

New Music for the Gazebo
History and Practice Suggestions
by Toby Hanson & Jakob Bean

Many years ago Rick Hatley had a profound inspirational experience. He had visited the Norsk Høstfest in Minot, North Dakota and participated in their massed accordion band. Inspired by that occurrence, he was determined to create something similar for the Leavenworth International Accordion Celebration. He brought the music back with him from the Høstfest and started the original LIAC Gazebo Ensemble.

Sadly, Rick passed away a several years ago from cancer and the management of the ensemble fell to Jim O'Brien, a retired music professor from the University of Arizona. Jim brought his own musicality and experience and updated the book with many of his own songs. After many years of leading the band he turned the job over to Lyle Schaefer and Toby Hanson. Both Lyle and Toby were incredibly impressed by the quality of the players and the overall ensemble last year.

At the end of the 2019 festival, Lyle and Toby started soliciting suggestions from the various performers and attendees about how the Gazebo Ensemble could be improved. This led to the creation of the well crafted 2020 LIAC song book. In 2023 Lyle and Toby passed the torch to Jakob Bean to run the Gazebo Ensemble. After last year there were suggestions from the group to make the songs more accessible for all levels of players. Jakob compiled new/updated songs for the 2026 LIAC song book in simpler keys (C,F,G) to allow diatonic players to perform on all the tunes.

For some players this new music will present a challenge. We recognize that and would offer the following suggestions for those players: **1. Just play the right hand.** There will be enough players playing the left hand that it won't be a problem if a few people lay out. **2. Play just the top line of the right hand.** There are some arrangements that use some chords but you don't have to play all the notes in the chord. Just playing the melody is fine and that will make it stand out in the ensemble. **3. Play just the left hand of each arrangement.** This will give you good practice for working on your left hand and also help to balance the ensemble for those who choose not to play the left hand.