

BAAAC PAGE

Dedicated to the accordion through fun, service & education

May 2001: Ladies Night Flourishes

By Robert K. Berta

Our May meeting provided an opportunity for our ladies to strut their stuff in our annual Ladies Night. Well, there were a few male ringers in there—but they were bewigged—and one wore a grass skirt! Talk about being secure in your manhood—accordion guys are *muy macho*.

We were elated to see that our attendance is going up again as we implemented some changes to make the meetings more “user friendly.” Theme nights and advance advertising of the performers seems to have helped.

The first to perform was our *BAAAC Fun Band*. WOW—have they been working hard! Sharon Walters, the conductor, has converted this assemblage into an excellent performing group (watch out ACE). Many people in the audience commented that this was the best performance they have ever done. I overheard Frank Montoro positively crooning appreciation for the group. They played *Amelia Polka*, a medley of Hank Williams tunes, a medley of “girl” tunes (ladies night remember), a cowboy medley, *Julida Polka* and *Strolling Through the Park One Day*. If you would like to increase your own musical fun, learn how to play with others, or find another musical outlet I can't think of a better group to join (wigs not required).

The next performance was the duet of Jane Tripi and Leslie Bonnett (Jane's daughter). Jane provided accompaniment for Leslie's fine singing. Some of us remembered how much stage fright Jane had the very first time she appeared before us—it looks

like she is getting a lot more comfortable, because she seemed as cool as a cucumber. The twosome maintained a high level of musicianship and their renditions of *Stormy Weather*, *Mood Indigo* and a Cajun waltz were extremely effective and moving, especially the Cajun piece.

Our superb Button Box artist Renate Bixby followed. What wonderful stage presence and style she has even before she plays a note. And when she plays you're transported. She began with a fine performance of Joe Smiell's *Camp Polka* (it seems everyone loves to play this piece and rightfully so—it's simply neat); she followed with a *Polish Waltz Medley*, *Oh Susanna* and *Oh Marie*. Button Boxes have a gorgeous sound with that strong “honking” bass that wafts over us and is unlike any other free reed instrument. And Renate takes her button box into her soul and plays it like few others—close your eyes and you can imagine yourself in a Austrian Ratskeller with a stein of beer surrounded by a glücklich mix of music and song.

After the break we welcomed a new group to the stage.

The *Lemon Lime Lights* is composed of JD (from Kimrick Smyth's accordion shop) on accordion, vocals and animal sounds (that's what he wrote down!), Kate on clarinet, Lisa on cello and vocals, Doc on drums and Anne on bass guitar. The tunes they performed included *Business as Usual*, *Insomnia*, *Only Human* and *Monkey Train Song*. You may not recognize any of these tunes—they were decidedly not what we normally hear at a BAAAC meeting.

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Sharon Walters & BAAAC's Fun Band



Jane Tripi & Leslie Bonnett

Renate Bixby



Lemon Lime Lights

June is National Accordion Awareness Month: Day of the Accordion June 17th. BAAAC'S Accordion Chamber Ensemble plays four concerts. The Fun Band performs @ The Cannery's Festival & we'll have another great meeting June 6th. Who could ask for anything more!

The last performer was **Nora Mazzara**. Nora always has some

with a girl friend from hell, *Cuban Moonlight* and *I Want a Lot of Love*. Nora plays with a lot of love, style and emotion and you can bet you won't hear somebody else playing the same tunes soon!



The June theme is Broadway, Movie and TV themes. Here is a chance to dust off your copy of a tune from *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Student Prince*, *Jurassic Park* or the

neat tunes to treat us with. This time she selected *Dicitencello Vuie* (*Just Tell Her/Him I Love Her/Him*), *Nora's Mazurka* (hmm—wonder why that one got her attention?), a tango that translated into *I Am Afraid*—as she read the lyrics from the tune it became amusingly obvious that the composer had a *real bad* experience

theme from *The Simpsons*. You don't have to include the June theme in all your music, but if you do we promise a fun filled evening as we try to "Stump the Audience." They get to guess what show the tune is from—no wagering, please. To perform contact Bob Berta at 510-450-5766 or Val Kieser at 510-531-4836.

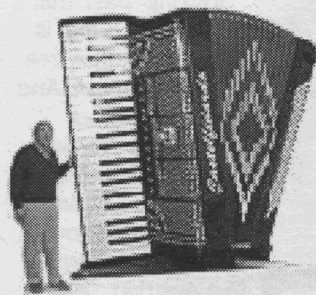
A Postscript

We can't say enough about the tables of food set before us by **Domenic & Frances Benedetto** at each meeting's end. How can we thank them for their wholehearted effort on the club's behalf—precurring the food, preparing it, bringing it to us, setting the table, all the while having to depart early from Redwood City to get here on time. We are very fortunate to have them as members & friends.



The World's Biggest Accordion By Beniamino Bugiolacchi

Giancarlo Francenella has made his dream come true by building the largest accordion in the world, a feat which required over one thousand hours of work! The instrument weighs around 200 kg (440 lbs.) and features 45 treble piano keys, 120 bass buttons, its keyboard is 253 cm high (almost 9 ft.), each key measures 70 cm and the reeds are 10 cm high. The materials used include wood (fir, cedar, mahogany, walnut), metals (aluminium & steel), cardboard, cloth for the bellows and special varnish, etc. This instrument (in perfect working order) should deserve a place in Hollywood's Guinness World of Records.



Giancarlo Francenella with his creation

Giancarlo Francenella, an accomplished craftsman from Castelfidardo, is the owner of Sonerfisa, a workshop, which produces reed blocks for most accordion firms in the area, and has a deep passion for the accordion. Always eager to contribute to

the initiatives of the Tourism Board and City Council when it comes to promoting the fascinating and rewarding world of accordion craftsmanship at fairs and events (last year in Perugia his work caught the attention of EEC President Romano Prodi), Francenella is well-known for his modesty.

The instrument bears the name *Castelfidardo* and its maker wishes to make it available to all organizations which aim to promote the accordion as a musical instrument and the inventiveness and skill of the craftsmen of the Marche region. This technical masterpiece will be presented at the Disma Music Show in Rimini (April 28th) and will be featured during a musical evening at the Astra theatre in Castelfidardo (May 9th) at the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the International Accordion Museum.

World Leaders Entertained in St. Petersburg

On April 9th & 10th a meeting was held between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany in St. Petersburg. The visit included a visit to the ancient wooden frigate *Kronwerk*, which is moored on the Neva River near the Admiralty Building. While on the ship, accordionists Vladimir Ushakov and Svetlana Stavitskaya (members of the Musette Ensemble of St. Petersburg)



entertained the two world leaders and guests with a selection of popular music, classical compositions and German and Russian folk songs. At the completion of their performance both Putin and Schroeder approached them, warmly thanked the musicians for their playing and shook their hands. The selection of accordionists to entertain such a high level meeting was significant and proves the stature of the instrument in the world at large.

For Sale

Roland Keyboard Amp KC-500...\$ 350
Polytone Amp #4 w/reverb.....\$ 495
Roland Jv1010 Module.....\$ 299
Orla XM600 Module.....\$ 899
2 Sound-Tech MC100 Amped Speakers.....\$ 399
Excelsior Piano Accordion AC w/Midi Handmade reeds Approx 1 year old Warranty Available.....\$ 5,495
Call (925) 830-2935 Ask for Paul

Accordions al Dente

By Tom Torriglia

It seems odd to me that you don't hear much original music played at accordion club meetings. Does anyone know why? Is it because accordionists aren't creative? I don't think so. Is it because it's difficult to compose on the accordion? Not if you're composing a song that's played on the accordion. It seems that the best that accordionists can come up with is an arrangement of someone else's work. One of the music programs I suggested was a new-music showcase featuring original pieces by club members. I didn't see that included in the list of upcoming programs. I heartily encourage members who write original music to step up and play it. It would be great to hear what you've got. Remember, each cover tune you perform is someone else's original composition. Is someone else's material better than yours? Of course not!

Last month, I mentioned that someone disrupted the Squeegees' set at the San Francisco accordion festival last year. That person told me he didn't realize that he was being disruptive. I took that as being an apology. Apology accepted. If that person or any other person wants to publicize his or her own event or sell merchandise this year at the Day of the Accordion-San Francisco, just purchase a vendor table. They are only \$200.00. You can even get a group to go in on a table. Interested? Call the Cannery at 415 771 3112 and ask for Kris.

Speaking of the Squeegees, last year we didn't get to perform at the Cotati Accordion Festival because Clifton said we weren't good enough (of course, we were good enough for the North Beach festival, the ...oh, it really doesn't matter). This year, the Squeegees are not performing at the Cotati Accordion Festival because Clifton said he's full up and can't find any room for us. I finished booking the Day of the Accordion festival with barely four weeks to go. Here, he was able to completely book his festival with four *months* to go. Wow.

I am not holding my breath about getting booked at the Cotati Festival next year. So, I've decided to take the bull by the bellows and I will try to put on my own Accordion Festival next year. There's certainly plenty of talent here in the Bay Area and there's some national acts I've spoken to who want to come and play out here—they just need an excuse and bunch of money. I think a field trip to Castelfidardo is in order. I'll see about getting some sponsorship. Of course, if I hold it in Sonoma or Napa I could make it the Accordion & Wine Festival and get all the wineries to chip in. Any suggestions? I had lunch the other day up in Healdsburg and they have a beautiful downtown park—larger than the one at Cotati and the wineries have tasting room stores dotted around the park. Sounds pretty good to me.

Accordions dal Mente

By The BAAC Executive Board

Re Board Meetings: Yes, any BAAC member is welcome (and encouraged) to attend Board Meetings. We appreciate constructive suggestions from people who have concerns and/or questions. We try to have board meetings on the Tuesday before the general meeting (i.e. the day before), but often we can't get a quorum on the scheduled day. Anyone wishing to attend a board meeting is invited to call Val Kieser at (510) 531-4836 to find out when the next board meeting is. At the moment, the next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 5, but this needs to be confirmed for the above reasons.

Playing for the Day of the Accordion is intriguing and fun, and it would be great to have more participation by our club. The logistics of getting there with an accordion and parking are a bit of a deterrent. We thank you, Tom, for inviting the BAAC Fun Band to participate, and as many of us as possible will be there. The BAAC Ensemble and the ACE Ensemble require a more formal atmosphere.

The Fun Band also played at the April BAAC meeting and will play at the BAAC picnic of course, and probably other clubs' picnics as well. We are now getting a nice repertoire going under the excellent direction of Sharon Walters, who not only directs us and provides most of the music, but she also *teaches* us so that we actually learn something!

The two Ensembles are very busy! The BAAC Ensemble plays

The Bay Area Accordion Club (and any accordion club) seems to me to be almost like a professional union, rather than a club. Think about it. Take the Electricians' Union. It is comprised of people who work as electricians. We are an organization comprised of many people (not all) who work as accordionists. We all show up each month and talk about gigs we played, gigs we have coming up, instruments, etc. It's amazing that we can all get together since many of us are in competition with each other. If someone called and asked me if I could send over an accordionist who could play *Anima Core*, I don't think I would need to look very far. It's difficult to differentiate between a club and a union. I have gone to a couple of Rotary Club meetings and the Rotary Club is comprised of business people from all types of businesses. The Rotary is not comprised of people all in the same business. I guess that's the difference between a club and a union. Maybe I should think about starting the Accordion Players' Union of America. Wow, I could be President. We could offer health and dental benefits, retirement packages—the whole deal. I bet the Bay Area Accordion Club could do the same for its members today if it wanted.

Speaking of unions, one of the things that the Musicians' Union does is set performance fees. They say things like, if you are playing for two hours on a Tuesday night between 8:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. and the moon is full and yada yada, you get so much money. It seems like there are so many factors to consider: will I be playing near my home or will I have to travel. If I have to travel, do I charge a travel fee. At what point do I begin to charge a travel fee. Is this a first-time client, a repeat client or a booking agency? Does it sound like it's going to be fun? It goes on and on. Just like the Union, I need to set some baseline fees for my services. When someone I don't know calls, I always quote the amount I would like to receive and then if they balk I will settle for what I am happy to receive. Sometimes I even play below what I normally make if I feel I am going to get a lot of referrals from it. Invariably, I never get any. One thing I never do in booking myself is to assume that the client is not able or is not willing to pay what I would like to receive. My prices are only high if people aren't willing to pay them. I guess what I do is keep pushing the envelope and when it drops off the table, my price limit has been reached. Is \$200.00 per hour too high. Like I said, it's not too high if someone is willing to pay it. Is \$100.00 per hour too low. Maybe for me, but maybe not for you. I don't play for less than \$100.00 per hour. If I did, I personally feel that people wouldn't think I'm any good. *A presto!*

often for BAAC and you will see more of it in coming months, especially the Christmas meeting. The ACE Ensemble has two concerts scheduled: one on June 3 in San Mateo and one on June 24 in Piedmont. ACE is also giving small concerts at two schools on the Peninsula on June 4. ACE regularly plays for schools and for other organizations as well. ACE may be on the BAAC program August 1, featuring the Viennese Accordion Chamber Ensemble (on tour from Vienna). ACE also plays frequently for the other clubs in the Bay Area; it has played twice for the Accordion Lovers Society International in San Diego and was the featured group at the Leavenworth Accordion Festival in Washington State a couple of years ago. BAAC's website has a page for ACE that summarizes what ACE does.

Many individual BAAC members play out not only at restaurants and clubs, but at retirement homes and centers as well. We invite those who play out to let us know when and where so we can publicize it.

Letters about BAAC have been sent to the heads of about a dozen cities in California, and to the Governor and even to the U.S. President. So, Tom, we aren't *doing nothing* about spreading the word of the accordion to the world!

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**BAAC extends its heartfelt thanks to
Jim Holliday & Mark Zhagel
for their recent generous donations.**

Bits & Pieces

By Valerie T. Kieser

First, let me tell our members that at the **August 1st BAAC meeting**, we will host the **world famous Viennese Accordion Ensemble**, which is similar to **ACE**, but comprised of just 8 players. They will do a **full concert**. Also, an **excellent group including Marian Kelly & Richard Yaus** will play & **ACE members may perform in trios or quartets**—it's a full and superb program.

If any one would like info on the **Galla-Rini camp**, which is in Oceanside at Mission San Luis Rey July 22-26, they should call me, Val Kieser, at (510) 531-4836 or e-mail me at vtkacc@value.net. I have the literature and the sign-up sheets. The total cost is \$585 per playing participant staying on campus. There is RV space (but no hookups). RVers or people staying off campus can take the camp for \$345, with meals at the mission for another \$100 for the whole time.

Kris Nelson relayed to me that **The Accordion Circle of the East Bay Music Meeting** for June will be held at the home of Eldo Bianchi, 1540 Scenic, Berkeley, on Thursday, June 14 at 7:30 p.m. (They have lost the Grant Street location and will be at Eldo's temporarily until a new permanent place is found.)

Kris Nelson Reminds

May 21 The ACR General Meeting—our 5th Year Birthday Celebration!!! Members Pasta Feed 6:30–7:30pm. Meeting & Music Program 7:30–9:30pm. Location: Herman Sons Hall. 860 Western. Petaluma. Info. Contact Harry Cannata at: (707) 838-2859

July 14. The ACR Summer Picnic. It'll be held at Penngrove Community Picnic Grounds.

May 23rd Annual Far West Button Box Jamboree at Sons of Italy Hall. 9420 Sierra Ave, Fontana, CA. Info: (909) 422-1994

June 10—14 Rose City Accordion Camp, Silver Falls Conference Center: Sublimity, Oregon. It's 5 days of accordion music including: music & handouts, workshops, rehearsals, concerts, performances, and jam sessions. For further info: (503) 452-4517

June 15—17 The Annual Isleton Crawdad Festival, Isleton, CA. (Sacramento River Delta). Sponsored by the Isleton Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 758 • Isleton, CA 95641; (916) 777-5880 • Fax: (916) 777-4330 E-mail: isletoncoc@citlink.net.

June 23: The Golden State Accordion Club Summer Picnic at Pena Adobe Park, Vacaville. 11am to 4pm. Info: (707) 864-2359.

Oct. 14 – 18: The Las Vegas International Accordion Festival at The Plaza Hotel. Las Vegas, NV. Info. Hotline: 800-486-1695 Website:<http://www.AccordionInfo.com/convention>.

Kimberly International

(Myron Floren to perform)

The 26th Kimberley International Old Time Accordion Championships will be held from July 8th to 15th in Kimberley, BC, Canada. Guest performers include **Myron Floren**, Kerry Christensen, Johner Brothers, Paisley Accordion Orchestra (Scotland), The Cottonpickers, The Emeralds, The Killaly Rhythm Kings and The Sam Pecorilla Dance Band (Oregon, USA).

The festival hosts the "World's Old Time Accordion Competitions" each year, which includes competitors aged from 5 to 95 in 17 different categories. Prizes total over CAN\$12,000 with a \$200 cash bursary available for competitors aged 16 & under. This festival has been twice voted into the "Top 100 Events in North America" by the American Business Association.

Other events include jam sessions, family dances, accordion & dance workshops, pancake breakfasts, BBQ and lots of fun! For details email: [klotac@cyberlink.bc.ca](mailto:kotac@cyberlink.bc.ca) Submitted by **Jeany Irvin**

President's Message

By Lou H. Soper

We had a wonderful meeting this month with a great variety of music performed. This is what makes our club so exciting. You will always hear something that will please you.



A reminder about the workshop on Saturday, June 23 at the Moose Club starting at 10:30 A M to 3:00 P M. You will learn the easy way to play all 12 major scales and the 12 major triads. This is the most basic knowledge that you will ever learn. In addition, you will learn how to modernize these triads to make your playing more exciting. For the advanced players, extended chords and passing chords will really add a modern touch to your playing.

Our picnic plans are in high gear now and we have some great food and music to make **Sunday, July 8** a very enjoyable and entertaining afternoon. Nature Friend's Park is a wonderful facility for a party and you will really have a great time. So, make your reservations now as we need to know how many New York steaks to prepare.

The food will be delicious. Cost is \$12 and we will have tickets at the June meeting. To make your reservations, call Val Kieser at 510-531-4836. You will be able to pick up your tickets at the park on July 8 but you must make your reservations by July 1.

A nominating committee for the September elections are V.P. Joe Smiell and member Frank Schlotter. We need two more members and one officer to join this group. If you would like to help, call any of our officers listed in the BAAC PAGE.

Our newsletter, BAAC PAGE, will still maintain the same high quality and professional standard we have achieved. The cost is slightly higher but the quality is worth the difference. If you would like to make a tax deductible contribution to help maintain this wonderful publication, please indicate your desire with your contribution.

If you would like to participate in the **Day Of The Accordion** at the Cannery on **June 17**, then please call Tom Torriglia at 415-440-0800.

Well, I'm off to San Diego this week to reunite with Lou Fanucchi and play some fine accordion music in Balboa park which is where that great Zoo is located.

Hope to see you on Wednesday, June 6 at the Patio Espanol.

40 Years of Greatness

The Annual Spring Concert of the *University of Missouri-Kansas City Accordion Orchestra (UMKCAO)* on April 29th marked its 40th Anniversary, having begun in the spring of 1961. Joan Sommers has directed it since it began and the April concert marked her retirement from the Conservatory. In the fall of 2001 the name of the Orchestra will be changed to the *UMKC Community Accordion Orchestra*.

In conjunction with the concert, the *Orchestra* will release a set of six CD's highlighting 40 years of accordion greatness. For full details, information on the orchestra, its members, CDs, or to just send congratulations—e-mail Joan at: SommersJ@umkc.edu

@ Boaz Accordions

Thursday, June 21st at 7:30 PM

Bebop Jazz musician Donald "Duck" Bailey likes to explore. He began as a drummer, became a saxophonist and later took up the accordion. \$4.00. Refreshments. 510/845-1429. www.BoazAccordions.com

Guido Deiro & Frosini

The Classical Free-Reed, Inc. founder, Henry Doktorski performed original compositions by Guido Deiro and Pietro Frosini in recital at Duquesne University (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) on Sunday, May 6, 2001. The concert was held in the PNC Recital Hall at the School of Music and featured faculty members and advanced students of Duquesne University's City Music Center. Mr. Doktorski is now planning to produce a CD comprised of the works of Frosini and Guido Deiro.

In light of his forthcoming endeavor Mr. Doktorski is looking for compositions by Guido Deiro. If anyone has some of Guido Deiro's music contact Henry at: [<free-reed@trfn.clpgh.org>](mailto:free-reed@trfn.clpgh.org) or by writing him at 1387 Noblestown Rd, Pittsburg, PA. 15071. He will gladly arrange to reimburse you for copying and postage.

[Mr. Doktorski received the following e-mail.]

Dear Henry:

I am delighted that you selected Deiro and Frosini works for your recital at Duquesne University May 6th. You may not know that there was quite a friendship between the two artists. Frosini being one of the first, if not the first, to play semi-tone accordion in big time vaudeville. He said later that his Vaudeville program changed from all operatic and classical presentations to a mix with the popular tunes of the day through the influence of my father's success in combining them for his audiences.

Several of my father's vaudeville reviewers mention his "delighting the gallery by playing *Dixie*" and their ill-contained relief that "unlike other accordionist's who predictably torture us with the *Poet and Peasant Overture*, his virtuosity includes the new rags and songs."

I only wish I could hear you play. Are you doing *Egypto* and *My Florence*? Or do you have something else up your sleeve? Watching and hearing you in New York was like receiving and opening a wonderful gift box. Is it possible to record this recital for me as I have never heard Frosini. I would be happy to cover any costs.

Count Guido Roberto Deiro

Las Vegas, NV countdeiro@earthlink.net

Dance, Dance, Dance

[In reading an article by Alessandra Stanley in the New York Times about preschool education in France and Italy (France takes a structured approach and Italy is more free-form and artistic) and what lessons we may learn for American preschoolers, I came across this item.]

The French government gives special attention to schools that serve poor neighborhoods, limiting their class sizes to 25 and assigning more teaching assistants to each school.

The French preschool curriculum is laid out in a tidy pamphlet published by the education ministry. All French preschool programs include a hot lunch, naptime, story telling, drawing, painting and dance.

An accordion player comes to Miss Guigou's class to provide music for dancing. Classroom fun is veined with pedagogical purpose, whether the task is making masks for carnival ("what is the first letter in the word, clown?") or counting eggs used to bake a cake collected that morning from the pet hens of Goutee d'Or."

[As noted: our ACE Ensemble will be doing some goodwill performances in schools this month of National Accordion Awareness. But perhaps some of our more talented performers might take up their instruments and invade classrooms (as they've done in the past), perhaps aiming at the younger, preschool crowd—such as we find in day care centers. I know our members play for the in retirement and convalescent homes for the elderly (and that's admirable), but maybe we need to make a concerted effort to reach the young, and the younger the better.]

Smythe's Accordion Center & Survival

By Steve Mobia



"Yes, there really is an accordion shop back here," Kimric Smythe finds himself telling patrons as they wend their way back from the front gallery to use the only rest room in the building. In fact, Kimric sometimes makes unexpected sales this way to people who had never considered taking up the accordion. Most are struck by the sculptural beauty of the instrument and linger as long as they did with the art works in the gallery.

In April, the *21 Grand Art Space & Smythe's Accordion Center* had an all day benefit to raise legal fees to fight an impending eviction. Their landlord (who's next door) had been making daily demands and threatening to throw them out and raise their rent several hundred dollars—without seeming to recognize the contradiction. Tension had been building for months and things may soon to come to a head. On this day in April though, it's an all-out party with multiple bands, movies and performance art upstairs while a jet powered robotic hovercraft floats around outside. The age and interest mix is something to behold. Bob Smith plays, Lou Soper appears and Clyde Forsmen stays almost of the entire time, jamming on Swedish folk songs with rock accordionist Aaron Seamen and button box player Lee Thompson-Herbert. Upstairs a man in drag festoons him/her self with large cardboard skyscrapers and recites poetry about the stock market crash. In the Main Room one hears the unlikely duet of an accordion and the otherworldly sounding Theremin. Outside two large Doggie Diner heads stand watch while the pulsejets of the nearby hovercraft roar. And the evening is capped when Kimric dons a monkey mask and his friends dress as gorillas inside inflatable HAZMAT suits, seemingly conducting an experiment on a convulsing robotic figure on the floor. Anyone who knows Kimric Smythe as I do would realize there is nothing strange about the proceedings.

A veteran of the SRL (Survival Research Labs) robotic shows and a première pyrotechnic engineer for the annual Burning Man Festival, Kimric has done many curious things. Born in Hawaii, his childhood was spent traveling from one state to another and later from one country to another as his dad became involved in agricultural maintenance for the United Nations—dealing with things such as keeping elephants and baboons from ruining crops. His dad inspired Kim's keen interest in science and chemistry and though Kim wasn't an outstanding student, he taught himself a lot about those subjects and read voraciously. While other kids were playing baseball/football, Kim was building things, carving wood, making rockets and hot air balloons. An extended stay in Pakistan

gave him a curious cultural perspective, which upon his return made it hard for him to fit into America's cliché teen culture. He served briefly in the Air Force doing maintenance on airplanes and afterwards had a grueling stint with a traveling door-to-door magazine sales company. "It was more like the Moonies than anything, an exercise in mind control," Kimric says. "But at least I got to see the country close up."

Moving back to Santa Cruz where his parents lived, he began a two-year job with Seagate Technology doing quality control on hard drives. Just two weeks before his marriage he was laid off along with half the staff. After moving to San Jose and taking a few brief jobs (on one he was dismissed for complaining about having to suffer KOIT Muzak on the radio all day), Kim secured a job with an audiovisual company, Munday and Collins. Right after that, his wife Heidi was promised a catering job in Berkeley, so the couple bought property where they could afford it in Richmond. Heidi's job didn't turn out and the young couple ended up with a killer commute: Richmond-San Jose. Eventually both found work closer to home, Heidi at a Berkeley coffee house and Kimric at the Brisbane office of Munday and Collins, which is where I later worked with him. Despite all the moves and changes throughout this period Kimric and Heidi pursued creative activities—making costumes, ceramics and staging fantasy events. Kimric began working with the Industrial Artist Mark Pauline on his large-scale apocalyptic robot shows. Smythe's knowledge of machines, jet engines and chemistry was given free reign in these examples of unhinged industrial mayhem.

Another artistic outlet: the yearly fire festival in Nevada called Burning Man also allowed Kimric to express himself. For three years he performed as Exploding Man, strapping homemade fireworks to his body and dancing while pinwheels, bombs and rockets shot off. Later Heidi and his dad got into the act dazzling the desert terrain with crazy colors and sounds. Also, he supervised the main event, the torching of a four story tall wooden Man. He and his partner in art Scott Ficus attached pinwheels, flares, fountains and firecrackers throughout the wax soaked wooden figure, and each year their pyrotechnics got more elaborate as the event gained worldwide attention. In 1999 he and his dad built a 3-story wooden clock tower with balcony for the conclusion of a big procession: "Funeral for the 20th Century." At midnight, accompanied by music I composed for brass and percussion, the tower was approached by hobbling old men and women goaded on by Father Time who stood on the balcony. As the last person



entered, the music's dissonant conclusion heralded the very moment when the tower burst into flame. The people inside suddenly ran out, now dressed in diapers and shaking baby rattles.

After being involved in Burning Man from its beginnings, Kimric has finally decided to call it quits, due his work demands and the more regimented nature of the huge event these days. However, never doubt that he'll continue to be creative—he can't help it.

I originally got to know Kim through our participation in the San Francisco Cacophony Society—a group devoted to turning the City into a surreal amusement park. Events included staged fantasies in abandoned buildings, costumed events (the most famous being the hordes of rowdy Santas that invade a different city every Christmas), street theater, cocktail parties in Laundromats and similar doings. One memorable excursion to an abandoned toothpaste factory featured among other things a large atomic bomb piñata full of plastic soldiers—Kimric made that. Also, as it turned out, both Kimric and I owned AMC Pacers, that futuristic bubble car of the seventies. No wonder we became friends. He later assisted me in making a baby's high chair appear to blast off for Mars in one of my movies.

His entrance into the world of accordions was yet another unexpected turn—one that even shocked his parents. While he and his wife Heidi were creating pirate garb for an appearance at Burning Man, Kimric happened upon a cheap Chinese Hero accordion in San Francisco's Mission District. Teaching himself to play a few tunes (i.e., *Blow the Man Down*) for his pirate persona, he became curious about accordions in general—their mechanical workings fascinated him. A little later he purchased a large old piano accordion from a pawnshop for fifty dollars (all the left hand buttons were stuck down); taking the bass machine apart, he solved the problem. Later, his dad gave him an accordion he found at a thrift store. It was beautiful except for one thing; it was completely in pieces. Not only that but some of the wood had been eaten away by insects. By reconstructing this accordion from scratch Kimric gained an even greater insight into the workings of the instrument. Fortunately, our own master repairman Vince Cirelli also worked in Brisbane; Kim visited him and got some helpful pointers—and Clyde Forsman was more than generous with his time. Eventually, Kimric was accepting outside repair jobs through Noe Valley Music—charging very little, since he considered it a learning experience. But his multifaceted knowledge of machines, chemistry and woodworking were finally given a meaningful and rewarding direction and though not a musician, Kimric proved himself an excellent craftsman with an uncanny instinct for troubleshooting repair problems. I doubt there is anything about an accordion that Kimric can't figure out how to fix.

At this point he was repairing accordions during his spare time at Munday and Collins—but finally the boss complained about all the instruments strewn around the office. It was obvious Kim needed a shop if he was to continue.

Yours truly developed the accordion bug around this time; I worked with Kimric at the audiovisual company—he had hired me as an assistant during a particularly busy period. Although I had written soundtracks for my films, I had never studied music formally. The accordion gave me a good reason to learn an instrument and gain a greater understanding of music theory. I

had just recently purchased an accordion from a shop in Oakland, which I heard about through street accordionist Susie Sounds (aka, the Space Lady—famous for wearing a blinking winged helmet). The shop was run by **Orlando Meni-Ketti** (who was aging) with the help of his guitar playing assistant Reuven Kall.



During the several times I visited Orlando I heard stories about his once great Accordion Academy and how he supervised teaching facilities up and down the entire state of California, teaching as well as selling instruments. When the accordion's popularity declined, so did the demand for teachers and instruments, so consequently in his old age Orlando was forced to sell cheap furniture on credit as a way to survive. Not long after my visits, perhaps a year later, I heard that

Orlando had a stroke and died. Kimric and I went by his old shop and found a sad state of affairs: an unhappy widow, piles of sheet music, odoriferous dogs and a room full of accordions of varying quality and condition. To cut a long story short—Reuven sold Meni-Ketti's inventory to Kimric, continued the furniture part of the business and shortly thereafter Kimric moved into the back room. Kimric completely re-decorated, putting in walls, shelves, a checkered tile floor and moved a huge custom painting of Meni-Ketti into prominent position on two of the walls. In February 1999, Smythe's Accordion Center opened its doors. The front room became Reuven's pet project. He divided it from the furniture store and wanted to open a small theater café (his sign for "coffee and bagels" is still outside). Alas, last year before realizing his dream, Reuven Kall died, leaving the place in turmoil. His son Aaron ran it briefly but found the responsibilities too taxing and neglected to pay the rent to the building's elderly manager. At this point Kimric struck up a friendship with J. D. Schreiber who had the 2310 Art Gallery & Performance Space on nearby Telegraph Ave. When J.D. was forced to close that venue, he and his art friends began to rent the front space that Reuven had intended to turn into a cafe. A lot of construction, remodeling and painting was done by Kimric and the Art Collective, which eventually turned the front area into the "21 Grand Gallery." Soon after it's opening last year the gallery hosted numerous interesting artists who exhibited works—as well as a variety of musicians, poets and filmmakers, which quickly placed 21 Grand on Oakland's cultural map. Last August it seemed certain that Kimric and company would gain a leasing agreement for the entire building (including the now closed furniture store), but for reasons unknown to Kim and his associates the manager chose instead a computer retailer. It happened while Kimric and his friends were out of town working on the Burning Man Festival. When they returned, the new landlord was in charge and created difficulties for Kim and friends—complaining about the nightly performances and uttering what seemed to Kim to be threats. Any lease agreements on Kim's behalf appeared to be disregarded and people who seemed (in Kim's opinion) to be not unlike members of the drug culture started hanging out at the landlord's shop—which didn't help Kim's customer relations. A simmering conflict devel-

(turn to p. 15)

A Smith Dobson Tribute

By Lou H. Soper

[The Saturday May 5th issue of the Chronicle carried their jazz columnist Phillip Elwood's memorial to Smith Dobson. Smith died at 54 while driving back from a concert to his home in Santa Cruz. His car veered off the road and rolled over. Mr. Elwood's tribute emphasizes how important



Dobson's 20 years on the South Bay jazz scene were. Two thousand people turned out for the memorial service at the Oakwood Chapel in Santa Cruz. Smith was a pianist, arranger and singer, as well as a teacher and an inspiration to one and all. The crowd at the service was comprised of fans, students and friends, but almost anyone who met him became a friend—and many deeply loved him.

Smith came from a musical family in Stockton and fathered a musical family in Santa Cruz. His wife Gail

is a talented singer and their two children often performed with them. Smith had extensive academic background, which was coupled with extraordinary talent and rich performing experiences—he played venues from the White House to major concert halls to regular appearances at the Garden City Restaurant in San Jose—he was the personification of a complete artist. His dozens of recordings with jazz legends and his work as an educator, lecturer, clinician and adviser at San Jose State, U.C., Santa Cruz, the Monterey Jazz Festival and the Kuumbwa Jazz Center established him as a formidable artistic and humanitarian force. Memorial contributions are being sought for the Dobson Scholarship Fund % Kuumbwa Jazz Center, 320-2 Cedar St., Santa Cruz, CA 95060. BAAC PAGE is honored to print Lou Soper's moving tribute.]

A few days ago I lost one of my very best friends in a tragic accident.

Smith Dobson was without a doubt the finest keyboard musician I have ever known. Any musician or vocalist who ever had the pleasure of working with him would wholeheartedly agree he was without equal. He was on the level of Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson. I was always completely awed and overwhelmed in the presence of such wonderful God given talent. And yet, every time I went to see him he'd just reach out and give me a huge bear hug

and a wonderful, loving smile and offer nothing less than his heart.

And if it happened, as it did from time to time, he said he'd back up a vocal for me, I was on cloud nine. He was an inspiration then and he will always be for as long as I live.

When my wife passed away ten years ago, Smith just opened up his heart and home and did whatever he could to ease my terrible sense of loss. I'll always be grateful for such extraordinary kindness.

As great as he was musically, he surpassed that ability with gentleness, kindness and love for all who knew him. He was the most gentle and humble man I have ever known and I loved him dearly. A couple of months ago he came to my home with his mother and he told me what a great voice she had. So I strapped on my accordion and accompanied her on a song entitled *Mean To Me*. He was absolutely right, as usual; her voice was fantastic. And Smith just sat there in his chair and beamed with that glowing smile of his that told the whole story—he was a man blessed with the joy of love. When he left, I received my usual bear hug and I can still feel his arms around me. His warmth and friendship are something I'll never forget.

Smith has completed his earthly journey, but in his too short span he contributed more than most of us ever will in a hundred years. In a sense he has embarked on a new level of spiritual inspiration and love that is available to all who will just reach out to his wonderful spirit—eventually our tears of sorrow will have turn into smiles of joy. For now, Smith is all around and everywhere to guide us through our daily lives with the same love he gave us here on earth.

To his wife Gail and his children: I offer my sincerest sympathy and prayers to help you overcome your terrible sense of loss. I hope in time his memory will bring you comfort and joy. You had the gift of a wonderful husband, father and friend who will be remembered and respected forever—a man truly loved by thousands. Thank God he touched us on his way passing through.

The Accordion Chamber Ensemble

Performs Two Major Local Concerts

Happily coinciding with June as National Accordion Awareness Month, the San Francisco Bay Area Accordion Club (SFBAAC) is proud to present its well-renowned Accordion Chamber Ensemble (ACE) in concert on two occasions. **On Sunday, June 3rd at 2:30PM at the Unitarian Universalist Church of San Mateo**, located at 300 East Santa Inez (corner of Ellsworth) and on **Sunday, June 24th at 2:30PM at the Zion Lutheran Church** located at 5201 Park Boulevard in Piedmont (above Highway 580, below 13, north side of the street). Information can be secured from Frank Montoro ((650) 574-4757 and Valerie Kieser (510) 531-4836 prior to the events. The programs at both venues will be comprised of classical, semi-classical and folk music. There is a request for a five-dollar donation. The members of ACE include: Aldo Argenti, Jr., Peter Di Bono, Mary-Alice Eldon, Lynn S. Ewing, Ron Harris, Valerie T. Kieser, Nora C. Mazzara, Frank Montoro, Valarie Morris, Robert L. Smith and Sharon Walters. The Ensemble is under the direction of the internationally acclaimed conductor, composer and arranger, Joe Smiell. These are two events that any music lover should seriously consider—and which accordion lovers should attend if humanly possible. It's two days of sheer joy. Everywhere ACE has played the response has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic:

"The versatility of this group is extraordinary... Joe Smiell gets a

huge sound out of his group with an arrangement that is well-balanced from the lowest registers to the highest... It is clear that Joe 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 reflects a high degree of commitment from the ensemble membership...." Bob Warner in *The Reed Block* newsletter of the Accordion Lovers Society International, San Diego. "We were very impressed with the San Francisco Accordion Chamber Ensemble program on Sunday. We've never heard accordions sound like that before...." Joe and Ann Gentile, Cupertino, CA. "The Ensemble gave a mesmerizing performance to a standing-room only crowd." Carole Enneking, Golden State Accordion Club. "The accordion concert I attended a week ago in Redwood City was a "first" for me! You certainly had a famous list of composers on your program with some notable selections & arrangements credited to Joe Smiell. Congratulations!" Charles R. Bubb, Jr., First Trumpet, San Francisco Symphony for 25 years.

[Also, please note: ACE is also performing for two schools in June—at the Cumberland School in Mt. View where Nora Mazzara teaches and the El Granada School in El Granada (on the Peninsula north of Half Moon Bay), where Lynn Ewing teaches.]

Travels With Myron Floren

By Richard Terrill

MYRON FLOREN is sitting in front of us sipping a soft drink after the gig, a dance at some anachronistic ballroom in a small town on



a winter night in 1974 or '75. Or it's summer and he's in his trailer with that same soft drink, and it's the same year, or perhaps a year earlier or later. Either way, Myron Floren is the accordion player on *The Lawrence Welk Show*, the guy who seems to be second in command, who takes over directing the orchestra when Lawrence is ill or when Lawrence is dancing in front of the bandstand

and before the TV cameras with his champagne lady or a "chick singer," as we would have called her then.

Myron is relaxing with us after the gig. This has never happened before. We are college students making money for school or rent. We have never before seen Myron (soft spoken but businesslike Myron, show-biz half-smiling Myron), never before seen him relaxed. We are, to those in the crowd of senior citizens who ask us, members of the Myron Floren Orchestra, "For this night only," we could tell them, but dare not. "Where you headed next?" the dancers ask us when we're on a break. "Oh," we reconnoiter, eyeing each other to get the story straight, "I guess we're headed east. Aren't we?"

It's true. After the gig we'll drive home to our rent and our classes. Our town lies east of here. The eyes of the oldish *Welkies* who ask us light up at what they imagine is the romance of our travel. To be young again and this time live the itinerant life of the working musician! Carefree and on the loose!

Whenever Myron Floren has a gig in Western Wisconsin or Eastern Minnesota, or northern or central Illinois, his manager calls Gerry Way, our bass player and leader, who lives over in Chippewa Falls, the next town from where our college is. How Gerry Way came up with this connection with Myron and other such traveling performers no one has told me. But when Myron's man calls, Gerry in turn calls whomever of the local musicians is around—three or four trumpets, a trombone, a rhythm section, and three or four saxes (including me). Then, we pile into cars and drive to whichever county is holding the fair, or whichever town the dance. In each region of the country there is a Gerry Way whom Myron's manager would contact, and that Gerry Way gathers whatever musicians he can find to be, for that weekend in that part of the soon-to-be-200-year-old USA, the Myron Floren Orchestra.

"So where are you headed next, boys?"

Once, crammed into three cars, we drove all the way to the Holiday Inn in Gary, Indiana, some eight hours away, to play a dance. The money was especially good and it was summer and there was no school the next Monday and the hotel room was actually paid for. Despite that, a few of us left in one car right after the gig and drove all night home. The fog was so thick we started out with the windows rolled down, heads craned into the night to look for road signs or median strips to let us know we weren't in the ditch.

"Is that the entrance ramp to 94 over there?" Duke the lead trumpeter asked the semi driver in the next lane.

"You're on the entrance ramp," the driver said.

Duke had to be back home to go fishing the next morning, so he had said he was leaving now—after one a.m.—and asked who wanted to go along. Duke was like that—a handsome, ex-football-playing, tobacco chewing free spirit who couldn't live in town because if he didn't get into the woods every day to drop a line or check his beaver traps, he just didn't feel good. I don't know exactly why I went along with Duke and those who had summer jobs the next day, since I didn't. Maybe it was because Stan, the drummer, scared me a little and I didn't want to spend the night in the hotel with him. Not yet thirty, Stan was the only one of us to already have a pot belly. He liked to wear a faded t-shirt that read "Bruenig's Beer," after a brewery that had gone out of business before I turned eighteen. Stan had a tangled web of hair that swished in front of his face when he played his sparse and passionate drums behind the college big band.

After the Myron gigs, though, I was afraid the drinks and joints and practical jokes with Stan might get to be too much for me. I didn't like to be that much out of control. It was a weakness, surely, to be one of the youngest guys in the band and still to be "uptight," as the expression of the day had it. Stan kidded me that I worried too much. Once, on the way to a Myron gig in Mattoon, Illinois, I laughed at the series of green Interstate road signs that advertised "Regional Trauma Center," marking every town off the highway in which one could find a hospital.

"Trauma Center!" I laughed out loud each time I saw the sign. I thought it was a strange thing to call a hospital.

"Trauma," Stan, the drummer repeated. "That's a good nickname for you. Trauma!"

Stan had never had a worry in his life up to that time, I thought. Once he and Duke got Charlene the piano player drunk. She was one of two women in the local pool of musicians and only 16 besides, so she got a harder time even than me. This time she and Stan and Duke were lounging in a hotel room, the two guys with their clothes mostly off, or so the story went by the time I heard it. "Just sit back," Stan told her, but she didn't.

We are in Ellsworth or Austin or LaCrosse with Myron, and I remember now that the scene is a summer one, which means county fair instead of ballroom dance. Myron Floren relaxes in his trailer with a soft drink after the gig. He works us hard at dances, sixty minutes on/fifteen off, more time playing than the Union would allow. But during our breaks, when we're questioned about our itinerary by the faithful, Myron stays on stage and signs autographs. Myron doesn't take breaks. We know he's had at least two more heart attacks than anyone else in the band.

"My dream for the Bicentennial," Myron tells us, collar loosened and Dr. Pepper in his hand, "is to gather a chorus of young people—the picture of health and of America—and stand them before Mount Rushmore. And to stand in front of them myself and conduct them as they sing *God Bless America*."

"Is he serious?" each of us wonders, long-haired and bell-bottomed. This is the first time Myron's let us into his trailer and we look to each other for confirmation of how to react. His television smile doesn't crest or waver. He is serious, we conclude. There is no reason to conclude otherwise: Myron, after all, doesn't take breaks he doesn't need. Only once did he miss one of our gigs—for open heart surgery. We got to that dance on a wintry night in Snowblind, Minnesota, and found that instead of Myron, it was Dick Dale, a Welk singer and woodwind man, leading our little pick up orchestra. What was the difference to us, since the money was the same (and pretty good—fifty 1970s pre-inflated dollars a night; my rent was 52.50 a month)? The difference was that all the music was different. Dick Dale had a different book, and even

Myron's music had been hard enough for me. *The Lichtensteiner Polka* was a black forest of sixteenth notes; Myron played *Alley Cat* in the key of z sharp; and there was always some chart a dancer would request that we'd never played before—*Fat Dutch Girl Polka*, *Canadian Tango*—and Myron would not turn down a request. On any of these jobs we were supposed to be able to get out of the car, change into our felt black out-of-style tuxedos (Stan and Duke had bought out a bankrupt men's store and sold the goods to us at a tidy profit), sit down, and play whatever was put before us. That's what professional musicians did, we knew. And we wanted to be professional. Myron all the while smiled at the people and played. Flawlessly. Each beat and each note.

But another difference between Myron and Dick Dale, quite fortunately, was that Dick Dale at least held a quick rehearsal. Dick Dale was a singer—the one who each December crooned *Walkin' in a Winter Wonderland* with his arms around the waist of a Welk girl singer twenty years his junior; the one who stood at the apex of a vee of younger men in cardigan sweaters to belt out in his seamless baritone *Saturday Night*, Welk's obligatory rock tune. Dick Dale's face looked something like that of a camel. But being a singer and a pro, Dick Dale didn't want to be smiling in song before the people and have the band miss a repeat sign and send him over a musical cliff with lead weights tied to his polyester. It's hard to keep smiling through that. It was different for instrumentalists like Myron, who might be able to lead the band through a botched key change or missed second ending. People didn't listen that closely to music that didn't have words in it—as long as the beat was solid so they could keep dancing through another highball. And the beat was solid, since Stan the drummer was as dependable onstage as he was certifiably crazy back at the hotel.

This is the way I remember it, so this was the way it was: there was the gig in Duluth with the weather at some record-setting low and us driving up there in the middle of winter (why always in these stories in the north where I live is the setting the middle of winter? Is there no beginning or end to it?). This night we were to be the Elgart band, led by the big band era holdover of that name, still touring once in a while. I can't remember now if it was Les Elgart or Larry Elgart, and I'm not sure I knew even then. I knew that one bandleader brother was dead, either Les or Larry. The other brother played the saxophone. We had the saxophone player. Larry (or Les) was nasty and drunk, swore off-mike, and lacked Myron's rapport when on. He couldn't get over how "women's lib" was invading the music world, since Gerry's lead sax player was Katie, the other woman in our group. She was an exceptionally good player and an extremely attractive woman, which I think pissed off Les (or Larry) even more, the way that some men get hacked about beautiful women who are skillful and who have existed in the world up to this point entirely without them.

We got our money and left the Duluth arena, breath gathered in clouds ahead of us. We were glad that Myron was a nicer guy than Elgart. Then we found that somebody had lifted the battery from Gerry's car. We'd get home by dawn.

There was the Outagamie County Fair as early as '72. Like most fairs, it was a series of back-up acts leading up to one big-name headliner. One of the back-up acts at this fair was a young country singer calling herself Tanya Tucker. She was 14, I think, and Duke went over to talk to her between shows. Shy, but a nice kid, he reported, and we all wondered if he would try anything, but he didn't.

I remember more clearly that weekend the Marquis Chimps, another back-up act. I was playing the third alto sax part, which put me on the end of the first row. When Edmunds & Curley, the comedians, were on each night and we didn't have anything to do for a few minutes, I could look off stage to watch the "beautiful assistant" line up the three chimps and set them into their colored

chairs, where they waited for the cue we'd play them when the comics were done. The chimp in red, the one sitting at the end of the row, would look at me and scratch the top of his head, and by the last night, second show, I would scratch my head back at him. He would pucker his chimp lips at me, and I would make lips back at him. He swiveled his neck and I swiveled mine. All the while the people in the stands could see me, but not him. They sat in their grandstand across the drag-racing track from the stage, waiting to get more cotton candy, waiting for the fireworks after the show, waiting for school to start in a couple of weeks, none of them seeing the chimp, but seeing only the sax player with the odd facial tics. In turn, I could see from my chair the thick paint on the face of the "girl" who managed the chimps, how her skin had been forced into that tutu. The chimp master, if that's what you called him, was a little old man in a red and white striped jacket. How tired the woman looked. I couldn't guess whom she disliked more.

And there was—always—the music, which meant that there was a thick black book of charts, and Myron or Les or Larry or Dick Dale or even, once, Tennessee Ernie Ford, would call over his shoulder, never missing a beat or a smile before the audience, "47," or "86," or *Just the Way You Look Tonight*, and we would have the music unfolded a split second before the downbeat, and we would see the language of the notes before us then for the first time. Or see it, at least, for the first time since the last gig, in Fargo or Appleton, maybe last month or last summer. I was one of the poorer sight readers in the band, and perhaps the terror of this lottery was part of my Trauma. Worse, reed players were expected to double, and I might be reading along the baritone sax part, belching out low C's and B-flats on that vertical tank of an instrument, when the part would suddenly, almost coyly read, "to clarinet." The flight or fight terror would rise in me (could I run off stage to join the chimps? Could I get out of town now as a roadie for Tanya Tucker? "Where ya goin' next, boys?"). In four bars rest I would set down the giant bari sax, take up my plastic clarinet (real clarinets were wood), the one my roommate the year before had given me instead of the fifty bucks he owed me. The reed on the clarinet was dry as a stick, the page peppered with notes as if the tune had been arranged by Jackson Pollock. And what was worse, I had never learned to play the clarinet. My mouth went from blowing into the tank-like bari to blowing through the barrel of this black plastic Derringer inclined to squeak more than sing. The other players were good: Stan solid as a tree on drums, Gerry like a clock on bass, Duke's lead trumpet as pure and high as good weather, Katie always beautiful on lead alto. They never missed a note. I hid in their arms and loved them for it. I earned each of the fifty dollars one clam at a time.

I don't know what happened to Gerry Way, who I think quit teaching a high school chorus in Chippewa Falls, but then went back to it. For a while in between, he was playing weekends in a one-man band. I don't think that was meant as a comment about his former mates, but I'm not sure. In fact, the Myron gigs continued for Gerry and some of the others for several years after I left college. The money got even better and the work steadier. Duke, I know, continued to teach junior high band in the small northern Wisconsin town where he could fish regularly. Katie married another of the trumpet players and they eventually ended up in New York, where she sings beautifully in a classy lounge for big money. The piano player who had once been sixteen, and maybe without her clothes, also has ended up in New York, a professional musician. Stan the drummer taught college for awhile, became much more of a friend to me after he calmed down a bit and I became less regularly traumatized by the pages I turned in life. Maybe quitting music helped. Or maybe having played it did.

I imagine by now the once-surviving Elgart brother—Les, or Larry—is also dead. I hope so. Tanya Tucker is now Tanya Tucker. Tennessee Ernie Ford died a few years ago. Lawrence Welk is off

the air (and thus Dick Dale doesn't have to sing any more rock and roll covers, which he must have hated).

And I don't know that Myron Floren ever led a chorus of young singers in patriotic American songs before Mount Rushmore on July 4, 1976. I suspect he didn't. I imagine him now retired in Southern California, not taking that red station wagon from the regional airport to meet us or our clones in the Mid-Atlantic, upstate New York, West Texas, or wherever. Myron is taking a break.

From among these experiences I can pick one that I know happened always exactly as I remember it. I am as sure as if I were reading it now off one of those hand-penned charts in those terrifying black books. In the last set of the night, Myron always called *Lady of Spain*, one of those obligatory show pieces for accordion players, the accordion being after all not so much a real musical instrument as an excuse for outrageous displays of technique. I even wrote a line into one of my poems about Myron's version of *Lady of Spain*. The poem was a love poem for an old girlfriend—a humorous poem I'm happy to report, given how badly the relationship turned out—and the line said that my excitement at seeing her was like "ten thousand accordions, playing *Lady of Spain*."

Unlikely as that line sounds, it was a pretty good poem, and the line is true—all except for the part about the ten thousand. In reality, it was just that one guy up there astounding all the dancers on the out chorus. Each time he played that part of *Lady of Spain*, no matter which season or state, Myron would raise his one leg against the bottom of the sequined squeeze-box, and paste on a serious look. Somehow, in the way accordion players can, he made each note of that melody into a triplet, so that the sound of the line was tremulous and beelike, though still exact. He leaned his forehead always to the same side in concentration (I noticed this the way I had noticed the mugging of the chimp in red offstage in Outagamie County). The sweat on Myron's brow, I remember, was real. Maybe he had to think for a moment about what his hands had to do to play these furious tremolos in *Lady of Spain*. Or maybe he'd played this tune too many times to have to worry about missing a single note.

Maybe he worked to make look easy what he was making look hard. God bless America, he was that good.

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Mr. Doktorski notes:

In an advertisement in the 1997 Accordion Teachers Guild Festival Program, Myron Floren claimed to perform over 150 concerts per year. Recently, however, he has had to cut back due to ill health. In the September 4, 1998 issue of *Weekly News* published by *Accordions Worldwide*, the following article appeared: "MYRON FLOREN UPDATE—we add to our news flash. Myron Floren who suffered a small stroke on stage while performing in Jamestown on August 28th [1998], we are pleased to report has suffered no motor impairment and his speech is fully recovered. He was kept in hospital for a few days to undergo tests to check that everything was okay. The hospital neurologist said Myron's condition 'is almost as if he never had a stroke at all.' Myron flew home to California and is presently being treated with antibiotics to combat a mild blood infection which the doctors traced to his recent bout with shingles. At the family's insistence, Myron will take it easy for the rest of this month. His next appearance will be at Hoefteft in Minot, ND on October 14th." ¶ More recently, on January 1, 1999, Bob Berta, former president of the Bay Area Accordion Club, wrote on *rec.music.makers.squeezebox* (the usenet newsgroup for accordionists), "After surviving a stroke, Myron was found to have cancer. Evidently he has successfully gotten rid of that. Now word comes that

he is suffering from pneumonia and in the hospital." At the time Myron asked friends who wished to send cards, "funny ones," to: Myron Floren. % Randee Floren, 22728 Date Ave, Torrance, California 90505. However, all that's in the past. **Myron is well and he's back.** We happily note (p. 4) that he's **playing this year at the Kimberly International Festival**—which is heartening to all of us. We thought this article would stir a lot of fond memories and make an interesting pairing with Guy Kluseusek's memories & how Guy took inspiration from many of the same roots, but diverged and developed his talent in a different direction—and that's the glory and diversity of the accordion.]

Happy Birthday Clyde

Clyde Forsman turned 86 and we sang *Happy Birthday* to him at our last meeting. Clyde said, "Well, I'm still here. What keeps me going is playing the accordion; it's sort of a Scandinavian Pacemaker." Clyde's keep-going-ness was attested to by Kimric Smythe who said that during the daylong event at his shop, Clyde stayed in the backroom playing his accordion hour after hour without a break, "I began to think he'd found the secret of perpetual motion."

Info Wanted

Roy Olsson would like some information on an accordion inscribed, "G. Galleazzi Accordion Maker, 478 Jackson Street, San Francisco, CA. Pat. Aug 18, 1896 Gold Medal Awarded Cal. Mid. Exp." Roy also wonders if the name "Galleazzi" may now have been changed to "Galassi." Email: NOSTALG1@aol.com.

The Boom Room

Accordionist Jon Hammond performed at the *Boom Boom Room* (John Lee Hooker's famous Blues Night Club) in San Francisco last week with Ronnie Smith (drums) and Barry Finnerty (guitar). Their program included burning renditions of *Cookin' at the Continental* and *Liberated Brother* by Horace Silver. Two agents from the Bill Graham Presents concert booking agency arrived to critique the show.

Jon is currently in Manhattan working on his TV show and also meeting with the local 802 Musicians Union Jazz Committee.

Danny Pollard

We noted in the May 5th edition of *The Chronicle* with some sadness the passing of the fine Cajun/Zydeco player Danny Pollard. Our condolences go out to his family and friends. He will be missed.

Day of the Accordion on June 17 Has 10 Great Acts


The **DA-SF** program will highlight just about every kind of music that can be played on an accordion. The line-up from noon to 6:00 PM @ The Cannery is as follows:

1) The Bay Area Accordion Club Fun Band; 2) Bella Ciao—Italian pop; 3) Conjunto Romero-Tejano; 4) Big Lou: San Francisco's Accordion Princess; 5) The Jazz Chords (three, count them, Jazzy Accordionists); 6) Baguette Quartette—French Cabaret; 7) Sexfresh Bossa—Mambo Rock; 8) The Squeegees, Polka Band; 9) Alex Yaskin, Bayanist; 10) The Crawdaddy's Zydeco. Come early, stay late. It's a great day for music and the accordion.

Accordion Misdemeanors: A Musical Reminiscence

By Guy Kuceusek

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My first memory of the accordion is seeing one on television when I was 5 years old. In the early '50's, the accordion was incredibly popular, reflected by the television success of Dick Contino on The Horace Heidt Show and the Ted Mack Amateur Hour, and the weekly Lawrence Welk broadcasts. I coaxed my dad

into buying me my first instrument, a 12-bass accordion. My first teacher was Joe Macko, who came to our house to teach. I remember learning *In a Little Spanish Town*, along with other popular standards.

After my parents got divorced in the early 50's, I moved to western Pennsylvania, to be raised by my aunt and uncle. Purely by chance, they found me one of the best accordion teachers in the country, Walter Grabowski, an intelligent, well-read man whose bookshelves were lined with volumes of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bertrand Russell. He told me he memorized Beethoven symphonies by playing recordings of them in his bedroom while he slept.

From the beginning, my training with Grabowski was both high-brow and low-brow: I was learning transcriptions of opera overtures, piano and violin concerti, and solo piano pieces; but I was also playing novelty pieces like *Dizzy Fingers*, *Flight of the Bumble Bee* and *Carnival of Venice*; and polkas and waltzes by Frank Yankovic, the hero of my Slovenian-American community. Grabowski stressed musicianship above all else: he could abide the occasional wrong note, but was unforgiving when I failed to honor the composer's intentions with regards to expression. He also gave me a solid grounding in harmony; by the time I was 16, I knew all the major, minor, seventh and diminished chords by memory.

In the early 1960's, Grabowski introduced me to pieces by Paul Creston, Nicolas Flagello, Alexander Tcherepnin, Elie Siegmeister and Henry Cowell, which had been commissioned by the American Accordionists' Association. These pieces were written expressly for the accordion and they instantly felt and sounded natural on my instrument. And I was young enough to be open to the new vocabulary which these composers used.

During all my excitement over original accordion compositions, I was still playing pop music, too. I had a band called *The Fascinations*, made up of accordion, tenor saxophone, guitar and drums, which played for weddings, parties, club dates and dances. We had no singer, so we covered a lot of tunes by my favorite instrumental band, The Ventures: *Telstar* and *Walk, Don't Run*; along with instrumental versions of *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* and *When I Fall in Love*; and Slovenian-American polkas and waltzes. I was transcribing tunes from the radio and records and began writing

my own polkas, which became my introduction to the world of composition.

In 1967, Grabowski introduced me to the "free bass" accordion. Up until that time, I was playing a standard, or "Stradella bass," accordion, on which the left hand buttons contained 2 rows of bass notes and 4 rows of pre-set chords—you could push one button and get a 3-note chord. The free bass accordion had a left hand system with all single tones and a range of over 4 octaves. With this instrument, I was able to play Bach and Scarlatti pieces directly from the keyboard manuscripts, with no transcription involved. And modern composers were using the left-hand buttonboard of the free bass as an equal melodic partner to the right-hand keyboard.

I spent the years 1965-72 studying music at several colleges, universities, and conservatories. Because the accordion is not accepted as a classical instrument in most universities in the United States, I majored in music theory and composition and got heavily involved in electronic music. Although I don't use electronics in my works now, working with electronic music for 3 years stressed to me the importance of timbre as a primary musical element and developed in me a love of drones.

The recordings I heard in college that I listened to the most were of works by Xenakis, Penderecki, Ligeti, Partch, Nancarrow and Feldman; but it was not until Morton Subotnick introduced me to Terry Riley's *Rainbow in Curved Air* and Steve Reich's *Come Out* that I realized I wanted to be a composer, not just a performer. The Reich piece, especially, made a huge impact on me: I was amazed and inspired by the idea that a composer could take a single, spoken phrase and make an entire 15-minute composition out of it without introducing any new material.

I began, in 1971, writing solo accordion pieces in which subtle harmonic shifts took place over long periods of time and in which tones would slowly cross-fade between the left and right hand keyboards. Often times I used analog or digital delays to cover the changes of bellows, thus providing a continuum. The only piece which has survived from this time is *Toronto: Seventh* (1972), for one or more accordions.

From 1972-75, I taught part-time at the Acme Accordion School in Westmont, New Jersey. The director of the school, Stanley Darrow, introduced me to the European avant-garde literature for accordion, through the scores of Per Norgaard, Arne Nordheim, Ole Schmidt, Torbjorn Lundquist, et al., and the recordings of Mogens Ellegaard and Hugo Noth. It was from studying these scores and hearing these recordings that I learned about extended techniques for the accordion, which I incorporated into my composing and performing vocabulary.

In 1977, I began working with the Philadelphia-based ensemble, Relache, as performer, composer and music advisor. We specialized in what I call "performer choice" pieces—compositions for classically-trained performers in which all-or-part of the material for the piece is provided, but a good deal of decision-making is left up to the performers. A good example is Terry Riley's *In C* (1964), containing 53 melodic patterns which all the performers play in sequence, with each performer deciding independently how long to spend on each pattern, resulting in an infinite variety of phase-shifting. We created a repertoire of these kinds of pieces by collaborating with Pauline Oliveros, Malcolm Goldstein, Daniel Goode, Joseph Kasinskas, Thomas Albert and Mary Jane Leach. This was a very exciting process: we were creating a new kind of improvisation designed for performers who were not improvisers in the traditional sense. I composed *The Flying Pipe Organ of Xian*

(1985) for Relache using this technique.

In 1984, I heard John Zorn for the first time at New Music America/Hartford, performing his game piece, *Rugby*. This performance challenged every idea I ever had about ensemble playing: here was a situation where every decision in the piece was being made by the performers, guided by a set of instructions provided by Zorn. I was so excited by what I heard and saw that I ran up to Zorn on stage, introduced myself, and told him if he ever needed an accordion player in a future project, I wanted to do it.

The next year, Zorn took me up on my offer by inviting me to join the Cobra Big Band. With Cobra, Zorn was able to do for the '80's what *In C* did for the 60's: create a classic piece for open instrumentation for performers who wanted to be part of the creative process of realizing a piece. Cobra codifies just about every aspect of free improvisation: instructions are provided which enable individual ensemble members to determine orchestration, dynamics, density, types of material, endings, even the ability to call back events which happened earlier in the performance ("memory systems"). And, in a quintessentially American move, Zorn provides "guerrilla systems" for those independents who don't like taking instructions from anyone.

The Cobra Band was made-up of people whom I was meeting for the first time: Elliott Sharp, Bill Frisell, Bobby Previte, Wayne Horvitz, Zeena Parkins, Carol Emanuel, Arto Lindsay, Christian Marclay, and Anthony Coleman. I had no contact whatsoever with the free improv scene before, but I have since collaborated on numerous projects with many of these same people.

During the tour of Cobra, I asked Zorn about the possibility of writing me a solo accordion piece. He said that he had never written a piece in which he did not perform himself, but would be glad to give it a try. The result was *Road Runner*, which he finished in January of 1986, and which we first realized as a recording project for my cassette-only release, *Blue Window* (zOaR, out-of-print, reissued on *Manhattan Cascade*, CRI).

I was so encouraged by the results of the *Road Runner* experience that I continued commissioning solo accordion pieces from Lois V. Vierk, Mary Ellen Childs, Anthony Coleman, John King, Aaron Jay Kernis, Stephen Montague, Somei Satoh, William Duckworth and Alvin Lucier. There seemed to be a healthy, nurturing balance between my own composing and performing pieces by my colleagues.

My own music took an abrupt shift after meeting Zorn: up until 1985, my pieces were definitely out of the minimalist mold, concentrating on limited material which I would put under an intense musical microscope. My first solo piece after working with Zorn was *Scenes from a Mirage* (1985), a set of variations on a theme which sounds vaguely ethnic. I put the theme through the stylistic ringer, with references to flamenco guitar, Tex-Mex accordion, Balkan bands and Henry Cowell-like tone clusters. This was the first time since high school that I drew on popular music and the first piece I ever wrote using more than one genre. Although the piece sounds nothing like Zorn, its episodic structure and mixture of popular music sources with art music techniques came directly out of my experiences with Cobra and *Road Runner*.

Also in the mid '80's, I was invited to compose my first score for modern dance. I continued drawing on forms from popular music for this project, *Waiting Room*. I wrote a march based on a traditional Shaker melody; a cover version of *Sentimental Journey*, which I had Bill Frisell play over a drone; a middle-eastern-sounding tune called *Fez Up*; a jazzy, chromatic piece in 11/4, *Urban Rite*; and my first polka in 20 years, *The Grass, It Is Blue* (*Ain't Nothin' But a Polka*).

The Grass, It Is Blue gave me the idea for my next project. My thought was, if I can write a polka without giving up my avant-garde credentials, why don't I ask other composers to try to do the same? I invited composers from a broad cross-section of the alternative music scene— from free improv, Fred Frith, Elliott

Sharp, Tom Cora, Christian Marclay, John King, Nicolas Collins, Anthony Coleman; new classical music—William Duckworth, Carl Stone, Thomas Albert, Peter Zummo, Mary Jane Leach, Rolf Groesbeck, Aaron Jay Kernis, David Mahler, Joseph Kasinskas, Peter Garland, Daniel Goode, Guy De Bievre, Mary Ellen Childs, Lois V. Vierk, Bill Ruyle; jazz, pop, rock—Bobby Previte, Carl Finch, David Garland, Robin Holcomb, William Obrecht, Steve Elson, Phillip Johnston. I gave the composers only the following criteria: try to write a piece under 3 minutes that can be played either solo or with a band. The result was a collection I call *Polka from the Fringe*.

I have spent most of my creative life since 1985 writing music for dancers. There are so many things I like about writing for dance: the act of collaboration with someone outside your own discipline can create naive, outrageous, impractical demands—leading to improbable, surreal and inspired solutions; dance seasons are 3-6 days long, so you get to perform the pieces several times over a short period, polishing and refining the composition and performance; the audience is broader, less specialized, but at the same time more exposed and friendly to new music than concert music audiences. I have now written about 20 pieces for dance and it continues to be one of my favorite and most fulfilling activities.

For a 1992 dance project called *Passage North*, I put together an acoustic band of accordion, violin, cello and bass. I recently recorded the material and was so taken by the sound of that ensemble that I have decided to make it a working band. I'm now writing and arranging material for the group, to be called the Bantam Orchestra, and intend to tour and record with that combination for the next few years.

The most amazing thing about being an accordionist for 40 years has been to experience the dramatic shifts in public opinion about the instrument. As I said, I began playing in 1952, when the accordion was the most popular instrument in America. By the late 50's, however, the guitar had replaced the accordion in popularity: kids watching television at that time were more likely to see Elvis Presley playing guitar than Dick Contino playing accordion. During the 60's and 70's the accordion was decidedly and totally out-of-fashion. Not only were fewer people playing it, but the future of the instrument seemed relegated to camp and nostalgia.

But by the late '80's, low-and-behold, the explosion in world music brought the accordion back into vogue again—you could now see accordions not only in bands from Texas, Louisiana, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, South Africa and Madagascar—but in pop culture again, with Paul Simon, John Cougar Mellencamp, Los Lobos, Ry Cooder and Tom Waits. Now in the '90's, the accordion shows up frequently in television commercials, the ultimate capitalist compliment.

I've continued playing the accordion through all these attitude adjustments. People often ask me why. I used to explain that I made the choice when I was a 5-year-old, but that always made it sound like, had I been a sensible adult instead, I would have known better. Would I have made the decision knowing the negative image that came with the instrument? I don't know. I'm just thankful that I made the choice at an age when we act first and foremost on our instincts.

In 1988, I was asked to perform on *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, a long-running, children's television show. The producers explained to me that they wanted to show children that the accordion could be used as a classical instrument. For me, it was like coming full-circle. Now I had a chance to play accordion on television and just maybe there would be one child out there watching for whom the accordion would spark an interest, and perhaps even a life, in music.

(More)

About the Author

By Henry Doktorski

Guy Klucevsek has created a unique repertoire for accordion through his own composing and by commissioning over fifty works from composers including Mary Ellen Childs, Anthony Coleman, William Duckworth, Fred Frith, Aaron Jay Kernis, John King, Jerome Kitzke, Alvin Lucier, Stephen Montague, Somei Satoh, Lois V Vierk and John Zorn. He has composed over 20 dance scores for choreographers including Karen Bamonte, Angela Caponigro, David Dorfman, Anita Feldman, Victoria Marks and Mark Taylor.

Klucsevsek also composed the music for *Chinoiserie*, an evening-length music/theatre piece written in collaboration with Ping Chong and Company, which was presented on the 1995 Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where it ran for 5 sold-out performances. His solo performances include the Berlin Jazz Festival, New Music America, *Serious Fun!* at Lincoln Center, *Bang on a Can*, and the children's television show *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*. He has also performed and/or recorded with Laurie Anderson, Anthony Braxton, Bill Frisell, Fred Frith, Robin Holcomb, the Kronos Quartet, Pauline Oliveros, Bobby Previte, Relache and John Zorn.

In 1987, Klucsevsek commissioned *Polka From the Fringe*, a collection of 32 post-modern two-steps by such composers as Carl Finch, Fred Frith, Christian Marclay and Elliott Sharp, which he presented at the 1988 Next Wave Festival, and has performed around the world with his group, Ain't Nothin' But A Polka Band. He has released eight recordings as soloist/leader, including *Polka Dots & Laser Beams* and *Who Stole the Polka?*, which were chosen as the best recordings of 1992 by John Schaefer on the nationally-syndicated radio program *New Sounds*, and *Transylvanian Softwear*, which was cited as a 1995 Recording of Special Merit in *Stereo Review*.

He can also be heard on the recent compilations *Planet Squeezebox* on Ellipsis Arts and *Great Jewish Music: Burt Bacharach* on Tzadik. Klucsevsek received a 1995 New York Dance and Performance Award (BESSIE) for his score for David Dorfman's *Dance, Hey* and was awarded a "Listen Up" prize for "Best Original Score of 1996" by *Publishers Weekly* for his music accompanying the Audio Book version of E. Annie Proulx's novel, *Accordion Crimes*.

Free Range Accordion

A Review of Guy Klucsevsek's Latest CD

By Steve Mobia

There's nothing like a Guy Klucsevsek album. His eclectic sensibility is unmatched in the accordion world. Where else are you going to hear a goofy rendition of the horror movie theme *The Blob* alongside a serious dissonant dirge like Kernis' *Hymn*? This wild gear shifting is something unique to Klucsevsek's sensibility.

While most classical accordionists would steer clear of standard accordion fare (polkas, waltzes, folksongs), Klucsevsek acknowledges the public's common association with his instrument and makes the most of it—turning standard popular forms on their head using imaginative reinterpretations of the genres. He even came out with two albums of nothing but polkas (albeit the strangest polkas ever written).

In the present album though, there is less of this remixing and more originality. At times, particularly in Aaron Jay Kernis' *Hymn* the level of intensity and depth is nothing short of alarming. In other places, sophisticated silliness reigns. The "isms" of composers of the past have been surmounted by a general "musicism" (that is, all music has something to offer).

Though Guy Klucsevsek is certainly capable of speed demon playing (as evidenced by the cascading arpeggios in Montague's

Aeolian Furies) much on this recording makes use of slow homophonic textures. Despite an impulsive *zanybone*, his talent and interest here lies in subtlety, not flashy pyrotechnics. Most of the works chosen were written for Klucsevsek by composers he has met and been moved by. In this recording he plays a Titano *bayan* which has an extended range, giving the deep bass quite a punch.

Stephen Montague's rapid fire *Aeolian Furies* starts things off. The word *aeolian* refers to the natural minor mode as well as the Greek mythological "king of the four winds." Descending whirlwind triplets lead into syncopated unisons for both hands. After a brief reprise of the opening, the piece slows down to rolling swelling chords like a turbulent ocean. Then gusts of wind begin to move things again back up through the unisons heard before. The lines build in intensity with rhythmic energy being discharged in falling glissandos until a strong cluster chord completes the section. Tentatively the rhythm starts again though in spurts. The unison theme reenters along with the opening arpeggios and triple bellow shakes to a finale of diving glissandos.

The next piece, Jerome Kitzke's *Breath and Bone*, is pretty hard to describe. Full of loud and lively vocal effects (hooting and yelping, scat singing), percussive beating on the bellows, whistling, etc. Klucsevsek is perhaps the only accordionist who could pull this one off. The result is funny, outlandish and tender. A bluesy melody gets going then gets sidetracked into several other propulsive tangents before coming back to the opener rondo style. Then a soft whistling cadence leads to a gentle waltz. The spell is abruptly broken by a mad clock-like ticking. Then a reprise of the second subject is concluded by swooping vocals and finally a major chord pared down (or up) to a lone high E.

After the restlessness of the first two tracks, Somei Satoh's moody *Recitative* makes for a strong contrast. One can imagine huge dark waves advancing and cresting in slow motion. Klucsevsek's handling of extended rising and falling dynamics here is brilliant. In the bass a drone generally centered on B continues throughout only to rise briefly to support a couple of emotionally intense peaks.

Lois V. Vierk has written for Klucsevsek before, most notably her shimmering yet aggressively relentless *Manhattan Cascade* on the album of the same name. That piece was firmly in the minimalist camp. This one offers more variety. *Blue Jets Red Sprites*, said to be inspired by atmospheric phenomenon around lightning strikes is in several sections. After some building chords with yo-yo glissandos and swelling dynamics, a loud chugging begins, tossing chords from treble to bass. Some syncopations follow, leading into the longest section based on ascending figures against a regular pulse alternating with undulating major thirds. The chords grow more dissonant, the ascending figures longer and faster. Finally, out of a descending syncopation the chugging returns with a vengeance to conclude.

Guy's own pieces lately have a spare simplicity with repeating folk-like tunes. His artistry is in the phrasing of these deceptively easy passages. The three included here were written for a dance performance and are gentle and unimposing. The first *Coral Desert*, opens with the highest pitch reeds slowly outlining the theme. Then some nice ornamented harmonies enter and embellish it, occasionally inserting a wry playful comment. Extending lower, a deeper register accompanies the last restatement and the piece ends. *Organum* presents an ostinato, which subtly changes throughout. Over this is an expanding melody based on the ostinato figure in two polyphonic lines. A lovely ornamented folk-like tune opens *AOK Chorale* which largely consists of floating major seventh progressions which harmonize a repeating phrase which is a bare bones version of that opening melody.

The craziest entry on the album is a theme and variations of the sixties horror movie title song, *The Blob*, by pop veteran Burt Bacharach. The vocals sung by David Garland, include lyrics I don't remember from the original (which I saw appropriately at a Denver drive in when I was a kid): "It oozes and schmoozes, it lurks and works the room. It tangos, eats mangos, chitchats, wears spats. It seems quite harmless (after all it's armless) but please be careful of the blob."

A more serious look at Bacharach's tunes is the following spare rendition of his hit *One Less Bell to Answer*. Done on the accordion's high piccolo reeds playing the melody without accompaniment, this

arrangement perfectly expresses the loneliness the song describes. The masterwork on this CD is Aaron Jay Kernis' nearly nineteen minute *Hymn*. Pondering the issues of war and suffering, *Hymn* is reminiscent of the great Russian bayan works of Berinsky and Solotarjow, with it's huge pipe organ sonorities and dark pathos. The opening deep loud minor chords get progressively more agitated and dissonant, leading to a descending theme, which acts as a sort of passage or summation of grief with its falling line. The second part, a quiet yet still unnerving eulogy is suggestive of inner rumination of troubled thoughts bubbling just below the surface. After a reprise of the passage theme, the tensions suppressed in the second section erupt impulsively alongside a restatement of the opening. There seems to be a struggle as one theme interrupts the other, becoming a wild flurry of cluster chords building to an intense violent climax. The forth section is a reconciliation as light breaks up the preceding dark colors and the harmonies ascend slowly and deliberately into the upper regions. This is one powerful listening experience and commands complete attention.

To conclude, Klucevsek plays a pretty tune, *Boeves Psalm*, by the Swedish accordionist Lars Hollmer. On succeeding repetitions, the simple tune is filled out with added voices, giving it an almost heroic optimism.

This CD is well thought out as a journey of extreme contrasts. Only Vierk's piece failed to hold my complete attention through the entire seventy-two minute duration. The recording is well made with some stereo separation between the treble and bass manuals and tastefully applied reverb. The eleven-page CD booklet is detailed in the bios of the composers and Guy's own emotional reflections on their music. This one is certainly among Klucevsek's best efforts.

(Cont'd from p. 7)

Smythe & Survival

oped and went on until recently when Kim and J. D. were given an eviction notice. Obviously, they needed a lawyer on their side and the idea of an all day party was born as a way of raising money. It was hugely successful—they made more money than they had hoped—and all this was just the first act.

The second act: a week after the fund raising party, the landlord's next door computer store was raided by the Oakland Police. They found a man living there who had an outstanding warrant. They also allegedly found a substantial amount of methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia. The landlord went to jail for the night, but was back the following morning—apparently not legally entangled in the police raid and/or charges. Later, a moving van appeared and took away most of the computer equipment. Kimric thought the landlord was moving out, but no—the next day he was again open for business. Kim has no idea what the computer boxes that were carted away in vans contained. However, Kim subsequently received a legal document stating that the Accordion Center and 21 Grand were operating illegally, because Kimric and the gallery did not act on the eviction notice—which was confusing. Kimric's lawyer contacted the building manager suggesting that perhaps the landlord should vacate the premises, since he was allegedly associated with activities sufficient to cause a police raid. Kimric has acquired police documents containing testimony and court orders, which suggest the landlord may have had a murky past. So, the future of Smythe's Accordion Center at this point is uncertain. Once the legal fight began some in the Art Collective left; Kimric and the remaining artists are determined to see it through feeling that they have certain rights having spent a great deal of time, money and effort renovating their space, as well as building an excellent reputation and a promising business in the community. We'll have to wait for act three and the final resolution.

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. NEW LOCATION!!!
1540 Scenic, Berkeley. 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"

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Moose Lodge Daly City.
Call Val Kieser (510) 531-4836 to confirm.

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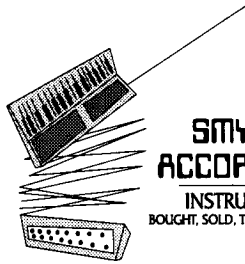
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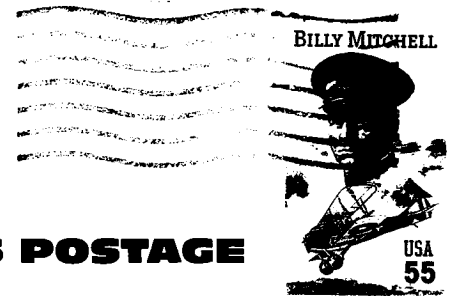
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BAAC PAGE would like to hear from our readers and we welcome any submission of material that might be of value to people interested in music and accordions of all persuasions. You may submit your articles to the address below. Or, contact our President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

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