

"IN MY EARLY DAYS I TACKLED MANY VIOLIN EXERCISES..." HUGO D'ALTON

IN THIS INTERVIEW (BEGUN LAST MONTH), WORLD-FAMOUS MANDOLINIST HUGO D'ALTON (H.D.) DISCUSSES WITH BMG EDITOR (MAC) MODERN "OUT-OF-TUNE" MUSIC, GIVES AWAY SOME SECRETS, AND COMMENTS, WITH CAUTION, ON THE MANDOLIN AS A BLUEGRASS INSTRUMENT.

MAC: It occurs to me that a special technique is needed to play Bluegrass music on the banjo and on the guitar. But the mandolinist can adjust easier than the others – if he is a sufficiently accomplished musician.

H.D.: Agreed. But the notes of the mandolin won't *bend* much. You can very easily bend notes on the guitar – and on your banjo. But if a mandolin is correctly strung – and I'm talking about the authentic round-back form – which is the only form I acknowledge – the instrument has very little "give". It will only make this very precise, perhaps very beautiful note. Any attempt to alter that upsets me, usually.

But a recent work of George Crumwork – *Ancient Voices of Children* – lovely title – requires the mandolinist to de-tune, so that

in each pair of strings one string is a quarter of a tone away from its mate, instead of the usual "in unison" tuning.

The amazing part was that after many rehearsals of this very beautiful, though difficult work, I found that it was very hard to readjust once again to normal tuning!

MAC: To get back to your career, over the years you've played a vast amount of music written originally for the violin – a fairly predictable alternative to mandolin scores.

H.D.: Yes, I've borrowed from Elgar and Kreisler, among many others. Violin music can be a great help to the aspiring mandolinist.

In my early days I tackled many violin exercises – including works by Mazas, Spohr and Kreutzer. My brother Terry and I went through the whole lot – and not all of it is

recommended for mandolin.

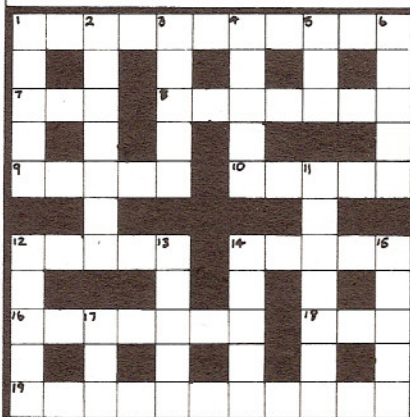
Fiorello was a violinist as well as a mandolinist. He composed his 36 Caprices for violin, but he was primarily a *mandolinist*. His mainstay was mandolin, which he played through the courts of Europe. It was only when he ran out of money that he returned to playing fiddle in the pit of the Opera House.

But the truth is, until you've worked your way through difficult pieces like those you're not worth your salt... though we may be a little old fashioned in that sentiment...

Now I can look any fiddle player straight in the eye – I don't care how lofty he is – and say: "Well, I appreciate what you've been through – but I've done it, too!"

To anyone seriously considering taking up the mandolin, I recommend Philip Bone's book: *The Guitar and Mandolin*.

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ACROSS

- You can play B-major here on this occasion, use fresh style on tenor's entry (7,4)
- Accelerando during semi-breve? (3)
- Old instrument to enrich composition with the best of tone (7)
- Moving Mass - Mozart's first with Robert? (5)
- The Lehar overture initially played by Hilton? (5)
- Behave cheaply, take the surface of a piano (5)
- Initially find this method, octave divided as Lydians? (5)
- Songs like "Only Sixteen"? (7)
- St. Paul's organist transports composer... (3)
- ... Newcastle-German from & Italy! (11,7)

DOWN

- The composer hasn't a favourite, playing badly (5)
- Composer who's a funny lad about a double sextet? No just the opposite! (7)
- There's a recess in harmonic heptachords (5)
- Old pianist's den (5)
- The truest fret's in (3)
- Number in alto sounds well oddly enough (5)
- See 19
- A boy, one's the most superior creator of noise (5)
- A snatch of music? (5)
- Stones: their managers mother's on! (5)
- First bit of rallentando's up, carry on till it's this? (5)
- Manuscripts, leave one out (3)