

Newsletter of the

SAN FRANCISCO



ACCORDION CLUB

MARCH 2004



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's already March, Valentine's Day is over (I hope you remembered that special person) and spring is soon to spring. In case you missed January and February, we've been treated to some great

entertainment this year. In last month's newsletter I talked about a "don't-miss Club night". Well, we really had one in February. **Bruce Metras** started the evening off playing **Frank Marocco** and **Tony Mecca** original and jazz classic arrangements. A perfect musical mood was set, but what followed was very different, and good, from what we expected. **Jim Murdoch**, who came to us by recommendation of **Vince Cirelli**, began his act in the back of the clubhouse, playing a children's round on a 12 bass accordion. Jim is about 6 foot 5 inches, and was dressed like a clown, including a big red nose. Well, he certainly had my curiosity. Jim won the crowd over in nothing flat, everybody was laughing at his cute clowning around, and I hope you remember him when you're planning a

party and want something out of the ordinary.

Frank Lima is "The Great Morgani". His ideas are so clever, and innovative, that I expect to see him on the big stage someday. I can't adequately describe his 15-minute act in the space of this writing, but I will just say it was brilliant. If Frank ever treats us to a return visit in the future, don't miss it.

After the break, **The Mike Marottas** took over, and Mike Jr. paired up with violinist **Dave Dally** first. This remarkable duo played everything from Broadway to Brahms, and their execution of some very difficult music was flawless. Papa Mike then joined junior, and bassist **Mickey McPhillips** in turn joined them. This quartet played some of the swingingest music this side of Frank Sinatra. Mike senior's ideas are right from the heart of the music, and go right to the heart of the lucky listener. Just when it couldn't get any better, **Don Nurisso** joined in, and the quintet ran through a performance of the testy *La Pianola*. Mike junior added thirds to Don's sizzling first part. When they concluded, everyone jumped up with thunderous applause, bringing to an end another great night at The San Francisco Accor-

(Continued on next page)

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY 11 MARCH
7:00 P.M. MOOSE LODGE DALY CITY
Featuring MURL ALLEN SANDERS from Seattle;
the SFAC Ensemble, plus JOE SMIELL'S BAND

dion Club. I hope you didn't miss this one too. ☹

••••

The legendary **Art Van Damme Quintet** is performing at the Bach Dynamite House and Dancing in Moss Beach on Sunday, May 2. Watch for further details to follow.

The annual **Club picnic** is scheduled for Saturday, July 10 at Nature Friends in the Oakland Hills (same place as in recent years). Please mark your calendar now, and plan on being there.

I look forward to seeing you at the Club on March 11. Play your accordion every day, and remember...

REAL MUSIC IS LIVE!!!

Peter Di Bono

MARCH MEETING:

We have some very special treats in store: a first-time (for our club) performance by **Murl Allen Sanders**, a versatile musician whom many of us have met at the Las Vegas convention in previous years. (See publicity in opposite column.)

ALSO: A rare performance by **Joe Smiell's band**, mostly of Polish music. Anyone who knows Joe, knows he is the Master of ethnic music, and this performance will be memorable. At this same meeting, your **SFAC ensemble** will surprise you with how well they can play 3 classical pieces with only a few rehearsals, thanks to Joe Smiell's excellent teaching and directing.

OUR NEXT WORKSHOP . . .

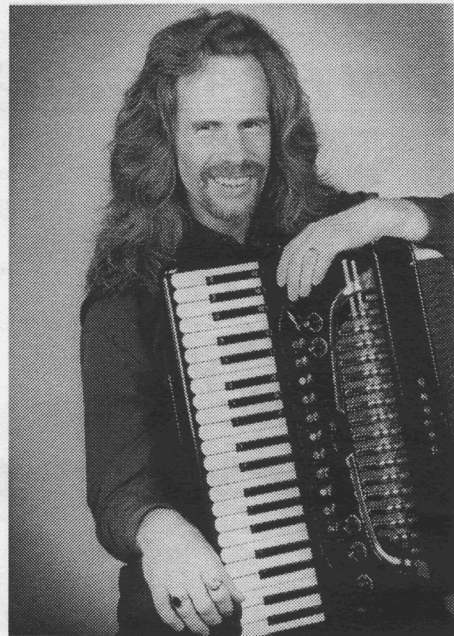
. . . will take place

Saturday, March 20 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Moose Lodge Daly City

With our own JOE SMIELL

Anyone who has worked with Joe in an ensemble group knows his easy, casual but challenging style of teaching. He is a real expert in all facets of music, with emphasis on proper phrasing, articulation and dynamics—and the tendency of all musicians, especially accordion players, to speed up, or “compress” notes whenever eighth or sixteenth notes appear in the music. He'll work with us on how to recognize and overcome this “disease.” You say you don't speed up? Think again! Everyone does it! **Don't miss this workshop!** *There will be a lunch break and sandwich makings available, and drinks may be purchased at the bar.*



A Few Words About Murl Allen Sanders

Murl is a free-lance musician and recording artist who has been active in the Seattle area music scene and across the US for over 25 years. He performs and records regularly with his own bands, as a soloist, and with numerous bands in the Northwest. He plays piano, accordion, electronic keyboards, B-3. He sings teaches and composes. He has worked with Chuck Berry, Etta James, Theodore Bikel, Leslie Gore, Barbara Lamb, Peter Duchin — and with the Von Trapp children (which hits close to home with your Editor!).

Murl's Accordion Concerto #1 had a world premiere June 6, 2003 with Orchestra Seattle, conducted by Maestro George Shangrow on the U. of Washington campus. He has performed and conducted workshops at the Las Vegas Accordion Convention and has been a featured artist at the Cotati Accordion Festival, at the Leavenworth (WA) accordion festival and other festivals and at various accordion clubs across the US.

Murl's latest release is an accordion CD called “Can You Dance To It?” featuring all original tunes and his band. He has recorded other CD's as well, including a solo piano CD. He has been featured on various movie soundtracks and on TV and radio commercials. **Don't miss the opportunity to meet Murl and enjoy his music at the March 11 meeting!**



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WORD HAS IT . . .

. . . that, at the invitation of friends in Watsonville, your Editor and Dick Schiller attended a performance of the Santa Cruz County Symphony held in Watsonville, containing a major accordion solo performed by **Anthony Quartuccio**. Afterward we had a great visit with Anthony, who is a conductor for Opera San Jose, and is gifted in many musical pursuits. He wants to get back to playing more accordion, and we're working on getting him to come and play for our club. (See photo on page 8.

. . . that **Rosemary Armanino** produced some really nifty name tags to use at our meetings.

. . . That SFAC member from Portland, **Father Joe Baccellieri**, not only attended our February SFAC meeting and played during the break, but he also joined a few of us at Val's mother-in-law's retirement home and played for a very grateful crowd there, before he returned to Portland. Our adorable "Mutti" loved every minute of it, and enjoyed meeting Father Joe and also Sister Francis Clare from nearby St. Elizabeth's, where Father Joe stays when he visits the Bay Area.

. . . That **Frank Schlotter** organized a very nice going-away party for **Bob Berta** on February 19 at the Emeryville Public Market. There was plenty to eat and drink and lots of accordion music, played by our members, to the delight of the other patrons of the Market. We shall certainly miss Bob Berta, who has served as President of our club as well as a mainstay for the club itself. He promises to keep in touch and to come and visit whenever possible.

UPCOMING MEETINGS . . .

April 8 TONY LOVELLO RETURNS!! We'll also hear the Schiller family band, and your Editor is honored to be asked to play a part in that group that evening.

May 13 LADIES' NIGHT! Please call

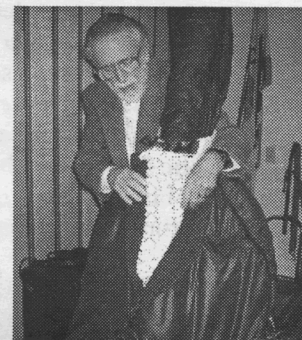
Don Nurisso (650) 359-3549,

*e-mail nurisso@sirius.com, to get yourself a spot on the program. As of this writing, one of our all-time favorites, Norma Zonay-Parsons, will be playing, plus . . . We have a very special treat for the second half of the program: **BONNIE BIRCH** and her combo from Seattle will perform for us! We haven't seen Bonnie at our club for a few years, and we're very fortunate to get her for Ladies' Night 2004!!*

February Meeting a Winner

The first member of the Marotta band that I met on arrival at the February meeting was bassist **Mickey McPhillips**, who had a most unusual case for his string bass: his wife had sewn on all the necessary frills, pockets, bow tie, etc. to dress it up in a tuxedo!

After President Peter DiBono's announcements, our first player was **Bruce Metras**. I personally am blown away by the dramatic improvement Bruce has made over the last couple of years. He plays so smoothly and



*Mickey McPhillips &
"Tuxedo Bass"*

effortlessly now.

Playing his Beltuna double-bassoon accordion, Bruce played in a smooth, jazz style, several numbers, including *Stormy Weather* and *Blue Skies* (Marocco arrangements) and some Anthony Mecca songs.

We didn't know what to expect next. We had heard that there would be a clown act and were a bit skeptical.

Wow, did we have a surprise! A very tall clown in the person of **Jim Murdock** emerged from the back of the room playing a 12-bass Grande Vox (ca. 1950)—and he played it musically and well. He performed several hilarious pantomime skits while playing and dancing pirouettes. There isn't room here to write about all his funny antics, but I can certainly recommend him for anyone giving a party—for kids from 3 to 93!

Then came **The Great Morgani, a.k.a. Frank Lima**. One runs out of superlatives for Morgani. He is a superb player and also makes his own amazing costumes—both for himself and for his accordion.

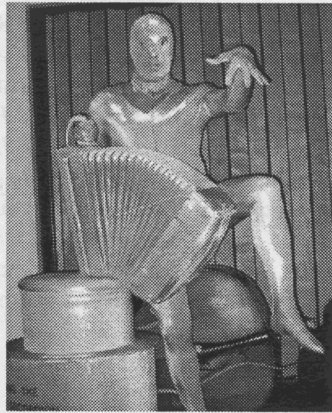


Bruce Metras



Jim Murdock & Peter

He came out wearing pale blue shirt and pants, a bright blue glittery hat, with black over his head and hands. He pulled a gold disc out of a bag, which turned out to be the base of a 2-tiered gold stand for a human-sized Oscar statuette, and the statuette was none other than Morgani himself, after having stripped off everything except his gold body-hugging suit—and, his accordion also wore a gold body-hugging suit! So, dressed as the Oscar statuette that he called "*Oscaccordionist*," (including diamond ring and bracelet commemorating the 75th Oscar academy awards last year) Morgani played *No Business Like Show Business* and several other show tunes. He played *Stairway to Heaven* as a French waltz—and he played everything with ease right through the 3 layers of gold fabric that covered his keyboard! Asked how he prepared for his costumed gigs, he said he must plan ahead: no food or drink for hours before the show! Thank you, Frank!



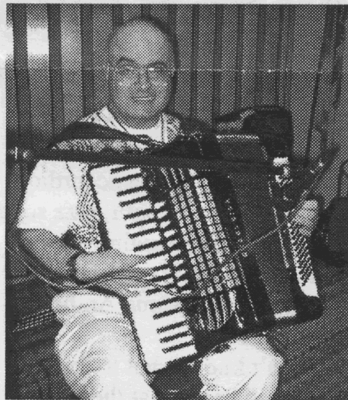
"The Great Morgani"

Mickey on bass joined them and they played Monti's famous *Czardas*. Then "Big Mike" joined the others, with his Petosa accordion, and together they played *Carioca*. Mike Sr. then played *Torno a Sorriento* and *Autumn Leaves*, with some backing on violin and bass. Mike Jr. (playing a beautiful white Bugari from Boaz Accordions) also played some great solo accordion. I was impressed by the judicious (that is, not overdone or too long) bellow shakes by Mike Sr., a truly winsome player with a jazzy style and just the right amount of fills. He ended beautifully with a delicate tremolo. Mike Sr. said, "You have to feel good to play well." Amen! All four of them played the lovely *Tesoro Mio* waltz. There was much more to come—I can't possibly write it all here, but songs included *Twilight Time*, *Indifférence* (perfect for accordion and violin), *Cavaquinho*, and more still, when **Don Nurisso** joined them with his 140-bass extended keyboard Giulietti. WOW! WHAT A PROGRAM! It just doesn't get any better than this entire evening was!



Mika Marotta, Sr.

VTK



Father Joe Baccellieri

During the break we were treated to some great music played on Dick Schiller's Art Van Damme Model Excelsior by visiting artist **Father Joe Baccellieri** from Portland. Thanks Father Joe!

Following intermission, Peter announced that everyone sitting near a valentine heart won a prize. Sorry I didn't get the names of the people who won, but it was a nice Valentine-related diversion

for the season. Then came the cash drawing. The ticket was drawn by **Jim Murdock**, and the winner was — *ta-DA!* — Domenic Benedetto! It couldn't happen to a more deserving person!

How many stars can be highlighted in one show? Wow! For our after-intermission finale we had the **Mike Marottas father and son**, and the younger Mike Marotta's combo of **Mike Marotta, Jr.** on accordion, **Dave Dally** on violin (Dave was Concert Meister for the Monterey Symphony for years and is a superb musician), and **Mickey McPhillips** on bass. All of them are among the nicest guys you could ever hope to meet.

They began with a terrific duo of accordion and violin, playing *Por Una Cabeza* from *Scent of a Woman*. Later,



"Monterey International"
With
Mike Marotta Sr.
And
Don Nurisso



Frank Lime ("Morgani")
And Val



Mike Marotta Jr., Dave Dally,
Peter Di Bono



Chromatic Scale Fingering

By Robert L. Smith

There are a variety of ways that a chromatic scale can be fingered for the piano accordion. The most common way is based on the book *Scale and Arpeggio Fingering* by Walter MacFarren. The accompanying illustration shows the Standard Fingering by MacFarren. The initial finger (on C) is shown as finger 2. That is necessary in the scheme shown for playing multiple octaves. But MacFarren also adds a second method, shown as "Alternate Fingering" in the figure. The alternative fingering leads to a somewhat faster playing speed because there are fewer undercrossings of the thumb. Both the first and second method are somewhat difficult to memorize.

I have two additional alternative fingerings. The Alternative Method #2 has the sequence 1 2, 1 2 3, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3, 1 2, etc. That is fairly easy to memorize.

There is an even easier memorization and playing sequence, but it requires that you give up the requirement that the same fingering be used in the second octave. The new fingering consists of the sequence (1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3) played repeatedly, as shown as Alternative Method #3. The fingering suggested above has one disadvantage; namely, that it cannot be followed indefinitely. If it is continued, an error will occur after the F in the third octave, unless the fingering is changed at that point. The fingering should allow the fastest execution since this uses the fewest thumb undercrossings.

If you are interested in a complete set of standard and alternative fingerings for both treble and bass of the piano accordion, I have written a book entitled *Fingering for the Accordion*. The book has been reviewed and recommended by Maestro Anthony Gallarini. (See card from Gallarini, next page.) RLS

Chromatic Scale Fingering

Standard Fingering (by MacFarren)

3rd Finger on all black keys

Alternate Fingering (by MacFarren)

4th Finger on B \flat

Alternative Fingering #2

4 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 1

Alternative Fingering #3 (Two Octaves)

2 1 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 3

**Note from Anthony Galla-Rini to Bob Smith
Concerning Bob's "Fingering for the Accordion" Book**

Dear Robert:

November 22, 2003

I want to congratulate you on your book "Fingering for the Accordion" which I received a couple of days ago.

I will say that you have covered the subject quite thoroughly. You also allow for an alternate of opinion.

I believe that it would be worthwhile for any serious accordionist to obtain the book and thereby enlarge his or her opinion on their technique for the instrument.

Truly yours,

Anthony Galla-Rini
Anthony Galla-Rini
President-emeritus, A.T.O.

Welcome New Members ...

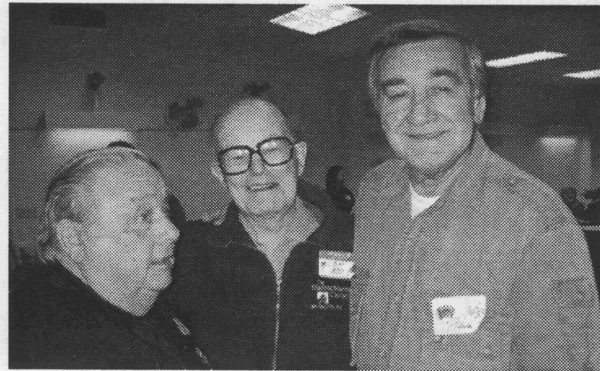
**Ruby Dezman of Daly City
Richard Denier of Carmel**



More Photos from the February meeting ...



Jim Murdock



Mike Marotta Sr., Jim Holliday, Jim Hillman



*Reno Di Bono,
Mike Marotta Sr.,
Mike Marotta Jr.,
Dave Dally,
Mickey McPhilips*

... and from Bob Berta's Goodbye party ...



Bob Smith, Frank Schlotter, Herb Meier



*Bob Berta, Bob Smith, Val Kieser,
Telmo Echeverría*



*Steve Mobia, Kimric Smythe,
Dick Schiller and Bob Berta*