From there we moved on to an awareness of phrasing. At that point our bellows became like the lungs of a singer. In both cases the musician didn't want to break up the phrase, either by changing directions with the bellows or by taking a breath.

What I have found to be more challenging has been the more subtle, finer controls of the

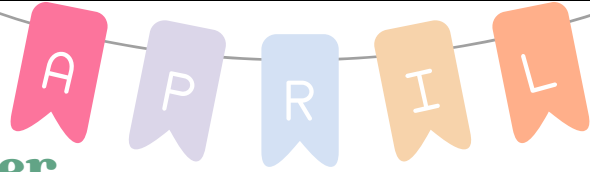
bellows. This isn't where we read and respond to the signs indicating crescendo, decrescendo, forte, piano, etc. We can all do that and each one of us does it in a way that seems to us to be appropriate. However, what we often haven't done is to listen to ourselves objectively and then adjust our playing based on what we are hearing.

I thought I knew how to play and how I sounded when I started playing professionally. Then I heard Eileen Hagen playing a song and compared that to a tape recording of myself playing the same song. The difference was huge. What I heard on the recording was not the same thing as what I heard when I played the song. It was at that point that I started making a concerted effort to gain more control over my bellows. Along with repeatedly recording myself and playing it back, I also listened to other accordion players, learned by ear what they were playing, and tried to play exactly what I was hearing.

I can't say that I've always achieved my goal of being able to play the music exactly as I hear it in my head, but I do appreciate the confirmation I received from one listener who commented on a Petosa Youtube video I made years ago. He said, "Awww, c'mon! Who is this guy? That is just incredibly tasteful accordion music. Such a crazy-smooth style."

So, take the next step, record yourself, play it back, and decide if you hear anything you'd like to work on.

Support RCAC Musicians



Chris Boris & Matt Cooper

Accordion duo **Christine “Chris” Boris** and **Matt Cooper** bring a vibrant and wide-ranging performance to our Chamber Music Festival. With roots in award-winning festival appearances, accordion orchestras across the country, and performances from California to the Pacific Northwest, Chris and Matt have built a dynamic partnership—despite living in different states—recording 15 duets remotely and appearing together at festivals like Squeeze Play and the Leavenworth International Accordion Festival.

Catch this unique collaboration live at the annual Chamber Music Festival (**Sat, April 11, 2026**). Tickets for this exclusive event are on sale now at <https://www.oregoneastsymphony.org/>

Dr. Jeff Nelson

Dr. J and the All-Stars are backing up NYC vocalist Hannah Sumner at the Alberta St. Pub on Thursday night, **4/16**, for a cabaret show. <https://www.albertastreetpub.com/music>

The **Willamette Valley Big Band’s** Spring Concert will take place **May 29th at 7:00 PM** at Canby Alliance Church. Classic swing, jazz favorites, and the full big band sound you know and love.

Courtney Von Drehle

4/9, 7-9 pm, McMenamins Grand Lodge (Andrew & Courtney’s Mystery Box, clarinet/accordion duo, jazz, European, originals)

4/12, 4-6 pm, Mississippi Pizza (Carpathian Pacific Express, Klezmer, New Orleans, adventurous, groovy)

4/24, 7:30-9:30 pm, Abbie’s House Concerts, SE Portland (www.froggie.com), Trio Quartetto (Cellist Gideon Freudmann’s delightful jazzy music)

4/28, 7-8:30 pm, Old Market Pub & Brewery, Andrew & Courtney’s Mystery Box

The Adventure of Learning

by **Courtney Von Drehle**

Hi everyone,

The accordion continues to offer its particular blend of joy and challenge - and, as with any lifelong pursuit, an endless horizon of things to discover.

Three years ago, I attended a workshop with Jacques Mornet at CNIMA in New Orleans. Alongside Nathalie Boucheix, he introduced a range of ideas that reshaped how I think about the instrument - especially the "Mornet Technique," which encourages us to approach the accordion as a wind instrument rather than simply a keyboard.

As is often the case, understanding the idea was one thing - absorbing it into my playing was another. It took about a year before I began to feel those concepts take root, and I continue to explore them today. Some of you may remember I shared these ideas at the Rose City Accordion Camp a couple of years back.

I continue to be fascinated by the journey from concept to instinct - the gradual shift from thinking about something to simply doing it. That transformation can't be rushed. It unfolds over time, shaped by patience and curiosity. And I've come to see that as part of the reward.

In about a month, I'll be heading back to New Orleans for another CNIMA workshop. I'm looking forward to what I might learn this time around - and also to reconnecting with one of my early students, Vincent Schmidt, now a professional accordionist in New Orleans. When we meet up, we get to play, exchange ideas, and share where the music has taken us.

Here's to the ongoing adventure of learning.

CNIMA USA Accordion Workshop

Transform your playing with instructors, Jacques Mornet and Nathalie Boucheix in New Orleans — 2 workshops: **May 4-9** and **May 11-16**.

Read more and register at cnimausa.com

Announcements



Camp Update

- Rose City Accordion Camp will take place May 31–June 5.
- You can still register! See the updated registration form posted on our club website: rosecityaccordionclub.org.
- Contact **Susan Schwab**, Camp Director, with your registration form, questions, or requests: rosecityaccordionclub@gmail.com



May 16, 2026, 1:00 pm Special guest: Andy Mirkovich

Save the date! **Andy Mirkovich** will be our special guest and featured performer at the **May 16th** club meeting.

This event will be open to the public and is sponsored by the Rose City Accordion Club! Free admission.

June 19-21, 2026 Astoria Scandinavian Fest.

Coreen Bergholm leads the **Astoria Scandinavian Nordic Accordion Band** which will perform:

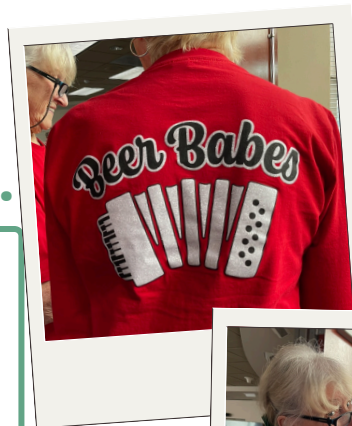
Saturday, June 20, 1:45–3:15 pm
at the Astoria Scandinavian Festival.

Beer Babes schedule:

Fri., June 19, 4–6 pm

Sat. June 20, 4–6pm & 9–10 pm

All performances in the Beer Garden!



Beer Babes!

March Memories



Music Circle

