

Adjustments for Competition at LIAC 2023 by Toby Hanson, Competition Chair

Last year marked a successful return of competition to the Leavenworth International Accordion Celebration. To build on that success and continue to meet the needs and interests of our young accordion students, we have made a few changes to the competitions at LIAC for 2023. It is our sincere hope that participation will continue to increase, especially with our younger accordion students. They are the ones who will be inheriting the accordion community that we all cherish so much so it's important to ensure they feel included and valued as we go forward.

The categories have been slightly adjusted based on last year's participation. In 2022 we had three solo open categories: Classical Open, Old-Time Open, and Leavenworth Open. This year we have consolidated the Old-Time and Leavenworth Open categories, returning to a more traditional style of Open categories. Because of the tradition of the festival featuring old-time dance music, we felt it was important to keep that as the focus of the primary Leavenworth Open category. Competitors may play any non-classical pieces they wish in the Leavenworth Open category but we encourage the inclusion of old-time music as part of the competition pieces. The Classical Open category is for classical music, defined as music which follows the original form and intent of the composer, written primarily between 1600 and 1920.

There are two duet categories this year: Accordion Duets Open, in which professionals may compete, and Amateur Accordion Duets for players 17 and under. This will allow young players to continue the long tradition of performing duets without having to worry about competing against professional players. Note that we have restricted the two Duets categories to just accordion duets. Other combinations of instruments are welcome and encouraged to participate in the Bands/Ensembles category. This change was made to preserve the tradition of duets played by two accordionists.

The amateur Variety categories have been adjusted for 2023. There are only three Variety categories this year: Variety 1 for players 19 and older, Variety 2 for players 14-18, and Variety 3 for players 13 and under. Based on participation in 2022 this seemed like the most fair and equitable way to divide up the Variety categories so that players of roughly equal skill level would be able to compete against their peers. The Amateur Classical category is gaining an extra year of eligibility, now for players 18 and under. Raising the age by one year will allow players in the category all the way through the end of high school.

The Artistry categories will return unchanged. The Artistry categories were very popular in 2022 because they give amateur players a way to get the experience of performing for adjudicators without the pressure of competition. These categories have proven to be very popular with accordionists who would like to try out performing without having to commit to being in a competition.

For those who just want the feedback and coaching that comes from competition without the added challenge of getting up on stage, we also still have Private Coaching sessions available. Those will be up at the Grange Hall and are available to any accordionist who would like to sign up. This is the true hidden gem of LIAC as it gives participants access to some of our region's best accordion teachers in a private session where they can play and receive one-on-one feedback. At other musical events that kind of opportunity can be very expensive but we work very hard to ensure that it is affordable and accessible for participants.

Perhaps the best change coming to competition at LIAC in 2023 is our new Competition Highlights Concert on Sunday morning. We've heard your comments and know that many participants are busy playing at the Gazebo or taking workshops on Friday and Saturday and don't get to see the

competitions. To ensure that all participants of LIAC get to hear the best performers in the competition we are starting a new concert on Sunday Morning at the Festhalle just before the Awards Ceremony. Those competitors who do especially well in the competition will be invited to perform their competition pieces in a brief recital on Sunday morning when everyone can enjoy the performances. This will be both an extra honor for those chosen to perform and an opportunity for participants to enjoy the performances who might have missed them during the competition.

It is the sincere hope of all of us on the LIAC Committee that the competition will be full of participants. The pursuit of accordion excellence is what keeps our accordion community at its best. We look forward to seeing all of you in Leavenworth in June and hearing the "Tranquillo Overture" ring out from the stage!