**http://olivier.manoury.free.fr/bandoneonfaq.html**

**BANDONEON Frequently Asked Questions**

Where can I find a bandoneon and how much does it cost?

That's the most frequently asked question. I think Argentina and Uruguay are the best places to find bandoneons, (Argentinean -"diatonic"- system only se explications below)

In France very few old good bandoneons are to be found, mostly "chromatic" system. Post 1945 instruments are frequent and bad

Be careful in Germany because there are many different systems there which do not belong to Tango tradition, have different sound and tuning and nobody knows how to play them.

Prices vary a lot following luck, ignorance, quality, decoration (mother of pearl inlays) and condition of instruments. Among musicians bandoneon are between 2000 and 4000 US$ (4000 is really a maximum for a **good old and well tuned** instrument in good shape.
(Tuning is expensive and good tuners are extremely rare)

What do Diatonic, Chromatic, Bi-sonor, uni-sonic, Argentinean mean?

People traditionally call ***diatonic*** bandoneons which play two different notes with one button, one note when the bellows opens and another note when the bellows closes. They are sometimes called *Bi sonic*
People traditionally call ***chromatic***bandoneons which play the same note when you open or when you close the bellows. They are sometimes called *unisonic*.

On a strictly musical point of view all bandoneons are Chromatic, which means that they cam play the twelve notes of the octave.
Diatonic instruments (folk harps, folk flutes ,folk accordions, blues harmonicas etc.) can only play seven notes per octave. Diatonic accordions generally play a different note when you open or close the bellows, therefore the popular musicians called diatonic the bisonic bandoneon. In the popular tradition diatonic means bisonic and this language ambiguity will last forever, we will have to live with it and explain it every time.
Bandoneons that cannot play twelve notes per octave are not bandoneons although they might look pretty much alike, they are German Concertinas.

What type of bandoneon should I choose?

The two systems described above are the only one to have still a tradition. The Argentinean/diatonic/bisonic (choose the world you want) is by far the most used. The chromatic/unisonic is mostly played in France since 1930 but only a handful of professionals use it.

The unisonic (chromatic) one is more logical and easier to learn (if not easier to play). It is convenient for one who is isolated and wants to learn by himself. It is also better adapted to improvised music because it has logical and rather symmetrical keyboards (the same fingerings can often be used on the right and left hand. Good chromatic bandoneons are very rare and bad ones are frequent.

The bisonic (diatonic) system is indeed terribly difficult, and more so if you do not have a teacher and a tradition. but it is more convenient to play written Argentinean virtuoso music (fast tango variations for instance) because *it has been written for that system*. Diatonic are much more common, they were made in huge quantities in the first half of the century and are the only ones found outside France-Belgium-Swiss

Goods bandoneons were made by Alfred Arnold and ELA (Ernst-Luis Arnold, father of the former) factories before world-war two, specially when they have zinc reed plates which makes them heavier and better. ELA used mostly aluminum
Arno Arnold brother of Alfred put up a factory in West Germany and used Hohner accordion reeds so they don't have a bandoneon sound. The***secret is in the reeds!***

Most post war instruments, *including Arnolds* are mediocre.