

BAAAC PAGE

Dedicated to the accordion through fun, service & education

MARCH 2001: A LOVELY WAY TO SPEND AN EVENING

By Rober K. Berta



Before we review the March Meeting the staff at the club's Newsletter wants to congratulate **Boaz Accordions** for making it to the pages of the Oakland Tribune on March 12 [see elsewhere in this issue]. An excellent article discussed the newfound interest in the accordion and the author dropped in on a beginner's class at Boaz's shop and took a lesson along with a group of other students consisting of a wide age range. We need to recognize the fantastic job **Boaz** is doing to promote the accordion—a heart felt thanks from the accordion community of **BAAC!**

OK—back to business. The March meeting featured 4 performers with very different styles of musical interpretation. First was George Johnstone. I don't believe I have heard him play for us on stage before. George felt right at home playing a nice collection of *Girl From Ipanema*, *The Shadow of Your Smile*, *Early Autumn*, *Autumn Breeze*, *What a Difference a Day Makes* and a couple of other nice tunes that were familiar to us. Evidently his selections and playing evoked a lot of good memories. I sat next to Ed Massolo and overheard him humming and singing a couple of the tunes. Ed was joined by a few other *hummers* in the audience and Lou Soper couldn't resist and joined Evelyn Baulch to dance to a couple of the numbers.

Next up was Roberto Rosa. He missed performing at our last meeting having injured his back—since he normally plays standing up it presented a bit of a problem, but with a stool in place tonight he didn't seem to have any problems whatsoever. I rate Roberto as the best MIDI accordionist I have ever heard or seen, period! He blends the skills as an

electronics expert with his formidable talent as an accordionist and adds a healthy dose of musicality to produce wonderful music. Roberto builds his own MIDI equipment, microphones system, speakers, etc. I was particularly impressed with the fantastic sound of his miked accordion. Capturing the sound of an accordion and amplifying it is a true challenge. Often the end result is a horrible screeching that bears little resemblance to the acoustic sounds that the same accordion produces unamplified. I know of only two people that have been able to do it right: Paul Pasquale of Concerto Accordions and Roberto. Roberto worked his way through a couple of *Bossa Novas*, a French Musette selection, *Anima Cuore*, a Russian piece, *Blue Moon*, a Puerto Rican (his country of origin) folk tune, and a couple of other delightful tunes. You can't listen to Roberto play and keep your foot from tapping—his music is contagious to body & soul.

After an intermission Don Nurisso and Ron Borelli played a series of duets that were sheer works of art. Those who have heard these two pros perform will agree that they rank among the very finest jazz musicians in the US. The wonderful arrangements they come up with and their amazing jazz innovations are beyond anything we're used to hearing. They can take any well worn number like *La Campanella* or *Arrivadierci Roma* and by the time they are done with it, it becomes a whole new experience. They worked their magic on *Summertime in Venice*, a medley from *The Godfather*, *A Foggy Day* and *I'm in the Mood for Love*. For an encore they took that well worn but beloved *Flight of the Angels* and turned it inside out and into a most refreshing and new rendition.

(Next Page)

April 4th: Sally Ann Smell, Mary Ann Field, Joe Domitrovich, The Cabletones, Play with the Pros night and more. Don't miss another great meeting!!!!

(Evening Cont'd)

Finally in the tradition of all great Jazz musicians—they couldn't put their accordions down and Roberto Rosa returned to the stage to join them in a few more selections. [They even continued to jam after the meeting. They pulled together three chairs in the audience area and sat there playing for a solid forty minutes—they did great versions of *Take the A Train*, *The Yardbird Suite*, *Sophisticated Lady* and others. It seemed like a return to the good old days of BAAC meetings where great things keep happening.]

One of our members, Bruce Sherman, is a concertina player and he has volunteered to perform at the May meeting. **BAAC** has always promoted all types of free reed instruments but sadly we haven't had that many concertina players. Here is your chance—if you are a closet concertina player, have a Chemnitzer or a Bandoneon (also forms of concertinas)— we would love to hear you play at our May meeting. I am also looking for an authentic Irish or English folk group which includes a concertina. If you know of one or belong to such a group PLEASE contact me. Bob Berta RKBerta@ hotmail.com, or (510) 450-5766.

BAAC

Conductor

Lou H. Soper

Co-Conductor

Joe Smiell

Scribe & Banker

Valerie T. Kieser

Directors

Ron Borelli
Lou Casalnuovo
Vince Cirelli
Jim Firpo

Historian

Frank Schlotter

BAAC PAGE

Editor & Layout

Paul A. Magistretti

Contributors

Robert K. Berta
Valerie T. Kieser
Henry Doktorski
Willard Palmer
Pietro Frosini
Eddie Chavéz
Tom Torriglia
Paul A. Magistretti
Tom Fabinski
Hugh Barwell
Angela Hill

**H
E
L
P**

**If any
of OUR
readers
would
like to
PERFORM
for us,
call BOB
Berta
at (510)
450-5766:**

RKBerta@
hotmail.com

**or LOU
Soper
(510)**

**792-8765:
louhsoper@
aol.com.**

**DON'T be
selfish,
don't be
SHY.**

**You've
GOT
to help,
TOO!!**

BAAC TEACHERS

San Francisco

Peter Di Bono
*Theory/Technique/Perfor-
mance 415 621-1502*

Sharon Walters
All levels 415 621-8284

North Bay

Steve Albini
Private Lessons
415 897-4131

Bart Beninco
Accordion & Piano
Petaluma 707 769-8744

East Bay

Valarie Morris
Self-expression/Technique
Theory—All Levels & Ages
510 222-8442

Lou Jacklich
Private Lessons: Technique
Arranging & Chords
510 317-9510

South Bay

Mike Zampiceni
Beginner to Advanced
BA & MA in Music
408 734-1565

Lynn Ewing
All Levels & Ages
650 365-1700

Peninsula

Lou Soper
Every Tuesday 3-6:30
Moose Club, Colma
510 792-8765

Correspondence

Gary Dahl
Technique & Musicianship
Mel Bay Arranger/Author
253 770-9492 Phone/Fax
www.accordions.com/garydahl

GREAT SQUEEZIN' IN TEXAS

By Valerie T. Kieser

My usual expression for something that to me is truly fabulous is, "**Wow!**" Well, I can't think of any other term for the 2001 National Accordion Convention in Plano, Texas March 8-11. Every year it just seems to get better. Maybe it's because I'm getting to know some of the regulars there, but each year I meet wonderful new friends and players as well. In any reasonable space I couldn't possibly cover all the wonderful aspects of this convention, so here are a few highlights.

Wow! Playing in the 35-accordion orchestra

again this year under **Gary Daverne** of the Auckland, New Zealand Symphony. We played difficult arrangements of really great pieces, including a wonderful Beatles medley, a number composed by Gary called *Pocket Overture* (there is a story about how it got its name), *The Lord of the Dance* (faster toward the end than my fingers can fly), *Orange Blossom Special*, a fabulous Glen Miller medley, and *The Syncopated Clock*, for part of which Gary called up a member of the audience to conduct us, and had the whole audience in stitches.

Wow! Friday Evening Party/Concert, which was an informal presentation by many different talented players and groups.

Wow! The Saturday Evening Concert, which was a more formal event with some of the best musicians I have ever heard—really first-class entertainment. It included our big orchestra as noted above, plus a special performance by the *Traveling Orchestra*, consisting of a few members of the larger group. The traveling group toured Texas just before the convention, showing the public what the accordion can do. The group included real virtuosos such as the members of the *K Trio*, Arlene Boddicker's daughter Michele, and others. They blew everyone away with *España Cañi*, a hilarious polka called *Grasshopper Polka*, (with perennial favorite Marilyn Monsivais on a rhythm stick called the *Stump Fiddle*, that had everyone roaring with laughter) and *El Rancho Grande*. Also at the Saturday night concert we heard some beautiful accordion playing by Lin Xu, a young man from China who is well on his way to becoming

a virtuoso. Since Lin lives in Fremont and is a BAAC member, I hope he will come and play for us. In fact, BAAC helped him attend the AAA and ATG competitions last year, and he did very well.

And of course, Tony Lovello! Well, I don't need to tell you he "razzle-dazzled" everybody!



Wow! The Workshops by really top talent in their field: every one that I was able to catch was great. Unfortunately I had to miss some workshops because of much-needed orchestra rehearsals.

Wow!
Santiago Jimenez, Jr. playing Tex-Mex/Conjunto style on his button box. Santiago is the brother of Flaco Jimenez, and a son of Santiago Jimenez, Sr., pioneer of the Tex-Mex/Conjunto movement. Norm Seaton, President of the TAA and the wizard in charge of

the whole convention, asked me if I would show Santiago my button box, which is the Austrian/Slovenian type and has a different sound from the one Santiago played. Well, one thing led to another, and soon Santiago was in love with my button box and played it for over an hour. Was I honored? WOW!

Double Wow!! Anyone who has not heard the *K Trio*: don't miss hearing them if you get the opportunity! They are a precision trio of acoustic accordions, of which one is a bass accordion. They blew everyone away with, among others, Chopin's *Minute Waltz* (which is not intended to be played in one minute), *Carnival of Venice*, *Malagueña*, *Bumble Boogie* (I used to play it on the piano, and it is lots more fun than *Flight of the Bumblebee*), and *The Atchison*, *Topeka* and *the Santa Fe* including accordion-made train sounds that were really effective. This trio is totally committed to beauty and precision, with all the best articulation, phrasing and dynamics you can imagine. They stand out from any other group I have heard. *The K Trio* has a website—www.ktrio.com—through which you can get their CD's.

Thanks, BAAC, for sending me as your representative to the convention. And congratulations Norman Seaton! You outdo yourself every year! **Wow!! WOW!!**

Open Letter to Accordion Manufacturers

By Bill Palmer

(Concert Accordionist, Teacher and Composer)

[This article is reprinted in its entirety from the September 1948 issue of *Accordion World* (New York)]

Dear Sirs:

There is little doubt that the world owes you a debt of gratitude for your great contributions and conscientious efforts that have led to the speedy evolution of the accordion from a square, gaudy instrument of limited range and raucous tone to the modern multi-shift instrument of classic dignity.

As a direct result of these great improvements in accordion building, particularly those you have made in the past dozen years, the accordion now seems destined to attain at last its long coveted position in the ranks of legitimate musical instruments. Schools, colleges, and universities are now lending a favorable ear to our pleas for full recognition. All that is necessary now is that we, the teachers and artists, and you, the craftsmen, work together perfectly to give the accordion just the right boosts at just the right moments.

This will mean a great deal to every person associated with the accordion field. When our instrument is fully accepted there will soon be many more serious students beginning accordion study. We lose much of the cream of the crop of students who find it necessary to leave our ranks and take up the study of instruments more readily recognized for academic credit. Full recognition will mean more students, more accordion sales, more fine artists developed, more dignity to our profession.

But right now we are up against one tough problem, and we need your help to solve it, and solve it quickly. We must rid our bass keyboard of some of its limitations.

Let me agree wholeheartedly with Lloyd La Vaux, who in a recent article for the *Accordion World* pointed out these limitations and intelligently commented on the need for improvement.

"Oom-pah" bass is not only *passe*, but it has never been in good taste for serious music in general. How much Oom-pah can we find in compositions of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Moussorgsky?

Now I know that there are many accordionists who believe that we should leave the music of Bach and others strictly alone. If this is true it is only because of the limitations of the bass keyboard. It is certainly obvious that the accordion is quite an acceptable vehicle for many of Bach's works, the organ compositions in particular (and it is no doubt superior in many respects to the organs of Bach's day), if we could only play all of the bass notes at proper pitch. *The Toccata and Fugue in D minor* has become standard accordion repertoire, simply because it is one of Bach's few compositions that can be done easily on the accordion with every bass note almost as intended by the

composer.

The heads of music departments almost invariably demand a classical approach to music study. This means that we *must* overcome those bass limitations. To attempt to organize a systematic course in classical music with our present bass range of apparently only one octave is inconceivable, not only to the music but to ourselves. Our weaknesses are only emphasized all the more.

To those accordionists who suggest that we abandon our efforts to play such music I would like to level a blast that has no place here. Let it suffice to say that I prefer to see the instrument improved until it is capable of handling such literature, and at the same time the possibilities of creating more interesting literature of our own will be greatly increased.

Basically, we need at least a three octaves range in the left hand, with the same tonal quality throughout the range. We must also have a means of playing harmonic intervals up to two octaves, or at least a fourteenth.

Recently you put on the market many different models with four, five, six, and even seven bass shifts strung out along the bass keyboard. Unfortunately this is not the answer. These shifts actually only serve to give up to seven varieties of Oom-pah. In some few selections they are quite effective in melodic bass passages, but they only whet our appetites by suggesting to us what wonderful effects we could obtain with a really efficient system. One of the principal difficulties encountered in using these instruments is that the shifts are not readily accessible from all positions of the left hand. Often when we are playing near the fundamental D flat button we find that we have immediate need for the shift that is located, say, near the A natural fundamental button, or vice versa.

Another definite defect is that accordions with multi-bass shifts invariably have the lowest set of bass reeds coupled with the highest, or next to highest set, and have no shift that will give the low voice alone. I understand the reasons you have done this, I believe. First—the low voice does not seem to respond readily enough alone, it needs the high set to boost it. Second—if the high reed is not added there will be no chords on the bass when this register is on. These are facts, but have you considered the following points?

First—the low reed does not need such rapid response when played alone. Most low bass passages are slow passages, due to the character of all low orchestral instruments, which are not such virtuoso instruments as higher ones. The low treble shift seems to work quite well,

(Next page)

(Letter cont'd)

and it approaches very close to the lowest range of the bass, doesn't it? Second—and important—when we are playing extremely low passages in the bass we have *no need* for bass chords, high or low. Particularly do we *not* need that high treble chord found on some instruments. Oom-pah has its uses, but Oom-squeak is out of the questions.

We cannot wait another twelve years to begin removing these “bugs” from our instrument. If we have to add another bass row or two, let's add them. If a five-bass shift accordion must have twenty shifts as small as bass buttons to place all five within practical reaching distance from all positions, let's have them.

If we have to depart radically from our present system, let go! *[Bill's wishes have been somewhat fulfilled by free bass and converter systems. I thought this article should be noted because even today many accordionists aren't aware*

that they have a serious choice to make.]

You, accordion craftsmen, are the ones who can contribute most to making the necessary improvements. The artist seldom has the knowledge or the time to experiment with such construction, or the genius to overcome the engineering difficulties involved. And with every confidence in your ultimate success, let me beg you to make the resulting solution available to all accordion manufacturers. You will profit in the long run. Much more speedy recognition of the accordion is sure to follow, and every artist, teacher, manufacturer and craftsman will find his position a more secure one.

Let's not wait for the accordion to develop. Let's develop it!

Sincerely, Bill Palmer

The French Stradella System

By Hugh Barwell

(Accordionist—York, England)

As a nation, the French excel at minimalism! Consider the Citroen 2CV, a car stripped to the bare essentials. They also invented the hot air balloon, which obviated the need for explosive hydrogen, and improved (in my view) the bikini, by dispensing with its top half! Their accordions follow the same idea: since the “dim” button can play a Dominant 7th, let's get rid of the row of Dominant 7th buttons.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that this French Stradella system has nothing whatsoever to do with the fact that many French players also have a Continental Chromatic Treble Keyboard rather than a piano keyboard! We are only considering the chord and bass buttons here.

The “Italian” system is almost without exception what is offered by dealers in these fair isles to anyone seeking a full size accordion, though most manufacturers offer the French system if required. Having heard visiting French professionals extolling the virtues of the system, and performing brilliantly upon it, I was among those British players left wondering if our dealers were overlooking a superior system, and decided to investigate further.

In the Italian system, the button we call “G dim” makes a perfectly good C7 chord, consisting of the notes E, G, Bb. Occasionally (in certain classical arrangements) it may be preferable to the C, E, Bb construction of the normal C7 button. If you have an ordinary Italian system accordion, with 3 note Dominant 7ths and a row of “dim” buttons, you can try, (at no expense!), what the “French” 7ths sound like by substituting G “dim” for C7, C “dim” for F7 etc. This gives the “French” chord construction, but not the exact physical feel, for the French put this “G dim” button in the C row, in the place we would find our C7.

From this example, it should be clear that, in the French system, all the “dim” buttons are moved one row physically DOWNWARDS or “FLATWISE” as I prefer to term it. So a player who is already used to the position of the “dim” buttons and their relationship to the bass and counterbass

buttons would need to adapt, though one who has yet to progress to the use of the “dim” row would have no problems learning the system.

Advantages

The row of dominant 7ths being omitted either makes for a more compact bass button board with five rows of buttons, or the space saved can be occupied by an extra row of counterbasses instead. This new row plays the Minor 3rd. Thus, in the row containing the marked C bass note, you have the normal Major Third counterbass note E, as on the Italian system, and you additionally have the note Eb available in the extra counterbass row, which is the row nearest the bellows. Some variants of this system displace the extra counterbass row by one position; but the essential advantage is that the minor third bass note is nearby. On the Italian system, playing a first inversion of Cm, ie Cm button with Eb bass note, is a job for a hardworking little finger. So out of the way is it that many average ear players never use the first inversion of a minor chord !

For those who more methodically study the bass side, a hurdle which has to be jumped is the extremely common chord progression:- C/e Cdim/eb Dm/d G7/g It is a progression which occurs in all styles of popular music, from Ragtime through Dance Band, Polkas and Musette. Because the C dim is being used as an abbreviated Diminished 7th chord, whose construction is symmetrically built out of Minor Third intervals, it follows that any other “dim” button 3 rows away will be an inversion of the same chord, though with a different note omitted in its abbreviation. Thus, the progression could also be played: C/e Ebdim/eb Dm/d G7/g

There are other possibilities, but none which strike me as being physically more convenient.

Much musette music uses this chord progression as a commonplace. This progression and many others should be much easier to execute on the French System with the minor

(Next page)

third counterbasses. Complex Bass Solos should also lie more under the hand.

Disadvantages

As discussed above, the sound of a "dim" button used to voice a Dominant 7th chord differs from our normal 7th buttons. But leaving aside any personal preference for either sound, the Italian system offers some extra chordal possibilities. Since the Dominant Seventh buttons on the Italian Stradella omit the perfect fifth, the button can be used as the basis for such chords as G7+ (where the augmented fifth can be added in the right hand without a clash), and G7b5, where the flattened fifth can be played on the basses or the right hand. As far as I can see, these Seventh chords containing a major third and an altered fifth are the only ones which the pared down French system cannot cope with.

For the folk players and other less harmonically demanding accordionists, the 5-row French system, constructed without the extra row of counterbasses, might be suitable. A letter in the Feb 94 issue from Werner Fehlhaber, no stranger to this magazine, advocated lighter, more compact accordions, asking "for our daily enjoyment do we really need diminished seventh?" Yes, most emphatically we do !! By far the better candidate for the chop would be the Dominant Seventh buttons. The casing around the bass mechanism could be approx 1cm shorter, though the weight saved would be negligible in comparison with leaving out one octave of bass reeds.

The 6-row French System, with the extra counterbass row, is the choice of many French accordion stars, so it is obviously not too restrictive!

Devotees of this system maintain that the use of their "dim" buttons as a Dominant Seventh is more sonorous and rounded than our "Italian" ones, and willingly demonstrate that their "dim" row (being identical to ours except in being displaced "flatwise" by one position), is obviously just as versatile. A recap on its various uses:- The "dim" button to be found in the C row on an Italian system accordion, or in the F row on the French system, can be used to voice a 3-note version of the eight following 4-note chords, with a suitable bass note underneath: C dim, Eb dim, F# dim, A dim, F7, Am7b5, Cm6, D7b9.

The first four are all inversions of the same Diminished Seventh chord; the F7 has no tonic (name-note); Am7b5 and Cm6 both contain the same notes, though in Am7b5 it is the 7th which is omitted, and in Cm6, it is the fifth. Finally D7b9 consists of any inversion of a C Diminished Seventh Chord played over a D bass note.

I asked a couple of experts for their thoughts on the French system. Albert Delroy, who sadly died in February 1996, was the leading authority on chord systems, having studied even the one-off systems commissioned by individual artistes. His view was that the Italian system, or "Modern Stradella", sold here, is the best possible, provided one plays music suited to the instrument. He felt that the essential, defining feature of a Dominant Seventh chord is that crunch of the Tonic heard against the Seventh, and this is missing in the "French" Seventh. He added that in Northern France and Belgium, the so-called "Belgian System" is popular. This has exactly the same three types of chord as the "French", though the layout is different.

Charlie Watkins, dealer, inventor, and accordion enthusiast, agrees about those Sevenths. He does not know of

any British players who have adopted the French or Belgian systems, and feels that the extra counterbass row is probably confusing. He likes the sound of the four note sevenths which formerly were built into most accordions, and still are in East European accordions, but agrees that some harmony is precluded by this.

In conclusion, the compact 5 row French system might be attractive to: (A) Players who have not yet progressed to the "dim" buttons. (B) Those who have, but are willing to seek them in a new position. Anyone contemplating this system should be aware of the different sound of the Seventh, and reconcile themselves to avoiding 7+ and 7b5 chords. *Je regrette, ce n'est pas pour moi !*

New Accordion Concerto Draws Impressive Reviews

March 2001: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: On the evening of February 6, 2001, in the Winspear Centre for Music, on the opening gala concert of the Resound Festival of Contemporary Music, concert accordionist N. Antonio Peruch and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Grzegorz Nowak gave the World Premiere performance of celebrated Canadian composer Malcolm Forsyth's *Concerto for Accordion and Orchestra*.

The Edmonton Sun music critic John Charles wrote: "The premiere of Malcolm Forsyth's Accordion Concerto was impressive . . . Forsyth has written a splendid, soaring work that's accessible on first hearing but deserving of many more."

Edmonton Journal music critic D. T. Baker wrote: "Edmonton composer Malcolm Forsyth's new Accordion Concerto makes as strong an argument as has been made for the instrument on the symphonic stage. N. Antonio Peruch's blazing performance on an instrument specifically built for him made this rich, vital music come alive." ¶ On Sunday, March 4, 2001, at 10:00 pm Eastern Standard time, the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) broadcast the performance on its new music radio program "Two New Hours." The performance was also heard at the same time on the Internet in streaming Real Audio. The Web Site address was: www.radio.cbc.ca/programs/2newhours/2newhours.html. For more information contact Liz Smolec via email: fisa@telusplanet.net.

Soave Performs

March 2001: Bandoneonist Peter Soave performed Sunday, March 4th at the Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church in Detroit's historic Indian Village. He was accompanied by his String Quintet composed of MOT Orchestra members Victoria Haltom and Velda Kelly violins, Barbara Zmich viola and Nadine Deleury cello, plus Jazz bass player Marion Hayden. The program included music of Argentinean composer Astor Piazzolla and Venezuelan composer A. Romero

The Evolution of a Unique and Effective Left-hand Keyboard, Which Had Its Beginnings in Italy Many Years Ago

By **Pietro Frosini**

The standard system of accordion bass keyboard has one octave of single basses and fixed chords controlled by single buttons. My left hand basses are single notes running chromatically in the same manner as on the chromo-piano keyboard. The buttons in the third and fourth row (as shown on **next page**) give the chromatic scale, beginning from low C below the staff in the bass clef, to high E, fourth space in the violin clef.

This gives me a range of over three octaves. Each button of the third and fourth rows controls three reeds, two of which are in unison and one of which is an octave higher. The third and fourth rows (see diagram) are flanked by the second and fifth rows, which are the same notes as the third and fourth rows, but are so fixed mechanically that they play the octave lower. This is to avoid the jump of seven buttons to reach for the octave lower. The first row is also a repetition of the notes of the fifth row, only in different positions. This is to facilitate rapid bass passages.

I do not employ the thumb in playing. I use four fingers, and the little one does most of the fundamental bass work, leaving me three fingers to form my chords in whatever inversion they sound best or are easiest to reach.

I started to play this bass system at the age of nine. It was introduced to

me by my father who was a dilettante of the accordion, but not a musician. From the age of six to nine I had been content to play on a four bass accordion, which had eleven keys on the right hand side.

The accordions with chromatic keyboards on both right and left hands were very popular in the city of Catania Sicily, where I was born. There was a factory there that made this type of accordion and Rosario Porto was the owner. His son, Salvatore Porto, was a fine player and he impressed and inspired me the first time I heard him play, which was on the occasion of my father's purchasing an instrument at the Porto factory. He played the *Norma Overture* and *Intermezzo* from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. He manipulated the bellows with the shake style that I use. He was the first man that I heard do the tremolo with the bellows.

My father showed me where to place my fingers to run the scale. That was enough. In three months I was playing polkas, mazurkas, waltzes, quadrilles and marches with remarkable ability. In less than a year I was playing the *Norma Overture* myself.

My accordion career was abruptly halted at this time, for I entered musical college and here the accordion was taken away from me and absolutely prohibited. For six long years I did not touch an accordion, but I did not forget it. Neither did I forget how to play. When I finished my courses at the musical college, I went back to my accordion, but with a real foundation of musical theory behind me.

The accordion I had used up to this time had only two rows of basses similar to those represented by the third and fourth rows on the diagram. The sub-basses were very thin, but I got along with this type of instrument until about 1910 when Pietro and Guido Deiro came along with the 120 bass piano accordion.

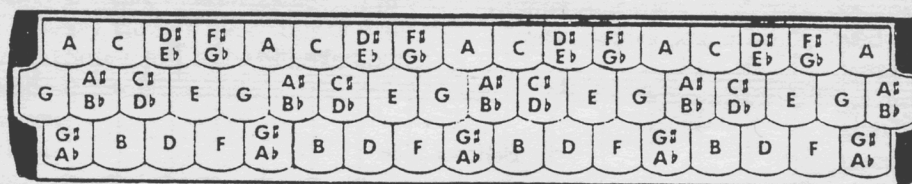
I got to work quickly on some device to obtain those heavy rhythm basses and had manufactured an accordion with the second and fifth rows added (see diagram).

These two extra rows controlled the heavier reeds an octave lower. This innovation enabled me to play heavier rhythms. Recently I have added one more row of basses, which is shown as the first row in the diagram.

I have found this bass system very practical and effective for all types of music.



**Frosini's Treble Keyboard
(See Bass on next page)**



[A footnote from Eddie Chavéz. "I have researched Frosini and would like to add the following: After he finished studying in Italy at the conservatory in Milan, where he majored in the coronet—the accordion not being accepted as a "serious classical instrument." He learned that the British Government was organizing a band to play concerts all over the world. It was a goodwill tour and would be based on a British Battleship, but not connected with the military. Frosini got the job as a coronet player—by then he was a virtuoso—and in a short time he was doing all the band's arrangements. Every-

(Next page)

(Frosini cont'd)

where the band played he was singled out for rave reviews, particularly for his beautiful tone. When the tour was wrapping up and the ship happened to dock in San Francisco, Frosini decided he'd take leave of the band and stay in the City with its vibrant Italian community, exploring the possibilities of life in America. This was 1905. While staying he got work in several hotels as an accordionist. The instrument's popularity was thriving in San Francisco, as well as throughout America. Also, returning to the instrument was perfect for him. He needed a change from playing with a band and with an accordion he didn't need accompaniment—above all, the accordion was where his heart was. On his days off he often went to stage shows. Vaudeville was big in San Francisco as it was in every major city. Naturally many of the acts featured musicians. It didn't take him long to think that he might go into Vaudeville himself. Since most of the major booking agencies were in New York, he set out for the Big Apple. He met with the Orpheum Circuit agents, but as soon as they saw his button instrument they said the public wouldn't accept it. All the accordion players on the circuit played piano accordions and that's what people were used to. After all, everyone was familiar with pianos and parlor organs. Well, surviving two thousand years of foreign invaders made Sicilians smart and resilient and Frosini was no exception. He immediately said,

"You know, I play the piano accordion, too. I'll go and get it and come back." It so happened that Frosini's paisan and best friend from Catania, the very man who made his accordion, now lived in New York. Frosini went to him and had him put a set of dummy piano keys in front of the buttons. Frosini went back to the Orpheum bookers flashed his instrument and its fake keys and began to play. And while he played he kept the bass towards them. He was such a fantastic player and they were so completely dazzled that the illusion was complete; they hired him on the spot. Once on the road he removed the fake piano keys and later he had his accordions built with small piano-like keys that were arranged in three rows, tiered, and aligned in the chromatic B System, the system he played. When other players saw how fantastic he was, some of them got interested in playing chromatic, because they were so impressed with Frosini's speed and facility. However, there weren't any teachers who knew the system and Frosini was too intimidating an act to follow; it never really caught on. By the way, the only teacher I know of who taught it in my time was Leo Piersanti in Chicago. John Simkus, the current President of the Chicago Accordion Club studied with Leo. Also, the late Alice Hall, as well as Leon Sash, played a three row chromatic with piano keys just like Frosini's."]

**Frosini's Single Note Bass System
(from Accordion World)**

The diagram illustrates the 'Bellows Side' of an accordion keyboard, showing a 5-row layout. The notes are arranged in a chromatic scale across the rows. The 1st row contains notes F#, G#, A#, C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C, D, E, F#, G#. The 2nd row contains C#, D#, F, G, A, B, C#, D#, F, G, A, B, C#, D#, F, G, A, B, C#, D#. The 3rd row contains C#, D#, F, G, A, B, C#, D#, F, G, A, B, C#, D#, F, G, A, B, C#, D#. The 4th row contains C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C, D, E. The 5th row contains C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C, D, E, F#, G#, A#, C, D, E. Vertical dotted lines connect the notes on the keyboard to the corresponding notes in the musical notation above and below. The notation includes five staves, labeled 1st through 5th, with notes and rests. The 1st staff is in bass clef, and the 5th staff is in bass clef. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th staves are in treble clef. The diagram is labeled 'Bellows Side' and 'Chromatic Scale'.

Footnote on Eddie Chavéz

Eddie was born in San Antonio, Texas and early on developed an interest in airplanes. In the 1920's he often went to Kelly Field, the then so-called "West Point of the Air" to watch the Curtiss P-1s, Falcons and Keystone Bombers take off and land. Later, he and a friend carved models of the planes from apple-crate wood and sold them to the cadets. And with that he set himself on a road for the rest of his life. He became a superb model airplane builder with many of his works exhibited in the Smithsonian. However, before that he got closer to real planes. In World War II he was a ball turret gunner in a B-24. Later, in Korea he served as a G-2 officer and trained front-line troops in aircraft recognition—often using his own models.

After the service (leaving as a Captain) he began to sell models to people and eventually he did one for the Piper Agency in San Antonio. William Piper liked his work so well that he had him do five models of his planes and made them part of the Piper exhibit that was sent to the Smithsonian.

Eventually Eddie ended up working for the Post Office. It was in 1962 that Eddie Powers, owner of the Nut

Tree restaurant on I-80 commissioned him to do an Aero Commander. He was so pleased that he had him do more and Eddie spent the next twenty years making models. The Nut Tree used the models as an attraction—all of them done from scratch and taking a year. He's did Ford Tri-Motors, a Curtiss Condor, Chuck Yeager's P-51D, a Sikorsky S-42, the Graf Zeppelin, the Goodyear Blimp, a Northrup Gamma, the Howard 500 and many more. He usually worked in 1/16 scale, but that still meant the Zeppelin was thirteen feet long. Everything was done from his own fabricated parts that were fashioned in his one car garage with a jig saw, drill and Dremel tools. The Gamma, in fact, had 80,000 handmade rivet heads. He ended up with nine models on display in the Smithsonian and the twenty-three models he did for the Nut Tree were bought by the San Francisco Airport and will eventually be on display.

While meeting and talking with our own Vince Cirelli, Eddie learned from him that there was another postal employee who was interested in accordions, Ron Flynn—they eventually met and the rest became history, but let him tell it.



A Letter From Eddie Chavéz

Dear Paul:

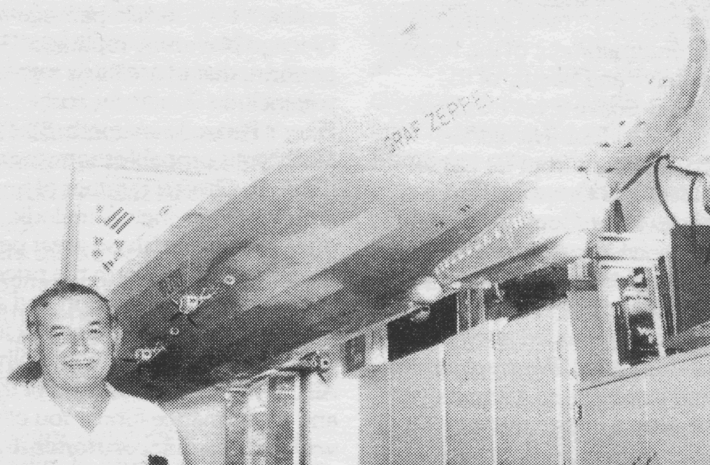
I want to introduce myself. I'm Eddie Chavéz. I'm a long time friend of Jim Holliday. He sent me a copy of your club newsletter. I know Lou Soper, too, as he attended our Texas Accordion Convention some time ago. Perhaps you knew Ron Flynn. I met him through Vince Cirelli, who visited the old Nut Tree restaurant along I-80. I had built all the models that they had on display there. Of course, as you may know, the Nut Tree went broke and closed after being there for 75 years. Anyway, Vince learned that I worked at the Post Office as Ron did, too, and that I played the accordion. Ron called me and we met. At that time Ron had written a small book, *Some Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco*. He wanted to do a bigger book and I suggested we write one including all the artists of the

Golden Age and we called it, *The Golden Age of the Accordion*. I knew another person who played the accordion and who was also a journalist, so we teamed up and it took seven years to write. We have sold over 1,900 copies to date all over the world. There are presently only two people still living from the Golden Age: Anthony Galla-Rini, now 97 and Charles Nunzio, 89.

I fell in love with the accordion when I heard Charles Magnante play on the radio way back when and I have been in love with the accordion sound ever since. I'll be 84 this April. When I was 14 I started collecting old 78s of accordion music. In time, I had 450 records. As the years went

by I collected everything Magnante ever recorded, including the 33s and his Quartet recordings, I also have an extensive

(Next page)



(Letter cont'd)

collection of records by the Deiro Brothers, John Molinari and Frosini (all of his stuff), as well as anyone in the States who ever recorded on the accordion. I now have everything on cassettes (I sold the records at a time when there was a great interest in the accordion)—although I kept the Frosini disks. Frosini was a favorite of mine. As for the piano accordion, no one was better than Magnante.

I'm sending you some information on Frosini's bass system. He played bass on 102 single notes and made chords with his fingers. When you hear him it sounds like the Stradella System, but you can hear every single note and the complete chord. You can see the arrangement on a diagram I'm sending from the *Button Box Newsletter* (an excellent NL by Jake Kons; the diagram is a reprint from *Accordion World*). I understand you have an article on the bass system used with most chromatics in France; I've sent another. Note: Three rows of single basses and three rows of chords—no diminished; the so-called 3x3 system. I'm also including the program of Magnante's concert at Carnegie Hall in 1939, which you covered in your last newsletter.

I have a friend in Canada who has a satellite dish and he tapes shows from France that come to Montreal. There's a show called *La Chance* and it features accordionists young and old, but a lot of young people, including a great number of ladies. None of the performers look at the keyboard [which may be easier on chromatics] and most play four and five row chromatics. Some use five and some four fingers. All their

music is memorized and they have young people on the scene dancing—real ballroom dancing and not jumping up and down. There's no advertising, just solid accordion playing.

The San Francisco Airport bought all the Nut Tree models I built. In time they'll go on display at their new Museum. I'll come out there when it opens and the models go on display.

If there is anything you want from the old accordion world, I probably have it. Also, I have learned quite a bit about the accordion; oh, not everything but more than a litte.

Congratulations on your fine writings, just excellent.

I play a Bell 4516 and my favorite is an Excelsior Black Beauty. The latter was built in 1932 and cost \$625 way back then. It has 4/5 reeds, a full sized shift on the bass and one on the treble; the treble reeds have about 2 cents of musette tuning, so that the sound would carry way to the back of any hall in 1932—microphones weren't generally used in vaudeville back then. The bass reeds are dry tuned; it has three middle reeds and bassoon on the treble. It had been played so much that the keys were worn down to the wood. I had them recovered with mother of pearl and it has a new red bellows. Now, everything is like new and it plays so easy and smooth it almost plays itself. It has a beautiful sound and only weighs 20 lbs. John Buday, my long time friend, and the last person I know of who does engraving on accordions, made the main plate for me; it's a work of art.

My best regards to you. I'll bet you're a fine musician. I know you're a good journalist. Eddie.

Chicago Accordion Club Volume One (A CD Review)

By Paul A. Magistretti

The Chicago Accordion Club has produced a CD that displays the tremendous range of music that perfectly fits an accordion. You have musical selections from Classics & Pops, plus Tangos, Sambas, Bossa Novas, Musettes and Jazz interpretations of standards. There are tracks from Stas Venglevski, Peter Soave, Frank Marocco, Lindy Kao, Mike Alongi, Don White & Dick Caldwell, Don Komar, Brian Erickson (on concertina), John Simkus and Joe Vito. They're all virtuoso performers with a variety of styles, so that apart from the sheer entertainment of the recording you have a showcase for the flexibility and beauty of the instrument in the hands of masters. Peter Soave gives excellent renditions of Piazzolla (*Bordel 1900*) and Brahms (*Hungarian Dance #5*), Stas Venglevski plays two selections from his CD of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite (The Miniature Overture, Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy)* and teams up with Mike Alongi on *Lindy's Song* from his album *Accordion Illusions*, which we heard live in November 2000. Lindy Kao, a legendary performer, is heard on two selections (*Autumn Leaves* and *Avalon*). Lindy was the well-loved first president of the Chicago Club who passed away in 1999 while taking a bow at the end of a performance. We can hear his playing at its best—fluent, musical and jazz-inspired without ever becoming limited by the idiom. Mike Alongi does a musette inspired original and a jazz composition with multi-layered recording techniques, and includes the use of a bass accordion. Dick Caldwell and Don White do *Tour Monparnasse* (which speaks for itself) and Dick Komar plays *Samba De Orfeu* and Charlie Parker's *Scrapple From The Apple*. Brian Erickson does rousing

versions of *Sweet Georgia Brown* and *Limehouse Blues* on the concertina. John Simkus checks in with an Art Van Damme inspired group featuring vibes, drums, guitar and bass doing Jobim's *Triste* and Victor Young's *Beautiful Love*. Joe Vito plays fine renditions of *It Might As Well Be Spring* and *My Favorite Things* in a solid melodic style. Frank Marocco rounds out the twenty selections with *Cheek To Cheek* (solo) and *Nobody Else But Me* (ensemble). It's a terrific package and while I knew a number of the Chicago players by reputation I hadn't had a chance to hear them perform; that in itself was a great reason to get this CD. But when you include Stas, Peter and Frank at their best you have a winner. Peter's Piazzolla is superb. Stas' *Nutcracker* is beautiful and Frank Marocco is probably the swaggiest player ever. I've heard him do *Cheek To Cheek* a number of times in person and it never ceases to amaze me—swinging, melodic and fresh; one of the best things he does. Any one of these great performers doing any one of their pieces would be worth the price—all together it's an opportunity to dive into the accordion and spend some happy hours. The players are all so different that it's like a lesson in what the accordion can do and say—something to soak into your subconscious. All the profits from the sale of the CD go to the club's scholarship and performance funds. You can contact their website www.chicagoaccordionclub.com or order from Chicago Accordion Club %Don White 7938 S Kilbourn Ave., Chicago IL 60652 (773) 585-5178. The price is \$15 + \$1.00 S&H with breaks for multiples. The Cassette is \$10 incl. S&H. Make checks payable to the Chicago Accordion Club.

Aces in San Diego

By Valerie T. Kieser

We were fortunate to have beautiful weather on the day of our second concert for the Accordion Lovers Society International (ALSI) in San Diego, Sunday, February 11, 2001. Anthony Galla-Rini once again came to hear us, which was quite a sacrifice on his part (and an honor to us), because he does not like to leave the side of his beloved wife Dolly.

The concert once again was well received, with over 100 people in attendance.

We played everything from marches to folk tunes, classical, semi-classical numbers. Besides our full ensemble, some smaller groups from among us also played: a trio (Frank Montoro, Sharon Walters and Lynn Ewing) and a Quartet (Nora Mazzara, Mary-Alice Eldon, Aldo Argenti and Ron Harris), playing some of Joe Smiell's compositions written

especially for them. There was also a duet of improvisations with Frank Montoro and Peter Di Bono—always a special treat, and everyone loved it! As a special act within our concert, three of Aldo Argenti's grandchildren, Bridgett, Andrea and Scott, played a couple of numbers together that they obviously had worked hard to learn—everyone was really impressed by these youngsters.

At the beginning of our concert, we played three ensemble numbers together with ALSI's Concert Ensemble,

arrangements by Joe of *Irish Air* (Danny Boy), *Kammenoi Ostrow*, and *La Cumparsita*. ALSI's own "ACE" ensemble is making great progress under the very capable direction of Joanne Pilgrim.

Following the ACE concert, Joanne Pilgrim played a solo of Galla-Rini's arrangement of *Finlandia*—with Maestro Galla-Rini as her page turner! Joanne is an accomplished virtuoso player and an inspiration to all who hear her play.

We of BAAC's ACE ensemble were most gratified with the write-up of our concert in *The Reed Block* (ALSI's newsletter) by Bob Warner, in which he said, among other things, "The versatility of this group is extraordinary.... It is clear that Joe Smiell holds himself and the ensemble to high standards and that each responds to the other.

The quality, the technical competence, the originality and the versatility of this performing group reflect a high degree of commitment from the ensemble membership. Having a director with the talent and experience of Joe Smiell is no small advantage. We wish the San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble continuing success and hope to hear them again soon."

Thanks, Bob Warner, and thanks, ALSI.



ACCORDION MEETS SILENT FILM BERLIN & MORGANI

Live accordion music from Santa Cruz accordionist Morgani will accompany the renowned silent film, *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927, Walter Ruttmann) showing in a limited three-day run, nightly at 7:30 p.m., April 12-14 (Thurs.-Sat.) at the Fine Arts Cinema, 2451 Shattuck Avenue in downtown Berkeley—five blocks from the downtown BART station. The performance is sponsored by Boaz Accordions and the Accordion Circle of the East Bay.

Admission is \$8. Tickets are available at the theater on the night of performance. *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* is a selection of the CIRCA NOW International Documentary Film Festival, produced and presented by the Fine Arts Cinema. For more information, call the Fine Arts Cinema at 510/848-1143 or visit www.FineArtsCinema.com.

This classic silent documentary, employing montage portrays a day in the life of 1927 Berlin. It opens at dawn on a late spring day and proceeds through the day to midnight. It's a tremendous window into the life and times of an age on the brink of chaos and destruction.

Morgani is an unorthodox entertainer and street

performer, who is a familiar figure around Santa Cruz and to those who follow the Bay Area accordion scene [former BAAC member Frank Lima]. He is known as much for his fine musicianship as for his wildly creative costumes, zany alter egos and offbeat humor. He will draw on his extensive repertoire of European romantic music to accompany the film.

The Fine Arts Cinema has successfully paired a variety of silent movies with live music, including *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Italian Straw Hat*, *Man With a Movie Camera* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*. "It lets us indulge our twin passions for film and music, and the musicians really rise to the occasion," comments Fine Arts partner Keith Arnold."

Berlin is preceded by two silent shorts directed by Joris Ivens: *The Bridge* (1928, 12 mins.) and *Rain* (1929, 15 mins.) The complete program begins at 7:30. **Sponsored by: Boaz Accordions & Accordion Circle of the East Bay (See Ad on Page 19). Group rates are available in advance for BAAC (12 or more @ \$5 each). Call: Keith 510/848-1038 to make arrangements.**

President's Message

By Lou H. Soper

What a wonderful musical program we had on March 7th. Swing music was the theme and one word describes the entire evening, "Sensational!"



George Johnstone, a native of Glasgow, Scotland, started the evening with a full selection of popular and difficult songs with some great chord changes to show his love for this kind of music. Poor George was a bit nervous and concentrated so much on his playing that he didn't say a word in his delightful Scottish brogue. Nice going George.

Then Roberto Rosa took center stage with his MIDI equipment and simply unleashed his magnificent talent upon us to tremendous effect. The variety styles, arrangements and techniques only goes to prove what super musician he has become.

Then, Ron Borelli and Don Nurisso treated the audience to the art of improvising at it's highest level with amazing technique that simply wow'd everyone. BAAC can be very proud of these members who are so gifted and generous in sharing their talent with us. They continued to jam after the meeting with Roberto out of sheer joy—another treat for us.

Jim Firpo brought our fun snacks of peanuts, pretzels and licorice to nibble and Tom Torriglia had a great selection of accordion music at reasonable prices. Dominic and Frances Bennedetto provided a delicious variety of cold cuts and cookies afterwards and they brought coffee for 50 cents and

sodas for 75. The zucchini relish Frances made was fabulous, if you didn't try it you're not Italian—though you didn't have to be to swoon.

Think of this: great music at wonderful facility with great lighted parking, delicious nibbles and outstanding sandwiches for \$3. Is this rolling prices back to the pre-inflation 60s when our coins contained silver, or what? You can't see a movie today at senior prices for less than \$4.

The energy crunch has struck and we will now pay an extra \$50 in rent at the Patio. Still the total cost of \$200 for this terrific location is a bargain.

Talent for the April meeting will feature something totally different from what we have ever had. Two professional musicians will invite at least five of our non-professional accordionists to play one song together so they can get the feeling of what it is like to play in a band. We will have Bill Baillie, clarinet and Al Avakian, bass. The 5 members will select what they want to play and lets see what happens. The second half of the program will feature the San Francisco Cabletones.

The executive board has decided to make the month of May Ladies Night. This is always a fun night for BAAC and we look forward to many ladies squeezin' and pleasin'.

Our second workshop for 2001 will be held in June. You will be notified in advance the date, time and location. We have planned our summer picnic for Saturday, July 8 at Nature Friend Park and we will have excellent food, games and music. Mark your calendar and plan to attend these exciting events.

Hope to see you on Wednesday, April 4 at the Patio Español.

Joe Soprani

(from the Union trade paper International Musician)

Joe is a noted accordionist, educator and arranger who has gained Classical recognition for an instrument that is often bound by stereotypes. Soprani, a member of The Philadelphia Musical Society Local 77, has twice had the honor of appearing with Luciano Pavarotti and has performed for three different presidents.

Soprani holds many "first" honors, among them having the privilege of being the first and only accordionist to be a featured soloist for the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy. In 1997, he became the first accordionist to perform in Verdi's *La Traviata*, presented by the Opera Company of Philadelphia.

Soprani is dedicated to promoting the accordion as a serious instrument, visiting colleges and universities to speak with young composers and educators about the instrument. Having performed in several Broadway shows, Soprani is currently performing in a new musical, *Charlotte*, which premiered in Philly on February 24th. *Charlotte* is the tale of a young Jewish woman in hiding during World War II and the 800 paintings she created during that period to chronicle the experience. Not only does Soprani perform, but he has also been assisting the composer in developing the accordion part to compliment the feeling of the show.

99 Years for Killing An Accordionist

On March 10th, Reuters New service reported a news item about a Texas man who was sentenced to 99 years in prison for killing a musician who did not know the song he requested! The man became angry with accordionist David Saenz because he could not play *El Guajolote*, or *The Turkey*, so he shot him in the head with a .38 caliber pistol. Saenz was a local character who often played the guitar and

accordion and sang for his neighbors. Saenz died at the scene with the guitar and accordion at his feet. The killer testified he was not drunk when he shot Saenz, but also claimed he had no memory of the murder. He was sentenced by a jury on Thursday and under Texas law will be eligible for parole in 30 years.

Berkeley Shop Notes Accordion Revival

Instrument Losing Corny Associations

By Angela Hill

(Staff Writer for the Oakland Tribune)

BERKELEY—Somehow, you'd think a roomful of beginning accordionists would just be the funniest thing. But the funniest thing was, none of these people thought it was funny. They were having a great time, to be sure, but it never occurred to them to make even a one-a-two-a Lawrence Welk jokes and mere blank stares appeared when the words "roll out the barrel" were uttered in jest. (One woman did say her mother used to play the accordion, and perhaps that explained why she was so flat-chested.)

Other than that, the seven people seated on folding chairs at the small Boaz Accordions shop in Berkeley last week took it all very seriously, their attention focused on their own chests, squeezing, feeling and fingering—the accordion, that is.

"Your body has to get the feel of it," said instructor Rick Corrigan.

"The accordion is this incredible natural bio-feedback machine. You hit the C and then the chord, and it responds right away, and you say, 'Yeah, that feels good. Give me a piece of cheese and let me do it again.'"

Behold the accordion.

Of maligned in America, yet possibly the most popular musical machine in much of the world, certainly the center of every barn dance from South America to Ireland, Italy to Brazil. And arguably the perfect instrument during the energy crisis—no electricity required. Sure, there are numerous electricity-free instruments. But how many can generate such volume as can be heard by someone in a closet clear across town with earmuffs on? Try that with a kazoo.

Boaz's owner, Boaz Rubin (who, for some reason, was wearing a smock that said "Gordon") just recently started these beginner lessons every other Wednesday night at his shop on Sacramento Street, where there's a giant poster on the wall of the Mona Lisa with an accordion on her lap. Ah, the smile finally explained. Accordion music makes a lot of people smile and has actually swelled in popularity in hip-and-cool circles the past few years. Boaz has a theory.

Theory for revival

"I have an indisputable crackpot theory," he said. "I may be wrong, but I think mainstream America rejected its European roots after World War II. Second languages dropped off. Assimilation was in. And Lawrence Welk was the generation people were rebelling against. And he played the accordion. Not well, but he played it. Young people today see the accordion as new territory," he said. "And older people who grew up learning the instrument in the '50s and '60s are going back to the hobbies of their youth."

Evidence of both filled last week's class.

There was Giano—just Giano—a 23-year-old man who loves the sound of accordion-flavored South American spiritual music. And there was Carol Habercross, 44, of Berkeley, a software engineer whose father played the accordion in World War II. "He had his own polka band in Germany and everything," she said.

Instrument's portability

Carol Ann Co, 46, of San Ramon says she plays the piano, but it's not exactly portable.

"This is an instrument you can carry with you," she said. Co is a schoolteacher, but also works part time at a retirement community.

"They have a lot of different entertainers who come in, and with

the accordion, I can contribute."

"I just think it sounds cool," said Audrey Easterwood, 15, who came all the way from Martinez with her dad for the class. "I want to play the bagpipes too, but my dad says they're even louder."

So far, Boaz's beginner classes have been extremely popular. From six to a dozen people each time. It's a drop-in class—no reservations required—and the hour session costs \$15. And you don't even have to have your own accordion.

"Let's fit you up with one," he said, grabbing a used \$395 accordion off a shelf, shortening the straps and attaching it reverse-backpack style.

This was a relatively small one at only 17 pounds—they can be up to 30—but it still felt like having an old and very huge electric typewriter strapped sideways to your chest. Not that it seemed so heavy, really. Just awkward at first. Especially when standing, the frontal weight forcing you to lean back like a pregnant woman ready to give birth to fully-grown triplets.

As Corrigan said, your body has to get the feel of it—that's because you damn sure can't see what you're doing. If it's like a typewriter on your chest, you have to learn to be a touch typist. There are all these buttons—120 of them just a hair's breadth apart—under your left hand. These are your bass notes and chords. Hit a bass note button for the "oom." Then punch twice on the chord button. Hence the "pah-pah."

Corrigan handed out a map to these buttons, called the "Stradella Bass Diagram," with dozens of little circles in rows with letters on them, which looked more like the periodic table of the elements.

Corrigan, who plays the accordion in real life in his band called the pickPocket Ensemble, says he can teach you to play by ear—even if you've never touched a keyboard in your life.'

A coordination thing

That's because the accordion is a coordination thing. There's the squeezing of the bellows. The rhythmic punching of the buttons. Then, the melody on the keys. Now if you just had some gum to chew—

"It's not a difficult instrument, but you do need some guidance," he said. "The accordion is the most proprioceptive instrument there is," Corrigan said to a collective "Huh?"

"You know, like when your back itches and you reach right to the place and scratch it without having to look," he explained to a collective "Ahh."

The class practiced chord buttons and scales on the keyboard.

To say the students were "playing" the accordions might be a tad euphemistic. Perhaps wrangling is a better word. They jabbed away at various buttons, causing the poor instruments to holler in obvious agony at the hands and fingers of such neophytes.

But slowly, very gradually, the would-be accordionists and their instruments began to make peace. Still not playing, exactly, but at least toying with the idea. The sounds came easier, forming into a crescendo of "oom-pah-pahs" — or at least an "oom" here and a "pah" over there—but there was the occasional attempt at a melody, and it all came together in a joyous—if cacophonous—crescendo, warming hearts and seemingly even the temperature in the little shop.

They all rejoiced. And no one rolled out the barrel.

Accordions al Dente

By Tom Torriglia

Mark it down! *Day of the Accordion—San Francisco* is scheduled for Sunday, June 17 (Father's Day) at the historic Cannery, located at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. The time of the event is from Noon–6:00 PM. If you are interested in performing at the festival or doing any volunteer work, please contact me at: tom@ladyofspain.com. It's going to be bigger and better this year. The Cannery's new marketing director, Kris, plays the accordion and used to be a student of mine. Wow! More later.

Regarding attendance at the meetings—let's put this issue to rest. Someone must keep track of how many people attend each meeting (by how much money is collected). So, how many people attended last month? How many attended in March of 2000 and how many attended in March of 1999? Graphs don't lie. Maybe we can track it for a few months in the newsletter. Speaking of the hall, why did the club move from Donworth? I liked that place. It seems that some other people did too.

Musical chairs. Based on the last few meetings, I would like to suggest to the Board that they appoint someone to *really* be in charge of the musical entertainment at the meetings. I seem to recall that at one point in the club's history there was a three-song limit for each performer. Last month, the first performer played at least seven or eight songs. The next person played about seven or eight songs as well. Keep it fresh. Keep it short. Keep it diverse. Someone mentioned that these players played more than three songs due to the lack of other performers being available and if no one volunteers to play, well... Well, instead of asking people to volunteer, why doesn't someone get on the phone and call up some people and ask them to perform. How hard is that? Also, I was at the meeting. If they were short of performers someone could have walked over to my table and asked me if I would like to play. And shouldn't there be a rule that no more than one act gets to play *Anima Cuore* at any given meeting. OK? AHHHH!

Why don't we ever get any Conjunto players. In recent memory I haven't seen any bayan or bandoneon performers. No Balkan or Russian folks. Not even gypsy music. What about genre or ethnic-specific nights? How about a night of Broadway show tunes or a Gershwin night or a Sondheim night or Swing night or Polka night. Up at the Accordion Club of the Redwoods (ACR) they keep it moving. They keep it interesting. Not every accordionist appeals to each attendee

that's why having someone do only three songs is great. If the person is a huge success and everyone is throwing roses at his or her feet, invite the person back. With word of mouth, attendance would certainly increase the next time the person was scheduled to play. I'll be performing at the ACR meeting on April 16. Hope to see you there.

It would be great to see the line up of performers for up-coming meetings in the newsletter. If it is there, sorry; but it's obviously not prominent enough for me to see. Maybe if we all knew who was performing, more people would show up. With so many members having access to e-mail, someone should send out a blanket e-mail three or four days before each meeting reminding the members of the meeting and also listing who's going to be performing. I could sure use a reminder.

Accordionist and comedian Judy Tenuta was in town recently. She was at the Punch Line. I was disappointed that BAAC didn't try to do anything with her shows (at least as far as I know they didn't). BAAC may have been able to co-sponsor her shows and in return, get some signage and maybe a table outside the club where someone could pass out literature about the club. I feel these are the types of opportunities where BAAC can get itself into the public eye in the hopes of getting some attention and possibly new members. But, maybe trying to get exposure for the club (an in return, new members) is not an agenda item. Should it be?

I volunteer for an organization called Music in Schools Today (MUST). They get instruments out to high schools and do fund raising for music programs, etc. A couple of weeks ago, they hosted an event called The Big Music Lesson down at Davies' Hall. There were about 500 middle-school kids in attendance. It was a one-hour program where the kids learned a lot about music theory from performers including Bob Weir from the Grateful Dead and violinist Regina Carter. Anyway, at the beginning of the program, the MC thanked Bill Graham Presents, and yada, yada for their support of music in schools and how important it is to have music available to kids, etc. Why doesn't BAAC get involved in things like that? *Patio Espanol* probably holds about 500 people. Maybe BAAC can partner with the school district and get a bunch schools out for a field trip and let the kids hear some accordion music. But, maybe trying to get exposure for the club (an in return, new members) is not an agenda item. Should it be?

Kristofer Nelson President of ACR Writes

I sent my SF Bay Area Accordion clubs calendar to the folks at www.accordionsusa.com and they took to it like a fish to water. The fellow I contacted is Kevin L. Friedrich and he can be reached at (accordion@compuserve.com). He is constantly looking for events, meetings, concerts and the like. Kevin says if we're having a special event type up a little description and he will be glad to post it on the site's Weekly Highlights section. I encourage you to take advantage of this site. Let's show 'em who we are!

Josephine Hornbrook Says

Dear Editor: I have just finished reading my BAAC newsletter—especially Tom Torriglia's article. He had a lot to say, but when I was on the board for 8 years, I never saw him attend a meeting and put any input as to how we, the Board, were doing. For him to criticize the present and previous Boards without knowing any of the facts is ludicrous.

An Interview With Zhang Guoping

(From The Classical Free Reed Website, July 20, 2000)

By Thomas Fabinski

Interviewer: Thomas Fabinski

Translator: Dr. Joseph Lin

Please tell us something about your family and your early music education.

Zhang: I was born in 1960. My parents are both professional accordionists. They served in the Chinese Army. From 1950 to 1966 they often performed not only in China but also in many foreign nations, including Russia, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. My father, Zhang Ziqiang, was the president of the Chinese Association of Accordionists in the 1980s. I learned to play accordion from my parents until I was 18 years old.

When was your first recital in China?

Zhang: November 26, 1983. It was the most unforgettable day in my life. It took place at Beijing Central Music Conservatory and my debut was a success. I played the Sonata in B minor by N. Tschkin, Hungarian Rhapsody No. 6 by Liszt, Rondo Capriccioso by Mendelssohn, Olive Blossom by P. Frosini, Dark Eyes and Torna a Surriento arranged by C. Magnante, and a few pieces of Chinese music. This was a turning point in my career and established my position among the Chinese professionals. Historically, this was also an important event because this was the first time a public recital was given by any accordionist in China. It meant that for the first time, the accordion was accepted as a serious instrument in China.

What happened to your career after that?

Zhang: In 1984 I started to learn the use of the free bass accordion. I performed the works of Bach, Scarlatti, Jacobi, Schmidt, Krzanowski, and Bentzon. In May of 1987, I was the first accordionist to represent China in an international competition at Klingenthal, Germany. Later I also visited the United States, Canada, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, France and England. In 1994 the Chinese government awarded me a "Certificate of Special Government Award." It is one of the highest honors given to a musician in China.

What instrument are you using now?

Zhang: I had used a Parrot Free Bass Accordion, which was made in Tienjin until 1996. Later I started using a Giulietti Free Bass Accordion made in Italy. This instrument was probably made in the 70's and produces a beautiful sound. Earlier this year, I ordered from Petosa Accordions a Cathedral Bajan II Piano Accordion (Converter Free-bass System). I believe this is one of the best piano accordions in the world.

I understand that you published many CDs and tapes in China. Please tell us about this.

Zhang: Since 1983 when China's largest recording company, China Record Corporation, published my first album in LP mono record, I have published quite a few recordings including LPs, cassettes, videos, CDs and VCDs. They are available at many cities in China.

Where can we buy your CD today?

Zhang: You can buy them from *The Classical Free-Reed, Inc.* There are now 4 CDs including *Peking Operas*, *Goddess Scattering Flowers*, *Blue Danube Waltz*, and *Scarlatti's Keyboard Sonatas*.

I understand that you have quite a collection of important

recordings by world famous accordionists. Please tell us about it.

Zhang: I am happy to tell you about this. It has been my hobby to collect the recordings of famous accordionists from different parts of the world. I listened to many recordings when I was very young. My parents brought back from Russia some recordings of Russian Folk Music on Bajan. In 1976 one of my father's friends brought back from the U.S. an LP record by Christian Di Maccio which was recorded live in Copenhagen in 1975. We had little contact with the outside world at that time and I remember I was very impressed listening to this great performance using a free bass accordion. Later, I was able to acquire other LP records including the 1972 Klingenthal International Accordion Competition, 1978 Coupe Mondiale in Poland, Warsaw Accordion Quintet, 1977 and 1979 Hugo Herrmann Competition and other recordings of Joseph Macerollo, Ivan Koval, Oleg Sharov. In 1989 I bought in Moscow some LP records published by Melodiya Company including old Russian Bajanists' recordings dating back to the 30's and 50's: Ivan Punitski, Boris Tihonov, Quartet of Kiev Philharmony Bajanists. These are very rare recordings and I am hoping that one day someone will reissue these recordings into CDs. We shouldn't forget the contribution of these great masters. I also have a fairly complete collection of CDs by contemporary classical accordionists.

Please tell us something about original Chinese accordion music.

Zhang: I regret to tell you that at this moment most of the important composers in China do not write music for free bass accordion. There are many reasons but the most important reason is "money." The only well-known composer interested in writing accordion music is Li Yuqiu. He wrote for me the music *Goddess Scattering Flowers* which I performed in Beijing for the first time in 1984 and later at many other nations. This piece became well-known accordion music in China.

Who is your favorite classical accordionist?

Zhang: In my opinion, there are three great musicians who have had the most influence on classical accordion music. They are: Mogens Ellegaard, Hugh Noth and Friedrich Lips. They are not only great performers but also educators and musicians. They created a new accordion culture. Their great performances attracted top composers of the world to write new music for accordion. They collaborated with composers to create great music.

Mogens Ellegaard is a pioneer of classical accordion music. He understood the essence of music. He recognized the importance of incorporating art and philosophy and let the music represent the composer's thought and emotion. Ellegaard passed away a long time ago and we lost a great leader. But he left many recordings which are our treasures. I think his recordings of the 70's, *Made in Denmark* and *Accordion da Camera* represent his best work. Without Ellegaard, we might not have classical accordion music today.

From Noth's latest recordings of Bach and Couperin, we can appreciate his deep musical sensitivity, delicate expression and richness in variation. He touches deeply the composer's spirit. His performance is in true Baroque tradition: elegant, simple and natural. The depth of his work is not easily copied by young performers. The performances of Lips are pure and truthful without exaggeration. They have a lot of depth and passion and

(Next page)

(Zhang cont'd)

the music is expressed entirely from within. He has elevated the Russian Classical Bajan to another level. Among the young classical accordionists, the one whom I admire the most is Stefan Hussong. He is an intelligent performer with a unique style. His technique is superb, representing one of the best in the world. Another one I should mention is Mie Miki, an Oriental lady who is becoming an important leader of the classical accordionists. Her performance of Baroque music is elegant and extraordinary.

Others who have made great contributions to the classical accordion are: A. Abbott, F. Lacroix, L. Puchnowski, J. Macerollo, M. Rantanen, V. Semyonov, J. Vestrellov, A. Skliarov, W. Besfamilnov, O. Sharov, E. Moser, J. Petric, and J. Sommers.

Who are your favorite composers and classical accordion compositions?

Zhang: There are many. Some of my favorites are: S. Gubaidulina: *Et exspecto* (1987); S. Pade: *Excursion with Detours* (1984); A. Abbott: *Toccata* (1974); W. Jacobi: *Divertissement pour Accordeon* (1969); T. Lundquist: *Metamorphoses* (1965); E. Denissow: *From the Darkness to the Light* (1996); S. Berinski: *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1990); A. Nordheim: *Flashing* (1985); L. Klein: *Essercizi* (1980); V. Holmbor: *Sonata op.143* (1979); G. Katzer: *En Avant*; and F. Dobler: *Introduktion und Toccata* (1980).

Tell us your view regarding the piano accordion and the Bajan.

Zhang: First I would like to emphasize that no matter whether you play a piano accordion or a Bajan, the most important thing is to achieve a high artistic level. This is most important. However, in recent international accordion competitions, the two instruments are being put together in the same group. I think this is a mistake and will affect the development of the piano accordion. It may also encourage many young students to stay with the Bajan. My opinion is that both should be developed together.

Tell us about your view on the classical accordion world.

Zhang: With regard to classical accordion, whether you are referring to the making of the instrument, the creation of music or the standard of performance, we have made great progress during the past 40 years. These achievements are no less than the achievements in other musical instruments. However, we know that our market is small and many talented young people who after having participated in international competitions often abandon their goal to become classical accordionists. This is, indeed, regrettable. When I was in Poland in 1989, Ellegaard told me that "the situation with classical accordion is terrible!" In China, there are many classical music lovers. However, a large number of composers, pianists or violinists never heard of free-bass accordion. I am sure the situation is probably similar in the U.S. So, the question is what can we do?

The appearance of record players changed the lives of the musicians. With the growing importance of the recording industry, a musician does not need to travel all over the world to play at concerts to become famous. For example, the famous Russian musician and conductor, M. Pietnev has never been to China. But he is well-known to music lovers in China because of the large number of his CDs from Deutsche Grammophon.

So far, including DG, Decca, Philips, BMG, none of the large recording companies pay much attention to classical accordion music. This is also regrettable. Most of the CDs on classical accordion are published by small companies or individuals and they are not distributed widely and their influence is quite limited. Only large recording companies are capable of promoting and marketing recordings. Therefore, the classical accordionists

need to work hard to gain acceptance by these big companies or we will never gain the status enjoyed by the performers of other musical instruments.

We have heard that one of Chairman Mao's policies was to remove bourgeois instruments from school curricula such as piano and violin. By default the accordion became the most popular keyboard instrument. Is this true?

Zhang: Instruments such as the piano or violin were not banned as such, but during the Great Cultural Revolution the playing of western music, including most classical compositions was banned. Chinese music and military/revolutionary types of music were encouraged. Partly because of the ban, musicians stopped playing piano and violin and many started to take up accordion. Accordion is portable and can be carried anywhere to play allowed music. Another factor is economy. An accordion is cheaper than a piano or organ and thus became the most popular keyboard instrument in China. I think that the trend was similar to what happened in Russia.

Lastly, please tell us about the accordionists in China today.

Zhang: My father published a book called *Method for the Accordion* in 1972 which has sold over one million copies. So, you can see that the accordion is a very popular instrument in China. Email: gpzhang@public3.bta.net.cn

[In light of Zhang's recent performance at BAAC we thought it would be interesting for our readers to learn more about this fine young musician. As you'll note & as Arnold says, "He'll be back."]

Video! Would the person who videoed Zhang's concert for BAAC contact Bob Berta at (510) 450-5766???

Donald Lee Haas

2/2/36—2/12/01

Don Haas, a gifted artist and inspired jazz pianist/accordionist died at his home. He performed and recorded with such artists such as Benny Goodman, Judy Garland, Willie Nelson, Sammy Davis Jr., The Hi-Lo's and many Bay Area professionals. He was a devoted husband for 44 years to Delores "Dee" Haas and father of Karen, Vanessa, Clifford, Denise and Tiffany. He also leaves a sister, Sandra Haas. He has grandchildren: Kate, Anthony, Maxene, Ariane and Theodore. Friends were invited to services at Sneider & Sullivan, 977 S. El Camino Real. San Mateo, on Fri. Feb. 16 at 10:30 AM. A tribute and celebration of Don's life was held at Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society, 311 Mirada Rd., Miramar on Sat. Feb. 17 at Noon. The family thanks Don's innumerable friends for their kind words, donations and support. BAAC members will remember when Don played accordion for us for us approximately six years ago. He was a wonderful and talented man.

The Accordion and Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue

By Henry Doktorsky

George Gershwin (1898-1937), the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, was born in Brooklyn, New York. He grew up with a keen sense of the street. According to the rules of the street, music was for "sissies," and it wasn't until he was ten years old that George heard the strains of a violin emanating from an apartment window in his neighborhood. "It was, to me, a flashing revelation of beauty," Gershwin said years later, and the revelation indeed changed his life.

He began playing the piano, which led to piano lessons, which led to his parents' buying a piano for their apartment, which led, in 1914, to George's decision to quit high school, over his mother's furious objections, and work full time for Tin Pan Alley writing popular songs.

His particular genius lay in his ability to break the conventional rules of both concert music and popular music, and he quickly became known for his rapid chord changes and unorthodox rhythmic patterns.

One night, while improvising on a piano at a party—something he did at almost every party he ever gave or attended—he began formulating the sinuous, intoxicating melody that would become the inspired core of *Rhapsody in Blue*. "There had been so much chatter about the limitations of jazz," Gershwin wrote about *Rhapsody in Blue*, "not to speak of the manifest misunderstandings of its function. Jazz, they said, had to be in strict time. It had to cling to dance rhythms. I resolved, if possible, to kill that misconception with one sturdy blow."

Rhapsody in Blue had its debut in New York on February 12, 1924 (featuring the Paul Whiteman Orchestra with Gershwin himself at the piano), in an event that was later dubbed "the emancipation proclamation of jazz." When it was over, the auditorium erupted in applause. *Rhapsody in Blue* came to represent the unmistakably optimistic, impulsive, and brazen sounds of America in the 1920's. Gershwin recorded the *Rhapsody* with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra for RCA Victor in 1924, and listeners across North America and beyond embraced it as the quintessential sound of an era.

Not only was the music of George Gershwin popular among pianists, it was also popular among other instrumentalists; his music was transcribed for organ, woodwind, brass and string instruments, as well as accordion.

And why not the accordion? During the first half of the twentieth-century, the instrument experienced a "golden age," a boom time of amazing popularity, as scholars of American music can attest. Between 1900 and 1950: accordion studios mushroomed across the country; radio stations regularly scheduled shows featuring prominent accordion performers; two major record labels released recordings featuring orchestras such as Paul Whiteman (who employed staff accordionists and featured them in solos); accordion recitals were heard in Carnegie Hall and Chicago's Civic Opera House, as well as Los Angeles' Philharmonic Auditorium.

One of the accordion's greatest exponents during the mid-twentieth century was Dick Contino (b. 1930 in Fresno, California), who literally catapulted the instrument into the public eye. His sudden rise to fame as a teenage accordion idol from 1948 to 1951 was nothing less than phenomenal. He performed concerts with the Horace Heidt Orchestra from New York to Hollywood and appeared 48 times on the Ed Sullivan television

show. Wherever he played, lines formed at the box office, lines filled with teenage bobbysoxer girls who turned out in numbers that hadn't been seen since the heyday of a skinny young crooner named Frank Sinatra. When he performed at the Hollywood Bowl, twenty thousand fans packed the stadium. Five hundred Dick Contino fan clubs were formed throughout the United States.

Mario Perry was one of the violinists in the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, but he frequently also doubled on accordion. He was born of Italian parents on June 19, 1900. He also played in "Palace Trio". He made several records for various companies such as Victor, Brunswick, Pathé and other companies. Unfortunately he died in a car accident in 1929.

In much of the above-mentioned accordion-related activities, the music of George Gershwin—especially *Rhapsody in Blue*—was featured. The editor of *Accordion World* magazine expressed his admiration of Gershwin's music in the following obituary from the August 1937 issue, "All accordionists mourn Gershwin's death. His *Rhapsody in Blue* is the American accordion classic. This lofty gem, not yet released by any music publisher for the accordion, nevertheless, is played self-arranged by our name accordionists."

The legendary American concert accordionist, Anthony Galla-Rini (b. 1904) confirmed this, "The *Rhapsody* was (and still is) extremely popular among accordionists; I began playing it myself soon after the first piano and orchestral reduction score was published."

The *Rhapsody* was performed in dozens of recitals by other virtuoso accordionists. *Accordion World* magazine listed performances by artists such as Anthony Galla-Rini (October 1936), Frank Gaviani (Zordon Hall in Boston, October 1936), Andy Arcari (Musician's Hall in Philadelphia, April 1937 and Rivoli Theater in Toledo, OH, April 1938) and Rosamund (Carpathia Park in Detroit, June 1938). Domenic and Anthony Mecca played their own duet version of the *Rhapsody* at the historic *Charles Magnante Accordion Recital* held at New York City's Carnegie Hall on April 18th, 1939.

Mort Herold (b. 1925) played the entire *Rhapsody* in recital at the Chicago Civic Opera House on November 15, 1947 to an audience of 3,500. *Accordion World Magazine* called the concert, "one of the year's outstanding accordion events"

The music of Gershwin has not lost its popularity with accordionists with the passage of time. Although today the instrument is not heard in recital as frequently as it was in the past, the author recently had the pleasure of attending a young people's concert in 1996 at the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater—featuring accordionist Carmelo Pino with the Washington Chamber Symphony (conducted by music director Stephen Simon)—which included a medley of Gershwin tunes (including portions of the *Rhapsody*) arranged by Pino.

Accordionists also recorded the *Rhapsody*, beginning with the duo of Basil Fomeen and Nick Hope on the Victor Record Company label in 1928. (The only other recording of the *Rhapsody* available at this time was the Victor two-record set of George Gershwin with the Paul Whiteman Concert Orchestra).

Basil Fomeen was a Russian-born American orchestra leader, accordionist, composer, and director of the Basil Fomeen

(Next page)

(Rhapsody cont'd)

Orchestra. Elena Bradunas wrote about Fomeen in *Folklife Center News*, a publication of the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress at Washington D.C.

"Basil Fomeen (1902-1983) . . . played hotels and clubs in New York City and on the eastern seaboard. Born in 1902 in Kharkoff, Russia, he trained in the country's cadet corps and studied music. He came to America in 1922, settling in New York City. In 1924 Fomeen organized his International Orchestra, which presented a wide repertoire of American dance music, Viennese waltzes, boleros, guarachas, rumbas, sambas, choros, paso-dobles, tangos, and songs of different nationalities put into dance tempo.

"From 1943 to 1944 Fomeen went overseas with U.S.O. unit 99 and performed in Africa, Europe, and the Far East. He recorded six discs for RCA Victor as an accordion soloist, including excerpts from 'Rhapsody in Blue', which he arranged for the accordion. His orchestra recorded on the Standard, Seva, National, and Decca labels. Fomeen's original compositions include his theme song 'Manhattan Gypsy' published in 1940, thirty-six songs called Russian-Gypsy love ballads included on his five recorded albums 'Songs of Inspiration,' made in 1939, and a few sambas-choros published in Rio de Janeiro in 1941.



"He was also the designer and builder of a unique keyboard instrument called the 'basiphon,' which consisted of a piano, harmonium, vibraphone, chimes, and cimbalom rolled into one."

Fomeen's duet partner on the *Rhapsody* recording was Nick Hope, a popular accordionist who wrote a regular column in the short-lived *Accordion News* magazine, published from 1935 to

1936.

Most accordion performances of the *Rhapsody* (including the recording by Fomeen and Hope) were abridged solo arrangements—only the most popular sections were included—but a few accordionists actually played the complete work with orchestra. Edwin Davison wrote in *The Golden Age of the Accordion*, "In 1939 Arthur Metzler [b. 1915] appeared in concert at Kimball Hall [in Chicago] where he played the complete 31 pages of George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with a symphony orchestra under the direction of his teacher Andy Rizzo. The performance was a tremendous success."

Perhaps one of the greatest accordionist to perform the complete *Rhapsody* with orchestra was Cornell Smelser. Lester Sims wrote in the February 1938 issue of *Accordion World*, "I met Cornell Smelser (a truly great genius) many times, and heard him play. He once played Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in its entirety [italics by Sims] on the accordion; something I doubt any living accordionist has ever attempted." C. Hilding Berquist expressed his appreciation of Smelser in the July 1947 issue of *Accordion World*, "Probably the first time in radio history of an accordionist's appearance with an outstanding orchestra occurred on the evening of April 20, 1931 (16 years ago) when Cornell Smelser played the *Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin in its entirety on the Gold Medal Fast Freight Program over WJZ and the NBC national network, accompanied by the Ohman-Arden Orchestra of some 40 musicians.

"Of special note was the fact that Cornell was the only accordionist given permission by Gershwin himself to play it over the ether. Also, the only other musicians permitted to broadcast it at that time was Paul Whiteman's Orchestra and the organist Jesse

Crawford with Gershwin himself at the piano."

Berquist wrote later in the July 1950 issue of *Accordion World*, "Cornell Smelser was born on August 7th, 1902, in Budapest, Hungary. Piano was his original instrument and he received his musical education at the Conservatory of Music in Budapest. . . He came to New York in 1920. "First appearing as an accordionist on the jazz scene somewhere in the late 1920's, he blazed across the jazz firmament like a meteor, only to vanish—in mid-1931—as quickly as he had first appeared. . . This is because . . . illness, tuberculosis, . . . prevented continuance of his career."

Today, a century after the birth of George Gershwin, a small but dedicated contingency of accordionists still carry on the tradition of Cornell Smelser and his colleagues. During the last decade, no less than three accordionists (and one accordion orchestra—the UMKC Accordion Orchestra) have made recordings of Gershwin's *Rhapsody*.

Of special note are two exceptional recordings: a 1992 release featuring Anthony Galla-Rini—who began his musical career in 1911 and is still performing and teaching today (2001) at the age of 97—and a 1998 release featuring the author with *The Duquesne Chamber Players*: the first recording ever made of the unabridged *Rhapsody* with accordion and orchestra.



Jennifer A. Cutting, folk life specialist at the Library of Congress and the author playing Fomeen's double-keyboard accordion.

Ernie Felice

Dave Martinsek of the Milwaukee Accordion Club is looking for any information on Ernie Felice—evidently no one knows if he is still alive or not. If he is, where is he? If you know something about his life and work contact Dave at MAC, or call Bob Berta and he'll pass it on: (510)450-5766.

BAAC's Scholarships

In our effort to spread the joy of accordion playing to young people, the Scholarship Committee would like to offer more scholarships. We encourage and welcome donations to the Scholarship Fund to make this possible and we hope you teachers out there will encourage your young students—those who show real promise and a real need for financial assistance—to apply. For application forms, call Val Kieser at (510) 531-4836.

CALENDAR

Bay Area Accordion Club:

1st. Wed. 7:30 pm. Patio Español,
2850 Alemany
San Francisco. 510.792.8765
<http://www.baaccordionclub.org>

East Bay Accordion Circle:

2nd Thurs. 7:30pm. 1542 Grant St.
Berkeley In the cottage behind the
main house. Bring Your Accordion!
Info: (510) 548-2822

ACR Fun Band Practice:

2nd Mon. 7-9pm. McDowell
Elementary School.
421 South McDowell Blvd.
Petaluma. Info: Gwyn Lister
(415) 924-3202

Golden St. Accordion Club:

2nd Tues. Pietro's #2. 679 Merchant.
Vacaville. Info: (707) 864-2359

Good Time Accordion Club:

2nd Weds. Community Center. 7:00pm.
1055 Escalon Ave.
Escalon, CA. Info: (209) 545-3603

ACR General Meeting:

3RD Mon. 7:30pm
Herman Sons Hall. 860 Western. Petaluma.
Info. contact Harry Cannata (707) 838-2859

South Bay Jam

1st Sunday 2PM.
7th Day Adventist Church
off Camden and Kooser.

BAAC Ensemble

2nd & 4th Weds 7pm.
Moose Lodge, Daly City.
Call Frank Montoro (650) 574-4757 to confirm.

BAAC "Fun Band"

3rd Weds 7pm.
Moose Lodge Daly City.
Call Val Kieser (510) 531-4836 to confirm.

Sagebrush Swing

April 19th 7:30 PM
Barbara Ann Barnett & Audrey McLaughlin
perform western classics from the 30s-50s. \$4.00.
Refreshments. Boaz Accordions

Day of the Accordion

—San Francisco—

Sunday, June 17, 2001

The Cannery @ Fisherman's Wharf
2801 Leavenworth

Corner of Beach & Columbus

12-6PM Admission Free

Info: @ (415) 771 3112

Interested in performing/selling

Contact Tom Torriglia (415) 440 0800.

tom@ladyofspain.com

LIVE ACCORDION & SILENT FILM

MORGANI
ACCOMPANIES

"BERLIN"

Symphony of a Great City

on the **ARMANDO BUGARI** accordion

APRIL 12-14

Thurs.-Sat., 7:30 p.m.

Three Days Only!!

Fine Arts Cinema

2451 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley

Sponsored By:
Boaz Accordions
& Accordion Circle
of the East Bay

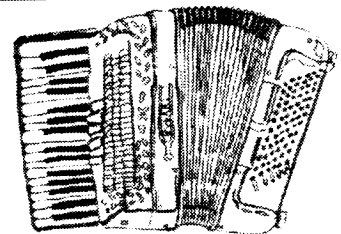
\$8 admission

Fine Arts Cinema, 510/848-1143

www.FineArtsCinema.com

Boaz Accordions, 510/845-1429

www.BoazAccordions.com



TEACH SPEAK

Making Music

(Right Brain/Left Brain)

By Steve Albin

Musicians hear their music in their minds & practice until they can play on their instruments what they hear.

Knowing scales, chords, arpeggios and fingering is fundamental; however, don't make the mistake of spending your life on the fundamentals and never losing yourself in the music. Student musicians sometimes get overwhelmed by details and physical facts and forget there has to be a balance between rational learning and the sheer the joy of making music.

The best musicians are those who can balance left-brain knowledge with right-brain creativity. So sit back and practice hard but sometimes take a deep breath and dive into the music.



Accordions

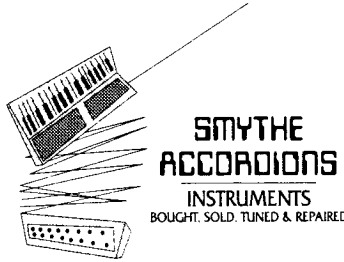
petosa accordions

CUSTOM CRAFTED SINCE 1922

313 NE 45th St.

Seattle, WA 98105
(206) 632-2700

www.petosa.com
petacc@aol.com



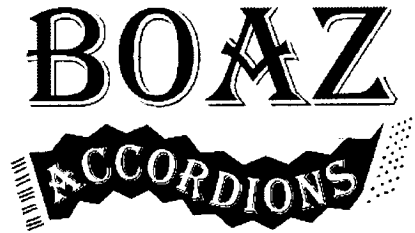
Kimric Smythe

21 Grand Avenue

Oakland, CA 94612

(510) 268-4084

smythek@ix.netcom.com



**Sales • Repairs
Workshops • Accessories**
• Armando Bugari
• Castagnari
• Hohner and more!

Visit our Berkeley loaction
By Appointment
(510) 845-1429

www.BoazAccordions.com

BAAC PAGE would like to hear from our readers and we welcome any submission of material that might be of value to people interested in music and accordions of all persuasions. You may submit your articles to the address below. Or, contact our President Lou Soper by e-mail: <LouHSoper@aol.com>

BAAC PAGE

**San Francisco Bay Area
Accordion Club
PO Box 318175
San Francisco, CA 94131-8175
www.BAACcordionclub.org**



FIRST CLASS POSTAGE

