

Gypsy Jazz for Sidmouth 2024

'Gypsy Jazz' or 'Manouche Jazz' (à la Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli) is firmly at the 'folky' end of jazz. It remembers its dance roots more clearly than many other jazz genres, for one thing! We've been running ad hoc Gypsy Jazz jam sessions at the Cricket Club for some years now, and now we're on the programme for real – two workshops (Sat/Sun, *not* at the Cricket Club – see the working programme) and morning jam sessions at the Cricket Club (10am to midday) Monday through to Thursday.

“Will it suit my instrument?”

The usual instruments found in the genre are: **guitar**, **violin**, and **clarinet**.

These are obviously welcome. The keys we usually play in are: F, C, G, D, Gm, Dm, Am, Em (we have Bb parts for clarinet for quite a few of the usual tunes). There are almost always some chromatic notes – and sometimes a lot of them! Note that guitars use standard EADGBE tuning, usually avoiding open chords; drop-D or DADGAD tunings don't really work either. All other fully chromatic instruments should be fine.

Bass: of course various bass instruments will be appropriate. However, it will probably only work to have one playing at any one time, and as 'house' bass player it will fall to Meg to liaise and coordinate any other bassists that wish to play!

Piano accordion: no problem, melodywise; be careful with the basses.

B/C or C#/D melodeon: no problem, melodywise, if you *really* know your chromatic notes.

D/G melodeon: Difficult! Not very suitable (unless you are Will Pound...)

English Concertina: no problem. **Anglo Concertina:** Difficult – not very suitable.

Tenor banjo: no problem.

Mandolin: no problem (although the rhythm chord shapes might be unfamiliar).

Bouzouki: GDAE tuning is no problem (although the rhythm chord shapes might be unfamiliar), but GDAD may be more challenging?

Flute, Recorder: no problem, if you're *really* happy with all your accidentals!

Whistle, keyless flute: Not very suitable.

Saxophone: no problem, but be very aware of balance issues. (Note that we have music sheets for Bb instruments, but NOT for Eb saxes.)

Keyboard (piano): no problem, but *be careful not to overplay*. Not only in volume, but avoid being too busy, and watch the left hand bass – there will already be a bass in the ensemble and things easily get muddy. More than one keyboard at a time is not going to work well (take it in turns?). Thought: if you bring headphones, you can play along anyway!

Percussion: this is a difficult one – practically any percussion instrument played very well *can* work (except perhaps bodhran, which suffers from the same 'muddying the bass' problem as keyboards do); the best is probably snare+brushes. *However*, more than a couple of players at a time will be just too much, so **it is essential to be sensitive** to the overall musical balance at all times – if you're overbearing, you will be told politely!

Please do also read our other info sheet: '**Gypsy Jazz Session Etiquette**' – these sessions are, in some important respects, quite different to the folk sessions you may be used to. It is not a free-for-all!