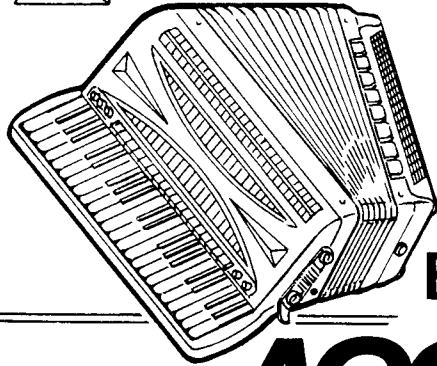


Newsletter of the

SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA U.S.A.



BAY AREA

ACCORDION CLUB

FEBRUARY, 1997

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February General Meeting

by Denny Huff

President **Bob Berta** welcomed everyone to the meeting and made a few brief announcements. First of all, our old friend, the House of Parties, has closed its doors. It's been sold and will no longer be available for the Fun Band, the Ensemble, or for other accordion functions. It had its shortcomings, but it served a purpose and the price was right. RIP House of Parties. **Bob Delgado** mentioned that there were still about 40 accordions left in the **Jim Boggio** estate — call **Bob** if you're interested. And finally, (President) **Bob** gave an appeal for quiet in the back of the hall when players are trying to perform. I enjoy the socializing opportunities at the club, but once people begin playing, it always seemed more than a little inconsiderate to make them compete with the background noise level. Thanks, **Bob**, for reminding us to practice our accordion manners.

It was more or less **Di Bono** night, and the clan's elder statesman led off the musical portion of the evening with songs which **Tony** has probably played countless times. Both he and we in the audience were very comfortable with them. *Yes Sir, That's My Baby, Has Anybody Seen My Gal, The Shiek of Araby, and Alley Cat* were in his opening salvo. He and Cameraperson **Kathy Greenfield** seemed to have a good time with the photo opportunities. **Tony** continued with *When You're Smiling, It Had to Be You, the Sirio Waltz and La Spagnola*. Simple, enjoyable tunes well played by an accordionist who was obviously having a good time.

Continuing in chronological order, **Reno Di Bono** was up next. (I think we established that **Reno** is the senior offspring.) **Reno** enjoyed playing so much that he brought several fellow musicians along to share in the fun. Drummer

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

March 3rd, Monday. BAAC General Meeting. Featuring our favorite Finn, Veikko Ahvenainen. And it's DESSERT NIGHT; bring a dessert to share. Donworth Hall, 22nd & Eucalyptus, S.F., just north of Stonestown Shopping Center. 7 P.M.

Mar 5th, 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.

March 10th, Monday. BAAC Accordion Band (Fun Band) practice. Location in doubt! Call Domenic Saso, (415) 587-7557.

March 12th and 24th, Wednesdays 7:00 PM. BAAC Ensemble Practice. Location?? Call Joe, 510-832-6938.

April 6th, Sunday. Quartetto Gelato at Herbst Theater. Q.G. is NPR's Debut Artist of the Year. This quartet features accordion along with strings, and they play a wide array of styles..from gypsy through folk to operatic arias and classical. Don't miss! 2P (415) 398-6449

April 8th, Tuesday. Composers' Organization features music for solo accordion, performed by Peter Soave. Let's all be there to support these good people! See p. 2

April 22nd, Tuesday. Sev Garcia, soloist, with the Tulare Symphony League. See p. 6

June 29th, Sunday. BAAC Picnic. We're back to the Palo Alto Elks Club this year, in response to popular demand. Save the date!

July 20 - 25th, Eighth annual Galla-Rini Accordion Camp, Silver Falls, OR. Val has signup forms, but hurry!

August 23 & 24, Sat/Sun. Cotati Accordion Festival.

Please send Calendar Information to Your Editor, using the address on the last page. Thank you.

EDITOR'S CORNER

COMPOSERS, Inc.
 1011 Rhode Island
 San Francisco, CA 94107
 (415) 512-0641
 cmpoisrsubc@aol.com
 January 18, 1997

To the Bay Area Accordion Club:

We are pleased to announce that a piece for solo accordion, *Toccata* by William Popp, will be included on our concert of Tuesday, April 8, 1997. *Toccata* is the winner of the most recent Lee Ettelson Composer's Award, a prize awarded annually by Composers, Inc. for an outstanding chamber work by a living American composer. It will be performed by internationally known virtuoso Peter A. Soave. As an additional point of interest, the accordion will also be heard in the ensemble that will perform another work on this concert — Eitan Steinberg's *Simplicity*.

The concert will be at 8:00 p.m. in the Green Room of the Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Ave (at McAllister) in San Francisco. Tickets are \$15 general admission/\$10 students, seniors, disabled persons, and are available by mail or by telephoning (415) 512-0641. Blocks of tickets (10 or more) are available at the discounted price.

In *Toccata*, composer William Popp explores many of the characteristics unique to the accordion as a keyboard instrument. The most striking of these are produced by the bellows, a mechanism that allows the performer to achieve very fine gradations in dynamics. *Toccata* features the technique of "reverse attack," one in which a note may begin very softly, crescendo, then be released with a strong accent. Another bellows effect is the "vibratissimo," which is produced by a rapidly vibrating hand upon the keyboard, resulting in a wavering sound. Extremes of range, produced by the use of "shifts," and interesting combinations of the reeds, which are tuned in octaves, add further demands upon the performer of this dazzling piece.

William Popp earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in music from the University of Denver and his doctorate in composition from Catholic University of America. He is the current arranger and accordionist with the United States Air Force Strolling Strings. His compositions and arrangements have been heard in numerous White House performances and throughout the world.

Composers, Inc., founded in 1984, is dedicated to presenting the finest new chamber music by living American composers.

<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>

Dear BAAC Members;

What a delight it is to receive a letter like this one! This local composers' organization is certainly sympathetic with BAAC's mission to spread the word about the accordion and to enlighten those

who tend to dismiss our instrument. We wonder which savvy member of their group encouraged them to feature a piece for solo accordion on the program! We should perhaps find out, and become acquainted (Board members.....hint).

For the moment, though, we encourage everyone to attend this concert which will be held the day following our April BAAC meeting. Let's do what we can to tell **Composers, Inc.** that they have made a very wise decision.

Peter Soave, from Dearborne, Michigan, has not been a BAAC guest, but he has played twice at the Cotati Festival, and you may recall that Lou Soper sponsored him in a local concert a few years ago. His repertoire is very broad, from jazz to classical. Peter plays a bayan and keeps a full schedule of concerts, many in Europe, where he is very successful. He is certain to do our instrument proud on April 8th.

You will notice that tickets are discounted for seniors, students and for groups of ten or more. If you would like to attend and do not qualify for the senior discount, please call BAAC's voice mail (number on outside of this newsletter) and let us know how many tickets you would like. If we can accumulate requests for ten tickets, BAAC can purchase them in a group. MK

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL:

Nope, not yet! But several of you have been asking about our renewal policy and dates. Here's what we do:

BAAC bylaws call for a fiscal year beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Hence dues have always been payable on the first of July of each year (with no amortization for late payment). In May, therefore, you will find a reminder in the form of a dues billing in your mailbox. Should you pay next year's dues prior to that time, you run the risk of confusing our fantastically complex accounting system.

However, that may change this year. The Board is considering changing the Fiscal Year to 1 October thru 30 September, for many reasons. Should that occur, dues won't be payable until September! So stay tuned.

MK

February General Meeting, cont.

Roy Kaufman and clarinetist **Joe Di Vittori** filled out an excellent trio which we've seen before — at Cotati, among other venues. These guys really put out some great music and play frequently around the Bay Area. *Dizzy Fingers* and *Under Paris Skies* were their first offering. Other numbers included *Tico Tico*, *The Way You Look Tonight*, a *Tarantella*, *La Campagnola*, several polkas including *Julietta*, *Eh Cumpari*, a samba, and *Clarinet Polka*, featuring **Joe** and his trusty clarinet. He really makes that instrument sing, and it's a great pleasure to hear him play. It'd cost a lot more than \$2 to hear him Saturday evening at Niccolino's in the South Bay (just off Tasman near Lawrence Expwy). I think these three

guys can give up their day jobs.

Going into the break, we raffled off fifty bucks and a **Bob Delgado** tape. Monetary winners were **Janet Landauer** and **Jim Holliday**. **Orie** (I missed his last name) won the tape. As a side note, I've bought many accordion tapes over the past four

years, mostly to support the players. Other than **Veikko's** tapes, which are obviously incredibly good, the one I listen to most is **Bob Delgado's**. It's a very pleasant, enjoyable tape which you ought to buy if you don't have it. And thanks

for the contribution, **Bob**.

The Reno Accordion Club was represented by a delegation at the meeting. **Ed Suterko**, Club President, and **Don Evans**, VP, brought a selection of accordions for sale and joined with ever popular **Clyde Forsman** to do a few songs. **Ed** plays a concertina that looks like a bandoneon, **Don** had a button box, and we all know what **Clyde** plays. They played *By the Light of the Silvery Moon*, *Red River Valley*, and *Rambling Rose*, at least one of which Master of Ceremonies Domenic Saso selected at random from their song book, or at least offered to. The songs were well delivered, but the trio worked out the selections in real time — with the audience offering suggestions.

We got another opportunity to hear **Richard Yaus**, and this time he was an anticipated part of the program, so we were treated to a longer sampling. **Richard** played a selection of dance music, but different from the ballroom dance music which **Bonnie Birch** likes to play. **Richard** played various types of European folk dances. He's an incredibly good, young player who just moved here from Bavaria, and whose first number was a Bavarian Farmer Folk Song. He continued with a special piece written by Bernard Molique during the previous century (1869) for the piano and the accordion. Lacking a piano accompanist, **Richard** played the number solo, and we wouldn't have ever known the piano was missing. He then played another song which sounded like a tune I heard in many fest tents across Upper Bavaria, and it evoked good memories. Showing great versatility, he played *Kiss of Fire*, followed by a *Czardas*. He received a very strong and well deserved ovation. Thanks **Richard**. Munich's loss (even if only temporary) has been our gain!

Yes, folks, you guessed it! (Well, a few of you did, anyway.) That youthful, exuberant mystery face in January's newsletter grew up to become **Peter Di Bono**, our next and final player! And the final page of the **Di Bono**



The Di Bono Statesman (obviously)



Roy Kaufman, Joe Di Vittori, Reno Di Bono



Richard Yaus



February trilogy. **Peter** put a smile on our faces with, appropriately, *Un Riso* (a smile). And he makes it all look so easy. **Peter** noted that most of his material had been absconded by earlier players, but he received a hearty endorsement to provide another version of the *Clarinet Polka*, which was a real crowd pleaser! **Peter** also played a Czardas and another number called *Chiquilin de Bachen* by Astor Piazzolla. For an encore, Peter played a request from the audience, Moonlight in Vermont. It was patented Di Bono excellence, and our pleasure to be there. I'd tell Peter he could also give up his day job, but he's already done that. He's a retired San Francisco police inspector.

Tony Di Bono capped off the evening with God Bless America. It's an appropriate thought.



Well, not exactly Pot Luck, but we are hoping that everybody will bring a scrumptious, calorie-free DESSERT to our March meeting. That will give us a longer opportunity to become better acquainted with our guest, Veikko Ahvenainen, pictured at right. His name is pronounced Vay' ko Ahh ven ni' nen, with the "i" in "ni" given a long i (eye) sound.

Veikko lives, teaches and performs in Finland, a country which has deservedly earned its reputation as an accordion mecca. And Veikko has played a large role in the development of that reputation. It's been two years since we've seen

him, so please attend and welcome Veikko!



Peter Di Bono, Isabel Massolo

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- Ed Massolo (415) 589-8409
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What's Happening in the Accordion World???

Here's a recent feature article which appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, complete with colored pictures:

BIG SQUEEZE

Down but never out, the lowly accordion is staging a comeback.

by *Tina Maples*, MJS pop music critic

It's a humble instrument with a big p.r. problem.

When Lawrence Welk and "Weird Al" Yankovic are your ambassadors, you know you're in trouble. And then there's Gary Larson's infamous "Far Side" cartoon: "Welcome to heaven. Here's your harp. Welcome to hell. Here's your accordion."

Go ahead, laugh. After nearly four decades in the popularity Dumpster, the accordion is hot again — and we're not talking about the temperature in Hades.

Listen carefully these days, and you're likely to hear accordion wafting through the background in a surprising number of places.

The Kevin Costner/Rene Russo golf flick "Tin Cup" opens with a ridiculously infectious ditty called "Little Bit is Better Than Nada" by Grammy winning conjunto accordionist Flaco Jimenez and the Texas Tornados. Accordion also winds its way through recent soundtracks for "Lone Star" and "12 Monkeys."

The Colorado-based Closet Accordion Players of America claims more than 1,500 members nationwide, including about 65 in Wisconsin, where the polka is the official state dance. Those Darn Accordions!, a jokey squeezebox band from San Francisco, draws capacity crowds to its annual shows at Summerfest with accordion versions of rock classics such as "Stairway to Heaven."

Older players who put down their accordions when the electric guitar came along are rediscovering the instrument. And in the "geek chic" 90s, an accordion looks just plain cool.

"Younger people are picking it up now, initially thinking it's freaky-geeky," said Michael Shapiro, a New Yorker who compiled last year's three-CD "Planet Squeezebox," considered by many to be the definitive sampler of world accordion music.

The instrument has inspired at least two books this year. Annie E. Proulx's "Accordion Crimes" follows a plucky green squeezebox through several generations of immigrant ownership. Suzanne Strempek Shea's new novel, "Hoopi Shoopi Donna," tells the semi-autobiographical tale of a young woman whose father dreamed of her leading an all-girl accordion band.

"He figured I'd make a killing playing weddings," said Shea, 37. A proud C.A.P.A. member, she hauled out her childhood accordion about 10 years ago during Hurricane Gloria when her East Coast home lost power and her husband couldn't play his stereo.

Even the Bud Lite frogs do their burping against a backdrop of zydeco accordion in a recent beer commercial. If this keeps up, kids are going to think the Disney film is called "Polkahontas."

The accordion. It's not just for punchlines anymore.

"I think once you fall in love with the accordion you never stop," said Wendy Newton, president of Green Linnet Records, an

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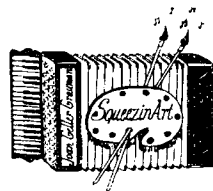
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Joan & Dan Grauman



BIG SQUEEZE, cont.

Irish music label in Danbury, Conn.

"It's that gutsy, emotional thing that gets me," Newton said. "The accordion has a huge amount of heart. The Irish tunes are thick with emotion anyhow, and the accordion has so much texture it can give to that kind of music. Guys like (traditional button accordionist) Billy McComiskey can make you cry."

Baby boomers who feel disenfranchised by grunge and rap are finding refuge in world music — much like the way they turned to country music a few years earlier.

In other cultures, they're discovering the accordion in endless historic incarnations: from the Irish folk of Joe Derrane to the French jazz of Richard Galliano, from the Dominican merengue of Francisco Ulloa to the trance-like sounds from the island of Madagascar, where accordion is used in ceremonies to summon the spirits of the ancestors.

The instrument also is getting a boost from the growing mainstream interest in accordion-rich Tex-Mex music following the 1995 murder of Tejano singing star Selena. And thanks to tireless advocates such as Stanley "Buckwheat" Dural, zydeco, the festive music of Louisiana's Creole and Cajun communities, is giving the polka a run for its money as a dancehall favorite.

"We get a huge response every time we play Beausoleil and Beau Jocques. And Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys are totally kicking some butt," said Bruce Warren, music director and producer of the Philadelphia-based, nationally syndicated public radio show "World Cafe."

One man doing his part to expand the accordion's horizons is New York avant-accordionist Guy Klucvsek.

In 1987, he began writing and commissioning new accordion works from classical composers for a program he calls "Polkas from the Fringe."

He'll play a selection with Milwaukee's Present Music Ensemble Saturday at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Tunes on tap include "The Disinformation Polka," "The Attack Cat Polka," "The Club Nada Polka" and "Kielbasa, Beer and Sauerkraut."

Although all accordions might sound alike to the uninitiated, there's a vast array of disciplines among the reed-and-bellows instruments.

Cajun and Mexican musicians typically play a diatonic accordion rather than a piano accordion, which can play in any key and is brandished by most polka players as well as by zydeco masters such as Buckwheat Zydeco. The Irish push the button accordion. The late Argentinian master Astor Piazzolla reinvented the tango on a reeds-and-bellows instrument called the bandoneon. His surreal flourishes added menace to the "12 Monkeys" soundtrack.

Klucvsek favors a 4 1/2 octave variation on the piano accordion that has no pre-set chords on the left hand, called the free-bass accordion. When he says it's addictive, he's not kidding.

Not everyone is happy with the accordion's newfound popularity. Chris Strachwitz, owner of Arhoolie Records, a zydeco, Cajun and roots reissues label in El Cerrito, CA., worries that the mainstreaming of zydeco will cement the accordion's reputation as a frivolous party favor rather than a serious instrument.

Nor is he optimistic that the conjunto sound he loves will cross over to the mainstream in a significant way.

"It's really hard to get people into Mexican music," he said. "It's just this bizarre racial attitude, partially a fear that there are too many of them, or that they're too close. People love to dance to cajun music. They're a small, isolated group of safe, quaint, harmless folks who don't pose a threat to anyone."

Meanwhile, the accordion defense continues. A popular T-shirt sold by Those

Sev Garcia in Concert

Sev Garcia, BAAC member who hails from Porterville, will play an all-classical program for the Tulare Symphony League in Visalia, CA on Tuesday, April 22nd at 10 AM. Sev plays acoustic accordion with separate MIDI accompaniment. He most recently played for our club in duet with Bart Beninco early last year, so we all know how great he sounds!

The Tulare Symphony League program will include a Mozart Organ Sonata with string quartet, Pietro Deiro's "Concerto in A for Accordion and Orchestra," and "Reflections" a suite for accordion and orchestra by Andrew Walters. Sev has already performed this suite in March '95 with the Klamath Symphony Orchestra. Call Sev for specific address in Visalia or for more information (209) 781-2911.

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

Darn Accordions! reads "Accordions don't play 'Lady of Spain,' People Do." And piano accordionist David diGiuseppe has reclaimed that old Larson cartoon by naming his latest album, "Welcome to Heaven."

But perhaps Shapiro, the "Planet Squeezebox" diva, said it best:

"There's so much great accordion music out there, it ain't funny."

End.



San Francisco Chronicle

May 16, 1996

Dear Marian,

You're a real sport — you know I'm mostly kidding when I take a poke at accordions, and your very nice letter shows a lot of class. I promise to read the newsletter, so keep in touch!

All best,

Herb

which was preceded by this letter to Herb Caen, considerably shortened here, from your Editor:

May 1, 1996

Dear Mr. Caen;

We of the Bay Area Accordion Club are now 340 members spanning a range of accordion styles and abilities that is both impressive and sometimes even a little scary. Most of us, having indulged our own specific accordion interests, are only now recognizing the wide and wonderful diversity of musical situations into which Our Favorite Instrument fits.

We are aware, of course, of your ongoing interest in our instrument, as evidenced by little snippets which appear in your column from time to time. I suspect it is superfluous to mention that we are sometimes but not always delighted with your choice of accordion-related comment.

I do mention it, though, because some of those items have triggered a mini-campaign to encourage you to hold the accordion and its local supporters in, should I say, somewhat higher regard. This enclosed newsletter is a step in that direction.

I'll put you on our mailing list for a few months. The newsletter may not provide column fodder, but I hope you'll applaud our activities at least privately!

Marian Kelly, Newsletter Editor
Bay Area Accordion Club

And so, Herb Caen has been on our mailing list for several months, and, with his passing, it seemed time to share these two letters with the membership. I believe that his regular accordion tidbits and jokes were a positive influence and that we owe him considerable thanks. I hope he has taught some of us to laugh at ourselves.

MK

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The Button Box in Amherst, MA has just released their latest 32-page catalog. They are an excellent source for new one, two, and three-row button accordions, including Saltarelle, Hohner and Castagnari. They carry Anglo, English, and Duet concertinas and are close to being able to manufacture their own line of concertinas. They have a large supply of all sorts of used instruments. The Button Box offers a complete repair and tuning service for all types of accordions and concertinas and carry all types of reeds, valves, straps, and replacement parts. They carry a wide selection of English/Scottish, Irish, Cajun/Zydeco, French, Québécois, Tex Mex, and Contra Dance recordings.

For information and orders, call (413) 549-0171 or email to squeeze@buttonbox.com.

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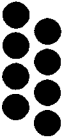
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