

The Variety of the Harmonica Festival

Unlike any other instrumental festivals, a harmonica festival consists of far more elements than its counterparts. The typical events in a festival, which runs for 4 to 5 days, include :-

- Competition of various categories,
- Concerts of various musical styles,
- Open stage performances,
- Workshops of various topics,
- Sales of harmonica-related merchandises,
- An opening ceremony typically linked to the local culture of the hosting country, and
- A closing ceremony announcing the results of competition, bringing all the joys and happiness together.

Competition

One would be amazed to learn about the vast diversity of harmonica families. While the **chromatic** harmonicas are suitable for **classical** and **jazz** music, the **tremolo** harmonicas (with a natural vibrato effect in-built) are almost monopolized by Asians in playing their **folk** tunes, and the **diatonic** harmonicas are indispensable in **blues** and **pop** music, as well as **folk** music of the Americans.

While most harmonica players play **solo**, the other typical combinations of harmonica are **duo**, **trio**, **small and big ensembles** and **orchestra**. A harmonica trio is the most well known combination of harmonicas, as popularized by the late "The Harmonicats" group of the USA. It consists of a solo player with the highly rhythmic bass and chord parts. A small ensemble consisting of 4-6 players is usually an extension of the trio format with more melodic parts. However, the King's Harmonica Quintet has pioneered a new form of ensemble, which is derived from the string quartet. It consists of 2 treble harmonicas, 2 tenor harmonicas and 1 bass harmonica, all of them of equal importance.

With the diversity of musical styles and instrumental families, and the various combinations of players, and the division by ages (**youth and adult**), the total number of categories can be up to 15 which is the practical limit for the duration of the festival.

In some festivals, one will even find "**open**" or "**future**" categories for the promotion of uses of harmonicas that cannot be covered by the above classification.

Therefore, if a piano festival is the World Soccer Cup, a harmonica festival would be the Olympic Games!

Concert

Owing to the diversity of harmonica music, different concerts are organized to suit different musical tastes. The concerts are usually packed with internationally renowned harmonica players who are enthusiastic in entertaining their peers as well as the general audience.

Open Stage

While the concert halls are for the professionals, the open stage is the place for those who wish to gain more experience in performing on stage or who demand a less serious atmosphere for playing to the audience. Although they may not be professionals, still they are of high standard. If you have the time to listen to all open stage performances, you would be certain to find some gems!

Workshops

For knowledge sharing, a collection of workshops of various topics is delivered by the experts in the corresponding fields - chromatic, diatonic, tremolo, chord, bass, trio, ensemble, orchestra, repair etc.

Sales Counters

Everything about harmonicas can be found here: various types/brands of harmonicas, score, CD, video, souvenirs with a touch of harmonica etc.