

#### AUGUST, 1996

# August General Meeting

by Denny Huff

Master of Ceremonies Domenic Saso got the meeting started and introduced our President Bob Berta. Bob plugged the upcoming awards dinner, encouraged folks to attend Cotati, and offered the podium to Peter Di Bono for a few minutes. Peter was one of seven accordionists who had appeared with the San Francisco Symphony Pops the previous Friday. Peter told a startling story of how the conductor that evening, in an effort to entertain, had told some accordion jokes which seemed quite demeaning. Who'd a thunk it from a Symphony Conductor!

Simple is often beautiful, as our first performers proved once again. Bob Smith, Val Kieser, Jean Malley, Norma Fox, Jana Maas, and Sharon Walters, fresh back from accordion camp, played just one number, the Silver Falls Waltz, written for the camp held at Silver Falls State Park in Oregon (see Val's report in this newsletter). It was a simple and graceful song well played by "mainstream" players. The song doesn't need to be exotic or the players in Henry Doktorski's class for the music to be fully enjoyable.

Curt Van Neck followed with three songs which he performed with his usual outstanding delivery — to no one's surprise. España Cani led off his selections, and he made it look pretty easy. Curt obviously likes European music, because he next crossed the Pyrenees and did French Musette. Without changing direction or quality, Curt continued an eastward march and finished off with a German number. If he hadn't been limited to three songs, I'd have expected a Polish mazurka next. Thanks to Curt for playing my favorite kind of music.

I've always enjoyed listening to Steven Shen play, but Monday's performance was particularly outstanding. Idon't know whether it was the songs selected or whether Steven has developed a new practice routine, but I don't think I've ever heard him sound quite so good! Great job, Steven! And whenever he plays, I'm amazed at how well the accordion delivers Chinese music. (I really shouldn't be surprised.) His first song was a Chinese number, Horseriders on the Grassland, a change from his usual Chinese songs which frequently involve

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

August 24th and 25th, 10 A to 7P. Cotati Accordion Festival, downtown Cotati, 40 miles north of San Francisco on 101. Honorary (non-performing) Director is Art Van Damme. Featuring the popular Celtic group, Golden Bough (if you haven't heard them, you have a big surprise coming). Gate fee; no coolers. For more info, Festival phone # is (707) 664-0444.

August 25th, Sunday. Squeeze-In for Bay Area concertina players. Call Daniel Hersh at (510) 370-0844 for details.

Sept. 4th, Wed. BAAC Board Meeting, 7:30 PM at Ed Massolo's, 612 Lassen, So. S.F. Guests welcome. Call Ed at (415)589-8409 for directions.

September 9th, second Monday. BAAC GeneralMeeting. featuring and our very special guest, Stas Venglevski. Donworth Hall, 22nd & Eucalyptus, S.F., just north of Stonestown Shopping Center. 7 P.

**September.** No BAAC Accordion Band (Fun Band) practice until October.

September 11th & 25th, Wednesdays 7:00 PM. BAAC Ensemble Practice, House of Parties. Call Joe, 510-832-6938...

**September 7-13** Joe Smiell's Button Box Camp. Call Joe at (510) 832-6938.

### President's Message

by Bob Berta



After the summer vacations it is time to get back in the swing with the BAAC activities planned for the rest of the year. Of course we are all looking forward to the return of Stas Venglevski in September. Stas is an incredible musician who was two time Moldavian champion. He was a student of Frederic Lips, arguably the greatest accordionist alive today. Mr. Lips himself is scheduled to perform for our club at the end of the year. Ihave a couple of CDs by Maestro Lips... WOW...if you haven't heard him you will be amazed. This promises to be the event of the year.

It is important to remember that our club doesn't exist just to provide outstanding performances for our members. One of the aims of our club is to provide and promote awareness of the accordion to the general public. While we have done a lot in this area, I feel that we need to do a lot more. You have heard the saying "Preaching to the choir." While we accordionists know what can be accomplished on the accordion, we need to go out and reach the general public to increase their awareness. The new board is working on a couple of ideas in this regard. But we also need input from YOU. Many of you have ideas and resources that can be put to good use. If you have some input the board would welcome your thoughts. You can reach any of the board members by calling the phone numbers listed in each newsletter.

# August Board Meeting Synopsis

- Treasurer Peter Adler circulated our '95-'96 Income Statement and a proposed budget for the year already in progress. Various changes were proposed to the budget; Peter will revise and re-present.
- Peter reported that with membership monies coming in, our supply of funds has increased to \$10,753.
- Plans for the Cotati booth are changing because we have encountered difficulties with suppliers. We will still have an interesting inventory mix at our Festival booth.
- The group decided that the 1997 BAAC picnic will be held at its original site, the Palo Alto Elks Club, rather than at Swiss Park in Newark, although the cost at the Elks is considerably more. The date is June 29, 1997.

#### Contact Phone #s for Officers and Board Members:

Pres: Bob Berta (415) 756-8309
V.P. Frank Panacci(415) 731-1039
Treas. Peter Adler (510) 845-4936
Record.Sect. Val Kieser (510) 531-4836
Finan. Sect. Bob Smith(415) 856-9321
Peter Di Bono (415) 753-1502
Ed Massolo (415) 589-8409
Herb Meier (415) 364-5398
Frank Schlotter(510) 339-8657
B. B. Simmons (510) 841-7960
Please use these numbers to give ideas, reactions, suggestions to our Board.

Thank you for your interest in the Bay Area Accordion Club. We hold monthly meetings and schedule various accordion-related events, and we send this monthly newsletter to all members (currently 340). We encourage your continued interest and participation. Should you care to join us, membership is \$20/year. Make check payable to BAAC and send to 31 Aliso Way, Portola Valley, CA 94028

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## **NEW MEMBERS**

A hearty welcome to all of our new members: Roy Abad, Carmel Eric Barr, Fremont Gary Cattrone, Pleasant Hill Michael Cleveland, Daly City Nancy deStefanis, San Francisco Jo Ann Grasso, Millbrae John Kovach, Wallingford, CT Catherine Lazio, San Francisco Howie Leifer, San Francisco Hester Loy, San Francisco Valarie Morris, El Sobrante Gregory Mott, Union City Louis Renner, Mountain View Flora Rigotti, Portland, OR Eva Marie Sbragia, Alameda Tom Torriglia, San Francisco

# Across the Editor's Desk......

July 18, 1996

Dear Friends,

Just a line to thank you for the Accordion Club News. I get a kick out of reading it every time it comes. I really enjoyed the program in Philadelphia with the American Accordionists' Association. I am amazed at the stature of the young and older accordionists. I especially enjoyed the work of the young accordion bands. I remember especially a rendition of Finlandia. Outstanding.

In June I played my medley of Fiddler on the Roof, which I usually do with symphonies, with the Joan Sommers accordion orchestra in Kansas City. I feel thrilled that the accordion is alive and well and getting better all the time. Wish I could be around the next 50 years to see the strides that will be made.

Enclosed is a partial itinerary for you. More to come.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely yours,

#### **Myron Floren**

The "partial itinerary" which he enclosed lists 28 separate engagements for the second half of 1996, some lasting several days. Locations are primarily East Coast. However, he will be at the Sacramento State Fair on Aug 21st, and at the Glendora, CA Citrus Community College on September 28th. The 1997 itinerary lists 10 engagements just in February. At the bottom of the itinerary, he says:

"As you can see, I'm slowing down a bit but not too much. I'm happy to see that wherever I appear there are other accordion players in the audience. The accordion is very much alive and beautiful music is being performed by talented artists all over the country.

Keep tuned."

## STAS VENGLEVSKI



Our September guest will be Stas Venglevski, pictured here, originally from Russia and now living in Wisconsin. This young man is an amazing talent and is also an extremely personable guy. He and his wife are both musicians, her instrument being the cello. Stas has recently organized an American tour for his teacher, Frederic Lips, who will be our November guest.

When Stas first arrived in the U.S. three plus years ago, his musical tastes mostly tended toward classical. But since he first played for us he has really modified his ideas! He sent us a program of selections which he intends to play. It includes a sonata and a sonatina and Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. Then he

plays to play a Piazzola tango, four polkas, including *Tic Toc* by Magnante, a mazurka, and Frosini's *Jolly Caballero*. Sounds like Americanization in action!

Please be there the second Monday in September to cheer him on!

## GALLA-RINI ACCORDION CAMP 1996

by Val Kieser

Another great musical week at beautiful Silver Falls Conference Center, just east of Salem, Oregon. The Maestro Galla-Rini, now 92, has unbelievable energy. This camp is the highlight of his year (and ours!) each year. He writes, by hand, all the parts for the camp ensembles, new pieces every year. They are always gorgeous arrangements of wonderful mostly classical or semi-classical compositions. This year's grand finale was a spinetingling, powerful "God Bless America." Just imagine it with 50 accordions playing in multiple parts and voices. It was awesome!

This year, for the first time, we had a jazz workshop, taught by John Simkus, President of the Chicago Accordion Club and an accomplished jazz accordionist. John also had written out a jazz arrangement of his own which included the familiar "Whispering" theme, and which was performed quite nicely by the jazz

group on Concert Night.

In spite of the heat and humidity this year, we all had a fabulous time. With great friends, great music till the wee hours of the morning, singing, dancing and wonderful food, how can you lose? The Maestro is already planning what music he will arrange for us for NEXT year. I can hardly wait!

P.S. We all thank John and Ellen Bonica of Portland for organizing this camp for all of us.

We announce with sadness the passing of **Ken Iorio**August 12, 1996

## August General Meeting, cont from p. 1

a love story. We all recognized the next number, *Midnight in Moscow*, which **Steven** delivered in authentic Russian style, including some lyrics. His last song was *The Beautiful Grassland*, *My Home*. Another Chinese number, as well done as the previous pieces. What's your secret, **Steve?** 



Curt Van Neck

Maybe everybody's getting better.
Rick Bez gave another of his pate n ted shows with his new-old accordion.
Place
Pigalle

headed up his list of songs, and he demonstrated that he's really branching out with his musical style. He then added vocals to his act, and delivered the *House of the Rising Sun*, transforming us all to a New Orleans venue. We all got to vote on the last number. Hurrah! I couldn't move off the New Orleans theme and voted for *Jambalaya* but was beaten out by *Dark Eyes* advocates. No loss however, as **Rick** was in great form by now, and we all enjoyed his finale. Yes...he's still bobbing and weaving across the stage as he plays—how does he do that?

It's amazing how many really outstanding accordion players there are. Or maybe there aren't that many, but we get to see almost all of them. In any event, we became reacquainted with another great player at this meeting - Ken Olendorf from Seattle. We know his accordion skills, but all may not know that Ken is also a pianist, keyboardist, arranger and conductor, with a degree in jazz composition. Over the years he has played with the Harmonicats, the Mills Bros., Ink Spots, Helen O'Connell, and jazz guitarist Charlie Byrd. I had the feeling Ken was holding back on his jazz tendencies for our audience, but his natural jazz inclinations still managed to creep into most every number, beginning with Perfideo, Polka Dots and Moonbeams, Day By Day, and My Romance. All good songs which you don't often get to hear. Even Clarinet Polka, a great accordion number, had a jazzy presentation. And he just continued to pull them out of the hat with no apparent difficulty - except that it was hot and he had to do a "partial Contino" and remove his jacket (only!) Ken did a Frank Marocco number, Freedom Flight, followed by Paper Moon, Boogie for Boggie, Under Paris Skies, and Barbara. An Olendorf performance never seems complete unless it includes that last lovely piece which Ken wrote for his wife.

It seemed like **Ken** was only on the stage a short period (time flies when you're

having fun), but actually he played more than ten songs and added a lot of personalized anecdotes as he went along. His grand finale included a duo with our "Cajun" friend, **Jim Boggio.** They really tore it up with a version of *Green Dolphin Street*. It was hard to tell whether the audience or the performers were having more fun.



Steven Shen



Rick Bez



Bob Smith, Val Kieser, Jean Malley, Jana Maas, Sharon Walters, Norma Fox



Ken Olendorf

#### ACCORDION GLOSSARY

with permission of the author, Bob Godfried, NY-based accordion builder and repairman Origially Printed in the booklet accompanying *Planet Squeezebox*, produced by Ellipsis Arts

#### **Diatonic Accordions**

The earliest accordions had a single row of ten buttons, each controlling a valve which controlled the air flow to a pair of metal reeds inside the instrument. These ten pairs of reeds were tuned to a diatonic (or Western major) scale, using a layout almost identical to the harmonica. For each button, as with the harmonica, 2 different notes could be obtained. One note played when the bellows were pulled open, and a different, adjacent note in the scale would play when the bellows was pushed closed, reversing the air flow through the reeds, allowing for 20 notes through the ten pairs of reeds. This "push-pull" arrangement provided a compact and simple system for playing diatonic melodies. With 2 notes per button, 4 fingers could cover a complete 8 note octave. The frequent reversal of bellows direction necessary to change notes added a rhythmic articulation of the notes very suitable for many types of dance tunes. The simple two fingered bass arrangement allowed for a minimal yet adequate accompaniment for most folk music. These factors combined with rugged construction, a loud sound output and relative affordability made the diatonic accordion the most widely distributed and played accordion throughout almost every country in the world.

One Row Diatonic Accordion Also known as the "German style" diatonic accordion, it is the earliest accordion design still being made. It features a single row of ten buttons, exposed valves and from 2 to 4 pull stops on top of the treble side of the instrument altering tone and register of a given note by controlling which reeds will sound. It has only two bass accompaniment buttons. The four stop model remains popular amongst traditional French Canadian musicians in Ouebec and Cajun musicians in Louisiana. The Cajuns re-tune by filing some of the reeds to provide a sweeter harmony

when certain combinations of notes are played together. They also tune the middle sets of reeds in unison, without the tremolo found in most other accordions.

The Organetto. The organetto is a diatonic button accordion found in central and southern Italy. It can have one or two rows of melody buttons and have from 2 to 12 bass buttons. The most common version, known as a "due botte," has 2 bass buttons (hence the name) and a single row of ten melody buttons. It is often made with 3 or 4 extra buttons in a short second row to provide alternate fingerings. The organetto usually has 3 reeds per note: 2 middle sets tremolotuned with a 3rd set tuned an octave lower and controlled by a pull stop.

**3 to 5 row diatonic "Helikon Bass" accordion** Also known as "tyrolean,"
"Alpine" or "Steirische Harmonika" (after the region in Austria) accordions, these are found, with slight variations, in Austria, Bohemia, Bavaria, Slovakia, and Slovenia. They have from three to five diatonic rows of buttons. Each row is tuned to a key a fourth above the previous row. Named after the helikon, a type of European tuba, these instruments have the most powerful bass tone of all accordions, featuring from 11 to 19 bass buttons.

Irish Accordion. The melodeon, as the diatonic button accordion is known in Ireland and Great Britain, had a single row of ten buttons on the right hand keyboard and two bass accompaniment buttons for the left hand. In order to render the ornamentation associated with the fiddle and bagpipes, and to play in additional keys, a second row of buttons was added. This new second row was also diatonic, but was pitched a semi-tone higher or lower than the original row. Instruments were made in key combinations such as: C/C#; C#/D; D/D# and D/ C#. By the early 1950's the "B/C" system took hold because it allowed for a smoother and quicker style of playing. The Irish accordion with its two rows tuned a semi-tone apart is a member of a family of accordion keyboard systems known as the "semi-tone" keyboard. The origin of these systems is somewhat untraceable as they appeared around the turn of the century all over the world. By adding the second row a semi-tone away from the first row, it provided the missing sharps and flats, making the instrument fully chromatic, while preserving some of the push-pull technique and tonality of the diatonic accordion.

2 and 3 Row Diatonic Button Accordions. Known as "Vienna" or "Italian" style diatonic accordions. They have 2 or 3 rows of buttons, each row tuned to a key a fourth higher than the previous row. Some 2-row instruments have an additional 3rd row of 4 to 10 buttons of notes missing from the 2 diatonic rows. These extra notes give the instrument a full, but awkward to finger, chromatic range. There may be from 4 to 12 bass buttons. The Tex-Mex and Mexican Norteño 3-row accordion players have developed a fast style of playing which involves crossing all the rows and using most the notes that play when the bellows is pulled open. Since all the accompaniment basses are not available on the pull stroke, most players do not play the basses at all, but rely on the other instruments of the conjunto group to provide the bass and chordal accompaniment.

Chromatic Button Accordion. In 1850 in Vienna, the musician F. Walther re-arranged the reeds of a three row diatonic accordion to play a 46 note chromatic scale (a 12-note scale of all half steps). Starting at the upper end of the keyboard, the notes progressed in a chromatic scale, diagonally across all three rows. Unlike the diatonic button accordion, each button played the same note regardless of the bellows direction. Walther's chromatic keyboard layout is one of the systems still in use. Most modern chromatic button accordions

The Glossary from Planet Squeezebox. The author, Bob Godfried, is busy writing a book about accordions!

have five rows of buttons. They are still based on a three row chromatic pattern — the two additional rows duplicate the first two rows to provide alternative fingerings. The advantage of a chromatic button keyboard is that only one fingering pattern is necessary to play in all keys. To change to another key, you simply shift your fingering pattern across the keyboard and begin on another note, as you might do on a guitar fingerboard. Also the hand can span 2 1/2 octaves as compared to a single octave on a piano accordion keyboard. The chromatic button accordion is more widely used in Europe than the piano accordion. Some larger chromatic button accordions with a "free-bass" system can play seven chromatic octaves or more.

Musette. A four row button chromatic accordion popular in France. It has three middle reeds tuned to produce a very strong tremolo which is evocative of the tone of the "musette" bagpipe. Diatonic accordions were later replaced by the chromatic button accordions which are now known as "musette" accordions.

Piano Accordion. The first piano accordion appeared in Paris in 1852; however, the size of the keys remained quite small. The piano accordion was introduced to the United States by Pietro Deiro, Sr. in San Francisco in 1909. Domestic manufacture of these instruments began shortly afterward, later becoming by far the most popular system in the US. Deiro is credited with popularizing the instrument and also enlarging the size of the keys to their current proportions, thus improving the playability of the instrument. The piano accordion is manufactured with stradella or free-bass systems.

### The Concertinas.

All concertinas have their keyboards set into the opposite ends of the instrument. There are no preset chords available. Each button plays a single note (occasionally two notes an octave apart) and notes are somewhat evenly distributed between the left and right hands.

The instrument is held by some type of hand strap and often supported on the knees. Some varieties of the instrument are as follows:

English Concertina. Octagonal or hexagonal ended instrument developed by Charles Wheatstone of London in the 1830s to play violin repertoire. It has a range of three chromatic octaves. Each button produces the same note regardless of the direction of the bellows; thereby it can easily produce smoothly flowing melodies.

German Concertina. Developed by Carl Freidrich Uhlig of Chemnitz, Saxony, Germany in 1834. It is a square ended instrument based on the diatonic accordion push-pull system. It divided the ten buttons into five buttons for each side. Later a second row of buttons for another key a 5th higher was added above the first row.

Anglo-German. George Jones of London in 1850 built a hexagonal ended instrument using the diatonic German concertina fingering system to which he added another row of accidental notes making the instrument chromatic. This instrument later became known as the "Anglo-chromatic" or simply "Anglo" system concertina.

Bandoneon. A large square-ended concertina. It is based on the diatonic German system to which many additional buttons were added (for a total of 72 or more buttons) to provide a range of 4 1/2 chromatic octaves. Each of these notes can be found in a pushing or pulling mode; however, for each bellows direction, the buttons' location that will produce these notes is different. Therefore, two completely different fingerings must be learned: one pattern for use when the bellows is opened and another completely different pattern when the bellows is closed.

Zulu or Sotho Concertina. Also known in South Africa as a "squashbox" system. These are inexpensive Italian and German made "German" system concertinas which have been re-tuned to a wide variety of tribal and individual

scales and note arrangements used in South African traditional and popular music.

### **Bass Accompaniment Systems**

Diatonic Bass. Diatonic accordions have one or two pairs of bass buttons on the left or bass side of the instrument for each row of buttons on the treble side. Each pair consists of one button that produces a fundamental bass note and another button that produces a pre-set chord. The tonic, or root, bass note and chord will sound when the bellows is pushed closed and the dominant bass note and chord will sound when the bellows is pulled open. Since most chords are available in only one bellows direction, the accompaniment basses do not always match the requirements of the melody. While the diatonic bass system is adequate for much folk music, there are occasions when the limitations of this system become apparent.

Stradella Bass. The "Stradella" bass system, often referred to as a "120 bass" system, is capable of providing accompaniment in all keys. It features a row of fundamental and counter bass buttons and a row of buttons of major, minor, dominant 7th, and diminished chords. It is possible but difficult to play limited single note bass melodies using the fundamental and counter bass row.

Free-Bass. The "free' Bass" system, also known as "bassetti," consists of 3 or more rows of buttons, each playing a single note arranged in the same pattern as the treble keys in a button chromatic accordion. While there are no pre-set chords available, the melodic possibilities are much expanded. A five octave button chromatic accordion with a three octave free-bass system can have a total range (allowing for some overlap) of over seven octaves., There are also "converter" systems that with the moving of a switch change a "stradella" bass system to a "free-bass" system. There are also bass arrangements that have three rows of "freebass" buttons next to a full "stradella" bass system.

## What's Happening in the Accordion World??

# Welcome, ACCORDIONAIRES

We've just received our first issue (not, apparently, their first issue) of Sharps and Flats, the newsletter of the new Accordionaires Accordion Club of northern LA. Their President is Walt Nycz, VP-Paul LaVoe. They hold meetings on the third Tuesday of the month at Victorio's Pizza, 10901 Victory Blvd., No Hollywood, from 6 to 10PM. One block east of Vineland, they say. Should you wish to call them, the number is (818) 762-9000. They would welcome guests...please stop by should you find yourself in LA on the third Tuesday!

Their newsletter is two long legalsized sheets filled with info about their activities plus a few snippets about Beethoven: "Beethoven had ten children and practiced on a spinster in the attic." And this one: "A Beethoven fan who adored the master saved his money for a trip to Germany to visit Beethoven's birthplace and various points of Beethoven history. He went to the grave and was surprised to see Beethoven sitting at a table, busily erasing music. "Why, Master, what are you doing!?" the man exclaimed. Beethoven replied, "I'm decomposing."

#### Your E-mail Address??

Since it seems that computers and the Internet are here to stay, we need to begin to update our phone lists to include net addresses for any member who has one.

If you have access to the Internet and are willing to have your netaddress included as an alternate means for BAAC to contact you, please let us know. Send it to Your Editor and I will add it to our lists. I'm mjkelly@netcom.com.

Next time we print mailing lists, we'll be able to include an additional column!

#### **Accordionist Database**

Would you like your name to be included in a database of accordionists who are willing to accept playing jobs? Tom Torriglia's company, All Things Accordion, is starting such a database (name, address, phone, skills, musical genres, stroll, etc.) for booking purposes. Tom has frequent requests for accordionists who can do specific things, so he will add names of all interested persons to his list.

If you think you might like to be included, phone him at (415) 440-0800 or e-mail to sfbellows@aol.com.

# Accordion Calendars for 1997

Karen Gurlevich of Sarasota announces the release of her 1997 accordion calendar featuring color photos of many of your favorite accordionists, including Frankie Yankovic, William Schimmel, Lou Fanucchi, Bonnie Birch, and Jorgen Sundeqvist.

To order one, send \$12, which includes shipping, to:

Accordiona Music Sales 3277 Beneva Rd. Unit 104 Sarasota, FL 34232

### Mark YourCalendars, Cont.

September 20, 21, 22. Northeast Squeeze-in.."a wonderful free-reed getaway in the heart of the Berkshires" (western MA). Meals, workshops, and spontaneous squeezings. Traditional concert and contra dance on Sat. A variety of accommodations are available. Call The Button Box, (413) 549-0171 for more info.

November 4th, Monday. BAAC General Meeting with very special guest artist, world-known accordionist Frederic Lips.

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Paul is giving two seminars at Cotati this year, one on MIDI accordions and one on amplifying your acoustic instrument (without MIDI)

Please plan to attend!

# **CELEBRATE THE ACCORDION!!!**

1996 is the Year of the Accordion!!

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