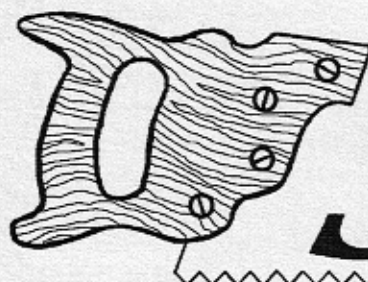


INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL SAW ASSOCIATION



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The Different Methods of Saw Playing



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As a folk instrument, different ways of playing the musical saw have evolved. Some ways evolved regionally, others - individually.

Many saw players are isolated from other saw players, and by necessity they "re-invented" the instrument, figuring out a way of producing sound from the blade without relying on someone to show them how it's done.

Stance and Saw Placement

The saw can be played sitting down (most common), kneeling (popular in Switzerland) or standing up.

The teeth can face the player or away from the player.

The handle can rest between the player's knees or on the floor and some even place the handle under their chin, similar to a violin.

The handle can rest in specially made belts and stands.

Some players bend their torso down to the blade to reach the high notes. Others pull the saw towards them to achieve the increased curve needed to play high notes.

You may or may not use a tip handle or hand reinforcement. I tape my thumb placing half a clothes-pin to the back of my thumb for increased strength in bending the blade (*see photo below*).

Handling the Bow

Most saw players bow the edge of the blade which is farther away from the player's body (the teeth face the player). But some bow the edge of

the blade closer to the player's body (the teeth face away from the player).

It is easier to bow in an upward motion and some choose this bowing direction only. Others bow both up and down. The latter technique usually enables faster strikes and increased control of attack.

Most saw players hold the bow with the hand perpendicular to the bow. I favor holding the bow as an extension of one's hand. I find that it gives me better attack. As a busker, loudness of sound is really important. Amplification is not aloud in many public spaces, and musicians have to be heard over the noise of the street, not to mention other musicians near by. I discovered that holding the bow as if holding a knife when cutting a steak helps me achieve a louder sound. My ability to play loud without amplification paid off every time I played at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall and other similarly large concert halls with orchestras - being heard above the full orchestra and having the saw sound reach the highest balcony in the concert hall.

Playing Methods

All the above are technical variations on how to handle the saw and bow. No matter what variation you chose to use, your playing will most likely fall into one of the following methods:



