

Newsletter of the

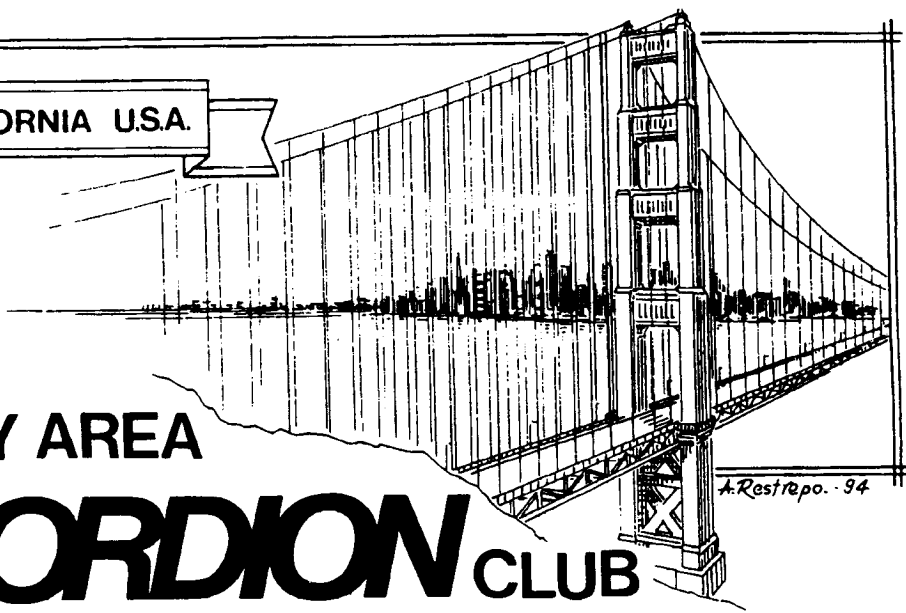
SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA U.S.A.



BAY AREA

ACCORDION CLUB

June, 1999



President's Message

Dear Members and Friends,

The big subject this month is our planned July 6th meeting honoring Art Van Damme. Here's our agenda for that evening:

First: Please understand that we have not asked Art to play. We will show parts of two video tapes which include Art and his quintet, so you'll be able to see and hear his group on film. We plan to intersperse clips from those tapes with a live interview; in other words, we'll ask him to talk rather than to play.

Second: We will include live performances that evening, by Club members Peter Di Bono, Ron Borelli, Lou Soper and his group, Jim Hillman, and Don Nurisso.

Third: We won't schedule an intermission, and the planned program will run about two hours, after which you may stay as long as you wish.

Fourth: Bring all your jazz-loving friends to this very special meeting to honor the world's greatest jazz accordionist, who also happens to be our friend.

•••••

I have another subject this month. I want to tell you a little about my trip last month to Klingenthal, Germany for the 36th annual Klingenthal accordion competitions.

You've never heard of Klingenthal? Not a surprise. It's a small town of about 10,000 in a gorgeous valley at about 3,000 feet tucked up against the Czech border. For years Klingenthal has called itself "The Music City" because its industry has long been the manufacture of musical instruments... strings, brass, and of course, accordions. All Weltmeister accordions are manufactured there today, and I had a personal tour of Weltmeister's factory.

This lovely little town suffered during the last 50 years from being a part of East Germany. Folks there had to learn to speak Russian

Continued on page 5

Mark Your Calendars

July 6 (Tuesday). BAAC General Membership Meeting at *Verdi Club in San Francisco*. 2424 Mariposa at Potrero. 7:00 - 9:30pm+. Special program recognizing **Art Van Damme**. Also in tribute other BAAC members will be performing. See the President's column for more information about this exciting event and the article about Art also in this issue.

July 7 BAAC Board Meeting at 31 Aliso Way in Portola Valley. 7:30pm

July 12 (Monday). (and every second Monday). **NEW ACCORDION CLUB announcement.** *The Good Time Accordion Club.* At the Escalon Methodist Church 7:00pm. Info about joining from Jana Maas at 8001 Beckwith Rd., Modesto. \$15 membership fee includes newsletter called "Accordion News".

July 13 (Tuesday). (and every second Tuesday). Meeting of the Golden State Accordion-Aires. 7:00pm. Pietro's No.2. 679 Merchant St. Vacaville. Ca.

July 8 (Thursday) (And every second Thursday). Accordion Circle of the East Bay Music Meeting. 7:30pm, 1542 Grant St., Berkeley, in the cottage behind the main house.

July 11 (Sunday). BAAC San Jose meeting. **NOTE This meeting will be the last meeting on this day of the month. Starting in August the meetings will be on the First Sunday of each month at the same location and time.** Germania Rest. 261 N. 2nd. St. 3:00pm to ? Bring your accordion!

July 11 (Sunday). Beginning two Row Button Box with Carolyn Anderson. At Boaz accordions in Oakland. Call 510-653-6983 for reservations.

Cont. page 2

\$35 workshop cost.

July 18 (Sunday). Intermediate-Advanced Technique with Henri Ducharme. At Boaz accordions in Oakland. Call 510-653-6983 for reservations. \$35 workshop cost.

July 20 (Tuesday). (and every third Tuesday). Accordion Circle Band in East Bay. Call 510-548-2822 for more location and more info.

July 19 (Monday). (and every third Monday). Meeting of the Accordion Club of the Redwoods. 7:00pm. Volpi's in Petaluma.

July 16-18. Accordion Teachers Guild (ATG) Festival. Branson, MO. Call Amy Jo Sawyer at (618)632-2859.

July 31 (Saturday). Accordion Club of the Redwoods Summer Picnic.

August 1 (Sunday). (and every 1st Sunday). Note new date of meetings starting this month. BAAC San Jose meeting. Germania Rest. 261 N. 2nd. St. 3:00pm to ? Bring your accordion!

August 2. (Tuesday). BAAC General membership meeting. Some spots open for artists. Contact Bob Berta to be put on the program.....650-450-5766.

August 7 (Saturday). Festa Italiana in Stockton. 10:00am - 11:00pm. Call 209-931-3529 for more info or Email Info@main-squeeze.com.

August 28-29. Cotati Accordion Festival.

Sept. 7 BAAC General Membership Meetin featuring PETER SOAVE in concert. 7:00-9:00pm. Verdi Club 2424 Mariposa St. in San Francisco

Sept. 18. (Saturday). BAAC annual picnic at Nature Friends picnic area in Oakland. Details to follow.

BAAC Ensemble practice first and third Wednesday of each month at Moose Lodge in Colma at 7535 Mission St. from 7:00pm-9:00pm. Contact Frank Montoro (650)574-4757 for additional information.

BAAC Fun Band will not meet during the months of July or August.

Beginners Support Groups/Bands
East Bay 510-843-9958
San Francisco 415-673-8835
South Bay 408-258-1258

Please send Calendar Information to your Editor, using the address on the last page.

Ron Borelli was married the weekend of June 19-20th. Congratulations Ron!!

by Val Kieser, Domenic Saso and Bob Berta

The June meeting provided us with the opportunity to renew some old friendships, hear a wonderful accordionist and his very talented sister-in-law, and give some much deserving students some financial help in their musical education. We also had the opportunity to hear and later try out the latest accordion from Petosa. After the meeting the third annual swap meet gave us a chance to try out some accordions and drool over some accordion music. And a special care package consisting of tasty cherries was delivered by Bob Foppiano from Stockton. Thanks Bob!

After a long sabbatical from his prior duties as Master of Ceremonies, Domenic Saso returned in fine form.

Domenic introduced Lynn Ewing who, as representative of the Scholarship Committee announced recipients of the 1999 awards. Also on the committee are Ed Massolo (chairman), Joe Smiell, Sharon Walters, Mary-Alice Eldon and Val Kieser.

Val reports: "What's special about Mark Church, Harrison Dirck, Neil Wahlgren, and Ezra Gale? They're the first recipients of \$300 Scholarship awards under our BAAC Scholarship Program, that's what's special about them! The two who were present at the June 1 meeting—Mark Church and Harrison Dirck—received their award certificates at the meeting—and treated us to a demonstration of their respective talent."

"Mark Church, age 10, of Santa Rosa, wrote with his application, "I love the accordion so much I can't live without it. I really want to continue with my music." His grandmother, Marjorie Konrad (BAAC member), who has been Mark's teacher up until now, wrote that Mark not only has talent, but is willing to share his music with schools and care home facilities. Mark has played for a Salvation Army care unit, the Sons of Norway, Accordion Club of the Redwoods—and now, BAAC. His teacher under the scholarship will be Bart Beninco of Petaluma."

"Harrison Dirck, age 7, is a student of Lynn Ewing, BAAC member on the Peninsula. Harrison has made tremendous progress in the time he has been playing, loves the accordion and wants to become a great player. From the sampling we got at the June meeting, it appears he is well on his way."

"Neil Wahlgren, age 16 and with a 4.0 gpa,



Mark Church



Harrison Dirck



Frank Lima

is a student of Peter Di Bono. Neil was very disappointed not to be able to attend the June meeting, receive his award in person and give us a demo of his talent, but Peter di Bono tells us he is an excellent student with real potential. We'll look forward to hearing him play at the August 2 BAAC meeting, when he will receive his official award certificate."



Ben Creed

"The Scholarship Committee has already chosen the fourth award recipient: Ezra Gale, age 13, another student of Peter Di Bono. Peter tells us that Ezra, who attends Waldorf School, already has a knack for arranging music! Ezra will receive his award and will play for us at the August 2 general meeting."



Ken, Ella and Kim

"So, as of the August meeting, all four scholarships for this year will have been awarded. Hearty congratulations to the recipients and to their teachers!"

"In the coming months, the Scholarship Committee will be conducting an intensive fund-raising campaign so that we can offer more scholarships next year. Donations of both money and accordions are welcome and encouraged. The Scholarship Program is in full swing now—with your support we'll keep it that way!"

Next on stage was Frank Lima, our man of a hundred alternative identities. This time he appeared in a French beret and some of the highest platform boots we have seen in a long



Joe Petosa Jr.

time. This outfit coordinated well with his Spandex covered "Electrolux" accordion! His repertoire included *Little White Pages*, an Opera Aria, and a trilogy of theme songs from the old Jackie Gleason show.

Taking the stage next was another Ken Chambers student, Ben Creed. In only 13 years this young man has an incredible list of accomplishments. Besides playing accordion he also plays baritone horn, flute, drums and is blessed with a very fine voice. Evidently he is already a seasoned performer having appeared with many school and church musical groups. Various local venues and was a first runner up in the National Oscar Mayer Talent Search II. The Oscar Mayer contest resulted in his appearing in a 1996 Oscar Mayer commercial (playing accordion and singing). Ben performed *Bubbles In The Wine*, *The Original Boogie Woogie*, *Sparkling*, and *Stand By Me* which gave Ben a chance to show off his fine voice.

Ben was a hard act to follow but his teacher, Ker Chambers, was up to the task. He came on stage and introduced his sister-in-law, Dr. Ella Steinberg. We all know Ker and relish his rare performances on his Giulietti free bass accordion. Evidently talent is plentiful in Kens family, Ella has a PHD in music and is a very fine performer on trumpet. Ker accompanied Ella in *Prelude, Saraband, Minuet and Allegro* by J.S. Bach. Next they performed *The Lord Bless And Keep You* as arranged by BAAC member Dick Schiller. For this number Ken's daughter, Kim Chambers, joined in with a beautiful voice. What a delightful treat for BAAC members! Hopefully we will see Ken and his clan back soon for another fine performance.

Joe Petosa Jr. made the long trip to San Francisco to show off the new and much anticipated Millenium reedless accordion. The features were described during the demo and it looked like a winner. Certainly the big plus was the very light weight (16 lbs.) and this was for a full 120 bass that also incorporated two varieties of free bass. Of course this is a purely electronic accordion so you do need amplification....but for the pros this looks like a real winner. Several of them remarked that they can see going to this type of accordion to save their backs. Vince Cirelli was asked to come up and play a few numbers on it as was Jim Hillmar. Both found it excellent in action, a fact I was able to agree with when I later played it myself. The action was identical to a fine regular accordion. It had a great keyboard, nice bellow action and I wasn't able to get it to choke on anything including bellows shakes. Reedless accordions may or may not be in your future or appeal to you but I suspect that we will see more and more people converting to these types of accordions in the future.

Save This Date

Sat. Sept. 18th

BAAC Annual Picnic

at Nature Friends in Oakland Hills

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Art Van Damme, a Man of Passion.

by Bob Berta

When I first heard of an accordionist by the name of Art Van Damme many years ago, I was curious who this man was that evoked so much respect and awe from other accordionists and jazz musicians. Later I had the opportunity to learn more about Art when I read *The Golden Age of The Accordion*. All of this enticed me to learn more about the man and listen to more of his extensive recordings.

Art Van Damme has made significant contributions to the advancement of the accordion. He is truly one of the most celebrated and recognized jazz musicians residing in the United States today; indeed he's often called the leading jazz musician of this century.

Art was born in Norway, Michigan in 1920 and got his first accordion at the age of 9...his first job as accordionist was only one year later! At age 14 his family moved to Chicago and there his musical interests turned from classical to swing for which he is so well known. Later Art got a contract with NBC for radio and later TV and during some 15 years with them, besides doing his own shows, the worked with top entertainers such as "The Howard Miller Show", "The Dave Garroway Show", Hugh Downs, Ransom Sherman, The "Bob and Ray Show", and "Monitor Club 60" with Dennis James. His quintet also did many solo spots for singers and instrumentalists, including Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Dizzy Gillespie, and Buddy DeFranco. Later his group was seen on TV shows like "The Tonight Show", "The Mike Douglas Show" and "Lawrence Welk Show" among others.


So popular was Art and his quintet that he was sought out for many record contracts: Capitol (1945-1952), Columbia (1952-1965), and MPS Records of West Germany (since 1962). Art's quintet has recorded over 40 albums plus many singles.

Art has won many top awards. His group was in the "Top Ten" instrumental category for many years in *Billboard*, *Metronome* and *Playboy* polls. Art was named as the top jazz accordionist in the *Down Beat* poll for 10 consecutive years! He was also voted the top jazz accordionist in *Contemporary Keyboard* magazine from 1976-1980.

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rather than English, something they have come to regret, now that they are wanting so very much to become westernized as quickly as possible. Jobs have been lost because manufacturing is now so mechanized, so many people in the town are wondering how to reinvent themselves, as it were. The obvious answer is tourism, but they are resisting anything that will change their idyllic town.

I traveled with Willoughby Ann Walshe, whom I had met at a BAAC meeting in December '97. She has been living in Germany for 20 years, had recently switched from playing a piano accordion to a B-system chromatic, and she had urged me to go with her to the Klingenthal competitions, which she has attended since 1992!

Before we left Frankfurt on our 5-hour drive to Klingenthal, Willoughby brought me to a rehearsal of her accordion orchestra. To say that I was impressed, jet lag or no, is a great understatement. I saw and heard 25 accordianists (7 were missing), average age 30ish, including two playing bass accordion and two playing electronic accordion. All were piano accordionists except Willoughby. The young director, Wolfgang Wagner, who conducts two accordion orchestras, was very demanding, stopping the group every few measures to work on something that didn't sound quite right. It was apparent that the orchestra members respected his leadership ability highly, because they listened intently and responded for the entire rehearsal. The main piece that they were working on was Lizst's "Les Preludes", which they intend use in the orchestra competitions at Trossingen, Germany in the fall. For those of you who aren't familiar with this piece... it's usually performed by an entire orchestra and is particularly challenging music. And for those not familiar with Trossingen, it's the accordion competition which features orchestras... this group couldn't have competed at Klingenthal.

We were welcomed in Klingenthal by Herr Gabler, who oversees the competitions, and who has become well acquainted with Willoughby. He greeted us warmly and generously by providing us with tickets to each evening's concert (imagine...a concert every night!). By the end of the week, we had held many conversations with him (in German), had promised to help him become better connected with accordianists in the West and especially in the US, had helped his office staff with their relatively new computer, and really felt like we belonged there!

We also had many opportunities to speak with the judges, all 18 of them and to understand some of the ways in which they worked. (Each competitor was scored by at least four judges.) The judge best known to BAAC'ers was Friederich Lips, who was our guest about two years ago.

Competitors numbered about 125. That was a far smaller number than listed in the program; unfortunately, almost none of the competitors from Yugoslavia arrived. Many were from Russia and the former Soviet republic; France

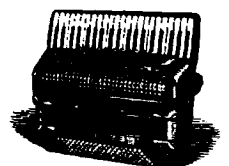
was very well represented. The French all seemed to stay in the same hotel 'way on top of a hill so they could party at night and fly the French flag during the day. Other countries represented included China, Poland, Germany, Finland, Croatia, Slovakia and Britain. The solo categories were II, III, IV, and VI. II was age 15 or younger; III was age 18 or younger, and IV was open. Contestants had to play required pieces at first; then, if they got through the first round, were more able to choose their own selections. Required pieces were, in general, Bach and Scarlatti. The big Category IV required piece was a Toccata by Ole Schmidt, a very formidable composition. Category VI was for more informal music. And Category V was for groups, as small as two and as large as six. There were about 40 entrants in the most prestigious category, IV, the one that Peter Soave won in 1984. The final test for the five finalists was a solo performance with an orchestra, which provided a fine format for observing the differences among them. The ultimate IV winner was a 22-year old French female, Dominique Emorine, who played with such feeling and intensity that it was clear very early on that she would at least be close to the top.

The bayan with free bass was the instrument of choice for almost all of the contestants simply because the left hand range and the large right hand keyboard were essential for the required pieces. I was both surprised and delighted to hear so many young people playing such a difficult instrument with such ease and competence. After seven days, I was far from feeling accordianed-out. I left Klingenthal thinking about what other competitions I might consider attending.... Castelfidardo in October, maybe? Not a bad thought!

Don't forget that Cotati is just around the corner. Inside this months newsletter (page 7) is a tentative schedule of performers. This looks like another outstanding year. Also note the number of local accordianists on stage throughout the event. BAAC and the other Bay Area clubs can pride themselves in having some of the BEST accordianists in the USA.

And don't forget the annual BAAC picnic. Last year proved to be an outstanding event and this year promises to be even better. The Picnic committee is hard at work to ensure you have a picnic you won't forget!

And last but not least our big concert of the year featuring Peter Soave, is happening at the September 7th meeting. Peter can be counted on to provide a most amazing evening of a variety of musical styles and will give us a chance to see and hear how he is doing on his newest passion...the bandoneon. In addition he will be playing his Bayan and a little piano accordion to illustrate the differences in technics and characteristics of each instrument.



My best to you!

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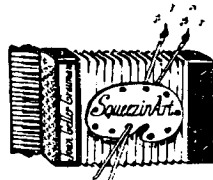
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Diminished Chords

by Bob Smith

What is a diminished chord? We have to proceed slowly, because the subject of Diminished Chords on the accordion bass can quickly become confusing.

We will first define a full diminished chord starting from a full dominant 7th chord. As a simple example, consider the C-7th chord consisting of the notes C, E, G, and Bb. (We write Bb = B-flat because the actual symbol for a "flat" is usually not available on most word processors). Now flat each member of the C-7th chord by one-half step, except for the "root" of C. We then obtain a full diminished chord: C, Eb, Gb, and A. (We can think of the A as Bbb, or B-double flat.) Because each of the notes in the chord are one and a half steps apart, including the distance from A to C, we can see that we actually have 4 diminished chords which are identical. From this standpoint, there are then only three distinct full diminished chords.

That is just the easy part. If you play just a C-diminished BUTTON on the accordion, and then compare it to playing an Eb-diminished button, you will find that they are not identical. On almost all accordion basses, the diminished chord button is really a diminished TRIAD! Now, which triad is it? You might conclude that the button for the C-diminished should be use C, Eb, and Gb, but that is not the case. In fact, the C-diminished triad button uses C, Eb, and A. There are two different ways to think of that sequence. If you recall the previous discussion on the missing 5ths from seventh chords, you can just as easily think of the diminished chord buttons as being a full diminished

chord with the (diminished) fifth omitted. Alternatively you can consider that it is a diminished triad with a root a minor third below. For example, the C-diminished button could be considered as an A-diminished triad, using A, C, and Eb. A very common way to make a full diminished chord is to add the missing minor fifth by simultaneously pressing the counterbass up two rows from the diminished chord button that you are using. Thus, add the F# = Gb counterbass button to the C-diminished button to get a full C-diminished chord.

If we consider the diminished chord button as having a missing fifth, then, just as for 7th chords, we see that we can add a fourth or a fifth to the triad without a strong dissonance. Adding a fourth is particularly interesting, since that combination makes a full seventh chord! You can easily try that out on your accordion by pressing the F-bass note along with the C-diminished chord button. Another alternative is to play the F-Major chord button with the C-diminished chord button. (Side comment: since the usual arrangement the 7th and diminished chords are so close, some people have suggested alternate arrangements which may be more useful).

There is yet another way to play 7th chords using the diminished chord buttons. In Book 9 of the Palmer-Hughes Accordion Course, they introduce the term "Diminished Stretch". That uses a note from the counterbass row along with a diminished chord. To continue with the example above, where we used an F-bass button with C-diminished, instead of using the F-bass, use the F-counterbass with the second finger, and play the C-diminished button with the fifth finger. The F-counterbass is opposite the C# bass button. If you are not used to using your fifth finger, this may take a little practice to get comfortable with this stretch. However, you can do it. It is even better to use your 3rd finger on the counterbass.

Why would anyone in his right mind even want to learn to do this as an alternate form of the 7th chord? The reason is to avoid large jumps. A very common sequence in music is the use of chromatically descending 7th chords. Say, for example, that you wish to move from C-7th to B-7th. Instead of jumping up a number of rows, after playing the C-7th in its normal way, possibly along with the C-bass, then play the B-counterbass (in just the next row up) along with the Gb-diminished chord button with your fifth finger. If you then wish to go down one step more to Bb-7th, then it is just a short distance away.

It is well to know your diminished chord buttons. You will find that the wrong diminished chord is chosen when you play from sheet music written for the piano with guitar chord symbols shown. You should examine diminished chords very carefully before deciding which of the alternative forms of the chord to play.



full C7

full Cdim

Cdim button

Adim triad

COTATI ACCORDION FESTIVAL PERFORMERS:

Saturday

- STEVE ALBINI
- MILEN SLAVOV
- NADA LEWIS AND MEMBERS OF PANACEA
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- SPIRAL BOUND with ROXANNE MARIE
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- DANNY POUILLARD & Y2Kajun
- SANTIAGO JIMENEZ JR.
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- INN OF THE BEGINING 2-6pm Cajun Dance Party With CAJUN COYOTES

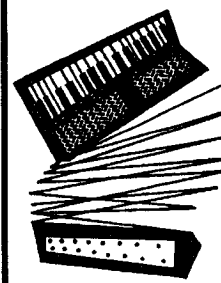
Sunday

- STEVE ALBINI
- BEN CREED
- FRANK LIMA / JULIO MORGANI
- LIMONIM
- BAQUETTE QUARTETTE
- RAMON TRUJILLO & his MARIACHI JALISCO
- LEN WALLACE
- SOURDOUGH SLIM & BLACKIE
- THE INTERNATIONALS
- ROBERTO ROSA
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- INN OF THE BEGINNING 2-6pm Cajun Dance Party with DANNY POUILLARD AND FRIENDS
- BOTH DAYS: Polka dance party with the STEVE BALICH POLKA BAND

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Editor.....Bob Berta
Contributors.....Bob Smith, Scholarship Committee, Domenic Saso
Distribution.....Rusty Bartoli

Send all newsletter-related communications to:
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Daly City, Calif. 94015
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If you would like to play at a meeting contact Bob Berta at 510-450-5766