

BAAC PAGE

Dedicated to the accordion and related instruments through fun, service & education

OFF & RUNNING IN 2001

By Valerie T. Kieser

President Lou Soper announced that the Chinese virtuoso Zhang Gouping would play a special concert for us at Moose Lodge on January 10th and he urged everyone to attend. It promised to be an outstanding event.

[It was. See elsewhere in the newsletter.] He also reiterated that BAAC continues to be a successful club through the efforts of some wonderful people and he asked if more people could find it in their hearts to help out. [He mentioned the efforts of Vince Cirelli, Jim Firpo, Bob Berta, Lou Casabnuovo, Val Kieser, Kris Nelson, John Seckman, Jim Holliday, Evelyn Baulch, Frank Schlotter, Ed Zaro, Joe Smiell, Sharon Walters, Rustly Bartoli, Dominic & Frances Benedetto, Frank Montoro and begged anyone's pardon if he overlooked them during the heat of the moment.]

Then, the music began:

Marlen (Mark) member, played for us his own arrangements of *Hello Dolly*, *All of Me*, and *Moscow Windows* on his bright red Weltmeister accordion. It is always a treat to welcome new members, and we thank Mark for having the spirit to just stand right up and play for us [Other members take note]. Nice job, Mark! Mark also plays with our BAAC Ensemble.

Next was Bob Berta, playing his acoustic accordion. He played a Bach hymn, *Eleanor*, *The Theme From The*

Apartment and *Summertime* from Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. The pieces Bob chose to play were all beautiful selections, and I couldn't help but notice how Bob's playing has improved

over the last several months. Our articles on phrasing, articulation,



dynamics, rubato and other such topics are really paying off! Even though I haven't mastered the execution of all these aspects of music, I have become aware of them and have learned (and am still learning) what to listen for!

When I was asked on the spot to play at this meeting, I figured I could be forgiven if my performance was less than perfect, so I said "Why not?" And play I did—actually it didn't hurt a bit! I played a beautiful French piece called

Hymne à l'Amour (hymn to love); in English it's called "If you Love Me, Really Love Me." Then I played *Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes*, an arrangement inspired by Bob Smith, to which I added a few touches of my own. Lastly, I played *Twelfth Street Rag* exactly as I had learned it at the Olmstead Studios in Palo Alto sometime around 1950.

Next up was one of our favorite "stars," Frank Montoro, playing his acoustic Giuletto (I swear it has velvet reeds!). Frank played, in his special and beautiful style, *Roses and Lollipops*, a French tango called *Viens m'Embrasser*, meaning "come and hug me," *Long Ago and Far Away* and *Misiridou*. Absolutely lovely, Frank.

How do you top Frank Montoro? It's not easy, but it got even more exciting when Peter Di Bono joined Frank on the stage and together they played *All of Me*, *Moonlight in Vermont* and *Fascination* in a medley—then, a change of pace: *La Cumparsita*, and *Una Vez, Nada Más* ("You Belong To My Heart"). What a stunning combination!

After the intermission, we heard someone new, whose full name we were unable to get before he left the hall, but *continued on next page*

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OFF & RUNNING *continued*

who is called "Hebber." Hebber plays for various churches in the Mission District, so his selections were in a sacred mood. First he played *I Come to the Garden Alone*, which I have known all my life and that I consider one of the loveliest spirituals. Since I could not find Hebber at the end of the evening, I did not get the name of his next piece, but it was slow, in _ time, in a minor key, and with much harmony [*the refrain was "He walks with me and He talks with me."*] His last piece was [*a literal translation from Spanish*], "If God Provides for the Birds He Will Also Provide for Me [*His Eye Is On The Sparrow*]," also in _ time and at a medium speed. This was a pleasant change of pace for the club, and I enjoyed it very much.

Next our President, Lou Soper, got up with his accordion and played bits of various types of waltzes [*when in doubt, do a waltz, he advised*]: *La Spagnola*, *O Marie* (Italian), *Du, Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen* (German), *When Irish Eyes are Smiling* (Irish, of course), *Home on the Range* (cowboy),



Remember and What'll I Do? (standards, Irving Berlin), and some Mancini waltzes: *Dear Heart*, *Charade*, *Moon River* (with vocal). He finished with *The Nearness of You* (also with vocal) [*transliterated into That beer next to you*"].

Lou then asked Frank Montoro to join

him on the stage, and together they played *September in the Rain* and *Kansas City*. Great fun! For an im-promptu program, our players really came through! [*You see, folks. Even when a big line up of stars isn't announced our meetings are absolutely great.*] Do yourself a favor and come every time. You won't be sorry.

TEACH SPEAK

Teach Speak is a column open to our teachers & others who would like to share tips and advice with our readers. Gary Dahl is an Arranger/Composer/Author for Mel Bay Publications who teaches a correspondence course. For further information see his ad elsewhere in this issue.

How To Wear A Piano Accordion

By Gary Dahl

The piano accordion, because of its vertical keyboard, requires correct placement for maximum technical capability. When in seated position the bottom section of the keyboard *should not be inside the right leg!* This blocks the bottom section of the keyboard at an inward angle thus forcing the hand position to be twisted at a severe technical disadvantage. The keyboard should be parallel with the centerline of the body; this will allow a proper angle for the hand position. To accomplish this, the straps should be tightly adjusted preventing the accordion from moving side to side upon reversal of the bellows direction. When the keyboard is correctly aligned the technical aspects of fingering, such as the crossing of the 4th finger over the thumb from C to Bb can be executed with confidence and accuracy. In photos, Charles Magnante always showed the best example of correct keyboard placement: the keyboard was only a few inches below his chin, black keys directly in line under the chin and vertical with the center line of the body. This positioning is ideal for standing or sitting and will present a professional and confident appearance and performance.

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FRIEDRICH LIPS: THE ART OF BAYAN PLAYING

(A Book Review) By Robert K. Berta

I had heard from several sources that noted virtuoso concert accordionist, Friedrich Lips, wrote what is considered the ultimate book on technique, interpretation and performance. Unfortunately, it was written in Russian so was of no use to me—or countless other non-Russian speaking accordionists.

Recently, I was thrilled to hear that Willoughby Ann Walshe, familiar to many in our club, had undertaken the task of translating it to English. Faith Deffner informed me that I could get a copy from her for \$23.95 plus shipping and handling. Needless to say I jumped at the chance to obtain it. When I received it I was impressed with the quality of the soft cover book. It is 211 pages long. Twenty-four pages of the book are a forward by Willoughby, which are in themselves a treasure trove of information about the accordion in Russia.

Of course, the first thing you learn if you didn't already know is that Lips' accordion is not the usual piano accordion we are familiar with. While the piano accordion is played in Russia, the instrument described here that the Russians developed to a high level is called the Bayan. Bayan is the Russian word for minstrel or rhapsodist. The bayan is a chromatic instrument (same note played on push and pull stroke), but instead of piano keys on the right side it has a series of buttons in rows. This can range from two rows to 5 rows. The bass system looks the same as what we are familiar with—often it has a converter (from Stradella to free bass), although many of the bayans are only free bass.

I suppose that many people would assume that much of what Lips writes about is specific to the bayan and therefore not of much use to the piano accordionist. In fact that is not true. While there are some bayan specific parts—in general everything in the book is applicable to the piano accordion; or, for that matter even other forms of free reed instruments like button boxes, concertinas and bandoneons. I found it curious that a book entitled *The Art of Playing the Bayan* would feature drawings of piano accordions on the front cover rather than the bayan. Perhaps that was an attempt to try to get the piano accordionists attention (if so this is a clever bit of marketing). In fact, I can't imagine any musician not finding lots of gold in these pages. I am still reading and re-reading many parts of the book but I have to admit this is the most incredible collection I have seen. Perhaps the only "competition" is Anthony Gallarini's extraordinary collection of writings in book form (also available from Deffner).

The first section is devoted to tone. Some of you who attended Peter Soave's workshop may remember the very strong emphasis he placed on tone. In Lips' book that is also placed at the very top of the list regarding technique. I was gratified to see how much emphasis he placed on bellows control. Anyone who plays the accordion knows that the absolutely most important attribute of our instrument is the bellows which allows you to create an incredible array of nuances that few if any

instruments can match. He also discusses keystrokes (and you thought you just pushed a button!): tremolo, bellows shake and how to perform other various types of articulation. I am sure the terms legato and staccato are familiar terms to you—how would you like to add a bunch of additional types of articulation to your playing palette? He goes into excellent detail and describes with text and musical examples terms like *legatissimo*, *portato*, *tenuto*, *detache*, *marcato*, *non legato*, *martellato* and *staccatissimo*—wow—just knowing all those terms will impress anyone with your knowledge! Throughout there are descriptions of various techniques—one that caught my eye is that there is an alternative way to do a trill—instead of with alternating fingers you can rapidly rotate your wrist—evidently this is easier to maintain than the more traditional method.

"Bayan is the Russian word for minstrel or rhapsodist."

The next section is devoted to the other key attribute of the accordions—registers. Lips describes how to choose the appropriate register and apply it to tonal perspectives and phrasing. You may remember the articles that both Paul Magistretti and myself have written about phrasing—making the music sing. I was happy to see that Lips also considers that of prime importance.

Next up, is a chapter on playing technique which discusses everything from how you sit and how the accordion sits on you—to ornamentation, scales, arpeggios, chords, jumps and polyphony. Fingering is discussed and while the fingering for a bayan is obviously different than a piano accordion, the same principles apply.

The second to last chapter deals with interpretation of a musical composition. It discusses how to develop a musical picture, content, tempo (Paul Magistretti's excellent article in the November BAAC newsletter comes to mind), rhythm and interpretation.

Lastly Lips covers how to give a concert—from selecting the repertoire to preparations before the concert, to after the concert.

After reading this book I believe that every teacher should include a copy for each of his students and regularly refer to it to illustrate various techniques. And of course for us "oldsters"—a book like this can greatly improve our playing and give us some exciting new tricks to learn. I even found it valuable as a listening tool. After reading through the book and then listening to my recordings of Semyonov and Lips I was able to spot many examples of what the book described. It was great to have these nuances revealed and as a result I have become even more impressed with what those artists are doing. In short—this is the best \$25 I have spent on my accordion.

ZHANG WENT THE STRINGS OF OUR HEARTS

(A Concert Review)

By Robert K. Berta

I had the pleasure of attending a concert by Zhang Gouping at the San Francisco Bay Area Accordion Club on Wednesday, January 10th, 2001. I first heard of this superlative accordionist when I received one of his CDs for review for The Classical Free Reed Web site. The combination of his technique and musicality was very impressive—and the selections were thrilling. There were several familiar concert accordion selections from classical composers, some from the great Russian accordionists, as well as some gorgeous Chinese compositions. Later, I had the opportunity to review another CD of Zhang's—one devoted to the music of Scarlatti. Again, I was blown away by the wonderful musical interpretations and outstanding playing. Evidently others agreed with me. I was delighted to learn that the folks of Petosa Accordions would underwrite a tour of the US. Since Zhang lives in Beijing, China it was obviously no easy task to arrange this tour and a special thanks goes to the Petosa people for undertaking the project. Having arranged for my own daughter to attend a conference in Beijing last summer, I can appreciate the dedication it took for Petosa to put this together. THANKS GUYS!!!!

Since one of his concert stops was in San Francisco I jumped at the chance to review the concert. An audience of about 60 people attended on a particularly stormy night. Rather than our normal large meeting location we met at a local Moose Lodge, which provided a more intimate session in keeping with the number of people. Also, not needing microphones really allowed us to appreciate the pure natural sound of the instrument. Having heard three of his CDs I knew we would be in for an interesting mix of musical selections. Before I start the review it might be interesting to tell a little about the accordion in China. Much of this comes from Barbara Ann Martindale who herself performed in China a few years back and has previously played for our club in concert. First, the accordion is the most popular instrument in China—evidently there are millions of people who play it there. A major reason for the success of the instrument is that when the Cultural Revolution under Mao was under way, traditional orchestral instruments such as violins, woodwinds, etc. fell out of favor

being deemed the instruments of elite Westerners. Since the accordion was an instrument of the people having emerged from folk music it was raised to “approved” status. There is an excellent recent movie that documents some of this called *The Red Violin* that I recommend highly.



The concert was broken into three sections with a couple of intermissions. The first session consisted of a series of Chinese compositions. Having heard some of these on the CDs I was delighted that Zhang saw fit to include them in his performance. The compositions are wonderful. There were lots of interesting effects that were provided by the accordion and which took advantage of the various unique attributes of the instrument and were truly enhanced by his beautiful bellows technique and use of registers. The Chinese compositions he selected included the *Happy Sheng*, *Goddess Scattering Flowers*, *Celebrating Our New Life*, *Happy Woman Soldiers* and *Peking Opera*. As you

can tell by a couple of the titles, politics does mix well with music in China.

Following this Zhang turned to music that we were more familiar with, *Pizzicato Polka* by Strauss and *Rassypucha* by Gridin. Following that were a selection of compositions that are well known to all accordion aficionados, an Italian Medley [*Sorrento*,



Funiculi, Funicula, etc.] arranged by Galla-Rini, *Ze Confrey's Dizzy Fingers* arranged by Pietro Diero and *Magnante Boogie* by Charles Magnante. Throughout all the selections the playing was tasteful and phrased perfectly. While I have heard these more familiar pieces many times Zhang's playing was very fresh with a sense of nuance and directness that I've rarely heard before.

It turns out that Zhang's Aunt and Uncle live in San Francisco. Zhang asked if we would mind if his Uncle played two selections on harmonica. Ching Rui Wang is 80 years old and has been playing harmonica since age 10. To say he was good would be an understatement. Wow—what a talented man! He first played *La Cumparsita* in a spirited and excellent arrangement. Following this he played *No Place Like Home* but with a very unusual trick. He explained that while a piano or accordion player can play with two hands—a harmonica player only has *one mouth*. But

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ZHANG GUOPING: A VIRTUOSO NO DOUBT

(Two CDs Reviewed)

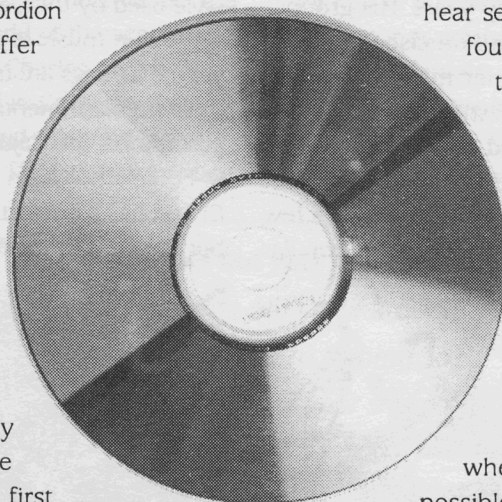
By Robert K. Berta

I reviewed two of Zhang's CDs for the Classical Free Reed Web Site (founded and published by Henry Doktorski, a previous guest artist at BAAC) and I was very impressed with the level of his technical skill and musicality. Let me share with you some of the things I noticed about them. Unlike many of our current virtuosos, Zhang plays a piano accordion rather than a bayan, but he seems to suffer no disadvantage whatsoever. I received the first CD some time ago—and due to a heavy personal workload I had the perfect excuse to take my time listening to it. I should tell you that I don't often review a CD with one listening. Instead, it becomes my constant companion. I listen to it as I do my weekly shopping, during coffee breaks, hikes around the neighborhood and on my home stereo. My approach is based on my ideas about art. For example, you may be attracted to a photograph or painting on first viewing, but take it home and hang it on your wall a while [well, not the Mona Lisa, there are laws]. At first, you may like it but if after a while you become bored—if it never reveals anything new to you—you may have been taken in by the obvious. On the other hand, there is art that is very quiet, subtle and almost subversive; it can remain on your wall for a long time and every time you look at it, it keeps growing in stature—you're constantly finding nuances and revelations you hadn't noticed at first; it's as if it's alive with suggestion and beauty.

Using this same "hang it on the wall" approach has proven to be a good way for me to determine if a CD is truly outstanding or simply flashy. Well to make a long story short—I have heard that first CD of Zhang's a minimum of 25 times! With every listening it becomes new for me—a totally new experience with fresh nuances revealed every time. I just marvel at the outstanding musicality that the artist exhibits and a technical proficiency that is outstanding. On the first CD you hear selec-

tions from the virtuoso repertoire of the Russian school and you're also treated to Bach and Scarlatti. And as if to state that the Chinese are capable of outstanding compositions, the artist throws in two Chinese pieces—and frankly they are a breath of fresh air! Over the years I have had the opportunity to hear several Chinese compositions and always found them to be wonderful. As I've mentioned elsewhere, the accordion is the most popular instrument in China—and they even love western music from the *Golden Age of the Accordion*; something we are all familiar with. It's also clear that they fully recognize the treasure they have in their own compositions and happily they'll continue to share them with us. (And as I noted in my concert review Zhang did just that.)

I was expecting more of the same when I received the second CD for review. If possible, this CD proved to be even more exciting. It was totally dedicated to Scarlatti's Sonatas, seminal works for any classical keyboard artist, be he pianist or accordionist. This CD was perhaps one of the two purest accordion CDs I have ever heard—the other is Øivind Farnen's *Baroque*. By pure I mean that the recorded sound is faithful to what you would hear in a live accordion performance. There was no equalization, no overbearing stereo emphasis or booming reverb that changes the accordion into a different instrument from what it really is; there was no adulteration of sound that places too much focus on the musician rather than on the composer and the music. Zhang put Scarlatti and what the composer intended to express on display rather than placing himself or his instrument in the foreground and by so doing breathed life into the music through his formidable and self-effacing skills as a performer. It's just a beautiful recording.



ZHANG *continued*

Ching Rui Wang was able to play the "right" hand with the right side of his mouth and the "left" accompaniment with the left side. It was as spectacular a display of harmonica playing as I have never witnessed. Ching received a most deserved standing ovation at the end of this piece.

After the second intermission Zhang returned to perform *Trish Tratsch* by Strauss, *The Sabre Dance* by Khachaturian, *Jolly Caballero* by Frosini and Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever* as arranged by Magnante. Many of these outstanding performances resulted in standing ovations and for an encore Zhang selected

an inevitable polka—*The Beer Barrel Polka*, but you probably never heard it played like this before, because (unbelievably) he made it seem so brand new—just fabulous!

The excellent playing made the night rush by and sadly the concert came to an end way too early. While you may not get the opportunity to hear Zhang in concert as I did, you can get his CDs [four at the present time] through The Classical Free Reed web site [<http://trfn.clpgh.org/free-reed>]. To whet your appetite I'll deal briefly with two of the CDs elsewhere in this month's newsletter.



ALLONS DANSER! – (Come Dance)

By Kristofer Nelson

At the BAAC February Meeting we will be treated to a performance by Billy Wilson. Billy has played foot stompin', good timin', Cajun and Zydeco Music for many years. His group Motordude Zydeco is a fixture on the San Francisco bay area Cajun & Zydeco dance circuit and summer music festivals (including the popular Cotati Accordion Festival). Originally a student of Danny Poullard, Billy has earned a reputation as one of the finest Cajun accordion players in the Bay Area. To prepare us for Billy's performance I have been asked to jot down a few of the major points to help us all better appreciate this popular style of folk/dance music.

Who are the Cajuns and what is Cajun music? Cajuns originally immigrated (escaping religious persecution) from France in the 17th century, to the area they named "Acadie" in what is now Nova Scotia, Canada. Britain later took over these lands and in 1755 British military forces drove the "Acadiens" from their new homeland for refusing to swear allegiance to the British crown.

The long exile held many hardships for the Acadiens who finally found a new home in the French speaking settlement of Louisiana. Contrary to popular belief, the Acadiens did not settle in New Orleans. They made their homes in the southwest prairies of Louisiana in and around the current area of Lafayette. The name "Cajun" is a contraction of the name "Acadien," shortened by the English speaking Americans of the region. The music of the Cajuns is a mixture of many nationalities. Celtic influences gave the Cajun fiddle its characteristic drone, while other European influences are evident in the form of the Cajun waltzes and two-steps. Cajun music was originally played by two fiddlers, or a fiddler and a guitar player—one player taking lead while the other played back-up rhythms with a triangle player usually keeping the beat.

The accordion was introduced into Cajun music around 1870 by German settlers; that model of the accordion (a single row diatonic button box) is still in wide use today as the premier accordion of Cajun music. The Cajuns quickly took up the instrument and put it to use in their house dances (*Fais do-dos*), as the accordion could be more easily heard over the loud foot stomping and partying crowd.

Signature elements of Cajun music are the double octave and staccato playing of the accordion (the latter I attribute to the early efforts of the accordion players to emulate the rapid

playing styles of the fiddlers who proceeded them), the frequent use of waltz and two-step timings, and the mournful or plaintiff style used by the Cajun singers (who sing in Cajun French).

Cajun music is usually lively and the melodies are simple, yet the timings are tricky because of their staccato elements and their embellishments. When compared to piano and chromatic accordions, the Cajun single row diatonic button box falls short in range. The Cajun accordion plays in two keys (usually C and G) and has a one-octave range in each key. So it is very limited, but the Cajun musicians overcome these shortfalls by playing

their songs from the heart—songs with a double purpose, which reflect the pain of those hard times in exile so long ago, and sweep the audience out onto the dance floor for another round of infectious good times. *Allons Danser!* This is the essence of Cajun music.

WHAT A TREAT

Composer, educator, and performer Valarie Morris will present

her new duet series, *What a Year!* at the February meeting. Accordionist and music educator Sharon Walters will join her in playing duets from this new series as well as selections from the previous series, *What a Week!*

Sharon, who has been teaching since she was 15 years old and performed most recently in a Kurt Weill cabaret show, says, "*What a Year!* fulfills a need unlike any other duet book. Valarie has composed very appealing original, contemporary tunes. And while the pieces are somewhat challenging, they are very enjoyable and well worth the effort for anyone who wants something fresh and different."

What a Week! offered one tune for each day of the week, so naturally *What a Year!* has one for each month of the year. In testing *What a Year!* with students, Valarie discovered that many of them wanted to instantly learn and play the tune named for the month of their birthday! What could be a better way for teachers to motivate students to practice and play.

In addition to the duets for piano accordion, the *What a Week!* and *What a Year!* series include versions for flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophones, trumpet, trombone and bassoon—an any combination of two or more instruments.

To demonstrate the versatility of the books and how the accordion sounds with different instruments, Valarie will play accordion, clarinet, and flute—though not at the same time (in case Dennis Stoscher was going to ask).



HISTORY IS MADE AT CARNEGIE

1939 Magnante Concert at Carnegie Hall

by Joe Biviano

[Editor's Note: This article was adapted & reprinted from the March 1939 issue of *Accordion World* (New York) as it is archived on *The Classical Free Reed* website.]

YE LOVERS of Accordion! Have you yet heard about the biggest single event to occur in the world of the accordion? Well, it is on the horizon now; it's the Charles Magnante Accordion Concert, which will be held in Carnegie Hall—the first time the accordion has invaded this long famous musical sanctum. The evening of April 18 [1939] is the date.

On the program, too, will be the Magnante Quartet of which, I am happy to say, I am a member. Gene Von Hallberg and Abe Goldman complete the foursome. The Magnante Quartet was formed several years ago to appear as a special guest feature on Lucky Strike Hit Parade. It was then that Mr. Magnante realized the value of presenting a serious all-artist ensemble, one which would augment the musical possibilities and provide unlimited scoring opportunities for the accordion. They have completed many transcriptions for Columbia, have had their own sustaining program, and appeared with Major Bowes Capitol Family, Lucky Strike, Fred Allen's Town Hall Tonight, and others.

Already we are hard at work preparing for this event, which certainly should make accordion history. The first half of the program will consist of compositions by such great composers as Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Tchaikowsky. The second half includes a lighter type of music. Magnante will give a number of solos, and will be

one half of a duet with "yours truly" as the other half. I also will appear as soloist as well as with the quartet. One of the important numbers planned by the quartet is Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor*. . . But if I tell any more you'll be knowing more about the concert than I do, so I'll be seeing you at Carnegie.

"Now get out your date book and put a big red circle around April 18, for we're hoping to see many, many of your smiling faces at Carnegie."

Now, after talking about an event that is meaning work and lots of it, I want to bring up a point about study in the early stages of musical training. I often have pupils who feel that giving much time to scales, arpeggios, etc., is not necessary. If they are not convinced before of the error of such notions, let them wait till they get working outside

of music school and without a teacher standing over them. Fundamental studies are the backbone of any musical instrument, and these exercises and studies are what makes it possible for the accordionist to sight read, divide correctly, and to play musical passages clearly. Lucky is the student who does realize the importance of these studies, for he will surely find his "pot of gold" at the end of the rainbow.

Now get out your date book and put a big red circle around April 18, for we're hoping to see many, many of your smiling faces at Carnegie. Until then, happy studying!

PRELUDE TO A CONCERT

by Lee Edwards

NEW YORK'S busy, exciting thoroughfare of 57th Street was teeming with the usual quota of auto traffic and pedestrians as I made my way to Carnegie Hall on a windy March afternoon. Arriving at my destination I found the crowds even denser as passersby stopped to read the giant billboards that had just been posted in front of the building. They announced something that was really news to the music world. "Coming Accordion Concert" the posters read; and then there was the name "MAGNANTE" in letters a foot high. Magnante. . . the name was well known to many who paused to read. They had heard it over the radio countless times; but as a Carnegie Hall artist—this was an astonishing discovery!

Naturally I felt quite superior as I pushed through the crowds, for I had been fully aware of the coming event. In fact my reason for being at Carnegie at that very moment was to witness a rehearsal of the Concert, which is to be held the evening of April 18.

I stepped into the Hall quietly for the rehearsal had already begun. The Quartet was in action. They were playing Mendelssohn's *Rondo Capriccioso*. I sank into an orchestra seat and immediately forgot the world outside in the beauty of these exquisite harmonies. They followed this number with Tchaikowsky's *Dance de Mirlitons* and then the music stopped as the artists paused to discuss some points—I made my presence known. Charles Magnante greeted me with his cordial smile.

continued on next page

MAGNANTE *continued*

Rondo Capriccioso of Mendelssohn. A moment of appreciative silence, then applause rang out, echoing and reechoing through the Hall. And those who had been skeptical or merely curious joined in. This was indeed music.

When applause finally died away, Mr. Magnante took the stage alone and in his matchless style played *Malaguena* by Lecuona; Chopin's *Waltz in C# Minor* and *Nocturne E-Flat*; Kreisler's *Liebsfreud* and his own *Perpetual Motion*. At the conclusion of the group he was recalled time after time to receive the plaudits of his listeners. There followed two duets by Mr. Magnante and Mr. Biviano. Then again the quartet appeared, this time to play *Danse des Bouffons* by Rimsky-Korsakov; *Danse de Mirlitons* by Tchaikovsky; Bach's *Fugue in G Minor*; and *Flight of the Bumble Bee* by Rimsky-Korsakov.

An intermission gave members of the audience a chance to look about and see some of their interesting neighbors, Frosini and Pietro shared a box and Anthony Galla-Rini and other noted players were surrounded by friends and admirers. Probably the record holder for long-distance travel was held by Mr. and Mrs. Bert Glassel of Saskatchewan, Canada, who covered the distance of 2000 miles solely for the purpose of attending.

The second half of the program, which was devoted to modern compositions, was opened by Mr. Magnante's rendition of a paraphrase on *Dark Eyes* and *The Carnival of Venice*, and *On the Trail* by Grofe. Two new personalities were next introduced by Mr. Keech: Domenic and Anthony Mecca. These two brilliant young stars, who already have a wide following, won enthusiastic appreciation with their rendition of *Rhapsody in Blue* and Frosini's *Jolly Caballero*.

Joe Biviano followed the Mecca Brothers as soloist, playing *Schoen Rosmarin* by Kreisler and *Dodging a Divorcee* by Forsythe. His sensitive interpretation of the former and sparkling execution of the latter elicited applause that recalled him to the stage again and again.

A final group by the Quartet, including *Mardi Gras* by Grofe; Magnante's well-loved *Accordiana* and a medley of Gershwin's numbers brought the brilliant program to a close.

The rousing ovation given Mr. Magnante and his assisting artists left no doubt as to the popular approval of the event. The one question remaining was: What would the critics say? The next day's newspapers told the story, and on these pages we re-print a few excerpts which tell the story of how critics as well as the general public were won over to the accordion as a musical instrument of the highest quality.

REVIEWS

New York Herald-Tribune

Accordionist Presents Carnegie Hall Recital Charles Magnante and His Group Offer Familiar Music

Mainly familiar music was heard in a medium unfamiliar to concert auditoriums last night at Carnegie Hall, where Charles Magnante, an expert practitioner upon the accordion, gave his first New York recital.

Mr. Magnante did notable work in illustrating the resources of his instrument from a technical and interpretative point of view, displaying remarkable digital dexterity, clarity of medium and detail and an ample dynamic range and nicety of shading. His colleagues also gave meritorious performances in a concert which suggested that the accordion has more possibilities than are generally realized, but left room for a certain amount of doubt whether the color and range of the instrument is sufficient to sustain interest at an even pitch throughout a complete program. Kelvin Keech, a N.B.C. commentator, furnished oral program notes for a good-sized audience.

New York Journal-American

Charles Magnante Group Gives Accordion Recital

By Grena Bennett

Charles Magnante revealed to a large audience last evening that the accordion is not necessarily limited to "swing" music but is also a medium for interpreting the greatest of classical compositions. He and his associates achieved some unusual and praiseworthy results in tonal combinations resembling in quality and character those of a small pipe organ. The technique of the accordion players was surprisingly brilliant and facile and suggested that of well-equipped pianists. The event was a diverting and worthy experiment.

New York World-Telegram

Accordion Program at Carnegie

By Robert C. Bagar

And last night Charles Magnante, ace radio accordionist, took over the glory-bound arena, in order to prove that the accordion is a musical instrument capable of doing justice to the greatest composers et al.

Had Assistants.

Mr. Magnante, not one to go in for half measures, had several other accordionists to assist him, principally Joe Biviano, Abe Goldman and Gene von Hallberg, who together with him constitute the Magnante Accordion Quartet. There were two other addicts, the Mecca brothers, Domenic and Anthony, and a string bass player, Paul Prinz. And to give the even an extra touch of elegance, Kelvin Keech, NBC announcer, made appropriate introductions and comments, via a public address system.

All in all the young artist and his cohorts provided a capacity audience with much enjoyment.

ACCORDIONS AL DENTE

by Tom Torriglia

The New Year is over and it's time to get back to work. Where does that work come from? I believe the work comes from three sources: referrals, repeat business and marketing. The other day, an accordionist pal asked me if I were going to spend the afternoon doing marketing. I told him sure. I told him that I had to get a mailing out to the wineries for Valentine's Day and spring/summer weddings. He said he does no marketing and yet, he's busier than I am. The secret? For him, referrals and repeat business. It's been my experience and yours too that most of our work comes from referrals, yet, it's still important, in my opinion, to do serious marketing and PR in an effort to stay ahead of the competition. Playing the accordion as a business is no different from any other type of business. We all rely on repeat business and referrals just as any company does, but I also think that ad campaigns, marketing campaigns, PR campaigns and any other campaign certainly can't hurt. And let's face it, if I'm not out there aggressively canvassing the market someone else will. Last night I was at a function for the S.F. Publicity Club and one woman there said that her company hired an accordionist for their company's Oktoberfest party based on the recommendation of the caterer they used. That accordionist wasn't me and you can be dang sure that I am going to do a mailing to every caterer from Sonoma to Salinas.

One of my goals this year is to produce a series of books called The Working Musician's Guide to™: blah, blah, blah. This will include The Working Musician's Guide to Italian songs, French Songs, Irish songs, Latin songs, etc. Plus, a general book covering the best of all the genres. After all these years, we play practically the same songs that we have always played because they are songs that we know people want to hear. I really don't know why people expect to hear them. I guess at one point many of these songs were popular in America and stayed in the public's consciousness. When I go and play an Italian gig, I always play, without exception, *O Sole Mio*, *That's Amore*, *Arrividerci Roma* and the *Tarantella*. Most of these songs are from long ago and I can't think of many native

Italian songs since 1960 that are included in my repertoire. Even the Italian/American collaboration on *The Godfather* is almost 30 years old. A couple of months ago I played with some other accordionists whom I had never met (let alone played with) and prior to playing together, I sent them a list of songs and the keys I wanted to do them in. They all said no problem. The reason? They had been playing the same songs as I have for years. When we did the gig, it was a harmonic convergence of *Napoletanic* proportions. I was in an Italian restaurant in South Beach, Florida a couple of years ago and the accordionist was playing the same songs I would have played. Think of it, I bet you could go to any Italian restaurant in America and the accordion player would be playing the same songs as you. There are hundreds of songs, yet we all seem to play the same ones. Anyway, I think it would be great to make it easy for the generations following us and give them a hand in learning what staples they should have in their repertoires. I envision it as being a lead line with chords and lyrics. No adult chords. No weird keys. This is where you come in. I would like to get everyone's input as to what songs you would like to see in such a book and in what key. Hmmmmm? What key? Do you folks always play the *Tarantella* in A minor? Or, *O Sole Mio* in G? Let me know! Send me your top five Italian and French songs and let's see what we come up with (tom@lady-ofspain.com). I will publish the results in next month's article.

Feedback: So, what do you think of the new newsletter? It certainly has improved and gotten bigger. Do you like that? Do you think there should be a bitch-back column? After that debacle with the Cotati Festival it sure seemed like the newsletter could have used one. We could call it Letting The Air Out. Everyone has an opinion. I think it would be great to let everyone have the opportunity to express it. What about the meetings? Do they sizzle or fizzle? It sure seems like attendance had dropped recently. What could be done better? I think the newsletter may be used as a suggestion box to move the club forward. This is just a suggestion.

NOW PLAYING @ BOAZ ACCORDIONS

THE TOIDS

Thursday, Feb 15th 7:30 PM

Although the Toids play traditional Balkan dances, using traditional instruments, their aim is to combine the new with the old. You can be sure that the boundaries of cultural music will be stretched by accordionist, composer and vocalist Dan Cantrell, who played with the legendary

Frankie Yankovic, and whose work can be heard on some edgy film and animation soundtracks. Joining Dan Cantrell are the other founding members, Ryan

Francesconi, Jerry Summers on percussion, and Lila Sklar on violin. Admission: \$4.00 at the door. Refreshments.

Tel. 510/845-1429 www.BoazAccordions.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



We certainly started 2001 with some outstanding musical programs. First, the monthly meeting on Jan. 3 provided us with an all-volunteer group of fine performers. This shows what a talented and wonderful variety

of accordionists belong to BAAC.

Second, our special guest from Mainland China, Zhang Guoping, was outstanding and really excited our members. Everybody who attended was very pleased with this marvelous performer. If you do not attend when these visiting musicians are here for your listening pleasure, you lose part of the benefits of belonging to BAAC.

Our February program has another fine lineup of music for you featuring our first Cajun group, Motor Dude Zydeco. Billy Wilson will treat you to some exciting selections that are guaranteed to make you *wanna* dance. You'll also find *mucho* surprise and delight with Roberto Rosa as well as some interesting duets by Valarie Morris and Sharon Walters.

Another important event will be our first workshop for 2001 on Saturday, February 3 at the Moose Lodge with Joe Smiell instructing all level of players. Starting time is 10:30 AM and runs to noon with a one-hour break. The second part will start at 1:00 PM and go to 3:30 PM. This workshop is *absolutely free* for paid

up members. For non-members the cost is \$10. What a bargain! We have one of the nation's premier conductors, arrangers and instructors giving you valuable lessons and insights that will really improve your musical ability—plus, it's a lot of fun! Bring your accordion. If you miss this, shame on you.

Now for some urgent facts. Val Kieser has been our secretary for the last 5 years and it is time for this club to come to her aid. She does everything for BAAC and it has become too much for one person to handle. We need three volunteers. One secretary to do the correspondence for BAAC and one to be a recording secretary. The third volunteer we need is somebody with accounting experience to be our Treasurer.

I keep asking every month for volunteer help with no response from the membership. Surely with our large membership there is someone who is kind and generous enough to help us take care of our business needs. And your help will not require too much time when we divide the chores among more people. We need help with membership, promotion and publicity. So please help us and volunteer. We need you, we want you, we have to have you!

If you would like to play at one of our meetings, give one of our directors a call and you will be signed up. If you are only a beginner, don't be bashful. The experience will be exciting and we will enjoy whatever you have accomplished. After all, we all started the same way

See you on Wednesday, February 7th.

— Lou Soper

A LETTER FROM FRANK MAROCCO

Hi Paul, I have just finished reading your article Meno Barba Piu Voce and I must tell you it is the most intelligent and insightful writing about the Accordion, Bayan and Bandoneon I have ever read. The love you express not only for our instrument but for serious music is exactly what is missing in the Accordion World. Even though my first love is Jazz, I like you, appreciate all music that is played well and from the heart. I felt that you gave credit to Dick Contino and Myron Floren, but I totally understand your disappointment that the Accordion World does not sufficiently recognize its most serious and accomplished artists who take the instrument past the popular realm to a higher level of musical achievement. Could you imagine pianists only

showing interest in Liberace or Roger Williams and ignoring Horowitz, Oscar Peterson, etc.!!! I don't think so.

Also, I enjoyed your comments on the Carmine Coppola Concerto. Peter Soave, a great classical Artist, had called me and expressed his excitement over this Concerto. I especially enjoyed your review of Lips and Gubaidulina. I am not a big fan of avant-garde music, but I love her work. As I read your article, it was as if you were reading my mind. You expressed my thoughts on everything you wrote. I want to thank you very much for your love, understanding and passion for the instrument we've dedicated our lives to and for your fine journalistic gift in its behalf. Yours truly, Frank

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Lou Soper

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Valid Entertainment.

Musically there was valid entertainment for the gathering. As to the importance of the accordion, that, too, was tellingly established.

New York Sun

Accordion Recital Given By Charles Magnante

Carnegie Hall was the scene last night of an accordion recital by Charles Magnante, who was assisted by five other accordionists and by a player of the double bass. Mr. Magnante proved himself a virtuoso of his chosen instrument. In his solos he sometimes approximated a piano in his manner of presenting music that made unusual technical demands upon him. He played several of his own works as well as transcriptions of music by Chopin, Lecuona and Kriesler.

In an interesting effort to show the further possibilities of the accordion as a medium for art music, a quartet composed of Mr. Magnante, Abe Goldman, Gene von Hallberg and Joe Biviano, assisted by Paul Prinz, string bass, played Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*; Mendelssohn's *Rondo Capriccioso* and music by Rimsky-Korsakoff and Tchaikovsky, as well as some more popular works.

For those who prefer Gershwin to Bach, irrespective of the medium, Domenic and Anthony Mecca gave a spirited performance of *Rhapsody in Blue*. A large audience applauded with much enthusiasm. Kelvin Keech acted as commentator.

New York Post

Accordion Recital At Carnegie Hall

Charles Magnante, accordionist, offered an unusual and diverting program to a large audience at Carnegie Hall last night. The program made few concessions to the general conception

of the accordion as a "popular" instrument. The selections ranged from the Bach *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*, through Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro Overture* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Dance of the Bouffons* to Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Mr. Magnante proved himself worthy of the greatest respect as a performer on his instrument.

New York Times

Magnante Gives Recital

Charles Magnante, accordionist, who has been heard often on the air and on records, gave a recital last night at Carnegie Hall. A large audience took pleasure in Mr. Magnante's virtuoso treatment of a varied program that contained classical and popular music in his own transcriptions.

Cue Magazine

Cue says Go!

Squeeze Box Bach

For no very good reason, the piano accordion is usually associated, in the minds of many, with college reunions, trade association dinners, and barrooms. Charles Magnante has made up his mind that this shameful misconception must stop, and he's going to fire the opening gun in Carnegie Hall next Tuesday night.

By himself, with Mr. Biviano of his quartet, and with the whole quartet supported by a string bass, he'll fill the old hall with the lilting strains of pretty nearly everything from Johann Sebastian Bach to George Gershwin. It's the Bach that Mr. Magnante's proudest of, and the particular composition that he's elected to try his hand at is no less than the celebrated *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor*, specially arranged by himself for accordion quartet and one string bass.

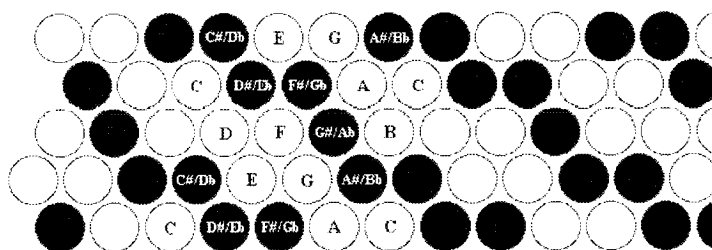
AND TWO FOR TEA—ERRATA

[I don't know how or when these errors crept in & were missed, but I want to thank BAAC member Joe Greco for pointing them out. Whether I mistakenly wrote second when I meant first—& probably even thought I saw "first" in the proper place—or suddenly became infected with dyslexia (I hear it's going around), I don't know, but mea culpa & apologies. The rest of the article seems correct, but who am I to say at this point. PMJ]

Each system has its own proponents and essentially the difference is that on the C system C, A, G flat and E flat are in the ~~second row~~ **first row**, while on the B system B, A flat, F and D are in the ~~second row~~ **first row** (the C group is in the ~~first row~~ **second row** in the B system & the B group is in the 3rd row on the C system. Although most bayans have five rows of keys, the first three rows contain all the notes, so the last two rows (closest to the grill) are repeats. In the B system, the C group and B group are the repeats. In the C system the

row containing G, E, D flat and B flat and the C group are repeated. Am I losing you? I'll sum up: the B system gives you repeats in the 4th and 5th rows of C, A, G flat, E flat, F, D, B, A flat; the C system gives you repeats of G, E, D flat, B flat, C, A, G flat and E flat.

C GRIFF CHROMATIC KEYBOARD TOP (GRILL) BOTTOM



AN APPRECIATION OF THE CHICAGO QUINTENT

Don Nurisso

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, Carol and myself attended Carol's sister's 50th wedding anniversary in Chicago. Mike Alongi hosted the occasion with a 5-piece combo: vibes, guitar, bass, drums, and accordion (sounds like an Art Van Damme group)! In fact, Freddy Rundquist, Art's guitarist for many years was part of it and played just incredible guitar licks. The music was so good that it made me cry. Mike, a great big sincere thanks for being such a fine musician. Your playing and the group's performance were just incredible!

FROM: DOMINIC PALMISANO

Tuesday, November 28, 2000 1:09 PM

Hi Pauli,

I'm sorry for not responding earlier, but I've been focusing on losing 30lbs. and forgot about everything else. [Regarding my request that he tell me about the people we might have overlooked as contributors to BAAC's success.] Both Josephine Hornbrook and Rae Lembi were like heart and soul for the early days of the club. Josephine in particular she experienced all the ups and downs of the "infighting" and still continued to give her time and sincere effort to move the club forward [and continued to do so] up until recently. I can't think of anyone else that measures up to Josephine and Rae. There is one other person, Marian Kelly [Editor: who was recently singled out and thanked in the pages of BAAC's Newsletter]. See you, Dominic.

PETER SOAVE KEEPS ROLLING ALONG

(A press release)

- 1) On January 7, there was accordion performance by Peter of Paul Hindemith's *Chambermusic No. 1*. It was presented with the Emerald Sinfonetta, Felix Resnick, conducting (Grosse Pointe War Memorial Auditorium).
- 2) January 13, Peter performed Piazzolla's *Aconcagua* at the First Presbyterian Church in Bay City, MI. with the Saginaw Bay Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leo Najjar
- 3) January 17 & 21: Bucharest, Roumania. Soave performed nationally televised concerts w/ the Rumanian Philharmonic (conducted by Roberto Salvalaio) of a program that included Piazzolla's: *Aconcagua*, *Tres Minutos Con La Realidad*, *Remembrance*, *Cavalcata*, and *Adios Nonino*.
- 4) February 1: Rome, Italy. The Orchestra of The Academy of St. Cecilia, conducted by Ernesto Gordini, performed with Peter, Piazzolla's *Suite Punta del Este* and Aldemaro Romero's *Piazzollana*, *homage a Astor Piazzolla—Concerto for Bandoneon and Orchestra*.
- 5) February 2: Antrodoco, Italy. Program: Romero's *Suite de Castelfardo* and Piazzolla's *Five Sensations*.

Calendar of Events

Ongoing

BAAC Ensemble rehearsals, 2nd & 4th Weds. of the month, 7:00PM, Moose Lodge Daly City Call Frank Montoro (650) 574-4757 to confirm

(BAAC Ensemble should not be confused with ACE ensemble, which is an entirely different group, also affiliated with BAAC)

BAAC "Fun Band" rehearsals, 3rd Weds. of the month, 7:00PM, Moose Lodge Daly City Call Val Kieser (510) 531-4836 to confirm.

Feb.

- 7 Bay Area Accordion Club 7:30PM
Patio Espanol, 2850 Alemany Blvd., S.F.
Info: 510.792.8765 <http://www.baaccordionclub.org>
- 8 East Bay Accordion Circle. 7:30PM
1542 Grant St., Berkeley, Behind main house
Bring Your Accordion! Info: (510) 548-2822
- 9 ACR Valentines Dinner Dance, More Info to Come.
Herman Sons Hall, 860 Western, Petaluma.
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Info: 480-837-3627, E-mail: el37@earthlink.net
Room Reservations: (800) 675-3267
- 13 Golden State Accordion Club.
Pietro's #2, 679 Merchant, Vacaville.
Info: (707) 864-2359
- 14 Good Time Accordion Club General Meeting.
Escalon Community Center. 7:00PM
1055 Escalon Ave. Escalon, CA.
Info: (209) 545-3603

March

- 5 ACR Board Meeting, 7:30PM Open to members!
Herman Sons Hall, 860 Western, Petaluma.
Info. contact Harry Cannata at: (707) 838-2859
- 7 Bay Area Accordion Club, 7:30PM
Patio Espanol, 2850 Alemany Blvd. S.F.
Info: 510.792.8765 <http://www.baaccordionclub.org>
- 8 East Bay Accordion Circle, 7:30PM
1542 Grant Street, Berkeley, Behind main house
Bring Your Accordion! Info: (510) 548-2822
- 12 ACR Fun Band Practice, 7-9PM.
McDowell Elementary School.
421 South McDowell Blvd., Petaluma.
Info: Gwyn Lister (415) 924-3202
- 13 Golden State Accordion Club
Pietro's #2. 679 Merchant, Vacaville.
Info: (707) 864-2359
- 14 Good Time Accordion Club General Meeting.
Escalon Community Center, 7:00PM.
1055 Escalon Avenue, Escalon, CA.
Info: (209) 545-3603
- 19 ACR General Meeting, 7:30PM
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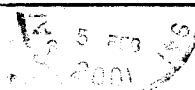
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