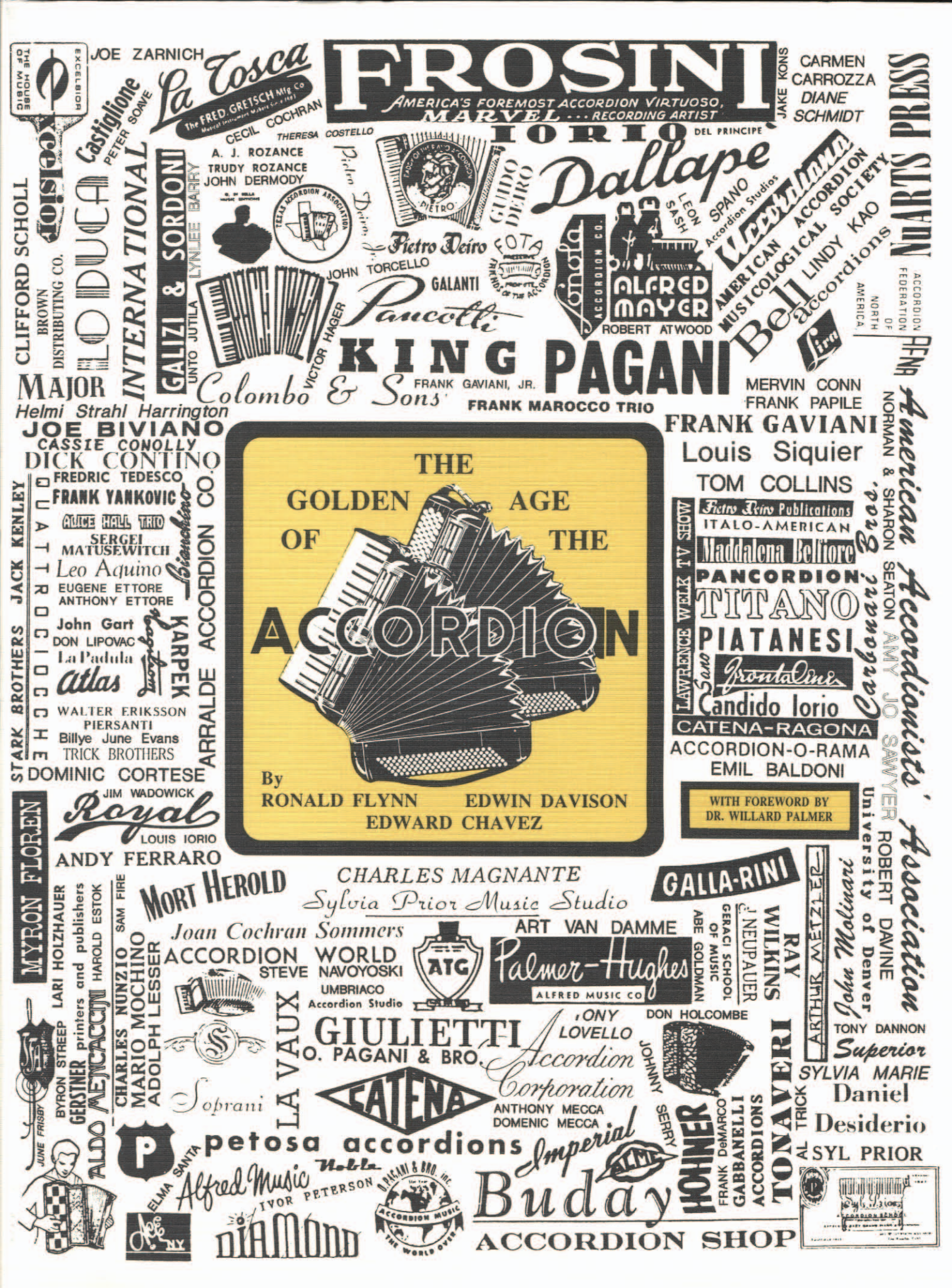
THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION
By RONALD FLYNN EDWIN DAVISON EDWARD CHAVEZ
WITH FOREWORD BY DR. WILLARD PALMER
FROSINI
AMERICA'S FOREMOST ACCORDION VIRTUOSO, MARVEL ... RECORDING ARTIST
IORIO
KING PAGANI
Dallape
La Tosca
Castiglione
Excelsior
ELDUCA
INTERNATIONAL
GALIZZI & SORDONI
Pietro Deiro
Pancotti
Colombo & Sons
MAJOR
Helmi Strahl Harrington
JOE BIVIANO
DICK CONTINO
FREDRIC TEDESCO
FRANK YANKOVIC
SERGEI MATUSEWITCH
Leo Aquino
EUGENE ETTORE
ANTHONY ETTORE
John Gart
DON LIPOVAC
La Padula
Atlas
WALTER ERIKSSON
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LOUIS IORIO
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The FRED. GRETSCH Mfg. Co.
THE HOUSE OF MUSIC
EXCELSIOR

THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION



By
RONALD FLYNN EDWIN DAVISON
EDWARD CHAVEZ

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DEDICATION

The previous editions of this book were dedicated to Ron Flynn's good friend Vincent Cirelli — accordionist, accordion maker, repairman, tuner, and teacher. This revised edition is also dedicated in his special honor.

Additionally, we dedicate this revised edition in honor of all the great accordion pioneers from America's past who, though no longer alive, live on in our memory. Without these pioneers, the "Golden Age" of the accordion would not have been possible.



PIETRO DEIRO — VINCE CIRELLI — RON FLYNN



RON FLYNN (Left) — CHARLES MAGNANTE (Right)

To my dear friend, author,
Ronald F. Lynn.
"What the accordion world
needs is more enthusiasm
like yours!"
Sincerely -
Charles Magnante



THE ARTISTS IN THE 'ACCORDIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS' PICTURE:

1. CHARLES MAGNANTE
2. ETHERINE GIUSTI
3. MARIE MANINI
4. ANDY ARCARI
5. JOHN PEZZOLO
6. PIETRO DEIRO
7. MIKE CORINO
8. ART VAN DAMME
9. GINA AVOLA
10. CAESAR PEZZOLO
11. VINCENT CIRELLI JR.
12. SAL BRAVOS & ETHERINE GIUSTI
13. VINCENT CIRELLI & DINO BENETTI
14. ANTHONY GALLA-RINI & JOHN MOLINARI

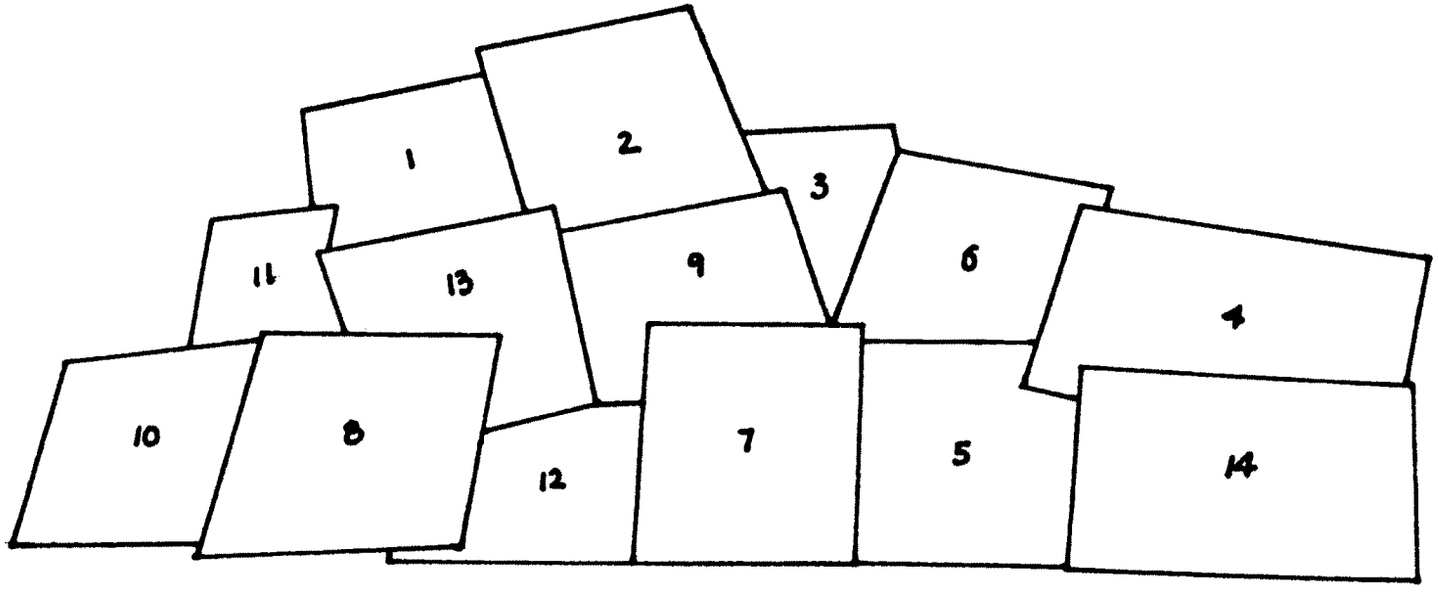

Chart: By Ellen Cheung

Flynn's accordion/photo collection companion chart

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Alfred Music Company, Inc xviii

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— Ron Flynn

*** Note: Although listed only one time, those persons marked with an asterisk provided assistance for each book edition.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR — RONALD FLYNN



Ronald Flynn was born in Ireland. He came to San Francisco when he was 10 years old. His love for a reed instrument began first with the harmonica. Noting that he had an intense fascination for the harmonica and that he played it almost endlessly, his parents decided to buy him an accordion when he was only 14 years old. This was a wonderful decision on their part and one that Ron has appreciated throughout his life.

He is a graduate of the University of San Francisco with a degree in Business Administration. He worked for the United States Postal Service for over 30 years until he retired in 1980. After his retirement, he devoted practically all of his time to his interest in the accordion. After a period of intense study of the accordion history in San Francisco, he decided to document his research and publish the information in 1984 in his book, ***Some Thoughts About The Accordion in San Francisco.***

Following the publication of his first book, he was urged by many of his friends to expand the book in a revised edition to include some historical information about the accordion beyond San Francisco to the entire USA. Challenged by this idea, he mobilized his resources, reorganized his material, gathered the necessary new information from the other parts of the country, and began a lengthy process of sorting through mountains of material and preparing additional articles to present the lives of other movers and shakers of the accordion world during accordion's "Golden Age" from other geographic areas of the United States. This new book could not have been completed alone and published in such a short time without the efforts of a large number of friends and close personal associates who helped in every way possible to secure all of the articles printed in the new sections of the book. He has expressed his sincere thanks to the many contributors in the Acknowledgments published in the beginning pages of this book.

Ron Flynn studied with many teachers: Alfred Firenze, John Anconi, Armand Papini, Theodore Pezzolo, Henry Amerio, Bud Seghieri, Vincent Cirelli, and John Reuther. He does not regard himself as a professional accordionist; instead, he considers that he is a lover of the accordion who is striving to promote the accordion and preserve its history for future generations.

Ron loves to play his accordion, collect accordion memorabilia, correspond with his numerous accordion friends, and write about the accordion.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR — EDWIN DAVISON



In 1988, Ron Flynn invited Edwin Davison to join him in revising his original book. Because of the vast amount of new material and the need to complete the revision as quickly as possible, additional help was essential if the book were to be printed on schedule. Edwin accepted the opportunity extended by Ron Flynn to co-author this new book.

Edwin Davison is a native Texan. He became interested in the accordion in the late 1950's, influenced by Myron Floren and various other accordionists appearing on programs, such as the Lawrence Welk Show. In Edwin's hometown of Hillsboro, there were no accordion teachers, but seeing an advertisement of a studio in Waco, Texas, he and his father set up a visit with a prominent teacher, the late John Reuther.

Arriving at the first session, Edwin had not yet acquired an accordion, so he asked John Reuther about purchasing an instrument. It was at this time that he first learned of the uniform keyboard accordion patented by Mr. Reuther. John gave a brief explanation of the differences between piano and uniform keyboard accordions, but left the final decision to Edwin concerning the choice of instrument. After some thought and discussion with his father, Edwin chose the uniform keyboard accordion — a decision he has always been proud he made.

Edwin took lessons from John Reuther for about 1 1/2 years, and then moved away to college and joined the Air Force after graduating from the University of Texas at Austin with a major in Psychology. Upon graduation, he entered Officers' Training School and received a commission in the United States Air Force in 1962. He also holds a master's degree in Psychology from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. He has over 27 years of active and reserve military service and is a retired Colonel in the Air Force Reserve. In his current civilian job, he is a personnel psychologist with the Department of the Air Force.

Today, Edwin plays the uniform accordion as a hobby, enjoying the relaxation and pleasure it gives him. Interested in preserving this type of accordion, he has restored many uniform keyboard accordions and has in his collection all three styles of accordion that were developed by John Reuther. Most of his avocational activities involve writing about the accordion.

Edwin is married to the former Patricia A. Janda, and has three children, Erik, Susan, and Jeffrey.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR — EDWARD CHAVEZ



Edward (Eddie) Chavez was born in San Antonio, Texas. His love for the accordion began at age 12 after he heard Charles Magnante play over the radio. This experience created an intense love for the magic sound of the accordion that has endured. His parents purchased him a 12-bass Hohner, and he learned to play it by ear. Today, he still plays the most difficult arrangements by ear, which his friends find most amazing.

He has been involved with the accordion throughout his life. His interests have ranged from collecting accordion records to corresponding with accordionists the world over. Because of his close association with all of the famous artists throughout the world, Eddie is often referred to in accordion circles as "Mr. Ambassador."

He enlisted in the military in 1941 and served in the U.S. Air Corps until 1945. Then, he transferred to the U.S. Army where he was commissioned as a First Lieutenant. During the Korean War, he worked in the intelligence division where he fabricated models of aircraft that could be used as visual aids for pilots and soldiers in the identification of enemy aircraft. Eddie was discharged in 1952, in the rank of Captain, after a distinguished military career. He then joined the Postal Service where he worked until he retired at the age of 55.

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Eddie is married to the former Kathryn Moser, who also loves the accordion and participates in accordion activities.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR — EDWARD CHAVEZ



Edward (Eddie) Chavez was born in San Antonio, Texas. His love for the accordion began at age 12 after he heard Charles Magnante play over the radio. This experience created an intense love for the magic sound of the accordion that has endured. His parents purchased him a 12-bass Hohner, and he learned to play it by ear. Today, he still plays the most difficult arrangements by ear, which his friends find most amazing.

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HOW THIS BOOK CAME ABOUT

When Ron Flynn got the idea for his first book, he had no idea that it would take just over 7 years to complete a personal ambition to document the rich history of the accordion in the San Francisco area and elsewhere. The first edition of his book was entitled: ***Some Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco***, and it was published in 1984 as a small, limited edition that was mostly for personal friends and acquaintances. After publishing the book, however, he was encouraged by some of his friends to write a new edition that included historical information about the accordion and artists in other parts of the United States. Challenged by this idea, he contacted a few other friends and found that they agreed that, for the sake of history, such a book would serve a real need within the accordion community. Thus, Ron drew up a plan to write the book since so few books had been written about the historic events and famous accordionists from America's "Golden Age" of the accordion.

Although Ron Flynn is a retired Postal Service employee and had a reasonable amount of free time to conduct the necessary research for the project, he realized that such a book would require more time than he could give — considering his health and expected longevity. In a conversation with one of his closest friends, Eddie Chavez of San Antonio, Texas, Ron asked Eddie's opinion and found that he also liked the idea. Eddie is also a retired Postal Service employee, a master aircraft model maker, and an accordionist.

Eddie Chavez immediately suggested several new ideas for the book and volunteered to help. So with Eddie's pledged assistance, Ron was near the decision point. However, Ron realized that this type of major revision would require an extensive amount of technical support and editorial assistance, as he would be doubling the size of the book. For this new project, he needed someone who could help with the additional writing, editing, and word processing that would be required. Ron did not want just a typist; he hoped to find someone who was also an accordion enthusiast who would know the historical background and understand the basic thrust of the book. Here again, Eddie helped Ron make the total commitment to the project by introducing Ron to his friend, Edwin Davison, who could help in the revision of the book, particularly in developing the new articles about the accordion artists and events from outside the San Francisco area. When Ron contacted Edwin with a proposal, he was warmly greeted and found that Edwin would be willing, despite his heavy workload, to help prepare the revised edition.

With these two associates and with all of the necessary support requirements now met, Ron became totally committed to the new edition! But, what would the new book be called? In the beginning months of the book's preparation, the authors planned to name it "Some Historical Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco and the U.S.A." as they thought that title would tie the two editions together, making one an extension of the other. However, only a few months before sending the book to the printer, they thought that a shorter title would be more appropriate. So, they sought another title, and after much deliberation, they chose a shorter, more descriptive title: ***THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION.*** This new title perfectly described the scope and purpose of the book. Later, they realized that this new title had been waiting to be discovered all along. The phrase "Golden Age" had been mentioned in article after article, but had been overlooked as a potential book title.

The authors' association throughout the project was a joy that they shall always cherish. Never once was there any disagreement or dissension as they worked toward the common goal of preparing this new book. Each of them worked on various facets of the book's preparation, including research, writing, and editing of the final copy. Eddie Chavez was primarily responsible for making the initial contacts and personal followup with the accordionists featured in the

book, while Ron Flynn and Edwin Davison collaborated in developing the new articles and editorial comments, and proofing and coordinating finished articles with the book's many contributors. Without a total team effort, this book could never have been completed.

When the authors published the 1990 edition of this book, there was a great satisfaction in helping to preserve a portion of accordion history for posterity. Nonetheless, the authors felt some sadness because the book could not include some of the artists from the past who had died before the edition was published. Additionally, several other prominent artists had been asked to submit information about their career, but they never found time to submit the manuscripts and photos needed to prepare their story. But, perhaps these will be lessons for the future, and hopefully, someone reading this book (some other accordion enthusiast and history buff) will take up the torch and accept the challenge to research and document the lives of the accordion pioneers who have not yet been included or some of today's contemporary artists who are indeed performing in the rich traditions of the past.

——— ABOUT THE NEW 1992 REVISED EDITION ———

As the inventory of the book began to get low, the authors had to decide whether to reprint the 1990 edition or to prepare a revised edition which would involve additional work and expense. After considering various options, they decided that a revised edition could be prepared in the short time available if a coordinated effort were made. So, a revised edition was born! This new edition is noticeably different and more comprehensive. Although it contains all of the articles from the previous edition, the text of the new revision was reformatted into double-columns to improve its readability and create additional space for many new photographs and two new articles that had become available after the previous edition was published. A durable, linen-finish laminated material was chosen for the book's cover, and a comprehensive index was compiled to aid in locating persons and events mentioned in the book. These new features are significant improvements that will make this edition a treasured addition for every accordionist's library, even if a copy of the 1990 edition was originally purchased.

In the beginning pages of the 1990 edition of this book, one of the closing sentences on page xv was a misstatement that, in retrospect, should be corrected. The sentence aptly stated what was then thought to be true: "Most likely, this is Ron Flynn's final book as he is now over 70, and his arthritis no longer permits him to continue as he has in the past." At that time, no one would have imagined that just two years later, the book would be sold out and a new edition would need to be published! Indeed, the other two coauthors are anxious to correct this misstatement, for it gives them great joy that Ron Flynn is still active in promoting the accordion. We hope everyone enjoys this new edition as much as we have enjoyed fulfilling our personal ambition to write it.

— RONALD FLYNN
San Francisco

— EDWIN DAVISON
San Antonio

— EDDIE CHAVEZ
San Antonio

SOME BEGINNING WORDS ABOUT THE INFORMATION IN THIS BOOK

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Much of the information in this book has been derived from the featured individual artists and accordion firms themselves rather than through costly and time-consuming independent research. Having worked closely with these contributors during the preparation of this book, we have every reason to believe in the integrity and accuracy of the individuals who have submitted information for this book. Notwithstanding, there may nevertheless be a small number of facts, such as dates or names recalled after many years, in which future documentary information, currently unavailable to the authors, might differ somewhat from the information printed in this book.

DISAGREEMENTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

Also in a book of this nature, there may be a small number of disagreements or contradictions between artists since the articles were written independently, and each individual's recall of information is dependent upon many different factors. The authors have in many instances had to rely solely on individual accounts that had been recalled after a span of many years.

INDIVIDUAL OPINIONS AND STATEMENTS OF COMPARISON

We have sought to avoid any unfair comparisons or unwarranted favor that would tend to cast any individual as the "best" accordionist or infer that one accordion brand is superior to any other. In some instances, individual contributors have presented their own opinions concerning the "best" accordionist or a favored accordion brand; however, we wish to emphasize that those opinions are solely those of the contributors and not of the authors.

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENCE

Overall, however, we are confident that the reader will find this historical information about the accordion and its artists to be a fascinating and comprehensive account of the early days of the accordion as seen through the eyes of those who were destined to make that history.

SOLICITATION OF INFORMATION FOR CORRECTION OF FACTS

We welcome the submission of any substantiated information from readers pertaining to the correction of any facts known to be in error, so that the information can be verified and corrected in future reprintings of this book.

FOREWORD

During the first half of the twentieth century, the accordion blossomed from its infancy to a popularity that is difficult to imagine unless you were a witness to its rapid and steady ascent on the musical scene. As improvements in construction kept pace with the demands of professional accordionists and teachers, it attained an unmistakable prominence in the mid-1930's, and its popularity continued to accelerate through the 1950's and even into the early 1960's. During these years (except for the interruption of accordion production occasioned by World War II) anyone visiting a musical instrument store could see row upon row of accordions of various sizes, makes and models on display. There were more accordions than guitars, pianos, organs, wind instruments, violins, or percussion instruments. This was the **GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION**. The accordion was KING, and it was just about everybody's favorite musical instrument.

Those were the days of the true pioneers of the accordion: the professional artists who explored the musical possibilities of a new instrument and who set the early standards and traditions of performance. Very few of these artists became superstars whose names were household words; but to the accordion students, teachers, and professional performers of that era, they were musical idols whose compositions, transcriptions and other publications, radio appearances and public performances were eagerly awaited. In those days there were studios throughout the country that boasted from 500 to 1,000 accordion students, with each studio employing several dozen accordion instructors. Any student who showed exceptional talent was assured a job as an addition to the teaching staff. It was difficult to find enough teachers to fill the demand.

Accordion bands were heard throughout the land, playing a great variety of music, from polkas to transcriptions of symphonic music, and each student aspired to be in the top band of the local studio. Annual accordion festivals were held in almost every state. At these festivals, the students entered into competitions for ratings, awards and prizes. The winners went on to regional, national, and international competitions. At regional levels, as many as 3,000 to 5,000 accordionists would have an opportunity to be adjudicated by well-known accordion teachers. On the final festival day when the awards were made, students and their parents had the opportunity of hearing world-renowned accordionists in concert.

While the above scenarios may be difficult to imagine, let me assure you that they are not in the least exaggerated. It is possible that I was given the honor of writing this foreword precisely because I was a personal witness to almost every aspect of the scenes described above. This was made possible for many reasons, among which was the ever-increasing popularity of the Palmer-Hughes Accordion Method in accordion schools across the country. Thus, my partner and I found ourselves inevitably drawn into the midst of every major accordion event. Having such a unique vantage point, we were able to fully experience this truly fascinating period. Naturally, over the course of many years, we came to know through personal association almost all of the famous artists and teachers mentioned in this book. We were both grateful for this tremendous opportunity.

In the event that someone who is less than enthusiastic about accordion music should read this book, let me mention the fact that the accordion is, in at least one respect, the most sensitive and expressive of all keyboard instruments. This is because its sounds are produced by means of bellows which causes air to move over the metal reeds to produce a tone. The bellows is perhaps the least understood feature of the instrument as far as the public is concerned, and some may even view it as a fault rather than a virtue. This is often because unskilled accordionists use the bellows improperly, producing unwanted interruptions in the sound, misplaced crescendos and sforzandos, and what may be described as "gasps" and "wheezes."

But the bellows, in the hands of the seasoned accordion artist, becomes the heart and soul of the instrument. It allows perfect control of the attack and release of a tone. A single tone or

combination of tones may be sustained at will, and may be increased or decreased in volume as the player desires. Pianists have no such control over the tones they produce, and while the organ is capable of sustaining a tone and making crescendos and diminuendos while sustaining it, this cannot be done with anything approaching the finesse afforded by the bellows of an accordion, which handles in many respects with a sensitivity not unlike that of the bow of a violin or 'cello. Those who have not experienced musical satisfaction from hearing appropriate music played expressively on the accordion simply have not heard the right pieces played by the right artist.

Ron Flynn, along with those who have helped him to write this book, feel that it is important, for the sake of musical history, to record some of those artists whose accomplishments contributed so much to the development of the accordion and to its almost incredible popularity during its "golden era." These were dedicated human beings who totally devoted their talents and genius, not only to their instrument and its music, but also to the encouragement of others who understood their enthusiasm. They were legends in their own time, and the fascinating stories of their struggles, triumphs, and accomplishments should not be lost to the people of future times.

The development of the mechanics of the accordion also deserves a hearing. Representing a vast number of artisans whose skills went into the construction, maintenance and improvement of the instruments, the story of Emil Baldoni, a gentleman who had rare skill and dedication, will acquaint the reader with some of the complexities of that aspect of accordion history.

The names included in this book cannot possibly cover all those individuals who made significant contributions as artists and professional accordionists. A simple listing of all the names would be as large (and about as informative) as a telephone directory. To give proper credit for the incredible popularity of the accordion would mean that the dedicated teachers, studio managers, accordion importers, and even those enthusiasts who promoted accordion concerts in their areas would have to be chronicled. Every story has its unsung heroes, and this history of the accordion has many thousands of deserving individuals who might rightly ask, "Why was my name not included?"

Let the narratives that make up this book be considered "vignettes" from the history of an instrument that has been beloved by many, and still remains an instrument well deserving of all the popularity it has ever achieved. There are still many today who regard the accordion as the most versatile single instrument in existence — a completely portable instrument capable of producing melody, harmony, and rhythm; an instrument complete unto itself, requiring no electronic hookup or amplification; an instrument capable of infinite gradations of volume, tone and expression; an instrument which, in the hands of an artist, is worth of consideration by the most exacting connoisseurs of the musical arts.

The gathering of information that has gone into this book has been a monumental effort. Ron Flynn, Eddie Chavez, Edwin Davison, and others who have contributed a vast amount of time and energy in the preparation of this work have done so out of love for the instrument, with no possible motive of personal gain. For this altruistic effort, they deserve the thanks of all who share some measure of their devotion to the accordion, and the appreciation of future generations who will now be able to know at least a part of its fascinating history. I hope that this book will not be an end in itself and that it will excite others who may someday wish to write future books to record the enormous current accomplishments of the many contemporary artists of our times here in the U.S. and the rest of the world. Like Ron Flynn, I also urge someone to pick up the torch to recognize and honor today's other talented artists.

WILLARD A. (Bill) PALMER, Ph.D., Mus.D., L.H.D.

WILLARD PALMER

Musician, Writer, Teacher, Lecturer, and Co-Author, Palmer-Hughes Accordion Course.



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"My first focus was piano, but that focus changed to the accordion when accordion became so popular back in the '40s and '50s. You'd walk into a store back in those days and see 30 accordions displayed like they display guitars and electronic keyboards now. I could go into a music store and stand there and play a few tunes, and I'd walk out with ten students — and a commission for selling accordions. Accordion kind of went down the tubes on account of guitars and electronic keyboards, but now there's a little bit of a resurgence.

"I was teaching 86 private lessons a week in 1950 when I first started writing the methods for accordion. Someone suggest that we probably couldn't have more than three books in the course, but it was a kind of instant success; we wound up with 75 accordion books that went up to Level Ten.

"When I sent in Level Ten, I remember that Morton Manus, my publisher, called me and said, 'This is awful hard. Could Magnante play it?' I said, 'He could if he went through the other nine [levels].' Magnante was the best known accordion player back then; he got his start with Paul Whiteman, and played with the Major Bowes Family Hour and The Manhattan Merry-Go-Round, a weekly NBC show.

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"My partner, Bill Hughes, and I toured as a duet for Columbia Artists from the '40s right on through to 1964; we played concerts full of Bach and Mozart, stuff like that. We opened with a Bach G-minor fugue, and it wasn't too bad; then we'd wind up with show tunes. I'd play whatever you asked me back then, and I still will.

"I was teaching accordion at the University of Houston — did you know that they once had an accordion department out there? But in 1964, the state took over, and you had to go through a bunch more rigmarole to sell whatever you were teaching. I just didn't have the stomach to try to convince people for the nineteenth time that the accordion was worth considering as a legitimate musical instrument. In Russia they give degrees in accordion; it's a perfectly legitimate instrument.

"Our 40-piece Accordion Symphony Orchestra played Carnegie Hall around 1960, but I appeared in public with my accordion for the last time in 1964. I played a solo performance of the Paganini Violin Concerto in D Major with the Houston Symphony at the Miller Memorial Theater; Clyde Roller was the director.

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"He liked that idea and besides, he was tired of being known as just an accordion publisher. So I started doing the Masterwork Editions for piano. My first Masterwork Edition was Inventions and Sinfonias (the Two- and Three-part Inventions), and I worked from the original manuscripts. In the Two-Part Inventions, I wrote my interpretations of the composer's ornaments in a gray ink; the gray ink's getting a little too light to see now, so they're republishing the very first one that I did. Another one, The Well-Tempered Clavier, took me 18 years of research and was published first as a limited edition in a leather binding with gilt lettering. William F. Buckley ordered twelve copies of the limited edition; he plays harpsichord well enough to get through the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D Minor, and that takes a lot of intestinal fortitude.

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"The student books really caught fire in 1990; we sold one million copies, and this year we're already over two million. I have a hundred Masterwork Editions out, but how many people can play the Italian Concerto and all that? The royalties aren't high on that stuff. We sell, maybe, 6,000 Two- and Three-Part Inventions, but to justify the work you need to sell hundreds of thousands.

"I used to give about a hundred lectures a year, but I'm not going out anymore; I'm getting old. I just stay home and write so I can put our more books. When I first got my harpsichord, I played 14 concerts — no, I didn't. [Chuckles.] I played one concert 14 times; I played it till I learned it.

"Most people who know my stuff don't know that I'm here in Houston, and I've been here since 1941, the year of Pearl Harbor. I fought the Battle of Ellington Field, teaching bombing and navigation for four and a half years; I would have been a musician [in the service], only I found out that all the musicians were buck privates, so I decided that I'd be a pre-flight teacher. [Laughs]

"I write a lot of my pieces in the bath tub. I like to soak in the tub because I have a bad back. By the time I shave, I'll often have an idea finished, and I just have to go into the studio and write it down.

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PART I: GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION IN SAN FRANCISCO

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***Editor's Note:** Extensive pictorial histories of the Guerrini, Colombo, and Standard accordion companies were printed in the first book entitled Some Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco (1984) by Ron Flynn. The accordions shown in the early catalogs of these companies are considered typical of the period, and the pictorials are reprinted in this edition to preserve for future generations the style and prices of typical accordions during the "golden age" of the accordion. Certainly, other accordion companies were also operating in Chicago, Milwaukee, New York, and other parts of the United States, and they manufactured their own superb accordion lines. Understandably, there is insufficient space in this book to present all of the different lines of accordions that existed during that important period; however, interspersed in available space throughout the book are accordion models that are representative of the many other accordion companies throughout the U.S.*


ACCORDION CLUB. SAN FRANCISCO
1916
The Johnson Studio


11 OCHIPPOLINI
22
30 GIUSEPPE FIGONE
39 JOHN PEZZOLO
10
21 LOUIS ALLARA
29
38 SANTO SANTUCCI
9 ARMANDO PETROMILLI
20 CAESAR PEZZOLO
28
37 DAN BOUDINI
8 OLINTO DE LUCCA
19 PIETRO FROSINI
27 SILVIO SAVANT
36 PIETRO DEIRO
7 DEL DEGLIANTONI
18 LOUIS DE MARTINI
ACCORDION CLUB SAN FRANCISCO 1916
35 CHELI BROS.
6 JOE DE PUCCI
17 ?.
34 ANGELO CAGNAZZO
5 ALBERT ARCHIVI
16 GUIDO DEIRO
33 PHIL BOUDINI
4 JEROME DAMONTE
15 DAMONTE
26 EUGENE GIANNERINI
32 ADOLPH MOSCONI
3 GARY PIATANESI
14 PAOLO MASCAGNI
25 CAMILLO SCOPESI
31
2
13 PHIL DE MARTINI
24
1
12
23
CHART: By Ellen Cheung

ACCORDION CLUB PICNIC

FAIRFAX PARK, SUNDAY, AUG. 20, 1933



GALLA-RINI

GALLA-RINI
in person
CONCERT
DE-LUXE
and directing his
Accordion School
Pupils in a Special
Program

PROFESSOR
JOHN PEZZOLO
Conducting his
Class of Accordion
Players in
CONCERT AND
INDIVIDUAL
SELECTIONS



JOHN PEZZOLO

GATE PRIZE
$500. PIANO
ACCORDION
Donated by
GUERRINI & CO.

ADDED ATTRACTION: SAN JOSE ACCORDION BAND
Rendering Popular Selections and Favorite Marches
Union Music by Paris Classical Orchestra

40 CTS GENERAL ADMISSION **40** CTS

Hear GALLA-RINI in Person

GRAND
TOMBOLA
PRIZES
FIRST PRIZE
$100.00

ACCORDION CLUB PICNIC

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PROLOGUE

— August 20, 1933

——— It's Sunday morning at Columbus and Broadway in San Francisco, and you can hear accordion music in the air as you walk along the streets. The still silence of the morning is interrupted by voices and laughter; students with accordions are climbing onto buses in preparation for the Annual Accordion Club Picnic on the other side of San Francisco Bay, at Fairfax Park in Marin County.

Today, Anthony Galla-Rini, John Pezzolo, and Henry Sinigiani will be presenting their students in concert and individual selections. Anthony Galla-Rini is the featured soloist. The gate prize is a beautiful $500 piano-accordion donated by the Guerrini Company — one of the eight accordion makers in San Francisco.

Many similar events are undoubtedly being held elsewhere in the United States today — a picnic, a recital, a concert, or other musical event presented by great teachers, artists and students. What lovely memories these grand events will etch in the minds of those privileged to attend.

. . .

In this book, we have captured some of the typical moments from the past that brought joy and happiness to millions during the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. In so doing, we hope to preserve some of these memories for future generations to read and enjoy. The persons who had the privilege of living during those rich, early times in America can reminisce concerning similar experiences that almost certainly will parallel the events described throughout Part I of this book. The periodic reference to the Annual Accordion Club Picnic at Fairfax Park is made at selected points in the narrative of San Francisco's history. Also interspersed throughout this history are some descriptive comments about various members of the Accordion Club (of) San Francisco who were in the picture that hung on the wall inside the Guerrini Accordion Company (circa 1916).

In the ensuing Parts of this book, we go beyond the accordion history in San Francisco to the history that was simultaneously occurring in Chicago, New York, and the other key cities throughout the United States. The Editor's Note at the beginning of each article provides comments and historical perspective concerning the artist's life or subject being presented.

SAN FRANCISCO — THE EARLY BEGINNINGS

During the early 1900's, San Francisco was the center or capital of accordion manufacturing in America for a long period of time. Later, Chicago and New York gained equal recognition in this important area. The principal accordion manufacturers in San Francisco and dates of their operation are shown below:

Louis Miller	1883-1917
Paul Greub	1924-1975
Galleazzi & Sons	1896-1944
Standard	1933-1936
Guerrini Company	1903-1968
Pacific	1945-1954
Colombo & Sons	1927-****
Cirelli	1946-****

**** Only two of San Francisco's former accordion companies are still in business today: Colombo & Sons Accordion Corporation (Accordion Imports, Tuning, & Service) and Cirelli Accordion Service (Major Accordion Repairs, Tuning, and Service).

With the above firms, I* thought I had included all of the original accordion makers in San Francisco, but in looking through the older City directories I found two additional names that deserve mention. In the 1862 directory under "Musical Instruments, Makers," I found Keene, C. C. (Accordions and Flutes), 103 Montgomery. Then in the 1875 directory, Keene was listed as "Manufacturer, Accordions." All other dates of San Francisco directories listed him under "Musical Instruments — Makers and Repairers," including his last listing in 1909.

The name Zanini, Celso Giovanni, was first listed in the 1889 directory under "Musical Instruments, Cigars and Tobacco" at 424 Montgomery Avenue; the 1891 directory listed him as an accordion teacher and musical instrument dealer. The 1907 San Francisco-Oakland directory, combined because of the earthquake and fire in 1906, listed him under "Musical Merchandise: Zanini C. G. & Co., Accordion Manufacturers," 664 Broadway. The heading "Accordion Maker" was mentioned again in both the 1909 and 1910 directories, the last time his name was listed. Between 1889 and 1910, Zanini was then listed variously as "Musician; Teacher, Accordion and Musical Instruments; Cigars; Accordion Makers; Musical Instruments, Repairer; Accordion Manufacturers; Lodgings; Musical Instruments, Cigars and Tobacco."

Notwithstanding these numerous directory listings, I have never seen any accordions with the names Keene or Zanini on it. I also looked through the first (1850) San Francisco directory to see if I could find anything about accordions, but there was nothing — not even a Musical Instruments' section. The closest I could come was "Amusements." There were four kinds listed: Exhibition of Model Artists, Dramatic Museum, Rowe's Olympic Circus and Bull Fighting Arena on Vallejo Street near the St. Francis of Assisi Church, founded in the North Beach in 1849.

The North Beach District of San Francisco was an area where many Italian immigrants settled after the Gold Rush of 1849. World-famous Fisherman's Wharf is the result of their presence. In this City of St. Francis, the names Galleazzi, Colombo, Guerrini, Pezzolo, Deiro, North Beach, and Columbus Avenue have always meant just one thing over a period of many years — ACCORDIONS.

The Italians had not originally been honored by having a street named for the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus. In fact, there was no such street in the original plans for the North Beach. In 1869 the City decided that it wanted a street that would go directly to Fisherman's Wharf from Washington and Montgomery streets. This meant slicing through 20 blocks at a 45-degree angle. In

* This pronoun reference refers to author Ron Flynn in Part I and in the Editor's Notes preceding the articles in this book.

1872 the necessary property was acquired by means of eminent domain, and the City named the newly constructed thoroughfare Montgomery Avenue, causing it to be frequently confused with Montgomery Street. This confusion was finally eliminated in 1909, when the name Montgomery Avenue was changed to Columbus Avenue.

Not all of the accordion teachers were in the North Beach District; some were located in or had moved to the Mission District: John Anconi, Alfred Almestad, Vincent Cirelli, John Molinari, John Pezzolo, Reno Pucci, Michael Parti, Dominic Saso, Bud Seghieri, etc. The district received its name from Mission San Francisco De Asis (Mission Dolores) established by the Spanish on October 9, 1776. A military garrison (Presidio de San Francisco) and a settlement called "Yerba Buena" were established the same year. On January 30, 1847, the name Yerba Buena was changed to San Francisco. On June 29, 1984, the City celebrated its 208th religious birthday.

In 1932, Anthony Galla-Rini opened his studio in a beautiful Victorian mansion in the Pacific Heights District. This building, at 2209 Van Ness Avenue, had survived the 1906 earthquake and fire. This calamity of April 18, 1906, created the dividing line between the old and new San Francisco; the City would never be the same as it had been before.

After three days and three nights of fire that burned some 28,000 buildings in a four-square-mile area and caused the loss of more than 600 lives, the old San Francisco was gone. Galla-Rini's building was saved because it was



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on the west side of Van Ness Avenue. The east side was dynamited to stop the spread of the fire westward.

Galla-Rini remained at the same location until 1937; he then moved to the East for a busy career as a recording and concert artist, teacher, composer, and arranger. In addition to the main studio in San Francisco, he had opened a number of studios in the coast cities. According to the San Francisco city directories, associate teacher Henry Amerio stayed at the San Francisco studio for a couple of years before moving across the Bay to Oakland.

In 1954 I visited the Guerrini factory at 277-79 Columbus Avenue, near Broadway. Inside the building the smell of glue and celluloid permeated the area. (There's nothing like the smell of a new accordion.) I was fascinated by the pictures on the walls; the one that held my attention was titled Accordion Club (of) San Francisco (in) 1916. It was the only club of its kind in the world at that time. I brought my camera with me on my next visit and photographed it. Thirty years later, I found the picture at home, and I began to wonder once again who the players were. I asked my former teacher Vincent Cirelli for help in identifying them. He then sent me to see Henry Sinigiani, who had been a tuner with Guerrini from 1923 to 1936. In 1927, Sinigiani was the staff accordionist on radio station KGO, playing with the 35-piece Walter Beban Band, but two strokes ended his professional playing career. (Two other accordionists were featured with the band: Johnny Toffoli and Louis Allara. They were a featured trio from time to time.)

Both Vincent Cirelli and John Molinari suggested that I make it a point to find and talk to Vincent Petromilli, former assistant manager of Guerrini Company. The assistance that I have received from Henry Sinigiani, Vincent Petromilli, John Reuther, and Paul Miners, who happened to visit Cirelli Accordion Service while I was researching this story, helped me to identify some of the persons in the photograph that I had taken approximately 35 years ago. Presented below are the persons thus far identified in this photograph, along with other pertinent comments about the pictured individuals.

GARY PIATANESI (#3) is the son of the founder of Colombo and Sons (126 Columbus) and father of Gordon Piatanesi, who heads the company today. In 1983, Gordon decided to move to Marin County. His new address is: Colombo and Sons Accordion Corporation, 1201 Andersen Drive, San Rafael, CA 94901. Says Gordon, "We were forced out of the North Beach by the expanding financial district — No parking." Gordon didn't say so, but the expansion of Chinatown did not help his situation. The Washington Square Theater, where Pietro Deiro played in 1909, is a Chinese theater today.

. . .

In 1847 the first Chinese immigrants arrived in San Francisco. By 1852 there were 12,000 Chinese nationals in the City. The Gold Rush with its promise of instant wealth had attracted many of them, and many more had been brought to California from China to labor on the construction of the first transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869. When the railroad was completed, many of the Chinese stayed in San Francisco and opened restaurants and laundries, both of which were in demand. Previously, some San Francisco residents had been sending their laundry to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) to be washed because of a lack of facilities in the City. The Chinese population multiplied, creating San Francisco's famous Chinatown, which was bounded by Pacific, Kearney, California, and Stockton streets. It is a major tourist attraction, and according to *The San Francisco Examiner* of April 17, 1984, "The Chinese comprise about 11.2% of San Francisco's estimated population of 706,900." (Reprinted with permission of *The San Francisco Examiner*, copyright 1984.)

. . .

ALBERT ARCHIVI (#5) was a teacher and concert artist. The city directory of 1915 shows his studio at 331 Columbus; it was probably there that he wrote his famous "Accordion Club March." It appeared in his ***Archivi Method For The Accordion*** published in 1917 in English, Italian, and Polish. It was dedicated to the Accordion Club.

DEL DEGLIANTONI (#7) was in the printing business; he printed the tickets for the accordion picnics. He lived at his printing shop at 6347 Mission Street. A visit to this address in 1989 revealed a fenced-in lot full of weeds and bushes.

OLINTO DE LUCCA (#8). A shoemaker.

ARMANDO PETROMILLI (#9). Paul Guerrini and Rafaelo Carbonari once worked for Galleazzi & Sons (Guiseppe, Frank and Theodore). In 1903, they started their own factory — the Guerrini Company. In 1907, they sold the company to Pasquale Petromilli (Armando's father) and Colombo Piatanesi. Paul Guerrini eventually returned to Italy where today his descendants are still making accordions in the Italian factories.

In 1927 the partnership of Petromilli and Piatanesi was dissolved. In the same year, Colombo Piatanesi started a new factory with his son Gary (Garibaldi) at 1251 Grant. Another son, Faust, joined them after completing school, and Colombo & Sons was born. In 1929 they moved to 122-24 Columbus (After acquiring ownership of the building, the address was changed to 126 Columbus). In the same building was accordion teacher Louis Judnick, and, of course, he played a Colombo accordion.

. . .

I remember hearing him at Treasure Island at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on San Francisco Bay. This man-made island was connected to Yerba Buena Island by a causeway. Yerba Buena was the anchorage point for the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, completed in 1936. The Golden Gate Bridge was completed the following year. A visit to the fair by ferry boat was indeed a treat — especially at night when Treasure Island looked like an illuminated jewel floating on the water. Once on the island, the aroma of coffee and the sound of music, marimbas, and accordion lured visitors to the Brazilian Pavilion. There the Cafe Brazil, with seats and tables for 200 people, served many different blends of rich Brazilian coffee. But, it was the music that drew the crowds to this place. The combination of the world-famous Hurtado Brothers marimba band and the accordion of Louis Judnick was simply fantastic to hear; it became my favorite place to go. The three most popular attractions were Billy Rose's Aquacade, a (water ballet) with Esther Williams and Johnny Weismuller, Cavalcade of the Golden West (spectacular outdoor scenes of the old West with covered wagons, stagecoaches, trains, cowboys, Indians etc. on a 400-foot-wide stage), and the Follies Bergere. As I left the Cafe Brazil (and I never wanted to leave), the strains of "La Golondrina" or "La Paloma" lingered in the air. I'll never forget the melodious music played in that wondrous, fascinating place. That was a year I shall always appreciate as it left me with so many extraordinary memories.

. . .

Now that Colombo Piatanesi and Pasquale Petromilli were no longer partners, Petromilli was the sole proprietor of the Guerrini Company. He and his sons, Armando and Vince, were making accordions, incorporating their own ideas into new designs. The company had 39 employees, all from Italy. The Petromilli family hired only the best that Italy had to offer. Craftsmen would come to the United States for 2 years, return to Italy for 6 months, and then come back again. The popular Guerrini accordion was shipped to virtually all parts of the U.S. and the world, including Europe where the accordion had been born (Invented by Friedrich Buschmann of Berlin in 1822 or possibly Cyrillus Damian of Vienna in 1829 -- see p. 282). France and

Italy followed up with vast improvements on the instrument. Sempre Avanti (Always Forward) was the Guerrini company's motto. Says Henry Sinigiani, "Head foreman Bepe Busilacchio could put things on an accordion that no one else would think of. When you bought a Guerrini accordion, it was like buying a Steinway piano."

In addition to the companies in San Francisco that were manufacturing accordions, there were two firms that simply did repairs and sold imports and used accordions. One was Taffi Brothers (Elio, Enrico & Gino), 4726 Mission Street (1930-33). The other was the San Francisco Accordion Manufacturing Company at 236 Columbus (1929-33). (This company was often referred to as a branch of Guerrini.) Pasquale's son, Armando Petromilli, was there with manager Al Cirimele, Guerrini's top bass machine man. That 4726 Mission address was a familiar one. Besides the Taffi Brothers, John Pezzolo opened a second studio there in 1950. For a couple of years, he had two studios with an associate teacher Angelo Sfarzo in charge at 325 Columbus. John Pezzolo retired in 1964, and Reno Pucci moved in until he closed the studio in 1984. Today, 4726 Mission Street is a Boutique and Gift Shop. You won't hear "Neapolitan Nights," "Ciribiribin," or "Come Back to Sorrento" there any more.

OCHIPPOLINI (#11). This is all Henry Sinigiani could remember about this player. He did recognize one player, but could not remember his name. "He could not read music, but sure could read the dice," said Henry.

PHILIP DE MARTINI (#13) used to drive the bakery truck for his brother Louis (#18).

DAMONTE (#15) and his brother were from Southern California. Is this Nino Damonte? Maybe, but I have no positive I.D.

GUIDO DEIRO (#16) was born in Salto, Italy in 1886. He was a famous vaudeville star, international recording artist, composer, and teacher. When he was a child he was given an accordion in which he took great interest. Years later, like his brother Pietro, he played in beer gardens and cafes in Germany and Italy. After saving enough money, he came to the United States, settling in Seattle, Washington. He later visited San Francisco and was offered a vaudeville contract. He was the first accordionist to play big-time vaudeville. Guido and Pietro were among the highest paid performers on the circuit. He started teaching when the "talkies" forced many vaudeville shows to close. He taught with Louis Allara at Green and Columbus.

Guido Deiro was quite a man with the ladies. The book, ***Mae West — A Biography***, mentions Guido. It was written by George Eells and Stanley Musgrove, New York: William Morrow and Co., 1982. *[See story by Guido Deiro's son on p. 121.]*

This great pioneer of the accordion, a man loved by all, passed away on July 26, 1950. A year earlier, he had a nervous breakdown due to overwork and exhaustion. A month before his death, a Guido Deiro benefit concert was held in Los Angeles. Among the entertainers at this event were Anthony Galla-Rini, the Ernie Felice Quartet, Johnny Kiado and the Tito Quartet, to name just a few. Fourteen-year-old Dolly Bowers, a Guido Deiro protege, received encore after encore. She played Guido's latest and what was to be his last composition: "The Queen of the Air" (March). During his last days, Guido had his three best friends with him: Syl Prior, James Haney, and Anthony Galla-Rini. A fitting tribute was paid to this superb artist by Sydney Dawson of the Accordion Teachers' Guild: "Guido died a great man. His greatness was felt when he walked into any group...."

WHO IS THIS LADY (#17)? I discovered three different possibilities. One is that she did not play the accordion, but worked at a local bank. They may have needed one more for the picture; so, they put an accordion on her. The second is that she may be Mademoiselle Florinne. The last possibility is that she is Maria La Barba, who worked on the RKO

Vaudeville Circuit and used to play at the Hippodrome at 160 O'Farrell. I studied the autograph on the picture with a magnifying glass and the name looks like "Rose Brady." There was a Rose Brady in the 1915 City directory, but it did not say what she did. So, who is this lady? Indeed, we may never know.

WHO IS THIS ARTIST (#19)? I have received three different opinions. One is that he may have been the brother of the Damonte mentioned previously (#15). The second is that he may be Pietro Frosini. The last opinion held that the forehead of the man in the photograph seems too high to be Frosini. I know nothing about Damonte, so I cannot write about him. Since some think this is Frosini, I shall mention something of his life.

PIETRO FROSINI was born in Catania, Sicily (1885-1951). When he was six, he began to play the accordion. After four years of study, his father sent him to a musical college. At that time, the accordion was not recognized as a proper instrument, so he had to learn to play the piano and various band instruments. The cornet was his favorite. When he was fourteen, he was the first cornet player in the British Navy Band at Malta. Later he returned to his first love, the accordion.

In 1905 he came to San Francisco and was discovered by a talent scout for the Orpheum Vaudeville Circuit. This was the beginning of his vaudeville career. Soon afterwards, Frosini met Guido Deiro. Frosini felt that Guido had done much to originate a pleasing style of playing popular songs that helped make the transition from the accordion being seen as a novelty to an instrument that found its way into the hearts of the American public. Frosini was so impressed by Guido's renditions of popular songs such as "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Everybody's Doing It," etc., that it caused Frosini to change his programs from strictly classical to those having popular songs which usually ended with his famous bellows shake. (He has been credited as the first to have perfected it.) Frosini originally played a button-type chromatic accordion. Later, Guido Deiro influenced him to change to a piano-type keyboard (in appearance only) with dummy black keys and three tiers of white keys for the treble. The accordion was still a chromatic keyboard, though it looked like a piano-accordion.

Frosini, the Boudinis, the Deiros, and others were quick to add "The 12th Street Rag" to their shows. Written in 1914, it became an all-time favorite. Frosini was privileged to have made the first accordion recording on a cylinder record for Edison in 1907. He made the first record, "The Amorose Waltz," for Victor (later, RCA Victor) on a disc in 1908. He traveled all over the USA, as well as to many foreign lands, until he gave up vaudeville in 1932. The advent of talking pictures caused many vaudeville shows to close; so, Frosini joined a group of musicians on radio station WOR in New York. He played at WOR until his final illness and death in 1951. Throughout his career, he spent his time teaching, composing, and arranging. He wrote more famous compositions for the accordion than anyone else. Frosini's compositions have been recorded by many world-renowned artists, such as, Leo Aquino, Veikko Ahvenainen, Lars Ek, Luigi Appareti, and Unto Jutila; they have recorded many of Frosini's most famous songs on tapes and records, thus perpetuating his songs and arrangements for today's generation. *[See p. 80 for more information concerning Frosini's life and his recordings.]*

LEO AQUINO (Canada) is a protege of the prominent international artist Alf Carlson of Vancouver, B.C. Leo began his study of the accordion in 1940. The famous British musician and adjudicator, Lionel Salter, said, "It must be obvious to all how extremely good this accordionist is...." Leo spent 17 days performing concerts in the Soviet Union. He recorded "Accordion Salute — Leo Aquino Plays Frosini" (Aragon, ALP-131). Side One: "Carnival of Venice," "The Brave Matador," "Florette," "Dizzy Accordion," and "Swedish-Italian Mazurka." Side Two: "Hot Points,"

"Olive Blossoms," "International Patrol," "Jolly Caballero," and "Love Smiles-Tango." *[See p. 246 for a feature article by this concert accordionist.]*

VEIKKO AHVENAINEN (Finland), an international concert and recording artist, has played in the United States, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union, and the Scandinavian countries. He has recorded "Best of Pietro Frosini" on Blue Master BLU-LP 247. Side One: "Jolly Caballero," "Love Smiles," "Skippin' Along," "Serenata Primaverile," "Swedish-Italian Mazurka," "Rag in D-Minor." Side Two: "Olive Blossoms," "Hot Points," "Carmelita," "Bel Viso," "La Mariposita," and "Dizzy Accordion."

LARS EK (Sweden). His picture on the record jacket shows him to be a young, good-looking blond man. "Lars Ek Spelar Frosini" on Round Up LPRO - 56. Side One: "Dizzy Accordion," "Vieni Amore," "Bel Fiori," "Varserenad," "Bel Viso," and "La Mariposita." Side Two: "Hot Fingers," "Olive Blossoms," "Jolly Caballero," "Musette Mazurka," "Love Smiles," and "Through the Park." Also, he recorded five Frosini numbers on EKLP 8101: "O Silenzo," "Swedish-Italian Mazurka," "Silver Moon Waltz," "Frosini Symphonic March," and "Carnival of Venice," plus seven others: "That's a Plenty," "Limehouse Blues," "St. Louis Blues," "Hot Accordion," "Tiger Rag," "Chinka Bazara," and "Hasttrav."

LUIGI APPARETI (U.S.A.) was a protege of Pietro Frosini. He was one of his outstanding students. He has played in many foreign countries as well as the United States. This record, "Luigi Plays Frosini" (Capri-J7-OL-2309), is a combination of great Frosini compositions being played by a great Frosini virtuoso. Side One: "Espana," "Accordiomania," "Olive Blossoms," "Hot Points," "Coquette," and "Jolly Caballero." Side Two: "Gay Picador," "Florette," "La Mariposita," "Bubbles," and "Carnival of Venice."

UNTO JUTILA (Finland), a concert artist, composer, and teacher. He recorded "Unto Jutila Plays Frosini" on cassette SEN-3. Side A: "Omaggio A Pietro," "Britannia," "Dark Eyes," and "Olive Blossoms." Side B: "Vision of Love," "Hot Points," "Spick and Span," "Florette," "Tail Spin," and "The Accordion World March."

In 1985, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Frosini's birth, another recording of his compositions was made in Finland. *[See Tribute to Frosini by John Molinari, p. 80.]*

When we lost Pietro Frosini on September 29, 1951, the *Accordion World* magazine said, appropriately, "An irreplaceable loss has been suffered by our entire profession."

CAESAR PEZZOLO (#20) was a successful teacher and composer. He held an annual accordion picnic at California Park in Marin County with two of his brothers, Theodore and Ralph.

There were two picnics that were a must every year — this one, held by Caesar Pezzolo, and the other one held by John Pezzolo.

. . .

For a moment, let's go back in time to one of those memorable picnics. As we walk through the picnic grounds, we see numerous tables covered with food and refreshments. Here and there we hear some music. A senior citizen has brought his old accordion; he doesn't play much anymore, but his children or grandchildren are part of the accordion band. We hear laughter and many persons speaking Italian. If one doesn't understand Italian, he or she can listen to an accordionist at one of the tables. Summer in Marin County is usually very hot; everyone tries to get in the shade as much as possible. Some of the tables resemble small Italian delicatessens with their wide assortment of food — salami, sausages, macaroni, cheese, spaghetti, ravioli, canelloni, scallopini, panettone, rolls, and sourdough bread. The Italians certainly know how to eat! And to quench their thirst, there is plenty of wine and ice cold beer at every table. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves while waiting for the two main events of the day.

In a central area, there is entertainment by an accordion band. In addition to the band, we hear solos, duets, and small groups. At such functions there is always a featured artist, such as Pietro Deiro, Guido Deiro, Frank Gaviani, Anthony Galla-Rini, the Vagabonds' Attilio Risso, and many others. Today, everyone is waiting for the climax of the day — the drawing for a new $500 piano-accordion. This gate prize alone is reason enough to attend this picnic. The master of ceremonies selects a small girl from the audience; she is so small that she has to be lifted up so she can draw the winning ticket out of the large drum. Someone will go home very happy tonight.

. . .

In 1932, Caesar Pezzolo and his 41-piece accordion band played at two theaters in San Francisco — one was the Fox, the $5,000,000 world's finest theater, built in 1929. At the Golden Gate Theater, the Caesar accordion band appeared with the Horace Heidt band; they were held over for many weeks because of their popularity. Fifteen years later, we hear the name of Horace Heidt again. On December 7, 1948, Dick Contino, a 17-year-old butcher delivery boy from Fresno, California, appeared on the Horace Heidt radio talent show. Before this clean-cut, good-looking young man finished playing "Lady of Spain" on his accordion, he looked and sounded like a winner. He won every week for 13 straight weeks, winning a total of $20,000 which included the $5,000 final prize. This "Rudolph Valentino" of the accordion was on his way to fame and fortune. *[See p. 231]*

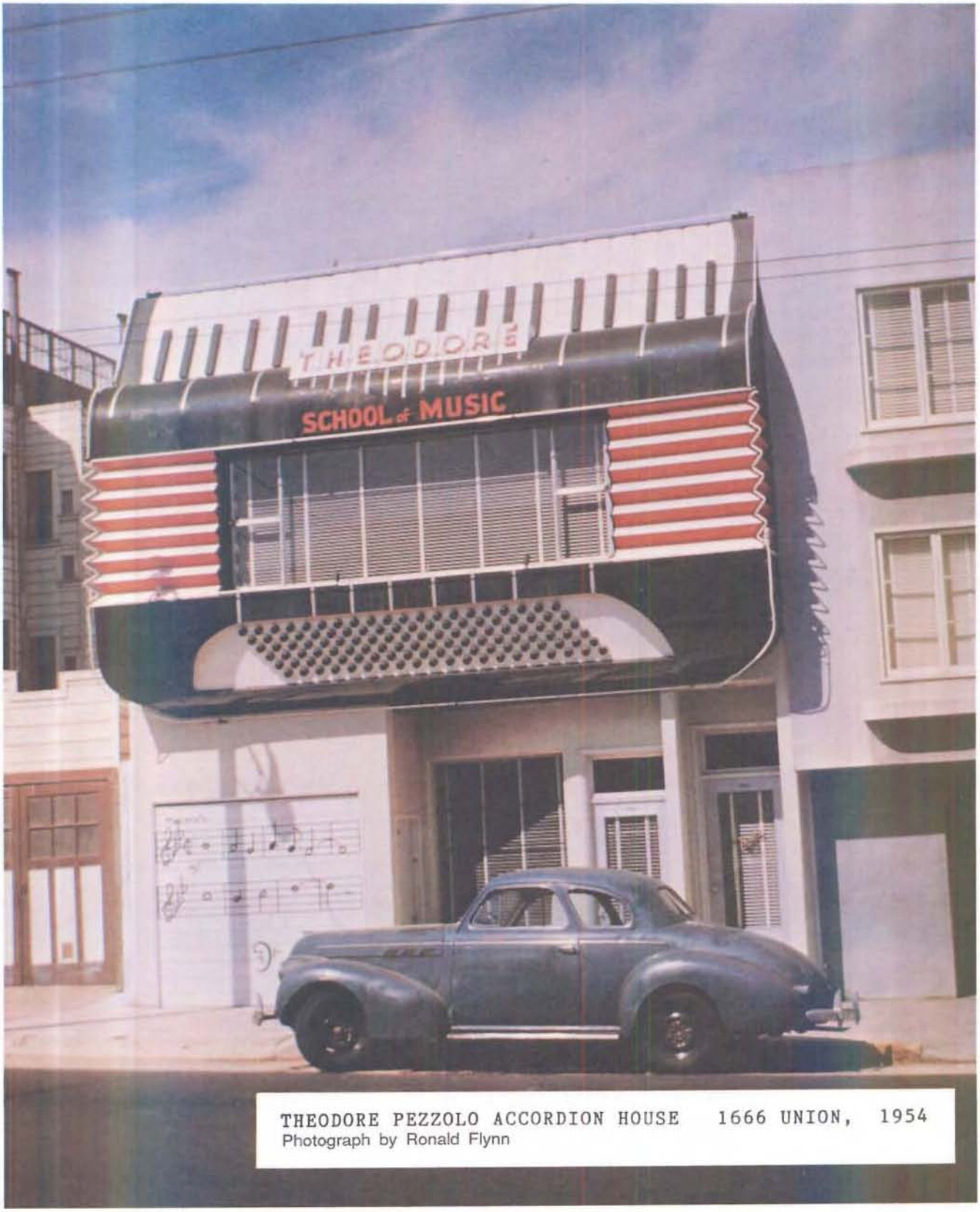
In 1950 Theodore Pezzolo moved from his North Beach studio to a new house at 1666 Union Street. The front of the second floor was built in the exact shape of an accordion with 120 basses and 43 keys. *[See picture on p. 10.]* The keys were on the top of the house. (They were regular black and white.) The accordion was black with chrome trim and red bellows. The gargantuan accordion was designed and supervised by Theodore, whose large, beautiful studio was folded within the bellows of the instrument. There were several other studios on the same floor. The rear of the building was three stories high; it contained Theodore's own apartment. This unique building was a regular stop for tourists; people would get out of the tour buses and take photographs of it. When lit up at night, it glimmered as if alive. It had been built in such a way that it could easily be converted to a regular home by some future owner, and unfortunately, that is exactly what happened after his death. A picture of this unusual building appeared in *California Crazy: Roadside Vernacular Architecture,* Jim Heimann and Rip Georges, (*San Francisco: Chronicle Books*, 1980). Ralph, the last of the Pezzolos, passed away on March 29, 1981.

. . .

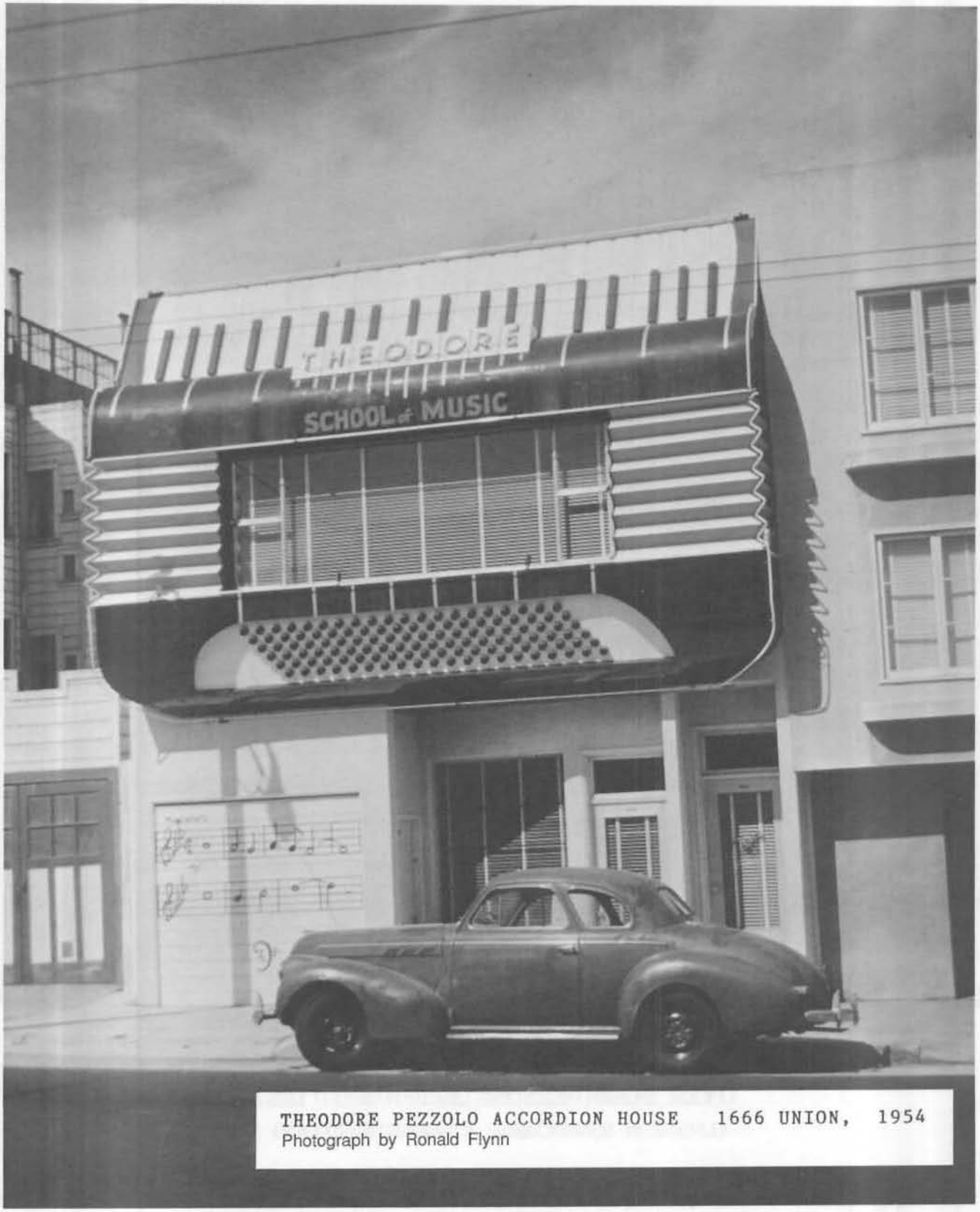
When I think of the Pezzolos, I think of all the other accordion teachers who have been in the City over the years:

LOUIS ALLARA
ALFRED ALMESTAD
HENRY AMERIO
JOHN ANCONI
ALBERT ARCHIVI
RONNIE BARRANTI
CHARLES BASILE
DINO BENETTI
ERIK BENGTSSON
JOE BRATTESANI
ANGELO CAGNAZZO
VINCENT CIRELLI
EMILIO CIVITA
MICHAEL COCO
MARGARET CONNORS
MIKE CORINO
ALEX DAINELE
JEROME DAMONTE
GUIDO DEIRO
PIETRO DEIRO
FLORENCE DEL TURCO
MELVIN DUNNE
MRS. SARAH EVANS
SAM FARACE
EMILIO FEDEREGHI
ALFRED FIRENZE
PIETRO FROSINI
ANTHONY GALLA-RINI
LOUIS GRAZIANO
MRS. JOSEPHINE HAUETER
JEAN IDIART
LOUIS JUDNICK
HILTON KESSLER
JOE LAZZERINI
MRS. MARIE MANINI
GEORGE McGREW
EUGENE MILLER
PAUL MINERS
JOHN MOLINARI
CHARLES NAPOLI
ARMAND PAPINI
MICHAEL PARTI
MRS. JESSIE PEZZOLO
FINAU PIATANESI
RENO PUCCI
JOHN REUTHER
DENNIS SAKELLARIDES
DOMINIC SASO
BUD SEGHIERI
ROBERT SELLERS
ANGELO SFARZO
HENRY SINIGIANI
PHILIP SUNSERI
HENRY TOMEI
ANNA VARONTZOFF
CELSO ZANINI

Note: I have done my best to mention



THEODORE PEZZOLO ACCORDION HOUSE 1666 UNION, 1954
Photograph by Ronald Flynn



THEODORE PEZZOLO ACCORDION HOUSE 1666 UNION, 1954
Photograph by Ronald Flynn



— ONE OF THE LAST GREA
OVER 10,000 PERSONS ATTENDED THIS PEZZOLO ACCORDION P
(L to R in Sport Coats) CAESAR PEZZOLO PIETRO DEIRO Master of C
(Unkn

[Editor's note: This rare photograph was provided to us by Guido Canevari, owner of Sonoma county's largest accordion center and school in Santa Rosa, California. At 83, Guido is old enough to remember John Molinari, the Pezzolo brothers, Charles Magnante, and many others; yet he is young enough to still teach the accordion and is even planning to promote an accordion concert for accordion lovers in Northern California.



AT ACCORDION PICNICS —
ICNIC IN CALIFORNIA PARK, JUST NORTH OF SAN FRANCISCO.
Ceremonies FRANK GAVIANI RALPH PEZZOLO THEODORE PEZZOLO
own)

Speaking about this photograph, Mr. Canevari recalls that this picnic was attended by approximately 10,000 persons. He said, "I never saw so much Italian salami, French bread, cheese, and red wine in my life. Pietro Deiro and Frank Gaviani came to participate, and their performances were outstanding. After the concert, there was a dance band and all the people danced to their hearts' content. I suppose we'll never see such a picnic again."]

all of the fine teachers who have worked in San Francisco; however, if I omitted anyone, it has been unintentional.

. . .

LOUIS ALLARA (#21), a former vaudeville star and successful artist and teacher; he was always in demand for orchestra work. Vincent Cirelli was one of his students. Born in San Francisco, Vincent studied with Emilio Civita before going to Louis Allara. Today, in addition to teaching, Cirelli is an accordion maker, a tuner, and an excellent repairman. His business, Cirelli Accordion Service, is located in an industrial park a few minutes drive from San Francisco at 200 Valley Drive #44, Brisbane, CA 94005. He represented Excelsior Accordions and Pietro Deiro Publications for some 25 years.

While working at Colombo & Sons, Cirelli met Eric Gylling, an accordion maker and master tuner who was born in Sweden and came to the U.S. in 1925. Eric and the well-known virtuoso Roland Hanell played in concerts through the eastern and western states. He lived in Chicago where he had many engagements at night clubs and dances. In 1931 he moved to San Francisco and went to work for Colombo & Sons. In 1945 Eric founded the Pacific Accordion Manufacturing Company with Gustave Olund. Cirelli was contracted to build accordion parts for them until Olund sold his interests to a Ralph Johnson. Gylling continued to operate for a short time until his death on June 5, 1954.

Besides being a fine reed tuner, Eric Gylling also was a very accomplished musician. Some of his compositions have been published and recorded on Accordia Records by the well-known John Molinari, an international concert and recording artist. Molinari studied piano, harmony, and counterpoint with Adolph Fink, a former student of Antonin Dvorak and was a featured staff artist on NBC and CBS for many years. Molinari conducted many concert tours in the Scandinavian countries. *[See p. 236.]*

On "Classical Favorites" (ALP-116), two of Eric Gylling's compositions were featured: "Festival Overture" and "Dans Pa Fagervik." The other selections included: "Czardas," "Tapestry," "Valse Variete," "Tico-Tico," "Greenwich Witch," "Rhapsody in Blue," "Cordoba," "Brusseler Spitzen," "Pupazzetti," and "Dizzy Accordion." Molinari features four more of Eric's compositions on "Accordion Variety Concert," Volume 4: "Waltz Accordia," "Scherzo in A-Minor," "Polka Dot Polka," and "Concert Overture" plus "Loco Loco Samba," "Snow Train Shuffle," "Siboney," "La Danza," "Chopin Waltz," and "Mexican Hat Dance." The songs, "Loco Loco Samba" and "Mexican Hat Dance" were recorded on multi-track on which one hears two or three accordions playing at the same time, but all are being played by the same person: Molinari. (Accordia Records - 6048 Rockridge Boulevard, Oakland, CA 94618.)

CAMILLO SCOPESI (#25). When Colombo Piatanesi left Guerrini in 1927, Pasquale Petromilli remained as the manager until his death in 1935. His son Armando was in charge until 1943, when Camillo Scopesi and Joseph Ferraris took over as the new owners. In 1948 Elio Taffi came into the picture; it was Scopesi and Taffi until 1953. In 1954 Sam Farace joined with Taffi for one year. He had a Guerrini factory branch and studio at 2560 Ocean where he sold accordions and gave lessons. In 1955, Taffi was working by himself, and by 1959, he had moved the factory to 45 Columbus. It was moved again in 1962 to San Rafael. Six years later, the company that had billed itself as "Makers of the World's Finest Accordions" was out of business.

SILVIO SAVANT (#27) was a terrific musician and worked as the bookkeeper for the Guerrini Company. He moved to Hollywood where he also worked as a trumpet player in the studio orchestras. He appeared in many movies.

GUISEPPE FIGONE (#30). A shoemaker.

PHIL BOUDINI (#33). He and his brother, Dan, both played the "chromatic keyboard" accordions. *[See comments about Dan Boudini on p. 16.]*



BOUDINI BROS.
THE SUPREME ACCORDIONISTS

The Boudini Bros. were artists of rare ability and genius. They won laurels in all the principal theatres of America for over ten years winning the reputation as the greatest accordion duo in the world. They were members of the Accordion Club of San Francisco. Exclusive for the Patho Phonograph Co.

ANGELO CAGNAZZO (#34) was born in Torino, in the northern part of Italy near the French border. He played the chromatic accordion which incorporated the concertina single note bass system. He arrived in San Francisco after the turn of the century. A good accordion player was in great demand then, especially in the notorious Barbary Coast, a 9-block area of numerous saloons, dance halls, dives, and houses of prostitution.

. . .

The Barbary Coast was bounded by Montgomery, Washington, Stockton, and Broadway. I always remember the stories of ships that needed crews in order to sail from San Francisco. Some captains had bad reputations. If a captain had difficulty getting a crew, there was the resource of the saloons in the Barbary Coast area that would provide a crew for a price.

First, the bartender would make sure that the intended victim had too much to drink. Then, the victim would suddenly fall through a trap door and wake up on a ship sailing westward beyond San Francisco's harbor. No work, no food. He had been shanghaied, an expression that came about because Shanghai was the usual destination of most of the ships. During the Gold Rush, whole crews, including the captain, would leave their ships and join with the passengers on their way to the gold mines. By 1851, the harbor was congested with some 800 deserted ships. The Barbary Coast, with its brothels, crime, and corruption, was finally closed by San Francisco's Police Commission in 1917.

. . .

Angelo Cagnazzo, who had been playing in the dance halls, was listed for the first time in the 1918 City directory. His teaching also began at this time. In the daytime he would teach; in the evening he would play at halls in the North Beach that charged "Ten cents a dance". In the 1920's, the Guerrini Company made Angelo a special 160-bass piano-accordion that had an extra row of augmented chords next to the counterminor third basses. In 1933 Cagnazzo and Elio Taffi were the financial backers of a new factory — Standard Accordion Manufacturing Company. The company was started at 441 Stockton. By 1936, it had moved to 250 Columbus. They designed a slanted, harp-shaped keyboard model that turned out to be less than popular *(See p. 66).* They sold only six of them, but they did make regular accordions as well. By 1937, they were out of business and Cagnazzo was back at Guerrini. During Standard's four years of operation, the following persons were associated with the company: Gino, Enrico and Elio Taffi, Peter Comparino, Romy Avivano, and Virginia Deromeri. Among Angelo Cagnazzo's outstanding students are Dan and Henry Sinigiani, and Dick Contino.

THE CHELI BROTHERS (#35). They were known as Al and Paul; Al was easily recognized as he was the shorter one. Both were regular entertainers in the North Beach. They played at the Gianduja Cafe which featured French, Italian, and American dining, dancing, and entertainment. Their location at 621 Union Street is today the site of the Fior D'Italia Restaurant.

PHIL BOUDINI (#33). He and his brother, Dan, both played the "chromatic keyboard" accordions. *[See comments about Dan Boudini on p. 16.]*



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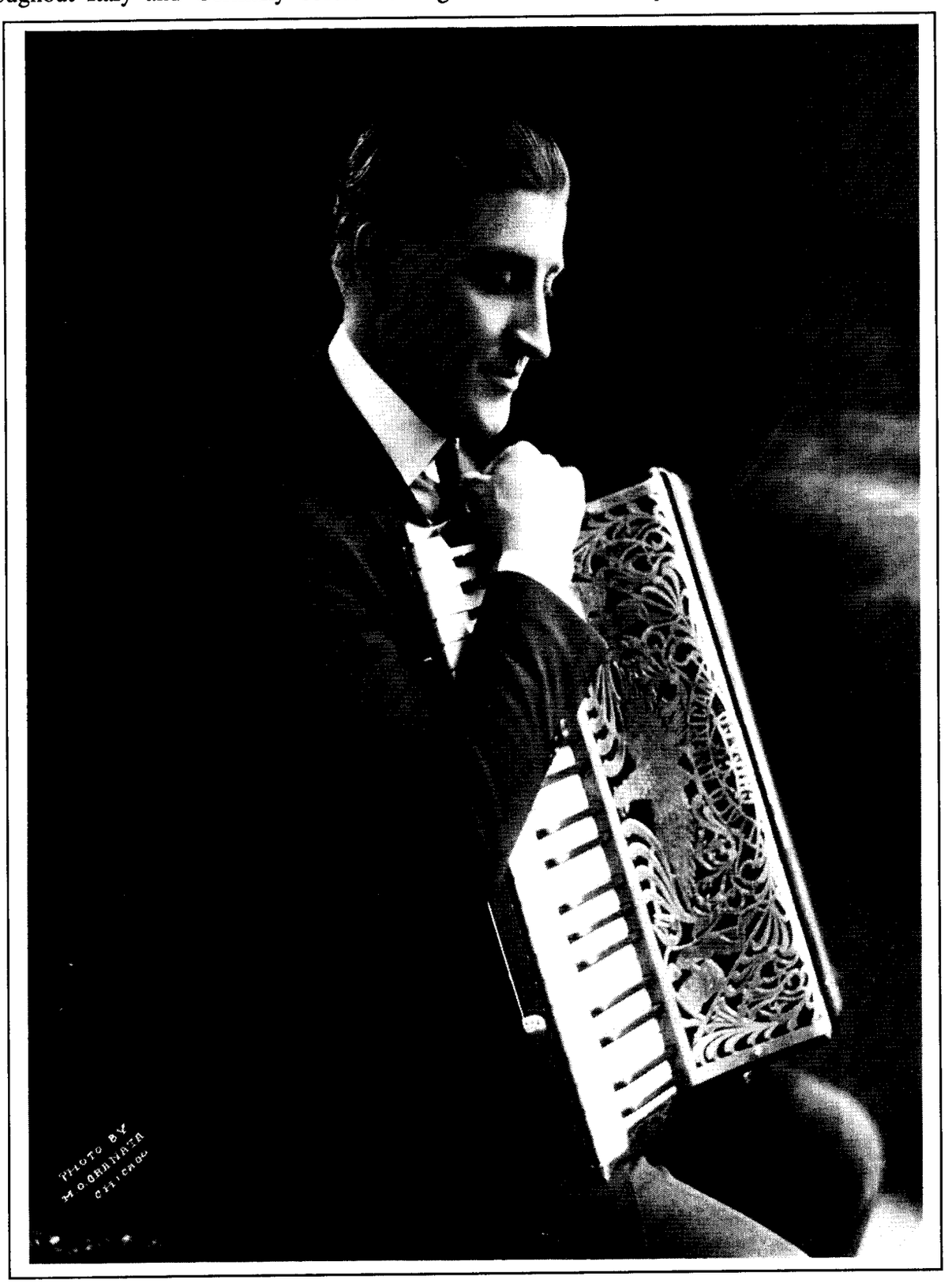
PIETRO DEIRO (#36) was born in Salto, Italy (1888-1954). He began his career with a toy accordion, but his father soon bought him a better one because he showed such an interest in the instrument. He played throughout Italy and Germany before coming to the United States. He stayed with an uncle in Cle Elm, Washington, where he studied with a local band leader. From there he went to Seattle for more study. Then, in 1907, he moved to San Francisco and on to vaudeville in 1909.

After 20 years of success, he established



PIETRO DEIRO 1888 - 1954 (Circa 1920)

(Used with the kind permission of Pietro Deiro, Jr.)

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PIETRO DEIRO 1888 - 1954 (Circa 1920)

(Used with the kind permission of Pietro Deiro, Jr.)

his Pietro Deiro Accordion Headquarters in New York in 1928. A few years later, he retired from vaudeville to devote his time exclusively to his school, compositions, concert work, recordings, and radio and television. His playing and recordings helped to make the accordion a very popular instrument during his lifetime. In 1931, he started his annual concerts which provided an opportunity for students to demonstrate their best work. That was the beginning of a trend that has been followed by teachers to this day.

The American Accordionists' Association was founded on March 9, 1938. Pietro, because of his 33 years of active participation in all accordion affairs, was elected president by acclamation. Charles Nunzio was elected vice president; the other ten members were: Joe Biviano, Sydney Dawson, Pietro Frosini, Anthony Galla-Rini, Charles Magnante, John Gart, Abe Goldman, Gene Von Hallberg, Sam Roland, and Byron Streep.

Affectionately named "The Daddy of the Accordion" by his colleagues, Pietro was recognized as a primary force in establishing the popularity of the instrument throughout the world. Of particular importance was his dedication to writing music which portrayed the instrument in its many capable moods. During his career, he composed many selections and transcribed thousands of others. However, it was his original compositions and materials for study which added immeasurably to the accordion.

Pietro Deiro, Jr. (Lee) said his father's jokes and everyday language revolved around the accordion. His father's favorite story was a fictional one in which, as a little boy, he was playing the accordion in the streets of Italy for only pennies. He came to the king's palace, and there he stood playing and hoping to impress the king. Finally, the king came out and remarked, "Little Pietro, you play very well; how much do you earn on each street?" This was Pietro's chance. With some authority in his voice, he replied, "I make all of ten cents." With this, the king reached into his pocket and pulled out a dollar. "Here's a dollar, boy, please move ten blocks away."

Pietro Deiro passed away on November 3, 1954. Lee Deiro recalls many happy times that he and his father enjoyed. He recalls that his father helped to develop the piano accordion in association with the Guerrini Company. "With Dad's guidance, the piano accordion, as we know it today, emerged on the American scene," Lee said. Following his father's death, Lee Deiro very ably carried on with one of the world's largest accordion music publishing houses: Pietro Deiro Publications. In 1909 just three blocks from Columbus and Broadway, Pietro had appeared at the Washington Square Theater. He played the first accordion with a piano keyboard in San Francisco at that time. He made his first record for Victor in 1910. Then, in 1915 at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, Pietro was a sensation. Lee Deiro retired in 1983, leaving the accordion music house under the very able management of owner, Bruno Borghesan.

Theresa Costello of O. Pagani Music Company summed up the feelings of many persons in her tribute about this great man:

"With the passing of this great pioneer, Pietro Deiro, the accordion world has suffered a tremendous loss — not only because a lovable, friendly and smiling friend has left us, but because Pietro Deiro was Mr. Accordion from the time he began to perform on the instrument to just a few weeks before he left us. I had the privilege of consulting with him on many of his first works arranged for the accordion when the accordion was "young," and fond are the many memories he has left for us to cherish. To a great pioneer who, in his unselfish manner, dedicated his entire life for the furtherance and betterment of the accordion, we say, not Good-bye, but Auf Weidersehn. He shall always be with us in spirit and in the invaluable works that will live on to be the inspiration of future accordionists. He has truly left us a great heritage."

DAN BOUDINI (#37). He and his brother, Philip (#33), were vaudeville stars and recording artists. On the vaudeville circuit, they had crossed paths many times with other artists, such as Guido and Pietro Deiro, Pietro Frosini, and Anthony Galla-Rini. From 1912 to 1925, these six artists made recordings of selections from operas, proving the accordion to be an "accepted" instrument. In 1939 the accordion was raised to new heights when Charles Magnante, staff artist on radio and T.V. networks, concert and recording artist, was the first accordionist to play at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Also, the Magnante Accordion Quartet (which included Magnante, Joe Biviano, Abe Goldman, and Gene Von Hallberg) was featured.

SANTO SANTUCCI (#38) was an international artist and vaudeville star. He moved from Italy to France with his family when he was twelve. He had a small accordion, and he earned enough money to buy himself a better one. In 1909 he joined a troupe called "La Belle Napoli" and came to the United States. He then joined the Keith-Orpheum Circuit, and for 64 weeks, he played in New Zealand and Australia. This was the first time an accordion was heard in those countries. During his travels, Santucci's path occasionally crossed those of Frosini, Galla-Rini, the Deiro Brothers, and the Boudini Brothers. In 1914 Santucci inspired Andy Rizzo, the "Teacher of Teachers," to learn to play the accordion. Santo played at the 1915 Panama Pacific International World Exposition in San Francisco.

. . .

This $50,000,000 fair with over 400 buildings was located on approximately 600 acres in the area now known as the Marina District of San Francisco (formerly called Harbor View). The fair went from Fort Mason to the Presidio, from Chestnut Street to and including part of the San Francisco Bay. The fair was originally intended to celebrate the opening of the Panama Canal, and San Francisco took advantage of this occasion to show the world that it had recovered from the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Once at the fair, you usually went to see Stella. (Everyone said to be sure and see her.) Who was Stella? She was a "nude" woman in a large, beautiful painting. For some reason, it was very popular. People wondered: was it real or only a painting? The back of the painting had a string attached to it. The string was pulled rhythmically by a small motor to give the impression that Stella was breathing.

Two buildings really stood out at the fair: the Tower of Jewels and the Palace of Fine Arts. In 1959, philanthropist, Walter Johnson, donated 2 million dollars to help rebuild the only building that had survived after the fair — architect Bernard Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts. Santo, who had appeared as a soloist in vaudeville on a tour around the world, was equally at home as he played in all the foreign pavilions at the fair. He played so much at the fair and in San Francisco that people thought he lived in San Francisco. The fair awarded him a Grand Prize for his accordion playing.

. . .

JOHN PEZZOLO (#39) was one of six brothers. He was born in Genoa, Italy, and he taught accordion at 355 Columbus in San Francisco. Of the six brothers, John Pezzolo was considered by many to be the most successful teacher since he trained more professionals and teachers. This distinguished pioneer of the accordion who had devoted most of his life to the instrument he loved passed away on January 3, 1973, at the age of 87. All of the brothers, except Silvio, also taught accordion in their own studios. Caesar (253 Columbus) and Theodore (535 Columbus) were close to John. Ralph was in Oakland, California, Eugene was in Portland, Oregon, and Silvio, who lived in San Jose, did not teach.

. . .

On any weekday and on Saturdays,



EARLY PICTURE OF THE PEZZOLO BROTHERS
(Photo by Miller Photography, Stockton, CA)

accordion music took over this area. Besides the Pezzolos, the Alex Daniele Studio (460 Columbus), the Emilio Civita Studio (464 Columbus), the Louis Allara Studio (511 Columbus), and the Guido Deiro Studio (511 Columbus) ensured that this area sounded like the name it was called — "Little Italy."

The Twenty-First Annual Accordion Club Picnic took place at Fairfax Park in Marin County on Sunday, August 15, 1937, featuring John Pezzolo. John presented a class of 105 students:

Tullio Simoni
Art Nominni
Gene Nominni
Vincent Pieri
A. Curian
Louis Moralis
John Ratto
Wilfred Scatena
Albert Colla
Willy Pieri
George Paolini
Joe Lucia
Zeno Canedero
Joe Lencioni
Guido Parenti
Tom Tornullo
Angelo Siragusa
Mickey Bruno
Billy Simoncini
Dominic Giampouli
Frank Bertulucci
Evio Comolli
Eddie Stariha
Raymond Stiavetti
John Baietto
Joseph Verdoia
Madeline DeMichel
Etherine Landucci
Stella Marciano
Johanna Borello
Josephine Baccelli
Cora Bertuccelli
Gloria Manual
Catherine Bolla
Olga Bertucchini

Cosmo Capotosto
Ignazio Busilacchi
Anthony Mannina
Jack Modica
Harry Casalegno
Frank Silvestre
Bob Petroni
Carl Fortina
Walter Figini
Julio Del Chiaro
Louis DeMartini
Donald Sheerin
Bob Rowatt
Angelo Delano
Elmer Papi
Lorry Casaleggio
Raymond Dondero
Melvin Ricossa
Lido Caselli
Harry Bertuccelli
Silvio Pali
Marco Guastavino
Aldo Lucchesi
Guido Ghiglieri
Lawrence Pieracci
Gene Dellamagiora
Lola Sebastiani
Mary Picchi
Lina Macchi
Yolanda Signorini
Margaret Mee
Garifalia Katsanis
Margaret
Yolanda Quilici
Marie Chiechi

Dino Malerbi
Theodore Ammiro
Vincent Simoni
Lewis Cresci
Amedeo Gonella
Michael Chiechi
Tonny Chiechi
Rudy Belliuomini
Kenneth Judnick
Clifford Stick
John Hanrahan
George Boschetti
Gibby DeMartini
Ernest Parducci
Gerald Firenzi
Frank Spinale
Guido Damele
Harry Andrew
Oreste Bartoli
Jimmy Perani
Gino Valenti
Elton Carlo
Quartilio Landi
Henry Pieracci
Chris George
Roy Simoni
Florence
Marie Bruno
Evelyn Beamen
Marie Ross
Elsie Signorini
Margaret Schade
Yolanda DeGrazia
Eugenia Petri
Lois Schier

THE ACCORDION CLUB

Presents

THE TWENTY-FIRST

ANNUAL ACCORDION CLUB PICNIC

AT

FAIRFAX PARK MARIN COUNTY

Featuring

JOHN PEZZOLO



Sunday, August 15, 1937

PISANI PRINTING & PUBLISHING CO. 311 COLUMBUS AVE., SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

PROGRAM

1. Progress of San Francisco March..Composed by *John Pezzolo*
   The Class
2. Duet ..... *Giulietta Polka*
   by Bob Petroni and Elton Carlo
3. Solo ..... *El Sirio*
   by Jimmy Pierani
4. Group ..... *The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down*
   by Ignazio Busilacchi, Domenic Giampaoli, Ivio Comolli, Raymond Staiavetti, Gino Valenti, George Boschetti, Melvin Ricossa, Joseph Verdoia, Billy Simoncini, Herbert Murdoch.
5. Trio ..... *Lucciole Vagabonde*
   by Mary Picchi, Gloria Manuel, Eddie Stariha
6. Solo ..... *Violino Tzigano*
   by Delfina Del Porto
7. Duet ..... *Biondina Mazurca*
   by Marie Chicchi, Michael Chicchi
8. Vocal solo ..... *La Maschietta*
   Sung by John Baietto
   Accompanied by Tullio Simoni, Vincent Pieri, Etherina Landucci, Art Nominni, Gene Nominni, Wilfred Scatena, John Ratto, A. Curian.
9. The Class ..... *I Bersaglieri Passano*
10. Solo ..... *Polka Variata*
    by Elmer Papi
11. Group ..... *Some of These Days*
    by Joe Lucia, Mickey Bruno, Frank Silvestri, Zeno Canadero, Joe Lencioni, Eddie Stariha, Rudy Bellinomini Willy Pieri.
12. Duet ..... *Rosetta Mazurca*
    by Ivio Comolli, Raymond Stiavetti
13. Solo ..... *Rattling Keys*
    Flight of the Bumble Bee
    by Albert Colla
14. Argument about Toscani
    by Tullio Simoni, Vincent Pieri.
15. Duet ..... *Nola*
    by Albert Colla, Lawrence Pieracci

SECURE YOUR TOMBOLA TICKETS FOR

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THE ACCORDION CLUB

Presents

THE TWENTY-FIRST

ANNUAL ACCORDION CLUB PICNIC

AT

FAIRFAX PARK MARIN COUNTY

Featuring

JOHN PEZZOLO



Sunday, August 15, 1937

PISANI PRINTING & PUBLISHING CO. 311 COLUMBUS AVE., SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

PROGRAM

1. Progress of San Francisco March..Composed by *John Pezzolo*
   The Class
2. Duet ..... *Giulietta Polka*
   by Bob Petroni and Elton Carlo
3. Solo ..... *El Sirio*
   by Jimmy Pierani
4. Group ..... *The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down*
   by Ignazio Busilacchi, Domenic Giampaoli, Ivio Comolli, Raymond Staiavetti, Gino Valenti, George Boschetti, Melvin Ricossa, Joseph Verdoia, Billy Simoncini, Herbert Murdoch.
5. Trio ..... *Lucciole Vagabonde*
   by Mary Picchi, Gloria Manuel, Eddie Stariha
6. Solo ..... *Violino Tzigano*
   by Delfina Del Porto
7. Duet ..... *Biondina Mazurca*
   by Marie Chiechi, Michael Chiechi
8. Vocal solo ..... *La Maschietta*
   Sung by John Baietto
   Accompanied by Tullio Simoni, Vincent Pieri, Etherina Landucci, Art Nominni, Gene Nominni, Wilfred Scatena, John Ratto, A. Carian.
9. The Class ..... *I Bersaglieri Passano*
10. Solo ..... *Polka Variata*
    by Elmer Papi
11. Group ..... *Some of These Days*
    by Joe Lucia, Mickey Bruno, Frank Silvestri, Zeno Canadero, Joe Lencioni, Eddie Stariha, Rudy Bellinomini Willy Pieri.
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    by Ivio Comolli, Raymond Stiavetti
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    by Albert Colla
14. Argument about Toscani
    by Tullio Simoni, Vincent Pieri.
15. Duet ..... *Nola*
    by Albert Colla, Lawrence Pieracci

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PROGRAM

16. Solo ..... *Canadian Capers*
by Lawrence Pieracci

17. Trio ..... *El Relicario*
by Albert Colla, Lawrence Pieracci, Gerald Firenzi

18. Solo ..... *Sweet Leilani*
by Margaret Schade

19. Group ..... *The Sheik of Araby*
by Joe Lucia, Mickey Bruno, Frank Silvestri, Louis Moralis, Angelo Delano, Frank Spinali, Ernest Parducci, Dino Malerbi, Jack Modica, Guido Parenti, George Paolini, Harry Casalegno, Tom Tornullo.

20. Solo ..... *Two Guitars*
by Madeline De Michel

(b) Vocal ..... *Al Chiar di Luna*
by Madeline De Michel

21. Duet, Spaghetti Tangle ..... Composed by *P. Frosini*
by Lola Sebastiani, Frank Bertulucci

22. Trio (Mazurka) ..... *Poeta Soldato*
by Lola Sebastiani, Catherine Bolla, Frank Bertulucci

23. Solo ..... *Love Smiles*
by Mickey Bruno

24. Solo ..... *Organ Grinder*
by Marie Bruno

(b) Duet ..... *Love Bug Will Bite You*
by Marie and Mickey Bruno

25. Solo ..... *Giulietta Mazurka*
by Guido Parenti

26. Duet ..... *Se Avessi un Mandolino*
Vocal by Mrs. Narcisa Parenti
Accompanied by her son Guido Parenti and the Ensemble.

27. Solo ..... *Se Avessi un Bicchierino*
Vocal by Vincent Pieri—followed by comedy

28. The Class ..... *Mazzolin di Fiori*

29. Solo ..... *La Boheme*
by Vincent Pieri

30. Duet ..... *Speranze Perdute Waltz*
by Theodore Ammiro, Anthony Mannina


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PROGRAM

31. Solo ..... *Dance of the Hours*
by Tullio Simoni

(b) Swingyana ..... Composed by *Charles Magnante*
by Tullio Simoni

32. Group ..... *I Dream of San Marino*
by Frank Bertulucci, Anthony Mannina, Michael Chiechi, Lido Caselli, Chris George, Walter Figini, Bob Petroni, Elton Carlo, Carlo Fortina, Silvio Pauli, Harry Bertuccelli, Guido Ghiglieri, Kenneth Judnick.

33. Solo, Volo di Farfalla (Mazurka) Composed..by *John Pezzolo*
Played by Carlo Fortina

34. Solo ..... *Cheap Banana*
by Chicky Fortina, a 5 year-old girl

35 Duet ..... *Chitarra Romana*
Sung by Chicky, accompanied by Carlo Fortina

36. Solo, Accordiana ..... Composed by *Charles Magnante*
Played by Etherine Landucci

37. Duet ..... *Italian Folk Songs*
Vocal and Instrumental by Mr. and Mrs. Julio Marcello

38. Two Tramps
Tullio Simoni, Vincent Pieri.
The Policeman
Al Babbini

39. Trio, Flying Sensation ..... Composed by *John Pezzolo*
Played by Art and Gene Nominni, Wilfred Scatena

40. Group ..... *Rose Room*
by Etherine Landucci, Cora Bertuccelli, Olga Bertucchini, Johanna Borello, Lina Macchi, Josephine Bocelli, Margaret Mee, Yolanda Signorini, Evelyn Beamen, Margaret Schade, Stella Marciano.

41. Ensemble ..... *A Sailboat in the Moonlight*
by Tullio Simoni, Etherine Landucci, Art and Gene Nominni, Vincent Pieri, John Ratto, Wilfred Scatena, A. Currian.

42. The Dream of the Golden Gate (March)
Composed by ..... *John Pezzolo*
Comical Skit Interruption by
Vincent Pieri, Etherine Landucci, Tullio Simoni, Angelo Siragusa, Marie Bruno, Theodore Ammiro.
Where Are You? ..... Sung and played by Angelo Siragusa

COMPERATE I VOSTRI BIGLIETTI PER LA TOMBOLA $500 IN PREMI

THE FOLLOWING SOUVENIR PROGRAM IS TYPICAL OF THE ACCORDION PROGRAMS PRESENTED BY THE PEZZOLO BROTHERS AT VARIOUS PICNICS DURING THE "GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION" IN SAN FRANCISCO:

Accordionists' Picnic

GIVEN BY

PEZZOLO BROS.

CAESAR ★ RALPH ★ THEODORE

★ ★ ★

CALIFORNIA PARK

MARIN COUNTY

★ ★ ★

SUNDAY, JUNE 11, 1939



SOUVENIR PROGRAM



PROGRAM

by the students of

CAESAR PEZZOLO

Introduction by Nello Ferrari and Yvonne White

1. **Treasure Island Grand March** (Composed by Caesar Pezzolo - - - Entire Class
2. **Alexander's Ragtime Band** — By Leslie Moresco, Lawrence Re, Lawrence Pignattaro and Levio Francho.
3. **Armoniosa Polka** - James Firpo, John Fiori
4. **Questa Notte Ti Dirò** - - - - - - - - - - Alice Cicciliot
5. **Blue Danube** (Special Arrangement) — By the Vernazza Twins, James and Joseph.
6. **Beer Barrel Polka** — Florence Porta, Olga Rosetto, Wanda De Santi, Annette Borgonovo, Albi Romani, William Mezzetta.
7. **Penny Serenade** - - - - - - - - - - Josephine Silvestre
8. **Jolly Caballero** - - - - - - - - - - Adolph Frambrini
9. **Waiting for the Robert E. Lee** - - Lawrence Dini, Ernest Oreste
10. **El Relicario** - - - - - - - - - - - - Albina Caviglia
11. **Tantalizing** (Duet) - - - - - Louis Parenti and Reno Paolini
12. **Caravan** - - - - - - - - - - Mario Bianucci, Louis Spada
13. **Two Guitars** - - - - - Kupper Sisters—Alice and Georgette
14. **Signorine Non Guardate i Marinai** - - - - - - Eddie Venturi
15. **Norma Overture** - - - - - - - - - - - - Ray Brusati
16. **Io la Notte Più Non Posso Dormire** — Sung by Naomi Damassa, accompanied by Ray Brusati.
17. **Zigeuner Weisen** - - - - - - - - - - - - John Grech
18. **The Serenaders** - - - - - - - Mario Pieroni, Tommy Bell

(Continued on next page)

19. **God Bless America** - - - - - - - - - - - Entire Class
20. **Motorcycle Polka** - - - - - - - - - - - Nello Ferrari
21. **Sbarrazzina** - - - - - - - - - - - - Dorothy Colla
22. **Trieste Overture** - - - - - - - - - - - Edna Franchi
23. **Occhi Neri** - - - - - - - - - - - - Victor Albertazzi
24. **Three Little Fishies** — Sung by Dorothy Colla, Edna Franchi, Yvonne White, Enrico Cinquini, Louis Pagni; accompanied by Silvio Del Chiaro.
25. **Carnival of Venice** - - - William Franzatti, Charles Jiuricich
26. **Caramba** - - - - - - - - Bartolino Fabbri, Richard Ratto
27. **Poet and Peasant Overture** - - - - - - - - Frank Borg
28. **Dino Polka** (Composed by John Pezzolo) — Albert Romani, Angelo Damiano, George Peterson.
29. **It's Delightful To Be Married** - Brother and Sister, Anita and Roy Berni
30. **Butcher Boy** — Sung by Edna Franchi, Dorothy Colla, Nello Ferrari, Silvio Del Chiaro; accompanied by Maurice Ducasse.
31. **Something Smart and New**
32. **La Romanina — Quando Mi Bacia Teresa — Se Avessi un Mandolino** Played by Sam Sciabica, Dave Otellini, Raymond Tulich, Edward Bokeland, Albert Del Hetel.
33. **Chitarra Romana** (Vocal) — Agnese Vannucci, accompanied by Emil del Carlo.
34. **Popular Spanish Songs** - - - - - - - - - Adolfo Usoz
35. **Gayway March** (Composed by Caesar Pezzolo) - - Entire Class

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PROGRAM

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RALPH PEZZOLO

1. **Cadet March** - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Entire Class
2. **Kinne Kulla Schottish** - - - - - - - - - Clarence Ellingson
3. **Four Jacks March** — Elizabeth Forgnone, Albert Giovannoni, Ray Banchero, Bobby Locanini and Lino Berto.
4. **Ciribiribin** - - - - - - Grannucia Amadie and Hilda Obertello
5. **Nola** - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Alex De Benedetti
6. **Electricity Polka** - - - - - - - - - - - - Benny Cerutti
7. **Biondina Mia** (Mazurka) - - - - Joe Cancilla and John Paulino
8. **Dizzy Fingers** - - - - - - - - - - - - Mary Garavento
9. **Italian and American Melodies** - - - - - - - - - Group
10. **La Spagnola** - - - - - - - - - - - - - Charles Trombetta
11. **Motorcycle Polka** - Mary Garavento and Genevieve Giovannoni
12. **Mio Carino Tu** - - - - - - - - - - - - Bunky Stathakos
13. **Sempre Allegri** (Polka) - James Rampoldi
14. **Tranquilla Overture** - - Clara Carbonaro
15. **Hi Hulla Dance** — By Adele Jenson, accompanied by Clara Carbonaro.
16. **Black and White Rag** - - John Paulino
17. **Popular Melodies** - - - The Four Aces
18. **Dance of the Hours** - - George Cerutti
19. **Italian Melody Songs** - Volpone Sisters
20. **Springtime March** - - - Entire Class





PROGRAM

by the students of

THEODORE PEZZOLO

1. **Glorietta on Treasure Island** (composed by Theodore Pezzolo) - Entire Class
2. **Nola** (Solo novelty) - - Robert Pepi
3. **Giulietta** (Mazurka) — By Eugene Foppiano, John Firpo, Gloria Raggio, Alfred Bertozzi.
4. **Song of the Islands** (Vocal solo) — By Frances Lencioni, the girl with the whistling voice.
5. **Bells of Moscow** (Solo) - - - - - - - Charles Giovanetti
6. **Geepers Creepers** (Duet) — Sung by Lois Repetto, accompanied by her uncle, John Minoli.
7. **Giga vs. Tarantella** (Composition of Theodore Pezzolo) - Entire Class
8. **I Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby (Duet)** — Sung by Joan Mannion (three year old girl), accompanied by Eileen Pruss.
9. **Toreador's Song** from "Carmen" (Trio) — By Mary Molinoli, Martina Zubiri, Eileen Pruss.
10. **Non Ti Scordar di Me** (Duet) — Sung by Josephine Ferrario, lyric soprano, accompanied by Josephine Gonella.
11. a) **The Little Accordionist** (Solo) — By Irene Torres, six year old girl.
    b) **Sidewalks of New York** (Duet) — Vocal and dance by Irene Torres, accompanied by Robert Pepi.
12. **Ciribiribin** (Duet) — Sung by Jacqueline Lertora, 15 year old dramatic soprano, accompanied by Cecile Mascarino.
13. **Quando Mi Bacia Teresa — Paesanella** (Solo) - - Rino Bernini
14. **Col Mazzolin di Fiori** - - - - - - - - Fox Della Montagna
    The Class and Chorus
15. a) **Estudiantina** (Solo) - - - - - - - - Martina Zubiri
    b) **Rancho Grande** (Vocal) - - - - - - - Martina Zubiri
16. **Quando la Luna Ride e . . . la Chitarra Piange** (Words and music by Theodore Pezzolo) — Sung by Jacqueline Lertora, accompanied by Josephine Gonella, assisted by Josephine Ferrario and Cecile Mascarino.
17. a) **Sextet from "Lucia"** (Solo) — By Mary Molinoli, a gifted little girl from Petaluma.
    b) **Carnevale di Venezia** (Duet) — By Mary Molinoli and her brother, Joe Molinoli.
    c) **Chiudi gli Occhi, Rosita** (Trio) - Mary, Joe and mother Molinoli
18. **Spagnolita** (March-Song) - - - - - - - Class and Chorus

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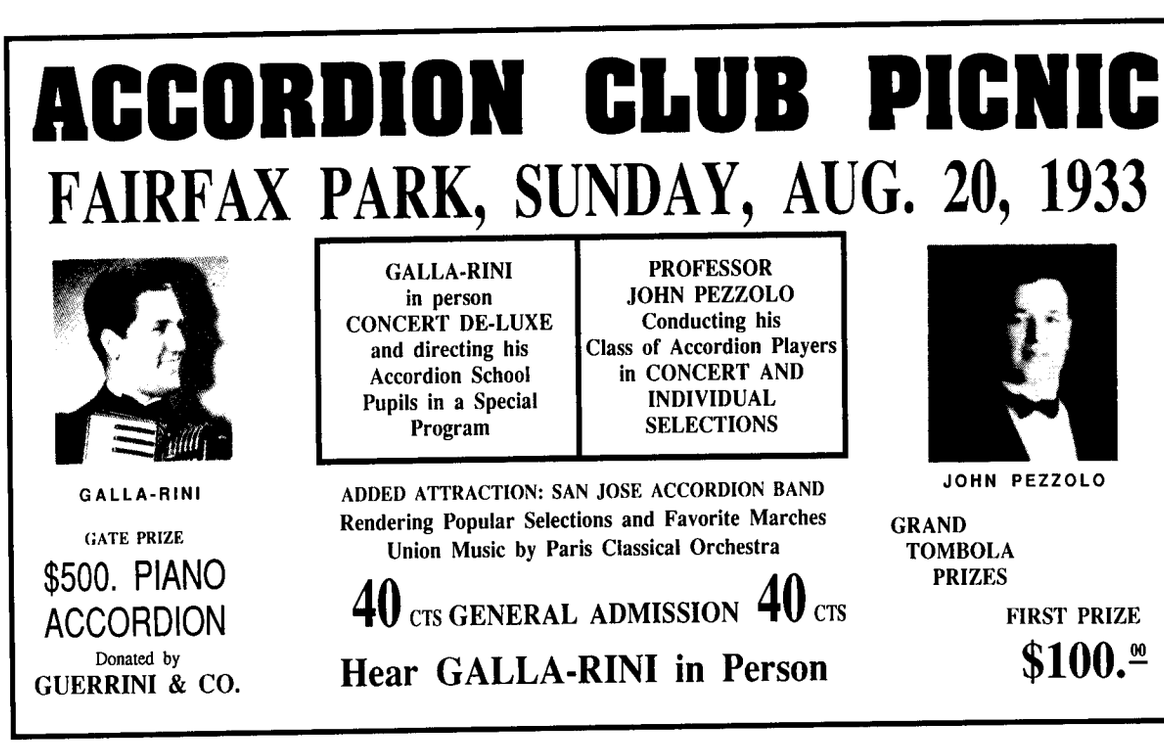
I remember that picnic well. I also remember what San Francisco was like when it was the accordion capital of the United States. Now, looking back I realize that an important period has passed into history — a period that I am now very interested in preserving in memory. My research shows that there have been ten accordion makers in San Francisco. Of the ten, only two are still in business, and they are no longer in San Francisco. As mentioned before, I found the names of C.C. Keene and Celso Giovanni Zanini listed in the 1862 and 1889 directories as accordion makers. However, I have never seen an accordion with the names Keen or Zanini on it; who they were and what happened to their accordions yet remains a mystery.

. . .

On Sunday morning — New Year's Day 1990 (or any other future year) — Columbus and Broadway would hardly be recognized by the members of the old San Francisco Accordion Club. The night before — indeed, every night — was like New Year's Eve in the North Beach of San Francisco. But today this area is a sleeping giant. When darkness falls the giant awakens, and a myriad of brilliantly colored neon lights explode incessantly in all directions. The barkers can be heard inviting pedestrians to see their topless girl shows. Sometimes their voices are drowned out by the traffic noises. How sad it has been to witness this unfortunate transformation!

No longer do you hear accordion music as you walk these streets. No "Santa Lucia," no "Sharpshooter's March," no "Flight of the Angels" — no more Pezzolos, no more Deiros, no more accordion makers. On May 15, 1989, Henry Sinigiani passed away, and when this 80-year-old San Francisco accordion pioneer died, a part of the old North Beach died with him.

The "accordion house" is gone, and an era has ended. The accordion capital in San Francisco is no more. . . .



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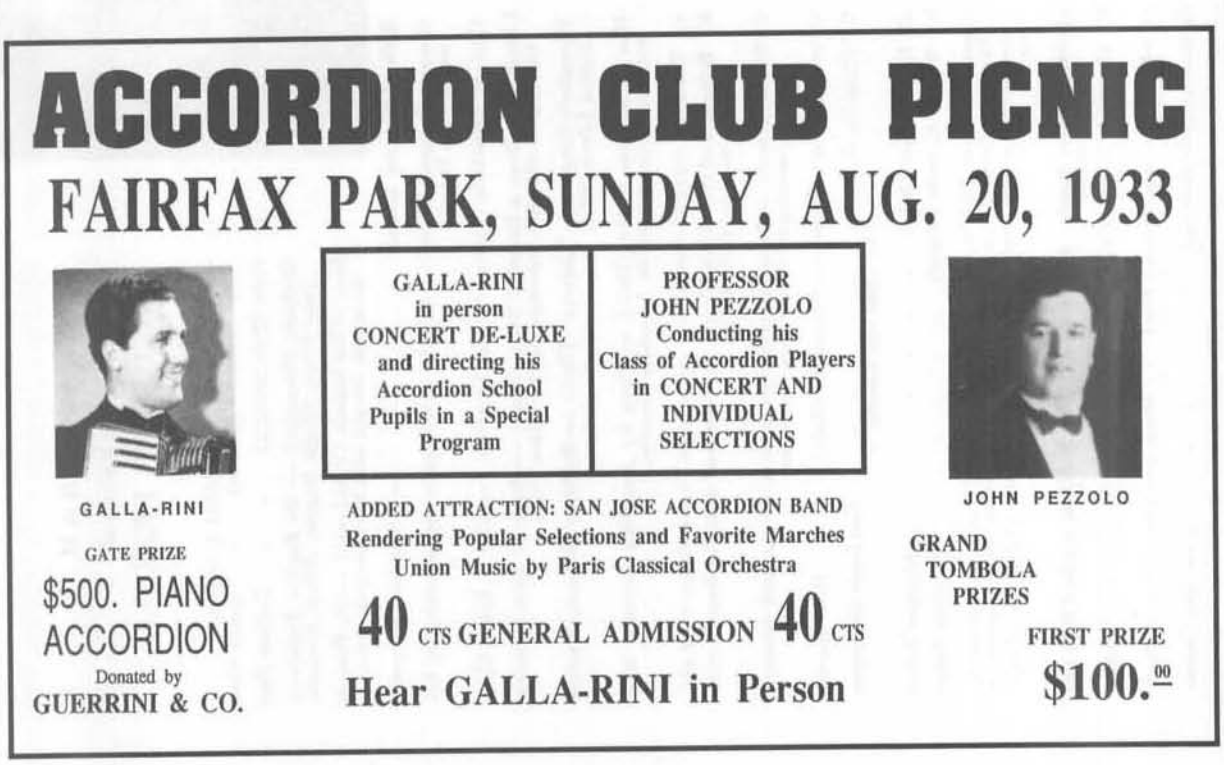

SOME AFTERTHOUGHTS

I once thought that Pietro Deiro was the first to play an accordion with a piano keyboard. However, I discussed my belief with the late John Reuther, and he said that it could not be true because he had seen pictures taken in Europe, taken before Pietro was born, that showed an accordion with a piano keyboard. So, I changed my story to read: "Pietro Deiro played the first accordion with a piano keyboard in the U.S." Then, Anthony Galla-Rini caused me to change my story again. It now reads: "Pietro Deiro played the first accordion with a piano keyboard in San Francisco at that time." (The first piano keyboard was introduced by Bouton in Paris in 1852.)

I had sent a copy of my story to Mr. Galla-Rini, and he was kind enough to send me a copy of a letter, dated August 1, 1950, that he had received from Bramante Piatanesi of Italo-American Accordion Manufacturing Company of Chicago. Galla-Rini believed it would shed more light in reference to when the piano keyboard was introduced on the accordion. The letter said, in part: "We received your letter today and were very sorry to hear that Guido has passed away. We didn't realize how ill he had been, and it came somewhat unexpectedly. He is one whom the accordion people will never forget because, as you requested to know, it was Guido who was the first to play the right-hand piano keyboard in this country. This we are positive. However, you asked that *Demo should think carefully back when he was in San Francisco. Well, he says that it was Guido for the first in this country, but Pietro was first to appear in San Francisco with the piano keyboard because Guido was elsewhere in Seattle or traveling. Guido was the first in this country to play the piano keyboard (right hand), and Pietro, coming later, appeared in San Francisco shortly before Guido did, so Pietro was the first in San Francisco only. This is indeed a fact that should appear in Guido's memoirs."

**Demo Piatanesi was a partner in the Italo-American Manufacturing Company of Chicago; he was the uncle of Gordon Piatanesi of Colombo & Sons Accordion Corporation of San Rafael.*

Guerrini Accordion Company was awarded gold medals at international expositions held in Genoa, Italy (1914), San Francisco (1915), and San Diego (1916). Guerrini had an extensive trade in the United States, Canada, Central America, South America, Australia, and also in Europe, Italy not excluded.

The 1922 directory listed Furtunato Panconi, as a music teacher at 357 Columbus. (With a name like that, he must have taught accordion!) Between 1934 and 1938, at Sacred Heart High School in San Francisco, you would have found the following accordionists: Mario Beltramo, Steve Pizzo, Eddie Stariha, Arthur Balboni, Ignatius Busilacchi, and Ronaldo Flynnoni (Otherwise called Ron Flynn — with this spelling, I have had a lot of fun with my Italian friends!)

I will never forget the time that I tried to win a new accordion. In 1934, there was a simple puzzle in a San Francisco newspaper; the prize was an accordion. I entered the contest, and I was elated to be notified that I had won a prize. Since I was only 15 years old at the time, I had to bring my mother with me to the store that had sponsored the contest. A salesman showed us the different models of the instrument and explained to us the advantages of being able to play the accordion. Hours later, we started home, and I took my beautiful prize with me — an ashtray!

Whenever I think of someone winning an accordion, I can't help but think of Charles Nunzio. When he was a child, he studied with his father, John, before going on to study with the well-known Frank Umbriaco and other outstanding teachers. In 1937, the Italo-American Accordion Company of Chicago had a contest; they were offering a new accordion as a prize for the best performance. The contest was open to everyone. Some years before, Nunzio's father had to have his left arm amputated because of blood poisoning. John's

friends wanted him to enter the contest, so he did. Then, he put an accordion on upside down and played the "Sharpshooter's March." He won the new accordion!

In the 1924 directory, Charles Basile's Studio was listed at 935 Market Street; he taught accordion, guitar, and banjo. The same building also housed the following music companies: Irving Berlin, Leo Feist, Morrison Music, Shapiro-Bernstein, Quality Music, Waterson-Berlin & Snyder, and M. Witmark & Sons. On the other side of Market, 906 and 908, we found Fisk Music, Music Supply, Pacific Music, Reese & Fuhrman, and J. H. Remick. Other music companies were listed on nearby side streets. The Powell and Market area was quite a music center; it was also the end of the line for the cable cars. In 1967, construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), an underground rail system that ran under Market Street and the San Francisco Bay, was started. It went as far north as Concord and Richmond and as far south as Daly City and Fremont. The buildings at 906 and 908 Market were demolished to accommodate a BART subway station called Hallidie Plaza, named for Andrew Smith Hallidie, a native of Scotland who built the first cable car in 1873. He was shocked when he saw what happened to the horses that pulled the street cars when they slipped on the steep San Francisco hills. When the brakes on a street car failed, the horses were dragged to the bottom of the hill, often hurt so badly that they had to be destroyed. The cable car was his answer to this cruelty; it was pulled by a cable that ran continuously under a slot between the tracks. To move the cable car, the motorman would hook onto the cable. The BART subway system started regular transbay service in 1974.

After some years of additional research and interesting dialog with other accordionists, I believe that I can now identify some of the remaining pictures of players in the San Francisco Accordion Club photograph.

JEROME DAMONTE (#4) was an international artist, teacher, composer, and arranger. He was a well known and prominent artist. Eddie Chavez heard him some 50 years ago in San Antonio, Texas. Eddie says he was a very "smooth" player who had a very pleasing style. Financial investments were his main interest, and he did very well with them. The accordion was like a hobby to him. He was the brother-in-law of Silvio Pezzolo. Some of the companies for whom he composed and arranged music were:

G. Schirmer Company in New York
Chart Music Publishing House of Chicago
M. M. Cole Publishing Company of Chicago
Forester Music Publishing Company
of Chicago

JOE DE PUCCI (#6) was a teacher and professional; he played a chromatic accordion. He used to play on the Matson Liners, going to the South Pacific for months at a time.

PAOLO MASCAGNI (#14) was a shoemaker; he played a chromatic accordion. He played in vaudeville in the Bay Area. Elio Taffi said that he lost track of him after 1935.

EMMA BALDOCCHI (#17) was a bookkeeper at the Bank of Italy (now Bank of America). She lived at 1312 Grant Avenue with Alberto Baldocchi, a musician, and Alfred Baldocchi, a bookkeeper with the Bank of Italy. Was Alberto her husband and Alfred her brother-in-law? Alberto played the accordion; he was not in the 1916 picture. They needed one more person to fill the large 1916 picture and selected Emma. She played for fun, but she was not a professional. The autograph on the picture could be Emma's. If I had to decide which name to put down for picture #17, I would say it is Emma Baldocchi.

EUGENE GIANNERINI (#26) was a professional musician. The directory lists his address at 279 Columbus (he and some other players had their mail sent to the Guerrini address). He would play in night clubs, playing "by ear" as he couldn't read music. He was a good friend of Pasquale Petromilli and Colombo Piatanesi.

ADOLPH MOSCONI (#32) did not teach. He was a terrific vaudeville star. He used to draw large crowds wherever he played. He would play, sing, and tell a few jokes, making everyone laugh. He would play, then stop again, and tell some more jokes... then play again, stop, and tell more jokes. He had the people rolling in the aisles with laughter. After every joke, he would say, "Passa le fagioli!" (Pass the beans).

When he played at 1741 Powell Street (where Pietro Deiro had played in 1909), he packed the house. He loved to tell Italian jokes, and the audience loved them. He would play in vaudeville houses in Concord, Stockton, Tracy, San Jose, Watsonville, Monterey — all the way up and down California. He had a brother, Alfred, who played the accordion; his brother wasn't in the 1916 picture.

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The building in which the Guerrini Accordion Company was located also housed the Buon Gusto Restaurant and a cigar store. "Not all of the cigar boxes had cigars in them," said Henry Sinigiani. Henry was referring to Prohibition (January 16, 1919 - December 5, 1933). Henry continued, "If a regular customer came in, the store owner knew which cigar box to reach for in order to get the bootleg liquor."

I remember this area well. In 1931, when I was 11 years old, I used to go with my father to the Italian section of the City; years later, I learned that it was called the North Beach. After getting off the streetcar, we always had to walk a few blocks to arrive at our destination. I can remember one house in which we would hear an accordion every time we passed. Whoever lived in that house loved the accordion and had good reason because what a beautiful-sounding instrument that person had. I always looked forward to our visits to that area because I wanted to hear that accordion again. That person really loved to play.

A couple of years later, I again heard more accordions like that one when I went to the August 20, 1933 accordion picnic in Fairfax. To get there we boarded a ferryboat at the Ferry Building at the foot of Market Street in San Francisco. It was a very cold and foggy morning as the ferryboat moved out into the Bay. We were halfway across the Bay when the fog suddenly vanished, and sunshine greeted us. In the distance was Mount Tamalpais, almost a half mile high; it was named after the Tamal Indians, who had lived for many years in that area. Marin county received its name from an Indian who used to move people by boat; Marin was the shortened name for the Spanish El Marinero (the sailor). It was at Point Reyes in Marin County that Francis Drake anchored his galleon, the Golden Hinde, on June 17, 1579, in the area that later became known as Drake's Bay. The galleon needed repair, and the crew needed water and supplies. Francis Drake failed to discover San Francisco Bay because a heavy fog concealed it, so he sailed right past the harbor entrance. Two centuries later, the San Carlos, commanded by Juan Manuel de Ayala, became the first vessel to sail into the San Francisco Bay on August 5, 1775.

As we left the ferryboat at Sausalito, some people were beginning to remove some of their clothing. Those carrying an accordion had to set the instrument down in order to remove a coat or a heavy sweater because it was hot in Marin County in the summer. We boarded an electric train, and as we passed through the cities of Corte Madera, Larkspur, Kentfield, Ross, and San Anselmo, we found ourselves looking at quaint suburban homes, the places where well-to-do San Franciscans spent the summer. When we arrived at Fairfax, one would have thought it was the end of the line because so many people were departing from the train. Fairfax, a town of some 6,000 residents, became a city in 1931; it still looked like a small town. The first thing one noticed were the automobiles parked all over the place at every angle. Some were still looking for a place to park; some ended up parking just outside Fairfax and walking back. The grocery

stores were very busy. Groups of people streamed toward the picnic grounds, many carrying their accordions. One could already hear accordion music since some people had arrived as early as 5 or 6 in the morning. They wanted to get choice picnic tables near the bandstand and wanted to park their cars as near as possible.

As I entered the picnic grounds, I saw little evidence of Prohibition; there was a gallon of water on the top of every picnic table. But under the tables, that was another story!!! Everyone was evidently enjoying themselves. An accordionist at one of the tables was playing "Viva La Giga," and as he played that number, the people started to move. There is nothing like watching Italians dancing to 6/8 rhythm accordion music. The accordions of that era (circa 1933) were beautiful-sounding instruments. They were very lightweight, and their accordion-shaped cases made them easy to carry. Naturally, multiple switches and amplification were some years away. Since later accordions were much heavier, wheels on the cases was a welcome invention for carrying heavier accordions over long distances.

I heard some good music coming from another table that was surrounded by a large crowd. I could not get near the accordionist. One man climbed a tree for a better view, but he fell out of the tree as he evidently had consumed too much of the "water." The accordionist must have been sitting down; I never did see him (I assume the player was a man) — but I certainly did hear him. He was playing some terrific arrangements of "The Sheik of Araby," "Darktown Strutters' Ball," "Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue," "Ida," "Rose Room," "Margie," "Nobody's Sweetheart," "Dinah," and others. Accordion music was everywhere; people were playing, singing, dancing, eating, and drinking. Some were having such a "good time" that they did not realize that the sun would go down and that they would not notice it. They would be among the last ones leaving the park at ten that evening. (Indeed, they had their breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the picnic grounds.)

I looked at my wristwatch; it was almost noon. In another two hours the accordion concert would begin. The students of Anthony Galla-Rini, John Pezzolo, and Henry Sinigiani would be entertaining us all afternoon. Nobody would go home; everyone stayed for the concert and drawing for the new $500 accordion.

My memories of the Seventeenth Annual Accordion Club Picnic have given me much pleasure over the years; I'll never forget that summer day in Marin County. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to meet and hear so many wonderful accordion players over the years. I am so fortunate to have lived during such a time, a time that came to be known in the period that followed as "The Golden Age of the Accordion."

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BIAGGIO QUATTROCIOCCHE: EARLY ACCORDION MUSIC PUBLISHER AND JOHN BARSUGLIA: EARLY ACCORDION TEACHER

By Ron Flynn

Editor's Note: During the research for this book and discussions with the key accordionists whom I have included in this book, one name kept popping up as a key figure in the early development of the accordion on the American scene. So, because of his important contributions and the key role he played during the early years of the accordion, I wish to introduce Mr. Biaggio Quattrociocche to those who may be reading his name for the first time. As an introduction, I have included a letter that was written by Mr. Quattrociocche to John Barsuglia, together with some historic pages from one of his accordion catalogs, and some very interesting words from Sylvia Prior about this legendary gentleman. Then, immediately following, I shall introduce Mr. Barsuglia, who tells about his early association with Guido Deiro and his own unique contributions to the accordion in the California and Oregon.

Dear Mr. Barsuglia, April 29, 1955

Thank you for the order; the music is already in the mail. I read your biographical sketch and see that you and your Mrs. have a very good musical background.

Yes, too bad, Mr. Guido Deiro had to pass away; he wasn't too old (63). Galla-Rini and I were among the pallbearers at his funeral *[Editor's Note: Pietro Deiro and family were at sea at the time.]* Guido Deiro had such a wonderful genius for composition. We had arranged that he would play whatever came to his mind, and I would write it down to create new compositions, but then he got sick. When I came to Los Angeles in 1947, I started to teach piano and violin in his studio. And when he started to feel sick and was forced to close his place at N. Broadway, I had him to teach his pupils in my studio here on Huron Street.

About the origin of the piano-accordion, I know something because I am old (73). I remember when I was a boy — maybe Pietro wasn't born yet *[Editor's note: Mr. Quattrociocche was born in 1882; Pietro Deiro was not born until 1888.]* I used to tinker around the factory where August Iorio and Amedeo Iorio (two brothers, cousins to my father) had a little factory to build pipe organs, accordions, etc. For themselves, they already had piano-accordions to play duets. As both were fine musicians and composers, they used to play their own compositions and operatic music. In the year 1900, together with Frank Iorio, 17-year-old son of August, they formed a very good trio and went on tour in France. They played in several big cities and made enough money to make plans to come to the United States.

After a few years, Amedeo Iorio came first to New York and started to work for Cerabino doing repair work and building small accordions. After a year or so, August Iorio came and started to work in the same place for about a year, and then looking around in uptown New York found Bernardino who already had a store selling accordions and doing repairs. Bernardino offered him higher pay; so, he went to work for him building chromatic and piano-accordions for the customers. The piano-accordion at that time was with 48 or 60 basses.

After another year or so, Frank and Candido (August's sons) came to New York to join their father. Also, Arthur and Hugo (Amedeo Iorio's sons) came to New York. At that time, there wasn't enough accordion work, so Frank, Candido, Arthur, Hugo, and I all started to work in the piano factories.

It was only in 1907 when August Iorio opened up an accordion factory at 44 Baxter Street in New York and suggested to me to put a sign in the window as teacher of piano, violin, cornet, and piano-accordion.

So, I began to teach the piano-accordion in New York in 1907. But, I know that in Chicago, G. Bartoli had a piano-accordion school then, and later his son Frank published a method with a photograph of his father's piano-accordion school and right on the photo is the date 1907. To have such an accordion school, I think he must have started about 1904 or 1905. For better details, you can ask Frank Bartoli Accordion School, 217 E. 115th Street, Chicago 28, Illinois.

Guido and Pietro always had a little trouble among themselves.... When Pietro published his first accordion method, he had printed on the first pages that he had been the first to publish the accordion music. Well, when the Pagani Brothers, together with Pietro, wanted to start their publications in 1919, they wrote to me asking for me to give them permission to use my system for their accordion publications. So, I gave it to them without asking even a penny.

My accordion publications started in 1916, and during the same year I had published 36 numbers. Anyhow, for three years I was the only accordion music publisher in the world.

This is what I know about the piano-accordion. I thought I would write you these details because you are young and know just what other people tell you.

I am sending a copy of the first piece published for the accordion. You can see the date of the copyright: 1916.

Sincerely yours,
B. QUATTROCIOCCHE

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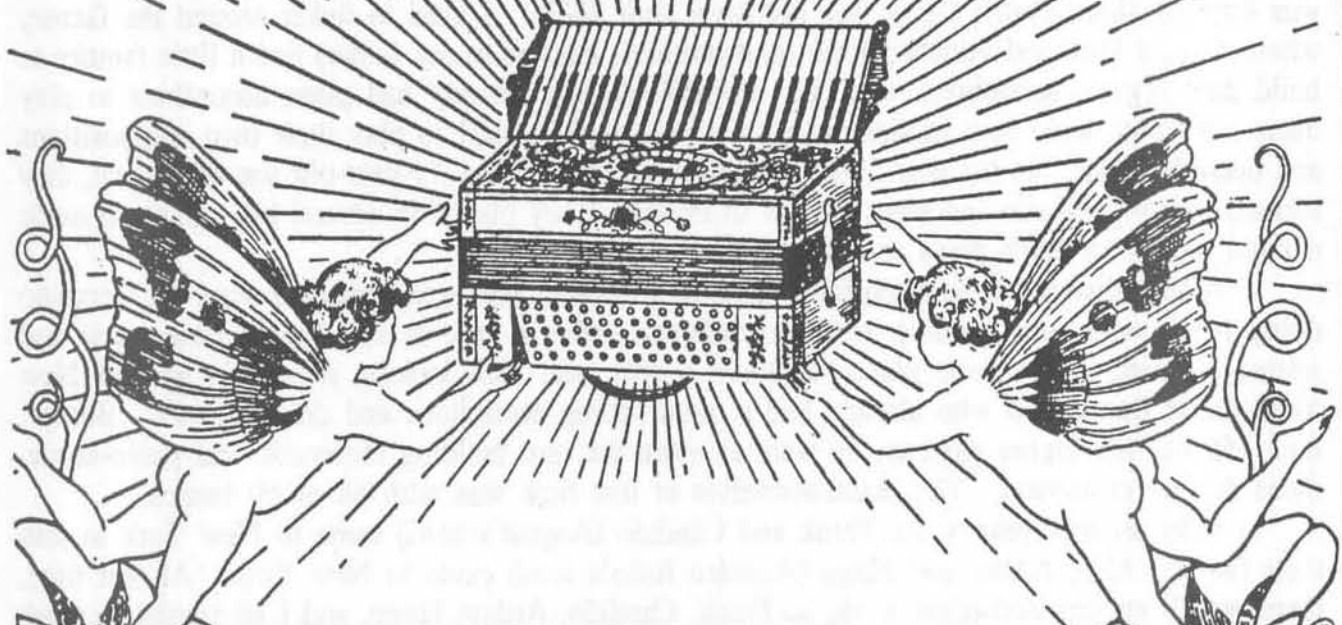

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2. April Flowers Mazurka.....F. B. De Leone .20-2
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4. Dream Valse.....F. B. De Leone .20-2
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7. Sweet Miss Betty Schottische.....F. B. De Leone .25-3
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9. Valse Allurement.....F. B. De Leone .25-3
10. Bobolink .....F. B. De Leone .35-4
11. Dance of the Marionettes.....F. B. De Leone .35-4
12. Reminiscences .....F. B. De Leone .
13. Allies March.....C. Pizzino .25-3
14. Serene Night Waltz.....C. Pizzino .25-3
15. Quindicenne Polka.....F. Lucas .25-3
16. One Night in Gondola Mazurka.....F. Lucas .25-3
17. Tarantella Siciliana.....F. Lucas .25-3
18. Bella Italia Polka.....F. Lucas .25-3
20. Lullaby .....P. Frosini .25-4
21. Valse Caprice.....P. Frosini .20-2
22. Omaggio a Pietro Overture.....P. Frosini .35-5
23. Panama Exposition Overture.....P. Frosini .35-5
24. On to Paragon March.....P. Frosini .25-4
25. Rag in D Minor.....P. Frosini .25-4
26. Pemberton Inn Waltz.....P. Frosini .30-3
28. Fiore Fragrante Schottische.....F. Pozzi .20-2
29. Golden Dream Mazurka.....B. Quattrociocche .20-2
30. Senorita Spanish Valse.....F. B. De Leone .25-3
31. L'Armonicista Polka March.....A. Dalle Molle .25-3
32. Lolita March.....J. E. Ovando .25-3
33. Los Ovandos Rag Time Two Step.....J. E. Ovandos .25-4

237. Cecilia, Waltz.....J. M. Coleman .25-4
178. Chicago Accordion Club, Polca.....Leo Pieraanti .25-4
264. Cielo Celeste, Mexican Song.....Fernandez .20-2
29. Ciribiribin, Valse.....A. Pestalozza .15-2
258. Clarinette, Fox-Trot.....F. Lucas .30-4
165. Claudina, Mazurka.....B. Quattrociocche .20-2
204. Collelongo, Waltz.....M. Pisegna .25-4
161. Confession of the Heart, Waltz.....Satrithis .20-2
158. Crisantemo, Waltz.....Sartori .20-2
324. Cuckoo Waltz.....Arr. by Quattrociocche .20-2
107. Cuore d'Angelo, Valzer.....Quattrociocche .25-2
270. Dancing Queen, Polka.....M. Borghesi .20-3
24. Danube Waves, Waltz.....Ivanovici .25-4
275. Dea, Polka.....Bruno Giardini .20-3
216. Deirina, Mazurka.....G. Deiro .35-5
85. Dena, Polka.....A. Parisi .20-3
100. Devil Dogs, March.....L. Mauro .25-3
271. Diana, Mazurka.....F. Rispoli .20-3
329. Dizzy Accordionette Novelty.....G. G. Beltramo .30-3
209. Docile Padre, Polka.....J. Mosti .20-3
174. Dogliani, Polca.....A. Cagnazzo .20-3
350. Dolores Tango.....Joe Mosti .25-3
17. Dolores, Valse.....Waldteufel .35-4
21. Donne e Ballo, Polca.....Anconetani .20-3
293. Dulciana Overture.....J. Mosti .35-4
201. Due Rose, Polka.....A. Tustelli .20-3
102. Echoes of Naples, Polka.....P. Frosini .35-3
224. Elettricita' Polka.....Frank Vitale .25-3
199. Eleonora, Mazurka.....P. Martello .20-3
149. Elvira Cara, Mazurka.....Joe Mosti .20-2
35. Elvira, Polca.....Cavalieri .20-3
51. Estudiantina, Val.....Waldteufel .30-3
330. Falling Stars (Stelle Cadenti) Polka.....F. Iorio .20-3
19. **Farfalletta Dorata, Mazurka Quattrociocche .25—3**
327. Farewell to School March.....E. Beltramo .25-3
27. Faust, Valse.....Gounod .25—2
87. Fiorentino in Campagna, Valse.....M. Partipilo .25-3
251. Fior di Primavera, March.....J. Mosti .25-3
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1. Fior di Siepe, March.....by B. Quattrociocche .25-2
318. Fiorentino March.....M. Parti .25-3
113. Fior Fragrante, Schottisch.....F. Pozzi .25-3
169. Fiori Alpini, Polka, Two Step.....F. Lucas .25-3
147. **Flight of the Angels, Waltz .... Quattrociocche .25—4**
121. **Florence, March ..... G. Bortoli .25—3**
46. **Florina Mia, Mas. ..... Joe Parise .25—3**
89. **Flower, Song ..... Lange .20—3**
253. **For-ge-me-not, Waltz ..... J.M. Coleman .20—3**
244. **Frances, Mazurka ..... T. Bertussi .20—2**
226. **Fremito d'Amore, Waltz Alfredo Barbirolli .35—3**

117. Gaeta Bella, Marvin .....A. Iorio .25—2
80. Galezza, March .....G. Bortoli .25—3
210. Gallzl's Return, March .....J. Mosti .25—3
348. Gaviani's Return March.....Frank Ioro .25-3
312. Gecoma March .....Nick Gecoma .20-3
110. Gioia di Primavera, Polka .....V. Roma .25—3
18. Gioia Mia, Polca .....P. Forte .30—2
75. Giulia, Mazurka .....B. Quattrociocche .20—2
76. Giulietta, Polka .....A. S. Sherden .25—3
150. Giuseppe Migliorato, Polka .....J. Mosti .20—3
223. Gloria, March .....Joe Mosti .30—3
19. Golden Butterfly, Mazurka .....Quattrociocche .25—3
108. Golden Dream, Mazurka .....B. Quattrociocche .20—1
31. Golfo Incantato, Valse .....Fiorillo .20—3
206. Good Bye Waltz.....by R. Quattrociocche .15-1
205. Grapeville Polka .....Patsy Ferrante .20-3
283. Grasshopper, Polka .....B. Quattrociocche .20—3
60. Grido di Gioia, Polca .....Becucci .20—3
13. Guido's Return, March .....B. Quattrociocche .25—4
129. Hand Grenade Throwers', March .....G. Deiro .35—4
294. Hannastown Waltz.....Clide A. Rondi .20-3
291. Happiness March.....G. Beltramo .25-3
263. **Happy Accordionist, March ..... F. Vitale .25—3**
304. Happy Life (Vita Allegra) March.....A. Zordan .25-3
325. Happy Thoughts Waltz.....P. Frosini .40-3
213. Heavenly Dreams, Valse lento .....Tito Carinci .20—2
338. Helen Mazurko .....R. B. Quattrociocche .20-3
328. Hesitation Concert Waltz .....G. G. Beltramo .30-3
292. Hilda Mazurka (Duet for two accordions).....Prof. J. Sgallori .35-3
249. **Home Sweet Home, with variation Bishop .20—3**
317. Hot Accordion Fox-trot.....A. Zordan .25-3
179. **I Badigli del Barbiere di Siviglia, Fox-Trot P. Frosini .35—4**
48. **Ideal, Valzer ..... G. Mosti .20—2**
219. I Don't Care, Polka .....G. Deiro .35—3
161. Il Bacio, Valse Brillante .....L. Arditi .30—3
4. Il Mio Capriccio, Mazurka .....Quattrociocche .25—3
106. Il Poeta Soldato, Mazurka .....A. Le Donne .25—2
118. Il Sogno di una Fanciulla .....F. Iorio .25—2
147. Il Volo degli Angeli, Waltz .....Quattrociocche .25—4
246. Incanto d'Amore, Waltz .....Helen Ploretta .20—2
228. Indiola, Fox-Trot .....Frank Lucas .35—3
142. Ines, Mazurka .....B. Quattrociocche .20—2

302. In Gondola Waltz ..... Leo Rossi .20-2
39. Inno dei Lavoratori ..... N. N. .15—3
38. Inno di Garibaldi ..... Olivieri .15—2
23. In Riva all'Adige, Polca ..... Sartori .20—2
207. In the Garden of Flowers, Max. ..... A. De Cesare .20—2
235. Italian Fantasie ..... P. Frosini .35—4
109. Italian Serenade ..... V. Roma .25—3
185. Italian Royal Blues, Fox-Trot ..... P. Frosini .35—3
343. Italo American March ..... G. G. Beltramo .25-3
192. Johnstown Accordion Club, Mazurka ..... Mosti .20—3
193. Jolly Accordion Players, March ..... Joe Mosti .25—3
148. Joseph's Return, March ..... J. Mosti .25—4
287. Joyful Hours, Mazurka ..... F. B. De Leone .25—3
132. La Capricciosa, Polka ..... Branzoli .20—3
88. La Forza del Destino (Preghiera) ..... Verdi .20—2
334. La Golondrina ..... Serradell .15-2
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I hope that you are as impressed with the work of Mr. Biaggio Quattrociocche as I was when I completed this portion of my research. The scope of his music and publishing enterprise in Stubenville, Ohio and Los Angeles, California during the early years of the accordion was formidable and impressive for that period. In fact, Mr. Quattrociocche published his first piece of music in 1916. Although many others subsequently followed him in the accordion music publishing business, he was certainly the earliest pioneer in this part of the accordion field. To close my comments about this legendary gentleman, I have included a note about him to me from Sylvia Prior, of the Sylvia Prior Music Studio in Van Nuys, California. She is one of the few people today who personally knew him:

"I met Mr. Quattrociocche and his son through my father Syl Prior after World War II. I was young then, and I felt he was very old, but I'm sure it was because of my age. My father had been doing business with his company and, of course, DiBella, Pagani, Fox, Alfred, and Deiro (when Deiro was in business during the mid-1930's). I'm sure you are aware that Dad started his teaching in Los Angeles in 1917, and we are the oldest Southern California studio still in the business."

Now here is Mr. Barsuglia, who is the addressee in the above letter from Mr. Quattrociocche. John Barsuglia was born on December 15, 1915, in Arcata, California. Shortly afterwards, his family moved to the lumber town of Korbel, California. John listened night and day to his father's records of Guido Deiro. So in 1928, his father took John to the Guerrini Accordion Company in San



BIAGGIO QUATTROCIOCCHE (FAR LEFT), POSING OUTSIDE IORIO FACTORY

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BIAGGIO QUATTROCIOCCHE (FAR LEFT), POSING OUTSIDE IORIO FACTORY

Francisco and bought him a new instrument. Each Sunday John and his father traveled 30 miles from Korbel to Eureka so John could take lessons from his teacher, Professor Serafine. It was then that John decided that he did not want to spend the rest of his life in a lumber town; he wanted to become a professional musician.

John remembers another event that helped him make his career decision. During an accordion concert that Guido Deiro gave at the State Theater in Eureka, California in February 1931, John was fortunate enough to win first prize in the accordion contest that followed the concert. After John was announced as the winner, the applause was thunderous. From that time on he knew that the accordion was his life. But he never dreamed that the day would come in which he would become associated with Guido Deiro in the accordion field.

In 1933, he hit the road with his accordion. On the road at age 17, there were beer gardens, depression days . . . one dollar a night and tips, if any . . . honky tonks, and anyplace that wanted to hear him play . . . survival it was . . . many a time, he played only for a meal. The thought of going back defeated to the lumber mills for the rest of his life made John work very hard while breaking in to the accordion field.

At the same time that John was studying accordion and beginning his career, there was a brother and sister team (Nerino and Josephine Turchet), who were advanced students of Caesar Pezzolo of San Francisco. They were featured artists at the Pezzolo brothers' picnics. When Nerino felt that he had learned all that he could from Caesar, he enrolled at Arillago Musical College — then at 2315 Jackson Street in San Francisco. He studied piano composition, harmony, and arranging. An alert sister, Josephine, was learning all she could from her brother at the same time. Nerino had a heart problem, so he went to Italy to see a specialist. After six months in Italy, he returned to Oakland, California and started teaching again.

Then at the age of 25, Nerino was found dead after a concert. Josephine was so depressed by her brother's death that she put her accordion in its case and did not play any more until World War II. During the war, she played her accordion at U.S. War Bond drives in the San Francisco Bay Area, backed up by a U.S. Army Band.

In 1935, John was fortunate to meet Guido Deiro, and he started taking lessons from him. John became one of Guido's associate teachers when Guido started a chain of accordion studios along the Pacific Coast of California and Oregon. As was Guido's standard technique when he wanted to open a studio, he would choose a town and give a concert at a local theater. This would provide the publicity and audience that made the opening of a studio easy. Then after the studio was running



Francisco and bought him a new instrument. Each Sunday John and his father traveled 30 miles from Korbel to Eureka so John could take lessons from his teacher, Professor Serafine. It was then that John decided that he did not want to spend the rest of his life in a lumber town; he wanted to become a professional musician.

John remembers another event that helped him make his career decision. During an accordion concert that Guido Deiro gave at the State Theater in Eureka, California in February 1931, John was fortunate enough to win first prize in the accordion contest that followed the concert. After John was announced as the winner, the applause was thunderous. From that time on he knew that the accordion was his life. But he never dreamed that the day would come in which he would become associated with Guido Deiro in the accordion field.

In 1933, he hit the road with his accordion. On the road at age 17, there were beer gardens, depression days . . . one dollar a night and tips, if any . . . honky tonks, and anyplace that wanted to hear him play . . . survival it was . . . many a time, he played only for a meal. The thought of going back defeated to the lumber mills for the rest of his life made John work very hard while breaking in to the accordion field.

At the same time that John was studying accordion and beginning his career, there was a brother and sister team (Nerino and Josephine Turchet), who were advanced students of Caesar Pezzolo of San Francisco. They were featured artists at the Pezzolo brothers' picnics. When Nerino felt that he had learned all that he could from Caesar, he enrolled at Arillago Musical College — then at 2315 Jackson Street in San Francisco. He studied piano composition, harmony, and arranging. An alert sister, Josephine, was learning all she could from her brother at the same time. Nerino had a heart problem, so he went to Italy to see a specialist. After six months in Italy, he returned to Oakland, California and started teaching again.

Then at the age of 25, Nerino was found dead after a concert. Josephine was so depressed by her brother's death that she put her accordion in its case and did not play any more until World War II. During the war, she played her accordion at U.S. War Bond drives in the San Francisco Bay Area, backed up by a U.S. Army Band.

In 1935, John was fortunate to meet Guido Deiro, and he started taking lessons from him. John became one of Guido's associate teachers when Guido started a chain of accordion studios along the Pacific Coast of California and Oregon. As was Guido's standard technique when he wanted to open a studio, he would choose a town and give a concert at a local theater. This would provide the publicity and audience that made the opening of a studio easy. Then after the studio was running



successfully, Guido would often turn it over to a capable teacher in the area where it was located. In other instances, Guido would find accordion teachers in a town, and if he was satisfied with their ability, he would associate his name with them and form a new Deiro studio. In some cases, Guido did not personally have time to conduct a concert when starting a new studio, so he'd ask a trusted associate to start those schools using the same technique of holding a concert to create advance publicity.

These methods were used to open studios in California and Oregon. In March 1936, John Barsuglia was already making quite a name for himself on radio station KIEM in Eureka, California, playing solo programs twice weekly for almost 3 years. Then, he went to Klamath Falls, Oregon in April 1936, and continued solo work over radio station KFJI.

Shortly afterwards, Guido Deiro came to Klamath Falls and played a concert at the local theater. After the concert John went backstage to say hello and compliment Guido on his concert performance. During their conversation, Guido asked John if he wanted to start an accordion studio for his chain: **GUIDO DEIRO PACIFIC COAST STUDIOS.** John was the natural person to start this studio because he was already known in the area from his program over radio station KFJI and in his various night club appearances.

This was the beginning of John Barsuglia's business association with Guido Deiro. In the following years, John personally established a number of other studios in the Deiro chain, including several studios under the Barsuglia name, independent of the Deiro chain.

In mid-1936, Guido asked John to join his San Francisco studio as an assistant, and John accepted the offer. After a few months in the San Francisco studio, however, Guido and John decided to begin looking for another new studio location. So, John went to Chico, California, and using the same procedure that had been successful in establishing other studios, he got a night club job and began a solo program over radio station KHSL. After a period of several months, the response was good, and they established a new studio. Then, John repeated the same procedure in establish a studio in Jackson, California. To establish the Jackson studio in 1938, Guido Deiro personally came and performed a concert at the Amador Theater. This concert was performed in association with John Barsuglia, and some of his most talented students appeared on stage during the concert.

In 1939 John decided to open up a studio under his own name in Angels Camp, California; then, in 1940 he opened up a second studio in Sonora, California, retaining the Jackson studio that he had established with Guido Deiro. It was quite a job keeping those studios operating as there were many students. John would spend a few days per week at each studio, traveling between them over a distance of 49 miles.

In 1941 John was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Camp Roberts, California, where he received 12 weeks of basic training. He was then sent to Hawaii with the 27th Infantry Division, and was soon recognized as an accordionist and transferred to the 40th Infantry Division Army Band. But when the band received orders to move to the South Pacific, the commander ordered the band to leave their instruments behind. However, the mess sergeant liked the accordion, so he packed John's accordion in a wooden box with lots of silicone to keep the reeds from getting rusty in the humid weather. He screwed the lid on, and the accordion went with the food. For 3 years, John was moved from island to island, and accordion music was the only entertainment that many of the G.I.'s ever heard.

John had no sooner joined the Army than he received a "Dear John" letter. His sweetheart had found someone else. Then, one of John's students found him a pen-pal that he corresponded with until his discharge. In 1945 he was discharged from the Army, and he returned to playing in night clubs. It was then that he met his pen-pal, Josephine Turchet, for

the first time. She played the same instruments as he did: piano, organ, and accordion; but since the end of the war, she had only played the accordion a few times on weekends as a soloist with an Army band. Still very despondent about her brother's death, she had loaned her accordion to a fellow (since she was not using it full-time), and he never returned it. But, fortunately she still had Nerino's accordion. John and Josephine (Josie) were married in 1946. Josie was so happy that she took the accordion out of its case and has played it ever since.

In 1951 John and Josie started the Sacramento Conservatory of Music in Sacramento where they taught piano, organ, and accordion. They were going to add other instruments, but they didn't have the room in the building, so they stayed with piano, organ, and accordion.

John is a past president of the Accordion Teacher's Guild, International (A.T.G.) and also past president of the Northern California Accordion Association. Josephine retired in 1984 from teaching all three instruments. John now teaches two days a week to have something to do. John concludes, "Sacramento has been very good to us . . . we had yearly appearances of our accordion bands at the California State Fair from 1951 to 1968. Now we sit back and enjoy the wonderful memories of the past."

As for his association with the great Guido Deiro, John says, "He was a terrific accordion artist and a very patient teacher. It is sad that he had to get sick and pass away so young. He was a great man and did a lot for the accordion; he helped popularize it in the United States and Europe. He was a household name over the entire nation for many years. One could just say Guido Deiro, and every accordion lover knew who he was. May his name live on forever."



JOHN BARSUGLIA



JOSEPHINE (JOSIE) BARSUGLIA

[I wish to thank John and Josephine Barsuglia for their assistance during the preparation of this article. The Sacramento Music Conservatory was a "hallmark" music studio in the Northern California area, and many of their students went on to win contests and establish professional reputations of their own. Today, John and Josie still teach as time permits and as they find students who are interested in learning the accordion.]

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THE LARGEST AND LEADING
ACCORDION
FACTORY
IN THE UNITED STATES



A PICTORIAL HISTORY: THE GUERRINI ACCORDION COMPANY



VINCENZO PETROMILLI, ASSISTANT-MANAGER



PASQUALE PETROMILLI
PROPRIETOR AND
TECHNICAL SUPERVISOR



ARMANDO PETROMILLI
BUSINESS MANAGER

FOR the convenience of our patrons, we have marked with a special number every model of our accordions. It will be sufficient to tell us the number to enable us to exactly understand which accordion the customer desires.

PER convenienza dei nostri patrocinatori, abbiamo contrassegnato ogni nostro modello con un apposito numero. Basterà ad essi l'indicarci il numero per farci essattamente comprendere quale armonica desiderano.

[5]

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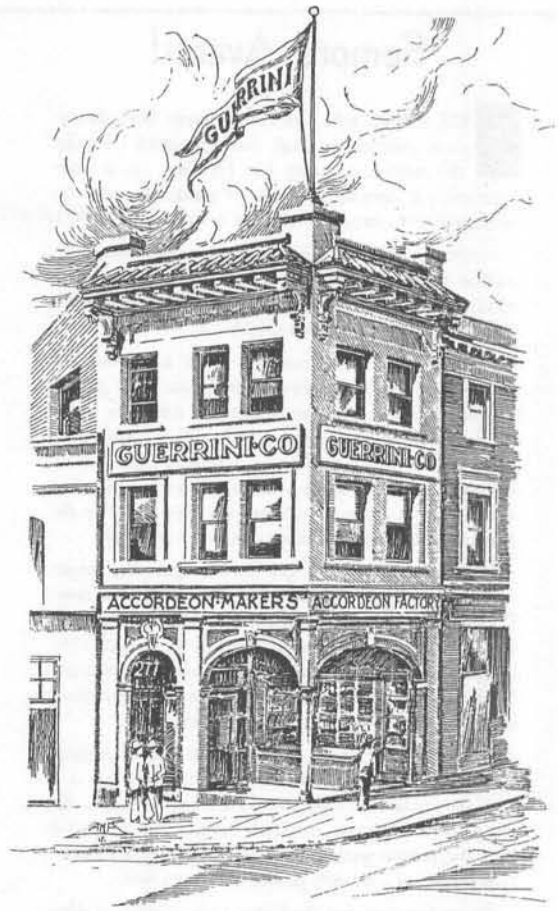

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Sempre Avanti!



ALE il motto della **Guerrini Company.** Sorta da modesti principii sin dagli anni precedenti l'incendio che ridusse in cenere San Francisco, risorse colla metropoli più rigogliosa di prima e procedette, sulla via della perfezione, senza mai rallentare e senza soste.

Sempre avanti! Alla costante osservanza di questa massima fece necessariamente riscontro la sempre crescente rinomanza della Guerrini Company e la eccezionale popolarità delle armoniche uscite dalla sua fabbrica.

L'armonica era considerata, un tempo a memoria dei viventi, come uno strumento primitivo, usato per lo più nei trattenimenti campestri e senza pretesa. Adesso fa la sua comparsa nei teatri d'ogni metropoli e dà un importante contributo all'arte musicale vera e propria. Tanto che i maestri-compositori furono costretti ad occuparsene. Essi adattano ormai non scarso numero delle loro creazioni alle esigenze tutte speciali di questo complicato congegno.

Simile trasformazione è, per consenso generale, dovuta in gran parte all'eccellenza raggiunta dalle armoniche Guerrini. Esse si imposero agli amanti della buona musica ed a legioni si contano ora gli artisti la cui maestria ebbe maggiore risalto dall'intelligente uso di una Guerrini e che ad essa, con modestia e sincerità che li onora, attribuiscono in parte il loro successo e la loro prosperità.

Sempre avanti! E ciò che destò non poca meraviglia, sia nel campo dell'industria, sia nelle sfere musicali, è il fatto che la Guerrini Company diede maggiore slancio alla sua produzione, seppe arricchirla sempre più di speciali migliorie, proprio quando si credeva che già avesse raggiunta la perfezione e che non potesse andare più oltre.

Questo fortunato periodo di accentuata attività e di rifio-

Guerrini Leadership



LWAYS FORWARD! is the motto of the **Guerrini Company.**

This firm was established before the memorable fire that practically reduced San Francisco to ashes. The Guerrini Company renewed its life and became more intensely active, as did the metropolis. Since then the Guerrini Company has proceeded from good to better without rest or hesitation, knowing that perfection has no limit.

Always forward! Having been persistently true to this motto is the principal cause of the renown of the Guerrini Company and of the exceptional popularity of the accordions manufactured by its factory.

In times which some of our readers may remember, accordions were considered primitive instruments. At the most, they were appreciated only at country festivals.

Now the accordion is welcome in the best theatres of large cities and contributes to the interpretation of classical music. So much so, that composers, to comply with public demand, have been compelled to take the accordion into consideration and to conform part of their compositions to the special requirements of this complicated instrument.

Such evolution is due, in no mean part, to the superior workmanship, to the high grade of standard of the Guerrini accordions. This opinion is held by countless legions of lovers of good music. Many professionals, modestly, and with a sincerity that is really praiseworthy, admit that their skill has had a better opportunity to be fully appreciated since they have used the Guerrini accordion.

Always forward! Just at the time everybody thought that perfection in the manufacture of accordions had been reached, the Guerrini Company caused no little astonishment in the industrial field and among the musical people

ritura artistica è recente e coincide colla data in cui **Pasquale Petromilli** divenne unico proprietario, ed esclusivo direttore tecnico, della Guerrini Company.

Pasquale Petromilli nacque a Castelfidardo, il centro, in Italia, dell'industria delle armoniche. Non si esagera affermando che egli incominciò ad addestrarsi nell'arte sin dalla sua fanciullezza. Paziente, tenace ricercatore del meglio, di feconda intuizione, d'ingegno naturalmente inventivo, seppe, col volgere degli anni, superare i suoi maestri.

L'essere diventato unico proprietario ed arbitro della Guerrini Company gli offerse il destro di rivelarsi completamente. Nell'industria, come in qualsiasi altra manifestazione dell'umana attività, condizione indispensabile di pieno successo è l'esser liberi.

Se si tien calcolo di quanto sopra, e della specchiata onestà, e della cortesia del tratto proprî della Guerrini Company, si avrà la chiave per comprendere come essa abbia potuto, in tempo relativamente breve, allargare la cerchia dei suoi affari sino ad accaparrarsi clientela e rinomanza in tutti gli Stati Uniti, nel Canada, nell'America latina, nell'Australia e persino in Europa, non esclusa l'Italia che, per merito di un suo figlio intraprendente, vide così ritornare sotto forma più attraente e dotato di pregi ritenuti irrealizzabili, uno strumento che ebbe, tra i suoi confini, la propria culla.

Qui dobbiamo aggiungere che il signor Pasquale Petromilli, premuroso di assicurare alla ditta chi possa continuarne la fama, pose e pone ogni cura nell'infondere nei propri figli Armando e Vincenzo l'amore dell'arte. Entrambi si avviano, con passo sicuro, nella carriera che egli, con esemplare costanza e tanto intelligentemente, seppe percorrere. E già gli sono di valido, inestimabile aiuto.

Il catalogo che segue offre la prova tangibile delle nostre asserzioni. Esso riproduce gli ultimi modelli ideati e manifatturati dalla Guerrini Company. Qualche cenno illustrativo gioverà a farne meglio comprendere i pregi e l'intrinseco valore.

as well, by endowing its instruments with new and original devices.

This happy period of exceptional activity, which almost might be called an artistic Renaissance, is recent. It had its inception from the date on which **Mr. Pasquale Petromilli** became the sole proprietor and the exclusive technical supervisor of the Guerrini Company.

Mr. Pasquale Petromilli was born at Castelfidardo, the Italian center of the accordion industry. He began learning the secrets of this industry at boyhood.

Patient and persistent in seeking what might be an improvement; endowed with a keen intuition and a natural propensity for inventions, he knew how, as years passed by, to go further than his teachers.

As soon as he became the sole proprietor of the Guerrini Company he had the opportunity to fully reveal his inventive powers. Liberty of action is a coefficient of success in the field of industry as in any other field of human activity.

As a result of the ingenuity of Mr. Pasquale Petromilli, the fame of Guerrini accordions has passed beyond the borders of California. The Guerrini Company has an extensive trade in the United States, Canada, Central America, South America, Australia, and also in Europe, Italy not excluded. So, owing to the industry of one of her sons, Italy sees an instrument that was cradled within her own frontiers, enter her shores endowed with a more attractive shape and with improvements that were deemed unattainable.

With a view to insuring for his firm the co-operation of experts who might successfully assume the difficult task of upholding the high standing of the Guerrini Company, Mr. Pasquale Petromilli does his utmost to develop in his sons, Armando and Vincent, their natural love for his own art. Both of them are progressing with sure steps on the same path he has followed so intelligently, and they are already his able and trustworthy assistants.

The catalog which follows contains engravings of the

* * *

Chiunque ha una pratica, anche solo superficiale, di armoniche non ignora che le difficoltà le quali impedivano di farle accettare nel mondo musicale come uno strumento di primo ordine, erano essenzialmente d'indole tecnica. Non si riesciva a dotarle di un numero sufficiente di note, di chiavi e di accordi senza renderle eccessivamente voluminose e pesanti... inconveniente gravissimo in uno strumento che, per suonarlo, dev'essere portato.

Molti industriali si provarono a risolvere il difficile problema, ma senza ottenerne risultati di rilievo. Il risolverlo pienamente fu dovuto appunto agli sforzi pertinaci, all'intelligenza del signor Pasquale Petromilli.

Le migliorie che egli ideò e mise in pratica rivestono il carattere di vere e proprie invenzioni. Esse vennero regolarmente patentate ed il Petromilli ne ha naturalmente il diritto di esclusiva. La rinomata chiave cromatica in quarta è tra queste privative.

Il descrivere i nuovi congegni ideati dalla Guerrini Company richiederebbe spazio eccessivo e, d'altronde, solo i meccanici provetti riescirebbero a comprenderci. Al pubblico in generale basti l'asserzione, facilmente verificabile, che le armoniche fabbricate da questa ditta, grazie a tali congegni, sono dotate di tutte le ottave e di tutti i bassi e gli accordi necessari a renderle uno strumento completo il quale si presta all'artistica interpretazione di qualsiasi creazione musicale. E ciò pur conservando dimensioni tutt'altro che eccessive e peso tutt'altro che soverchio.

Anzi, a questo riguardo, la Guerrini Company non si tenne paga del successo già universalmente riconosciuto. Nel presente catalogo viene, fra l'altro, sottoposto all'esame del pubblico un modello assolutamente nuovo nel quale l'altezza dell'Armonica fu sensibilmente ridotta senza diminuirne il numero delle note e senza sacrificare congegno alcuno. Riesce perciò possibile il suonarla senz'essere costretti ad allargare soverchiamente le braccia con dispendio di forze ed a scapito degli effetti.

Questa innovazione giova specialmente ai giovanetti che non hanno ancora acquistata la loro piena vigoria, alle signore ed agli adulti dotati di braccia al di sotto della lunghezza normale. Ma ben si può dire che la facilità del maneggiarlo rende questo modello utile a qualsiasi suonatore, sia professionista o semplice dilettante. Su esso richiamiamo l'attenzione speciale dei nostri lettori. (Vedi Modello No. 25.)

Superfluo il rilevare che la fama delle armoniche Guerrini concerne tanto quelle a sistema di pianoforte quanto le così dette cromatiche.

Le armoniche a pianoforte della fabbrica Guerrini godono meritamente fama di impareggiabili, non solo per i pregi a cui già accennammo, ma anche per l'intensità delle vibrazioni sonore, per la pastosità delle note e la loro inappuntabile intonazione, per la solidità che è valida garanzia di lunga durata.

Le armoniche cromatiche differiscono da quelle a piano solo in quanto che hanno necessariamente la tastiera a tre file; ma eguale è il numero delle note, eguali le dimensioni, eguale il peso, eguale tutto il resto.

La Guerrini Company garantisce qualsiasi armonica nuova uscita dalla sua fabbrica pel periodo di cinque anni. L'eccellenza dei suoi prodotti non potrebbe ricevere affidamento migliore!

* * *

AVVERTENZA—I signori, giovanetti o adulti, che intraprendono lo studio dell'armonica con serietà di propositi, devono riflettere che si tratta di un istrumento relativamente moderno e soggetto a continue migliorie.

Essi devono perciò evitare l'errore di scegliere un maestro unicamente per la sua rinomanza di buon musicista.

Per poter insegnare a suonare l'armonica e ottenerne con rapidità, sia pure relativa, il risultato che si è in diritto di aspettarsene è indispensabile conoscerne a fondo le complicate caratteristiche.

Prima di scegliere il proprio maestro, gli studiosi faranno opera saggia se consulteranno la Guerrini Company.

recent models manufactured by the Guerrini Company. We take the liberty to give a few explanations which might enable the reader to form a better idea of their intrinsic value.

Those who have some knowledge of accordions, even though in a small degree, are aware of the fact that the obstacles which prevented them from being accepted as first rate musical instruments were essentially of a technical nature. It was an extremely difficult task to manufacture accordions with sufficient notes, keys and chords without making them excessively voluminous and heavy.... a very trying inconvenience in an instrument that is carried as it is being played upon.

Many experts endeavored unsuccessfully to solve these difficult problems. The present satisfactory solution of the old hindrances is due to the practical intelligence of Mr. Pasquale Petromilli.

The improvements that he initiated have been regularly patented and Mr. Pasquale Petromilli enjoys the exclusive right of using them. The celebrated chromatic key in 4th is one of these inventions.

To describe fully all the devices of the Guerrini accordions would require a great deal of time and space; besides, only experts could completely understand such a description. To the general public the following facts, easy to verify, are sufficient: the accordions manufactured by the Guerrini Company are, owing to the above mentioned devices, endowed with all treble notes, all basses and all chords that are necessary to make them complete and modern instruments, thoroughly adapted to the artistic interpretation of any musical composition. It must also be borne in mind that these advantages have been attained without resorting to excessive weight and dimensions.

Indeed, just the contrary is true. The Guerrini Company did not rest satisfied with the universally recognized success that followed their inventions. On the pages of our catalog you will see engraved an absolutely new model which has had its dimensions and weight considerably reduced without in the least diminishing the number of notes or resorting whatsoever to the omission of a device. Consequently, a player may use it without fear of his being compelled to stretch his arms awkwardly or to waste an excessive amount of energy, which might impair the complete enjoyment of the artistic effects.

This latest innovation is especially useful to ladies, to youngsters who have not acquired their full strength, to grown persons of a delicate constitution and those with arms shorter than the average.

We highly recommend this special model to all our patrons, because owing to the facility to interpret with it any musical composition, it is the non plus ultra for any player, be he professional or otherwise. (See Model 26.)

We think it is superfluous to lay stress upon the fact that the popularity of the Guerrini Company is not only due to the superior pattern of its piano-accordions, but to the so called chromatic accordions as well.

Chromatic accordions differ from piano-accordions only in the fact that they necessarily have a keyboard consisting of three rows. The number of notes, dimensions, weight, etc. are alike in all respects.

In addition to the advantages mentioned, we call the readers' attention to the intensity of the sonorous vibrations of the Guerrini accordions, to the sweet tone of their notes, the perfect way they are tuned and their solidity of construction which is a sure guarantee of their durability.

The Guerrini Company guarantees all new accordions turned out by its factory for a period of five years.

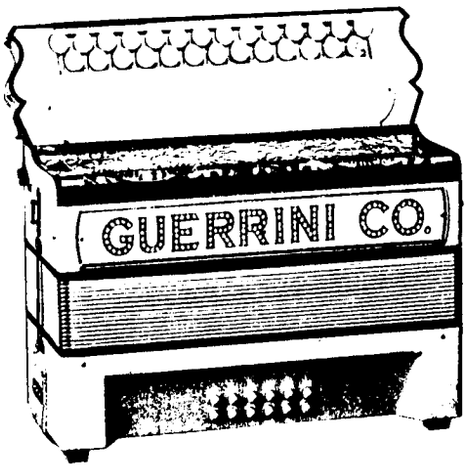
* * *

NOTE—Clients, adults or minors, intending to learn how to play an Accordion, will please bear in mind that it is a comparatively modern instrument, subject to constant improvements.

Consequently it is imperative to avoid the mistake of resorting to a teacher simply for his good name as a musician.

A teacher, to successfully give accordion lessons and realize all the results which are reasonably obtainable should be well conversant with the intricate characteristics of the Guerrini accordions.

Before choosing a teacher, students will act wisely by consulting the Guerrini Company.



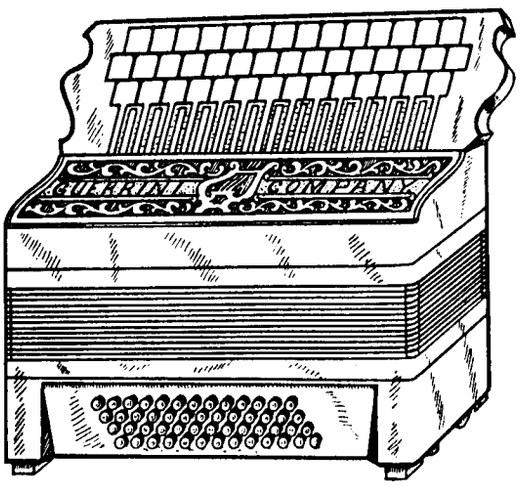
Modello No. 1 . . . . $110

ARMONICA

Con 25 Voci e 12 Bassi

A Doppia Intonazione

I modelli che figurano nel presente catalogo sono una creazione speciale della Guerrini Company. Ma essa e in grado di produrre qualsiasi genere di armonica piaccia ai suoi clienti di ordinarle. Basta all'uopo darle, a voce o per iscritto, tutte le indicazioni richieste dal caso.



Modello No. 2 . . . . $250

ARMONICA CROMATICA

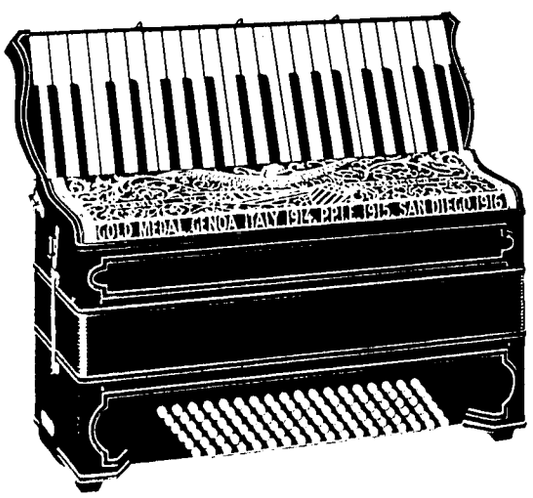
Con 43 Tasti e 52 Bassi

Questo modello può essere fabbricato anche con due intonazioni e semitono.

Il colore, a scelta del compratore, o bianco, o nero, o di qualsiasi altra tinta.

Il suo prezzo resta invariabilmente $250.

The models engraved on the pages of this catalog are special creations of the Guerrini Company, but we are able to manufacture any kind of accordion our patrons desire. All the purchaser needs to do is mail the necessary instructions to our office or explain his ideas to us personally.



Modello No. 3 . . . . $350

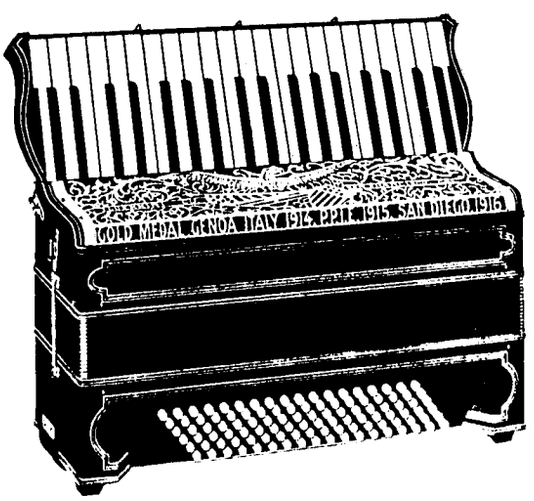
ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 39 Voci e 108 Bassi

E' di piccolo formato e molto adatta per ragazzi.

La sua ornamentazione è a color d'oro.

Le armoniche Guerrini hanno le così detto note cantabili colle rispettive corrispondenze in terza. Ma basta un semplice tocco al registro di cui sono fornite per ottenere un accordo in quarta ed anche in quinta. Sono dotati di accordi in quinta anche bassi.



Model No. 4 . . . . $350

PIANO ACCORDION

With 39 Keys and 108 Basses

Owing to its small size this model is very suitable for boys and girls.

The ornamentation has the color of silver.

The Guerrini accordion is endowed with the so called singing notes and the corresponding notes in-3rd. A simple touch on a switch is sufficient to obtain a chord in-4th, and even in-5th. The basses also are endowed with chords in-5th.



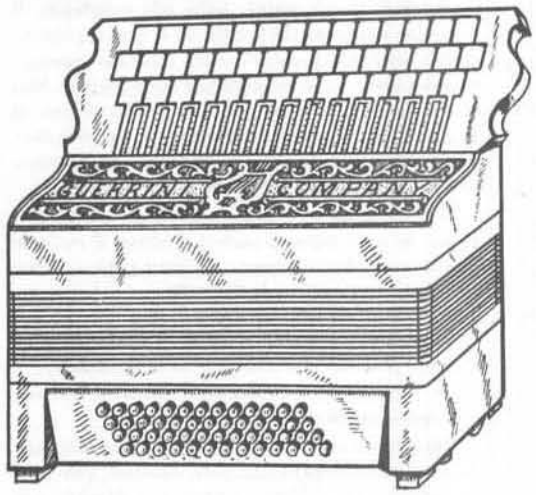
Modello No. 1 . . . . . $110

ARMONICA

Con 25 Voci e 12 Bassi

A Doppia Intonazione

I modelli che figurano nel presente catalogo sono una creazione speciale della Guerrini Company. Ma essa è in grado di produrre qualsiasi genere di armonica piaccia ai suoi clienti di ordinarle. Basta all'uopo darle, a voce o per iscritto, tutte le indicazioni richieste dal caso.



Modello No. 2 . . . . . $250

ARMONICA CROMATICA

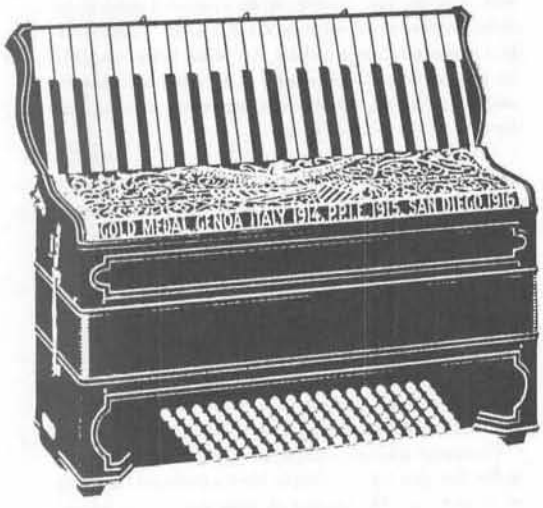
Con 43 Tasti e 52 Bassi

Questo modello può essere fabbricato anche con due intonazioni e semitono.

Il colore, a scelta del compratore, o bianco, o nero, o di qualsiasi altra tinta.

Il suo prezzo resta invariabilmente $250.

The models engraved on the pages of this catalog are special creations of the Guerrini Company, but we are able to manufacture any kind of accordion our patrons desire. All the purchaser needs to do is mail the necessary instructions to our office or explain his ideas to us personally.



Modello No. 3 . . . . . $350

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 39 Voci e 108 Bassi

E' di piccolo formato e molto adatta per ragazzi.

La sua ornamentazione è a color d'oro.

Le armoniche Guerrini hanno le così dette note cantabili colle rispettive corrispondenze in terza. Ma basta un semplice tocco al registro di cui sono fornite per ottenere un accordo in quarta ed anche in quinta. Sono dotati di accordi in quinta anche bassi.



Model No. 4 . . . . . $350

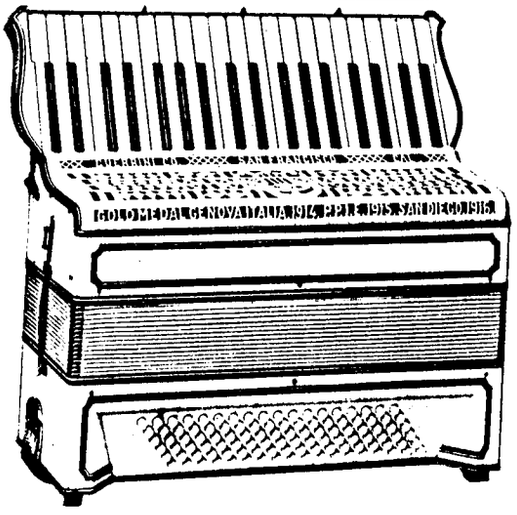
PIANO ACCORDION

With 39 Keys and 108 Basses

Owing to its small size this model is very suitable for boys and girls.

The ornamentation has the color of silver.

The Guerrini accordion is endowed with the so called singing notes and the corresponding notes in-3rd. A simple touch on a switch is sufficient to obtain a chord in-4th, and even in-5th. The basses also are endowed with chords in-5th.



Modello No. 5 . . . . $400

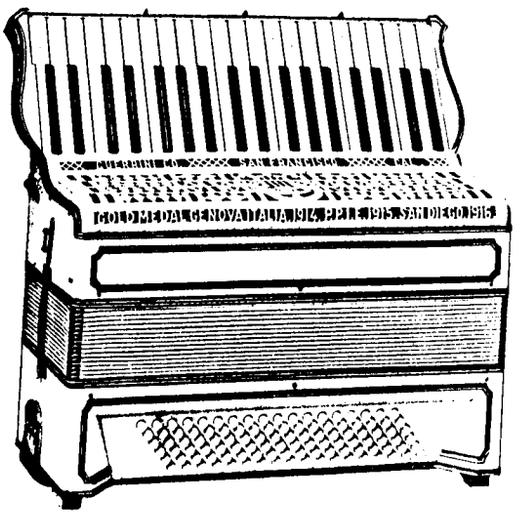
(Chi desidera un registro automatico deve aggiungere $25)

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 39 Voci e 108 Bassi

Di piccolo formato, molto adatta per signorine.
Le ornamentazioni di questo modello sono a color d'oro.

La Guerrini Company tiene a disposizione del pubblico anche armoniche (sia della propria marca, sia di marche estere) in buonissimo stato di conservazione, ma di seconda mano. Essa le offre a prezzi assolutamente vantaggiosi pel compratore. A coloro che se ne assumono la spesa del trasporto, la Guerrini Company accorda il privilegio di esaminarle e di respingerle quando non siano di loro piena soddisfazione.



Model No. 6 . . . . $400

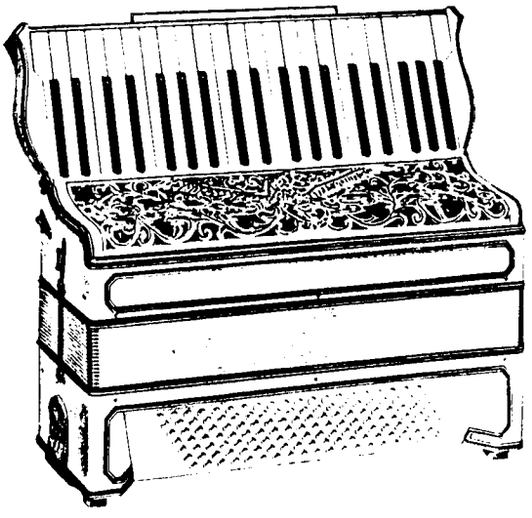
(With automatic switch, $25 more)

PIANO ACCORDION

With 39 Keys and 108 Basses

It is of small dimensions and very handy for young ladies.
Trimmings of a silvery hue.

For the accommodation of the public, the Guerrini Company have a stock of second hand accordions. These accordions are in perfect condition. Some are of our own make; others bear the labels of other companies. They are for sale at bargain prices. To patrons willing to pay all the shipping expense, the Guerrini Company will forward for examination any second-hand instrument. We grant the privilege of returning the accordion if it proves unsatisfactory.



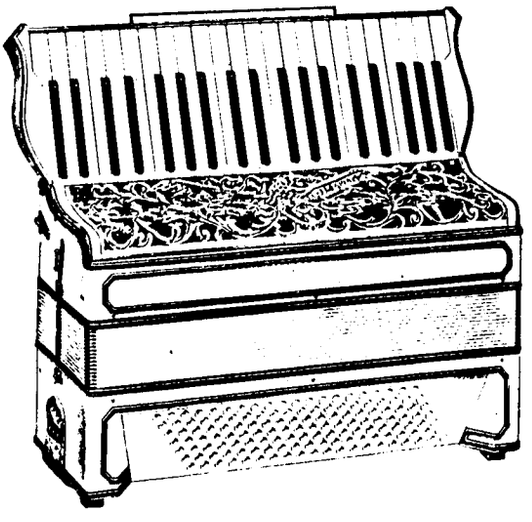
Model No. 8 . . . . $500

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Automatic Switch - Gold Trimmings

We wish to call attention to our repair department. Any accordion, regardless of the extent of its damage or defect, will receive most skillful care in restoring it to a new period of useful life. Prices are reasonable and the work is guaranteed.



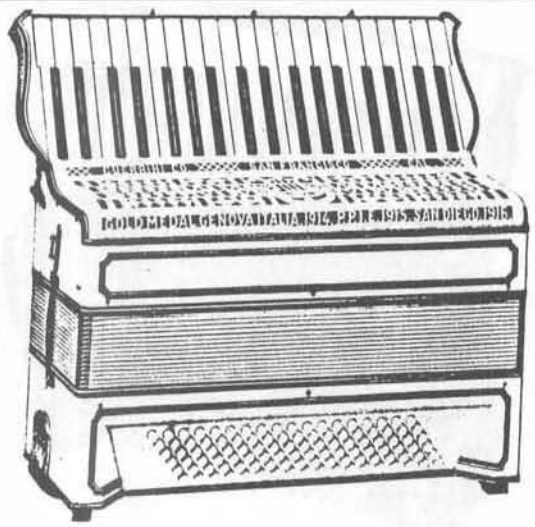
Modello No. 7 . . . . $500

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

Ornati color dell'argento - Registro automatico

Non è fuor di luogo il rammentare che la Guerrini Company ha un riparto apposito per le riparazioni. Non v'è armonica, per quanto avariata, che non sia rimessa a nuovo. I prezzi sono modici ed il lavoro è garantito.



Modello No. 5 . . . . $400

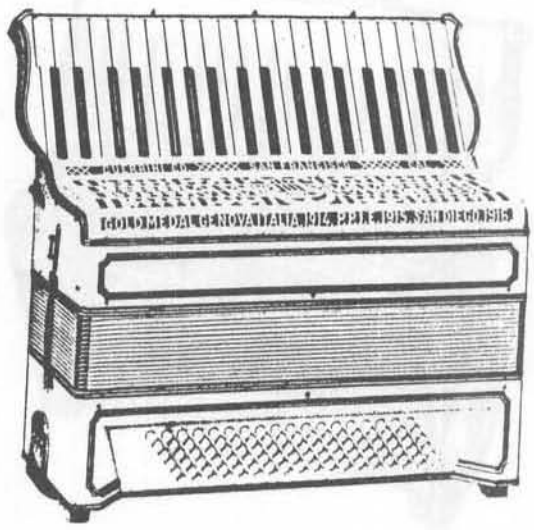
(Chi desidera un registro automatico deve aggiungere $25)

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 39 Voci e 108 Bassi

Di piccolo formato, molto adatta per signorine.
Le ornamentazioni di questo modello sono a color d'oro.

La Guerrini Company tiene a disposizione del pubblico anche armoniche (sia della propria marca, sia di marche estere) in buonissimo stato di conservazione, ma di seconda mano. Essa le offre a prezzi assolutamente vantaggiossi pel compratore. A coloro che se ne assumono la spesa del trasporto, la Guerrini Company accorda il privilegio di esaminarle e di respingerle quando non siano di loro piena soddisfazione.



Model No. 6 . . . . $400

(With automatic switch, $25 more)

PIANO ACCORDION

With 39 Keys and 108 Basses

It is of small dimensions and very handy for young ladies.

Trimmings of a silvery hue.

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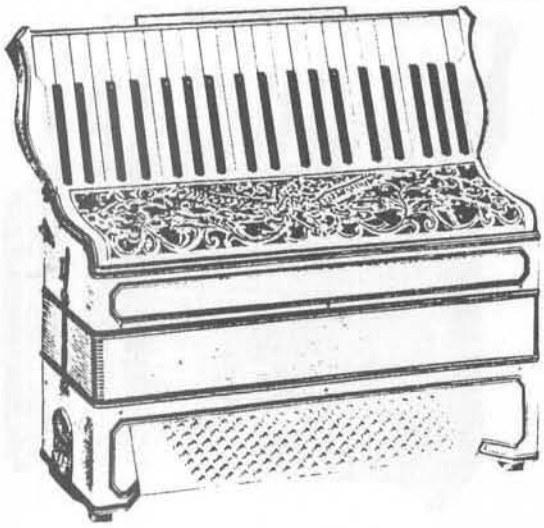


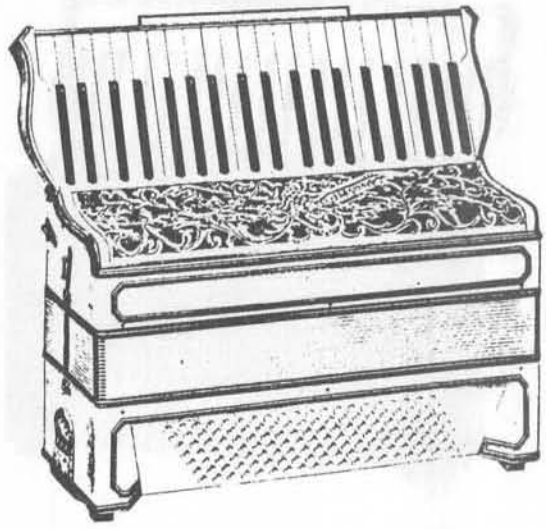
Model No. 8 . . . . $500

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Automatic Switch ◦ Gold Trimmings

We wish to call attention to our repair department. Any accordion, regardless of the extent of its damage or defect, will receive most skillful care in restoring it to a new period of useful life. Prices are reasonable and the work is guaranteed.



Modello No. 7 . . . . $500

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

Ornati color dell'argento ◦ Registro automatico

Non è fuor di luogo il rammentare che la Guerrini Company ha un riparto apposito per le riparazioni. Non v'è armonica, per quanto avariata, che non sia rimessa a nuovo. I prezzi sono modici ed il lavoro è garantito.



Modello No. 9 . . . . $525

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

Finita in celluloide ad imitazione madreperla verdognola.

Gli ornati sono in color d'argento.

Ogni ordinazione dev'essere accompagnata, a garanzia di buona fede, dal 25 per cento del suo importo totale. Il residuo da pagarsi alla consegna dell'armonica, o contr'assegno (C. O. D.) se spedita fuori di San Francisco.



Model No. 10 . . . . $525

PIANO ACCORDION

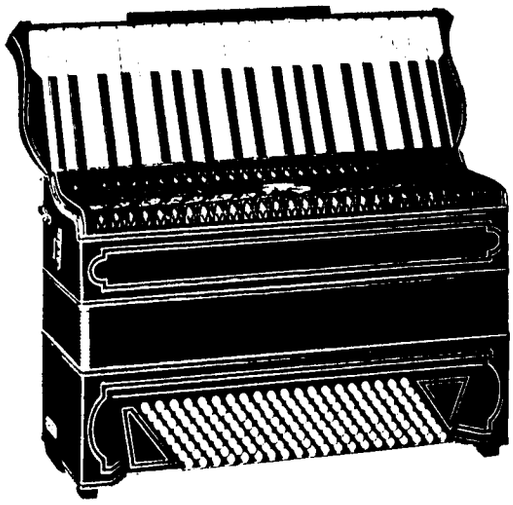
With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Finished in celluloid, mother of pearl imitation, grayish hue.

Ornamentations in gold color.

Transoceanic orders and orders aiming to materialize some special, personal idea of the client, must be paid in advance.

As a guarantee of good faith, all orders must be accompanied by a deposit equal to 25% of the total amount; the balance to be paid on delivery.



Modello No. 11 . . . . $550

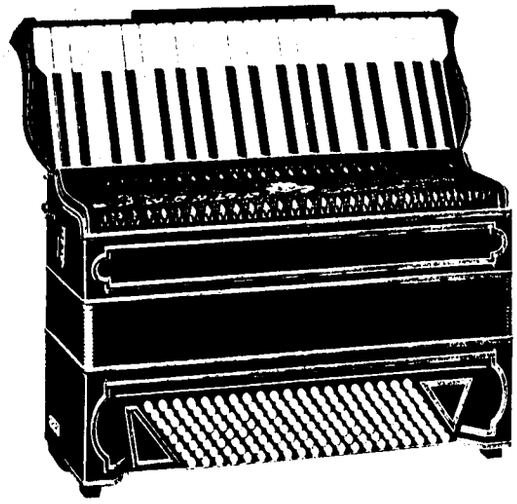
ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

Con Accordo Aumentato

Ornati Color d'Oro

Le ordinazioni che ci giungono d'oltre mare devono essere pagate anticipatamente per intero. Anticipatamente devono essere pagate anche le ordinazioni intese a concretare idee tutte proprie del committente.



Model No. 12 . . . . $550

PIANO ACCORDION

41 Keys, 160 Basses with Augmented Chord

Silvery Trimmings

La Guerrini Company è in grado di indicare il nome e l'indirizzo di buonissimi professori d'armonica dimoranti, non solo a San Francisco, ma anche in non poche città della California e di altri Stati.



Modello No. 9 . . . . $525

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

Finita in celluloide ad imitazione madreperla verdognola.

Gli ornati sono in color d'argento.

Ogni ordinazione dev'essere accompagnata, a garanzia di buona fede, dal 25 per cento del suo importo totale. Il residuo da pagarsi alla consegna dell'armonica, o contr'assegno (C. O. D.) se spedita fuori di San Francisco.



Model No. 10 . . . . $525

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

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Ornamentations in gold color.

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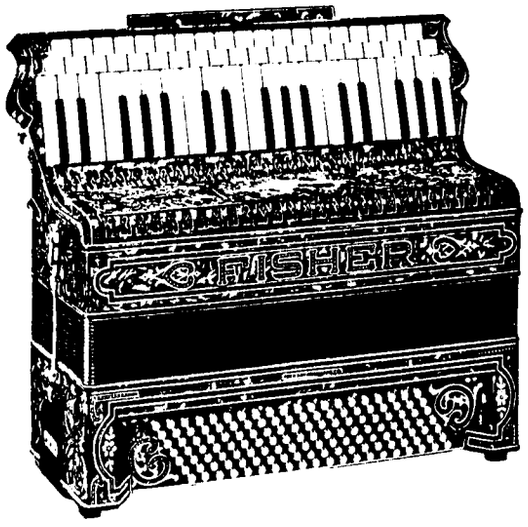


Modello No. 13 . . . . $600

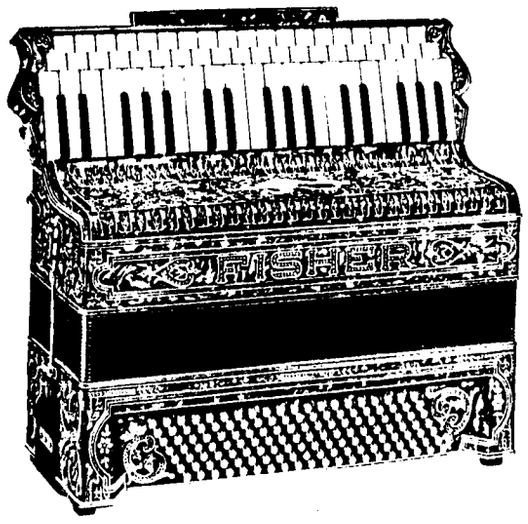
ARMONICA CROMATICA

Con 46 Voci e 140 Bassi

Imitazione Madreperla Azzurrognola

Riccamente Ornata in Colore d'Oro

Le armoniche viaggiano a rischio e pericolo di chi le ha ordinate. Se durante il tragitto subiscono qualche avaria i reclami vanno rivolti, non alla nostra ditta, ma alla ferrovia od allo spedizioniere.



Model No. 14 . . . . $600

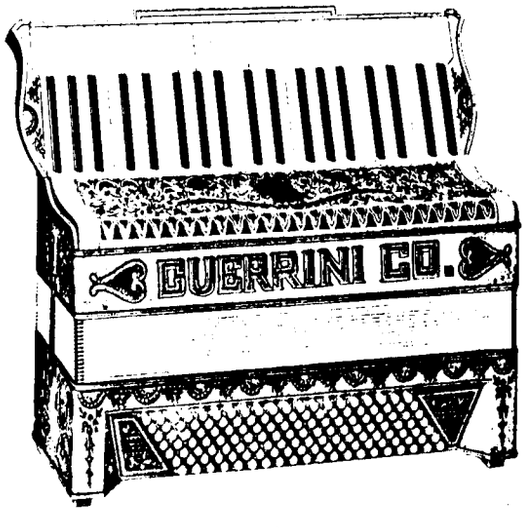
CHROMATIC ACCORDION

With 46 Keys and 140 Basses

Mother of Pearl Imitation of Lavender Hue.

Rich Silver Ornamentation

The Guerrini Company cannot be held responsible for damages incurred in transportation. Complaint must be made, not to the Guerrini Company, but to the carrier or any broker handling same.



Modello No. 15 . . . . $600

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 160 Bassi

E' Bianca ad Imitazione Madreperla.

Riccamente ornamentata d'oro e verde.

Non vi sfugga dalla memoria: la Guerrini Company non ha alcun agente vero e proprio che possa vantare d'avere, sulla sua piazza, il diritto esclusivo di vendere le nostre armoniche. Chi desidera fare acquisto di un'armonica della nostra fabbrica si rivolga in persona o per iscritto, alla nostra sede, Nri. 277 e 279, Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, California.



Model No. 16 . . . . $600

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

White Mother of Pearl Imitation.

Richly ornamented in silver and blue.

Please bear in mind that the Guerrini Company has not granted to any agent the exclusive right to act as their representative in any locality whatsoever. Patrons who want to buy an accordion of our own make, may come personally, or write to our office, 277-279 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, California.



Modello No. 13 . . . . $600

ARMONICA CROMATICA

Con 46 Voci e 140 Bassi

Imitazione Madreperla Azzurrognola

Riccamente Ornata in Colore d'Oro

Le armoniche viaggiano a rischio e pericolo di chi le ha ordinate. Se durante il tragitto subiscono qualche avaria i reclami vanno rivolti, non alla nostra ditta, ma alla ferrovia od allo spedizioniere.



Model No. 14 . . . . $600

CHROMATIC ACCORDION

With 46 Keys and 140 Basses

Mother of Pearl Imitation of Lavender Hue.

Rich Silver Ornamentation

The Guerrini Company cannot be held responsible for damages incurred in transportation. Complaint must be made, not to the Guerrini Company, but to the carrier or any broker handling same.



Modello No. 15 . . . . $600

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 160 Bassi

E' Bianca ad Imitazione Madreperla.

Riccamente ornamentata d'oro e verde.

Non vi sfugga dalla memoria: la Guerrini Company non ha alcun agente vero e proprio che possa vantare d'avere, sulla sua piazza, il diritto esclusivo di vendere le nostre armoniche. Chi desidera fare acquisto di un'armonica della nostra fabbrica si rivolga in persona o per iscritto, alla nostra sede, Nri. 277 e 279, Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, California.



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Richly ornamented in silver and blue.

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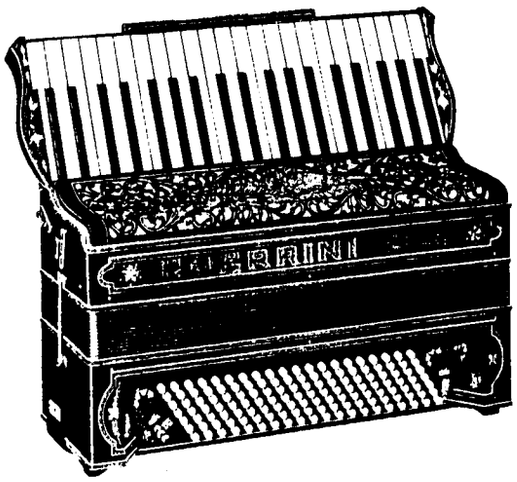


Modello No. 17 . . . . $525

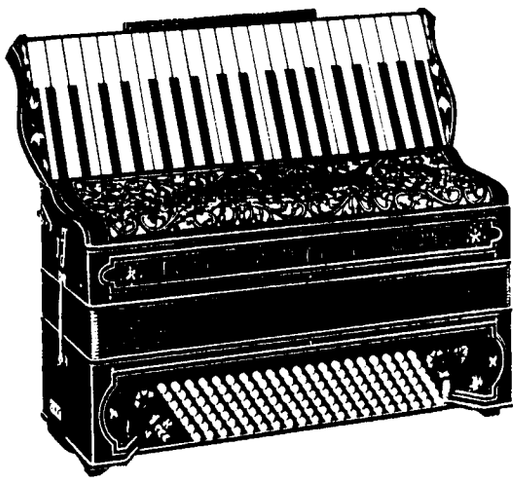
ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

In Celluloide Nera.

Ornamentazione molto artistica, colore dell'argento.

La fabbrica e l'ufficio della Guerrini Company, 277-279 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, California, sono aperti, nei giorni feriali, dalle 8 a. m. alle 5½ p. m. Per comodità dei clienti che non hanno l'opportunità di farci una visita nei giorni feriali teniamo, in quelli festivi, aperto l'ufficio sino alle 12 meridiane.



Model No. 18 . . . . $525

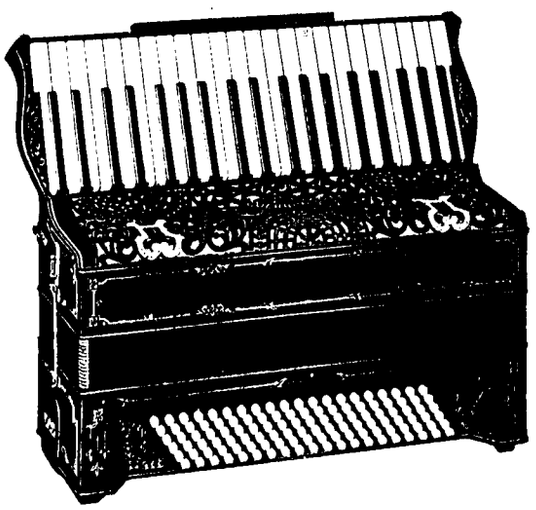
PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Black Celluloid.

Very artistic golden trimmings.

The office and factory of the Guerrini Company—277-279 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, California—are open on week days from 8 a. m. to 5:30 p. m. For the convenience of those customers who cannot visit us on week days, our office is open on Sunday till noon.



Modello No. 19 . . . . $600

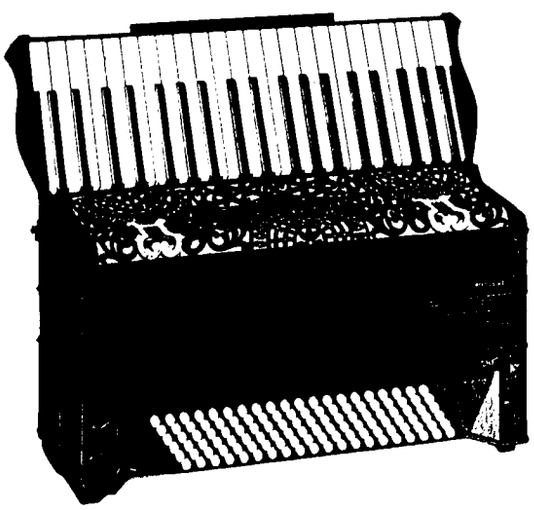
ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 120 Bassi

Dimensioni: 18¾"x7"x14" ◦ Peso: Libbre 17½

Celluloide Nera ◦ Ornati in Colore d'Argento

Non sarà mai abbastanza raccomandato a coloro che intendono di imparare seriamente a suonare l'armonica, specialmente se aspirano a diventare professionisti, di procurarsi un maestro che conosca a fondo lo strumento. Giovarà perciò il rivolgersi per consiglio alla Guerrini Company, 277-279 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, California.



Model No. 20 . . . . $600

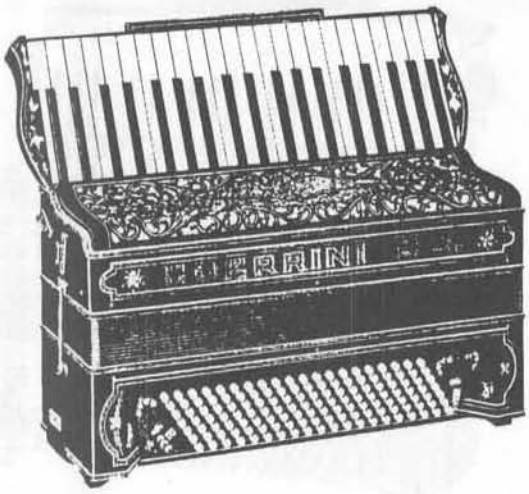
PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 120 Basses

Dimensions and weight: like those of Model 19.

Black Celluloid ◦ Golden Trimmings

In order to become a skilled player it is necessary to choose a teacher intimately acquainted with the intricate construction of accordions. To be sure of securing such a teacher, it is imperative to consult the Guerrini Company.



Modello No. 17 . . . . $525

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

In Celluloide Nera.

Ornamentazione molto artistica, colore dell'argento.

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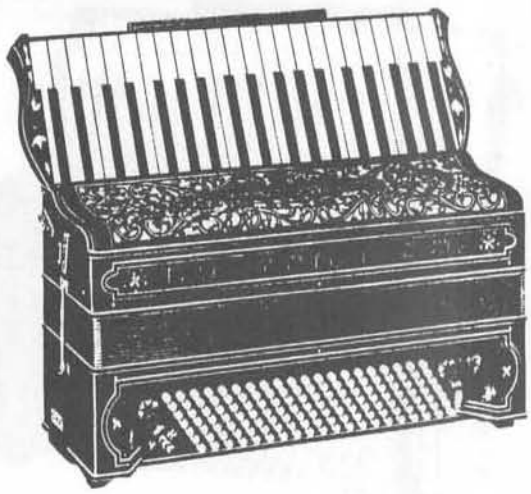

Model No. 18 . . . . $525

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With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

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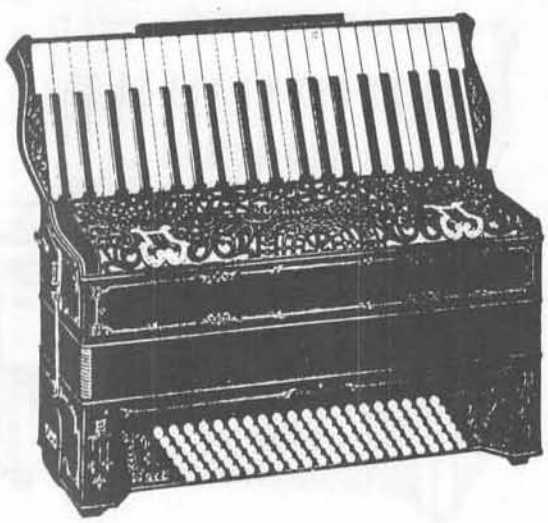


Modello No. 19 . . . . $600

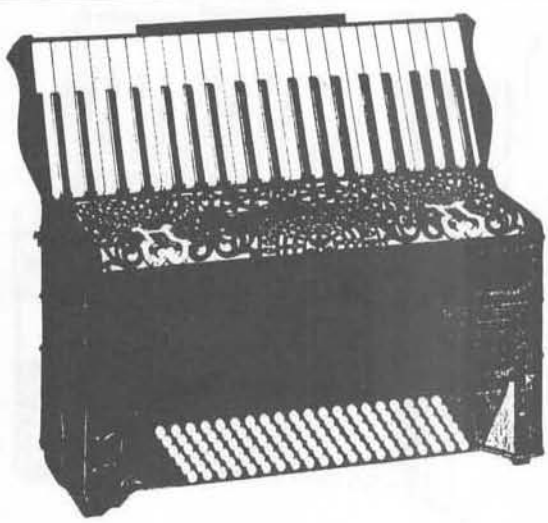
ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 120 Bassi

Dimensioni: 18¾"x7"x14" ◦ Peso: Libbre 17½

Celluloide Nera ◦ Ornati in Colore d'Argento

Non sarà mai abbastanza raccomandato a coloro che intendono di imparare seriamente a suonare l'armonica, specialmente se aspirano a diventare professionisti, di procurarsi un maestro che conosca a fondo lo strumento. Giovarà perciò il rivolgersi per consiglio alla Guerrini Company, 277-279 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, California.



Model No. 20 . . . . $600

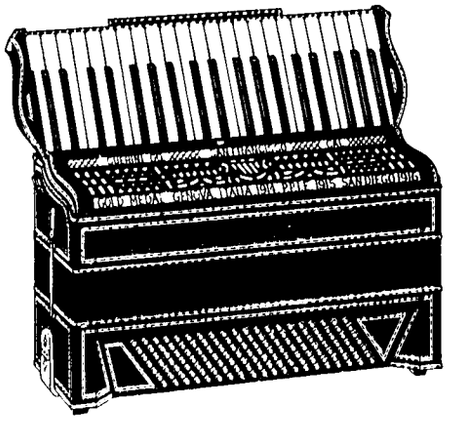
PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 120 Basses

Dimensions and weight: like those of Model 19.

Black Celluloid ◦ Golden Trimmings

In order to become a skilled player it is necessary to choose a teacher intimately acquainted with the intricate construction of accordions. To be sure of securing such a teacher, it is imperative to consult the Guerrini Company.



Modello No. 21 . . . . $525

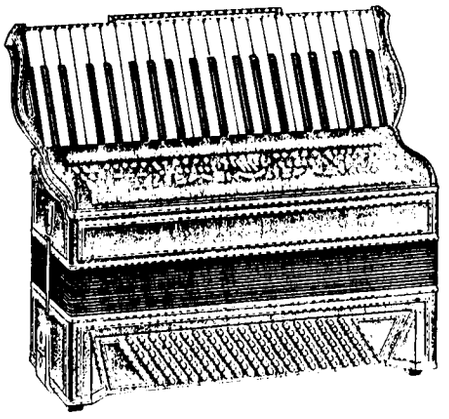
ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

Di Celluloide a Fondo d'Oro

Ornamentazione in bianco e nero

La base fondamentale per riescire buon suonatore d'armonica è quella di avere un buon maestro che conosca a fondo l'istrumento. A questo proposito, vi gioverà il consultare la Guerrini Company.



Model No. 22 . . . . $525

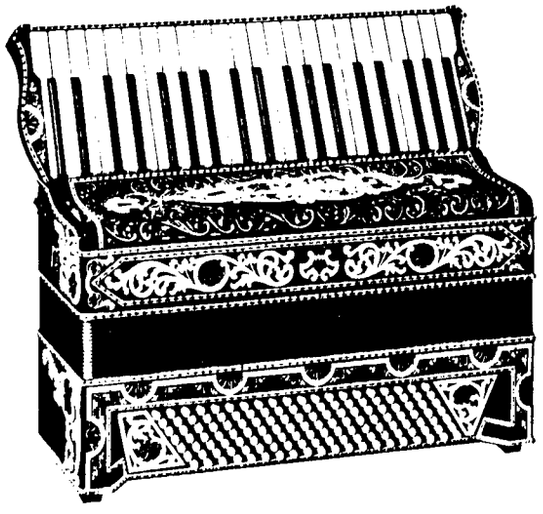
PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Finished in Green Celluloid

Ornamentation in black and white

Do not forget that the Guerrini Company is in a position to suggest names and addresses of first rate accordion teachers who live in San Francisco or other localities of California and other states.



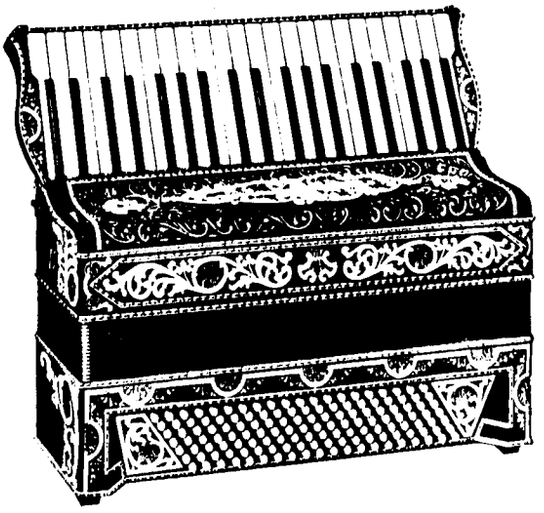
Modello No. 23 . . . . $650

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

In Celluloide Nera

Riccamente decorata con ornamentazioni d'oro puro e pietre ad imitazione del diamente.



Model No. 24 . . . . $650

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Finished in Black Celluloid

Richly decorated with silvery trimmings and stones, diamond imitation.



Modello No. 21 . . . . $525

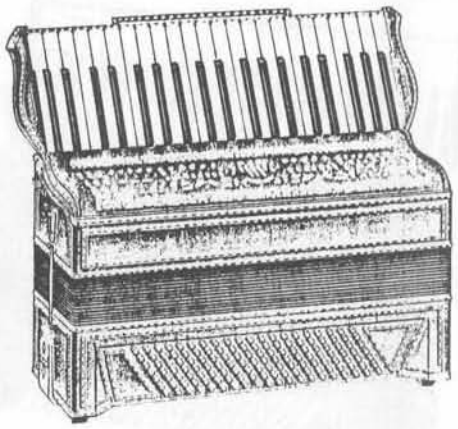
ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

Di Celluloide a Fondo d'Oro

Ornamentazione in bianco e nero

La base fondamentale per riescire buon suonatore d'armonica è quella di avere un buon maestro che conosca a fondo l'istrumento. A questo proposito, vi gioverà il consultare la Guerrini Company.



Model No. 22 . . . . $525

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Finished in Green Celluloid

Ornamentation in black and white

Do not forget that the Guerrini Company is in a position to suggest names and addresses of first rate accordion teachers who live in San Francisco or other localities of California and other states.



Modello No. 23 . . . . $650

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi

In Celluloide Nera

Riccamente decorata con ornamentazioni d'oro puro e pietre ad imitazione del diamente.



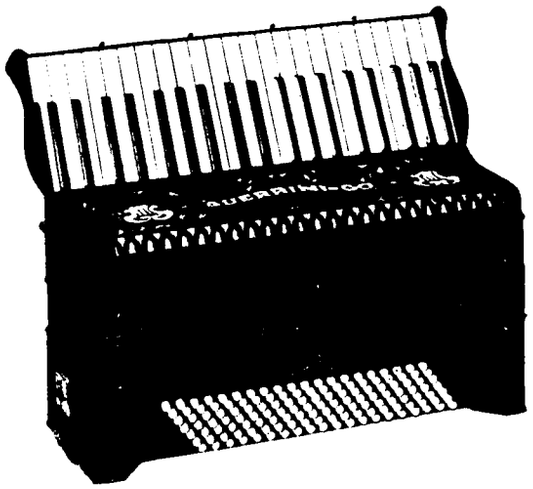
Model No. 24 . . . . $650

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Finished in Black Celluloid

Richly decorated with silvery trimmings and stones, diamond imitation.



Modello No. 25 . . . . $575

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi ✓ In Celluloide Nera

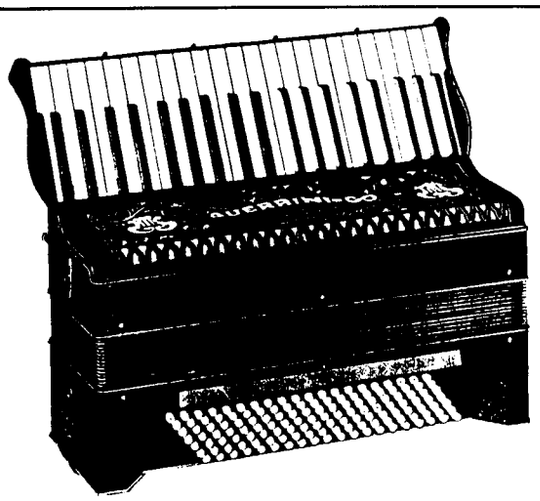
Ornati non chiassosi, di molto buon gusto, in colore d'oro.
Tipo di eleganza signorile.

La specialità di questo modello consiste di una innovazione di grande utilità pratica

Si tratta di un registro di nostra invenzione applicato alla tastiera delle voci. Su questo lato non occorre alcun altro registro, poichè con questo unico e solo, debitamente messo in azione, si può suonare in 1ma, 2da, 3za e 4ta; si può cioè ottenere quattro differenti tonalità.

Esso è fornito di un registro anche dal lato dei bassi: il quale può impartire ai bassi fondamentali la tonalità del bombardino, cambiando di conformità anche il tono degli accordi

Grazie alla grande facilità di cambiare i toni, questo modello è il non plus ultra per suonare sul radio ed anche per qualunque professionista debba far parte di un'orchestra.



Model No. 26 . . . . $575

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses
Finished in Black Celluloid

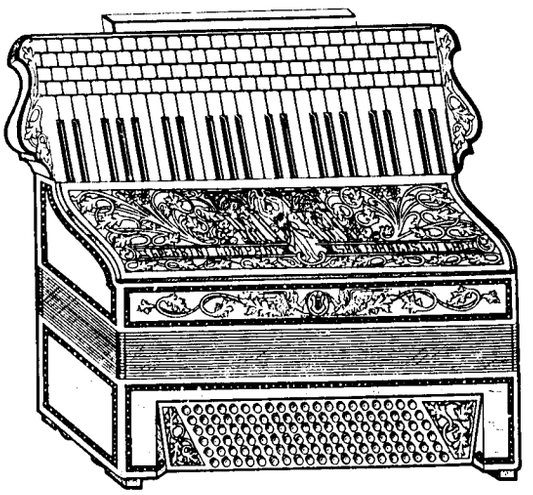
Silvery trimmings of very good taste.
An instrument of refined elegance.

The specialty proper to this model consists of an innovation of great practical value.

We refer to a switch of our invention which is applied to the treble keyboard. No other switch is required on this side because this single one, properly handled, enables anyone to play in 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th; namely to obtain four different tonalities.

This model has a switch also on the basses side which can impart to the fundamental basses the tonality of the "bombardino," changing accordingly the tonality of all the chords.

Owing to its great facility in changing tune, this model is a non plus ultra for radio broadcasting and to all professionals playing with an orchestra.



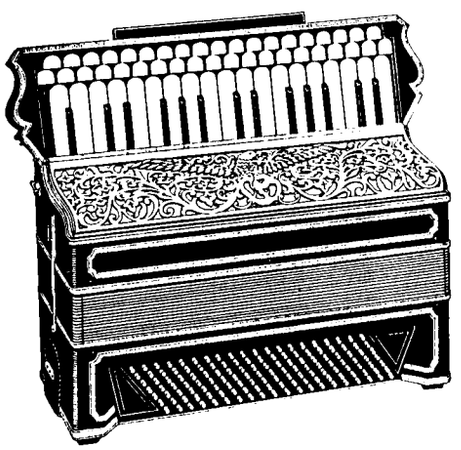
Modello No. 27 . . . . $550

ARMONICA CROMATICA

Con 5 File e 120 Bassi

Nuovo Registro

Dalla vostra istruzione dipende il vostro successo nell'arte e la vostra carriera. Prima di scegliere un maestro consultate la Guerrini Company.



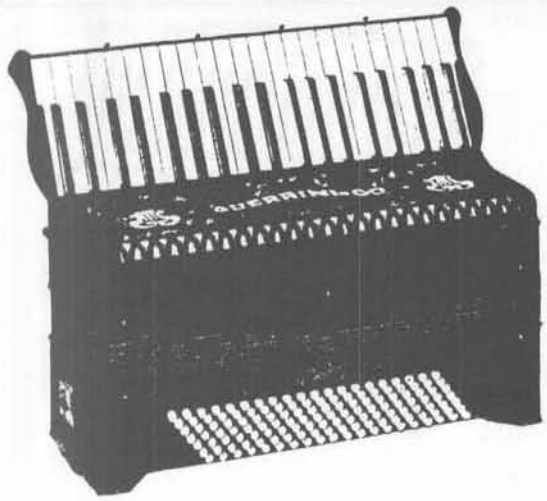
Model No. 28 . . . . $500

BLACK CHROMATIC

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses

Gold Trimming ✓ Automatic Switch

Your success as an amateur or professional accordionist depends entirely upon the efficiency of your instruction. Again we warn our readers. Before choosing your teacher, consult the Guerrini Company.



Modello No. 25 . . . . $575

ARMONICA A PIANO

Con 41 Voci e 140 Bassi ✓ In Celluloide Nera

Ornati non chiassosi, di molto buon gusto, in colore d'oro.
Tipo di eleganza signorile.

La specialità di questo modello consiste di una innovazione di grande utilità pratica.

Si tratta di un registro di nostra invenzione applicato alla tastiera delle voci. Su questo lato non occorre alcun altro registro, poichè con questo unico e solo, debitamente messo in azione, si può suonare in 1ma, 2da, 3za e 4ta; si può cioè ottenere quattro differenti tonalità.

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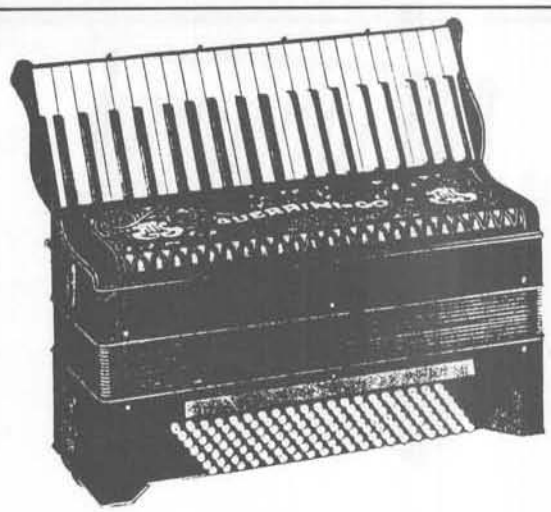

Model No. 26 . . . . $575

PIANO ACCORDION

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses
Finished in Black Celluloid

Silvery trimmings of very good taste.
An instrument of refined elegance.

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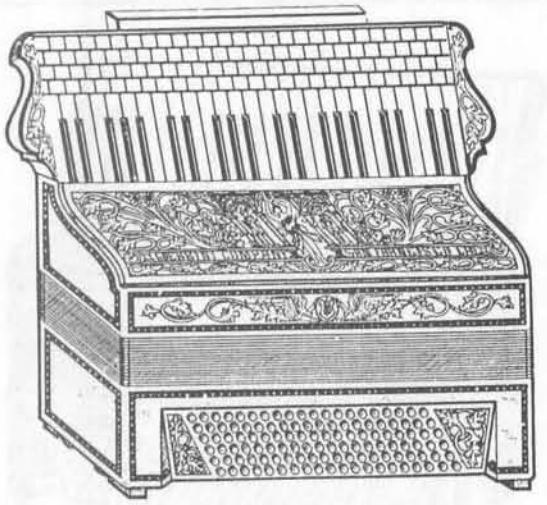
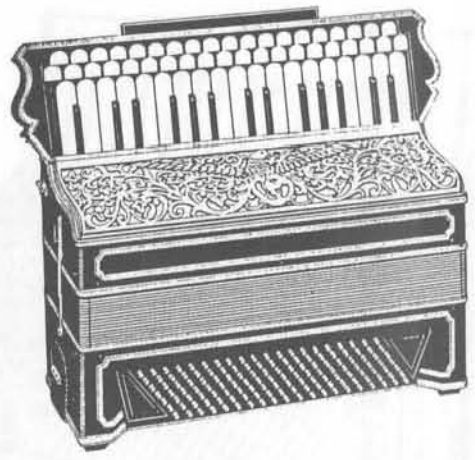


Modello No. 27 . . . . $550

ARMONICA CROMATICA

Con 5 File e 120 Bassi
Nuovo Registro

Dalla vostra istruzione dipende il vostro successo nell'arte e la vostra carriera. Prima di scegliere un maestro consultate la Guerrini Company.



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BLACK CHROMATIC

With 41 Keys and 140 Basses
Gold Trimming ✓ Automatic Switch

Your success as an amateur or professional accordionist depends entirely upon the efficiency of your instruction. Again we warn our readers. Before choosing your teacher, consult the Guerrini Company.

A Protezione dei Compratori

I vari congegni che fanno delle armoniche Guerrini uno strumento universalmente apprezzato (esso fu premiato con medaglia d'oro a varie Esposizioni: Genova, San Francisco, San Diego) sono debitamente patentati. La Guerrini Company ne ha perciò il diritto assoluto di esclusiva.

Ma, pur troppo, non tutti i fabbricanti sono di una specchiata correttezza. Noi ci riserbiamo di procedere contro i contraffattori con tutto il rigore della Legge, sia che essi copino esattamente i nostri congegni, sia che li imitino grossolanamente ma a sufficienza per trarre in inganno i compratori inesperti o malcauti.

Qualche suonatore, volendosi disfare della propria armonica di marca inferiore, ha tentato di ottenerne un prezzo superiore al suo valore reale incidendo sulla placca frontale il nome della nostra ditta. Facile lo scoprire questo disonesto sotterfugio.

Le armoniche Guerrini sono contrassegnate da un numero. Al momento della vendita esso viene ricordato a registro con tutti i particolarli dell'istrumento.

Vi viene offerta una Guerrini? Informateci del numero che porta (voi lo troverete marcato nell'interno) e vi sapremo dire se è genuina o se si tratta di una frode.

Copyright 1931
GUERRINI COMPANY
SAN FRANCISCO

Warning To Buyers

The special devices which have made the Guerrini accordions instruments universally appreciated are patented We have been awarded gold medals at the International Expositions held in Genoa, San Francisco and San Diego. The Guerrini Company has the exclusive right to use them.

But not all accordion makers, however, are guided by a scrupulous honesty. Those firms which infringe upon our legal rights will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. We will consider an infringement of our rights, not only the exact reproduction of our devices, but also the imitation of them in such manner as to deceive the good faith or inexperience of the purchasers.

Some accordionists, wishing to get rid of an old fashioned and inferior accordion, seek to earn on their instrument a price which is superior to its real value by engraving on the frontal the name of our firm. Such deceitful tricks are easy to detect.

All Guerrini accordions are marked with special numbers. When we sell an accordion, we note its number on a special register, together with all the particulars which might serve to identify the instrument.

When a Guerrini accordion is offered to you, mark its number—you will find it inside the instrument—and we will inform you whether the offer is genuine or a despicable fraud.

La Garanzia di Cinque Anni

Il lettore non si meraviglierebbe pel fatto che la Guerrini Company non si perita di garantire le proprie armoniche nuove per il lungo periodo di cinque anni quando si facesse un'idea almeno approssimativa della cura meticolosa posta nella loro fabbricazione.

La fabbrica Guerrini è suddivisa in varie sezioni: meccanica, musica, tastiere, ebanisteria, riparazioni, ecc. Ogni sezione produce esclusivamente i manufatti di sua spettanza e gli operai che vi attendono vi si specializzano e raggiungono la perfezione. Qualsiasi parte non entra nella composizione di un'armonica senza essere passata sotto la oculata supervisione del signor Pasquale Petromilli.

Rigorosissima anche l'ispezione nell'acquisto del materiale. Di primissima qualità ed assolutamente stagionato il legno. Nella costruzione delle parti interne dell'istrumento si fa largo uso di alluminio puro, ottenendo così tutta la leggerezza possibile. Sono pure di alluminio le piastrine su cui sono fissate le linguette vibranti. Queste sono di acciaio finissimo.

Si noti che la Guerrini Company manifattura nella sua fabbrica ogni pezzo delle proprie armoniche. La cui inappuntabile perfezione è perciò la conseguenza necessaria, il risultato inevitabile, la somma, per così dire, dei meriti delle singole parti di cui sono composte.

Ecco perchè la Guerrini Company garantisce le proprie armoniche nuove pel lungo periodo di cinque anni. Essa sa di poterlo fare per soddisfazione dei propri clienti e senza proprio scapito.

A Five Year Guarantee

Our readers will easily understand the reason why the Guerrini Company places a five-year guarantee on its new accordions if they consider the extreme care taken in their construction.

The Guerrini Company is divided into the following departments: mechanical, musical, ebony, repairing, etc.

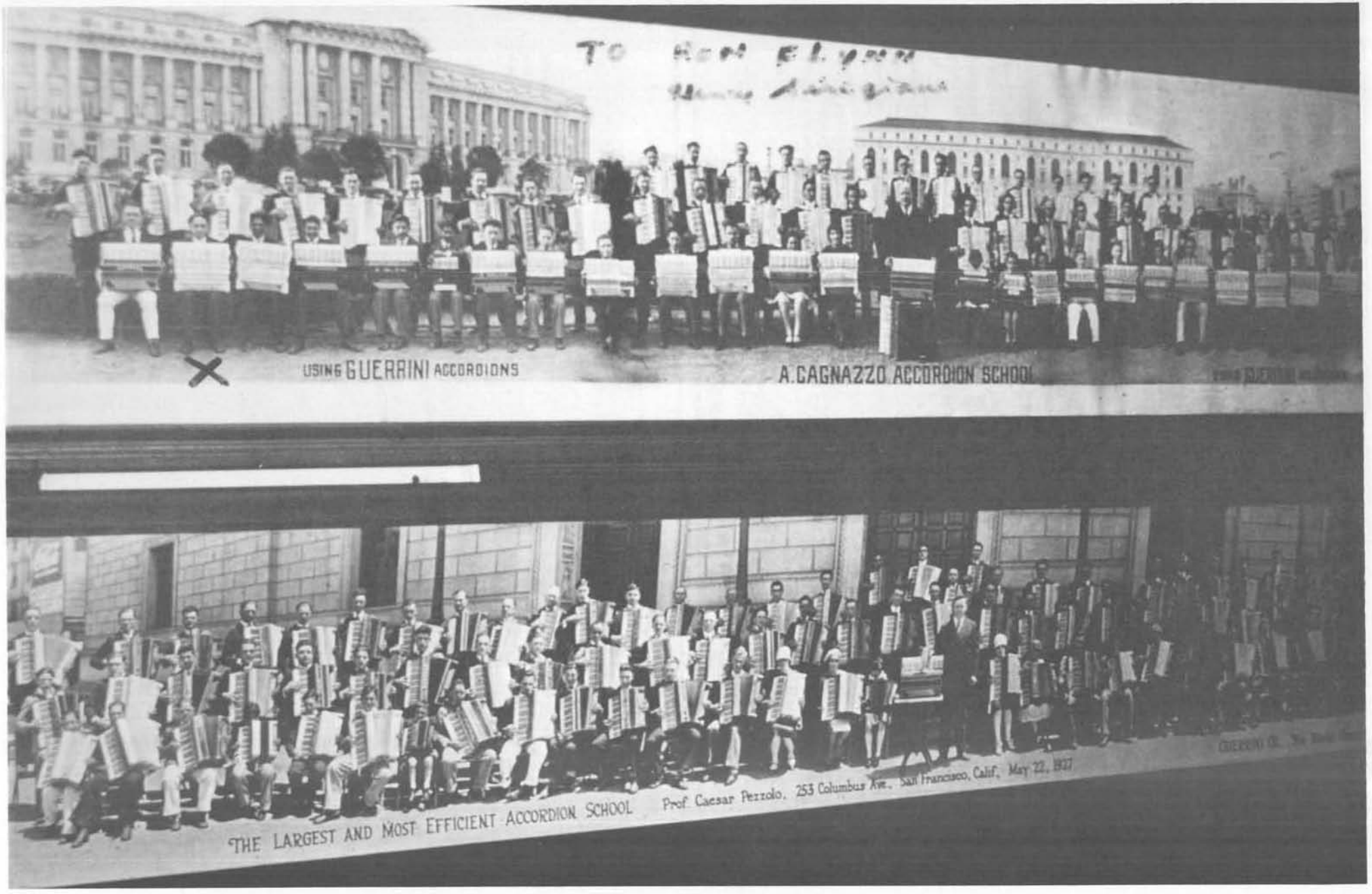
Each department turns out its own particular work and the workingmen employed in it are trained to become specialists in their line. In addition, Mr. Pasquale Petromilli personally supervises the construction of all accordions.

All materials purchased by the Company are the best on the market. In order to impart the desired lightness to our accordions, we use pure aluminum in the interior of the instruments. The small plates on which are attached the reeds, or vibrating tongues, are also made of aluminum. The reeds are made of fine steel. The wood is of first class and perfectly seasoned.

The Guerrini Company turns out from its own factory every part that is indispensable to the making of an accordion.

The celebrated perfection of the Guerrini accordions is the inevitable result of the perfection of every single part entering into their construction.

It is because of the absolute truth of this fact that the Guerrini Company does not hesitate to place a long guarantee of five years upon all its new accordions.



[Editor's Note: In top photo, Henry Sinigiani is sitting above the "X" mark.]

A PICTORIAL HISTORY: COLOMBO & SONS ACCORDION COMPANY

Colombo ACCORDIONS

FOREWORD

Colombo Accordions came to America in the year 1907, when Mr. Colombo Platanesi established himself in San Francisco. For thirty years Mr. Colombo Platanesi was known as one of the foremost accordion builders of the world, with honors bestowed on him at various American and European expositions. During this time his accordions were played by the world's foremost artists in all parts of the globe.

Today, with painstaking craftsmanship, the **Colombo Accordion** is constructed with utmost care to the minutest detail, the same as was employed before the advent of commercial production in the accordion field. The result has been that with the present rapid changes of leadership in accordions, **Colombo** still stands as one of the foremost favorites. This has been due to its tonal qualities, beauty in modern design, smooth performance and durability.

Colombo offers six different models in six different sizes—more than thirty accordions from which you can select the model to fit your requirements, your purse, and your person.

FEATURES

First, **Colombo Accordions** are American made. The case is constructed of three-ply West Coast African Mahogany, the reed blocks are three-ply veneer, the sounding board is of three-ply hardwood—all insuring long life due to non-warping, as also better tonal qualities. The bass mechanism is all spot welded with locked bass keys preventing keys from falling in, also all aluminum construction which has proven to give a minimum of trouble.

The switches or reed couplers come in various types and their selection is optional with purchaser. The three most popular are: the hinged lever type on top of keyboard; practical for one switch; the type on top of cover plate or scroll for the multi-switch; or the third type forming a fingerboard in front of playing keyboard. The latter two are operated by a flick of finger and instantly operated.

Our reeds are of the finest made, with Swedish steel, which, when tuned the Colombo way, have proven to give a true sweet tone, as also to hold this tone over a long period. The purchaser of a **Colombo** will note the fast velvet-smooth action on keyboard which is designed to meet all requirements so as to facilitate even the most polished professional's technique, let alone the amateur.

Last, the design of the **Colombo** is very smart and done with the best of taste. The corner obstructions have been eliminated almost to an entirety—no knife edges on the **Colombo.** The proportions are such that whether a large or small model the scale of keyboard to case, etc., is in perfect harmony.

ALL COLOMBO ACCORDIONS CARRY A WRITTEN GUARANTEE

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS

SPECIFICATIONS ON LETTERED MODELS

All "X" models have a fifth set of reeds in the treble that is tuned in a special manner, giving either fifths above bassoon reeds or fourths below regular reeds. With the use of the quint switch it is possible to simulate the Vox Humana (human voice) tonal color used in fine organs. Five treble, one master, one or two bass switches. Two regular reeds, one bassoon reed, one fith reed, one piccolo reed. Forty tonal combinations. This comes with or without mute on scroll.

All "A" models are 43 key or 41 key, have four treble and two master switches on scroll, one or two bass switches, 120 or 140 bass with or without augmented chords. This type has 15 to 17 tonal combinations composed of piccolo, bassoon and regular reed. This comes with or without mute on scroll.

All "B" models are 43 key, 41 key, more, or less as desired, three treble, two master switches on scroll, bass mechanism, 120 or 140 bass, one or two bass switches. This has 9 or 11 tonal combinations composed with piccolo, bassoon and regular reeds. This comes with or without mute on scroll.

All "C" models are 43 or 41 keys, 120 or 140 bass, have three switch stops on scroll or on keyboard, have regular and octave reed, seven tonal combinations composed of bassoon and regular reed with two or four tonal combinations in bass.

All "D" models have 43 keys or 41, 120 or 140 bass, two treble switches on scroll with master or on keyboard, four tonal combinations composed of regular and low octave reed and two combinations on bass.

All "E" models have 41 keys, 120 or 140 bass, two switch on scroll or on keyboard giving four tonal combinations with regular and low octave reed, one switch in bass.

All "F" models have 41 keys, 120 or 140 bass, one switch on keyboard or on scroll, one bass switch, two tonal combinations on keyboard and two on bass.

All "G" models have three sets of reeds in treble. These are especially adaptable for junior and women enthusiasts, have 41 keys or less as desired, 120 bass, one switch on keyboard or scroll, with octave and regular reed, giving two tonal effects.

COLOMBO & SONS

Accordion Manufacturers since 1907

COLOMBO PIATANESI, Prop.

★

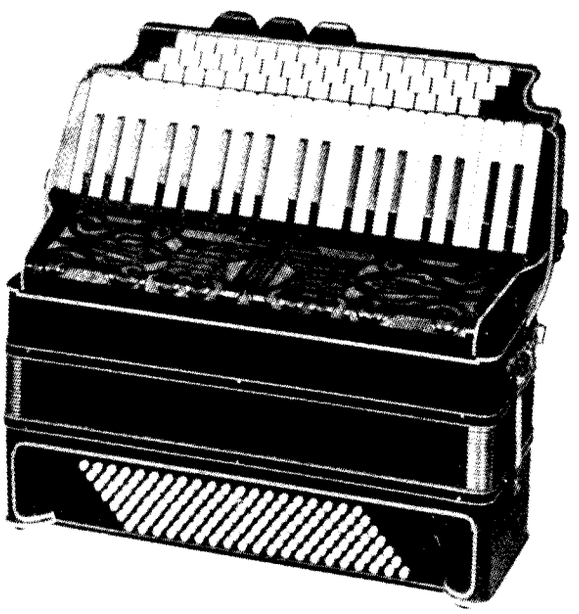
Factory and Main Office
126-138 COLUMBUS AVE.
San Francisco

East Bay Branch
4644 TELEGRAPH AVE.
Oakland

Colombo Chromatic Accordions are of the finest made today. The features in this model are the same as employed in the piano accordion. The keyboard can be made to the system desired by the individual—three, four rows, piano imitation and piano and chromatic combined. Shift keys can be operated with the slightest touch of the hand and can be placed on scroll or on keyboard wherever desired. Either 120 or 140 bass.

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS

COLOMBO CHROMATIC MODEL

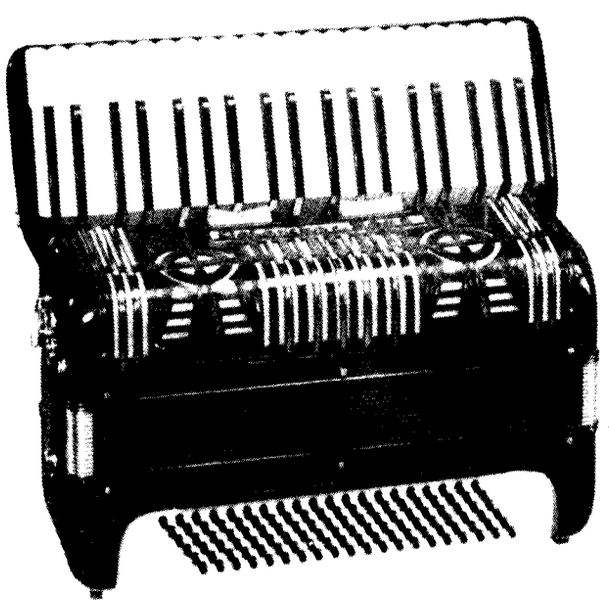


Colombo Model No. 11A-55A - $1000.00
(Piano and Chromatic combined)

Colombo Model No. 55A - - 850.00
" " " 55B - - 800.00
" " " 55C - - 750.00
" " " 55D - - 700.00

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS



California Model No. 45A - $550.00
" " " 45B - 500.00
" " " 45C - 450.00
" " " 45D - 400.00
" " " 45E - 350.00
" " " 45F - 300.00
" " " 45G - 250.00

Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS

COLOMBO CHROMATIC MODEL



Colombo Model No. 11A-55A - $1000.00
(Piano and Chromatic combined)

Colombo Model No. 55A - - 850.00
" " " 55B - - 800.00
" " " 55C - - 750.00
" " " 55D - - 700.00

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS



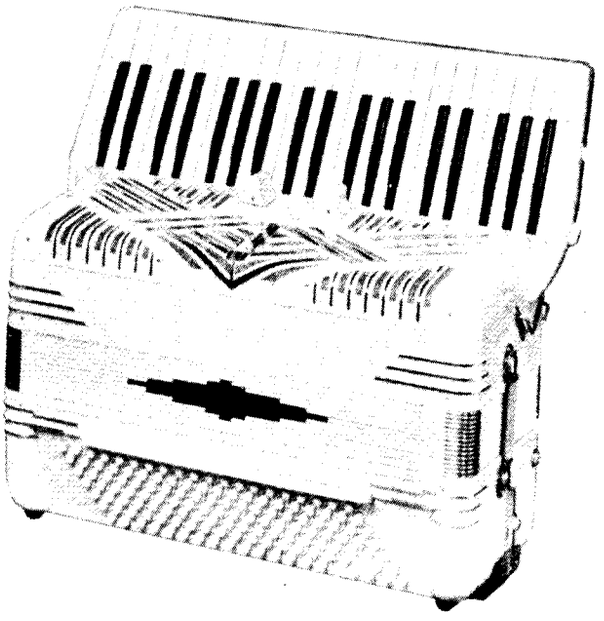
California Model No. 45A - $550.00
" " " 45B - 500.00
" " " 45C - 450.00
" " " 45D - 400.00
" " " 45E - 350.00
" " " 45F - 300.00
" " " 45G - 250.00

Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS

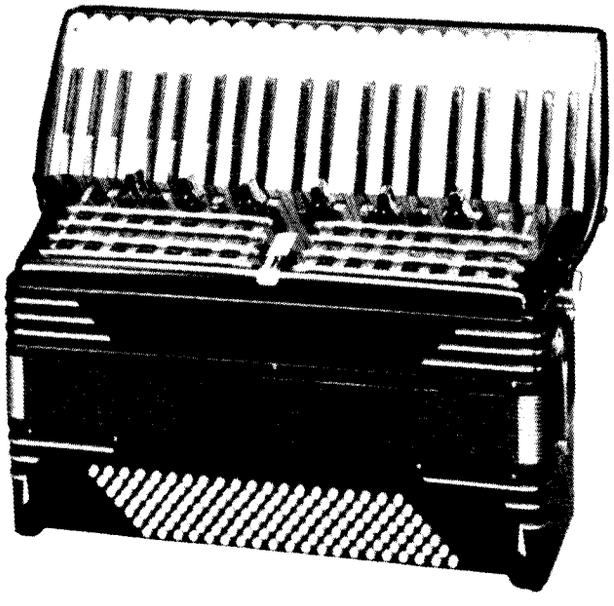
Colombo Model No. 63B - - $550.00
" " " 63C - - 500.00
" " " 63D - - 450.00
" " " 63F - - 400.00
" " " 63G - - 300.00



Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS



Colombo Model No. 11X - - $1200.00
" " " 11A - - 900.00
" " " 11B - - 850.00
" " " 11C - - 750.00
" " " 11D - - 700.00

Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS

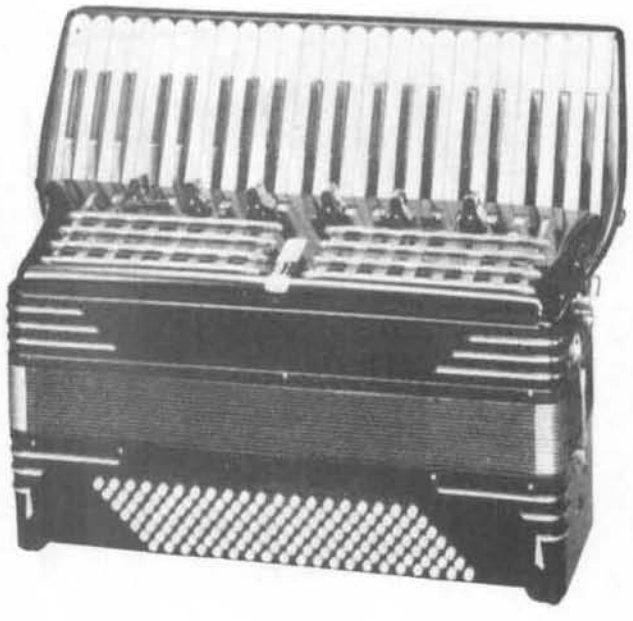
Colombo Model No. 63B - - $550.00
" " " 63C - - 500.00
" " " 63D - - 450.00
" " " 63F - - 400.00
" " " 63G - - 300.00

Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven



ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS

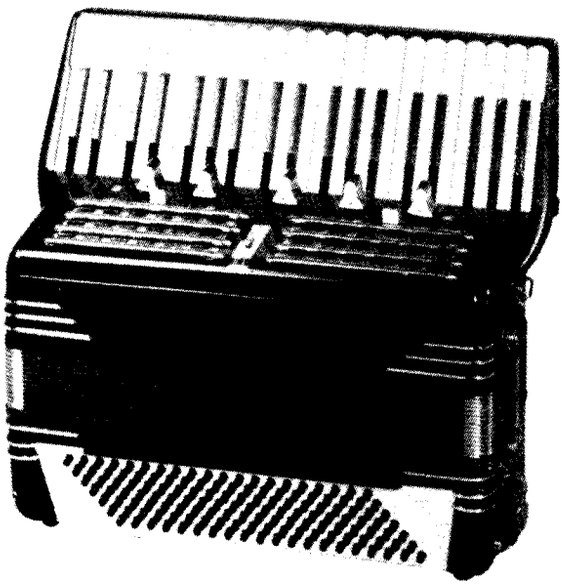


Colombo Model No. 11X - - $1200.00
" " " 11A - - 900.00
" " " 11B - - 850.00
" " " 11C - - 750.00
" " " 11D - - 700.00

Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS



Colombo Model	No. 35A	- - $650.00
" "	" 35B	- - 600.00
" "	" 35C	- - 550.00
" "	" 35D	- - 500.00
" "	" 35E	- - 450.00
" "	" 35F	- - 400.00

Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS

Colombo Model	No. 25X	- - $1000.00
" "	" 25A	- - 750.00
" "	" 25B	- - 700.00
" "	" 25C	- - 650.00
" "	" 25D	- - 600.00
" "	" 25E	- - 500.00

Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven



ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS



Colombo Model	No. 35A	$650.00
" " "	35B	600.00
" " "	35C	550.00
" " "	35D	500.00
" " "	35E	450.00
" " "	35F	400.00

Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven

ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO ACCORDIONS

Colombo Model	No. 25X	$1000.00
" " "	25A	750.00
" " "	25B	700.00
" " "	25C	650.00
" " "	25D	600.00
" " "	25E	500.00

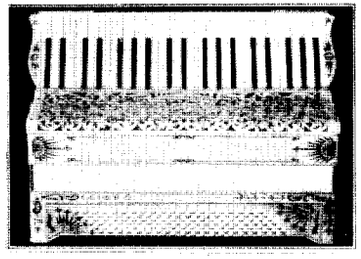
Specifications on different lettered models on page eleven



ALL MODELS COME IN ANY SYSTEM AS ALSO ANY COLORED FINISH

COLOMBO & SONS, 122-24 Columbus Ave., San Francisco

EACH ORDER IS TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A 20% DEPOSIT OF TOTAL AMOUNT

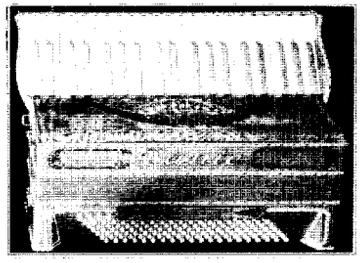


PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 3

41 Keys, 140 Basses, new automatic switch. Finished in white mother of pearl with fancy celluloid scroll. Decorated to harmonize with general scheme of accordion.

PRICE $500.00



PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 1

41 Keys, 140 Basses, new automatic switch, Bass switch and octave indicator. Finished in pale gold with celluloid scroll. Name and case complete.

PRICE $550.00

Our instruments are finished in any color desired and Decorations are carried out in

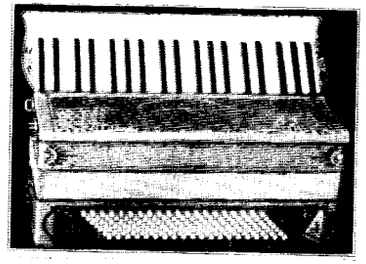


Group of Accordionists, all using COLOMBO Instruments, taken at an Accordion Picnic

A FEW WELL KNOWN ACCORDION ARTISTS WHO USE THE "COLOMBO"

DANTE BARSI Radio	JOE DE PUCCI Union Orchestra	WALTER LOVE Union Orchestra
A. BERTA Orchestra	EARL PAOLINELLI Union Orchestra	
P. WALTER Union Swedish Orchestra	AL LYONS Orchestra Director	ALMA DUBE Vaudeville Artist
JOE YOKI Vaudeville Artist	CARL ROSE Union Orchestra	
F. GILMORE Union Orchestra	Miss D. DAL PORTO Veneta Orchestra	JOHN MOLINARI Radio

USED ACCORDIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED AS PARTIAL PAYMENT ON EVERY NEW ACCORDION PURCHASE



PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 4

41 Keys, 140 Basses, new automatic switch. Finished in silver celluloid.

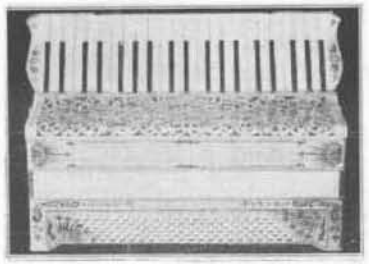
PRICE $475.00

Special bass register in addition to the patent switch that we have on the treble side we also have a base switch especially made for the base side of the accordion opening and closing the basses. This can be installed in any model at a slight additional cost.

Our Reeds in the Colombo Accordion are all hand-made of the very finest Swedish Steel.

COLOMBO & SONS, 122-24 Columbus Ave., San Francisco

EACH ORDER IS TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A 20% DEPOSIT OF TOTAL AMOUNT

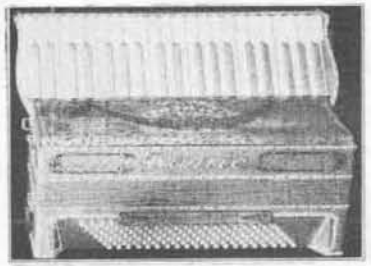


PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 3

41 Keys, 140 Basses, new automatic switch. Finished in white mother of pearl with fancy celluloid scroll. Decorated to harmonize with general scheme of accordion.

PRICE $500.00



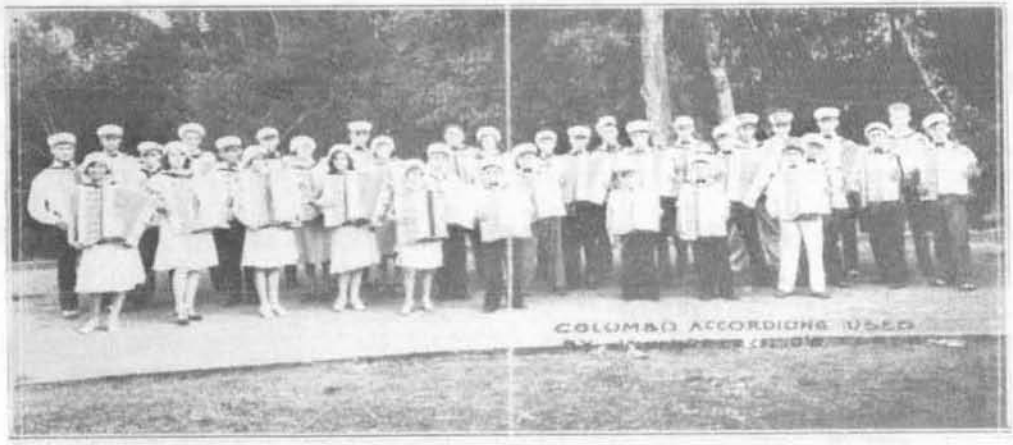
PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 1

41 Keys, 140 Basses, new automatic switch, Bass switch and octave indicator. Finished in pale gold with celluloid scroll. Name and case complete.

PRICE $550.00

Our instruments are finished in any color desired and Decorations are carried out in



Group of Accordionists, all using COLOMBO Instruments, taken at an Accordion Picnic

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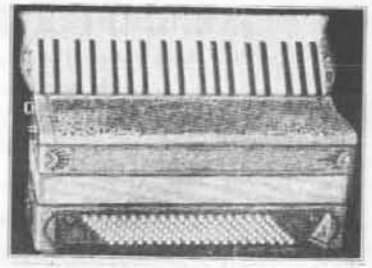
P. WALTER, Union Swedish Orchestra	AL LYONS, Orchestra Director	ALMA DUBE, Vaudeville Artist
JOE YOKI, Vaudeville Artist	CARL ROSE, Union Orchestra	
F. GILMORE, Union Orchestra	Miss D. DAL PORTO, Veneta Orchestra	JOHN MOLINARI, Radio

USED ACCORDIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED AS PARTIAL PAYMENT ON EVERY NEW ACCORDION PURCHASE



PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 4

41 Keys, 140 Basses, new automatic switch. Finished in silver celluloid.

PRICE $475.00

Special bass register in addition to the patent switch that we have on the treble side we also have a base switch especially made for the base side of the accordion opening and closing the basses. This can be installed in any model at a slight additional cost.

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COLOMBO & SONS

1249-1251 Grant Ave. **COLOMBO PIATANESI, Director & Proprietor** **San Francisco, Calif.**

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G. PIATANESI

Manufacturers of all kinds of

ACCORDIONS

With Special Systems for Artists

Awarded Medals

Genova 1914 **P.P.I.E. 1915**

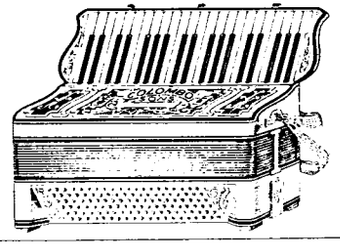
WE SELL

Sheet Music and Method Books for Accordions

Repairing of all Makes of Accordions

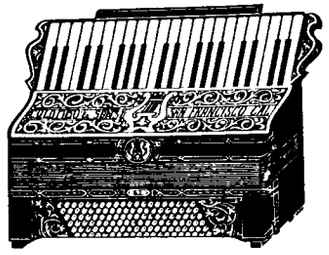
PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 205
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¾
PRICE $450.00



PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 190
39 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7 x 16 x 18¼
PRICE $475.00

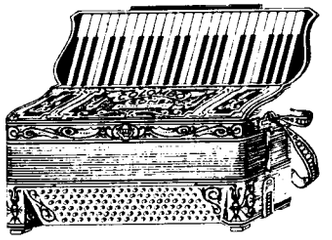




Latest Models with New Switch & Chords

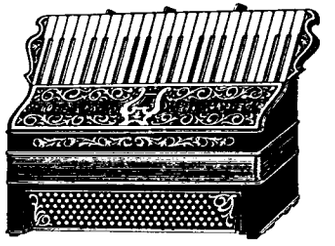
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 255
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¾
PRICE 475.00



PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 125
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¾
PRICE $425.00





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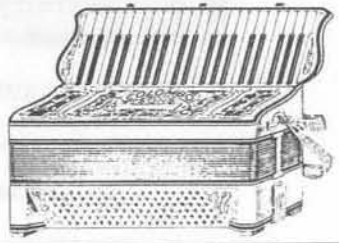

PIANO ACCORDION

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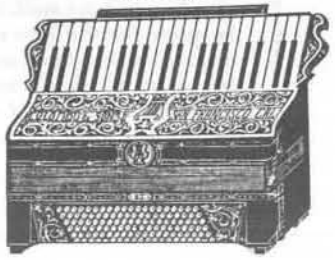
PRICE $475.00





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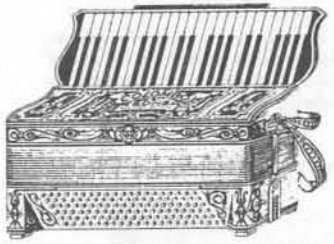
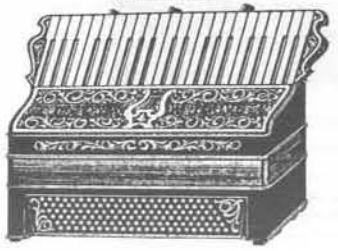


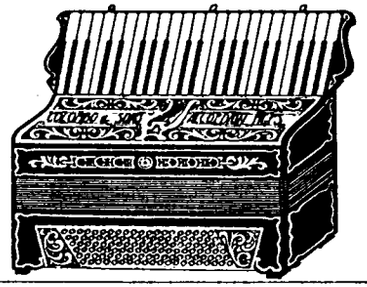
PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 125
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¼
PRICE $425.00



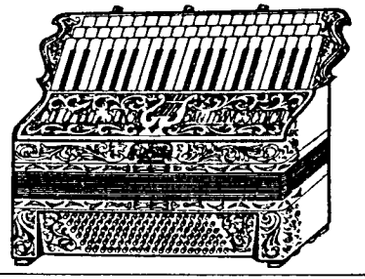
PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 141
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7 x 16 x 18¼
PRICE $425.00



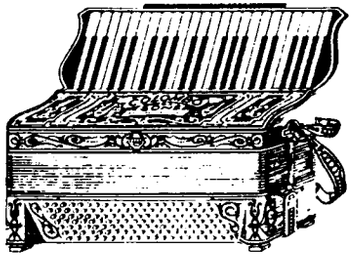
CHROMATIC ACCORDION

MODEL No. 205
46 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7⅛ x 16 x 18¾
PRICE $450.00



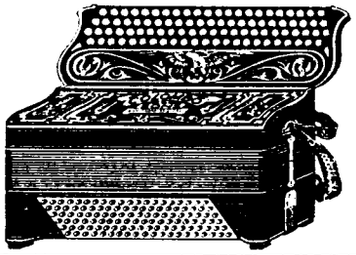
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 172
41 Keys, 140 Basses — Size 7 x 16 x 19
PRICE $500.00



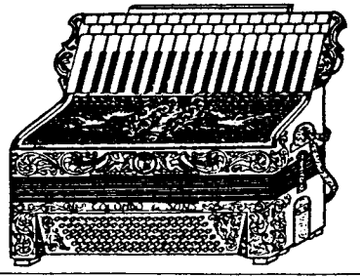
CHROMATIC ACCORDION

MODEL No. 225
46 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15⅛ x 18¾
PRICE $475.00



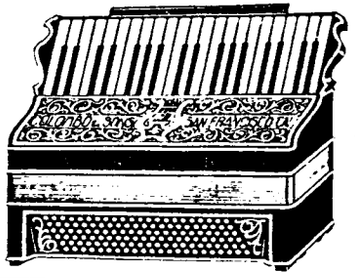
CHROMATIC ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 170
60 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¼
PRICE $475.00



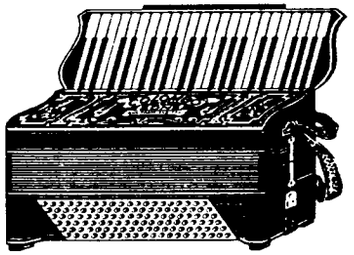
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 193
39 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7 x 16 x 18¾
PRICE $450.00



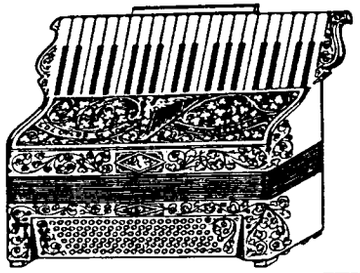
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 232
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 19¼
PRICE $475.00



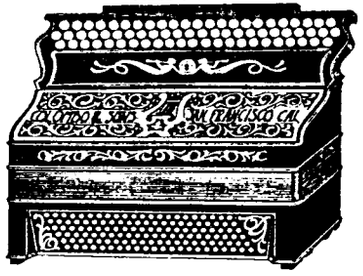
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 210
39 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¼
PRICE $450.00



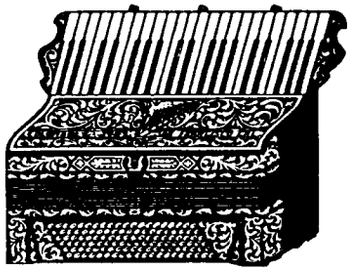
CHROMATIC ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 199
46 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15 x 18¼
PRICE $450.00



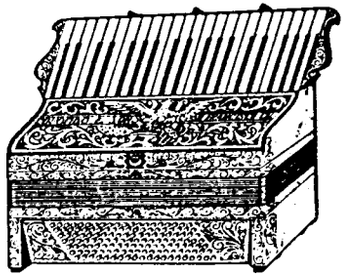
PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 216
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15⅛ x 19
PRICE $465.00



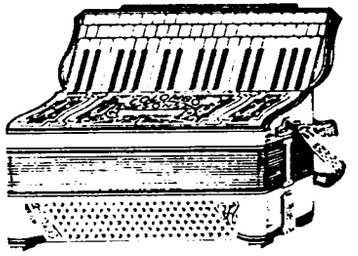
PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 213
41 Keys, 140 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15⅛ x 19
PRICE $450.00



CHROMATIC ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 220
46 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15 x 18¾
PRICE $500.00

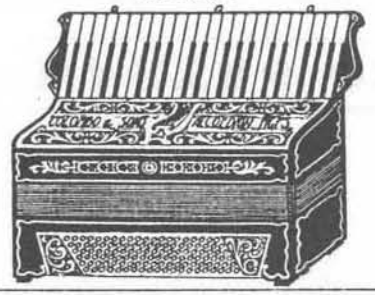


All Instruments are Guaranteed for 5 Years

Canessa Printing Co., 708 Montgomery St.

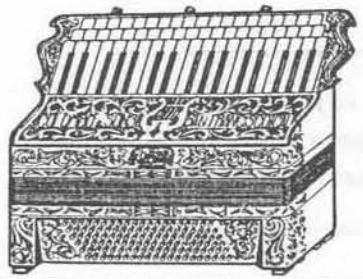
PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 141
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7 x 16 x 18¼
PRICE $425.00



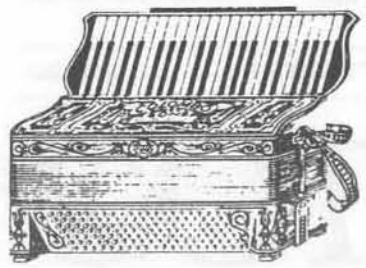
CHROMATIC ACCORDION

MODEL No. 205
46 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¾
PRICE $450.00



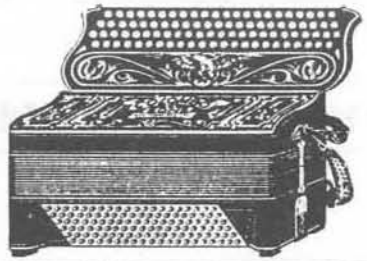
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 172
41 Keys, 140 Basses — Size 7 x 16 x 19
PRICE $500.00



CHROMATIC ACCORDION

MODEL No. 225
46 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15¾ x 18¾
PRICE $475.00



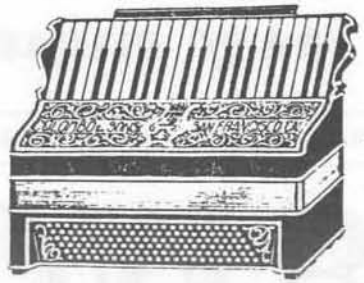
CHROMATIC ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 170
60 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¼
PRICE $475.00



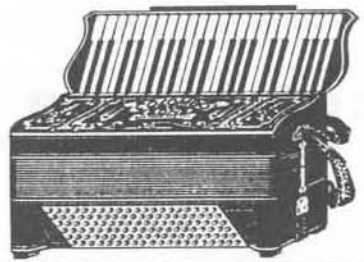
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 193
39 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7 x 16 x 18¾
PRICE $450.00



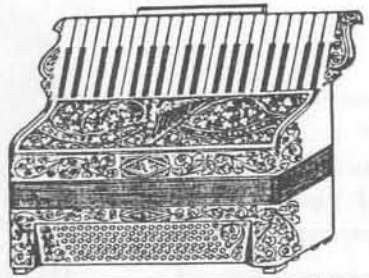
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 222
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 19¼
PRICE $475.00



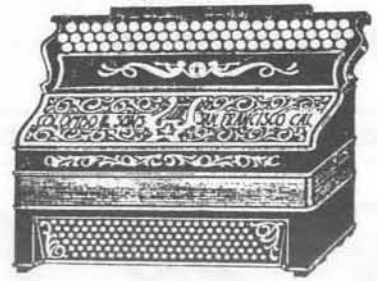
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 210
39 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¼
PRICE $450.00



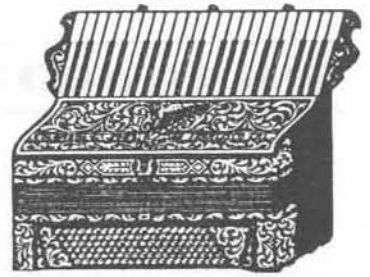
CHROMATIC ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 199
46 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15 x 18¼
PRICE $450.00



PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 216
41 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15¾ x 19
PRICE $465.00



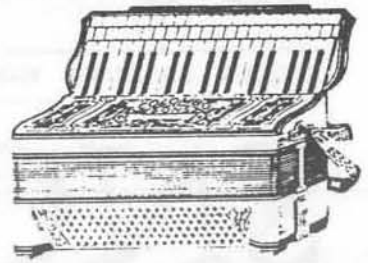
PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 213
41 Keys, 140 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15¾ x 19
PRICE $450.00



CHROMATIC ACCORDION

With New Switch
MODEL No. 220
46 Keys, 120 Basses — Size 7¼ x 15 x 18¾
PRICE $500.00



All Instruments are Guaranteed for 5 Years

Cancrse Printing Co., 708 Montgomery St.

COLOMBO & SONS

COLOMBO PIATANESI, DIRECTOR, FORMERLY CO-PROPRIETOR OF GUERRINI COMPANY FOR TWENTY YEARS

122-124 Columbus Ave. San Francisco, Calif.

Manufacturers of all kinds of Accordions with special system for Artists



COLOMBO PIATANESI, *Director*

We sell sheet music and method books for the Accordion. Repairing of all makes of Accordions.

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Catalogue of New Models with the Latest Structural and Mechanical Innovations

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DANTE BARSI

Popular Radio Artist of K. H. J. Columbia Broadcasting System, One of California's Best Bets

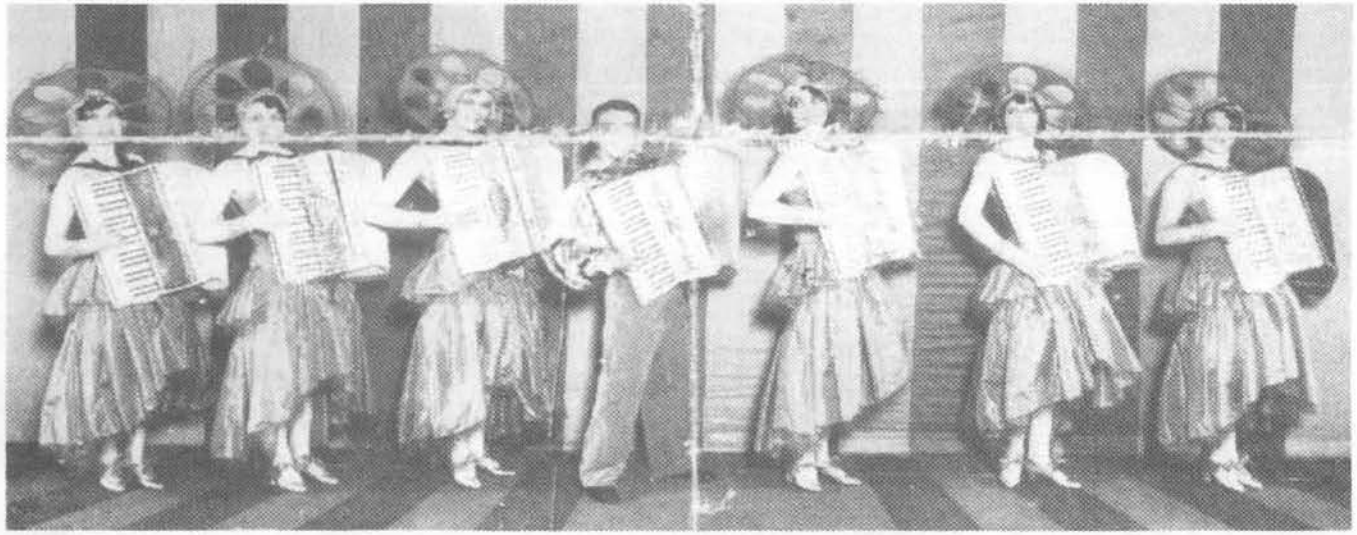
These Artists Use Model No. 2, Priced at $550 and having the New Invisible Patent Switch on the Keyboard, Bass Switch and the Octave Indicator.



JOHN MOLINARI

One of the Coast's Leading Representatives of Accordiondom

Awarded Medals ... Genoa 1914 ... P. P. I. E. 1915





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A FEW WELL KNOWN ACCORDION ARTISTS WHO USE THE "COLOMBO"

DANTE BARSI
Radio

JOE DE PUCCI
Union Orchestra

WALTER LOVE
Union Orchestra

A. BERTA
Orchestra

EARL PAOLINELLI
Union Orchestra

P. WALTER
Union Swedish Orchestra

AL LYONS
Orchestra Director

ALMA DUBE
Vaudeville Artist

JOE YOKI
Vaudeville Artist

CARL ROSE
Union Orchestra

F. GILMORE
Union Orchestra

Miss D. DAL PORTO
Veneta Orchestra

JOHN MOLINARI
Radio



Miss E. Bardana *and* Miss D. Dal Porto, two popular young Accordionists with their Colombo Instruments

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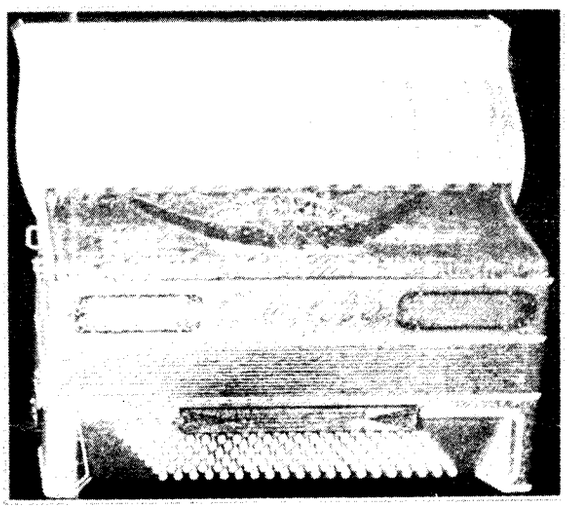
All of our instruments are shipped with privilege of examination.

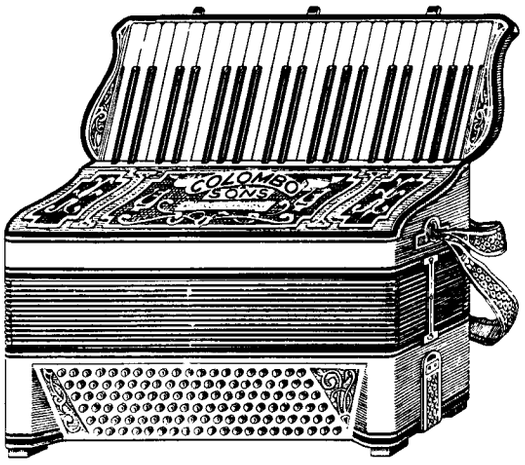


PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 1

41 Keys, 140 Basses, new automatic switch, Bass switch and octave indicator. Finished in pale gold with celluloid scroll. Name and case complete.

PRICE $550.00



PIANO ACCORDION

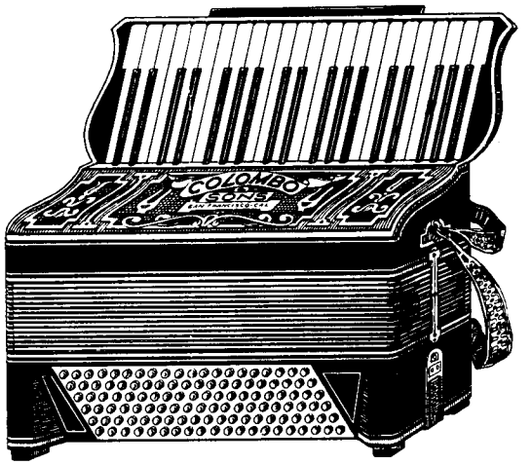
MODEL No. 1800

41 Keys, 120 Basses—Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¾

Finished in any color desired

PRICE $440.00

Our instruments are finished in any color desired and Decorations are carried out in good taste both in color and design so as to harmonize with the general design of the instrument.



PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch

MODEL No. 1801

41 Keys, 129 Basses—Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¾

PRICE $465.00

OUR original and perfected system of welding is one of our many new structural innovations. This in itself is a major improvement since it lightens the weight of our new instrument about three pounds or more. Because of these new methods our late model is very easily managed and its response is quick and accurate.

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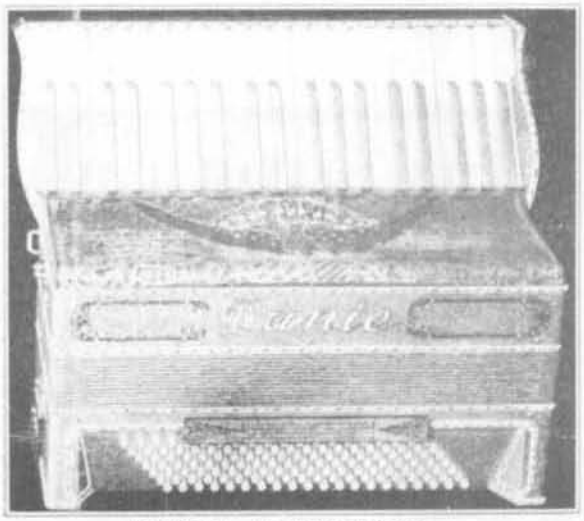
All of our instruments are shipped with privilege of examination.



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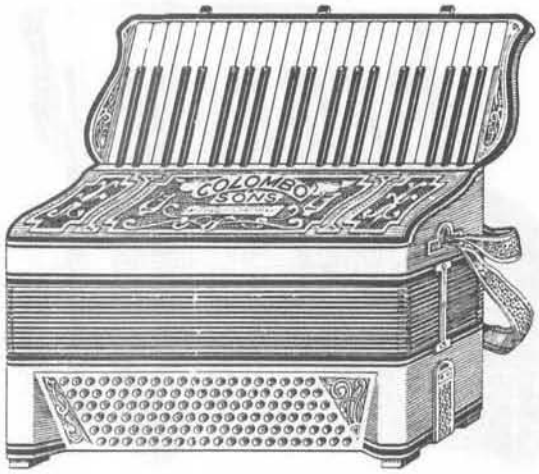

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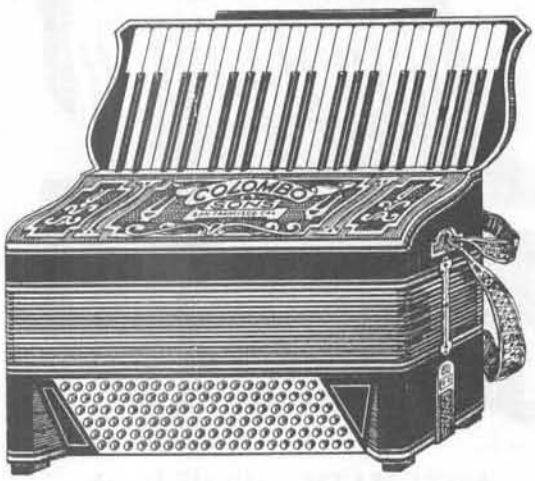

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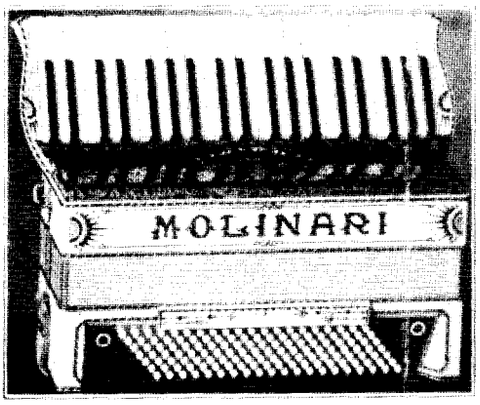


PIANO ACCORDION

MODEL No. 2

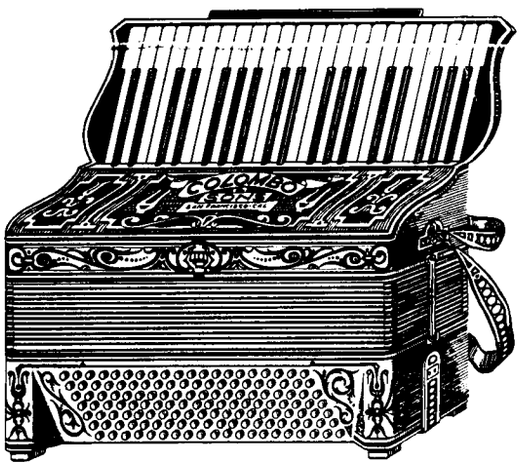
41 Keys, 140 Basses, New Automatic Switch, Bass Switch, and Octave Indicator. Finished in White Mother of Pearl with Celluloid Scroll. Decorated to harmonize with general scheme of Accordion. Name and case included complete.

PRICE $550.00

Our Reeds in the Colombo Accordion are all hand-made of the very finest Swedish Steel.

THE octave indicator shows whether accordion is being played in four sets of reeds with octave or in three without octave. It is of great value to the accordionist in vaudeville, radio or orchestral work. It can be applied to any Colombo Model. It is operated by the patent switch by lighting a small electric bulb which indicates whether accordion is playing with or without the octave.

Special bass register in addition to the patent switch that we have on the treble side we also have a base switch especially made for the base side of the accordion opening and closing the basses. This can be installed in any model at a slight additional cost.



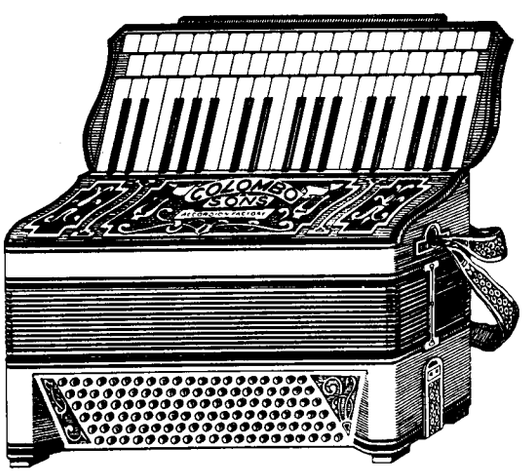
PIANO ACCORDION

With New Switch

MODEL No. 1802

41 Keys, 140 Basses—Size 7¼ x 16 x 18¾

PRICE $475.00



CHROMATIC ACCORDION

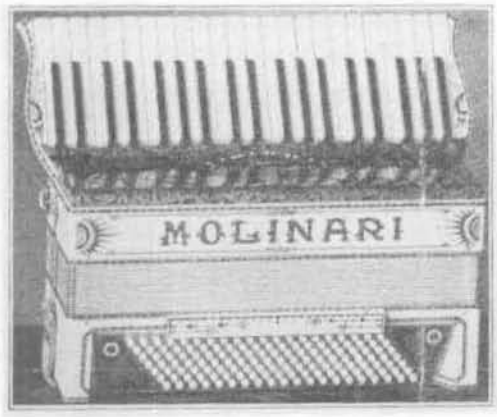
With New Switch

MODEL No. 1803

46 Keys, 120 Basses—Size 7¼ x 15 x 18¾

Finished in any color desired

PRICE $500.00



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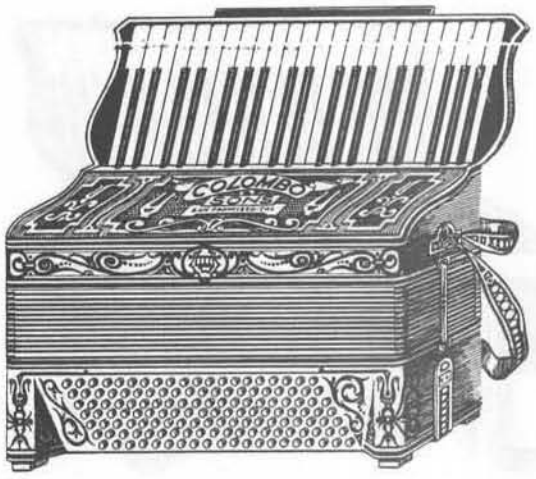

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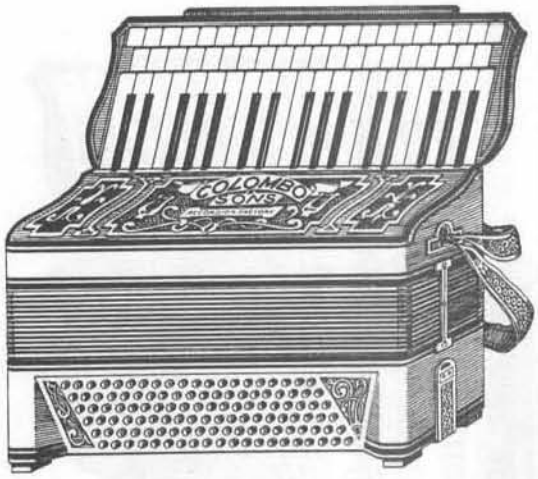

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46 Keys, 120 Basses—Size 7¼ x 15 x 18¾

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A PICTORIAL HISTORY: STANDARD ACCORDION COMPANY



NEW 1935 CATALOGUE

STANDARD ACCORDION MANUFACTURING COMPANY

441 STOCKTON STREET
San Francisco, Cal.



Mahogany Model - $475

A beautiful model finished in mahogany. It has 144 bass and 41 treble keys. Decorations are in gold and black—bellows in brown. Single switch. ALL STANDARD ACCORDIONS come equipped with the HARP-SHAPED piano keyboard, unless otherwise ordered. Some players, becoming accustomed to the straight keyboard, prefer not to change—but a matter of a few hours' practice is all that is required to accustom oneself to the new style.

Also can be made with the double switch—giving organ effect when desired. Price $500.



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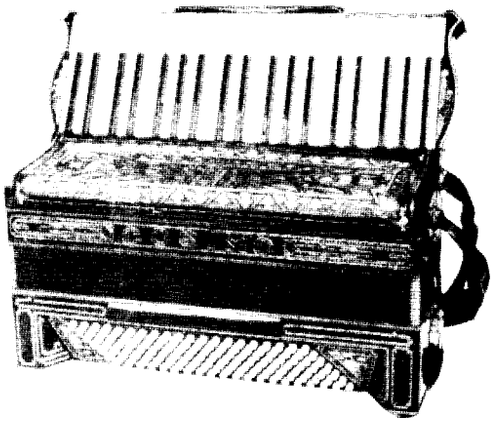
Ernest Gloe Model
$500 - $325 - $225

The model pictured is finished in English Gray wood. As all STANDARD ACCORDIONS are custom built, you may select your own color combination, in every model.

The $500 Ernest Gloe Model has 126 bass keys (7 rows) and 41 treble keys. Single switch. Five sets of bass reeds and four sets of treble reeds.

The same instrument equipped with three sets of treble reeds sells for $325.

Equipped with two sets of treble reeds, and four sets of bass reeds, $225. WE HAVE ALSO MADE THIS POPULAR MODEL WITH EIGHT ROWS OF BASS KEYS AND FIVE SWITCHES.
(Called the Radio Model Supreme)



The Cosimo Model - $550

BUILT FOR THE DANCE ORCHESTRA

Finished in black celluloid. Especially built to stand the hard usage and handling given accordions in professional dance orchestras. Has 140 bass and 41 treble keys. Equipped with double switch, five sets of reeds in the bass and four sets in treble—$550.



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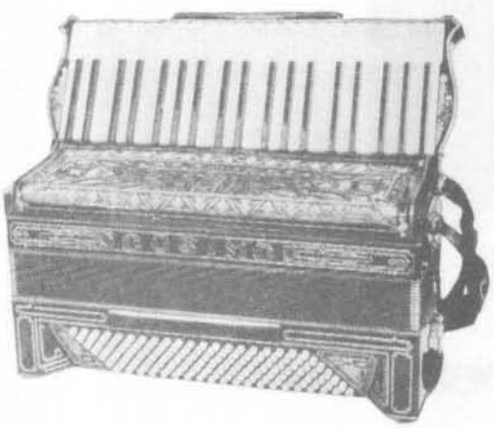

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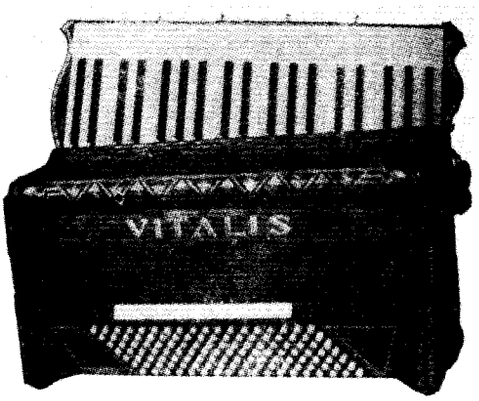
Young America Model
$225 - $175

This is the ideal instrument for children. Although compact in size and light in weight, it is absolutely large enough to cover all phases of musical development over a period of several years.

Made in celluloid or wood. Can be finished in any color desired.
Made with 96 bass and 37 treble keys.
Two sets of reeds in the right hand, or treble, and four sets of reeds in the left hand, or bass side—$175.

Also made with three sets of treble reeds (including switch) and five sets of bass reeds—$225.



Vitalis Model - $525

This modern instrument is used by professionals and advanced students. It has a double switch and double indicator. Like all STANDARD ACCORDIONS it is very light in weight, and very responsive to the touch. Can be obtained in any color desired—the one pictured being in light mahogany, which is now very popular. 140 bass keys and 41 treble keys. Five sets of reeds in bass and four sets in treble.

This instrument can also be built with three setsof treble reeds, with switch, and five sets of bass reeds—$400.



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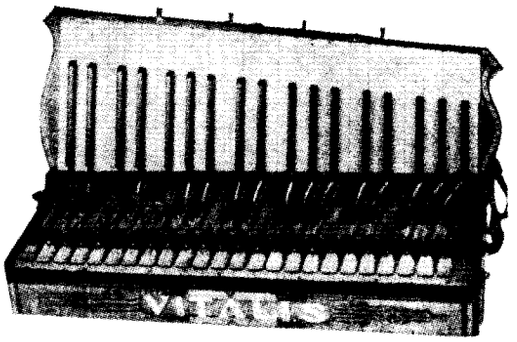
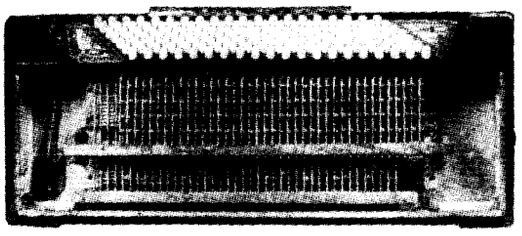
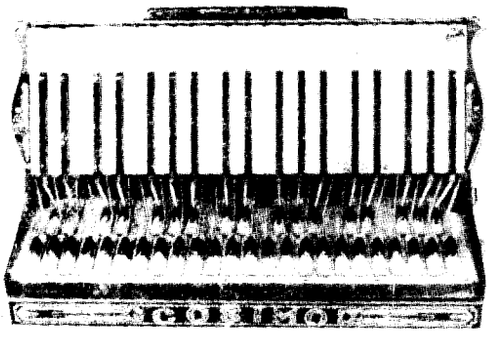
Photo of interior showing the intricate mechanism which is so compact in the STANDARD ACCORDION that only the finest, most highly skilled workmen are used in this work.





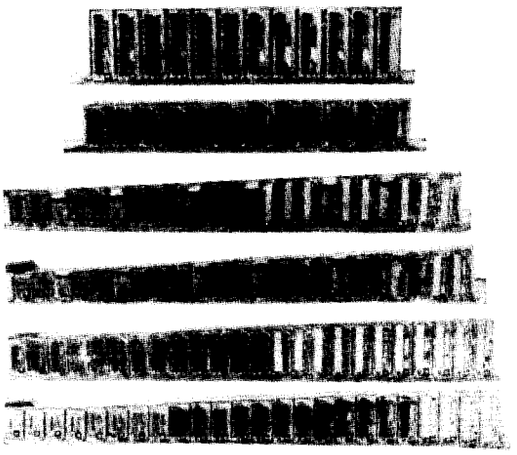


The makers of the STANDARD ACCORDION feel that the HARP-SHAPED ACCORDION is superior to the plain. But even if you prefer the straight keyboard, the STANDARD is a superior instrument to many others. Pictured above, the two types of keyboards, made in first quality Woodnut and Duralumin.



Pictured below—a complete set of reeds as used in the STANDARD ACCORDION. Our reeds are all hand made with genuine Swedish steel and Duralumin.





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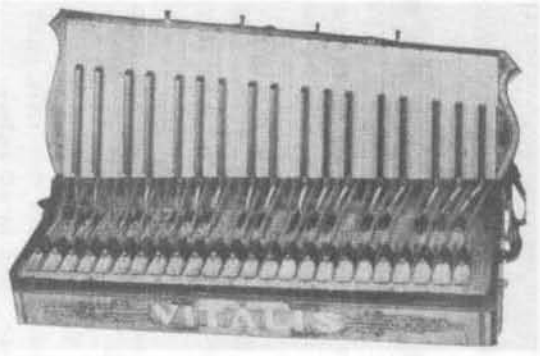



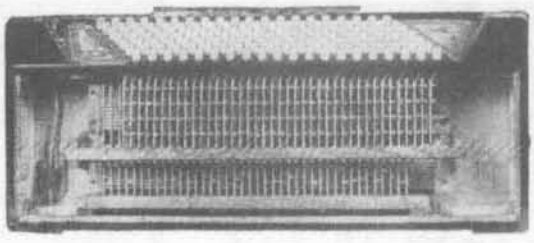

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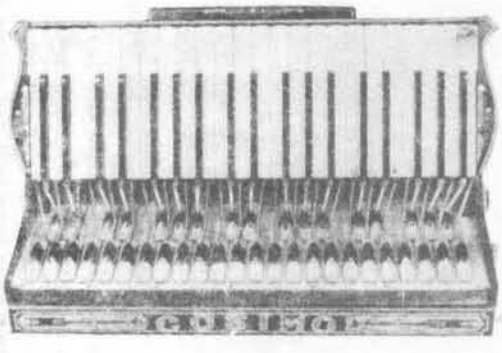
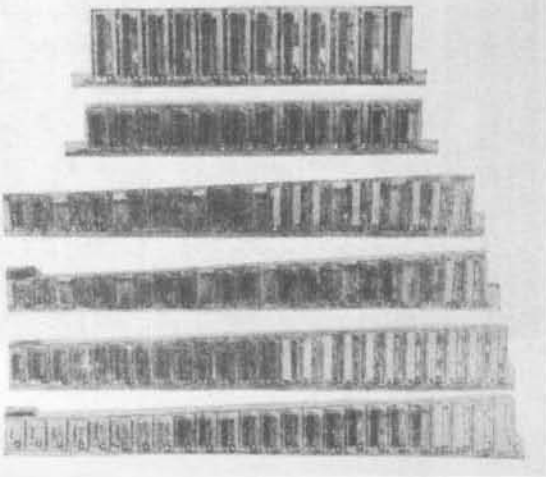
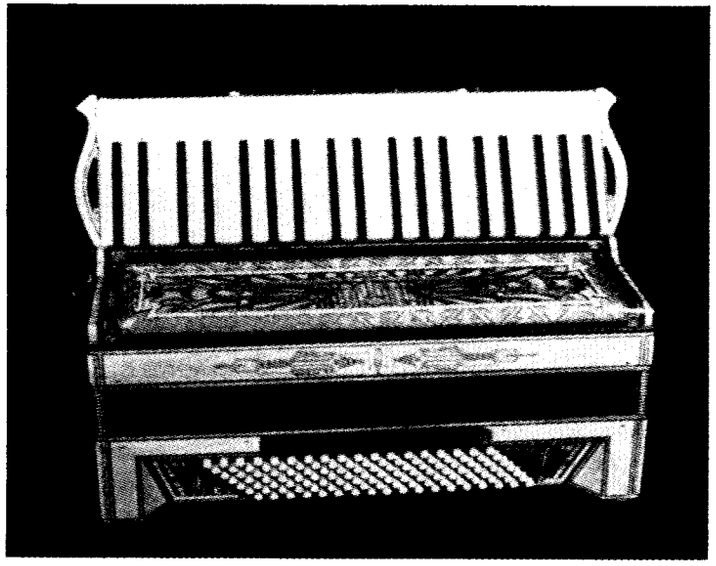


Pictured below—a complete set of reeds as used in the STANDARD ACCORDION. Our reeds are all hand made with genuine Swedish steel and Duralumin.







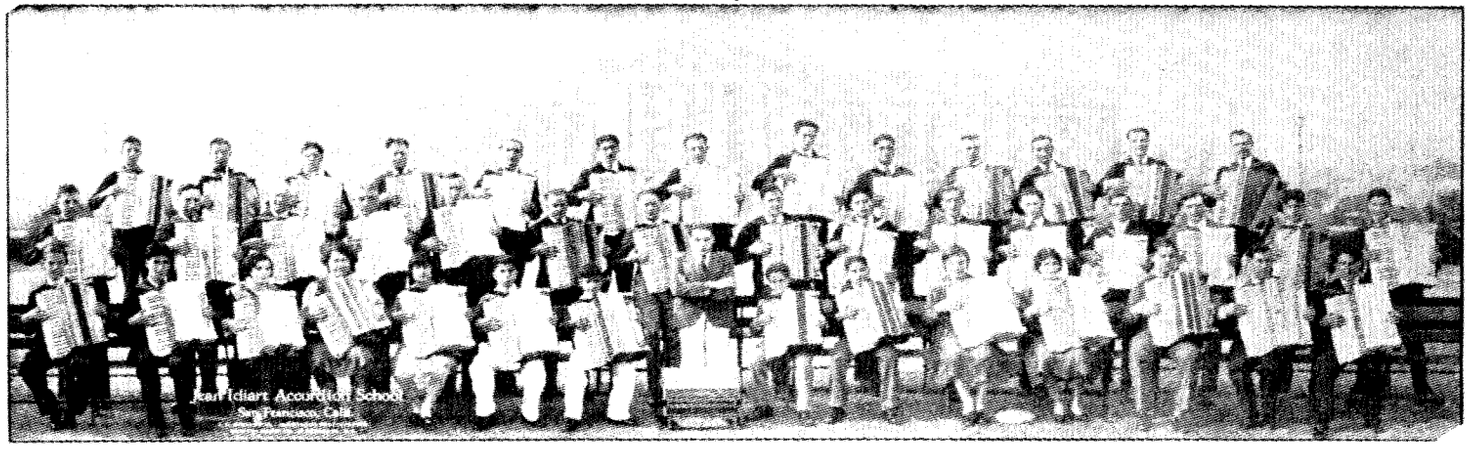
English Whitewood Queen
$575 - $400

Three separate and distinctly different tone effects may be obtained through the use of three switches, one in bass and two in the treble keyboards.

This model has 144 basses (containing all the augmented chords) and 43 treble keys. Complete with five sets of bass reeds, and four sets of treble reeds—$525.

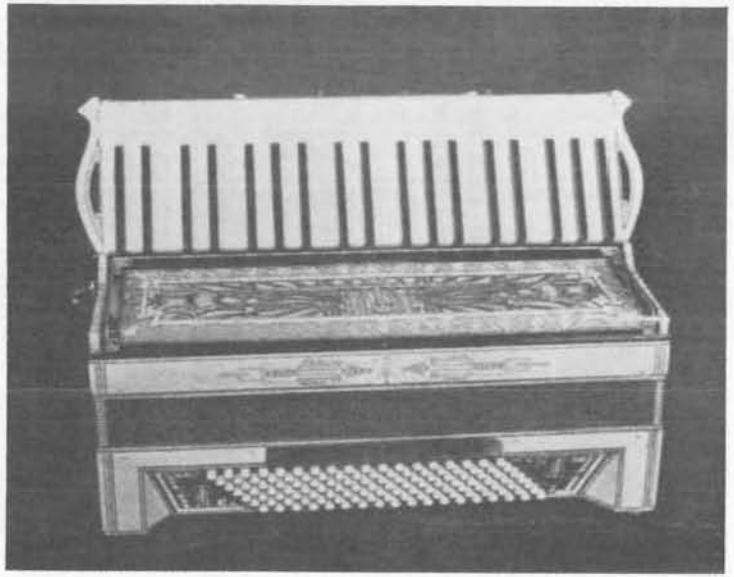
The same instrument is made with two switches, four sets of bass reeds and three sets of treble reeds—$400.

The instrument pictured is made of English Whitewood. However, your accordion is made to order, and can be covered by other materials, such as California Blisterwood, Celluloid, etc., etc., and in all colors.



Be Happy With an Accordion

There is a reason for the tremendous popularity of the accordian. An accordian is just as complete as a piano, and for this reason is sometimes called the "one man band". You can take your accordian to picnics, or on your vacation--you do not need other players to accom_ pany you, and thus you will get many hours of enjoyment that you would othewise miss.



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PICTURED:—Mr. A. Cagnazzo, famed teacher and radio performer, displaying his STANDARD ACCORDION WITH HARP SHAPED KEYBOARD. "The finest accordion ever built" is what Mr. Cagnazzo says.

Among many fine letters in our files, we discovered the following:

". . . The STANDARD ACCORDION with its ingenious harp shaped keyboard is a great achievement in the history of piano accordion manufacture.

"For tone, beauty and mechanical perfection it is unexcelled.

"I unhesitatingly recommend, with great pleasure, this marvelous instrument."

JEAN IDIART (See picture at right)



STANDARD ACCORDION MANUFACTURING COMPANY
441 Stockton St.
San Francisco, Calif.

Gentlemen:—

Please ship, as soon as possible, one Standard Accordion with the following specifications:—

Name of Model ..... No. Sets of Bass reeds .....

Color of covering ..... No. Sets of Treble reeds .....

Color bellows ..... Harp Shaped keys ..... (yes or no)

Other remarks:—

Name .....

Street and number ..... City .....



PICTURED:—Mr. A. Cagnazzo, famed teacher and radio performer, displaying his STANDARD ACCORDION WITH HARP SHAPED KEYBOARD. "The finest accordion ever built" is what Mr. Cagnazzo says.

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Color bellows ..... Harp Shaped keys ..... (yes or no)

Other remarks:—

Name .....

Street and number ..... City .....

JOHN GART CHARLES NUNZIO ANDY ARCARI JOHN GERSTNER



PIETRO FROSINI PIETRO DEIRO MINDIE CERE

CONCERT NEW YORK CITY 1942

(Photograph Courtesy of *Accordion World* Magazine)

..... A PART OF THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION .....

APPENDIX

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Accordion Manufacturers in San Francisco 74

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ACCORDION MANUFACTURERS IN SAN FRANCISCO

1850	None	———
1862	Keene, C. C.	103 Montgomery
1875	Keene, C. C.	3 Third
1886	Keene, C. C.	3 Third
	Miller, Louis	108 Third
1894	Keene, C. C.	3 Third
	Miller, Louis	234 Fourth
	Zanini, Celso G.	420 Montgomery
1904	Galleazzi, Joseph	438 Jackson
	Guerrini, P. & Co.	1406 1/2 Dupont (Grant)
	Miller, Louis H. P.	6 Marshall Square*
	Zanini, Celso G.	1025 Kearney

*Marshall Square was eliminated after the 1906 earthquake and fire. Today, it is part of Hyde St.

1915	Galleazzi & Sons	478 Jackson
	Guerrini Co.	279 Columbus
	Miller, Louis H. P.	105 Castro
1935	Colombo & Sons	122-124 Columbus
	Galleazzi & Sons	478 Jackson
	Greub, Paul	245 Capp
	Guerrini Co.	277-279 Columbus
	Standard Accordion Mfg. Co.	441 Stockton
1948	Cirelli, Vincent	1238 Broadway
	Colombo & Sons	126 Columbus
	Greub, P. J.	500 Capp
	Guerrini Co.	277-279 Columbus
	Pacific Accordion Mfg. Co.	1432 Stockton
1955	Cirelli Accordion Service	1236 Broadway
	Colombo & Sons	126 Columbus
	Greub, Paul	500 Capp
	Guerrini Co.	277-279 Columbus
1964	Cirelli Accordion Service	2930 Geneva
	Colombo & Sons	126 Columbus
	Greub, Paul Accordion Co.	500 Capp
1972	Cirelli Accordion Service	37 Leland
	Colombo & Sons	126 Columbus
	Greub, Paul Accordion Co.	500 Capp
1989	None	———

ACCORDION DEALERS IN SAN FRANCISCO

1850	None	———
1862	Keene, C. C.	103 Montgomery
1875	Keene, C. C.	3 Third
1886	Keene, C. C.	3 Third
	Miller, Louis	198 Third
1894	Keene, C. C.	3 Third
	Miller, Louis	234 Fourth
1904	Galleazzi, Joseph	438 Jackson
	Guerrini, P. & Co.	1406 1/2 Dupont (Grant)
	Keene, C. C. Mrs.	Hearst Bldg., 3rd Floor
	Miller, Louis H. P.	6 Marshall Square
1915	Galleazzi & Sons	478 Jackson
	Guerrini Co.	279 Columbus
	Miller, Louis H. P.	1105 Castro
1924	Galleazzi & Sons	478 Jackson
	Guerrini Co.	277-279 Columbus
	Sahlein, J. M.	718 Mission
1935	Colombo & Sons	122-124 Columbus
	Galleazzi, G. & Son	478 Jackson
	Greub, Paul	245 Capp
	Guerrini Co.	277-279 Columbus
	Sherman, Clay & Co.	Kearney & Sutter
	Standard Accordion Mfg. Co.	441 Stockton
	Wurlitzer, R. Co.	250 Stockton
1948	Cirelli, Vincent	1238 Broadway
	Colombo & Sons	126 Columbus
	Greub, P. J.	500 Capp
	Guerrini Co.	277-279 Columbus
	Kessler, H. C.	849 Madrid
	Meni-Ketti, Orlando	2871 Mission
	Pacific Accordion Mfg. Co.	1432 Stockton
	Pezzolo, John	317 Columbus
1955	Almestad, A. Accordion Co.	1114 Naples
	Cirelli Accordion Service	1236 Broadway
	Colombo & Sons	126 Columbus
	Greub, Paul Accordion Co.	500 Capp
	Guerrini Co.	277-279 Columbus
	Pezzolo, Caesar Accordion Co.	317 Columbus
	Sahlein, J. M. Music Co.	718 Mission
	Sherman, Clay & Co.	141 Kearney
	Theodore School of Music	1670 Union

1964	Almestad, A. Accordion Co.	1114 Naples
	Angelo's School of Music	962 Geneva
	Brattesani School of Music	703 Columbus
	Cirelli Accordion Service	2390 Geneva
	Colombo & Sons	126 Columbus
	Corino School of Music	411 Columbus
	Farace Accordion Studio	239 West Portal
	Greub, Paul Accordion Co.	500 Capp
	Parti, Michael	3371 Mission
	Pezzolo, Caesar Accordion Co.	2793 San Bruno
	Sahlein, J. M. Music Co.	1174 Howard
	Sherman, Clay & Co.	141 Kearney
	Theodore School of Music	1670 Union
1972	Angelo's House of Music	960 Geneva
	Cirelli Accordion Service	37 Leland
	Colombo & Sons	126 Columbus
	Farace Accordion Studio	239 West Portal
	Greub, Paul Accordion Service	500 Capp
	Pezzolo, Caesar Accordion Co.	2793 San Bruno
	Pucci's Accordion Center	4726 Mission
	Sahlein, J. M. Music Co.	1174 Howard
	Sherman, Clay & Co.	141 Kearney
	Theodore School of Music	1670 Union
	Universal Music Co.	990 Columbus
1989	None	———————

In 1989, no accordion dealers are listed in San Francisco. These dealers gradually disappeared or relocated outside San Francisco, as shown below:

Almestad, A. Accordion Co. (Alfred Almestad), 1114 Naples St. 1970 was the last time he was listed in the telephone book.

Angelo's House of Music (Angelo Sfarzo), 960 Geneva. In 1984, Angelo Sfarzo changed to organs and pianos exclusively.

Brattanesi School of Music (Joe Brattanesi), 1491 43rd Avenue. The year 1971 was the last time Joe Brattanesi was listed.

Cirelli Accordion Service (Vincent Cirelli), 37 Leland. In 1981, it moved to 200 Valley Drive #44, Brisbane, CA 94005.

Colombo & Sons Accordion Co. (Gordon Piatanesi) 126 Columbus. In 1983, Gordon moved to Marin County, 1201 Andersen Dr — Unit O — San Rafael, CA 94901.

Corino School of Music (Mike Corino), 411 Columbus. In 1970, Mike moved to Marin County. He closed his store in 1981. His home address was listed at 50 Elm Avenue, Larkspur, CA 94939.

Farace Accordion Studio (Sam Farace), 1050 Taraval. The year 1977 was the last time Farace was listed.

Galleazzi & Sons (Guiseppe, Frank & Theodore), 478 Jackson. They went out of business by 1944.

Greub, P. (Paul Greub), 500 Capp. He previously worked for Colombo & Sons Accordion Co., and he was last listed in 1975.

Guerrini Co. (Elio Taffi), 45 Columbus. In 1962, the company moved to San Rafael; in 1968, Guerrini was out of business. The home address was 4 Blossom Drive, San Rafael, CA 94901.

Kessler, H. C. (Hilton C. Kessler), 849 Madrid. He changed to pianos in 1961.

Meni-Ketti, O. (Orlando Meni-Ketti) was a teacher. In 1947, he had three studios: Oakland, Vallejo, and San Leandro. His only San Francisco listing, at 2871 Mission, was in the 1948 city directory. Address: Meni-Ketti Music & Furniture Co., 19 Grand Avenue, Oakland, CA 94612.

Parti, M. (Michael Parti), 3373 Mission. He was last listed in 1977.

Pacific Accordion Mfg. Co. (Eric Gylling & Ernest Olund), 1432 Stockton. The company went out of business in 1954.

Pacific Music Supply Co. (Roy Hunt). Listed for the first time in 1945 at 1114 Mission. His last listing in 1953 was at 1355 Market. He was a wholesale instrument dealer.

Pezzolo, Caesar Accordion Co. (Caesar Pezzolo & Joe Bertolone), 317 Columbus. When Caesar passed away on May 30, 1959, Bertolone joined with Andy Parenti until their last listing in 1973. By this time the company had moved to San Bruno, CA.

Pezzolo, John Music Center (John Pezzolo), 4726 Mission. He retired in 1964 and passed away in 1973.

Pucci, Reno Music Center (Reno Pucci), 4726 Mission. He closed his studio in 1984; today his only listing is a telephone number.

Sahlein, J. M. Music Co. (Jules M. Sahlein), 1174 Howard. In 1976, he moved to 454 S. Airport Blvd., South San Francisco, CA 94080.

Sellers Music Co. (Robert Sellers), 2924 Army. The year 1976 was the last time this firm was listed.

Sherman, Clay & Co. (Henry Sinigiani), 141 Kearney. In 1973, Mr. Sinigiani changed to organs and pianos exclusively — no accordions.

Standard Accordion Mfg. Co. (Elio Taffi & Angelo Cagnazzo), 441 Stockton. Firm went out of business in 1936.

Theodore School of Music (Theodore Pezzolo), 1670 Union. Theodore, who had retired in 1967 due to ill health, passed away on January 25, 1973. His brother, John, had passed away just 3 weeks earlier. The familiar sight, the historic 23-year-old accordion house came to an end.

Universal Accordion School (Paul Miners). Miners, who was listed for a total of 7 years in San Francisco, started the school in 1953. In 1957, the Universal Music Company at 990 Columbus was started by Wayne D. Parker. By 1962, the two companies were merged under the name Universal Music Company at the 990 Columbus address. Besides Miners and Parker, some of the other teachers were Melvin J. Bacigalupi, Seymore Borshell, Don Haas, Mrs. Adriana P. Parker, Bud Seghieri, and Emil Strauss. In 1975, the company became vendors for juke boxes — no more accordions.

Wurlitzer, Rudolph (Dick Reyna), 250 Stockton: A musical house that was famous for its Wurlitzer organs; he was a Wurlitzer accordion dealer from 1932 to 1938.



Sherman, Clay & Co. (Henry Sinigiani), 141 Kearney. In 1973, Mr. Sinigiani changed to organs and pianos exclusively — no accordions.

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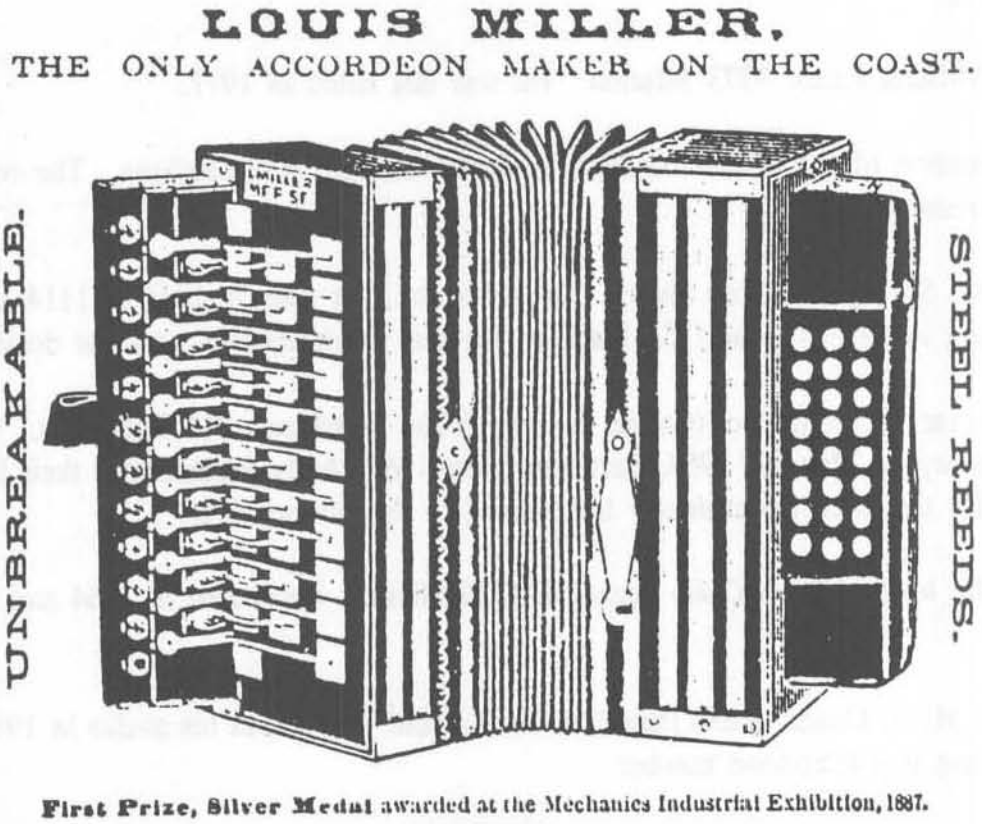

"YELLOW PAGES"

(Classified Telephone Directory)

FOR

San Francisco, Bayshore, Brisbane, Colma, Daly City

SEPTEMBER 1962 ISSUE containing listings and rates in effect JULY 12, 1962

The Company assumes no liability for damages arising from errors or omissions in the making up or printing of directories.

For information concerning this Classified Directory, please call YU 2-9700

Accordions

Accordion School of Michael Parti
Teacher-Composer-Arranger
3371 Mission ..... VAlencia 6-4316

ACCORDION STUDIO PUCCI'S
HOME OR STUDIO INSTRUCTION
Teaching for Over 20 Yrs in Bay Area
Near Cow Palace
3119 Geneva Av ..... DE 3-7766

ACOMA MUSIC SHOP
LARGEST SELECTION
RENTED – BOUGHT – SOLD
At 7th
1110 Market ..... HE 1-3500

Almentad A Accordion Co
Sales Service & Instructions
1114 Naples ..... DE 3-8847

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EXCELSIOR – EXCELSIOLA
ACCORDIANA
960 Geneva Av ..... JU 5-5292

Angelo's School of Music 962 Geneva Av-JU 5-5292
Bell Music Studio 272 Parnassus Av-----OV 1-0760

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF MUSIC
See Our Ad for Music Instruction
2125 Junipero Serra Blvd Daly City-----PL 5-2159
Chapin John Music Co 148 Jones....PRspct 6-2836

Accordions—(Cont'd)

CIRELLI ACCORDION SERVICE
Tuning & Repairing - Guar All Makes
2930 Geneva Av ..... DE 3-6279

COLOMBO & SONS ACCORDIONS
Since 1907
GRANDE VOX & COLOMBO
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Repairing & Tuning – All Makes
Guaranteed
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4644 Telegraph Av Oakind ..... OL 2-8421

Farace Accordion Studio
239 W Portal Av ..... SEabright 1-4320

Greub P Accordion Co
Accordion Sales & Repring Since 1924
300 Capp ..... ATwtr 2-6247

GUERRINI ACCORDION CO
MANUFACTURING & REPAIRING
45 Columbus Av ..... EXbrk 2-5820

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Exclusive Distributor LA MELODIOSA
Rental Purchase Plan to Schools
Dealers for 12 Bass Accordions
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AUTHORIZED DEALER FOR
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ACCORDION INSTRUCTIONS
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1670 Union ..... PR 6-4065

Sellers Music Studio 2924 Army ..... VA 4-6200
Sherman Clay & Co 141 Kearny ..... SU 1-6000

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Instructions in the Home
1942 Ocean Av ..... DE 3-2284

WESTLAKE MUSIC CENTER
See Adv Music Instruction
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SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS CARDS

HOME STUDIO
1334 31st AVE., S. F.
661-6494

HENRY SINIGIANI
TEACHER OF ACCORDIAN
Beginners - Advanced

SHERMAN CLAY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
PHONE SU. 1-6000
KEARNY & SUTTER ST.
SAN FRANCISCO 8, CALIF.

John H. Reuther

1060 FULTON STREET
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San Francisco, CA 94112

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JOE BERTOLONE

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SAN FRANCISCO 11, CALIF.
EXbrook 7-0678

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and his
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by Appointment
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Home: 588-1448

FINAU PIATANESI
FATHER OF THE ACCORDION IN AMERICA, SINCE 1908
AN INSTRUCTOR FOR MORE THAN 25 YEARS
Accordion Studio
ACCORDIONS ALSO BOUGHT AND SOLD
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STUDIO PHONE: WALNUT 1-9547 - RES. PHONE: EVERGREEN 6-6320

Phone 333-6374

Cirelli
Accordion & Music Center
EXCELSIOR - ACCORDIONS - AMPLIFIERS
PIETRO DEIRO MUSIC DEPOT
SALES - REPAIRING

VINCENT CIRELLI
37 LELAND AVE.
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

ACCORDION & PIANO LESSONS
ACCORDIONS RENTED WHILE LEARNING

John Pezzolo Accordion Center
EXCELSIOR - ACCORDIANA DEALER

317 COLUMBUS AVE.
BUS. DX. 2-6070
RES. DX. 2-2703

4726 MISSION ST.
JUNIPER 6-3465
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

(415) 457-2222

Colombo & Sons Accordion Co.
SINCE 1907

1201 Andersen Drive, Unit O
San Rafael, CA 94901
Gordon J. Piatanesi

***PIETRO FROSINI: Original Recordings 1920 - 1935**
(Polydor 825 682-1; Pressed and distributed in 1985)

*Distributed by Oy Musickki Frazer Musik of Helsinki, Finland
(U.S. Distributor: Accordia Records, Oakland, CA 94618)

Side A: "Dizzy Accordion," "La Mariposita," "Jolly Caballero," "Olive Blossoms," "Love Smiles," "Bel Viso," "Hot Fingers," "Silver Moon."

Side B: "Frosini Symphonic March," "Swedish Italian Mazurka," "Cordinella," "Serenata Primavera," "Gauchos On Parade," "Coquette Polka," "Rag in D Minor," and "Bel Fiore."

This album was issued to commemorate the Centennial of Frosini's birth. It is an interesting souvenir for accordionists and accordion enthusiasts to again be able to listen to Frosini playing his own compositions in his own artistic and inimitable fashion. The original compositions were recorded during the years 1920-1935. The selections were chosen by John Molinari and Veikko Ahvenainen from original recordings in the extensive accordion records library of Mr. Eddie Chavez, an accordionist of San Antonio, Texas. The selections were transferred from the original 78 rpm records to a 33 1/3 LP album at the Golden State Recorders, San Francisco, under the supervision of John Molinari. We are all thankful for the cooperation of these accordionists in making this album possible.

Pietro Frosini (1885 -1951)

In the growth and development of the accordion, Pietro Frosini was one of the outstanding pioneers. He did much to popularize the accordion, and he made available many compositions and arrangements that have been featured and played by accordionists in many parts of the world.

Pietro Frosini was born in the city of Catania in Sicily (Southern Italy) on August 9, 1885. His family name was Giuffrida. The name "Frosini" was later chosen for his professional career. He acquired his first accordion, a 4-bass, 11-key instrument at the age of 6. His father, Michael Angelo Giuffrida, although not a musician, had a great love for music and the accordion, and he was his son's first teacher.

When Frosini was 9 years old, his father purchased him a chromatic accordion which was the type Frosini used throughout his career. It was purchased from Rosario Porto, an accordion manufacturer in Catania, whose son Salvatore Porto was a fine accordionist. He impressed and inspired Frosini with his playing of the Overture from the opera Norma and the Intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana. Frosini was also impressed with Salvatore's manipulation of the bellows using a "shake" style. It was the first time Frosini had heard the tremolo with the bellows. This bellows technique was later developed and popularized by Frosini, becoming part of his musical expression.

With the help of his father, Frosini was soon playing polkas, mazurkas, quadrilles, and marches on this new chromatic accordion with remarkable ability. He then decided to attend the music conservatory in Catania, where he studied theory and harmony and also learned to play the cornet and organ. He later became the church organist of Catania and with his proficiency on the cornet became the first cornetist with the British Navy in Malta.

In 1905 at the age of 20, Frosini came to the United States and first settled in California, where he concentrated his interest on the accordion. He later moved to New York, and in the ensuing years became a "headliner" in vaudeville, the most popular form of entertainment at the time. His success and popularity

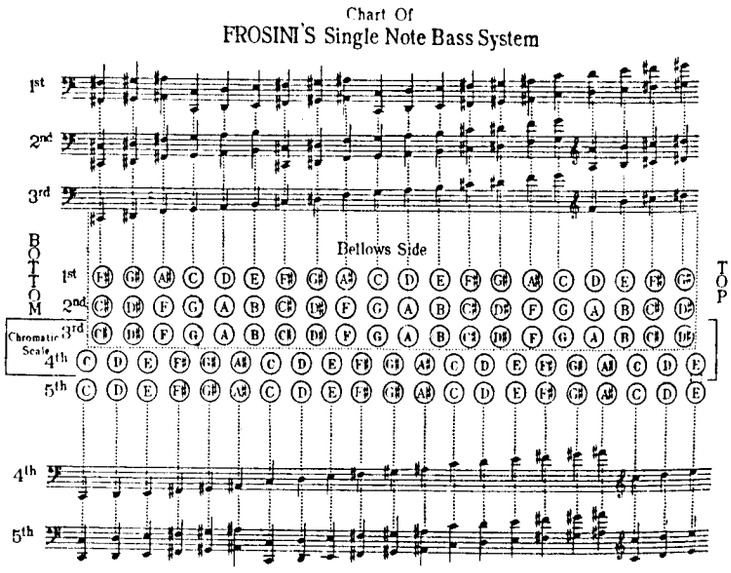
led to the "gramophone" recordings and as radio developed, he found a new successful career in that media. Frosini at heart was always a composer, and about 1908 he began to seriously compose for the accordion. His original compositions span a variety of musical expressions, including rhapsody, overtures, waltzes, tangos, paso doble, ragtime, and musical novelties. His many personal appearances and the "gramophone" records afforded opportunity to make his music and artistry known. The accordion world is today richer due to his talent and unique style of musical expression. This album is presented as a souvenir of the Frosini accordion legend.

— John Molinari

(Accordia Records, 6048 Rockridge Blvd., Oakland, CA 94618)



P. FROSINI, Excelsior artist, pioneer of the accordion, composer and arranger. A celebrated artist on stage and radio.
[Photo reprinted from Excelsior's Album of Stars: Courtesy of Mario Pancotti.]



Pietro Frosini described his bass button arrangement like this: "The buttons in the third and fourth rows (as shown in the diagram) give the chromatic scale, beginning from low C below the staff in bass clef, to high E, fourth space in violin clef. Each button of the third and fourth rows controls three reeds, two of which are in unison and one of which is an octave higher. The third and fourth rows are flanked by the second and fifth rows, which are the same notes as in the third and fourth rows, but are so fixed mechanically that they play the octave lower. This is to avoid the jump of seven buttons to reach for the octave lower. The first row is also a repetition of the notes of the fifth row, only in different positions. This is to facilitate rapid bass passages." Concerning the second and fifth rows, Frosini explained that these rows were added shortly after Pietro and Guido Deiro had begun to use the 120 bass piano accordion. He said, "These two extra rows, controlled the heavier reeds an octave lower. This innovation enabled me to play heavier rhythms." He also said that he later added one more row of basses, shown as the first row in the diagram.

[Editor's Note: Pietro Frosini described his bass button arrangement in an early issue of the Accordion World magazine. We have extracted a portion of that article. (Used with permission of Margaret Black and Carolyn Carlson.)

led to the "gramophone" recordings and as radio developed, he found a new successful career in that media. Frosini at heart was always a composer, and about 1908 he began to seriously compose for the accordion. His original compositions span a variety of musical expressions, including rhapsody, overtures, waltzes, tangos, paso doble, ragtime, and musical novelties. His many personal appearances and the "gramophone" records afforded opportunity to make his music and artistry known. The accordion world is today richer due to his talent and unique style of musical expression. This album is presented as a souvenir of the Frosini accordion legend.

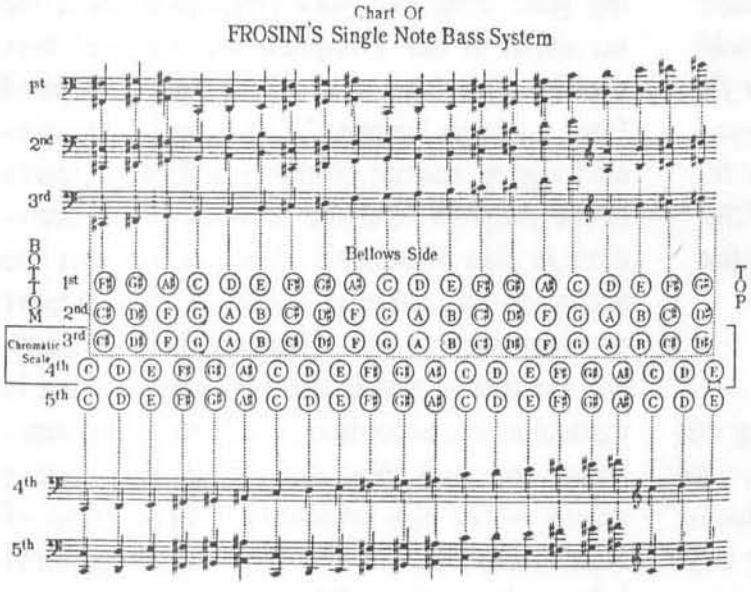
— John Molinari

(Accordia Records, 6048 Rockridge Blvd., Oakland, CA 94618)



P. FROSINI, Excelsior artist, pioneer of the accordion, composer and arranger. A celebrated artist on stage and radio.

[Photo reprinted from Excelsior's Album of Stars: Courtesy of Mario Pancotti.]



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[Editor's Note: Pietro Frosini described his bass button arrangement in an early issue of the Accordion World magazine. We have extracted a portion of that article. (Used with permission of Margaret Black and Carolyn Carlson.)

SOME COMMENTS BY ACCORDIONISTS ABOUT THE FIRST EDITION*

Leo Aquino: "Thanks for your manuscript. It was very thoughtful of you to send me a copy. You have done a marvelous job of compiling this interesting and entertaining period of accordion history. It ought to be properly published and circulated. I know my friends will enjoy it as much as I did when I read it."

Margaret Black: "What a pleasant surprise for me when I received your package. You certainly did massive work that indeed took a lot of enjoyable time to complete. How nice to see how our *Accordion World* magazine helped you to get much of your information. Your mentioning Frosini makes me think of him — especially as Christmas approaches us — as he and his wife spent several Christmas Eves with us."

[Publisher, John C. Gerstner and daughters Margaret Black and Carolyn Carlson owned and published the Accordion World magazine from January 1940 until the final issue of May-June 1968. The magazine was originally published by John H. Reuther in April 1936; in September of the same year Anna Wall Edwards became the owner and publisher until 1940.]

Eddie Chavez: "I've just finished reading this fascinating history of the accordion in San Francisco. It truly captures the 'Yerba Buena' that I recall about my visits to this lovely city. Once I started reading it, there was no stopping. I read it over twice before putting the book down. Of the many valuable things included in the book, I think the rare photographs you have published about this period of accordion history will undoubtedly be of great importance to future generations who want to know something about this early San Francisco period. A picture is indeed worth a thousand words! I truly appreciate your mentioning my name as helping you with this information. I certainly enjoyed being able to help. I will treasure this opportunity always. You have done such a beautiful and thorough job. Congratulations!"

Vincent Cirelli: "I would like to compliment you on a great job done on your story: ***Some Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco.*** Words cannot express my thanks to you for having me share some of the past history of San Francisco with you. All your hard work will be appreciated by the many accordionists and friends who read the historical events that the accordion was part of in those days. I would like to thank you for dedicating this book to me, as it made me relive that joyful part of my life again."

Anthony Galla-Rini: "Your package containing your letter and your reflections about the accordion in San Francisco was received here shortly after Mrs. Galla-Rini and I returned from a trip to Europe. You have indeed covered a great amount of historical data in regards to the progress (and the decline) of the accordion in San Francisco. I am afraid that the accordion has suffered a decline in a number of other cities as well. However, here in Southern California, and in the Los Angeles area in particular, the accordion is still enjoying popularity and activities due to a very active group — AFNA (Accordion Federation of North America). Incidentally, according to my information, Pietro Frosini's real name was Giufridda. The name Frosini was adopted by him at the suggestion of his music teacher. I appreciate receiving your book as it brings back thoughts of nostalgia when I read through it. I can certainly refer to it for historical data when needed."

Dr. Harry Gay: "Many thanks for the extremely interesting story that you sent me. I

feel honored that you sent me one of the first copies. There were, indeed, lots of familiar names. I took lessons for six months from Louis Allara and then my Dad talked John Pisacco, one of John Pezzolo's students, into teaching me. He was in a class like Carl Fortina. Elio Taffi made an accordion for me in the 1950-51 era."

Naomi Girouard: "Yesterday, I received your history of the accordion in San Francisco, and I enjoyed it so much that I just couldn't put it down until I finished it. I must say that your caring and enthusiasm for the instrument comes through loud and clear. If we had more people with that same attitude, the accordion would be much more popular today. Congratulations!"

Charles Magnante: "Your book and check for $11.50 were received. Thank you kindly. I hope you enjoy this new recording of mine. I must say that your book overwhelmed me! I couldn't lay it down for a moment until I finished it! Your presentation is remarkable. One can see immediately that you are a meticulous historian. I learned a thing or two about San Francisco and the accordion. I never played San Francisco. I did meet Angelo Sfarzo and was entertained at his home. I also met the Pezzolo Brothers years ago in New York City. Your book should be well received. Thank you for placing me in your book."

John Molinari: "I want you to know that I enjoyed very much reading your book about the accordion in San Francisco, and I am very happy to have a copy. All the facts and pictures in the book are both unique and interesting in the history and development of the accordion. San Francisco has a very colorful and interesting history, and the accordion in its own way was a part of it. No other city had quite the same activities and interests for the accordion, and I'm glad you did the research and put in writing these facts about the accordion. The accordion has always been a part of my life; it has always been interesting, challenging and enjoyable. I have found that those who have not been exposed to the accordion and who do not know its history are not aware of its possibilities and the enjoyment it can bring. I hope your book will be made available to anyone interested in any way with music and the accordion. I'm sure that many accordionists and accordion enthusiasts will thank you for your effort in preserving the accordion legend."

Charles Nunzio: "I want to thank you for the terrific job you did in your book ***Some Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco.*** I enjoyed looking through it and reading all the history and the location of players in that city. You should be commended for doing such a tremendous job for the accordion nationally. I know you spent considerable time assembling all the information for this book. Yes, we've lost a great friend, John Reuther; he was a fantastic fellow to know and to talk to. I will miss him at various gatherings and conventions."

Vincent Petromilli: "It must have been a difficult job getting all the data for ***Some Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco.*** It sure brings back memories as I have been away from the accordion business since 1938. It sure will be swell looking over your book every once in a while. I do hope that everyone enjoys it and appreciates it. Thank you for thinking of me. Let me hear from you every once in a while. I hope I can be of help."

Gordon Piatanesi: "With deep appreciation, we at Colombo & Sons Accordion Corporation congratulate you on your long and thorough research into the 'Accordion World' of San

Francisco from the beginning to the present time. It is gratifying to learn more about everyone who started the accordion business in our area. I am personally delighted to be mentioned in your book. I was, you might say, 'born with an accordion,' as I've spent many hours listening all about accordions and accordion players from my grandfather, father, uncle, and even relatives in Italy. Many thanks for your wonderful contribution to the 'Accordion World.' I'm looking forward to the pleasure of meeting you in person in the very near future."

Dan Sinigiani: "Your book, ***Some Thoughts About the Accordion in San Francisco***, was recently forwarded to me by my brother, Henry. I want to compliment you on your research. Your book was most interesting and a pleasure to read. It brought back memories of so many of those mentioned, including my teacher, Angelo Cagnazzo, the Guerrini Accordion Company, and so many others. I still have the Guerrini accordion which I purchased in the 1930's, and I still play it. The accordion is very special to me; it has been my source of livelihood since 1930, when I started teaching accordion in San Jose. Once again, it is a pleasure to hear of your accordion interest. I'll share the reading of your book with friends who will also recall many of the mentioned players, events, and accordion companies."

Henry Sinigiani: "You are a fitting tribute to the history of the accordion, its factories, and not least of all, its professionals. To me, it was an honor and a privilege to assist you with my knowledge of the 'facts.' I worked and played with the greatest accordion players of our times. You have really done an extensive research into the subject. Only a person with such love for the accordion could have taken it upon himself to devote so many hours of work to this task. I think you should be commended for preserving this information and brief history of the times. It was enjoyable to review and read this book. Ron, you should be congratulated on this wonderful book!"

Hakan Widar: "Thank you very much for the package which you sent to me with your interesting story, the music, and the *Accordion World* magazines. I find your book, ***Some Thoughts About The Accordion in San Francisco*** very interesting. It contained many valuable facts that I didn't know before. Of course, I knew much about the Deiro Brothers and Frosini, but I didn't know anything about the Pezzolo Brothers; they were just names for me until I read what you had written. I am so glad that finally something has been written about this period in the accordion's history. In Sweden, we call the music from this period 'The American-Italian Style.' It was the Swedish accordionist, Ragnar Sundquist, who popularized Frosini and the Deiro Brothers here in Sweden."

**** These comments were made by accordionists regarding the first edition of this book published in 1984.***



AN ACCORDION DUO PERFORMING ON-STAGE WITH THE PEZZOLO ACCORDION BAND AT PEZZOLO BROTHERS' PICNIC IN FAIRFAX PARK IN MARIN CO., CALIFORNIA IN 1937.

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PART II: GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION IN CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST

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SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE ACCORDION HISTORY OF CHICAGO

By Manny Quartucci

Editor's Note: I am indeed indebted to Manny Quartucci for his recollections about the early beginnings of the accordion in the "Windy City" of Chicago. A biography about this dynamic accordionist is presented in the article immediately following this historical account. Without this article, this book would lack the comprehensive scope I wanted. We are all indebted to him for researching Chicago's accordion history and organizing it into an interesting, informative story that covers a very rich historical period. Many persons have never known about Chicago's big contributions during the early days of the accordion, so it is quite important to emphasize that Chicago, along with New York and San Francisco, was one of three major cities around which the accordion industry grew during the early years of the accordion in the United States. So thank you, Manny, for your valuable help! Indeed, the people of Chicago also thank you as their historical roots are now made a matter of record for future generations to read.

.....

In the recollections to follow, I may stand corrected in some instances of name spellings and precise dates. So, if I am off by a slight margin, please forgive me as I am not an historian, and I did not maintain detailed notes or records over the years with the idea of writing about the history of the accordion in Chicago. However, I'm confident that the material I have gathered together accounts for most of the accordion's early beginnings here in my beloved hometown, Chicago.

Back in the early 1900's, the Piatanesi brothers [Colombo, Oristo (Demo), Bramante, and Finau] immigrated to America. It was in 1907 that Colombo settled in San Francisco and took over the Guerrini Accordion Company in partnership with a distinguished gentleman named Pasquale Petromilli. Colombo made the first piano accordion for Pietro Deiro — one that Pietro Deiro personally designed. Around 1927, Colombo started his own company, calling it Colombo & Son Accordion Co. It quickly became a "hallmark" accordion company on the West Coast, developing a superb reputation for building some of the finest instruments available. This company, still in business today and known as the Colombo & Sons Accordion Corporation, is operated by Colombo's grandson, Gordon Piatanesi.

Also in the early 1900's, the North American Accordion Company was founded here in Chicago on Blue Island Avenue. It was the first accordion company in Chicago and was owned by Finau Piatanesi and Alfredo Ciuccomei. It is very likely that some of the other Piatanesi brothers may have worked here before joining the Italo-American Accordion Company.

The Italo-American Accordion Company was founded sometime in 1914 or shortly thereafter. It is difficult to trace the exact founder(s) and founding date of this company because it was not started originally under this name. Actually, it was several years later that the name Italo-American was adopted at the suggestion of Pietro Frosini, who noted that the name would be quite descriptive since all the owners were from Italy and the company was in America. During the early years of the company, it was jointly owned and operated by several persons under various partnership agreements: Luigi Giulietti, Demo Piatanesi, Finau Piatanesi, Bramante Piatanesi, and Roberto Rocianni. Two other gentlemen named Cameranesi and Orlandoni (first names unknown) also worked with Luigi Giulietti during the early days of the company. Located at 51st and Kedgie, Italo-American quickly gained a national reputation for manufacturing the highest quality accordions. The company's reputation was enhanced when it crafted a special model accordion for Guido Deiro known as the Guido Deiro "Italotone." And, Guido Deiro remained faithful to the Italo-American name, playing it for most of his career.

After several years, two of the original partners of Italo-American decided to split with the other partners and form separate companies of their own. Luigi Giulietti left Chicago and went to New York where he founded a small accordion firm that grew into a premier accordion company: The Giulietti Accordion Company. Similarly, Finau Piatanesi started his own company on 1514 N. Milwaukee and called it the Piatanesi Accordion Company. In Chicago, Piatanesi and Italo-American became strong competitors, and this sometimes led to their share of family quarrels. Then, several years later, Alfredo and Aldo Morbidoni bought out Finau Piatanesi, but continued to manufacture accordions under the brand name Piatanesi. This new company only operated for a few years as it soon found that it could not





FINAU PIATANESI (Circa 1911) WITH A BEAUTIFUL EARLY MODEL ACCORDION.
(Photograph: Courtesy of Finau Piatanesi Estate)



ITALO-AMERICAN ACCORDION MFG. CO. PLANT IN CHICAGO

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ITALO-AMERICAN ACCORDION MFG. CO. PLANT IN CHICAGO

effectively compete with Italo-American. So gradually Piatanesi just faded out, and Alfredo opened a shop in Logan Square called the United Accordion Company. His brother, Aldo, became a traveling salesman importing accordions from the Morreshi brothers in Italy under the trade name, Diamond, which sold very well on the West Coast.

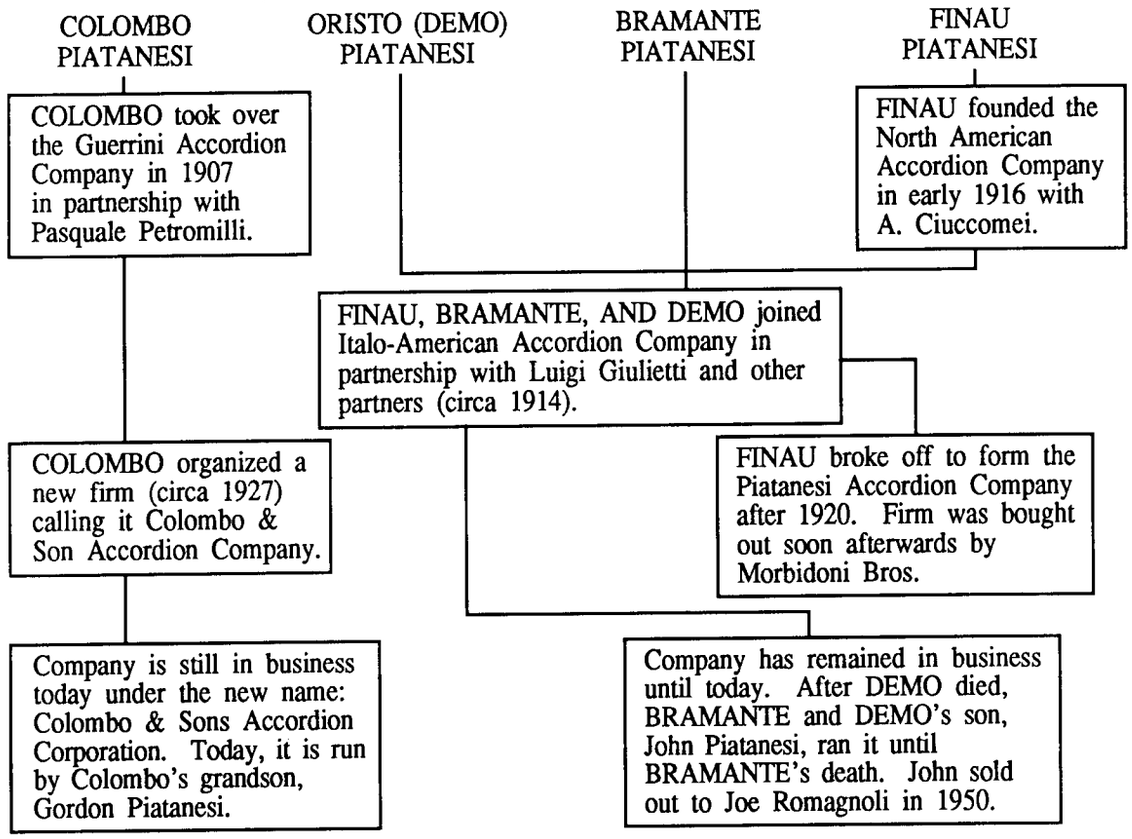
When Italo-American was in full bloom, the company had a staff of about 100 employees. John Piatanesi, the son of Demo, is a close friend of mine. As a young boy, he worked at the factory building bass sections. Later, he was even schooled in Italy in the art of tuning reeds. He became very proficient in all aspects of accordion building, and he was with the company until the late 1960's. The rapid growth of the accordion business in America is due largely to the great impact the Piatanesi brothers had on the industry, in both San Francisco and Chicago.

Figure 1 depicts the important influence that the Piatanesi brothers and others had on early accordion manufacturing for a period of many years.

In the vicinity of Chicago's west side, there was a very fine craftsman by the name of Variano, who worked independently out of his basement where he made accordions for the Klatt Music Company on South Port Avenue. Another craftsman working from his home in South Chicago was Tony Ruvoli. He built concertinas and accordions for the Patek Company on Milwaukee Avenue, and he also made parts for the Otto Glass Concertina Company.

Then, around 1950, three of Italo-American's employees, Carl Gaspesetti, Mike Malatesta, and Italo (Tony) Serbellini set out to start the Excel Accordion Company on Archer Avenue in Chicago. They made some accordions that were mediocre, so to speak, by the ordinary standards of comparison with other

Figure 1. Piatanesi Brothers, the Accordion Companies They Formed, and History of These Companies



Note: This chart was prepared from information contained in Manny Quartucci's notes and in letters from Gordon Piatanesi, Vicki Piatanesi Nichols, and Julio Giulietti.



ORISTO (DEMO) PIATANESI (Circa 1911). One of the original co-founders of the Italo-American Accordion Company. (Courtesy of John Piatanesi)

well-known brands like Italo-American in Chicago and Excelsior in New York. But suddenly, this newly formed company found itself in court due to a law suit filed by Excelsior, claiming and successfully proving in court that the name Excel was an infringement of its patented brandname: Excelsior. As a result, the Excel name had to be changed to Imperial, and the company was allowed to continue in business.

After only a few short years, Tony Serbellini decided to form his own accordion company, the Crown Accordion Company, in partnership with Geramia Georgietti, a meticulous craftsman, and Oswaldo Guerrini, the head reed man who was known for his exceptional tuning skills. Crown was one of the strongest competitors of Italo-American and Imperial here in Chicago. I must give a tremendous amount of credit to this company for their superb craftsmanship, and I must also emphasize that they always respected a person's ideas for improvements or modifications. The owners and craftsmen who worked for Crown always listened, cooperated, and adopted any proposed ideas, when practical or helpful to the artist.

Crown made the first free-bass accordion for Mario Moschino, and the model came to be known as the Moschino Model, which was later copied in Italy. They also once made a custom accordion for Vincent Geraci which had piano keys on the bass side. Vincent always liked to play that accordion as he could make his own chords and bass melody with the left hand almost effortlessly in a way that only few other persons had mastered. And, he played that accordion quite frequently until he passed away on February 28, 1989. That accordion was very well made. They also built me two accordions that I still have to this day. One is a super-structure two-reed, chamber



VINCENT GERACI. Renowned Chicago concert artist who studied with Frank Messina and Andy Rizzo. It was often said that "New York had Charlie Magnante, but Chicago had Vincent Geraci!"



ORISTO (DEMO) PIATANESI (Circa 1911). One of the original co-founders of the Italo-American Accordion Company. (Courtesy of John Piatanesi)

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VINCENT GERACI. Renowned Chicago concert artist who studied with Frank Messina and Andy Rizzo. It was often said that "New York had Charlie Magnante, but Chicago had Vincent Geraci!"

strolling accordion which I frequently use in society engagements, and the other is a custom 4/5-reed accordion that has an extended keyboard. Both of these instruments are great accordions, and I've always been pleased with their fast action and rich tone.

In the judgment of most artists during this period, the two most outstanding accordion companies in the Eastern half of the United States were Excelsior in New York and Italo-American in Chicago. These companies developed many great improvements that made the accordion easier to play. One such improvement was a "master switch" which was built first by Excelsior after the designs of Pietro Deiro, an Excelsior artist. Thereafter, other companies also began to incorporate the "master switch" as the various artists began to demand this feature from their accordion lines. This is a good example of how improvements came about in the early days and how inventions were incorporated quickly by the other major accordion manufacturers.

As accordion's popularity began to decline, Italo-American likewise struggled to survive. Demo Petromilli had some sort of difficulty which caused his premature death. Roberto Rocianni, who was with the company for a long time, returned to his native land. But, Bramante Piatanesi and his nephew, John Piatanesi, remained in business as long as possible as the accordion's popularity in this country continued its steep decline. Then, after Bramante's death, John ran the company for a short while; whereupon he sold out in 1950 to Joe Romagnoli, who is now running a one-man shop. Joe is indeed a super serviceman.

It is interesting to note that most of the early accordion manufacturers, artists, etc., were often connected or related in some way. For example, John Piatanesi is a brother-in-law to Emil Baldoni, a master accordion craftsman in New York City. Baldoni over the years has been connected to all of the accordion companies in New York City, including Ace, Bell, Excelsior, Pancordion, and Titano. Baldoni was in partnership with one of the Pancotti brothers at Pancordion. This was a fine accordion, and it was the same brand name that Myron Floren played on the Lawrence Welk Show for 25 years. Lawrence Welk also played a Pancordion. Emil Baldoni manufactured the Ace accordion for many years in partnership with Mr. Aldo Mencaccini. It, too, was a terrific accordion.

Some accordions marketed in Chicago during the early years were made in Italy and sold through dealers having a franchise. Some of these companies were the Don Noble & Company, Sonola Accordion Company, and Frontalini Accordion Company. These companies operated for many years and sold large numbers of fine accordions under the brand names listed below.

Don Noble & Co. Brand: **Noble**	Sonola Accordion Co. Brands: **Renelli** and **Sonola**
Frontalini Accordion Co. Brands: **Frontalini** and **Cortini**	Chicago Musical Instrument Co. Brands: **Dallape, Bell**, and **Scandalli**

There were also two other companies in Chicago which imported and serviced accordions in the 1930's: The Carbonari Brothers Accordion Company in Oak Park and the Del Principe Accordion Company operated by Frank and Otto at Wabash and Jackson.

Detroit and Milwaukee also had a few accordion companies which should be mentioned for historical completeness. In Detroit, there were four companies: General Accordion Company owned by Emilio Vergini and Cesare Orlandoni, Universal Accordion Company by Zupetti, International by Bernardi, and Pollina by Frank Pollina. In Milwaukee, the Karpek Accordion Manufacturing Company has been operated by the Karpek family at 820 S. 16th Street since 1915. Unfortunately, Karpek's owner George Karpek died in early 1989.

Most of the great accordion artists always played custom boxes which they had

helped design to their individual specifications and style of playing. Indeed, the accordion companies catered to these custom designs since it created additional business because others would then want a similar box built for themselves. For example, Italo-American made a custom box for Andy Rizzo with 140 bass and 43 piano keys (low E to high B). This accordion was made in the early 1930's, and Italo-American sold many of these accordions to Andy Rizzo's students over the years. One of the last custom boxes built by Italo-American for Andy Rizzo had a range from low E-flat to high C-sharp.



ANDREW (ANDY) W. RIZZO. Founder of famous Rizzo Conservatory of Music. Often referred to as the "Teacher of Teachers," he established a national reputation and trained many of America's leading accordionists.

One of the earliest accordion schools in Chicago was established by Leo Piersanti in the 1920's. His school met the highest standards of excellence. Students in the Piersanti School were offered instruction books in either English or Italian that Leo Piersanti had developed. He was well known for these method books. He was also an exclusive Excelsior dealer for the Chicago area.



LEO PIERSANTI. Established one of the earliest accordion schools in Chicago (Circa 1920). He published method books in both English and Italian, and his school met the highest standards of excellence.

Probably the largest accordion school in Chicago was run by Dave Biasco. At the peak of the accordion's popularity, he was employing 20 teachers and training over 1,100 students per week. His school was competing directly with Wurlitzer, which was also very big in the teaching world at the time. Wurlitzer believed in pushing its accordions. At that time their standard policy was to move a new student into a 120-bass accordion after completing only the 5th lesson. With this approach, Wurlitzer was literally selling accordions by the hundreds. This type of approach was never used by the Dave Biasco school.

Dave Biasco was a real tycoon at promoting the accordion, and he made a real name for himself and his school during this period in Chicago's history. He believed in having the very best teaching staff, so he would hire the most advanced students from the Andy Rizzo Conservatory of Music to teach in his studios. Some of his staff were Bud Kuehl, Mort Herold, Ben Ortigara, Sally Dern, and Manny

helped design to their individual specifications and style of playing. Indeed, the accordion companies catered to these custom designs since it created additional business because others would then want a similar box built for themselves. For example, Italo-American made a custom box for Andy Rizzo with 140 bass and 43 piano keys (low E to high B). This accordion was made in the early 1930's, and Italo-American sold many of these accordions to Andy Rizzo's students over the years. One of the last custom boxes built by Italo-American for Andy Rizzo had a range from low E-flat to high C-sharp.



ANDREW (ANDY) W. RIZZO. Founder of famous Rizzo Conservatory of Music. Often referred to as the "Teacher of Teachers," he established a national reputation and trained many of America's leading accordionists.

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Quartucci. In time, these teachers naturally branched out on their own. In my opinion Andy Rizzo never received the full credit that he deserved for all he did to advance the accordion. He was certainly one of Chicago's greatest accordion teachers, and his hard, dynamic work produced a great number of accordionists in his time.

In the 1950's, there was another fine accordion teacher here in Chicago by the name of Ben Matusek, and he ran a highly reputable school which had a strong following. Ben Matusek was a very sharp businessman — handsome and debonair. He even found time to dabble in politics. Then he decided to get into accordion manufacturing and founded the King Accordion Company. This company became nationally known for its model called the Matusek King, which was used by many famous artists, including Dick Contino. This model quickly became the rage throughout the Midwest. The company, located on 63rd Street in Chicago, had as its top craftsman a person by the name of Tony Ruvoli, who was also an artist in the trade. Tony is the only person I ever knew who actually used a micrometer to take measurements when building an accordion.

Ben Matusek kept his company in business for many years; but then, unfortunately, there was a large fire one night which burned down the entire King Accordion Company, putting them permanently out of business. Several years later, Ben Matusek passed away. He will always be remembered for his superior quality accordions, his fine school, and the many excellent students he taught.

Finally, I would like to include a list of some of the many accordion artists who have lived and played in Chicago, and who have gained recognition through radio, T.V., and other public appearances. Further, I wish to dedicate this concise history in memory of my long-time friend, Vincent Geraci, who passed away this year [1989] at the age of 69, and also to many of my other close accordion friends who, during recent years, have passed on to their eternal reward.



ENRICO MASTRO-NARDI. A student of Andy Rizzo and long-time teacher in the Chicago area. Known as the "Accordion Crusader," he has organized letter-writing campaigns to many newspapers in defense of the accordion.

Chicago Area Artists

Camarata, Don Orlando (Father & Son), Santo & Nick Santucci (Father & Son), Andy Rizzo (Father & Son), Dialmo Toniazzo, Leo Piersanti, Vincent Geraci, Charles Geraci, Larry Gunty, and Manny Quartucci.

Theater, Radio, Movie, and T.V. Stars from Chicago Area:

Don Orlando .....Radio and TV
C. Montagnia .....Radio Star
Remo Tondelli .....Radio Star
Frank Papile .....N.B.C. Radio
Augie Klein .....W.L.S. Radio
Sam Porferio .....W.G.N. Radio
Art Van Damme .....N.B.C. Radio
Lino Frigo .....W.L.S. Radio
Leon Sash .....W.L.S. Radio
Larry Gunty .....W.L.S. Radio
Frank Messina .....Radio, T.V., and Movies
Andy Rizzo .....Society Bands & Theater

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Frank Messina .....Radio, T.V., and Movies
Andy Rizzo .....Society Bands & Theater

Jazz Artists from the Chicago Area:

Remo Tondelli, Sam Incopero, Gerry Cigler, Art Van Damme, Don Orlando, Don Komarski, Leon Sash, Alice Hall, Tommy Gumina, Joe Vita, and Al Monti

Concert Artists from the Chicago Area:

Art Metzler, Mort Herold, Vincent Geraci, Frank Messina, Art Van Damme, Leon Sash, Bud Kuehl, Irving Kager, Tommy Gumina, Joe Vita, Mario Moshino, and Enrico Mastro-Nardi

Historic Chicago Accordion Schools (Partial List):

Andy Rizzo Conservatory of Music
Anna Romagnoli Accordion School
Frank Bartoli Accordion School
Dave Biasco Accordion Center
Mort Herold School of Music
John Krachtus School of Music
Leo Piersanti Accordion School
Santo & Nick Santucci Music School
Chicago Music School - Larry Gunty
Matusek Accordion Academy
Al Monti Academy of Music
Warput Accordion School
Wolkenes Accordion School
Wurlitzer Music School
Zordan Accordion School
Mamoth Accordion School
Ray Wilkins Music School
And many others .....

Other Local Accordion Performers:

Charles Radosta, Tony Dialmo, John Amedio, Mike Partipillo, John Slogar, Joe Petrocelli, Frank Rex, Eddie Baldacci, Joe Warput, Herman Troppe, Max Stelter, and Carsello Brothers



FRANK PAPILI. A popular radio performer and staff accordionist in Chicago's N.B.C. studio. He performed in popular hotels, on radio breakfast clubs, and with the Abe Lymon Orchestra.



LARRY GUNTY. A student of Andy Rizzo and a popular radio and recording artist. He starred on the W.L.S. National Barn Dance and was a music teacher for Wurlitzer Accordion Co.

[The final copy of this history has been reviewed for accuracy by Manny Quartucci, and it is printed with his kind permission and cooperation.]

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MANNY QUARTUCCI

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MANNY QUARTUCCI

By Edwin Davison

Manny Quartucci was born in Michigan City, Indiana on April 17, 1921. Most of the Quartucci family initially settled in this town. His first generation grandfather on his mother's side owned a shoe repair shop and had a big beautiful garden where he grew vegetables of every variety for the family. But, of course, it was impossible for his grandfather, being a good Italian, to use this spacious piece of land only as a vegetable plot. Manny distinctly recalls that his grandfather took great pride in this garden, and that he had taken great care in planning its layout so that there would be plenty of room for both his vegetables and his grapes — grapes for his VINO which everyone enjoyed when they came to visit.

During Manny's first several years of life, work was quite scarce, and his father decided that opportunities might be better in Chicago. So, at age 4 the family moved to Chicago where he grew up into adulthood. During his childhood, Manny was always fascinated by the sound and tone of the harmonica. Then, as fate would have it, he happened to hear a neighbor who was taking music lessons play the accordion, and it gave him a bigger thrill than a simple harmonica. It made such an impression on him that he told his father that some day when they could afford it, he would love to learn the accordion. But, it was not until Manny's 11th birthday that his father decided that the time was right. Telling Manny his decision, his father said, "It's O.K. for you to learn the accordion, but you must start — as they do in Italy — by Solfeggio *[the Solfa system of note reading and ear training]* and work on all the rudiments of music." Of course, Manny willingly agreed as he would now soon be able to realize his greatest childhood dream.

Finding a teacher was the first and most important task. In their own local community, his father found a very fine teacher Mr. Adam Romano, who was a "master" of the violin. Several other students were enrolled under Mr. Romano, including Vincent Geraci, who went on to become a virtuoso accordionist. Both Manny and Vincent (Manny always called him Vince) became lifelong friends, and their paths crossed again and again throughout their professional careers.

After about a year of study using Solfeggio, he was ready for his first accordion and an accordion teacher. His first accordion was a 120-bass Cellini having a single shift. It was a beat-up, used accordion costing only $75. But, his dad said, "If you prove to me you will learn, I'll buy you a custom made Italo-American in 2 years." And, in 2 years, Manny had learned so well that his dad cashed in an insurance policy and ordered a custom-made, Majestic-model Italo-American listing for $650. Then, after some negotiating on the price, his dad purchased the spanking brand-new instrument for only $450.

In 1933 Manny was enrolled with Frank Messina, who was a prodigy of Andy Rizzo. But after only a short while, he decided that he would rather continue his studies under Andy Rizzo at the famous Conservatory of Music since Andy Rizzo had an ensemble and a special program where his most promising students were allowed to work alongside the regular musicians in the ensemble. Actually, both teachers employed basically the same teaching methods of employing piano material basics.

Manny Quartucci learned quickly under Andy Rizzo. Lessons were enjoyable and productive, and each half-hour lesson cost $2 in 1933. That was quite expensive at that time — so expensive, in fact, that if Manny thought his lesson wasn't passable, he would call in sick as he couldn't afford to review a lesson. Recalling his early experiences with Andy Rizzo, Manny states, "Andy had the most bubbling personality of anyone that I have ever known, plus he had a great sense of humor. To know him was to love him."

In 1936 the "Andy Rizzo Accordion Ensemble" held a concert with the "Bjornson

Male Chorus" at the Masonic Temple in Logan Square in Chicago. As was the custom with Andy Rizzo, he would feature students as soloists throughout the program. So at the age of 15, Manny Quartucci stepped on stage, confident of his talent and preparation for this momentous occasion. He played "El-Cielo" by Rizzo and the ever-popular piano version of "Nola." At this age also, Manny was playing in the various Chicago pubs as well as with older Italian musicians who played at weddings, graduations, etc. Concerning these early background engagements, he reflected on their lasting influence on him, stating: "Perhaps, that is why I still enjoy playing the waltzes and mazurkas."

Vincent Geraci, on the other hand, continued on with Frank Messina for all of his early training. Manny introduced Vincent Geraci to Andy Rizzo about 2 1/2 years before Vincent gave his first concert at Kimball Hall. Then, for a period of about 2 years, Vincent studied with Andy Rizzo, who supervised and coached him in the difficult preparation for his first concert program. And then just 2 years later, under the continued superb coaching of Andy Rizzo, Vincent gave his second concert at the Eighth Street Theater.

Since Vincent Geraci and Manny Quartucci both studied with Andy Rizzo, they came to know each other in a very special way that is reserved for friendship that grows out of similar backgrounds and life experiences. Speaking of his lifelong friend, Vince Geraci, Manny said admiringly, "I grew up with this genius. I knew him well in all his roles as a composer, conductor, concert artist, and teacher. That's why I say without hesitation that he became one of the greatest accordionists in the world. New York had its Charlie Magnante, but Chicago had Vincent Geraci! I'm so proud to have had the privilege of studying and working with this great accordion artist."

By 1938 at age 17, Manny Quartucci had gained the necessary work experience and independence to launch out in an important transition stage of his life. At this time, he was approached by a fine "sax" man named Johnny Stevens and asked to join his group for a job in Peoria. This job was the beginning of his road work which in reality became one of his greatest teachers — both in music and lifestyle. Like so many other great musicians, he enjoyed his work and the cities that it took him. With this particular group he went all the way to San Diego, California where they played at the well-known "Pirates Cave" for 6 weeks. However, at the end of this engagement, he decided that this life style was not for him as a regular style of living. The other members of the group remained in California, but he decided to return to his hometown of Chicago to make it his permanent home. Of this decision he explained, "I guess I had my fill of that kind of living." From his base in Chicago, he went with the "Pietro De' Leon's Latin-American Orchestra" where they were booked at the famed Cadillac Hotel in Detroit and the Schroeder Hotel in Milwaukee.

Then came the War! In 1942 Manny Quartucci was drafted into the Army-Air Corps. However, after completing his basic training for a total of about 6 months, he became eligible for discharge, and was allowed to return to his musical career that had only been temporarily disrupted. This was indeed fortunate as he returned immediately to his music, taking jobs with various musicians and booking agents. In 1944 at the age of 22, he decided to take another important step — marriage. He had met a lovely lady named Vivian, who had so captured his attention that he had to put everything else aside while he tied the knot to his beautiful wife. They have been blessed with two healthy, beautiful daughters: Charleen and Bonita-Lyn.

Around 1947, Andy Rizzo had formed the "Rizzo Quartet," of which Manny Quartucci was a member. Other members were Joe Ranzini, Sally Dern, and Marion Johnson. The "Rizzo Quartet" gained considerable notoriety as it traveled about the country. This was due partly to Andy Rizzo's personal efforts to advance the accordion's role, but it was also

more importantly due to the individual and collective efforts of each member of the quartet. To make this group a success took considerable work, both in the selection of music, arrangements, and superb performances. This group was very successful as it had programs of classic music with arrangements by Bud Kuehl, Art Metzler, and Sal Stacco. The "Rizzo Quartet" traveled throughout the Mid-Eastern states for a total of 6 weeks arranged by Estelle Lutz, courtesy of the Collins Booking Agent of Rochester, New York. Wherever the "Rizzo Quartet" appeared, the audience was simply overwhelmed by the sound, performance, and variety of the group. Built into each performance was the highest caliber of musical rendition, both as a group as well as solo arrangements featuring each member of the quartet.

Manny Quartucci has been truly successful in his musical career. He has even performed for a short period on CBS with the "Caesar Petrillo Orchestra" under the direction of Frank Black. In and around Chicago, his home town, he managed his ever-popular "Rhythm Dean Trio" from 1945 to 1948. With this trio, he entertained at many of the swank supper clubs throughout the metropolitan area. In addition to his work with the "Rhythm Dean Trio," he also performed numerous solo engagements and other appearances from 1948 onward. A few of these engagements are highlighted below:

1948 - 1953. Played solo at the Magic Lounge in Chicago.

1950 - Played with the "Jerry Mayhal Orchestra" for the Ice Capades 1950 at the stadium in Chicago, featuring Ukranian Russian music for the ballet on ice.

1953 - 1958. Performed with the "Paul Liebeziet Orchestra" at the Old Heidelberg Restaurant in Chicago.

1958 - 1963. Booked at Armandos Restaurant in Chicago.

1963 - 1968. Booked at La Casa Restaurant in Franklin Park.

1968 - 1970. Monestero's Italian Restaurant in Chicago.

He also performed many other engagements as soloist and as an accompanist for vocal artists in the local Chicago area. He is still very much in demand to play the various society functions for local booking agencies.

At present, Manny is 68 years young, and still loves to play his accordion. Although in semi-retirement, he has no problem working four nights a week at restaurants such as the fabulous Scoozie Italian Restaurant in Chicago. He is also currently serving as the Vice President of the Chicago Accordion Club, which was founded by Joe Slaby in July 1988. Since Manny Quartucci lived practically all of his life and professional career in the Chicago area, he is one of the foremost authorities about the historical development of the accordion in this important city. We are indeed fortunate to have his reflections concerning the history of the accordion in the Chicago area.

[The early history of the accordion in Chicago and biographical sketch was obtained through the efforts of Eddie Chavez, who has corresponded with Manny Quartucci for years. In one of his letters to Mr. Quartucci, Eddie asked Manny if he could possibly find time to compile Chicago's accordion history and submit it for our book. To Eddie's surprise, Manny agreed! Thank you, Manny, for your hard work and hours of research. This biographical sketch has been personally reviewed for accuracy by Manny Quartucci. The article and professional photograph are printed with his kind permission and cooperation. Any correspondence may be addressed to Manny Quartucci at his home address: 4119 W. 59th St., Chicago, IL 60629.]

THE FANTASTIC ART OF ART VAN DAMME

By Ron Flynn

Editor's Note: For well over half a century, Art Van Damme has made significant contributions to the advancement of the accordion. His achievements as a jazz artist are innumerable. From the beginning of his career in Chicago, he worked hard and achieved one success after another. He is truly one of the most celebrated and recognized jazz musicians residing in the United States today; indeed, he's often called the leading jazz musician of this century. Not only has he made a permanent mark on the American scene, but he has also earned the genuine admiration and following of a vast European audience through his artistic performances overseas and through the number of albums he made of his European tours. Lastly, he was recently recognized by a major accordion manufacturer in Castelfidardo, Italy where he was presented the "Golden Reed Award" for his outstanding achievements as a professional accordion artist — a highly coveted and prestigious award.

.....

From soloist to trio, trio to quartet, and quartet to quintet. That's the path taken by Arthur (Art) Van Damme, famed jazz accordionist, whose quintet was a fixture at NBC Chicago for 15 years. Art was born in Norway, Michigan on April 9, 1920. He got his first accordion when he was 9 years old, and then at only 10 years of age, he got his first job as an accordionist in his hometown theater. From this early beginning, his love for the accordion continued to grow, and other opportunities followed which opened up two trips to California doing concerts for the Santa Fe Railroad Company.

At age 14 his family moved to Chicago, but it wasn't until four years later that he turned from classical study and became interested in swing for which he is so well known. Today he looks back and realizes the value of those early classical studies. Indeed, in a book published in 1956 by the Excelsior Company about his professional career, Art gave this important advice to aspiring young musicians:

> ***There is one important thing for the beginner to remember: That is, to get the best classical background possible. You will find that almost all top jazz men, no matter what instrument they play, are well grounded in the classics.***

His first trio consisted of accordion, bass, and guitar; this trio played Chicago night spots for about 3 years. Then, that big break occurred, and Art joined the "Ben Bernie Band" for a theatrical tour that lasted 2 months. After this tour, Art worked the Chicago Theater as a single. His next trio consisted of accordion, vibes, and bass. With this group, Art worked many supper clubs in the Chicago area, after which he began a tour that covered the Midwest during the next 3 years. Then in 1944, Art decided to add drums to the group for an engagement at the Sherman Hotel in Chicago. After 6 months at the hotel, Art got a contract with the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) for radio shows and later, a number of the big TV shows. In 1945, guitar was added to his group to form that famous quintet sound which became so popular and characteristic of the Art Van Damme sound.

In the 15 years at NBC, besides doing their own shows, the group worked with many top entertainers, such as, "The Howard Miller Show," "The Dave Garroway Show," "Coffee And" with Hugh Downs, "The Ransom Sherman Show," "The Bob and Ray Show," and "Monitor Club 60" with Dennis James. The quintet also did many solo spots for top singers and instrumentalists, such as, Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Dizzy Gillespie, and Buddy DeFranco.

So popular was Art Van Damme and his quintet that he was sought out for many record contracts: Capitol (1945-52), Columbia (1952-65), and MPS Records of West Germany (since 1962). From 1945 to present, the quintet has recorded over 40 albums plus many singles. Included are albums and singles with



Art Van Damme

Jo Stafford, Fran Warren, Johnny Smith, and Joe Pass. Albums from Germany included not only those with quintet arrangements, but others with brass, strings, flutes, and one with Singers Unlimited. In all, 15 albums have been recorded with MPS and some are available in the U.S. through EMI. Included is an album with the quintet featuring Joe Pass on guitar, released by PAUSA Records, and another album done direct-to-disc plus a new digital, released by Sonic Arts. Three new albums were done during a recent tour of Europe, England, Sweden, and Finland. During the European tour, several guest spots were done on radio and TV as well as concerts.

Art Van Damme has won many top awards throughout his long and remarkable career. Besides having his group in the "top ten" instrumental category for many years in *Billboard*, *Metronome*, and *Playboy* polls, Art Van Damme was voted the top jazz accordionist in the *Down Beat* poll for 10 consecutive years. He was also voted the top jazz accordionist in *Contemporary Keyboard* magazine from 1976 to 1980. The quintet made more transcriptions than any other small group, including 139 individual 15-minute shows for RCA Thesaurus. The group has also done many commercial spots. The 5-year dominance of the *Contemporary Keyboard* poll has indeed put Art in the "Gallery of Greats."

After leaving NBC in 1960, Art opened a music studio in suburban Chicago. The quintet also made guest appearances on the following shows: "The Tonight Show," with Johnny Carson, "The Today Show," "The Mike Douglas Show" (Mike worked with the group as a singer for 5 years at NBC), "The Lawrence Welk Show" and several other local shows. Nightclub work since 1960 has included the Desert Inn, Las Vegas; the Sahara Tahoe; the Bonaventure Hotel, Montreal; the Bayshore Hotel, Vancouver; Lenny's on the Turnpike, Boston; the Theatrical Restaurant, Cleveland; Disney World in Florida, and various U.S. jazz clubs. Between his nightclub appearances, he has conducted regular European tours.

Today, Art Van Damme is still carrying an unbelievably heavy tour schedule which demonstrates that the popularity of the accordion is indeed not dead. In a recent personal letter to Eddie Chavez, he cites the frenzy of his current schedule:

"Hello Eddie, 8/12/88

"Trying to catch up on my mail and just re-read your letter of June 26. Sorry for the delay but I've been very busy and just can't at times keep up with the personal mail.... I just finished a 16-day tour in Sweden with Quintet on the Tivoli cassette and had a good time. I'm just back from doing a concert in New York for the American Accordion Association's 50th Jubilee. They had a concert in memory of Charles Magnante. Other players were: Joe Biviano, Carmen Carrozza, Tony Dannon, etc.

"The people at Castelfidardo are having their 125th Anniversary for the making of the accordions, and I will appear there and do a couple of concerts in October. And, they also are giving me what they call the 'Golden Reed Award.' I will also be doing the jazz festival in Berlin, Germany in November. So, it has been a full year, and I guess that semi-retirement is on hold."

From this letter, it is apparent that the accordion is indeed alive and well when played by professionals such as Art Van Damme. Always interested in aspiring young accordionists, Art included this bit of sage advice to them in the previously cited book published by the Excelsior Company in 1956:

"Tomorrow, there will be opportunities galore for the trained accordionist. He will have opportunities to work as a single, in practically any type of small combo, concert orchestra, or jazz band. Radio and television have educated the public in what to expect from the accordion. So, I'm not going out too far on a limb when I say the young accordionist of today has much to look forward to."

Art Van Damme moved to Scottsdale, Arizona in 1986. He and his lovely wife, Dorothy, have been blessed with three children and six grandchildren. He is quite active in all kinds of sports and particularly enjoys golf in his spare time.

[This biographical sketch was obtained through the efforts of Mr. Eddie Chavez after months of research and direct correspondence with Art Van Damme. The personal notes of Art Van Damme have been slightly revised and adapted for this book. This article has been personally reviewed for accuracy by Art Van Damme. The article and photographs are printed with his kind permission. Art Van Damme may be contacted at his Arizona address: 1129 N. 87th St., Scottsdale AZ 85257.]







ART VAN DAMME IN CONCERT

Top Photos taken in Gothenburg, Sweden (July 1991)

Lower Photo taken in Vancouver, Canada (May 1988)

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ART VAN DAMME IN CONCERT

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Lower Photo taken in Vancouver, Canada (May 1988)

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO THE REMARKABLE LEON SASH

By Ron Flynn

Editor's Note: No book about the history of the accordion, whether of a local area such as Chicago, or the entire USA, or the whole world, would be totally complete without a special tribute to this "Giant" of jazz. All of the jazz fans from around the world recognize and appreciate the tremendous impact Leon Sash made during his life as he promoted the role of the accordion as a viable instrument for his beloved music — Jazz. His special interpretation, his flawless technique, and his sensational quartet arrangements of accordion sound became his trademark. Leon Sash shall long be remembered by friends and jazz lovers all over the world.

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A child prodigy, Leon Sash had a God-given natural talent for music that became recognized when he was 12 years old. It was at this same age that he lost his sight due to a glaucoma condition that had caused him pain during his early life. When he was 12, his Uncle Charlie gave him a chromatic accordion, and even without one lesson, he astounded everyone by playing the same tune that a neighbor upstairs was playing. This natural talent was built upon and cultivated as he later studied with Lou Klatt and Andy Rizzo. He also spent considerable time with Mac Gerrard working on musical theory. He was so determined to be the very best that he would practice until the wee hours of the morning, covering the accordion with a blanket in order not to disturb those who were sleeping.

Jazz fans in Chicago, America, and the world mourned the untimely passing of Leon Sash on November 25, 1979. In the eyes of many people, he was considered the finest jazz accordionist ever to play the instrument, and the illustrious career of the blind virtuoso spanned almost four decades of international fame and recognition in almost every facet of the music business. His accomplishments included composing, arranging, staff musician at WLS radio in Chicago, TV guest appearances, concerts, and club dates in some of the top jazz rooms in the country, plus the well-deserved honor of being the first accordionist requested to participate in the Newport Jazz Festival. In the *International Musician*, Leonard Feather named him one of the "Giants of Jazz." Other renowned jazz critics called him gifted, fantastic, even the president of the button-bellows society.

Because of his prodigious technique in both single note and interlocking block-chord improvisation and phenomenal bellow's control, Sash continuously succeeded to prove the accordion to be a viable jazz instrument with a swinging, driving style that could not be denied. His talents were not limited to the accordion, for he entered the night club scene playing vibes and guitar and was fond of and studied violin.

Throughout his life, Leon Sash had no qualms about sharing his enthusiasm for jazz, and he devoted considerable effort toward working with not only accordionists but other musicians who had the desire to achieve the expertise they so admired in his playing. He affectionately referred to them as his "guys," and when asked why he spent so many hours showing others his special and distinctive techniques, he replied, "When I'm gone, a part of me will always live on." One can readily hear his influence in many of today's fine musicians, especially accordionists.

During his career, Leon recorded for EmArcy, Verve, Storyville, Columbia, and Delmark. His jazz quartet featured impeccable ensemble work with reed man Ted Robinson and included Leon's wife, Lee Morgan, who played excellent bass and did the vocals, and at various times featured drummers Harry Hawthorne, Roger (Price) Wanderscheid, the late Dick Gill, and Dom Jaconetty. Sometimes Lennie Druss and Frank LaMarca took Robinson's place on reeds. The quartet shared billings with jazz greats Zoot Sims, Mulligan, Shearing, Garner, and Brubeck at top jazz clubs such as Storyville in Boston, the Cafe Bohemia in New York, and Chicago's famous Blue Note. Also included were some memorable radio spots on the Mutual



LEON SASH

Network show "Bandstand U.S.A." They appeared on frequent remotes from the Blue Note for U.S. Treasury Tapes. Frank Holzfeind, much-loved impresario of the Blue Note, was so taken by the big swinging "Sash Quartet" sound that he held them over for more than eight weeks at a flattering raise in pay! These appearances not only gained them more recognition but established the accordionist's rightful place in jazz. George Shearing, a former accordionist himself, was so impressed with Leon's ability that he was quoted in *Down Beat* magazine as saying, "In jazz he's the best. When I heard him play, I decided to give up the accordion!"

The "Leon Sash Quartet" appearance at the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival was recorded on Verve, and they were back-to-back on an LP with Toshiko which was regarded by *Down Beat* magazine as one of the best of that festival. This magazine gave Sash's first record for EmArcy with Lee Morgan and the Meadowlarks vocal group, "Leon The Lion" and "Package for Peggy," a five-star rating! Rave notices came from everywhere, even as far away as Sweden!

Leon Sash was the first person to introduce the Bassetti accordion using a completely different all-single-note left hand system which he mastered it in just three months and used in a performance at Chicago's Orchestra Hall playing Bach's "Prelude and Fugue in C Minor" to the amazement of all! He sang and played every kind of music as a staff musician at radio station WLS in Chicago with Lee Morgan and the "Midwesterners while using the pseudonym Dusty Sands. There, as with the "Cosmopolitans," Leon's hand-in-glove work with jazz violin great Ed Vana was a joy to hear. Dave Pitts, a fine guitarist, and the very perceptive drummer Harry Hawthorne were members of the quintet which also did group vocals. They had the honor of being invited by President Carter to play one of the Inaugural Balls and performed before 20,000 people at the National Visitors' Center in Washington, D.C.

In the sixties, Gerry Cigler and Jerry Brown joined Leon and Lee in a big band sound using three uniquely voiced accordions, two of which had larger reeds. The bass accordion played by Brown was comparable to a trombone section, and Cigler's tenor accordion was voiced like a reed section. And, Leon's charts were the brass section, with Lee singing the top trumpet part while playing her usual solid bass line along with swinging drummer Jim Gianas. Leon and Lee wrote the unusual arrangements, and this original and exciting sound was fortunately recorded. His folios, volumes 1 and 2 of SASH'N'JAZZ and ROCKIN' BLUES, published by O. Pagani Music in New York City have been sought after by many musicians because of the written jazz improvisation and proper accents as played by Leon — truly a great help in seeing how jazz should be played.

In later years, Leon and Lee and the very capable Ed Uhlig on drums were the nucleus of the Leon Sash Orchestra, and they played concerts, clubs, and private engagements primarily in the Chicago area using some of Chicago's finest musicians. *[Following Leon's death, Lee Morgan continued this endeavor with one of Leon's proteges, Bob Gray, on accordion.]* The many recording releases of the unique Sash sound have been enjoyed by everyone. A sensational talent such as his is a treasure too rare to be kept hidden and should be treated as an important part of America's musical heritage.

Leon Sash's attributes and exceptional qualities extended beyond the musical realm. Those close to him considered this man a special person . . . thoughtful, honest, fun-loving, a perfectionist, ever-conscious of his appearance, sentimental and caring about his friends. He was always ready to attempt what some might think impossible, so much so that many people didn't realize he was blind and wondered why he didn't wipe his foggy glasses, not realizing they had frosted lenses. He was the first to turn on the lights, tell you how good you looked, or compliment your attire. And, he never failed to look your way when you or he spoke. His hand was always intuitively there for a handshake.

As a youngster, he was named Boy Scout of the Year. With some prearranged signals from a friend, he drove a car down Chicago's

Lake Shore Drive after work, took over the controls of a friends' plane to get the feel of it, and had everyone convinced that he could tell the denomination of paper money by the smell and feel of it. He was written up in the papers when he almost bowled a 300 game, water skied around Paddock Lake, Wisconsin on his first try, piloted a friend's boat, swam in Lake Michigan, and could direct you around Chicago better than most sighted people.

Friends were of utmost importance to both Leon and Lee, and they have fond memories of eventful gatherings at Lake Lawn Lodge, a favorite vacation spot near Delavan, Wisconsin. Leon enjoyed visiting with friends, listening to records, and many an evening was spent at a jazz club or going to hear his friend Dick Kress' big band and having a cool "taste" with the guys, talking about music, and having another "taste" with the guys.

It is no wonder that here or abroad, for those who know jazz, play it, or just appreciate it, the name "Leon" is enough to bring instant recognition of this man. He was indeed a "Giant of Jazz" and a giant of a person! Leon Sash will be remembered along with many others who dedicated their lives to keeping the great American heritage of jazz alive throughout the world. In various memorial tributes to him, many friends and associates stated: "Anything you write about him is true, because he had done it all!"

Today, Leon's wife, Lee, receives many requests for Leon's music, and she is continuing to make his recordings available to jazz lovers all over the world. Two LPs are still available: "I Remember Newport" and "Leon Sash — The Master." Also, a new collector's edition, "The Leon Sash Quintet Plays Big Band Jazz," was released on cassette in October 1990. This new release would not be available today were it not for the efforts of Lee, who took the only existing tapes of the Leon Sash Quintet (from the '60s) and had them digitally re-mastered. It's an unforgettable collector's edition featuring a powerful, exciting, big band sound with Leon playing his chromatic accordion, Gerry Cigler playing a tenor accordion, Jerry Brown on bass accordion, and Lee vocalizing the high trumpet parts. All of the arrangements were written by Leon and Lee, and include beautiful ballads and vocals by Lee Morgan Sash. Leon introduces most of the numbers, giving the cassette a very personal touch! Though extremely busy, Lee promises to produce recordings of other Leon Sash groups in the near future.



[This information originally appeared as a tribute included with the record "Leon Sash — The Master" shortly after Leon's death. The original tribute has been slightly revised and adapted for this book, and the revised version has been personally reviewed for accuracy by Leon's darling wife, Lee; and it is reprinted here with her kind permission. For information about Leon Sash recordings, write to Sounds of Sash, P.O. Box 1623, Skokie, IL 60076 or 5008 Farwell Ave., Skokie, IL 60077.]

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ALICE HALL

ALICE HALL — THE QUEEN OF ACCORDION JAZZ

By Jim Mihelic and Edwin Davison

***Editor's Note:** It is indeed a privilege to include the life story and professional accomplishments of Alice Hall in these reflections about the history of the accordion. Not only is Alice Hall a superb accordion jazz performer in the truest meaning of the word, but she is a legend in our time. Everyone who has heard her on record or has attended her performances in person has been amazed by the unique, beautiful, and appealing "Hall" sound. Alice has booked numerous engagements in a variety of swank clubs from coast to coast throughout her career. During these grand performances, she never failed to capture the hearts of the accordion lovers and jazz enthusiasts in San Francisco, Chicago, and other major cities throughout the United States.*

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Alice Laquiere Hall was born in Brussels, Belgium. A few years after her birth, her family immigrated to the United States, settling in the Detroit area. There in Detroit, she got most of her schooling and early music training, the latter mostly at the hands of her father. All of her family were avid musicians, and this created within her a love for music and the desire to be a performer.

When Alice was five years old, her father Remi started her out on the drums, and she adapted to the drums very quickly, becoming an exceptionally good drummer. But then, when she was eleven, she switched to the chromatic accordion and discovered a special love for the accordion. She learned quickly with the help of her father and a friend Richard De Loof, her instructor. Not too many years later, her accordion talents led to a Detroit radio station where she performed on a regular basis for over a year.

At 14, she was playing with local kid groups in and around Detroit and neighboring Canadian towns. Although her first group was a quartet, consisting of accordion, organ, tenor sax, clarinet and drums, Alice later streamlined the group into a trio (accordion, bass, and drums) which she called the "Alice Hall Trio." She got her big break during World War II when there was a shortage of male musicians. She brought her own group to Chicago late in 1943 and shortly thereafter opened at the newly built Town Casino. With her on her first job were her sister Rae on drums; a tenorman, Arnold Santi, who later married Rae; and a bassman named Bill Kanales.

Following the engagement at the Town Casino, the world was wide open to the "Alice Hall Trio." Her Trio was booked in clubs from East Coast to West Coast. Moving a long way from her first engagements during those early teenage years, she began to expand her horizons by accepting major bookings at a variety of clubs from coast to coast. Although the trio concept remained dominant throughout her career, Alice Hall also performed as a quartet, adding a second accordionist to enlarge the dimensions of the "Hall" sound. Alice would play the "take-off" while the second accordionist provided the background.

Alice was a "wizard" of the chromatic accordion whose keyboard was the same style that Pietro Frosini himself had used throughout his professional career. Speaking of the chromatic accordion with its complex arrangement of keys, row upon row, Alice had this to say in an early published interview: "I play it instead of the piano accordion because my father played it, and he insisted I learn the same system. It took me eight years to learn the keyboard well enough to get around in passable fashion. With all its difficulties, it has a lot of advantages. The keyboard is arranged so that it is possible to reach two whole octaves."

Her style has been described as a type of "Bop" by those who feel compelled to classify or categorize her music. Those of us who have been lucky enough to hear her trio or quartet renditions are amazed at her power, dexterity, and style. Indeed, she added a lot

of showmanship (or womanship) to all her engagements. The audience saw a beautiful, pert-looking blond who seemed to get a hell of a kick out of what she was doing. While she had finger-busting routines, she also had in her repertoire many moderate tempoed songs which were beautifully arranged and artistically performed. And Alice could sing "scat" without missing a single note when she played — something few other accordionists have even attempted.

Over the years, Alice has built a large following of devoted fans. Accolades for her playing have come from the likes of Duke Ellington, Billy May, and Louis Armstrong. Alice believes that one of the finest compliments she ever received came from Louis Armstrong, the great creative trumpet player. After listening to her during a recording date, he said, "Nobody teaches you to play that kind of music. You gotta feel it."

Back in the 1940's, Alice had a hit record on the purple Capitol label, playing "Caravan" and "Pennies from Heaven." When I heard that record, I knew this lady was special. Although she enjoyed a 1-year contract with Capitol records, she never got the long recording contracts that she deserved. Alice had a beautiful technique on both hands and a style that was all her own.

Alice Hall now lives in semi-retirement in Van Nuys, California, and she still plays for an occasional private party. She now spends much of her time helping Friends of the Accordion (FOTA), an accordion association, where she has held several important positions, including her current position as the Secretary-Treasurer.

Alice will always have a special place in the Jazz field and will forever stir the hearts of her many friends and fans as they listen to her Jazz — the way Alice sings and plays it.



ALICE HALL



THE ALICE HALL TRIO

[Note: The original article written by Jim Mihelic has been updated and adapted for this book by Edwin Davison. This updated version has been reviewed for accuracy by Alice Hall and included, along with a photograph, with the joint permission of Ms. Hall and Mr. Jim Mihelic, Editor of The Accordionist newsletter. Alice Hall may be contacted at her California address: 15210 Sherman Way - Apt 50, Van Nuys, CA 91405]

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ALICE HALL



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MORT HEROLD — RENOWNED CHICAGO ACCORDION VIRTUOSO

By Eddie Chavez

Editor's Note: I am very happy to include Mort Herold in this book. He has made significant accomplishments in a variety of roles. He has been successful not only in the field of accordion but also in the other areas of interest that he has pursued. He possesses an unusual reservoir of energy and talent, and he has utilized them well in mastering these complex subjects, for which he has gained a national reputation. In addition to being a concert artist and college professor of accordion, he has amazed the world with his versatility by venturing into the field of memory improvement and applying the techniques he developed. He is extremely busy and is in demand all over the United States as a seminar speaker and business consultant in his well-established business of Memory Improvement Services. He also speaks at accordion conferences and association meetings and serves as an adjudicator at local, state, national, or international accordion competitions. Thank you, Mort, for allowing us to feature you in this book.

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One of the most versatile and accomplished of today's accordion artists, Mort Herold has covered many bases, including those of concert artist, entertainer, magician, teacher, composer, arranger, accordion clinician, entrepreneur, free-bass pioneer, and published author on music and other subjects.

Mort Herold was born in Chicago, Illinois, and ever since hearing his first accordion at age seven, he has continued a lifelong love affair with the accordion. After a period of preliminary lessons, he began serious studies with the noted accordion pedagogue, Paul Miners. At age fourteen, Mort won the first prize in the accordion division in the Chicagoland Music Festival. Later, after six months of study with Andy Rizzo, he toured with the USO Camp Shows, and then entered the U.S. Navy. While in the service, he was selected as a featured performer with the Claude Thornhill All Navy Show, performing at U.S. bases in the South and Central Pacific, receiving a gold star and Admiral's Letter of Commendation.

Returning to civilian life, Mort Herold taught accordion and did commercial jobbing dates in Chicago. During the next two years, he appeared as accordion soloist on his own weekly radio show, "Rhapsodies in Velvet," which became a focal point of accordion interest in the Midwest. With his reputation growing, Mort played the Midwest premier of the Galla-Rini "Concerto in G Minor for Accordion and Orchestra," with the "Chicago Symphony Orchestra."

During this time, Mort was a full-time music major at De Paul University School of Music, where he studied composition and composed two eccentric dances for accordion. It was during this period that he made an unusual recording for Coronet Records of "Hora Stacatto" and "Lady of Spain," which to this day remains a classic for accordion record collectors. After his solo recital and concerto performance, Mort set his sights on California and did a floor show accordion act in night clubs from San Diego to Anchorage, Alaska. Along the way, he played solo concerts and did radio and television appearances.

Returning to Chicago, he married Cressida Tabb, a pianist and instructor at the De Paul University School of Music. She introduced him to Alexander Tcherepnin, a world-renowned composer, who was subsequently commissioned by the American Accordionists' Association to write music for the accordion. Mort Herold familiarized Tcherepnin with the accordion and its possibilities, and when Tcherepnin's "Partita for Accordion" was finished, it was published with a dedication to Mort and Cressida Herold.

In the 1960's, Mort Herold owned and operated the Herold School of Music and also became one of the first teachers of classical accordion at the college level. For three years, he was the head of the newly established Accordion Department at Vandercook College of


GIULIETTI
BOLBER

Music in Chicago. Students from all over the USA and Canada came to Vandercook to study and pursue a Bachelor's Degree with concentration in classical accordion.

Besides his own school of music and his college teaching, Mort's other activities included concertizing, adjudicating state music contests, and appearing as accordion clinician for the Accordion Teachers' Guild (ATG) and the Music Educators National Conference (MENC). During this time, Mort Herold was elected as President of the Accordion Teachers' Guild, International, and his two-volume accordion course, *Learning the Accordion is Fun*, was published. Mort was instrumental in arranging the ATG commissioning of Ole Schmidt's "Toccata No. 2 for Accordion," and he was active in the standardization of the accordion's switch nomenclature and other attributes. Mort Herold became an accordion artist for the Giulietti Accordion Corporation, and he appeared as both performer and master of ceremonies on the memorable Giulietti Accordion Concerts at major music industry conventions. Mort was also active in playing, writing for, and pioneering the development of the free-bass accordion. His article, "The Riddle of the Free-Bass Systems," created much attention and awareness of this new accordion development.

Through the years, Mort Herold has pursued an interest in memory techniques. His research in this subject culminated in the publication of three books on this subject entitled: *You Can Have A Near-Perfect Memory*, *Memorizing Made Easy*, and *You'll Never Forget a Name Again*. Additionally, he developed a complete audio-cassette learning program: *A Memory System That Works*.

Currently, Mort Herold is a leading national authority on memory improvement for business and professional use. He is listed in "Who's Who In America" in the Midwest, and he appears across the nation as a keynote speaker and seminar leader for industrial, government, and association conventions. Besides his memory business, he performs professional accordion programs and is available for appearances as a guest artist. His current accordion activities include concertizing, being a board of directors' member for the Chicago Accordion Club, continued idea-development for the ideal accordion, creation of new music/memory presentations, and writing and arranging for the classical accordion. His compositions for the accordion to date are: "Eccentric Dance," "Eccentric Waltz," "Concert Rhapsody," and "Diversion."

When Mort was asked if the standard memory techniques are applicable to the memorization of music, he emphasized that memorization of music is not attained through the normal word association and visualization methods used in other types of memorization. Rather, he stated that the secret of memorizing music is contained in one simple maxim: Intelligent Repetition Over a Generous Amount of Time. He says that this little pearl of truth has been applied instinctively throughout the ages, whether for academic study or manual skills, and most specifically in instrumental music. The elemental power of directed repetition over a period of time must inevitably create an increasing mastery of whatever is so learned. He often quotes a poem which expresses the importance of repetition:

The rules of music are three
And all others are in vain,
The first and second are practice
And the third is practice again.

But one must not be misled by the old saying that "Practice makes Perfect" because it doesn't. Repeating a musical passage incorrectly merely results in learning it incorrectly. Thus, practice does NOT, in itself, make perfect. Rather, he says, "It is wise to remember instead, that 'Practice makes Permanent.' So, be careful to practice correctly, with the thought in mind that 'Only Perfect Practice Makes Perfect.' "

In summary of his theory of music memorization, he says, "To my knowledge, there has never been a more practical memory technique than this for the memorization of music. Of course, the ability to analyze and understand the line, form, and structure will quicken the grasp and speed assimilation, but in the end, it is primarily **repetition** and **use** that create



PANEL OF ADJUDICATORS FOR FINALISTS AT AMERICAN ACCORDIONISTS' ASSOCIATION CONTEST IN 1960. [PICTURED L TO R: MORT HEROLD, CHARLES MAGNANTE, JOE BIVIANO, DANIEL DESIDERIO, AND CHARLES CAMILLERI]



MORT HEROLD AS NEWLY ELECTED ATG PRESIDENT IN 1961 [PICTURED L to R: MAT MATHEWS, MARIO TACCA, LARI HOLZHAUER, MERVIN CONN, MORT HEROLD, RINA ROSA, and WALTER "COT" HAYNES]

lasting retention and recall."

The concluding paragraphs below express some of Mort Herold's long-held views about the accordion.

"As I reminisced while looking through old letter and photo files, I was amazed at how many different and talented people I have known in the accordion field. Many are gone, many are still here. All of their divergent opinions, aims, ambitions, and disagreements came flashing back to me. Undeniably, there has been much effort to promote the accordion in a more serious vein. But over the years, it has still remained a thorny problem. Although much sound and fury has been created regarding the accordion's musical acceptance, there has not been enough clear thought, common sense, and hard work focused in this direction. And today, forty years later, a "start" is still being made in this country. The fact remains that most people who like the accordion don't like classical music, and most people who like classical music don't like the accordion. Admittedly, a tough nut to crack! But no nut is uncrackable. It takes time to achieve worthy ends, even many lifetimes; but I keep hoping for a breakthrough while I'm still here to see it.

"In my view, it will take four things to make a breakthrough: (1) A sensibly built and standardized accordion which is capable of playing the classics properly, (2) More dedicated world-class accordion virtuosos, including at least one who possesses enough personal charisma to catch and hold any audience, (3) More good original music and tasteful transcriptions, and (4) Persistent efforts by all concerned, backed by specific goals plus a workable plan for implementation.

"In this country we still have a few idealistic classical accordionists who are carrying the banner, but they need all the help we can give them. I hope at least one of them makes it during his or her lifetime. Although I enjoy writing and consulting in the field of memory, I'd gladly give it up if there were a large enough paying audience for classical music on the accordion. Deep down, I still dream of career concertizing with the accordion, striving to do with the accordion what Segovia did with the guitar.

"It vexes me that other instruments such as the saxophone, guitar, and harmonica now enjoy classical acceptance and popularity, while the lonely accordion still struggles for any semblance of its deserved recognition. But such recognition will not, I fear, ever become a reality while ethnic polkas and other "accordionistic" puffery continue to satisfy the musical tastes of most people. Such music, of course, is fine for its genre, but it will never contribute to the new image of the accordion as an instrument of musical substance. Why spend a lifetime eating only candy when there is also T-bone steak and Dom Perignon?"

The Herolds reside in Hazel Crest, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Their son is a U.S. Diplomat, and their daughter is a business journalist.



MORT HEROLD PRESENTING FIRST PLACE TROPHY TO DONALD HULME, ATG INTERNATIONAL WORLD CHAMPION (1960)

[Requests for information about Mort Herold's concert program or his books and audio-cassette learning program may be sent to Memory Improvement Services, 18658 Golfview Drive — Suite 334, Hazel Crest, IL 60429. Telephone: (708) 798-3730.]

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"As I reminisced while looking through old letter and photo files, I was amazed at how many different and talented people I have known in the accordion field. Many are gone, many are still here. All of their divergent opinions, aims, ambitions, and disagreements came flashing back to me. Undeniably, there has been much effort to promote the accordion in a more serious vein. But over the years, it has still remained a thorny problem. Although much sound and fury has been created regarding the accordion's musical acceptance, there has not been enough clear thought, common sense, and hard work focused in this direction. And today, forty years later, a "start" is still being made in this country. The fact remains that most people who like the accordion don't like classical music, and most people who like classical music don't like the accordion. Admittedly, a tough nut to crack! But no nut is uncrackable. It takes time to achieve worthy ends, even many lifetimes; but I keep hoping for a breakthrough while I'm still here to see it.

"In my view, it will take four things to make a breakthrough: (1) A sensibly built and standardized accordion which is capable of playing the classics properly, (2) More dedicated world-class accordion virtuosos, including at least one who possesses enough personal charisma to catch and hold any audience, (3) More good original music and tasteful transcriptions, and (4) Persistent efforts by all concerned, backed by specific goals plus a workable plan for implementation.

"In this country we still have a few idealistic classical accordionists who are carrying the banner, but they need all the help we can give them. I hope at least one of them makes it during his or her lifetime. Although I enjoy writing and consulting in the field of memory, I'd gladly give it up if there were a large enough paying audience for classical music on the accordion. Deep down, I still dream of career concertizing with the accordion, striving to do with the accordion what Segovia did with the guitar.

"It vexes me that other instruments such as the saxophone, guitar, and harmonica now enjoy classical acceptance and popularity, while the lonely accordion still struggles for any semblance of its deserved recognition. But such recognition will not, I fear, ever become a reality while ethnic polkas and other "accordionistic" puffery continue to satisfy the musical tastes of most people. Such music, of course, is fine for its genre, but it will never contribute to the new image of the accordion as an instrument of musical substance. Why spend a lifetime eating only candy when there is also T-bone steak and Dom Perignon?"

The Herolds reside in Hazel Crest, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Their son is a U.S. Diplomat, and their daughter is a business journalist.



MORT HEROLD PRESENTING FIRST PLACE TROPHY TO DONALD HULME, ATG INTERNATIONAL WORLD CHAMPION (1960)

[Requests for information about Mort Herold's concert program or his books and audio-cassette learning program may be sent to Memory Improvement Services, 18658 Golfview Drive — Suite 334, Hazel Crest, IL 60429. Telephone: (708) 798-3730.]

PART III. GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION IN NEW YORK AND THE NORTHEAST

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PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON PIETRO FROSINI
By Marcello Roviaro

Editor's Note: Extracted from a personal letter from Marcello Roviaro to Eddie Chavez about his personal knowledge of the life and times of Pietro Frosini and their mutual association and friendship until Frosini's death. Mr. Roviaro was extremely close to Frosini, and much of his information has not been previously documented in print. I greatly appreciate the idea and assistance of Eddie Chavez in contacting Marcello Roviaro to obtain this remarkable information for inclusion in this revision of my book. I am especially grateful to Mr. Roviaro for his permission to print his letter and for furnishing us his interesting life story to accompany this article.

.....

Dear Mr. Chavez, July 28, 1987

Your letter telling me about your interest in the accordion and particularly your interest in Pietro Frosini and his music was a pleasure to read. It was most gratifying to know also of the praise and respect that Messrs. Charles Magnante, Charles Nunzio, and Alfred Rossi expressed to you about my musicianship.

The loss of my close friend and colleague, Charles Magnante, was very sad. We had worked together for many years on various committees of the American Accordionists' Association and always collaborated on many projects with great respect for each other's opinions. He was a great artist and a wonderful human being.

My association with Frosini began about 1935 and lasted until the day he died. Our relationship was not only as teacher and student, but also like father and son. He was not only a marvelous artist and composer, but also a very warm person — and with me — a very generous person.

You ask about where Frosini studied. At the age of about nine he began playing on his father's accordion, which was a chromatic button-type instrument. The bass system was a single bass system of 2 rows — a model which was very popular in Catania, Sicily, where he lived. His father, although not a professional musician, was his first teacher.

In 1895 he entered the Municipal Conservatory of the Arts in Catania. Since the accordion was not accepted as a serious instrument at the conservatory, he took up the cornet and also studied harmony, counterpoint, composition, and, I think, some organ. His teacher on cornet, counterpoint, and composition was Maestro Paolo Frontini. Frosini won many citations and medals as a student. He had absolute pitch and a very fine memory. Circa 1902, he transferred to the very prestigious Conservatory of Milan, Italy, and studied there for a while. Later, he took a position as a first cornet player with the British Navy Band at Malta, and by the age of seventeen was earning his living as a professional musician. All this time, however, he kept playing his beloved accordion at every opportunity.

As a teacher for me, he was absolutely the greatest. I remember very many lessons lasting as long as three hours! He was always concerned primarily with the musical conception of the composition. When studying an opera, symphony, or some orchestral selection of which we were arranging for the accordion at that particular lesson, he would delve into much detail about how the piece should be played on the accordion. Those lessons were absolutely priceless! One had to play with musicianship — feeling and beautiful technical execution.

What beautiful memories I have of him! On many occasions when I went for a lesson, I would find him at his music writing desk in the midst of preparing a lesson for another student or in the process of creating a new composition. He would always greet me with great courtesy and also with a beautiful smile on his face. Each student was always treated on an individual basis. That is, the technical studies and composition which had been assigned for a lesson were always prescribed with that

particular student's capabilities and requirements in mind. In other words, he did not use a "method" as was the popular way of teaching the accordion in those days.

When he played something — if you had good ears — you could hear that warm, wonderful tone that he derived from the accordion, let alone the delicate and artistic way that he shaped the phrases in the composition. His records and cassettes do not capture that sound. It gives me great pleasure to know of the renaissance of interest in Frosini's music, especially in Europe. The reason, I believe, is that his music has so many beautiful melodies. As Verdi used to say, "Melody, melody — that must always reign supreme." On another occasion during a speech, Verdi also said, "In Music as in Love, one must be sincere." In my opinion, Mr. Chavez, Frosini's music speaks to the heart. It is direct and sincere. Long may it live!

His ideas about what teaching materials to use were years ahead of his time. I would like to add also that his repertoire was very vast — not only his own compositions, but those of the great masters as well. In all the years that I knew him, I don't ever recall him losing his patience at a lesson. Of course, when I went for a lesson, I made sure I was very well prepared. With other students, I don't know if he was as patient.

You also asked about his accordions. In June 1951, one instrument was stolen from WOR just a few months before he passed away. Frosini never had much strength, so he would leave the accordion in a broadcast studio unlocked rather than take it to the musicians' locker room as I always did with my accordion. The other musicians in the orchestra also followed the same procedure as I did.

Anyway, at that time, I was playing the WOR programs for him every day since he was in failing health. I reported the theft immediately to the police with serial number and photograph (which I had obtained from the Excelsior people); but, as far as I know to this day, it has never been found. Sad to say, also, Frosini did not have insurance on the instrument because he felt and said, "Who can play this thing besides me?"

The other five accordions — two piano accordions and three chromatic accordions — were disposed of somehow by his sister, Rosa, who was taking care of him when he died. Mrs. Frosini had died a few years before. So, unfortunately, no one seems to know what happened to his accordions.

As to the question about living relatives, his brother, Natale, had some children and his sister, Rosa, also had children; but, I never met them; so, I cannot give you any information about them. I know that Natale passed away years ago, and I doubt very much that Rosa is still alive.

I am very sorry that I couldn't give you more detailed information about some of your questions, but I hope that what I have written clarifies some aspects of Maestro Frosini's life.

Mr. Chavez, I doubt very much if ever we will see the likes of Frosini and Magnante again. What a great legacy they have left to accordionists throughout the world!

Sincerely,

MARCELLO ROVIARO
Tenafly, New Jersey

.....

BIOGRAPHICAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE AUTHOR: MARCELLO ROVIARO

Mr. Roviaro is a native of Tenafly, New Jersey, and he began to play the accordion at the age of four. His formal studies began when he was six years old. At age nine, he played a series of broadcasts on WCDA which was New York's first Italian radio station. He also won first prize in the first Pietro Deiro accordion contest held in New York City.

At the age of thirteen, he made several guest appearances as a featured soloist with the world-famous "Paul Whiteman Orchestra" which were broadcast over the NBC network.

Furthermore, soon after these appearances, he began his studies with the legendary Pietro Frosini. This was followed by many solo appearances on WNEW, WINS, and the NBC network.

In 1942 Mr. Roviaro appeared in a joint concert with Pietro Frosini in Carnegie Hall, New York. During the subsequent years, he substituted on many engagements for Maestro Frosini, especially at WOR.

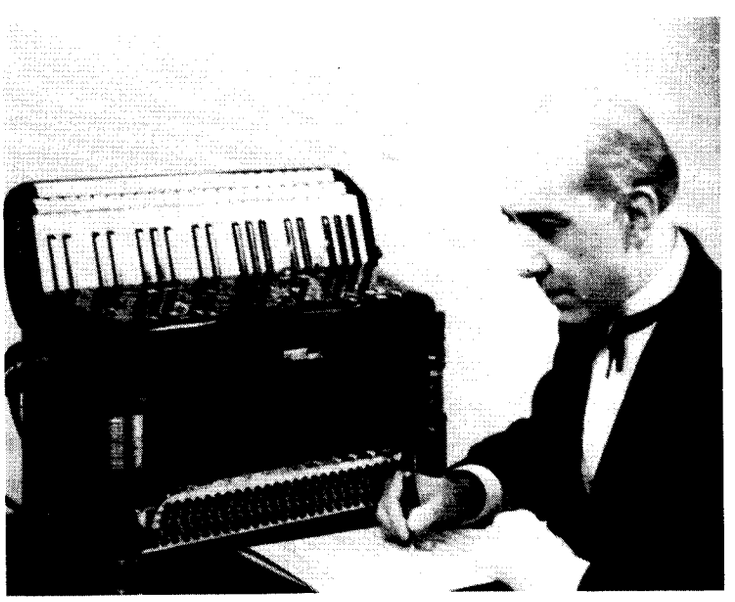
Upon Frosini's death in 1951, Mr. Roviaro replaced him and became the regular member of the orchestra as well as the featured soloist on the very popular WOR "Musical Clock" show. This was a daily program which continued broadcasting for the next 9 years. During this time, he also made many solo appearances on other radio and television stations in New York City, such as WHOM, WOV, WPIX, and WNBC.

In addition to his years of study and association with Maestro Frosini, Mr. Roviaro had several years of extensive courses in harmony, counterpoint, and composition with Otto Cesana, Tibor Serly, and Rosolino De Maria, who were very illustrious musicians and teachers in New York City.

Marcello Roviaro also enjoys the distinction of being a long-time member of the Governing Board of the American Accordionists' Association along with being a charter member of the Accordion Teachers' Association of New Jersey.



MARCELLO ROVIARO



MAESTRO PIETRO FROSINI

(Photographs: Courtesy of Marcello Roviaro)

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MARCELLO ROVIARO



MAESTRO PIETRO FROSINI

(Photographs: Courtesy of Marcello Roviaro)

REMEMBERING MY FATHER, GUIDO DEIRO
By Count Robert Deiro

Editor's Note: This letter was written to Al (Drazba) Day, a noted accordionist who now resides in Las Vegas, NV., where he regularly entertains at many of the famous landmark hotels and restaurants in that remarkable city. In his letter to Al Day, Count Robert Deiro relates the most vivid remembrances of his father, who had died when Count Deiro was only 12 years old. This unique letter was first printed in the Friends Of The Accordion (FOTA) newsletter, and is reprinted here with the personal permission of Count Deiro and FOTA.

.....

Dear Al Day,

I'm enclosing a little narrative regarding how I remember my father and his playing the accordion which might be of interest to readers of the publication *Friends Of The Accordion* (FOTA). My father, Guido Deiro, while performing on the vaudeville circuit, was billed as "DEIRO, THE WORLD'S GREATEST ACCORDIONIST." He was in the twilight of his career when I was old enough to listen to and appreciate his playing. He was born in 1887 and would be over 100 years old today.

Along with his reputation as a great artist, he had another one as a womanizer. Many people are familiar with his long relationship with Mae West. He is mentioned prominently in her autobiography: **GOODNESS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.** Along with his music, I can also remember the beautiful women that surrounded him, including my mother Yvonne. My father was 54 when he married my mother, who was at the tender age of 16. He had been dating her mother who was an opera singer. Father never let a pretty ankle go by without serious consideration.

I was twelve years old when he died in 1950. He had semi-retired to the Los Angeles area, opened a small music store, and taught gifted students whom he referred to as his "proteges." I had by then, of course, absorbed some culture and enjoyed listening to classical, as well as contemporary music. Each day, my father would take up his accordion, which I believe was an Acme of custom manufacture. It had the fifth and diminished, and a number of shifts, some of which were on the outside of the keyboard.

He would never do scales or exercises, but instead would roll into certain pieces that were technically difficult and obviously popular to him. These included the "Hungarian Rhapsodies," "Czardas," "Tango Jealousia," "Torno a Sorrento," and once in a while a popular tune. He played everything as if he were standing in front of 2,000 people. Pieces were always played from start to finish, and he never interrupted them to replay or practice a passage. To be truthful, I never heard him miscue. I can close my eyes and hear his music now as clearly as if it were forty years ago. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but my father was also a craftsman. He did all of his own reed work, and I can recall the little workshop that he used with his glue pots and wood. He had been forced to repair his instruments when he was in vaudeville because at that time very few people, other than a few piano makers, had any idea how to construct or repair an accordion.

My father attempted on several occasions to get me interested in the accordion, but to no avail as I realized even then he would be a tough act to follow. To me, it appeared impossible to even think of being able to play the accordion in a manner that would be acceptable to him. I'm sorry now that I was intimidated to the point where I didn't take the instrument up seriously. When it came time to practice, I always managed to be off somewhere riding my bicycle. His efforts did not produce an accordion player, but it did bring out in me a deep appreciation for music in all of its forms and the genius it takes to create it.

It's a tragedy for anyone to lose their father at such an early age. I am more fortunate than most because when feelings of sadness and loss come upon me, I can select one of his recordings and as it plays, his vitality and love fill the room and touch me. He still lives in his music and compositions.

Al, I hope the above will be something of interest to the members and readers of *Friends Of The Accordion.* And, I thank you for bringing the organization to my attention. My check for membership is enclosed. You know how much I enjoy your playing. You are a virtuoso.

Very truly yours,

COUNT ROBERT DEIRO



GUIDO DEIRO AT GUERRINI CONCERT IN SAN FRANCISCO IN EARLY 1930's
(Courtesy: Count Robert Deiro)

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Very truly yours,

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GUIDO DEIRO AT GUERRINI CONCERT IN SAN FRANCISCO IN EARLY 1930's
(Courtesy: Count Robert Deiro)

MY LIFE AND CAREER

By Charles Nunzio

Editor's Note: Thank you, Charles, for your life story. Its historical content will be a useful reference for the accordion world. This autobiography will be read over and over, and your successful career will be a continuing source of inspiration to future generations of accordionists around the world. Your renowned contributions to the advancement of the accordion have been truly recognized by accolade after accolade from your own peers. These significant achievements have left an indelible mark on the accordion world and shall be remembered forever by your many friends, students, and life-long admirers.

.....

I was born in the small town of Cattafi, Sicily on October 30, 1912. When I was eight years old, I came to America with my mother. We had an uncomfortable and stormy trip which took 26 days. My father had immigrated five years earlier.

My father was playing the chromatic accordion before I arrived in this country, and he was my inspiration and my first accordion teacher. I had seen pictures in Italy of him playing the accordion, so when he asked me what instrument I wanted to study, I told him I wanted the accordion. At that time, all the important manufacturers were located on Mulberry and Canal streets in New York. I was only eight years old, so Mr. Antonio Butti made a special accordion for me with 39 keys and 120 bass with one shift on the side of the keyboard. My father used all his savings to purchase this instrument which cost $700 — a large sum in those days.

After my dad taught me the basics, I studied with an excellent teacher, Nino Stramandino. His specialty was Solfeggio, a rigid discipline which covers reading music and timing. For two years, I studied sight reading and beating time, without playing a note on the accordion. Students today, I'm sure, would not be patient enough for that kind of study. My next teacher was Frank Umbriaco on 116th Street on the East side of New York. My lessons were every Sunday morning, and my father and I had to travel for 2 hours from Newark, using trolley cars and trains. We did this for 8 years until Mr. Umbriaco moved to Denver, Colorado. I visited him a few years ago, and we had a great time playing together and eating spaghetti.

I continued advanced study with Pietro Frosini for the next 5 years. He became my dearest friend and advisor. During the late 1920's, I was asked by Pietro Deiro to take over his radio program every Sunday afternoon and also his students for one month. Deiro and Frank Gaviani went to California on tour, so I was teaching day and night because I also had my own studio in Newark. At 25 years of age, I also added another step in my career. I established a music studio in the Carnegie Hall building where I taught 3 days a week.

At this time Mr. Frosini became ill, and almost every two months, his wife would call me to take over his radio program, "The John Gambling Show," on WOR from 6:30 to 8:00 A.M. It was a chore, but also a joy. Mr. Frosini was like a father to me. His lessons lasted 3 hours and included expression, interpretation, technique, and everything that resulted in professional musicianship. He would give me his manuscript compositions like "Olive Blossoms," "Jolly Caballero," "Hot Fingers," and all of his rhapsodies.

I had the opportunity to join a quintet called "The Capitol Accordionists," and we played on the RKO Keith Circuit, traveling from Maine to Washington, D.C. Then, came the invention of Vitaphone and the first Al Jolson movie with sound. This really destroyed vaudeville stage shows, so I came home and resumed my teaching and concert playing. I also studied theory and composition and wrote many solos and hundreds of arrangements for the accordion and orchestra. In addition to these arrangements dating from 1933, I have written the following original compositions:



CHARLES NUNZIO

*Accordion Rhapsody
American Victory March
Boogie Bolero Fantasia
*Boogie Moderne
El Cavaliere Paso Doble
Elenita Spanish Three Step
Frolic of the Seven Dwarfs Novelty
Negrita Conga
*Pan American
Racing Fingers Novelty
Streamline Waltz
Tambo Dance Rhumba
*Toreador Paso Doble
Valse Elena Concert Waltz
World's Fair March

*Unpublished Music

Some of the music publishers were Alfred Music, Sam Fox, E.B. Marks, Mills Music, Chappell, Harms, Big Three, and O. Pagani.

In the summer of 1937, I was sponsored by the Settimio Soprani factory as consultant and advisor for improving the instrument. In the factory at Castelfidardo, I supervised the various departments, and I noticed that there was much to be changed in order to build an "artist" model for the American trade. I was responsible for the automatic switches on the grill which was a first for Soprani. The Soprani company had 800 employees when the accordion was at its highest popularity, and they shipped thousands of accordions every month to their American distributor, Continental Music Company, in New York and Chicago. While I was in Italy, I performed several concerts and was given a beautiful gold Rolex watch by the Italian government.

After returning to America, I continued teaching and playing. Besides the Frosini radio programs, six mornings a week, I was often asked to sub for Joe Biviano and Charles Magnante. In the late 1930's, I was doing an average of 35 shows per week on WOR, NBC, CBS, WOV, and WINS and making commercial recordings for Decca, Victor, and Columbia.

In 1939 I experienced two events, one very tragic and the other quite uplifting. At age 54, my beloved father suffered a fatal heart attack which shocked and depressed me greatly. But that same year, my championship accordion band was invited to perform at the 1939 New York World's Fair, an invitation that by coincidence came at just the right time to help ease the shock and depression that had followed the loss of my father.

In 1940 I played a solo performance on "The Ford Hour" radio program on CBS with a 28-piece orchestra conducted by Carl Hoff. The following week, I accompanied Arthur Tracy, the street singer on "The Ford Hour."

Because I was so busy I had little time for socializing, but I was fortunate to meet my future wife, Helen, in 1940. She was a high school teacher of English and Drama, and we were married in July 1941. I consider myself fortunate indeed to have married such an intelligent, affectionate, and understanding wife. Throughout my professional years, Helen made many exceptional sacrifices in support of my career, and she provided the warmth and love that kept our family bonded together while my duties frequently kept me away from home. I shall always be grateful to Helen for her unceasing support of my career — a career that we both love so dearly. We have two sons, John and Charles, both successful in fields other than music.

In 1942 I played for several months at the Jersey Shore Seabright Yacht Club. Many stars playing on Broadway would come to the club after work, and I had the pleasure to perform for Lucille Ball and Jane Russell, who were chorus girls at that time.

Then came the war. I enlisted in the Navy in 1943, and after 7 weeks of training at Great Lakes, I played on coast-to-coast programs with the "Blue Jackets." Commander Eddie Peabody, a famous banjoist, was in charge of the music department and was so impressed with my ability that he recommended me to fill the opening at Bunker Hill Naval Air Station, Peru, Indiana. I assembled the "Melody Mates," a six-piece orchestra which included well-known musicians. We had trumpet, guitar, bass, drums, organ, and myself on the accordion. We played three radio broadcasts weekly and all the dances for the Navy personnel. At the end of 1945, the base was dismantled, and I was discharged at Lido Beach, N.Y.

I enjoyed performing concerts during 1937-1939 in New Jersey, New York, Boston, Dallas, Los Angeles, Detroit, London, Paris, Vienna, Italy, and Germany. Over the years, I've cherished the friendship and meetings with great artists such as:

[The artists listed below are presented in alphabetical order]

ANDY ARCARI	PIETRO FROSINI	MORTY NEVINS & 3 SONS
MADDALENA BELFIORE	ANTHONY GALLA-RINI	NICK PAONE
JOE BIVIANO	FRANK GAVIANI	CARMEN PIZZIMENTI
CARMEN CARROZZA	VINCENT GERACI	PAT REX
MINDIE & ADDIE CERE	CHARLES GUARRIA	ANDY RIZZO
CHARLES D'ALOISIO	MORT HEROLD	MARCELLO ROVIARO
ART VAN DAMME	DONALD HULME	JOAN COCHRAN SOMMERS
GUIDO DEIRO	FRANK IACOLUCCI	JOHN SERRY
PIETRO DEIRO	JOHNNY LA PADULA	LOUIS TOBIE
ANGELO DE PIPPO	GEORGE MANCINI	FRANK UMBRIACO
DANIEL DESIDERIO	CHARLES MAGNANTE	JOE VENTO & SONS
WALTER ERIKSSON	SERGEI MATUSEWITCH	HAROLD WAX
EUGENE ETTORE	EDDIE MONTEIRO	FRANK YANKOVIC
MYRON FLOREN	JOE MOONEY	NORM ZELLER

and many others

Until his recent death, I kept in touch with John Reuther, who invented the uniform checkered keyboard. I'd like to mention with praise the late Louis Siquier, publisher of the *Accordion News* magazine, and the late John Gerstner, publisher of the *Accordion World* magazine. They did so much to publicize and further the advancement of the accordion. I must not forget a great lady, the late Lari Holzhauer and her husband, Fred, of Detroit, who were responsible for the very active Accordion Teachers' Guild (A.T.G.).

Over the years, I've experienced many pleasurable honors and accomplishments. One high point occurred in 1960 when my student Donald Hulme from Belleville, New Jersey, won the World Championship in Pallanza, Italy. He has had a very successful career. At present, he performs at The Epcot Center adjacent to Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

To continue with highlights, a recent thrill in 1982 was my visit to China on the invitation of the president of the Parrot accordion factory in Tientsin. I had a wonderful time touring the factory, making suggestions, and being treated to banquets and a tour of the Great Wall.

Another great honor occurred in October 1985, when I was inducted as the first artist in the Accordion Association Hall of Fame, by the Accordion Teachers' Association of New Jersey. I was thrilled and deeply touched at the banquet to see all the teachers, family, students, and friends who attended. This great affair was initiated by my dear former student and Association President, the talented Maddalena Belfiore, who also was president of the American Accordionists' Association (A.A.A.) in New York. The proceeds established the Nunzio Scholarship Fund for deserving students. She is also one of the United States' delegates to the Coupe Mondiale which conducts the world competitions.

I have always strived to work for the development and popularity of the accordion in conjunction with many other teachers and artists. I was one of twelve charter members and vice-president of the A.A.A. I was also president in 1960 of the A.T.G. and was the first president of the A.T.A. of New Jersey in 1959.

At present although my activities are now limited, I still practice and play only a few selective engagements. I volunteer my services to the Veterans' Hospital and many senior-citizen organizations. My hobby is repairing and tuning accordions which I enjoy. I still hold a patent on the Kuehl Free-Bass System invented by William (Bud) Kuehl of Chicago.

I'm grateful that I'm in good health and that I've had all these wonderful years with the instrument and career that I love. I want to give special thanks to Ron Flynn of San Francisco, and Eddie Chavez and Edwin Davison, both of San Antonio. They are accordion players and devoted fans who urged me to relate the development of my musical life for the book they are writing about the accordion.

— **CHARLES NUNZIO**
Basking Ridge, NJ

Editor's Note: Although Charles Nunzio mentioned a few of his many publications in the above autobiographical sketch, I feel he may have been much too brief since the June 1950 issue of Accordion World magazine lists over 90 books and compositions to his credit. For the sake of completeness, I wish to add this listing of his works up to the June 1950 date:

BOOKS

Complete Hanon for the Accordion (Sam Fox)
Little Czerny Books, I-II-III
Mastery of the Basses (Alfred Music)

ALFRED MUSIC

* World's Fair March
* Streamline
* Frolic of the Seven Dwarfs
* Racing Fingers
Czardas
Two Guitars, Concert Arr.
Hotcha (Hot Novelty)
Second Hungarian Rhapsody
Valzer Della Fisarmonica
Happy Go Lucky, March
Dreaming, Waltz
Peasant Dance
Violets, Mazurka

PAGANI & BROTHERS

* American Victory March
* Valse Elena
American Patrol, March
Carnival of Venice (with variations)
Orpheus in Hades (Overture)
William Tell Overture
Valse des Fleurs (Nutcracker Suite)
Vienna Life (Strauss Waltz)
Ave Maria (Schubert)
La Cumparsita (Tango)
Flight of the Angels, Waltz
Helena Polka
Clarinet Polka
Dancing Tambourine
Reverie (Debussy, with swing chorus)
Invitation to the Dance
Somebody Stole My Gal
Barber of Seville (Solo, duet, trio, quartet)
Poet and Peasant (Solo, duet, trio, quartet)
In an Eighteenth Century Drawing Room
Powerhouse
Jeannie with the Light Brown
Eili, Eili, Hebrew Song
Jolly Coppersmith, (March)

SAM FOX

* Bolero Fantasia
* El Cavalier, Paso Doble
* Tambo (Rhumba)
* Negrita (Congo)
* Elenita (Spanish Three-step)
Tumbling Tumbleweeds
Mediterranean Concerto
Nola

EMIL ASCHER

Down on our Farm
Aida, March
Ciribiribin, Waltz

**** Denotes original compositions; the rest are arrangements.***
 # Denotes post-1950 arrangement

EMIL ASCHER (Continued)
Forever March
Still as the Night
Black Eyes, Russian Song
Two Guitars, Russian Song
On Guard, March
Ay, Ay, Ay, Spanish Song
Volunteers March
Grandfather's Clock Novelty
Overture Excerpts
Blue Danube, Waltz

THE BIG THREE
Again
At Sundown
Deep Purple
Forever & Ever
Good Night Sweetheart
Honey
I'll See You in My Dreams
Laura
Moonlight & Roses
My Blue Heaven
Peg O' My Heart
Santa Claus is Comin' to Town
Temptation
When I Grow Too Old to Dream
The Whiffenpoof Song
Once in Awhile Hair
You Were Meant for Me
Stumbling
Peggy O'Neil
I'm in the Mood for Love
Sweet & Lovely
Blue Moon

MILLS
Stardust
Bugle Call Rag
Lambeth Walk
Il Trovatore
Jazz Legato

E. B. MARKS
Derecho Viejo (Disillusioned)
Say Si, Si (Swing Rhumba)
Two Hearts That Pass in the Night
Yours (Quiereme Mucho)
A Gay Ranchero
He's 1A in the Army
Paper Doll
Glow Worm (for solo or band)
Malaguena

MUSIC PUBLISHERS HOLDING CORP.
Tea for Two
Jalousie
Night and Day
April in Paris
Indian Love Call
Someone to Watch Over Me
Shine On Harvest Moon

SOUTHERN MUSIC
Adios
Sweet and Gentle
Green Eyes

HARMS
Cherry Pink & Apple Blossom White
In the Still of the Night

CHAPPELL & CO.
Warsaw Concerto
Slaughter on 10th Ave.
September Song
The Third Man Theme
Where or When
Among My Souvenirs

**** Denotes original compositions; the rest are arrangements.***
 # Denotes post-1950 arrangements added by Charles Nunzio during the review of this article.





ABOVE PHOTO: FRIENDS SAYING FAREWELL TO CHARLES NUNZIO BEFORE HIS TRIP TO ITALY IN 1937. (Left to Right: FRANK IACOLUCCI, VICKY DeBELLIS, PIETRO DEIRO, CHARLES NUNZIO, EVA & MARIA DeBELLIS, LOUIS IORIO, AND JOHN NUNZIO.

PHOTO AT LEFT: PIETRO DEIRO WISHING CHARLES NUNZIO (LEFT) BON VOYAGE BEFORE CHARLES BOARDS THE ITALIAN LINER *REX* FOR A TRIP TO ITALY TO ADVISE THE SOPRANI FACTORY ABOUT BUILDING AN "ARTIST" MODEL ACCORDION FOR THE AMERICAN MARKET.

[The numbers listed in the 1950 Accordion World have been proofed for accuracy by Charles Nunzio and used with the permission of the former publishers of the Accordion World. During the review, Charles added several other arrangements that had not been included in the original 1950 article. Personal correspondence to Charles Nunzio should be addressed to 107 N. Finley, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920.]





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FRANK UMBRIACO

MY LIFE AND CAREER WITH THE ACCORDION

By Frank Umbriaco

Editor's Note: These remembrances of Frank Umbriaco have been transcribed from a cassette sent to Mr. Eddie Chavez relating the early years of Mr. Umbriaco's accordion career and the important contributions he has made to the accordion field during his long and prestigious career. We were indeed fortunate to have had such a distinguished artist in the forefront during the early days of the accordion's growth in the United States. He trained many important accordion artists, and he is credited by many persons for establishing the accordion as an orchestral instrument. Frank Umbriaco may be contacted C/O Frank Umbriaco, Jr., at 10950 W. Glennon Dr., Lakewood, CO 80226.

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Born in Cosenza, Italy on January 2, 1901, I came to Denver, Colorado from Italy when I was 2 years old. I took music lessons from a band leader, Mr. Angelo Pollice, and although Mr. Pollice did not play the accordion himself, he knew his music thoroughly. I had no other instructors. From that point on, it was on-the-job training as I learned by playing jobs (solo's, trio's, bands, accompanying singers) and by association with other musicians. When I started to play early in my career, a friend said, "You should be in vaudeville; I know the manager of the Orpheum Theater." So, I went to see the manager and he told me that the booking offices were in New York and that I would need some experience. So, I went to New York, and I only knew one person there from Denver.

I soon got acquainted with an accordion maker who would build an accordion for a buyer and then refer them to me for lessons. One day a drummer, Max Fierman, called me and he asked, "Do you play the accordion?" I said, "Yes." "Do you have a tuxedo?" I said, "No." "Do you belong to the musicians' union?" I said, "No." He said, "That's O.K!" The accordion was getting very popular. The people were demanding it. They brought me to a country club and wanted me to play the tables. I did not like this! They also had an orchestra made up of a violin, piano, saxophone, and drums. I sat in with the orchestra. The leaders, Hackel and Berge, said, "This guy is good!" Well, I made them sound like an 8-piece orchestra. So, I sat in with the orchestra and did not have to play the tables. I played this job for many weeks.

One day a different sax man came to play who asked for my name and phone number, and I continued to become very popular with many musicians. Then, I got a job with Harry Reser with the "Clique Club Eskimos." I played there for a year. Then I played on radio station WOR for 4 years and obtained great notoriety during this period of time. This was before the radio stations used phonograph records. Then, the Ritz Carlton Hotel in New York City sent me to Canada to play for the Royal Family. The Prince of Wales was in love with the accordion sound and was delighted with my playing.

On my return to New York, I got into the recording business through a friend of mine who had heard me play. He said that Columbia Phonograph Co. was looking for an accordion player to play some South American music. But, when I went to their studio, they sat me on a stool, asked me to play, and then said, "Don't jerk the accordion, don't play too loud, don't do this, don't do that." I got so nervous that I simply could not play the music. I said, "To hell with it," and promptly got out of the recording business.

I then started teaching. One of my first students was a Finlander who played for a Finnish singer. He had to go back to Finland, so he asked me to play for this singer. First, I said, "No," but he talked me into it. So, I played for him. I didn't know what he was singing, but we made the record. Columbia subsequently had me make many records. I played for many Scandanavian singers who came to America. Then, I joined an Italian orchestra "Coloniale" and made records with them. Charles Nunzio and Frederic Tedesco were both students of mine.

Charles Nunzio used to come to take lessons from me when he was still in short pants. I also was John Reuther's first accordion teacher when he first became interested in the accordion. He used to bring his recording equipment, including a record cutter to my store in New York. We would record his and my playing as well as my wife's singing. I remember he would then take the record to my cellar where he would bake it in a small oven to harden it. The late Charles Magnante and I were very close friends, and we filled in for each other on various jobs during the early days of our accordion careers. He used to learn a number and would then come over to my home in New York City to play it for me and ask my opinion.

For many years, I operated an accordion studio with sales and repair on the East side of New York City. Also, in the late 1930's, I devoted a considerable amount of my time writing an accordion correspondence course for the U. S. School of Music. Unfortunately, my personal copy of this course has been lost, and I would very much like to obtain a copy if anyone still has a copy of it in their possession. ***[Editor's Note: Thanks to Alex R. Hughes of Tucson, Arizona, Frank Umbriaco now has a copy of his accordion course. Mr. Hughes had seen a letter from Eddie Chavez in The Reed Block, that asked everyone to search their personal files to find this course for Frank Umbriaco.]***



Then in 1947, I moved back to Denver for health reasons. In 1952, I opened a studio in North Denver which lasted until my retirement in 1976. I am most proud of the fact that many musicians in New York City gave me credit for establishing the accordion in an orchestra and of the many pupils of mine who went on to good careers with the accordion. I have many fond memories of my accordion career, and I am particularly grateful for my good health during the early years of my career and the valued friends who helped me at crucial junctures in my life.

— Frank Umbriaco
Denver, Colorado

FRANK UMBRIACO TAKEN AROUND 1956 AT AGE 55. NOTE THE "UNICO" ACCORDION BRAND NAME WHICH WAS HIS BRAND IN DENVER, COLORADO. WHEN HE WAS IN NEW YORK CITY, HIS BRAND NAME WAS CALLED "SUPERIOR."

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THROUGH THE YEARS — MY LIFE IN MUSIC

By Frank Gaviani

Editor's Note: It is such a delight to publish this splendid autobiography! Frank Gaviani recalled poignant elements from the past that influenced his life and painted his life before our very eyes. It is heartening to read his dynamic story of success. Most truly great men have had to endure adversity; Frank Gaviani was no exception. The lengthy separation of the Gaviani family during World War I brought hardships that few other persons have had to suffer. Undoubtedly, these early hardships and life experiences molded him for the challenges and significant opportunities that were ahead. With music as his very passion, he — like many of the other great musicians in this book — seemed to absorb the accordion deeply into his very soul. It became his destiny, and he chose to fulfill that destiny. He was indeed proud of his long, successful professional life and the many accolades that he received during his eventful career. Even though not in the best of health, he took the time to complete this autobiography so others could benefit from his extraordinary experiences. On February 5, 1990, I was notified of the passing of Frank Gaviani. I consider myself fortunate to have worked with him during his final years to publish his life story. The entire "Accordion World" mourns the loss of this great man.

.....

My life began in St. Louis, Missouri on February 2, 1908. In 1913, I left for Italy with my mother and 2-year-old sister to visit my mother's relatives. During this visit, however, World War I started, and we were unable to return to the United States. Consequently, I was enrolled in the Italian school system in S'Arcangelo di Romagna in the Emilia region.

My mother became very ill and was unable to care for my sister and me. She was forced to depend on me to do all the errands and work, which included buying and cooking the food and searching for scraps of wood for our fire oven which was used for both heating and cooking in our very small home. Food was very scarce. My sister became my responsibility also.

So, at the age of six, I became "man of the house" with many chores during the summer at the town which was six kilometers (about four miles) from where I lived. Here, I tried blacksmithing, repairing bicycles, repairing shoes as a cobbler, plus any other miscellaneous work available.

I became the leader of the neighborhood; wherever I went, all the children followed me. Most of the time, I was barefoot; but, when it was necessary for me to walk to the town to buy food, I wore my mother's shoes which I stuffed with dried corn husks at the toes. I wore these with great pride. (Toys were made from corn cobs.)

Because of all these chores, I had no childhood. But, my greatest joy was to listen to the local accordionist perform. I'd listen and watch him every chance possible. I was completely captivated with the instrument. Music became my childhood passion.

After the war ended, my father came to visit us in 1920, but he had to return without us because of lack of funds. My mother, sister, and I were forced to remain in Italy. Then, in 1922, my uncle, James Gaviani, arrived in Italy with the full intention of settling there. Before he had left the States, my father had asked him to purchase a musical instrument for me upon arrival in Italy. Without hesitation, I chose the semi-tone accordion.

My first teacher, Luigi Macrelli, taught "by ear" (without music). After 14 months, I had progressed so well I was asked to play for local dances. That was at the age of 15. However, this was cut short as my uncle decided to return to the States. It was my opportunity to return also, as he was to be my guardian. My mother and sister were to return at a later date.

We left Genoa on March 1, 1923, and arrived in the United States 15 days later. Upon arrival, I had one suitcase and my



FRANK GAVIANI

beloved accordion. During this trip back, I met a fellow traveler who shortly after arriving in the U.S. introduced me to my future wife, Mary Corea. (We were married in Revere, Massachusetts on January 31, 1926.)

I started to work in a dye/dry-cleaning house at night and studied music during the daytime hours. This routine continued for 2 years. I listened intently to Pietro Deiro's recordings and, after hearing them three or four times, was able to play them without music. This was the way I actually learned to play. At this time, a local radio station, WEEI, opened in Boston, and I was invited to play "Sharpshooter's March" on my semi-tone accordion. This was during the "earphone" era.

My father looked for a teacher and found Alfred Tedesco on Salem Street in the North End of Boston. We were told that he did not teach the semi-tone, but did teach the chromatic; so, my father bought me a chromatic accordion. (This was all done "by ear" — the teacher taught by ear and I learned by ear.)

I made rapid progress under Mr. Tedesco and was advised to see another teacher, Salvatore Gulizia, who was on Hanover St., Boston. As it turned out, he did not teach the chromatic, but taught the piano accordion instead. Mr. Gulizia, however, decided to return to Italy which interrupted my routine once more. Thus, he referred me to another teacher, Albert Fallai. And that's when I started to really learn music — in 1925.

Billie Williams, known as "Sonia" in show business, also taught me a lot. She played accordion and organ. Alfred d'Berge, a violin teacher, gave me lessons in harmony.

In 1926-27, I entertained at the O Solo Mio Restaurant in Boston. After playing there for one year, I was recognized and recommended for vaudeville. I joined the RKO Keith Circuit and played all around the New England states, and then went on to New York. While there, I lived near the Williamsburg Bridge in Brooklyn and walked to New York City to perform. Because I was unfamiliar with the subway system, I preferred to walk the entire distance of 5 miles, carrying my accordion.

In 1928, it was my wish to take lessons from the great master, Pietro Deiro. Pagani informed me that Deiro was just around the corner from where I was standing. So, I visited him and was accepted as a student. After three lessons, however, he offered me a job as his teaching assistant. I gave up show business, and this partnership with Pietro lasted 6 years. We played many concerts and radio shows together all over the West, in Washington and California, as well as in Chicago and the Midwest.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that Pietro Deiro was a pleasant and good man and a man of heart. Because of my admiration for him, it was a very hard decision to leave his studio to begin my own studios. We were always very close friends and, to this day, I am thankful to him for giving me a chance to become someone.

Pietro Frosini was also my teacher in 1932-33. I learned much from this genius, and we remained close friends until his death in 1951.

In 1934, I decided that I'd had enough of New York so I returned to Boston to open a studio on Hanover Street in the North End. I stayed at the studio on Hanover Street from 1934-36. The C. G. Conn Music Company was next, and I stayed there for 2 years. Then, I moved again to Huntington Avenue. This studio was directly across the street from The New England Conservatory of Music. I became the head of its Accordion Department. Gradually, I opened studios in Worcester, Cambridge and Lawrence, Massachusetts; Providence, Rhode Island; Portsmouth and Manchester, New Hampshire; and Portland and Augusta, Maine. This kept me running practically all week.

In 1934, I was staff arranger for Pagani and produced many compositions, arrangements, and instruction books. It would be impossible to give a count on these as they were numerous. However, the most prominent of my compositions that sold in quantity were

"Accordionette" and "Accordionola." My arrangements include solos, duets, trios, quartets, quintets, sextets, septets, octets, and accordion orchestra scores for 9 to 17 accordions. From 1930 to 1934, Pietro Deiro, Elvira Collins, and I recorded for RCA Victor Records. One of my instruction books, *Modern Technique*, was a best seller.

Then, in 1946, I received my certification from the Veterans' Administration to teach the returning GIs under the Veterans' Bill of Rights.

In 1947, I became a partner with Theresa Costello at Pagani Music. Now, I had a chance to organize accordion bands, but was not happy with the sound. So, I studied books on orchestration. The first number I arranged was Beethoven's Fifth Symphony — First Movement, but I still did not like the sound. I refused to accept defeat, nevertheless, so I studied some more and solved the problem. My enthusiasm was renewed.

Most of the accordions those days had four sets of reeds with two changes. So, I took each accordion, put it in the range of the orchestra and took off some sets of reeds in certain accordions in order to get the right effect. But, I was still missing the bass.

I found a Hohner basso in a pawn shop and bought it for $25. We tried it, but it was not successful. In the meantime, microphones had come on the market; so, we put a "mike" on this little basso, and it had a tremendous effect. We then decided to amplify every accordion. Now, my dream was realized; we had achieved the blending of beautiful sounds of piccolos, flutes, oboes, clarinets, trumpets, violins, violas, horns, bassoons and bass. Everyone in the orchestra was quite astonished.

After about 6 months of rehearsals, we were hired out to play concerts. We played many, many New England towns for money and "for free" — just so long as we played. I first took this orchestra to New York in 1950, and we played a concert in the Governor Clinton Hotel at a musical convention and then the ball started to roll. Soon, accordionists around the country had their own orchestras and were playing my arrangements. I became known as the "Pioneer of the Accordion Orchestra."

Graduation day ceremonies for the GIs were held in Symphony Hall, Boston, in June, 1950. This was an all-classical program, and compositions by Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Mendelssohn, and Schubert were played. The all-accordion orchestra consisted of 45 graduates — 2 women and 43 men (ages 25-35). Ten of these graduates were soloists. It was a great success and a sell-out attended by 2,500 people. This event was the introduction of the accordion-orchestra at Symphony Hall.

My many appearances in Boston and this area included concerts in Symphony Hall, Jordan Hall, Mechanics Building and Boston Garden, as well as Mechanics Hall in Worcester, the Manning Bowl in Lynn attended by 18,000 and in a football field in Vermont attended by 20,000 people (along with Eddie Fisher).

There have been many awards and testimonial dinners honoring me throughout the years in this country and in Italy which I have enjoyed and appreciated very much. It gave me great pleasure in 1951 to be included in Who Is Who In Music. Other honors include a citation from the American Accordionists' Association in 1938, as the outstanding accordion teacher in the United States, an honorary Fellowship from the National College of Toronto in 1940, and the decorations of the Order of St. Hubert of Lorraine from Italy in 1948, for outstanding achievement in music.

During the "heyday" years of radio, I played over several radio stations, including WAAB, WEEI, WMEX, WNAC and WBZ. In 1933-34, Pietro Deiro and I played for the Brioschi program which was broadcast nationwide. Our program consisted of four duets and one solo every Sunday with Pietro and me alternating for this solo. In 1936, I played the first accordion concert ever held in an airplane. The concert was held aboard an American Airline's Condor aircraft while en route from

Boston to Toledo, Ohio, and it was reported as a major event in *Accordion World* magazine.

An interesting thing happened in 1939 during one of my crossings of the Atlantic. I was sailing aboard the Italian liner, the *Rex*, and was practicing my accordion in my second-class stateroom when I was interrupted by a sudden knock on the door. Answering the door, I was cheerfully greeted by the conductor of the ship's orchestra which entertained exclusively for the first-class passengers. He asked if I would play for him and, after my performance, it was evident that we had developed an immediate friendship and mutual admiration. As a result, he invited me to perform for the first-class passengers after the dinner hour in their private dining room. My half-hour program consisted of all classical music. Following the performance, I found to my astonishment that the famous actor, Tyrone Power, and his wife, Annabella, were in the audience.

I also played at a radio station in Ancona, Italy in 1939 and, in 1947, was the first accordionist to play over WMEX TV in Boston, which had a radius of 30 miles at that time. In 1956, I played over a Madrid, Spain radio station. And, in 1969, I appeared with Ted Mack in the Boston Garden with Steve Allen and Eddie Fisher and, also in 1969, with my orchestra on the Channel 2 TV station.

In 1956, I served as a participating judge for the A.A.A. at the International Championship held in Basel, Switzerland. There were between 50-60 contestants who came from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, England, France, Greece, Italy, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Norway, Yugoslavia, and the United States. From 1960-1965, I was associated with Carl Fischer of Boston as a consultant on accordions. The interest in accordions was so intense at that time that people came in droves to inquire.

There was a very significant and successful trip taken by my orchestra in 1970 to Italy. We gave 15 concerts in different cities and earned enough to cover all our expenses with some left over. We had 23 accordionists, ages 12-18, and a tympanist and a drummer were added to the orchestra. Our repertoire ranged from "East Side, West Side" to Beethoven. We won an award, and the mayor of my home town gave us a nice party at which time I was presented 2 plaques which now hang in my music room. Our entire party totaled 83, including the players' parents, brothers and sisters. We had a great time!

After retirement in 1973, I realized that I had a huge problem — what to do with all my memorabilia. My very close friend in Italy, Pietro Lombardi (known as "Mario") advised me that he would take the matter up with the local society of workers — the Societa di Mutuo Soccorso, of which he is a member. Soon afterward, I was delighted when informed that the society had voted to accept everything, to set it up in museum-like form, act as the permanent custodian, and keep it forever.

Consequently, I started to pack my things in 1980. But, it took 3 years before the Italian authorities allowed it to be accepted duty-free. There were 36 large cartons in all. Finally, everything was shipped in July, 1983, but did not reach the destination until November of that year. Today, it is set up in perfect order in one room.

The first showing was in 1985. It is open to the public once a year, but always open to the 30,000 members — the whole town, in fact. All revenues or proceeds received is used to help the underprivileged. Any person who wishes to borrow a manuscript is permitted to, but must copy it there. The manuscripts are never allowed to leave the building. It is considered to be a treasured, priceless, and exclusive collection of arrangements, compositions, documents, correspondence, scrapbooks, trophies, photographs, write-ups, relics, manuscripts, etc. They have assured me that it will be in protective custody for all-time, and preserved forever. There is even a photograph of Bob Hope and myself taken together in 1947 at the Hotel Statler in Boston. As of now, I've donated a total of 866 manuscripts, and I'm continuously adding to this number.

It has given me great pleasure through the years, and especially during the golden-age for accordionists, to know many other fellow teachers and concert artists. Among them are:

[Editor's Note: Artists are presented in alphabetical order]

ROGER ALLEN
ANDY ARCARI
TONY ARETTA
MADDALENA BELFIORE
ELSIE BENNETT
MICKY BISELIA
JOSEPH BIVIANO
DAN BORZAGE
CARMEN CARROZZA
ELVIRA COLLINS
DICK CONTINO
CHARLES D'ALOISIO
TONNY DANNON
ADRIAN DANTE
STANLEY DARROW
SIDNEY DAWSON
GUIDO DEIRO
PIETRO DEIRO
PIETRO DEIRO, JR.
LOUIS DEL MONTE
ALDO DeROSSI
DANIEL DESIDERIO
ERIC ERICKSON
JAMES ERICKSON
EUGENE ETTORE
SAM FALCETTI
MYRON FLOREN
PIETRO FROSINI
ANTHONY GALLA-RINI
JOHN GART
TULIO GASPARINI
TITO GUIDOTTI
LARI HOLZHAUER
BILL HUGHES
ANTHONY IMBRIGLIO
ART LANGE
LLOYD LA VAUX
CHARLES MAGNANTE
CERVASIO MARCOSIGNORI
DOMENIC MECCA
ANTHONY MECCA
JOHN MOLINARI
RUDY MOLINARO
PAUL MONTE
DR. JACOB NEUPAUER
CHARLES NUNZIO
BILL PALMER
IVOR PETERSON
JOSEPH PETTA
CAESAR PEZZOLO
JOHN PEZZOLO
SYL PRIOR
JOHN REUTHER
ANDY RIZZO
FRANK ROMANO
JOSEPH ROSSI
LEON SASH
JOAN COCHRAN SOMMERS
FREDERIC TEDESCO
ART VAN DAMME
GENE VON HALLBERG
LUCILLE WILMOT
OAKLEY YALE

---------- and many others ----------



FRANK GAVIANI (L) JOINS GUEST ARTIST, PIETRO FROSINI (R), IN PLAYING "JOLLY CABALLERO" AT A RECITAL/CONCERT HELD AT THE NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC'S JORDAN HALL IN BOSTON (1942). MARTHA MAGNUSON, ALSO ON STAGE, RECALLS THAT FROSINI HAD JUST COMPLETED HIS PART IN A RATHER SPECTACULAR MANNER; THEN, GAVIANI GAVE AN AMAZING RENDITION OF HIS OWN — MUCH TO THE DELIGHT OF HIS STUDENTS. GAVIANI'S PERFORMANCE WAS SO OUTSTANDING THAT FROSINI WAS ENJOYING IT IMMENSELY, ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE, AS SHOWN BY THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF THOSE ON STAGE. (Photograph used with the permission of Martha Magnuson)

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JOSEPH PETTA
CAESAR PEZZOLO
JOHN PEZZOLO
SYL PRIOR
JOHN REUTHER
ANDY RIZZO
FRANK ROMANO
JOSEPH ROSSI
LEON SASH
JOAN COCHRAN SOMMERS
FREDERIC TEDESCO
ART VAN DAMME
GENE VON HALLBERG
LUCILLE WILMOT
OAKLEY YALE

---------- and many others ----------



FRANK GAVIANI (L) JOINS GUEST ARTIST, PIETRO FROSINI (R), IN PLAYING "JOLLY CABALLERO" AT A RECITAL/CONCERT HELD AT THE NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC'S JORDAN HALL IN BOSTON (1942). MARTHA MAGNUSON, ALSO ON STAGE, RECALLS THAT FROSINI HAD JUST COMPLETED HIS PART IN A RATHER SPECTACULAR MANNER; THEN, GAVIANI GAVE AN AMAZING RENDITION OF HIS OWN — MUCH TO THE DELIGHT OF HIS STUDENTS. GAVIANI'S PERFORMANCE WAS SO OUTSTANDING THAT FROSINI WAS ENJOYING IT IMMENSELY, ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE, AS SHOWN BY THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF THOSE ON STAGE. (Photograph used with the permission of Martha Magnuson)

The late Arthur Fiedler, director of the noted Boston Pops Orchestra, was one of my very good friends; he called me "Gav." Frankie Laine was also among my many friends. Faithe Deffner is also an enthusiastic accordion promoter. Much credit is due this lady. Xavier Cugat has been my friend since 1932.

I would not have been able to accomplish as much during my career had it not been for my wife, Mary, and my son, Frank, Jr. My wife was my bookkeeper and kept perfect records. Frank, Jr. graduated from Boston University with a Bachelor of Music degree and received a Professorship from Lowell State College. He taught the accordion for 20 years and had studios in Salem, Lynn, Revere and Malden, Mass. Today, my son is an excellent musician in his own right, having composed and published works for Pagani. He has been teaching music in public schools for 18 years and is director of the Whitman Middle School Band in Whitman, Mass. To carry the ball, I have a great grandson, Steven, who is 6 years old. He is now playing "The Marine's Hymn" on a 48-bass accordion; it makes me happy every time I hear him play.

I also have a daughter, Leatrice. Although she did not participate in any of my musical activities, she has been a loving, supportive daughter. After graduating from Boston University, she married and moved away to other cities. She has lived in Chicago for the past 18 years and has been a very successful executive in a national corporation.

I retired in 1973 and today, as before, I spend my days still arranging music on an average of 5 hours a day. It is my "safety valve." I also enjoy TV, especially when Pavarotti and Placido Domingo appear.

I have traveled to Italy many times "to find my roots," and hope to return to renew my friendships once again.

In conclusion, if through hard work I have eased the way and somehow helped other fellow accordionists to go forward, then I shall consider it all worthwhile.

— **Weymouth, Mass.**
June 30, 1989

[This autobiography was prepared with the assistance of Martha Magnuson, a former student and devotee of Frank Gaviani. Her personal efforts are indeed appreciated as she has greatly assisted through many hours of painstaking dictation followed by many additional hours of manuscript preparation, editing, and final copy review. I also wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to Eddie Chavez, who first contacted Mr. Gaviani with the idea to write his autobiography for inclusion in this book of noted U.S. accordionists from the "Golden Age" of the accordion. The final manuscript of this autobiogaphy was personally proofed for accuracy by Frank Gaviani several months before he passed away. In preparing this revised edition of The Golden Age of the Accordion, we wish also to express our special thanks to Frank Gaviani, Jr., and Leatrice (Gaviani) Flynn for their assistance in reviewing this autobiography and their suggestions for updating their father's life story.]

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN REUTHER
By Ron Flynn

Editor's Note: This is the complete transcript of an interview of John Reuther by Ron Flynn in San Francisco in 1972. During the interview, John Reuther reflected about many accordion artists he had known throughout his career, and he gave his personal story of how he came to the United States, began his accordion career, and developed the Uniform Keyboard System for the accordion. The artists mentioned during this interview are shown on pp. 151-162 for historical reasons since Excelsior's Album of Stars is no longer in print. The transcript of this previously unpublished interview is particularly appropriate in this recollection of San Francisco — a city which was so close to John's heart and where he had lived for several years before his retirement in Ft. Myers, Florida.

.....

Ron: This is Ron Flynn in San Francisco. I have the pleasure to be over in the home of John Reuther once again. John is the original editor of the *Accordion World* magazine back in 1936. He is the author of the *Reuther Chord Reference*, a direct and simple guide for recognizing chords, and he is the author of *Accordion Repairs Made Easy* published by the O. Pagani Company. Also, he is the inventor of the Uniform Accordion Keyboard System. John, it's very nice to be over again to talk accordion with you.

John: Well, it's always a pleasure, Ron. Now, in this book of the *Album of Stars* by Excelsior, I see quite a few well-known stars amongst those that are totally unknown. So, it is, of course, a promotion deal which gives a boost to those unknowns to be listed in the same book with the famous artists. And it's good sales psychology. I see Andy Arcari here, an old-time accordion player of tremendous ability. I've heard him play symphony concerts of one thing and another, but unfortunately, he made very few records.

Ron: In fact, I didn't know, John, that he'd made any records at all.

John: Well, when he came to this country, the only thing they would let him make were simple things like "O Solo Mio" and "Vieni Sul Mar," and such, which I have in my Florida collection that I hope to get in a few weeks.

Ron: What country did he come from?

John: Italy.

Ron: I met Andy for the first time when I was in an Army hospital during World War II. He was with a USO group, and while they were performing at the end of the ward, I motioned to him to come over, and we talked accordion. When it was all over with, he took his Excelsior off and let me put it on. I let my feet hang out of bed, and one of the biggest thrills of my life was when I got through playing a simple polka, all the USO stars were applauding me. So, I'll always remember Andy for that.

John: Yes, he was a great accordionist. He now lives in Florida.

Ron: Then, here is Roy Awbrey; he used to appear out here at Will King's Rumpus Room over at 18th and Geary. Quite a fellow with the electronic accordion! I got him over to the house one time, and I recorded him on tape playing a few tunes, and I tried to get him back a second time, but he begged out because he had to meet some girl or something. How about Phil Baker? What ever happened to him?

John: Well, he was a New York show artist. He appeared first, when I heard of him at least, in the New York musical comedy shows; but he never mastered the accordion to the extent that he could play anything of a technical nature. He played simple stuff and if he got stuck he stopped and told a joke, found his

place on the keyboard, and then went on again — and did it very successfully. As far as I know, he retired somewhere in Hollywood. For a while, he was on the radio. He made records of things like "Stardust," and so on. He did a nice job, but I have not heard from him in years.... Then, we have Joe Biviano from New York City. I more or less grew up with these fellows.

Ron: Yes.

John: And between Charles Magnante and Biviano, they had the NBC work pretty well sewed up. Biviano also taught accordion. He turned out some very good players. Now then, who else do we have here that I recognize? Well, Carmen Carrozza. I've known him since he was a little boy, about 8 or 9.

Ron: Oh, yes?

John: Yes.

Ron: He was a student of Pietro Deiro?

John: Yes, that's right, and he went on from there and made a big success.

Ron: I think he is now with the staff of Pietro Deiro Music Company.

John: He taught for Pietro when he was a teenager, about 17 or 18. He then had a studio of his own up in Chappaquedic, New York.

Ron: Oh, Joyce Conti is a pretty girl.

John: Yes, I never met her.

Ron: She has the same rocker switches that I have on my Excelsior.

John: John J. Convertino, I've heard of him, but I've never met him. Arnold Crowe, a familiar name. Yes, he had a branch of the Deiro Co.

Ron: In Philadelphia. They had a branch of the Pietro Deiro Co. They don't have it anymore.

John: Then we have Pietro Sr. and Pietro Jr., Excelsior artists. Pietro Jr. took the name Pietro probably for the publicity value. His real name was Liszt, named after the famous piano composer.

Ron: That could be one of the reasons a lot of people call him by his nickname, Lee.

John: Yes. That's how it came about. Let's see, I remember Daniel Desiderio. He was studying with Pietro in the 1930's. I remember him quite well. He taught for Pietro for a while.

Ron: He played with an Army band, too, I think.

John: Quite a good player. And, we have, of course, Pietro Frosini, the famous (Pause) — so famous, we don't have to mention it here.

Ron: Oh, you mentioned one time, I think, that he was going to call "Jolly Caballero" by some other name, and you told him he shouldn't do it?

John: Yes, he named it the "Gay Caballero," but there had been fairly recently another popular song by that name, and I said it would be unfortunate to duplicate it. So, he changed it to "Jolly Caballero."

Ron: I see. This Carl Fortina, he was one of the star students of John Pezzolo. He was quite a player.

John: It is unfortunate that there is no real place in this country for a real concert artist anymore. There are three things needed for success in this field: First, a good artist — a man able to play and interpret; second, a good instrument; and third, an audience. And, unfortunately, we are lacking in an audience.

Ron: If one of those three things you mentioned is missing, you don't make it with the other two.

John: No, you don't make it. Frank Gaviani. I've known him many many years. He came from St. Louis. He started to learn music when he was 18 years of age, and it's remarkable that starting at such a late date, he went so far. He made records for Victor with Pietro, some of which I have. I think I gave you one of Pietro and Gaviani playing together.

Ron: I keep up with a lot of this by reading the old *Accordion World* magazines.

John: I made a 3-deck keyboard for him years ago for his Excelsior accordion which he used in his concerts. It was a piano keyboard with wide black keys and the first row duplicated by the third row.

Ron: Oh, I saw that. I wondered what that was.

John: Well, I made it.

Ron: Does that have anything to do with your uniform keyboard?

John: I have the patents on both. Yes, on both that keyboard and the other one.

Ron: It baffled me.

John: He did not want to alter the order of the piano keys; but he wanted the advantage of the third row, and he wanted the advantage of the wide black keys. Because with the third row, he did not have to get in between the black keys, you could reach above them and interpose with the keys.

Ron: It wasn't exactly your uniform keyboard. It was a combination.

John: Tito Guidotti played with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Paul Whiteman considered him the best jazz artist of the times. And, he wrote some peculiar jazz music like "Oodles of Noodles" or some stuff like that, "Snakes and Ladders," various odd things. Edward Gurzynski, a famous name but I never met him. Victor Hager, he used to make accordions up in Jamestown. I went to visit him there when the Hagstroms were trying to build a factory there, and he was foreman in a factory. He was probably the head man in the accordion field there because he taught there and played there in nightclubs. Yes, Louis Iorio, I know, but not Gabriel Paul Iorio.

Ron: Are they related?

John: It doesn't say. The Iorio family were accordion makers from way back. In fact, they were originally organ makers. And Amedeo Iorio made the cassata-type accordions where the reeds are set at a different angle in sort of a tone chamber. But, his patents ran out, and he also made the keyboards up on the grill; but, that did not go over either. Louie Iorio — whether he's related to the Iorio accordion makers, I don't know. Charles Magnante, I see him here.

Ron: Oh, yes. You told me one time he got his start playing on the ferryboats in New York, is that true?

John: Yes, the Staten Island ferryboats. He used to play the accordion, and his brother Angelo played saxophone. And Frank Umbriaco was quite an accordion player of that time, and Biviano also played on the ferryboats. This was going back to 1924 or so. That was their beginning.

Ron: Were they having dancing on the ferryboats?

John: No, they went the rounds strolling around playing and gaining experience.

Ron: They sure got the experience!

John: But, I rather think the salt air would have been hard on the steel reeds.

Ron: It certainly would! I was interested in a musette accordion that Vince Cirelli had. He loaned it to one of these professionals here in town, and when he came back, he told Vince that everybody on the boat enjoyed it. Vince said, "What boat? Are you talking about the boat that makes cruises on San Francisco Bay? It's yours; you can have it." And, it was a musette that Vince and I liked. Vince didn't want to sell it, but I wanted to buy it — and the reeds did eventually rust.

John: Now we have here, Sergei Matusewitch. His real name was Solomon Matusewitch. He used to teach at Wurlitzer during the time that I used to teach. And, he took lessons from Pietro Deiro. And, his brother, Boris, was a concertina player and his father was a

concertina player also, making records for Victor. I had to introduce Matusewitch at a concert one time. He had an Excelsior with two switches on the grill; so, by way of a gag, I said we used to call him "MAC," but since he got his 2-switch accordion, we now call him: "MA-TWO-SWITCH." *(Laughter)* He didn't appreciate it.

Ron: It was a good chuckle. I'll tell you that.

John: He didn't appreciate it at all.

Ron: No, he didn't, eh? He looked like the more sober type.

John: He frowned at me for that. But the audience enjoyed it. Now, Anthony and Domenic Mecca; they were famous accordion players from the Connecticut area, and they started quite young. In fact, at the age of 16, they were already acknowledged Excelsior accordion dealers in their territory. And, one of them married into the Boudini family. The Boudini brothers were accordion players from the 1890's. They played chromatic on Italian records. I remember they were chocolate-colored records. And, they made some nice records of things like "Swanee River" playing on the left and "Humoresque" on the other side, and clever things like that.

Ron: Yes, there are a few things you can do that on. Terrific.

John: Yes, because the harmony happens to run parallel on both songs; so you can do it. Very very effective, yes. Now, Bill Hughes is, of course, an Excelsior artist from Houston. ***[Editor's note: Although originally an Excelsior artist, Bill Hughes was a Titano artist for most of his career.]*** Bill Palmer and Bill Hughes teamed up to make quite a successful school while the accordion was going well. But, in time, with the accordion demise by 1960 or so, Bill Palmer began to teach music at the University of Houston, and Bill Hughes, I saw him in an organ and music store working there in the daytime and doing accordion work when the opportunity offered.

Ron: Were they very far from where you lived in Waco?

John: Ninety miles away. I used to visit them regularly, and they made records together of "Jolly Caballero" and several other things — an album which I have.

Ron: They have that terrific teaching system of books.

John: Yes, they made the first really successful instruction books so that teachers all over the country could teach accordion. The books before, unfortunately, or the publishers of accordion books selected players and concert artists who had no experience in teaching, and those concert artists were unable to reach the student level at all. They had no idea what was easy and what was difficult — that had long passed into their subconscious. In fact, Bill Palmer and Bill Hughes made such a thorough study and made it so easy to learn that you can credit a lot of the accordion studio success to their textbooks.

Ron: They were published by the Alfred Music Co.?

John: Yes, they were first offered to the O. Pagani, but Pagani said, "No, who are you people?"

Ron: Oh, what a mistake on his part!

John: He missed it completely. When they became so popular, he wrote them, "Don't print anything more until you see me." But, they would not go along with him. They stuck with Mr. Sol Manus, who was the owner of the Alfred Music Company, and they did very well by each other.

Ron: Frosini also had his music published by Alfred Music Company, did he not?

John: Yes. Now, we come to Milton Thomas of Glenbrook, Long Island. With the demise of the accordion interest, he

went into selling musical instruments for a Chicago musical instrument company, and that was what he was doing in Florida when I was there. He was making the rounds of the music stores and selling clarinets and other musical instruments. But, he still kept his accordion, his Excelsior, and he could play quite well.

Ron: John Pisacco. He was a student of John Pezzolo, and I think he passed away, Vince Cirelli told me. It was 21 years ago when this book was published.

John: And Syl Prior was quite well-known, and an old-timer too. But, I never met him or heard him play. He was very active in the field and had an enormous number of students.

Ron: This fellow here was another student of John Pezzolo, Aldo Roselli. And, I'm pretty sure Vince Cirelli told me he passed away also.

John: Elma Santa was a student of Biviano. Her real name was Elma Santavicki. But, she was very popular in the nightclubs in New York, and also composed one or two polkas and things also.

Ron: This is Angelo Sfarzo. He was a student of John Pezzolo. And when John was sick quite a while, he ran the studios on Columbus Ave, and when John came back and got well again, Angelo pulled out and opened the "Angelo School of Music" on Geneva Avenue, off Mission. He's the one I bought that Excelsior from that you played when you were over at the house. I bought that from him in 1952. It was $1,050 plus the extra row of basses. I turned in a beat up old accordion and got $200 for it, and I'll always remember $853.36. It was the biggest check I'd written up to that date. I'm certainly glad I bought that accordion.

John: Well, that was 20 years ago. You would not be able to find such an accordion today.

Ron: Yes, I love that accordion. I just worry about fires, that's all.

John: John Frilli. I met him a few times.

Ron: Joseph Zon Frilli?

John: Yes.

Ron: What type of player was he, orchestra or solo or... ?

John: Mainly a teacher. He studied with Frosini, and he opened a school there. Art Van Damme was an accordionist in Chicago who always played in a trio and was famous for his original Jazz work.

Ron: You know Art Van Damme? I think I told you once before. I dreamed about Art one night coming over to my house and playing the Excelsior that I have, and I went to turn the tape recorder on. I have one of those big old ones, and it was not where it was supposed to be. I couldn't find it anywhere. And, he played for a whole hour, and he left. Then, I woke up and I wrote down the facts of the dream so I'd remember them later when I wanted to look at them, and I wondered why I did it. And all of a sudden, I remembered Art had sent me his picture, autographed a year before, and I had it on the wall. And every time I passed it on the wall, I said to myself, "Gee, I've got to write to him and thank him for sending me that picture." And, the dream was a case of me actually being punished because I hadn't written to him and thanked him. So, I wrote to him and told him about the dream, and he got a big kick out of it. A real nice fellow!

John: Lucille Wilmot was a teacher for Frank Gaviani's School, and what she's doing today I do not know. I feel sorry for all those who built their careers on the accordion alone, thinking it would always be in demand. They have, like I have, had to go into some other field.

Ron: You went into electronics?

John: Yes, luckily, I had a smattering of

ignorance about electronics and caught on in the tape recorder field.

Ron: I remember when I first talked to you, you said, "I did not leave the accordion, the accordion left me." That's the way you put it.

John: Yes, the accordion left me — left many people. Joseph Zampiceni, he bought out the Quattrociocche edition, and he is now in San Jose, but I doubt that he had much sale for Quattrociocche.

Ron: Well, he published a lot of music by teachers around here, and then he sold out much of his stuff to Pietro Deiro. Pietro Deiro has it now.

John: Well, there looks like about a hundred people in here, but only about a dozen or so who really made a name in the field.

Ron: Yes. Well, you know, he had a lot of nice arrangements for the accordion, but it was getting them out in circulation that was a problem.

John: Yes. Well, you see, the publishing field is a separate thing altogether. Now, for a parallel we'll go to Mark Twain. He sought to publish a couple of books on his own and get 40% instead of the 5% that the publisher offered. But, he found that he had books stacked to the ceiling and no customers because he had no mailing lists and no proper channels. And, at the age of 75, he had to take to the lecture field again to pay for the printing of these books and try to sell a few at lectures. Fortunately, a millionaire, Hudelston Rogers, from Standard Oil was a great fan of Mark Twain. He saw what the difficulty was and rescued him, took the books off his hands, sent them through proper book channels, and got Mark Twain in the black again.

Ron: I see.

John: And that's what would be needed in a case like this.

Ron: In a case like this. He had some good arrangements. They just weren't getting around where Pietro Deiro can get them around.

John: Yes. And don't overlook the fact that Mark Twain was the biggest name in literature at the time. But, still it did not do him any good. He could not sell the books.

Ron: It didn't do him any good.

John: It's a separate trade — distribution and writing. Thus, I'd never publish a book on my own in the field. Therefore, I had my book published by regular publishers who have the entree' and access to the book-buying public.

Ron: A good example is that book of yours on accordion repairs that was published 17 years ago (?).

John: Something like that. I'd have to look it up.

Ron: Yes, I believe so, and here is the U.S. Championship Accordion Program for this year. Pagani still has it advertised for the price of $7.50 which you said...

John: ...at that time was unheard of. It's the highest price book [of its type] ever put out. I protested it. I said, "It'll never sell! A couple of dollars, it might sell, but not $7.50!"

Ron: What'd they say?

John: "Now, you write the book! We've been publishing for 40 years; we know what we're doing." And they were right.

Ron: John, it's always very interesting when I can get you talking about where you got your start in the accordion field, the company that you were associated with, and how you got started on your uniform keyboard. I forget the facts right now; just cue us in a little bit.

John: Well, it came about in this way. I came to New York at the age of 19 or so and living alone in rooming houses I always had a liking for music, and I thought I'd like to learn piano, but it wasn't practical in a small rooming house, and if I had to move, there

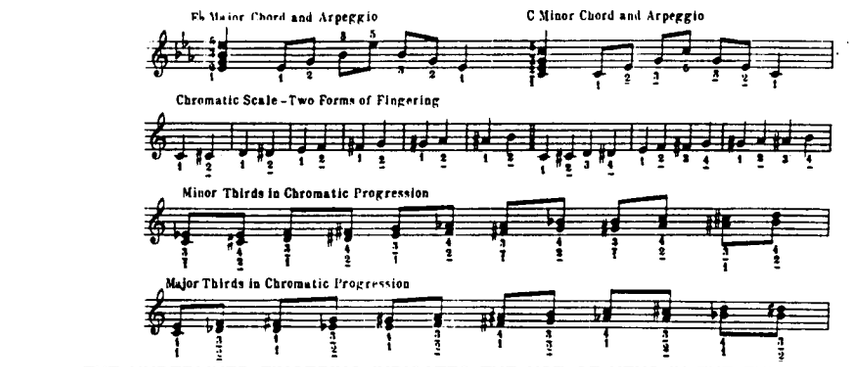
would be the problem of moving the piano. Then, I happened to see on the Staten Island ferryboats, accordions with piano keyboards on them. So, I thought, well, I would start with that and then graduate to the piano, never thinking that I would stay with the accordion and make a career of it. So, I asked one of the players where one could learn to play accordion. His name was Frank Umbriaco, and he was playing things like "The Second Hungarian Rhapsody" in grand style. I thought it was all lost on the ferryboats because no one was paying too much attention. So, he said he taught accordion in his spare time, and he gave me his address on 116th Street. And so, I began to take lessons from Frank Umbriaco without any accordion at all, just learning music and learning to read and so forth. And, then we scouted around for a second-hand accordion because I didn't have money enough to buy a $500 accordion. I had written to the Guerrini Company and they wanted $500, and they said it would take 6 months to make the accordion.

Ron: That was Guerrini here in San Francisco?

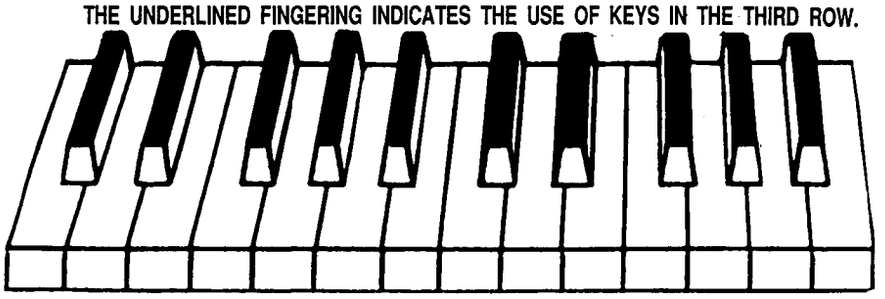
John: Yes. So, I then went around to Galizi brothers in New York and this was in 1924. And then I found the Excelsior Company down on Mulberry Street. Rosciani and the two Pancotti brothers, Egisto and Roberto, had a partnership and were making accordions. Their accordions were smart looking and had a beautiful sound; but, they were out of my reach. Well, then we heard of an accordion for sale in Philadelphia for $200; it was a Lupernacci accordion, and I just took a chance and sent the $200. Very fortunately, it was worth the money. It needed some repairs; but, I learned how to do it myself, not thinking that the day would come that I would write a book on accordion repairs. Well, Umbriaco was a great player and teacher, but for some reason I was unable to learn at that point in my life.... I struggled for a few months longer as I didn't believe that I would give it up altogether. Then I thought that I would get some records and sheet music and copy as closely as possible what was happening on the records while watching the sheet music, and that I'd just learn to play a few tunes to satisfy myself. But the more I delved into it at the Schirmer Library, and the more I got to know the musicians, I got a hint from one and from another. To make a long story short, in a period of 10 years, I got to the point that I was able to play in theaters — something I thought was quite a milestone in my career. And a strange thing too, after playing a few months in the theaters, I found that it was something I didn't like and did not want to do. From that, I branched out into studio work. Meanwhile, the piano keyboard that I'd spent quite a few years with, I did not like because of the arrangement of the piano keys and its lack of uniformity. You couldn't transpose immediately from one key to another like you can with the basses. I liked the uniformity of the bass keyboard.

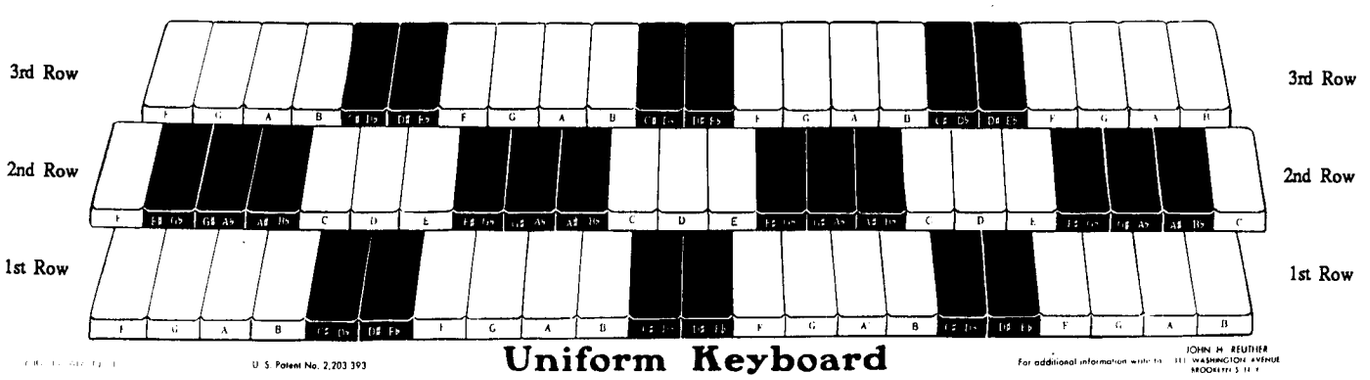
Ron: Yes, yes.

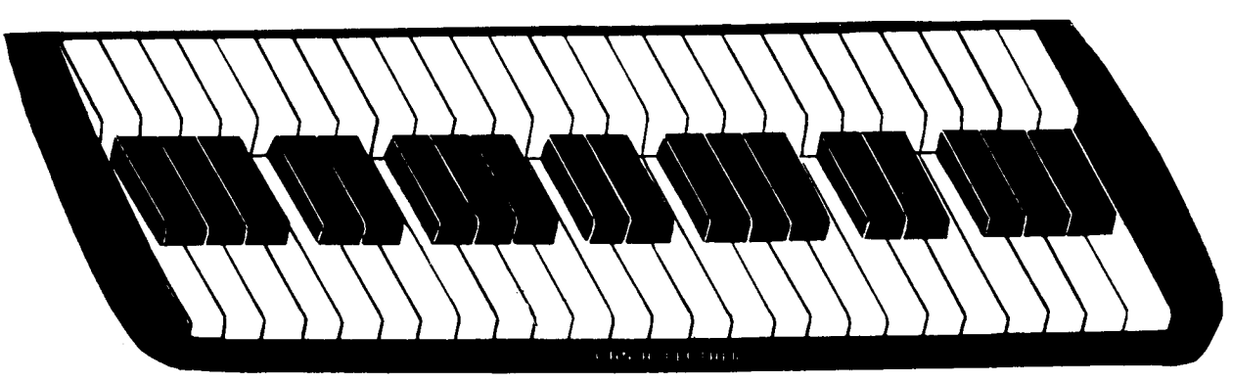
John: Well, the only other uniform treble keyboard I could find was a 5-row chromatic. But, it also posed other difficulties. For instance, your thumb had a disadvantage on the buttons — the thumb being an important finger as it is the pivot finger which the longer fingers pass over. So I decided to make cardboard models of various ideas I had, and the thumb decided the shape of the key, an oblong key about 1 3/4" long and about 13/16" wide. And, I stuck to that width and never had to change



THE UNDERLINED FINGERING INDICATES THE USE OF KEYS IN THE THIRD ROW.

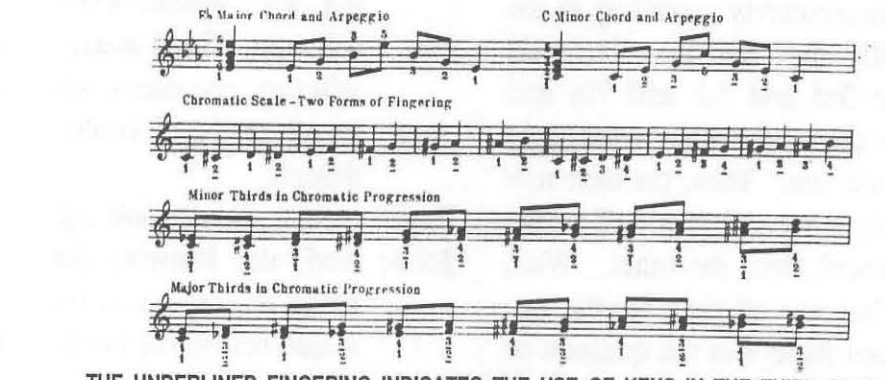




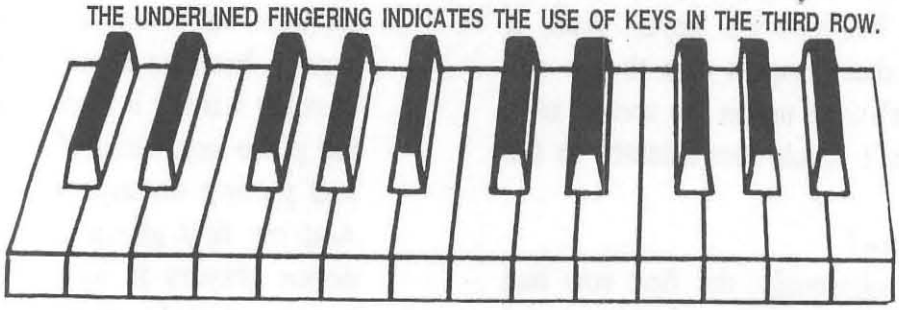


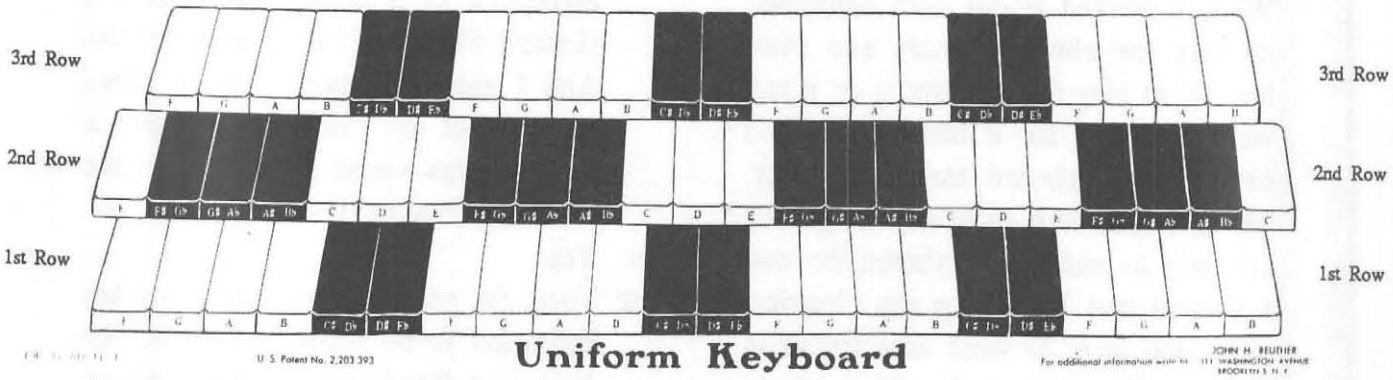
3 ROW PIANO KEYBOARD Pat. No. 2, 557, 690

UNIFORM AND 3-TIER PIANO KEYBOARDS PATENTED BY JOHN REUTHER

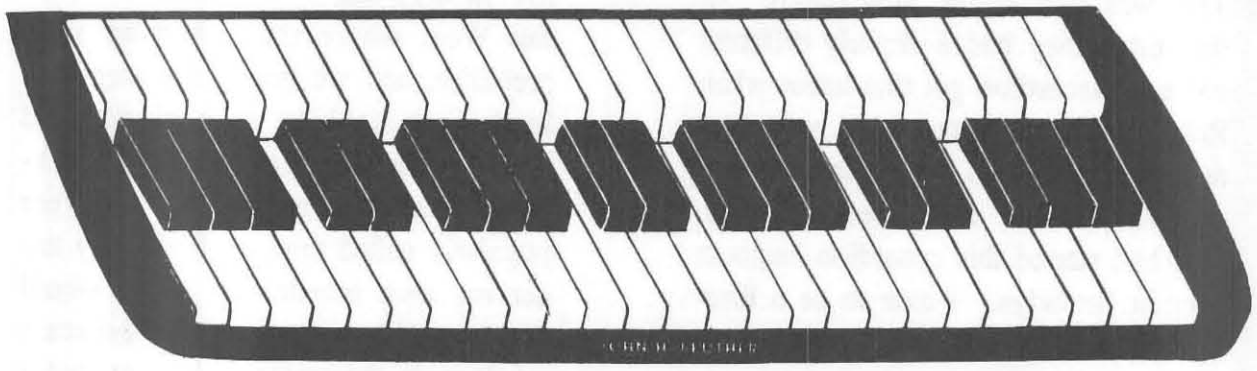


THE UNDERLINED FINGERING INDICATES THE USE OF KEYS IN THE THIRD ROW.





Uniform Keyboard



3 ROW PIANO KEYBOARD Pat. No. 2, 557, 690

UNIFORM AND 3-TIER PIANO KEYBOARDS PATENTED BY JOHN REUTHER

it. Instead of arranging the keys on the outer row consecutively according to the C-scale, with their half-tone intervals between the 3rd and 4th and 7th and 8th, I made them all whole notes right straight up the line. Then, the next row was also whole tones but a half-a-tone different (space) from the other. Well, all right. That was all right for the two rows, but then there was the question of getting in between the keys. And, if your two short fingers (the thumb and little finger) were up on the second row, you couldn't reach conveniently to the first row.

Ron: Down below?

John: Yes. So, obviously, the first row had to be duplicated by the third row. Well, I worked it out with cardboard models for about 3 years and even learned to play dry-run pieces on it and write fingering for it before I decided to have a keyboard made that way. Then, I had such difficulty in getting anybody to make the keyboard the way I wanted that I gave up my electrical work and went to work as a helper in an accordion factory for 80 cents an hour in order to get the skill of using celluloid, wood, glue, and what not.

Ron: What accordion company was that?

John: That was Pancordion, now called. At that time, they had a slightly different name. Pancordion got that name when Roberto Pancotti came out of retirement and went back into the accordion business and brought down George Bundy, who had started this accordion business over in Brooklyn. I rose to be a foreman in that factory, and in 3 years or so when I was foreman, I got some time off to do some experimental work and began to build the keyboard the way I wanted it built — my own particular keyboard. Because, at that time, many hundreds of piano keyboards had passed through my hands, and I had gotten in the necessary skills of working with walnut woods and glue and celluloid. So, I made for myself a satisfactory accordion, and they were very surprised that I could play on it, even though. . .

Ron: . . . it didn't look right.

John: And, also knowing that none had been made before, I told them I had worked it out before on the cardboard models. So then, as I say, I made it only for myself, but then some accordion friends of mine wanted it also. So I began taking piano keyboards off their accordions and putting on my uniform keyboard. And my first group picture of about a dozen players is now on the method booklet that I wrote for them at the insistence of a man by the name of Herbert Holmberg; he has since died. And I used that method book myself when I had my studio going. But all these things came about by degrees without premeditation.

Ron: Yes.

John: Then, the next step was when my keyboard got to be known a little in New York and Brooklyn, I found I got opposition from other studios. They all condemned it without even understanding it, and preached against it. So, then my ex-wife and I went out to Texas, out West where there was no such prejudice, and we began teaching both kinds and stocking both kinds. I'd give an order for about 3 dozen checkerboard accordions — as they were popularly called then — from Italy under my own brandname, and I would put them side by side in the showcase windows in the studio and never said a word about how they originated, these checkerboards, and offered them either one, interchangeably. The students could take their choice. And, I would say only that with the uniform keyboard, you learn one scale, and you can



(Photo by Wendy Drum)

RECITAL PICTURE AT CAMERON PARK (CIRCA 1957). SITTING IN FRONT ROW: INSTRUCTORS JOHN REUTHER (RIGHT) AND VIOLA REUTHER (LEFT)

play in all keys; you learn one chord position, and you could play it in all keys. Or you could read in one key and play in another since the left hand was uniform, and it was even more important that the right hand be uniform as all the intricate work is done on the right hand. So that is how the uniform keyboard got its start. And for 10 years, I had a very good business there and many hundreds of accordions were made with my keyboard. And then in Italy, Sweden, and England accordion dealers began to apply for patent licenses. I would let them have it for about $250 or so. But, as I say, this lasted for about 10 years. Then, an abrupt thing occurred in the music industry. First, came the demise of the magazine, *The Etude*, which had been the bible of all serious musicians for about 70 years. It was quite a large magazine — about as large as the old *Saturday Evening Post*.

Ron: When did that go out?

John: Oh, sometime prior to 1960. But it was quite a shock to me to see it go. Then about 1960, I began to see I had built up a wonderful business for 10 years and had began to see it die away. I thought maybe I was doing something wrong. So I consulted with Bill Palmer and Bill Hughes in Houston, with Tony Rozance in San Antonio, and other teachers in Dallas. It was all the same story. They had lost about 40% of their students and no way of accounting for it. Then I wrote to teachers in New York whether business was good there. They wrote me that teachers outnumber the students there. So I said to my ex-wife, "We've got to sell out while we have something to sell." Well, a music major from Baylor University bought us out with 40 students and predicted that within a year or two he would have 200 students and his opinion was that we did not concentrate enough on "Bee-Bop," as modern music at that time was called. Well, I checked with him a year later and he had exactly 12 students, and he was selling Wynn friction oil out in the hinterlands during the daytime. So his hope to build the student body to 200 did not materialize.

Ron: How many students did you have when this picture was taken here? ***[See photograph on page 149.]***

John: I always had about every week between 90 and 100. At one time, we had to hire a third teacher to take the overflow.

Ron: Is this some sort of a park?

John: That's Cameron Park, which is a very beautiful park in Waco. We held two concerts a year, one in the summertime, and the other a formal dress affair just before Christmas.

Ron: You certainly had some young students!

John: Oh, yes.

Ron: The accordions are almost as big as they are.

John: Well, we had them made in all sizes, of course, because we always made a hard-bound rule: Never strap on an accordion too big for a student.

Ron: I have seen some pictures of Excelsiors with your keyboard on it.

John: Yes.

Ron: Excelsior was making them?

John: No, I was making them for Excelsior. Usually, Pancotti would pay me $100 apiece to make keyboards for them. I made three for him just before I left for Waco, Texas.

Ron: Then, he'd incorporate the keyboard into his regular accordion.

John: Yes, that's right.

Ron: I see. The Excelsior Accordion Company, as I see it from San Francisco here — you don't get to see it too well from here when everything is back East. It has enjoyed a number one ranking for years and years. But, all of a sudden,

EXCELSIOR'S

ALBUM of STARS

[The entire Album of Stars (Copyright 1951) has been reprinted by permission of Mario Pancotti, Excelsior Accordion Company, Inc. of New York. Indeed, some of the artists shown on these pages played or represented other accordion lines later in their career.]



JOYCE AIMEE, Excelsior artist, hailed on recent television appearances as talented young star of accordion world. Popular night club entertainer.



ANDY ARCARI, Excelsior artist, nationally known as an outstanding concert performer. Ability to play anything - from symphony to jazz - makes him in constant demand.



FRANCIS W. ASHWORTH, Excelsior artist of Milwaukee, Wis. Soloist for 15 years, playing for organizations and social functions.



ROY AWBREY, Excelsior artist of Stockton, Calif. Soloist, night club entertainer. He appeared with Freddy Martin, Rudy Vallee, Horace Heidt, Shep Fields and Benny Goodman.



ROGER BAER, Accordiana artist of Kingston, N.Y. Soloist, night club and theater entertainer, and teacher at his own studio.



PHIL BAKER, Excelsior artist, favorite entertainer of radio and stage. Another star in the top brackets who plays Excelsior.



BOB BARRY, Excelsior artist of Danville, Ill. Radio and cafe entertainer and instructor. Appeared in 2,000 shows overseas during World War II.



JOE BIVIANO, Excelsior artist of New York City. Producer of radio shows and television star as well. Also conducts his own teaching studio.



ARLENE BODDICKER, Excelsior artist of Cedar Rapids, Ia. Formerly played with dance bands and now is teacher and director of accordion academy.



ROBERT J. BOHM, Excelsior artist of Toledo, Ohio. Featured radio and night spot entertainer. Now an instructor at Fort Worth, Texas.



WESLEY BOOFTER, Excelsior artist of Des Moines, Ia. Director of his own studio and accordion bands. Has played with Ralph Zarnow and Ken Harrison.



LOU BRYANT, Excelsior artist of Great Falls, Montana. Has wide experience with stage and show work. Toured cities in United States and Canada. Now accordion teacher in Great Falls.



EILEEN and **JOEY BUCK,** Excelsior artists of New Orleans, Louisiana. Nationally known teachers. Traveled extensively with Ernie Young Productions playing most of the principal cities.



BILLY BURKS, Excelsior artist of Nashville, Tenn. Radio performer who has appeared with the Wallace Hopper Trio, Red Foley "Prince Albert" Show and his own orchestra.



EDWARD CACKOWSKI, Excelsior artist of Schenectady, N.Y. Soloist and teacher, now playing with Cackowski's Polish Quartette, P.N.A. Orchestra and Excelsior Accordion Quartette.



PETE CALDARELLI, Excelsior artist of Raton, N.M. Has his own studio and orchestra. Formerly played with Jim Whited and His Men of Note. Is also a night club entertainer.



CARMEN CARROZZA, Excelsior artist of Chappaqua, N.Y. Has given concerts in Carnegie Hall, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Boston. Now playing in his own band.



JEANNIE CLAIRE, Excelsior artist, vivacious leader of popular trio. Has appeared with many name bands.



JOYCE CONTI, Excelsior artist of Schenectady, N.Y. Popular radio entertainer who now is leader of her own trio. Formerly played with LaVerne Duo and the Dan Eddie Mack Trio.



JOHN J. CONVERTINO, Excelsior artist of Utica, N.Y. Accordion director of New York State Music Camp, American Musical Institute and Indianapolis Conservatory of Music.



HAMEL A. CORSETTI, Excelsior artist of North Woburn, Mass. Has own small combination for concert and club dates. Teaches at local high school and Beacon Musical Instrument Co.



ARNOLD E. CROWE, Excelsior artist of Philadelphia, Pa. Director of Pietro Deiro Conservatory in Philadelphia, and composer of numerous accordion solos. Extensive radio and concert stage background.



PIETRO DEIRO, SR., Excelsior artist, often called the "Dean of Modern Accordion Teaching Methods." Noted as composer and teacher.



PIETRO DEIRO, JR., Excelsior artist, a leader in the field of accordion music composition, and a popular young performer.



MYRNA DELL, Excelsior artist of Hopkins, Minn. Stage and hotel entertainer, who recently completed extensive tour for International Harvester.



DONALD DE PIETRO, Accordiana artist of Media, Pa. A member of the Western Music Masters and a frequent entertainer on variety shows.



ALDO DE ROSSI, Excelsior artist of New Bedford, Mass. Teacher and radio entertainer. Has played with John Eno's Orchestra, Manhattan Serenaders and his own trio. Directs own studio.



DANIEL DESIDERIO, Excelsior artist of Springfield, Pa. Soloist with Paul Whiteman, Harrisburgh Symphony Orchestra and at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel.



JANET DILLINGHAM, Excelsior artist of Spencer, Iowa. Director and instructor of accordion at her own studio.



EUGENE DIMARIA, Accordiana artist of Bronx, N.Y. Has played at Carnegie Hall, Bronx Winter Garden, Town Hall and Carnegie Chamber Hall and over the radio.



LEOPOLD D. FILIPPINI, Excelsior artist of Spokane, Wash. Directs his own studio and is a member of the Sons of Norway Orchestra. Formerly played with Tony Grant's All Star Floor Show, and over the radio.



CARL FORTINA, Excelsior artist, soloist for NBC radio studios in San Francisco, and an accordion star of the West Coast.



BURDICK H. FREDERICKSON, Excelsior artist of Sioux City, Iowa. Has played with Brownie Walters Band, KSCJ Timberoojans and Burdick's Trio and Duo. Now a full-time teacher at own studio.



TEDDY GABYKIEWICZ, Accordiana artist of Troy, N.Y. Leads his own band "Gay Time Trio."



FRANK GAVIANI, Excelsior artist of Dorchester, Mass. Widely known concert artist, instructor and composer. Has several accordion studios in the East and directs his own accordion symphony orchestra.



CHARLES K. GLOMB, Accordiana artist of Palmerton, Pa. Radio and television entertainer who has played with "T" Texas Tyler, Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb and other popular orchestras.



MARY ALICE GLOMB, Accordiana artist of Palmerton, Pa. Hotel and club entertainer. Now a teacher in her own studio.



AL GOOD, Excelsior artist of Oklahoma City, Okla. Staff artist of radio station WKY. Leader of a band appearing in ballrooms and night clubs.



ALVIN A. GOULD, Excelsior artist of Janesville, Wis. Teacher and solo entertainer. Also has his own studio.



TITO GUIDOTTI, Excelsior artist, who has won fame on the West coast as a jazz artist and author of "Tito's Hints on Swing Music." Plays in Hollywood clubs.



EDWARD GURZYNSKI, Excelsior artist of Schenectady, N.Y. Radio and television entertainer and composer of several solo and accordion band numbers. Has own studio and owns E.G. Music Publishing Co.



VICTOR HAGER, Excelsior artist of Jamestown, N.Y. Teacher, night club and hotel entertainer. Directs his own studio.



LOIS HALFPAPP, Accordiana artist of Spokane, Wash. Teacher and club entertainer. Has played over the radio and has her own accordion orchestra which plays at the Sons of Norway Hall.



ELSIE MAY HALL, Excelsior artist of Napavine, Wash. Radio and club program entertainer. Also teaching accordion in Longview, Wash.



VINA MAE HARMER, Excelsior artist of Santa Ana, Calif. Frequently appears on radio and television. Teaches in her own studio. Has appeared on the Horace Heidt show and USO programs.



BILL HUGHES, Excelsior artist of Houston, Texas. Popular accordion artist of this area, devoting considerable time to concert work.



GABRIEL PAUL IORIO, Accordion artist of Altoona, Pa. Arranger, composer, instructor and leader of his own combo. Plays in hotels and night clubs of New York and New Jersey.



LOUIS IORIO, Excelsior artist, well-known accordionist and accordion instructor. Is a partner in a popular New Jersey school.



PAUL E. JACK, Excelsior artist of Denver, Colo. Soloist, instructor, and leader of his own trio. Has played frequently over the radio.



JOSEPH JESSICK, Accordiana artist of Elmira N.Y. Now playing with The Sophisticates and on radio station WENY.



WALTER J. KASPRZAK, Excelsior artist of Toledo, Ohio. Entertainer at night clubs, theaters, and on radio stations WSPD and WTOL. Also a teacher and singer.



EVEREST KEENE, Excelsior artist of Houston, Tex. Radio and night club entertainer and college accordion instructor. Has appeared on various civic programs.



MATT KELTS, Excelsior artist of Waterford, N.Y. Leader of the Melody Kings and a former member of Johnny Dudek's Western Orchestra.



BOB KOCHANOWSKI, Accordiana artist of La Salle, Ill. Leader of Bob Koch's "Fidelitones" and radio entertainer. Has played with the U.S. Army Band, and the John White "Quintette."



ANTHONY KOTULAK, Excelsior artist of Plymouth, Pa. Soloist playing with a number of accordion groups and orchestras.



PETER KOVA, Excelsior artist of Bayside, N.Y. Soloist for hotel and club dates and originator of radio program "River Pirates." Toured with the USO and Leon Von Gelder's Orchestra through South America. Has own studio.



LOIS LANDRY, Excelsior artist of New Orleans, La. Now on teaching staff of large accordion school in New Orleans. Also playing professionally on New Orleans radio stations.



ERIC LARSON, Excelsior artist of New Bedford, Mass. Instructor, radio entertainer and leader of his own trio. Has played with "Chick" Boucher's Orchestra and Art Perry's Orchestra.



KATHRYN LENNERD, Excelsior artist of San Fernando, Calif. Soloist for civic affairs and on television. Leader of her own dance band, which furnished music for Twentieth Century Fox's "Luck of the Irish."



CARL LUCAS, Excelsior artist of Scranton, Pa. Teacher and leader of the Carl Lucas Trio. Plays on radio station WSCR.



CHARLES MAGNANTE, Excelsior artist. One of the world's highest paid accordionists. Staff artist of both NBC and CBS.



SAMMY MARZANO, Excelsior artist of New Castle, Pa. Radio entertainer, instructor and leader of his own quartette. Has played with Veltry and his Pennsylvania Playboys and on USO shows in Italy.



SERGI MATUSEWITCH, Excelsior artist, accordion virtuoso and concert artist of wide acclaim. Now appearing in television shows.



ANTHONY MECCA, Excelsior artist, young radio and recording star, who has appeared in concert with brother Domenic, Magnante, and others.



DOMENIC MECCA, Excelsior artist, outstanding radio and concert performer, who now heads his own conservatory in Waterbury, Conn.



ANN MEYERS, Excelsior artist of Grand Haven, Mich. Leader of Grand Haven Accordion Band and Accordionaires. Owns and manages music shop and studio.



CHESTER S. OSOSKI, Excelsior artist of Manchester, Conn. Orchestra leader, composer and radio entertainer. Originator of the Harmony Bells Orchestra on Dana Records.



BOB OSSO, Excelsior artist of Bridgeport, Conn. Played with name bands before opening his own accordion school.



BILL PALMER, Excelsior artist, versatile entertainer of concert stage. Also a leading teacher of the Southwest. Famed for original accordion arrangements.



"ROCCO" D. PELILLO, Excelsior artist of Concord, N.H. Radio and stage entertainer and a member of Bob Cunningham's Orchestra. Also an instructor.



JOHN PISACCO, Excelsior artist of Stockton, Calif. Instructs at his own school of music and entertains at clubs and restaurants.



LOUIS E. PODESWA, Excelsior artist of Watervliet, N.Y. Istructor and television entertainer. Plays with his own dance orchestra and the Excelsior Accordion Quartette.



SYL PRIOR, Excelsior artist of Los Angeles, Calif. Since 1917, an active teacher and professional accordionist. One of the first radio accordionists in California.



VICTOR PUGLIO, Excelsior artist of Schenectady, N.Y. Has played with Steve Anthony, Bernie Collins and his own trio.



BARBARA RATAJCZAK, Accordiana artist of Amsterdam, N.Y. Plays with the Accordion Center Band of Schenectady.



JOE RESETAR, Accordiana artist of Freemansburg, Pa. Composes and arranges for his own 10-piece orchestra which presents 2 shows weekly over the radio. Is also an instructor.



EVELYN ANN RIES, Excelsior artist of Davenport, Ia. Soloist and night club entertainer now featured with Wibbey Fisher's Orchestra.



ZORA BELLE ROBERTSON, Excelsior artist of Trenton, Mo. Has appeared on the Horace Heidt show and on television. Has also played with Midwestern Music Camp Band and the University of Kansas Band.



JOHNNY ROMEO, Excelsior artist of Troy, N.Y. Has his own trio and studio. Staff accordionist for radio station WTRY, he has played with Mal Hallet and Kearny Kallander.



ALDO ROSELLI, Excelsior artist, popular in California night clubs. Also radio and television entertainer.



ELMA SANTA, Excelsior artist, lovely accordion entertainer who is much in demand by better hotels and night clubs of the East Coast.



PAUL SAWCHUK, Accordiana artist of Schenectady, N.Y. Has played two years with the Accordion Center Band of Schenectady.



ERNEST SCRIVANI, Excelsior artist of Camden, N.J. Radiostage and concert performer and instructor. Three-time first place winner of Foyer Academy of Music (Philadelphia) award.



JOHANN SESSER, Accordiana artist of San Diego, Calif. Early musical career in Russia, Sweden, and Germany and an accordion teacher since 1926. Also a stage and radio entertainer.



ANGELO SFARZO, Excelsior artist of Daly City, Calif. Entertains at night clubs, hotels and restaurants. Also an instructor and head of his own trio. Has played with Stage Door Canteen, accompanying Ginny Simms.



AILEEN H. SHIPPEE, Excelsior artist of Fort Worth, Tex. Transcribes and arranges accordion music for her own studio and octette. Has played over the radio and the orchestras of Ed Lalley, M. Cooles and George Owen.



EDGAR SMALLWOOD, Excelsior artist of Decatur, Ill. Plays with several dance combos and instructs accordion.



LOLA SMITH, Excelsior of Walbridge, Ohio. Staff artist of radio and television station WSPD. A member of Roy Smith's Tennesseans. Also plays the organ.



RAYMOND F. SUMINSKI, Excelsior artist of Milwaukee, Wis. Radio entertainer on station WMAW and a member of Jack Bundy's Orchestra. Has his own studio and trio.



RUTH SWEET, Excelsior artist, hotel and night club accordion entertainer. Leader of "Sweet All Girl Trio" and soloist.



PATSY TESSITORE, Excelsior artist of Schenectady, N.Y. Appears on television with the Excelsior Accordion Quartette and his own trio. Is also an instructor.



MILTON THOMAS, Excelsior artist of Lynnbrook, L.I., New York. Accompanies well known singers in New York night clubs. Teacher and entertainer as well.



VICTOR TIBALDEO, Excelsior artist of New Haven, Conn. Has his own studio and plays the piano and organ in addition to the accordion.



ART VAN DAMME, Excelsior artist, heads nation's top swing combo featuring accordion. Famous for radio and recording work. Television.



DONNA JEAN VOGLER, Excelsior artist of Louisville, Neb. Teen-age student who is attaining fame in accordion world.



LUCILLE WILMOT, Excelsior artist of Milton, Mass. Composer, arranger and first accordionist for the Frank Gaviani Symphony Orchestra. Has appeared as soloist and director of her own groups in Gaviani concerts.



EDITH WINN, Excelsior artist of White Plains, New York. She is engaged as an accordion instructor, also connected with a Red Cross Hospital Unit. Appears on club dates in and around the metropolitan area.



MARY WUNDERLICH, Excelsior artist of Cohoes, N.Y. Member of the Accordion Center Band of Schenectady and soloist.



ANTHONY ZAMPANTI, Excelsior artist of Providence, R.I. Concert and radio entertainer and instructor. Has appeared with U.S. Navy Band and Frank Gaviani's Symphony Orchestra.



JOSEPH ZAMPICENI, Excelsior artist of Barre, Vt. Radio entertainer and director of his own studios. Has played with The Reveleers, Ambassadors, Music Masters, The Musical Rubes, and his own trio.



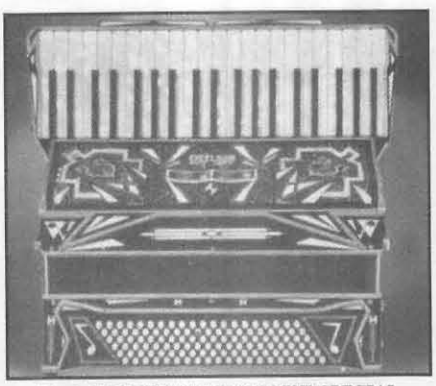
ELAINE R. ZELLNER, Excelsior artist of Milwaukee, Wis. Youthful student and entertainer.



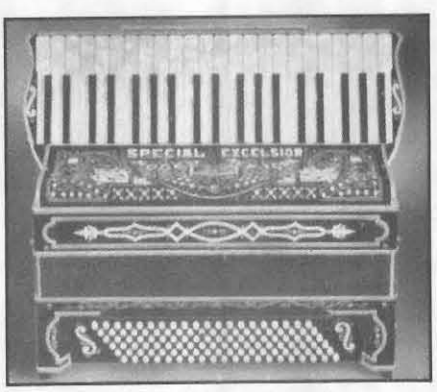
HERMAN ZIEMBA, Excelsior artist of Amsterdam, N.Y. Radio and television entertainer and a member of The Lariateers and Trio-tones.



JOSEPH ZON FRILLI, Excelsior artist of Irvington, N.J. Well known accordionist and accordion instructor. Is a partner in a popular accordion school.



No. 3 MODERNISTIC SOLOIST SPECIAL

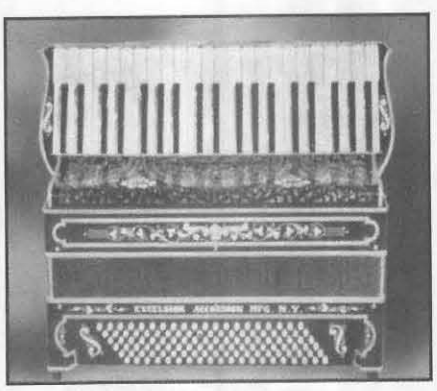


No. 4 EXCELSIOR GRAND



THE ACCORDIONETTES

Accordiana and Excelsior artists of Boise, Id. (Left to right) Standing: Barbara Thompson, Luella Salter, Virginia Farner, Mary Paul and Rhea Hatch. Front Row: Jean Kendall, Director Jim Baker and Dorothy Hollohan.



No. 5 EXCELSIOR

like flowers blooming overnight, up popped these other companies that started giving real competition.

John: Well, they had unfortunately had a change in their sales force. They got their sales start in national coverage through George Bundy. And then Bundy told me that he was frozen out. So he started an accordion-building company right after the war in Brooklyn and hired me to work at it. He also had three of the Magnante brothers working there: Joe Magnante, Angelo Magnante, and John Magnante.

Ron: And they were Charles' brothers?

John: Yes.

Ron: He had three brothers? I didn't know that.

John: Yes. And, George Bundy also had Ottavio Galizi working there and also Piatanesi and a few old timers of the accordion makers.

Ron: When you mentioned Piatanesi, I'll have to bring that copy with me that Vince Cirelli let me make copies of with a Xerox machine. On the pages of it, it's about 1930 or 1932 with the price of accordions and everything. It's very very interesting. Then, you mentioned that somebody said something that Magnante didn't like, and that's why he's not with Excelsior anymore. What happened?

John: Well, while Egisto Pancotti was in Italy handling the Excelsior operations, Charles Magnante took the advice of his brother-in-law, Joe Biviano, and he tried the Eldorado model accordion by La Tosca, distributed by the Gretsch Co., and thus left Excelsior. However, while Excelsior enjoyed the top billing and made the best accordion for many years, there are no secrets in accordion making, and any capable accordion maker can make as good an accordion as any other, if they get paid for it and if they want to do it.

Ron: You mentioned Pietro Deiro; he married one of the Pancotti sisters? Was that it?

John: No, it was the other way around. Blanche Deiro married Mario Pancotti.

Ron: Oh, I see. Yes.

John: So that's how that came about. There's quite a bit of relationships in the accordion field.

Ron: Yes.

John: I think Galla-Rini married into one of the accordion-maker families here. I forget who just now. ***[Editor's Note: Dina Petromilli]***

Ron: I was fortunate to meet those men once or twice because you don't get the opportunity when you're out on the West Coast here to meet these artists who are always appearing back East.

John: In New York and Chicago.

Ron: I once heard Charles Magnante down at Santa Clara at the University of Santa Clara auditorium, and I was very very disappointed at the small attendance that they had there. And all they would have had to do was put a small ad the size of a pack of cigarettes in the paper saying Charles Magnante would be giving an accordion concert, and it would have brought people from behind the woodpiles that knew the name Magnante.

John: Yes.

Ron: But nobody said anything. Just like when Toralf Tollefsen appeared here and gave a concert at the old high school auditorium....

John: But, nobody knew about it.

Ron: I heard about it when it was all over, and I could have gone that Sunday, but it got no publicity. It's very very unfortunate.

John: Very unfortunate!

Ron: I was so disappointed when I saw the small crowd that was there for Charles Magnante because I knew who Charles Magnante was, and he deserved a much bigger audience than that.

John: It's mismanagement of publicity. In

another field, when I first came to New York, I went to the Hippodrome Theater, and a magician — an escape artist — was there who called for volunteers to tie him up. Well, I was fresh from the cow country of New Zealand and knew something about ropes, cattle, horses, and what not. We used ropes all the time. So I went up onto the stage to tie him, and I got to know him. I did not know it then, but he was the world-famous magician by the name of Harry Houdini. And he took an interest in me, and said that he had never been in New Zealand, but he had been in Australia. He told me about books he had written, and I asked him how he came to be "world-famous." And he told me, "Publicity did it; there's no other way."

Ron: Oh, yes. Well, you know when you meet these famous artists... . I remember asking Mr. Galla-Rini before the concert, "Would you mind if I took some pictures of you during the concert?" I'll always remember the answer he gave me: "No, I don't mind; take all the pictures you want, but taking the pictures during the concert might interfere with some of the people in the audience." I thought to myself what a diplomatic man he was and I took my cues from that. So when I went to the Charles Magnante concert, I sat in the front row with my camera, and I took pictures of him only when he would take a bow after he played each time. And when I went up to get an autograph of him later, he thanked me personally for not taking his picture while he was playing. And I thanked myself that I had gotten the tip from Galla-Rini some weeks before because anything you hate to do is interrupt anybody that you admire. And with your enthusiasm to get the picture, you can get carried away, and do it.

John: Yes.

Ron: John, this has been very very nice getting you to talk of the early days of the accordion. You are one of the few people I can talk to who was there at the beginning of the accordion *[piano keyboard]*, and who was there at the beginning of its demise or decline in popularity relative to the popularity that it once had in the United States.

John: I saw its heyday. I saw its rise, and I saw, unfortunately, its decline. Whether it'll ever come back to the extent where it was in popularity, I don't know. By the way, I have a 1920 Victor Company catalog, and it has quite a few records of Pietro in there. If you would like to see it, I'll get it for you.

Ron: Yes, I would. I'd like to take a look at it. That was in 1920? John, I was one year old when that came out. (Ha! Ha!) That was a while ago.

John: Let's look up accordion records. Look at that list of accordion records!

Ron: Oh, my gosh!

John: "Stack of Barley" with John Kimmel and Pietro — and it still goes on. And they had a couple of Frosini records there too, but I don't see it listed here.

Ron: You know, John, I was saying: "Where could I run into someone today who knew Pietro Frosini, Pietro Deiro, Charles Magnante, Charles Nunzio, Galla-Rini, John Molinari, the Tollefsen brothers, and knew all these people in the accordion world?" To me, you are an edition of the *Accordion World* come to life for me.

John: Well, let's see. Frosini isn't listed here as an accordion player. I think he was listed under concertina — a concertina grand player.

Ron: Oh, did he start as a concertina player?

John: No, but they did not know in those times....

Ron: Oh, the button deal. They didn't know what to call it. I can see what you

mean.

John: That is why they called it.... Here is Frosini. See Concertina Grand; see accordion records. Well, let's see....(PAUSE)

Ron: They probably got them sandwiched in with a few of them. There's none on the first page.

John: I don't see them. Well, we'll look up concertinas (PAUSE). Here we are: Alexander Prince's Concertina Solos. But, I don't see the Frosini records.

Ron: They're not listed there.

John: That's odd. That's an oversight on the compiler of the catalog.

Ron: John, let me say thank you for all the information you just gave us for the tape recording on the accordion, your life, and the history of the accordion.

John: Well, I'm always happy to meet someone who is interested in the accordion and talk about old times. I feel fortunate that I started my interest in the accordion in 1924, when the accordion was beginning to rise in popularity. Although judging by the 1920 Victor records, there was quite a sale of accordion records by Pietro, Guido, and Frosini.

Ron: Oh yes. They seemed to have had it sewed up then.

John: Yes, and a few Irish players.

Ron: I got started on the accordion some ten years later in 1934, and in 2034, I'll still be working on it. I have enjoyed it, John.

John: So have I.

Ron: Good night.

John: Good night.

END OF INTERVIEW



(CIRCA 1937)

JOHN REUTHER



(CIRCA 1972)

SPECIAL THANKS: I wish to extend my personal appreciation and gratitude to Edwin Davison, a former student and personal admirer of John Reuther, for his painstaking efforts in transcribing, editing, and typing the verbatim conversation from the original cassette of my interview with John Reuther. Also, I wish to especially thank him for his contributions and editorial assistance in the preparation and finalization of the following special article written by Edward Chavez in his memorial tribute to John Reuther. — **Ron Flynn**

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A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO JOHN REUTHER

By Edward (Eddie) Chavez

John H. Reuther was born in Great Britain on March 17, 1905. His family then moved to New Zealand where they lived until 1920, when they immigrated to the United States. John passed away on August 9, 1984, of a heart attack while on vacation in New York City visiting some of his life-long accordion friends.

After coming to this country, John diligently applied himself, majoring in the electrical field and conducting research in the science of acoustics. In the course of his studies, he began to make his own phonograph records and to experiment with materials suitable for records blanks. During those early years, John Reuther became acquainted with many famous accordionists since his work in the acoustic field allowed him to record their concerts and radio broadcasts. Then, as he became more and more fascinated by the accordion, he decided to study the instrument himself.

His first accordion teacher was Frank Umbriaco, and he was later taught by Pietro Frosini. During a chance meeting with Frosini at Wurlitzer's Music Store on 42nd St. and 6th Avenue in New York City, John asked him if he would accept him as a student, but Frosini refused politely by explaining that he only had time for advanced students. But John persisted, asking Frosini what he would have to do to be accepted as one of his students. I recall vividly what John once wrote me that Frosini told him he would have to learn: "First, memorize the notes of the major and minor chords up to A (3 sharps) and down to A-flat (four flats). Second, be able to play these chord notes as arpeggios up and down in three octaves, first two to the beat, then three to the beat, and finally four to the beat, being able to do the same with the major scales up to three sharps and down to four flats. Third, be able to read notes of the bass and treble clef, including the ledger lines in all keys." Frosini emphasized to John that until he had mastered these essential details that he could not consider teaching him. From then on, John began to make real progress as he had some idea of how and what to practice. From the time he started until he was accepted to play in the movie theaters in Long Island, New York, it took nearly 10 years.

John later became an accordion teacher himself. He first taught at the Carl Fischer Music House and later taught at the Robotti Studios in New York City. Then, upon leaving New York City, he moved to Waco, Texas, where he established his own studio and taught there for about 10 years. As a teacher, he composed interesting study pieces for his students which made the learning of musical concepts easier for them.

His keen interest in the accordion and his genius for inventing led him to create a new system of notation — the *Reuther Chord Analyzer*, a clever device to facilitate an immediate chord identification. Not long afterwards, he introduced his patented Uniform Keyboard, often referred to as the "Checkerboard" accordion (because of its similarity in layout to a checkerboard), which he designed to permit the use of uniform fingering in all keys. While visiting John on several occasions, I had the opportunity to play this keyboard, and I found it to be a practical and wonderful invention. John never gave up on the merits of this keyboard system, and he worked throughout his life introducing and explaining this system to everyone he met.

John Reuther will best be remembered for the original uniform keyboard accordion having the standard checkerboard keyboard; however, he actually developed and introduced three separate keyboard systems: (l) The original uniform keyboard (checkerboard) having three rows of standard oblong keys, (2) A special 4-row "square key" keyboard, similar to the early chromatics, but having Reuther's own distinctive uniform keyboard arrangement. This 4-row uniform keyboard system is very very rare. In fact, I only know of one of these

accordions that is still in a playable condition today (having been completely restored by one of John's former students, Edwin Davison), and (3) Finally, a three-row piano keyboard that has wide black keys of the same size as the white keys. John Reuther personally made one of these keyboards for Frank Gaviani, who once used this style of accordion in some of his concerts and posed with it on some of his own sheet music.

While John was living in Florida, my wife and I visited him, and what a delightful experience it was to hear him relate his many extraordinary experiences. It was truly unforgettable to meet him; he was one of the nicest people we ever knew! At his house, the accordion was the main topic of conversation, and we talked about the instrument all day long.

John wrote two valuable books concerning the accordion. His first book, copyrighted in 1948, was a primary instruction manual called the *Reuther Method For The Uniform Keyboard Accordion.* This beginner's method book was written especially to provide fingering techniques for the uniform keyboard that he had introduced to the accordion world. A few years later, he also authored a second book, *Accordion Repairs Made Easy.* It is an exceptional handbook for anyone interested in minor accordion repairs of any type, and it is still in print today. Not only was John Reuther a good accordionist, but he was also a master mechanic who could build and repair accordions with the greatest skill.

In the 1930's, John Reuther started a monthly magazine called *Accordion World,* which sold for 25 cents a copy. He was later joined by Lee Edwards and his wife Anna Wall Edwards. The three owned the publication jointly, and John Reuther held the post of general manager and associate editor.

It was an honor for me to have personally known John Reuther. I believe he was loved by everyone who met him and who had a chance to hear his interesting stories about the accordion and accordion personalities whom he had known. He loved the accordion — as I do too — and all who love the accordion cannot help but feel the same way about John.



RON FLYNN (LEFT) AND JOHN REUTHER (RIGHT) (CIRCA 1972)



EDDIE CHAVEZ — SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS (CIRCA 1987)

[Editor's Note: Correspondence to Eddie Chavez should be addressed to him at 9019 Hetherington, San Antonio, TX 78240.]

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EDDIE CHAVEZ — SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS (CIRCA 1987)

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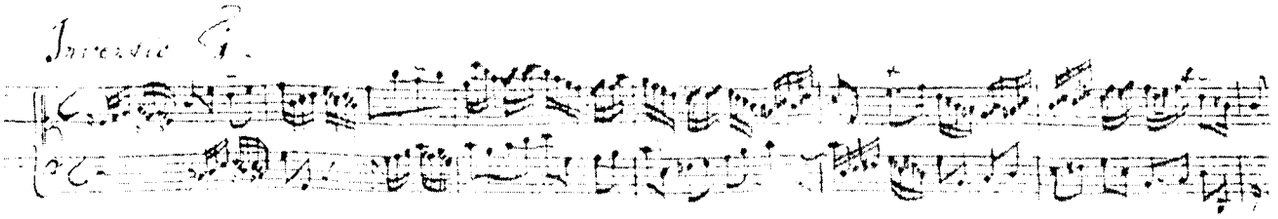
He was indeed fortunate to have been part of the accordion world during those early and exciting years. John personally knew artists like Pietro Deiro and his brother Guido, Anthony Galla-Rini, Charles Magnante, Charles Nunzio, and all of the other "greats." He was a close friend and student of Pietro Frosini, and he had many stories to tell about this world-famous accordion artist and composer.

It was the "Golden Age" of the accordion when all these famous people could be heard in concerts and on live radio. John Reuther was fortunate to have been there to enjoy that exciting period. He was a fascinating conversationalist, and he had many tales to tell eager listeners. When he spoke of his love for the accordion, he would smile and his animated blue eyes would sparkle.

Those who knew John Reuther will agree that no one will ever be able to take his place in the accordion world. He was most unique — a brilliant man, a fine musician, and a charming, kind person. He will always be remembered by his many friends and devoted students.



[THIS LETTER WAS SUBMITTED TO RON FLYNN FOLLOWING A REVIEW OF THE JOHN REUTHER INTERVIEW BY BILL PALMER]

Ronald Flynn
1508 Anza Street
San Francisco, CA 94118

August 2, 1988

Dear Ron:

Thanks for your letter and the John Reuther Interview. I enjoyed it very much.

The Chavez comments about Frosini's recommendations concerning the things he had to know to be considered as a student remind me of my own experience as a boy. I studied piano from an outstanding teacher who made me do **all** major, minor, seventh and diminished seventh chords in parallel and contrary motion, the full range of the keyboard, every day for half an hour before beginning to practice. She also listened to them at each lesson. **All** of them, in **all** keys! There's nothing quite like that to get the fingers working and the thumbs under. John Reuther (bless him) got a few things a little bit wrong. Bill Hughes and I had been Excelsior artists, but we had long been Titano artists at the time of that interview. We left Excelsior in 1953, when Dorothy and Edward Traficante, who designed the converter system, a Stradella bass system that converted all the bass buttons to single notes, with a range of four octaves, available three octaves at a time, high or low, and also three octaves of coupled octaves. This was manufactured as the "Palmer Emperor Converter," and many were sold. There were also smaller models with this feature. They also put out a line of Palmer-Hughes models that had registers that fit with those called for in our course.

Bill Hughes and I never did run out of students. We taught until 1967, and I think I could still have a large class today. The studio in which we worked decided it was more profitable to sell pianos and organs, but the man who ran it, and who now has the largest piano and

organ dealership in Texas, Don Holcombe, (also an accordionist of great ability) is convinced that if he sent out teams knocking on doors, he could still enroll accordion students. Perhaps, and perhaps not! When we played our last concert together in Kansas City around 1967, there were between 1,500 and 2,000 in attendance.

I did not give up accordion to teach at the University of Houston. I taught ***only*** accordion at the University of Houston, beginning in 1946 and continuing until 1964. Students came from far and near to get a degree there, with accordion as their major instrument. I had students from Canada, New York, Nebraska, Kentucky, Oregon, everywhere. We even had Lynlee Alley (at that time Lynlee Barry), who was the U.S. ATG champion. She got a Master's degree in accordion, fully accredited.

The accordion survived the change of music department heads three times, and each new chairman had to be convinced all over again about the accordion. I stopped when the University became state supported since I was in for new confrontations. I simply felt that it was too time consuming, and I was still writing a big schedule of things for my publisher, and I was playing a lot then. The University still continued to have accordion in the curriculum with one of my best students, a graduate of accordion, Judith Linder as the instructor. Students gradually dropped off after I left the music department. Perhaps it was because the accordion was becoming less popular.

The Pagani story is only partially true. Theresa Costello and Pagani had turned down my music, but they never saw my course. They WERE sorry about it later, and told me so. But the *Palmer-Hughes Accordion Course* was "ordered" by Morton Manus, Samuel Manus' son, when he took over the business after his father, Samuel (his name was not "Sol") became too old and ill to continue. That was about 1952. The way John told it makes a more interesting story.

There is another interesting story here. Around 1946 I had written to Samuel Manus, whom I had met at a New York NAMM convention around 1940 or 41, when I played in a concert with a quintette made up of Galla-Rini's students (including Bill Hughes). I asked him why he didn't have Frosini write a book on how to do the bellows shake, since he was supposed to be the originator of that technique. At that time I couldn't even do the bellows shake. Sam Manus wrote back and said that Frosini was too ill to write anymore, and asked me to write the book! He said I could use excerpts from Frosini's music. I told my wife, Ruby, "Here's my chance to be published, but they want me to write about something I can't even do!" So I woodshedded for many weeks and learned the secrets of the bellows shake. I wrote the very first bellows shake book, *The Mastery of the Bellows Shake*, and it was quite a success. After Morton Manus took over, which was just when the bellows shake book was released, he asked me to write a beginner's book. I took Bill Hughes in on that as a partner, and Morty thought we'd have about three books in the course. I am sure you know it wound up being more like ten books, with extra Prep Books (1A, 1B, etc.) plus about 65 supplementary books. When the first book hit the stores, he couldn't believe the response. In the 50's we sold millions of copies of accordion books. The course, believe it or not, still sells reasonably well, particularly in Canada and New Zealand, but also quite a bit in the USA.

After all is said and done, it was a fortunate thing for us that we went with Alfred instead of Pagani. Manus did such a great job promoting the course. As things developed, it has been fortunate for me in what has gone on after the publishers stopped putting out great quantities of accordion music. Alfred was a very small company when Morton Manus took it over. He wanted it to be a big company, and knew that it had to publish more than accordion and mandolin music and the like. He wanted a piano library, and he knew I had a piano background

(I had won a piano scholarship to the Leipzig Conservatory when I was younger) and he liked the way I worked, so we began "Alfred's Masterwork Series," scholarly editions that are carefully researched from the composers' original manuscripts and earliest editions. These were well received, and I followed with some piano method books that have gone quite well.

Joe Biviano is still in there kicking, and perhaps he should be interviewed. I suspect he would have very interesting stories to tell.

Eugene Ettore was a very special friend of mine. We corresponded a lot. He played great duets with Carmen Carrozza, you probably know.

Emil Baldoni, who made Ace accordions, and who worked for Sano, is still in the business. He lives in Brooklyn. He is a dear friend. He knew almost everyone. He developed a device called the "disengager" which disengaged the chord buttons from the bass buttons, making it possible to play single notes on the four rows of chord buttons. Without this device, the converter would not have been developed as soon as it was. Emil tuned my accordion recently. He is a wonderful man and a credit to the accordion business. You should see if he has some good stories to tell.

Ernest Deffner (who manufactured Pancordions) bought the Titano company from the Traficantes in January of 1965. Bill Hughes and I made a tour of Italy in 1966, with the Deffners and some well-known accordion teachers. The group included Johnny's Accordion Band from Duluth, Minnesota. They played, among other things, my arrangement of the medley from The Sound of Music, which I directed, in our concerts in Castelfidardo and San Marino. Bill Hughes and I were interviewed by a radio station in Rome. Ernest died a few years later, and Faithe Deffner is doing a wonderful and selfless job of running the company.

Lloyd La Vaux has been a very special friend of mine over the years. He is an extremely talented accordionist. He is an intellectual who speaks many languages fluently. He was a child prodigy who appeared in concerts and played at the NAMM conventions when he was very young. He is a good composer, and he plays marvelously. I believe he is now living somewhere in Canada. He studied with Pietro Frosini, and if you can find him, he will undoubtedly have some interesting stories to tell. He toured the United States and many other countries back in the late forties and fifties, and may have done a lot more since I last heard from him.

One of my favorite people among accordionists of note is Myron Floren. He's a true friend, a gentleman, and a real professional. He is a great entertainer and a solid musician. When our "Accordion Symphony" played a concert in New York City back in the fifties, he volunteered his services as an usher! This is typical of his friendly attitude. Through his influence, Bill Hughes and I made an appearance on the Lawrence Welk TV Show, back when the Lennon Sisters were still very small.

Regarding Lawrence Welk, I think his contribution to the popularity of the accordion has been immense. The accordion IS an instrument that can be used to play ethnic and popular music very well, and that is just as important, in my opinion, as any efforts we may make to prove that we can play so-called "serious" music. Incidentally, on the "Lawrence Welk Show," we played Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro Overture"! Lawrence Welk presented us at the Aragon Ballroom a day before the show. We played many classical and popular pieces, and the band decided what we should play on the TV show. We encored with Friml's "Donkey Serenade" played on two, 12-bass accordions. It was a great experience! We heard Lawrence Welk rehearsing his instrumentalists and vocalists. He was a tough but amiable taskmaster, and Bill Hughes and I decided that, as a musician, he has been vastly underrated by some of his critics. We observed that he always knew exactly what he wanted, that he was determined to achieve it, and that he had an ear like Toscanini. Without Welk, the accordion's decline in popularity would

probably have dropped more sharply, and many years earlier. Myron Floren is still in great demand and is probably the most successful of all performing accordionists.

Joan Cochran Sommers could offer you some interesting historical information, I believe. She is still offering accordion courses at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, and she takes performing groups abroad just about every year. She is an outstanding teacher, turning out some of the finest students in the world. She deserves an important place in the history of accordion.

Among the jazz accordionists most admired by Bill Hughes and me are Art Van Damme (we appeared on one or two NAMM programs with him), Mat Mathews, Leon Sash, and Alice Hall.

Ron, you should include a biographical sketch of each of these artists in your book, if possible. Alice Hall is right out there in your neighborhood, and we always thought that she was a really **great** jazz musician. A tape that she recently sent me confirms that she is **still** a phenomenal performer. She probably has many good stories to tell.

Also, Ron, I think you should retitle your book to include the history of the accordion all over the U.S.A., if not the entire globe! Such a book is needed — one that deals with the whole picture without prejudice. You seem to be cut out for the job, and I hope you'll undertake it.

Speaking of prejudice, there have always been some problems in the accordion field. Unfortunately, there seems to always be divisions among people who should make every effort to work together. During the years that Bill Hughes and I were at our peak of popularity as performers, playing hundreds of legitimate concerts per year in white tie and tails, and appearing with the legendary dancer, Paul Draper, for Columbia Artists' Management, many childish people in our profession tried to say things that would divide our friendship. I never knew why. Fortunately, they never succeeded. We were partners **all the way**. We loved each other more than most brothers do, and he called me his "Big Brudder."

One thing I particularly liked about the Reuther interview: John said **nothing bad** about **anyone**! He only said nice, complimentary things, and I appreciate the kind things he said about Bill Hughes and me. People who are devoted to the accordion should make a special effort to be supportive of one another. The make, model, system, or type of accordion played should not even be a consideration, and it shouldn't matter what kind of music is being played, as long as it is being played with sensitivity and sincerity.

I am enclosing an article I did for *Accord* magazine in 1979, in memory of Bill Hughes. It will tell you more about our work together (and it may repeat some of the things I have mentioned in this letter).

Thanks again, and please keep in touch.

Your sincere friend,

Willard A. Palmer

[This enlightening letter from Bill Palmer has been included in its entirety and retyped on his distinctive stationary. How I appreciate his taking time to comment on the John Reuther Interview! His observations help to place the interview in a greater perspective and correct certain remarks made by John in his extemporaneous recollections about the early days of the accordion world. Thank you, Bill, for your helpful insights about the interview as well as your personal reflections about some of the important accordionists that you have known and admired during your professional career. As the reader will immediately recognize by looking at the Contents (page vi), most of the famous personalities that Bill Palmer mentioned have been included in this book, and the title was changed to indicate the broader scope of the book.]

TRIBUTE IN MEMORY OF BILL HUGHES

By Bill Palmer

Editor's Note [Accord magazine]: Dr. Willard A. Palmer, who wrote this article, is fondly known as Bill Palmer in accordion circles. His accordion career may be divided into three segments — performer, composer, and educator. In each area, he has distinguished himself sufficiently so that other men might call it a full, successful career in itself.

Palmer and his partner, Bill Hughes, can be credited with the high point in accordion performance in the United States. Audiences will recall their white-tie-and-tails performances as they played one prestigious engagement after another in the 50's and 60's. They were the ultimate inspiration to serious young accordionists of the day.

Palmer collaborated with Hughes in producing a series of accordion method books which have had worldwide impact. Theirs was, and still is, the most successful single publication among accordion materials. Sales soared like a rocket into the millions, and the duo was unquestionably the cornerstone of the Alfred Publishing Co. empire.

As an educator, Willard Palmer was ahead of his time. He has been instrumental in carving an indisputable niche for the accordion at the university level. He and Hughes took the accordion beyond mere college acceptance, into the realm of establishing an actual accordion department within the University of Houston, where they were faculty members. Students of their program comprise a "Who's Who" for the accordion field in English-speaking countries, much the same as Hohner's Trossingen did for accordion education in Europe.

Today, Dr. Willard Palmer is one of the most im; ortant editors of keyboard music in the United States. His editions of works of the masters are highly acclaimed and respected in the most elite music circles. Palmer is noted especially for his painstaking detail and care in the scholarly researching of original music editions.

THE PRECEDING EDITORIAL AND FOLLOWING INTRODUCTION BY FAITHE DEFFNER ACCOMPANIED THIS MOVING MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO BILL HUGHES

The names Palmer and Hughes are inseparable in the minds of accordionists the world over. Indeed, some do not even realize that these are the names of two men and not one.

A few months ago **[Aug '78]**, Bill Hughes succumbed to cancer. He was only 52 years old. His was a lifetime of accordion achievements. Innovative, talented, personable, he left an indelible print on accordionists everywhere. It was he and Palmer who perfected and extended the parameters of concert accordion work well beyond the limits of their day.

No one could better write this article tracing the life-line of Bill Hughes, as it ran its parallel course with accordion history, than Bill Palmer — his colleague, partner, and friend of 40 years. Here is a rare opportunity to share some intimate reflections of the dreams, untiring efforts and accomplishments which made these two men a single entity — that phenomenon known as Palmer-Hughes.



BILL PALMER (LEFT) AND BILL HUGHES (RIGHT) FOLLOWING A CONCERT PERFORMANCE (CIRCA 1958)



THE CONCERT TRIO
BILL PALMER, BILL HUGHES (Accordionists), LEN MANNO (Bassist)



BILL PALMER (LEFT) AND BILL HUGHES (RIGHT) AT UNIV. OF HOUSTON CAMPUS (CIRCA 1946)



BILL PALMER (LEFT) AND BILL HUGHES (RIGHT) FOLLOWING A CONCERT PERFORMANCE (CIRCA 1958)



THE CONCERT TRIO
BILL PALMER, BILL HUGHES (Accordionists), LEN MANNO (Bassist)



BILL PALMER (LEFT) AND BILL HUGHES (RIGHT) AT UNIV. OF HOUSTON CAMPUS (CIRCA 1946)

THIS TRIBUTE TO BILL HUGHES IS PRESENTED BELOW IN ITS ENTIRETY

It will be impossible to adequately summarize all of the contributions Bill Hughes made to the accordion community and his great influence on a host of friends, fans, and admirers. He was a splendid and busy teacher, a lecturer and educator, a conductor, a writer, composer and arranger, an excellent jazz musician, and a concert performer. His contributions in each of these fields were nothing less than phenomenal.

My association with Bill Hughes began in Jackson, Mississippi in 1938, when he became my student at the age of 12. He was one of those rare, gifted students we call a natural musician. With no previous musical training, he was playing professionally in less than six months after his first lesson. After just one month of study, he was featured on radio station WJDX in Jackson, playing 15 minutes of accordion solos. They were not simply student pieces, but works like the overture to "The Barber of Seville," and popular pieces like "Night and Day."

At the age of 14, Bill hosted a weekly amateur contest and show at one of the Jackson theaters, filling in with accordion solos. In 1940, he performed with Anthony Galla-Rini's Octette at the NAMM convention in New York City. On that same program, he performed Galla-Rini's arrangement of the overture from "Il Guarany" by Gomes. Bill studied intermittently with Galla-Rini, whenever he had the opportunity. From this association, Bill received much encouragement and inspiration.

During the years of World War II, Bill was in the U.S. Navy band, and had the opportunity to further his musical education at the U.S. Navy School of Music. He saw dangerous combat action in the South Pacific, and often related some of the close calls he had at the battle of Okinawa.

In 1946, Bill and I enrolled as music students at the University of Houston. Since I was doing graduate work there, I urged the university to include the accordion in its curriculum. The chairman of the music department, Bruce Spencer King, challenged me to find an accordionist who desired this training and who could meet the rigid entrance requirements. That student would have to be able to cope with music literature of the same level as required of other keyboard majors.

It is much to Bill Hughes' credit that he conceived of the idea of enrolling as my student on a test basis. Of course, Bill predictably amazed everyone with his technique and musicianship, and in 1946, the accordion was fully accredited by the University of Houston as an applied major. Accordionists were permitted to earn a bachelor's degree of music or bachelor's degree of arts, and even a master's degree, with accordion as their major instrument.

The accordion was being accepted for elective credit at some institutions prior to that date, but I believe that this may have been the first time that a college or university in the U.S. had ever accepted the accordion on an absolutely equal footing with piano, violin, organ, or any other instrument. Among our first enrollees was Lynlee Barry (now Allee), who became an ATG champion and was a U.S. representative at the Coupe Mondiale. Also enrolled was Pauline Oliveros, now regarded as one of the world's outstanding avant-garde composers. She won the grand prize in the Bonn Beethoven Festival competition in 1977.

In the years to come, Albert Hirsh, chairman of the piano department of the University of Houston, often remarked that the accordion students had raised the standards of the entire music program at the university. For this spectacular success, Bill Hughes should receive a great share of the credit.

Bill and I organized The Concert Trio in 1949, with the late Len Manno, who was contrabassist with the Houston Symphony Orchestra. With two accordions and a string bass, we rehearsed faithfully for at least four hours daily, five days a week. We maintained this

schedule for more than 10 years. Our concert debut was made with the Houston Summer Symphony in 1950, when we played Vivaldi's "Concerto in D Minor," and one of Handel's organ concerti. We also presented a full concert that year to a capacity audience at the Music Hall in Houston.

We were employed for a time as a substitute for the pit orchestra by the Four Arts Theatre. Music was composed for us by Arthur Hall for the presentation of a modernized version of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," and by William Rice for Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion." Rice's music from "Androcles" was later rearranged for full symphony orchestra and presented by the Houston Symphony in their regular subscription concerts. Imagine the pleasure we had in seeing in the program notes that a symphony orchestra was playing a transcription of a work originally composed for the accordion!

Eventually, we had the opportunity to audition with a new conductor of the Houston Symphony, Efrem Kurtz, who was so impressed that he immediately telephoned his agent, Kurt Weinhold of Columbia Artists' Management, and arranged an audition. We drove to New York non-stop and arrived so exhausted that we had no energy left to be nervous. We played many things for Weinhold, but he liked our Bach the best, and fortunately we knew about 45 minutes of Bach's music at that time.

After that, we played many concerts, booked by Columbia Concerts, Community Concerts, the Civic Concert Association, Cooperative Concerts, Inc., and the Municipal Concert Association.

A recording for Capri Records brought more engagements and the fan mail came in droves from Russia, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ethiopia, Japan, France, and Germany — everywhere. Bill Hughes and I received an award from the American Accordionists' Association in 1957 for having played 110 concerts in one season.

After the Trio disbanded, Bill and I continued to concertize as the "Palmer-Hughes Duo." In 1963, we received the Award of Achievement from the American Guild of Music.

For our concert work, we first used accordions with 160 basses in order to increase the range of single notes available for the left hand. This was the period when free-bass development was in its infancy, and Bill Hughes made several important suggestions which were incorporated in construction of early models. When the stradella free-bass instruments were fully developed, we returned to using 120-bass accordions. In our performances, we played these combined stradella and free-bass instruments, utilizing both features about equally.

Here it may be well to comment, since this was a point that Bill often made, that the university faculty was never critical of the standard stradella system, and a great amount of the required literature was, in fact, performed on standard stradella instruments. Free bass systems were welcomed for the extended range they afforded, but were not required for enrolling accordion majors.

Along with our concert activities, which included a tour of Italy in 1967 with appearances in Castelfidardo, the home of the accordion, and in San Marino, Bill Hughes and I conducted numerous 5-day seminars throughout the U.S.A. and Canada.

These busy activities are only a small part of the story of Bill Hughes. From 1946 to 1967, he maintained a very full schedule of teaching private and class lessons. He was in great demand as an entertainer, and especially as a jazz musician. In the jazz field, he was outstanding among accordionists, and he played with large orchestras, including those of Henry King, Ed Gerlach, Buddy Brock, and others, not to mention numerous smaller groups.

In the midst of this extraordinary schedule, the *Palmer-Hughes Accordion Course* was being written. The first book, released in 1952, met with tremendous success. From everywhere came the continuing cry for more books. By 1961, there were 10 books in the course

itself, each advancing to a higher degree of difficulty, plus about 65 supplementary accordion books.

Bill Hughes contributed not only many hours of work to the writing of this course, but a great share of teaching ideas and concepts, skillful but easily playable arrangements, and constant suggestions for improvements, which our publisher was kind enough and farsighted enough to accept and execute. The work of Bill Hughes was in no small way responsible for the phenomenal success of this widely acclaimed series, which, to date, has sold a total in excess of eight million books. These books are still selling over 250,000 units annually, and presently sales are on the increase again. *[Note: **Latest figures from Alfred Publishing indicates the total now exceeds ten million, including the translations into many foreign languages.**]*

Bill Hughes was also one of the organizers of the Houston Accordion Symphony which began, to the best of my recollection, around 1954. The members soon voted that the name of the organization be changed to the Palmer-Hughes Accordion Symphony. The standards of this group were extremely high.

The president of the organization, Anthony Zinnante, appointed an audition board, and new members were accepted only when they met the rigid standards of the board. All members were frequently reexamined. The group labored to build a vast repertoire of orchestral concert material. Bill Hughes wrote hundreds of arrangements for the symphony and directed them in concerts at the Palmer House in Chicago, Carnegie Hall in New York City, the Presidential Arms in Washington, D.C., and in many other cities.

In his latter years, Bill continued to teach private lessons at his home in Collegedale, Tennessee. Bill is survived by his wife, Mary, three grown children, William III, Patricia and Michael, and two step-children, Randall and Kevin. He was a very active member of his church and played accordion at the weekly services and for many church-sponsored occasions.

He was an humanitarian, and for the last four years of his life, he performed every Sunday for the inmates of the Hamilton County Prison near Chattanooga, Tennessee. He volunteered his services at the local schools to assist members of the high school band who wished to make more rapid progress. He was highly respected and loved by his community, as all of us who knew him can well imagine.

When he became too ill to leave his home, the choir from his church serenaded him under his window. On the day Bill Hughes died, August 25, 1978, the flag on the high school campus at Collegedale was flown at half-mast.

— Bill Palmer
Houston, Texas

[This article has been reprinted in its entirety from Accord magazine (January-February 1979) with the permission of Faithe Deffner, Owner and Editor. As the owner of Titano Corporation, she has greatly benefited the accordion community through the construction of quality instruments that are played by many of the major artists in the world. She has also devoted a very large part of her life in supporting activities that have furthered the advancement of the accordion and encouraged its professional use by America's aspiring musicians at the regional, national, and international competitions and festivals such as the ATG Championships and annual Coupe Mondiale.]

THE LIFE AND MUSICAL WORKS OF JOE BIVIANO

By Edwin Davison

Editor's Note: Joe Biviano was at the forefront as the accordion grew to its height of popularity. These reflections provide additional information about a mosaic of historical events during the "Golden Age" of the accordion. I appreciate Joe's assistance in the preparation of this article, especially since he is currently busy writing his own autobiography. The accordion world eagerly awaits Joe's life story. Undoubtedly, he will have many things to say about accordion's early history in New York City — a story that can best be told by the great artists themselves. Joe also tells us that many of his former recordings are soon being released in cassette form by JOMAR music. Thank you, Joe, for your cooperation in preparing this article. I wish you great success in your forthcoming autobiography and cassette releases.

.....

Like Charles Magnante and many other early artists, Joe Biviano began his long and distinguished accordion career on the Staten Island ferryboats. He started out working on the ferryboats with a trio, consisting of a violinist, a guitarist, and himself on accordion. Joe worked on the ferryboats for about 2 years, and he enjoyed this experience. Working in a public place such as a ferryboat, he never knew who was listening to a performance or who might step forward to offer an opportunity to progress to other types of work. Joe worked on the same ferryboat as Charles Magnante until Magnante was discovered and went on to a well-known radio and recording career.

Since the accordion field was in its infancy at that time, talented artists like Joe were lucky as they were able to get in on the "ground floor" of the accordion and develop very successful careers. Joe realized that it was only a matter of time until he'd transition from the ferryboats to other more challenging things. At the moment, however, he was pleased with his job and did his best to entertain passengers on the ferryboats, working principally with Anthony Torre, a violinist who had originally worked with Charles Magnante on the ferryboats before joining up with Joe Biviano. Not only did this great Biviano-Torre team perform on the ferryboats, but they also played in vaudeville and formed an act which took them throughout the New England states under contract to the William Morris Office. They had a 15-minute act that they performed at the major hotels, rotating from hotel to hotel. With the many engagements they were playing, Joe finally began to earn money. This was his first feeling of "success." He had come from a family where his father earned only $12 a week, and the family had to live with only the basic necessities of life. Of his homelife he recalls, "I had a happy home with lots of security and a strong, domineering mother who took care of many things."

His first real break occurred when he received a call from Mr. Phil Carlin, Vice President of WEAF radio. He phoned Joe and said, "Joe, you're involved in a new medium, and we don't know if it's going to work or not; but, we'd like you to come down to audition for us." Simply ecstatic over this fantastic offer, Joe got his accordion and went to the special audition that had been arranged. The audition was a mere formality as they had already decided that Joe was the man for the job. The radio station also accepted Joe's partner, Anthony Torre. Joe and Charlie had finally been discovered and were to be featured on weekly 15-minute broadcasts on Saturdays from 4:00 to 4:15 P.M. on radio station WEAF. Joe says, "These broadcasts became very popular and helped us to progress to many other things."

Another major break for Joe came when he got a call from NBC and was offered the position of staff accordionist with the network. Joe was only 18 years' old at the time of this major breakthrough. He instantly accepted it



JOE BIVIANO





TOP PHOTO: CHARLES MAGNANTE (L) AND JOE BIVIANO (R) CHECKING OUT SOME NBC-TV STUDIO EQUIPMENT BEFORE A LIVE APPEARANCE IN NEW YORK CITY. BOTTOM PHOTO: JOE BIVIANO (SECOND FROM LEFT) WITH OTHER ACCORDIONISTS AND THE RECORDING CREW DURING A RECORDING SESSION BREAK IN LATE 1940's.



ORIGINAL BOARD MEMBERS OF AMERICAN ACCORDIONISTS ASSOCIATION ORGANIZED IN 1938. PIETRO FROSINI, ABE GOLDMAN, AND SYDNEY DAWSON (FRONT ROW), ANTHONY GALLA-RINI, CHARLES MAGNANTE, PIETRO DEIRO, CHARLES NUNZIO (CENTER ROW), AND GENE VON HALLBERG AND JOE BIVIANO (BACK ROW). MEMBERS NOT IN PHOTO: JOHN GART, SAM ROLAND, AND BYRON STREEP.

and joined the staff as part of a quintet which consisted of piano, violin, saxophone, clarinet/banjo, and Joe on accordion. This group did a number of things over the network as "The Luncheon Five." Then, Joe naturally started getting calls from different orchestra leaders who asked him to play with them. So for a period of 2 or 3 years, Joe also played with these various orchestras in his time off from his network job. At the same time, he became involved with various commercial radio programs and was featured as a soloist on many of them.

In 1936 Joe opened up a studio, The Biviano Accordion Center and School of Music at 113 W. 48th St. in New York City. "This studio," he said, "seemed to become a meeting place for practically all of the accordionists from throughout the country when they would come to New York City." Many of his students went on to create outstanding professional careers of their own.

At about this same time, Charles Magnante was organizing an accordion quartet. Needless to say, Joe Biviano was chosen by Magnante to join this legendary Quartet. The other members of the Quartet were: Abe Goldman, a fine organist and accordionist; Gene Von Hallberg, a fine arranger, pianist, and accordionist; and, of course, Charles Magnante, the leader of the group. Joe recalls, "We began playing different things, and I arranged some of the numbers. We had many performances on the air, but the highlight of it all was our accordion concert in Carnegie Hall in New York City. Needless to say, we had a packed house, and it was wonderful!" After their appearance in Carnegie Hall, the world was open to the "Magnante Quartet," and they played program after program.

Then, about 1949, Joe Biviano had a challenging idea that he wanted to bring to fruition — the accordion symphony orchestra. He was associated with Fred Gretsch (manufacturer of La Tosca accordions) at that time, and Fred approved the idea. So, Fred gave Joe permission to implement the idea and sent him to Italy to work directly with the Italian accordion factories to develop all of the proper acoustics (quality of sound) that were needed for the reeds in order to simulate the different instruments of the orchestra. So, to replicate the unique orchestral sounds, special reed tuning had to be accomplished to create the separate sound of the woodwinds, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, cello, and accordion. (The rest of the accordions were tuned to give a tremendous organ sound.)

Joe was extremely successful in arranging this new and exciting development for the accordion. Concerning this accomplishment, Joe says, "I'm very happy to say that I was the one who started this new rage. And, we had a wonderful time working with all of the people involved — professional as well as some amateurs. We did symphonies of Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Hyden, and Mozart, as well as many things that I had arranged and still have today." These symphony orchestras were quite large, consisting of about 60 persons. The orchestra performances were very popular and always performed to a packed house. Looking back, Joe says, "And that started a new era for the accordion. From that point, accordion orchestras sprang up all over the country."

Finally, Joe gave this parting word to his many friends: "Well, this is my story. I've had many wonderful experiences and worked with many talented artists. I have had the opportunity to make money with this wonderful instrument, and I have received a lot of love (and hopefully given a share of love and enjoyment in return) from many people along the way. Needless to say, I had a ball doing it and enjoyed every moment!"

Joe Biviano has had a very successful career, and he is still very active in promoting the accordion and playing engagements in the New York area. He is currently working on an autobiography and has arranged with a music company to release some of his former recordings on cassette. To further highlight his career, a short summary of his major works and life

accomplishments are presented below:

[CAREER HIGHLIGHTS]

CONCERTS:
- Premiered David Diamond's *Night Music* for accordion and string quartet at the Little Carnegie Recital Hall
- Premiered Paul Hindemith's *Kammermusik* for accordion and chamber orchestra at Town Hall
- Premiered many works with the New York Philharmonic under Leonard Bernstein and Dimitri Mitropoulos

OPERA:
- *Vanessa* - Performed the accordion part for Vanessa on stage with the Metropolitan Opera for two seasons
- *Wozzeck* - Performed this opera with the Metropolitan Opera for two seasons. Recorded it for Columbia Records and gave five performances in concert under Dimitri Mitropoulos at Carnegie Hall
- *Mahagonny* - Performed this with the Metropolitan Opera for two seasons
- National tour with the Metropolitan Opera

TELEVISION:
- The Garry Moore Show
- The Jack Benny Show
- The Ed Sullivan Show
- The Phil Silvers Show
- The Sid Caesar Show
- Soloist for "Jumbo" with Jimmy Durante
- Conducted/Arranged "Chance of a Lifetime" & "Lady Bountiful"

FILMS:
- Staff accordionist for Fox Movie Tone
  Wrote and played the music for *The Knife Thrower*
- Accompanied Carlos Gardel for *Questo Abajo*
- Soloist on *All Quiet on the Western Front*

BROADWAY:
- *Too Late The Phalarope*
- *Four Saints in Three Acts* by Virgil Thompson.
  Recorded this opera for RCA Victor; performed it with the N.Y. Philharmonic Symphony under Leonard Bernstein and Virgil Thompson

RADIO:
- Staff accordionist for NBC for 13 years.
  Featured soloist on:
  The Palmolive Broadcast
  Tango Ramantico
  The Silvertown Cord Orchestra
  General Motors Show
  Muellers Kitchen Cavalcade
  A and P Gypsies
  Carlos Gardel Broadcasts
  Saludos Amigos
  Latin-American shortwave radio shows
- Staff accordionist for CBS for 7 years. Featured soloist on Conte's Castile, Kraft Music Hall, Perry Como Show
- Staff accordionist for ABC for 8 years
- Soloist on Saturday Night Dancing Party
- Performed, conducted and wrote music for Michael Caine Show
- Contracted by Office of War Information to write original music for Animal Farm and perform it for European broadcast

RECORDINGS:
- Exclusive recording contracts with RCA Victor, Columbia, and Decca Records.
- Singles:

Dancing Tambourine	RCA Victor
The Accordion Polka	RCA Victor
Pretty Mafalda	Columbia

- Albums:
  Joe Biviano and His Jazz Sextet
  Sonoro Records
  Italian Favorites - Biviano/Mecca Duet
  Joe Davis Records

Favorite Waltzes	Joe Davis Records
Pizza Party	Joe Davis Records

- Recorded Virgil Thompson's *Louisiana Story* with the Philadelphia Symphony under Eugene Ormandy
- Made one or more albums with: Maurice Chevalier, Frank Sinatra, Vic Damone, and Andre Kostelanetz

PUBLISHED ACCORDION WORKS:

Original Works	Transcriptions
Beguine de Roma	Cubanera
Bolero in C Major	Galloping Comedians
Careless One,	Gypsy Rondo
Cha Cha Cha	La Chasse
Dancing Silhouette	Spanish Dance
Mazurka Bella	Valse op. 69
The Mexican Mouse	Valse op. 70
The Rooster	Italian Favorites
Serenata Sevilliana	(A Collection)
Soliloquy of a Peddler	George M. Cohan
Sweet Stuff	(An Album)
Waltz Bach a Roo Bach	
Waltz Impromptu	
Three Blind Mice	

Technical Material

- *Biviano Elementary Approach to Scales and Arpeggios for Accordion:* O. Pagani
- *Biviano Accordion Manual of Scales and Arpeggios in Advanced Form* (Vol I and II): O. Pagani
- *Biviano Progressive Studies in Chromatic Form:* O. Pagani
- *21 Little Etudes for the Accordion:* O. Pagani
- *Biviano Accordion Method for Beginners:* Deiro Publications

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION:

- Who Is Who In Music through 1951
- Founder-Member of American Accordionists' Association (AAA)
- President of the AAA for six terms
- V. President Confederation Internationale Des Accordeonistes
- Adjudicator for state, national, and international music competitions spanning 40 years
- Founder/conductor/arranger: Accordion Symphony Society of NY
- Designer of special instruments for symphony orchestras
- Designer of all La Tosca accordions for Fred Gretsch Company
- Performed at the White House for Vice-President Johnson, the King and Queen of Laos and the Royal Family
- Member of ASCAP



JOE BIVIANO (SECOND FROM RIGHT) AND TEACHERS JOSEPH MANZI (STANDING), TONY MECCA (CENTER), AND VICTOR LEONE (FAR RIGHT) ASSISTING A STUDENT, PATTY BROOKES, INTERPRET A DIFFICULT PASSAGE.

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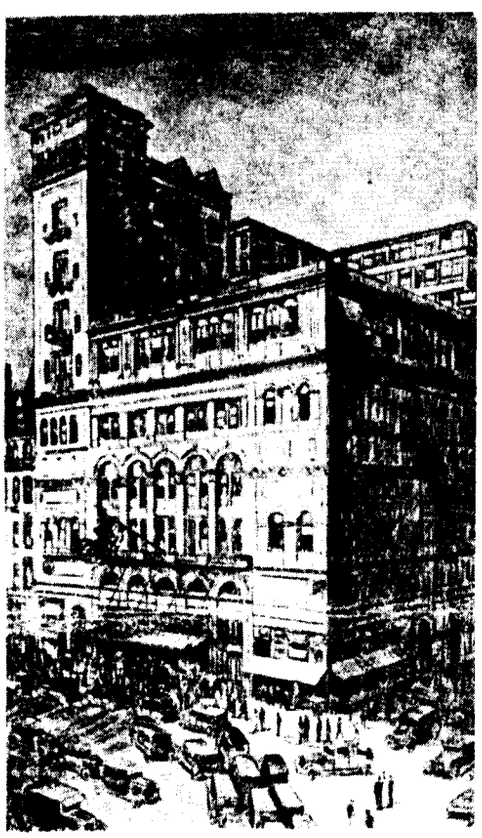
HISTORY IS MADE AT CARNEGIE!
By Joe Biviano

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

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



CARNEGIE HALL

Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky. The second half includes a lighter type of music. Magnante will give a number of solos and will be one half of a duet with "yours truly" as the other half. I also will appear as soloist as well as with the quartet. One of the important numbers planned by the quartet is Bach's "Toccato and Fugue in D Major." But if I tell any more, you'll be knowing more about the concert than I do; so, I'll be seeing you at "Carnegie."

Now, after talking about an event that means work and lots of it, I want to bring up a point about study in the early stages of musical training. I often have pupils who feel that giving much time to scales, arpeggios, etc., is not necessary. If they are not convinced before of the error of such notions, let them wait till they get working outside of music school and without a teacher standing over them. Fundamental studies are the backbone of any musical instrument, and these exercises and studies are what makes it possible for the accordionist to sight read, divide correctly, and to play musical passages clearly. Lucky is the student who does realize the importance of these studies, for he will surely find his "pot of gold" at the end of the rainbow.

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

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AS THOUSANDS CHEERED

The long-awaited, much-heralded date at last arrived: April 18. Carnegie Hall was in readiness for the event that was to loom large in musical annals and in accordion history. Only a vivid imagination can appreciate the feeling of suspense and anxiety that must have been experienced by the man on whose shoulders rested the responsibility for the whole affair — Charles Magnante. Would all the efforts of the past months be rewarded by appreciation from music critics and serious musicians, or would his attempt to establish the accordion on a new plan be ridiculed?

The evening was a treacherous one. A heavy blanket of fog hung over New York City, making travel, even to cross a street, difficult and dangerous. Nevertheless by 8:30 scarcely a seat was left unfilled in Carnegie Hall. In the audience of 3,000 people were representatives of New York's highest musical and social circles. The majority of the great crowd were already ardent Magnante fans; many were themselves professional or amateur accordionists, but there were some to whom this definitely was a new phase of music. They were waiting to be shown.

The time of starting arrived, and before this varied audience stepped Kelvin Keech, Commentator for the N.B.C. Studios. As an introduction to the playing, Mr. Keech spoke briefly on the outstanding accomplishments of Mr. Magnante and members of the quartet: Joe Biviano, Abe Goldman, and Gene von Hallberg.

As Mr. Keech concluded, the four star accordionists, of whom he had been speaking, stepped from the wings. With Paul Prinz at the string bass, they opened the program with Bach's famous "Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor," followed by the "Rondo Capriccioso" of Mendelssohn. A moment of appreciative silence, then applause rang out, echoing and reechoing through the Hall. And those who had been skeptical or merely curious joined in. This was indeed music.

When applause finally died away, Mr. Magnante took the stage alone and in his matchless style played "Malaguena" by Lecuona; Chopin's "Waltz in C-Sharp Minor" and "Nocturne E Flat;" Kreisler's "Liebsfreund," and his own "Perpetual Motion." At the conclusion of the group, he was recalled time after time to receive the plaudits of his listeners.

There followed two duets by Mr. Magnante and Mr. Biviano. Then again the Quartet appeared, this time to play "Danse des Bouffons" by Rimsky-Korsakov; "Danse de Mirlitons" by Tchaikovsky; Bach's "Fugue in G Minor;" and "Flight of the Bumble Bee" by Rimsky-Korsakov.

An intermission gave members of the audience a chance to look about and see some of their interesting neighbors. Frosini and Pietro shared a box and Anthony Galla-Rini and other noted players were surrounded by friends and admirers. Probably the record holder for long-distance travel was held by Mr. and Mrs. Bert Glassel of Saskatoon, Canada, who covered the distance of 2,000 miles solely for the purpose of attending.

The second half of the program, which was devoted to modern compositions, was opened by Mr. Magnante's rendition of paraphrase on "Dark Eyes" and "The Carnival of Venice," and "On the Trail" by Grofe.

Two new personalities were next introduced by Mr. Keech: Domenic and Anthony Mecca. These two brilliant young stars, who already have a wide following, won enthusiastic appreciation with their rendition of "Rhapsody in Blue" and Frosini's "Jolly Caballero."

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

A final group by the Quartet, including "Mardi Gras" by Grofe, Magnante's well-loved "Accordiana," and a medley of Gershwin's

numbers brought the brilliant program to a close.

The rousing ovation given Mr. Magnante and his assisting artists left no doubt as to the popular approval of the event. The one question remaining was: What would the critics say? The next day's newspaper told the story . . . how critics as well as the general public were won over to the accordion as a musical instrument of the highest quality.

[Editor's Note: The preceding two articles and the Carnegie Hall photograph have been reprinted from the original Accordion World (March 1939, May 1939) by special permission and courtesy of Margaret Black and Carolyn Carlson, daughters of the former publisher: John C. Gerstner.]



FAMED FOUR-STAR MAGNANTE ACCORDION QUARTET
SITTING: CHARLES MAGNANTE (L) AND ABE GOLDMAN (R)
STANDING: JOE BIVIANO (L) AND GENE VON HALLBERG (R)

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CHARLES MAGNANTE — THE MAN, THE ARTIST WE LOVED

By Ron Flynn

In the opening pages of this book, I included a personal note I received from Charles Magnante, who had been kind enough to review my first book. His note of approval encouraged and motivated me. I shall always appreciate his words: "What the accordion world needs is more enthusiasm like yours!" And, I now realize how much those words influenced me to accept the challenge to write this book.

Unfortunately, while I was still developing a plan for the book's revision, Charles Magnante became ill. So I dared not ask him for a contribution as an author during his illness. Then on December 30, 1986, our beloved Charles Magnante passed away after a long and protracted illness. He had lived among us for over 80 years, enriching us with his music. Naturally, no book on the accordion would be complete without including the man and the artist that we of his generation came to love and appreciate so much. Thanks to technology, we can still listen to his beautiful recordings, and it is as though Charles Magnante is still with us. How fortunate we are to live in this modern age. He will be remembered by all future generations for his perfect technique and style.

In making the final plans for this book, there was also the propriety of including biographic material about Charles Magnante at this time. I say this because I have been told that he had begun a comprehensive autobiography before his death. However, as of this writing, his autobiography has not been published. Since the task of publishing his autobiography rests with his wife, I did not want to compete in the slightest way with any pending book as I felt it would be inappropriate to preempt or duplicate what he may have written about his own career for later publication. For that, we must wait a short while longer, allowing additional time for the publication of his work by family members. At this time, therefore, I will not cover his life in a biographic sense. I wish, instead, to present a memorial of a different sort — a memorial that will portray his life in a totally different way.

But how should I approach the difficult task of covering Charles Magnante in my revised book? Whatever the approach, one thing was certain: It must be worthy of this accordion maestro. To author the article, I needed someone who had known Charles Magnante intimately. Pondering which of Charles Magnante's many friends I should ask to perform this special task, I realized that any one of them could provide an interesting, documented account of his extraordinary life. I then talked to some of my closest friends, many of whom had also personally known Charles Magnante. Again and again, I was advised that perhaps no single individual should be asked to have the sole responsibility of memorializing the Magnante that everyone had known and loved so much. Thus, I obtained a general consensus that this memorial tribute should simply be a forum for all of Magnante's friends to make a lasting statement about their long-time friend and colleague. What greater tribute could one be given?

With the assistance of my associates, Eddie Chavez and Ed Davison, I began the lengthy process of contacting those who had known or worked with Charles Magnante during the "Golden Age" of the accordion. Over a period of many months, I made an exhaustive effort to contact everyone who would want to make a contribution. If I have omitted anyone who may have known Charles Magnante, it is totally unintentional. Since I am not omniscient, I could not possibly know all of Charles Magnante's friends. Even if I knew them all, I would still be limited in knowing how to contact them. So, I apologize to anyone who may have wished to offer a tribute in his memory, but were precluded from doing so because of my inability to contact them.

Now, for the remainder of this memorial, I shall present friend after friend, allowing each



MAESTRO CHARLES MAGNANTE

to state in their own manner some interesting story that they remember about Charlie, what they admired about him, or how he helped or encouraged them during their careers. May these words by his many friends be forever etched in the memory of those who loved this great musical giant — the Man and Artist, Charles Magnante. How appropriate are the words composed by Shakespeare:

I count myself in nothing else so happy
As in a soul remembering my good friends.

— Richard II

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IN MEMORIAM

The American Accordionists' Association
mourns the death
of our founder member and past president
CHARLES MAGNANTE,
virtuoso, composer and recording artist
whose personal warmth and inspiring music
has enriched both the accordion community
and the music world

December 7, 1905 - December 30, 1986

[Comments Are Presented
In Order Received From Contributors]

(Submitted by Anthony Galla-Rini)

I join the entire accordion world in mourning the loss of one who was a great man and a fine artist. On January 6, 1987, I was informed of the sad news that Charles Magnante had passed away. On January 7, I sent the following telegram to Mrs. Charles Magnante, and I wish to repeat it now in his honor:

"We are sorry to be informed that Charles Magnante has passed away. Truly, we have lost one of the original pioneers of the accordion. As I remember him, he was always the perfect gentleman, congenial, and considerate of others. He proved to be a solid musician and a fine artist. We shall not forget the many years he devoted in the interest of his beloved instrument. We send you our condolences, and we are grateful to you for having brought happiness into his life."

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Galla-Rini

(Submitted by Charles Nunzio)

Please include this short verse in memory of my close friend, Charlie Magnante:

"I have known Charles Magnante from the early 1930's and know what a great perfectionist he was. He spent many hours, sometimes as much as 8 hours per day studying. We were very good friends, and for many years we did many radio programs and shows together. A wonderful colleague has been lost — a friend and master of the art of accordion virtuosity."

— Charles Nunzio

(Submitted by Frank Gaviani)

I am honored to present some remarks in memory of this great virtuoso accordionist who did so much for the advancement of the accordion:

"Charles Magnante and I first met in 1932, when he was 24 and I was 22 years of age. This was at the beginning stage of his career, and it was a chance-meeting at the Excelsior Accordion Company. I came into the Excelsior office and was dumbfounded when I heard him play. At that time, I thought he was the greatest accordionist alive; in later years, my conviction was confirmed again and again. Excelsior

used to give concerts at which all of its artists participated, myself included. That was around 1941. The war started at that time, and the accordion promotions stopped. Magnante and I did not see one other again for about 3 or 4 years, until he came to Boston to perform at a concert sponsored by a local accordion school.

"In the 1960's, when Magnante was no longer playing on the radio, he started to concertize by himself, at which time I had the pleasure of lending him a helping hand. We appeared together many times on the same programs in New York. And, when the Massachusetts Accordionists' Association was begun, we formed an accordion orchestra and played for most all of Magnante's programs. I greatly admired his intricate arrangements, and it was gratifying to me to have students who could play them. Also, we (of the Pagani Publishing Co.) published many of his arrangements, and we were always happy to see them submitted for publication. Thereafter, the only time Magnante and I met was when I escorted groups of youngsters to New York to compete at the American Accordionists' Association Contest (winning first prize), and he would always praise me about how wonderful my groups sounded. I believe, as many other accordionists believe, that Magnante was one of the greatest artists in the accordion world."

— Frank Gaviani

(Submitted by Art Van Damme)

In regards to Charlie Magnante:

"Charlie and I were good friends, and as a teenager I naturally admired his great playing. He was one of the finest accordionists I ever heard play the instrument. I very much loved his legato manner, which I thought was the proper way to play. At one time in the 1940's and early 1950's, we were next to each other doing our radio shows — Charlie out of New York and I with Dave Garroway in Chicago. Also, at one time, we switched places and played on each other's show. He was a 'great' accordionist and will be missed by so many."

— Art Van Damme

(Submitted by Myron Floren)

Please include this paragraph in memory of my close friend, Charlie Magnante:

"More than any one person, Charles Magnante influenced me to make the accordion my life's work. I first heard him play on the 'Major Bowes Capital Family Hour.' Then, I first met him in 1940, when he visited the 'Lucky Strike Hit Parade' where I was featured. Frank Sinatra was, by the way, the new singer on the block. Charlie Magnante's musicianship and warm friendliness have stayed with me all during my career. History will indeed remember him for his greatness:

"What Charles Lindberg was to aviation, Charles Magnante was to the accordion."

— Myron Floren

(Submitted by Emil Baldoni)

Please include these comments about the life of the legendary Charles Magnante in his memorial Tribute:

"Living in New York all my life, I had the great opportunity to follow all the musical activities of Charles Magnante's career. Although in the accordion manufacturing and repair business all my life, I never had the opportunity to maintain or

repair any of his personal accordions as he was an Excelsior artist, and the Excelsior craftsmen, naturally, maintained his accordions. When Charles Magnante was very young, he played on the ferryboats to make his living.

"With his business talent and professional musicianship, he unquestionably became the most successful accordionist of his generation. You have to give him exceptional credit as he was self-taught. As one of the greatest musicians of this century, it is truly amazing that he went as far as he did with no formal musical training. He was self-made, and I take pride in having known him."

— Emil Baldoni

(Submitted by Al Day)

I consider myself quite fortunate to have personally known Charles Magnante. Please include these comments in memory of this great musical giant:

"My association with Charles Magnante goes back to 1937 when I had a rare opportunity to attend an Excelsior demonstration in New York City. Many fine accordionists were introduced, including Pietro Deiro, Frank Gaviani, and Andy Arcari. Then, Charles Magnante was introduced, and as he began to play, it was such an experience. It was indeed a pleasure to hear him in person for the first time. He was absolutely fantastic.

"Shortly after that great treat, I was mesmerized every time I heard him play during radio broadcasts or on one of his records. I also obtained his many accordion arrangements for practice and serious study. Until this day, I recommend and use Magnante's material as much as possible.

"In 1959, Charlie came to Las Vegas with the 'Three Sons Trio' and played for 3 weeks. So naturally, I had a chance to become acquainted with him; I can say without reservation that Charlie was one of the nicest people I have ever known. We were together whenever possible during this period. Immediately after the engagement, he hurt his back and was admitted to the hospital and placed in traction for a week.

"I'll always remember Charlie's help and encouragement to me. He was such a great artist and musician and the perfect gentleman.

"In the 1960's and 1970's when Charlie would come through Las Vegas, he always gave me a call, and we would spend some time together. Once I took Charlie to visit a friend of mine at the Desert Inn Hotel, and when my friend opened the door, he was astonished to see Charles Magnante standing beside me with his sleeves rolled up saying hello to him. Yes, Charlie was a very friendly individual, and it was a pleasure being with him even when he wasn't playing the accordion.

"He was one of the finest composers, arrangers, and musicians I have known in my lifetime. His recordings were always done with the greatest taste and style and presented so that the skillful listener could learn much from listening carefully to this virtuoso. What a treat to the ear! His name should always be remembered and held in the greatest of respect whenever or wherever the accordion is mentioned. He knew what kind of sounds the accordion could make, and with his superb technique, he always got exactly what he wanted out of his accordion."

— Al Day (Drazba)

(Submitted by Ms. Joan Cochran Sommers)

I have often reflected on the life and outstanding accomplishments of Charles Magnante, as well as the tremendous impact he had and

continues to have on accordionists the world over. I am honored to share these comments with others in a Tribute to Charles Magnante:

"It was never my opportunity to study privately with Charles Magnante. I did, however, grow up hearing him play with his Trio on the radio, and I can assure you it was certainly one of those experiences that contributed to my desire to want to be an accordionist. And even now, don't we all continue to speak of that superlative Magnante technique to our students? I had the chance to hear him play in person many times and, even in his later years, that perfect right hand was always apparent — a continual reminder of what 'should be' as well as what 'could be' with the right amount of practice. Magnante had a very special gift, however, and he shared it with many! I feel lucky it was during my lifetime."

— Joan Cochran Sommers

(Submitted by Marcello Roviaro)

Enclosed is the "paragraph" on Charles Magnante. In writing about this great accordionist and good friend, it was very difficult to confine the article to a paragraph; therefore, the "paragraph" became quite extensive:

"Charles Magnante was one of the greatest performers in the annals of accordion history. He was a transcendent technician gifted with infallible, marvelous hands. He was probably the most publicized, admired, and successful accordionist of all time. His concerts, radio broadcasts, and T.V. appearances were anticipated and received with great enthusiasm and adulation. To all musicians, he was a consummate artist.

"Magnante made hundreds of recordings which were and still are being played and studied by accordionists throughout the world. They are a great source of inspiration to all performers who desire to emulate his style of playing. Throughout his brilliant career, Magnante gave many workshops in which he explained in detail all the intricacies of the fine art of accordion playing. These events were revelations and an education to thousands of accordionists.

"He made an immense contribution to the accordion repertory as an arranger and composer. His works reveal a very fine knowledge of voicings and use of registration, thereby making the arrangement or composition sound accordionistic and colorful. His most famous compositions, 'Accordiana,' 'Waltz Allegro,' and 'Accordion Boogie,' are enjoyed and played by accordionists throughout the world. His works as arranger and composer encompass many styles of music.

"Charles Magnante was a founder of the American Accordionists' Association (AAA). He served as its president many times throughout the history of the AAA and worked constantly with a profound dedication for the promulgation of the AAA and its principles. Throughout his professional career, he worked with undiminished enthusiasm for the acceptance of the accordion as a serious instrument in the musical world.

"I knew Charles Magnante for many years, and during all that time he was a kind, considerate gentleman. Always calm and dignified, he respected other people's opinions, never raising his voice when a divergent view was expressed. Over the years, we worked together many times on various committees of the AAA, and it was a constant pleasure to be with him to discuss the manifold aspects of a specific project. He was, without question, a primary force in blazing the trail for the advancement of the accordion. Indeed, in formulating the saga of our dearly loved instrument, Charles Magnante and the

accordion are synonymous!"

— **Marcello Roviaro**

(Submitted by Manny Quartucci)

I hope this article isn't too long to be included in this Tribute to Charles Magnante. Although I did not know him as well as others who will be submitting a Tribute, I am proud to add my own personal remembrances of this very great artist:

"My early recollections of Charles Magnante's career caused me to idolize him. He, like all of the other great artists, had to expend great effort to achieve greatness. His father (who also played the accordion) bought Magnante his first accordion, and he did much to encourage Charlie's professional growth. His father was also his first teacher, teaching him everything he knew, but it is well known that Magnante was basically self-taught. At age 14, he was already playing dances and on the ferryboats in New York City. Then came his series of radio appearances, concert performances, recording contracts, teaching career, and all the fame that accompanied his professional career.

"I shall always remember the great privilege I had when I met Charlie during an Accordion Trade Convention in Chicago. I got to visit with him an entire afternoon, talking about the accordion. I asked him many questions about his technique and other such questions that I had often wanted to ask this 'master' of the accordion. In looking back, I suppose I was amazed that a person of his fame would take time to spend the entire afternoon to help an aspiring artist such as myself. He was a perfect gentleman, and he seemed to enjoy telling me about his many experiences, technique, and style of playing the accordion. I shall always be grateful for that long afternoon with Charlie Magnante. I, like many others, corresponded with him over the years. Charlie was one who would always answer your letters and questions. Mostly, his replies were in longhand, reflecting his humble and generous nature in providing any requested information. He always provided the perfect answer.

"Here in Chicago, we had an artist of the same caliber as Charles Magnante, and we Chicagoans always used to say, 'New York has its Charles Magnante, and we have our Vincent Geraci.' I believe that Charlie could play 'Flight of the Bumblebee' better than the very best violinist. On radio, Charlie had no equal; his popularity on the airways was due to his originality and his ability to arrange and interpret music. He brought the accordion from the 'ferryboat' and 'Tin-Pan Alley' days to the grandeur of Carnegie Hall.

"It is a shame that a video was never made of Magnante playing the accordion. In our lifetime, we will probably never again see or hear anyone who can play as Magnante did. If there is an ensemble of accordionists up in paradise, I know Charlie will have first chair. What an accordionist!"

— **Manny Quartucci**

(Submitted by Frank Umbriaco)

Enclosed are my comments about Charles Magnante that I wish to have included in the special Tribute. I'm sorry for the delay in submitting these comments, but I am now 88 years of age, and my health has been up and down. I have relayed these comments to my son for transmittal to you. Thank you for including me in this wonderful Tribute to my good friend, Charlie Magnante:

"Around 1922, I was teaching the accordion on Sullivan Street in New York

City. Charlie would come over and play for me the different numbers that he had written to get my opinion about them. I must say that I was very impressed, not only with the numbers themselves, but also with his manner of expression and technique. As time went on, I would often refer Charlie to jobs that I couldn't play for one reason or the other, and he would do the same for me.

"Charlie was one nice guy. In my opinion, he was the greatest technician of the accordion that I have ever known. He did much to raise the level of the accordion to its acceptance as a 'concert' instrument.

"We will all miss Charlie, and his contributions will remain with us through his many recordings and beautiful arrangements, but most of all, in our memory of him in all his greatness."

— Frank Umbriaco

(Submitted by John Buday)

Here are some short stories about Charles Magnante that I wish to include in his Tribute. I believe they will reveal what a wonderful person he was and why his name will live on forever:

"When Charles Magnante released his final cassette, 'Virtuoso Accordion,' he phoned and asked me to be one of his dealers for the new cassette. Naturally, I agreed to carry it as it was indeed a great pleasure to represent him in this way. Since that time, I have sold quite a number of these cassettes. He also sent me a cassette of his Boston radio interview back in April 4, 1984. This cassette, with his voice and music, still thrill me to this day.

"On this cassette of the Boston interview on 'Music America,' a relaxed Charles Magnante made many memorable comments concerning his childhood and how he began his career. He was asked a variety of questions by the radio host concerning what he had done or what age he was when he made certain accomplishments and the like. So in tribute to this great man and artist, I wish to summarize a few of his many comments during that interview.

"Charles had four brothers and a sister, all of whom played a musical instrument (violin, clarinet, saxophone), but Charles played the accordion. He was often chided by his brothers and sister that he should play something besides a mere 'parlor instrument.' So because of their criticism, he stopped playing the accordion and took up the trumpet. But after only 6 months, he realized that he did not like it. Then one night his godfather drove down from New Jersey and asked if he could take little Charles (who was only 13 years old) down the road to play for 5 minutes at a dance hall. They drove a short distance to the dance hall where Charles played two numbers, 'The Sheik of Araby' and 'Sweetheart I Love You,' the only songs he knew at that time. After he played, they passed the hat and collected $5.50. This made a lasting impression on Charles, and he never again wanted to play anything but the accordion.

"Charles was the first accordionist to play on experimental radio in 1923. His entry on the 'Bell Telephone Hour' deserves special mention. Charles told the listeners the amusing story of how he came to be a regular performer on that weekly radio program. One day, Charles received a call from the conductor, Don Voorhees, asking if Charles and Joe Venuti could help out by filling in an empty 5 1/2 minutes on the show. Charles agreed and phoned Joe to ask if he could also come on short notice to help out. Charles arrived at the station first, and it seemed an interminable period before Joe arrived, just 2 minutes before going on the air. But they had an

immediate problem as it was less than 2 minutes before airtime, and they did not have a prepared number to play. They had no choice but to go on the air not knowing exactly what they would play.

"The announcer introduced them, and said, 'Charles Magnante and Joe Venuti will now play something of their own.' Nothing was closer to the truth because during the next 5 1/2 minutes, they inspired the national audience with a strictly improvised number. As if by inspiration, the song, 'Sweet Sue,' came to Charles' mind, and after he had vamped three or four bars, Joe Venuti joined in, and they performed a concert arrangement of 'Sweet Sue' that no one (including themselves) had ever heard before. This was Charles' debut on the 'Bell Telephone Hour,' beginning his long series of appearances on that weekly show."

— **John Buday**

(Submitted by Ms. Maddalena Belfiore)

Thank you for inviting me to be included in your historic book on the accordion. I regret the delay in sending this Tribute to you, but it is summertime and filled with all the accordion activities that are compressed into this time of year. Best of luck on your book:

"My first encounter with Charles Magnante was at the age of five when my father announced that the day had come to start music lessons. He asked me what instrument I would like to study. At that age I did not have the slightest idea what I wanted to play, so I said the saxophone. That day, before going to the music studio, my father asked me if I would like to go to the movies and I said, 'Yes.' Then after the movie, the show began (this was near the end of vaudeville), and one of the featured performers was Charles Magnante. After watching this marvelous performer with awe and admiration, I said to my father, 'That's what I want to play!' We immediately left the theater, and within 1 hour I had my first accordion lesson. This was the beginning of a fascinating and wonderful career with the accordion.

"Not only was Magnante a great musician, but he was also a great leader. As president of the American Accordionists' Association, he was dedicated to elevating the image of the accordion. He was instrumental in standardizing the music notation for the accordion and the preparation of the teacher's certification syllabus. He often donated his time in presenting workshops on technique and never refused to perform at an AAA concert or adjudicate at an AAA contest. His one particular project was to showcase young accordion artists. It was this project that I was able to fulfill during my presidency of the association with the Young Artists Series at Carnegie Recital Hall, New York City.

"Charles Magnante, the man, was a very warm and sincere person; Charles Magnante, the artist, was a true musician and a master technician of the instrument. During his many years on radio and in recording studios, he worked with many of the leading professionals in the music business. He was respected not only as a master accordionist, but as a fellow musician.

" 'Accordiana,' 'Valse Allegro,' and the many countless arrangements that he wrote for the accordion will always be an integral part of our teaching and performing programs. I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to know and to work side by side with one of the legends of the accordion — The Great Charles Magnante."

— **Maddalena Belfiore**

(Submitted by John Barsuglia)

Enclosed are some comments to include in the Tribute to the beloved Charles Magnante. The proudest thing we have in our family's possession is a picture of Charles Magnante with my wife and me together with Joe and Mary Razzaia of Stockton, California. Mary Razzaia is Anthony Galla-Rini's sister. I thank you very much for including me in this Tribute:

"I first met Charles Magnante after one of his concerts at San Jose, California in 1956. Then, once more, I had the great opportunity to meet him again and talk to him at the AAA-ATG Convention in Chicago in 1960. I consider both of these opportunities as great events in my life, and I shall always treasure those meetings as I had been an admirer of his since 1934. He was such a nice, soft-spoken man, and he showed the deepest interest and concern for everyone he met.

"Throughout the teaching careers of my wife and me, we found Magnante's compositions and arrangements to be very helpful in the instruction of our students as they were of varying difficulty and technique that was of importance to the advancement of students of the accordion — from intermediate through advanced level.

"The passing of Charles Magnante has indeed left the accordion field with a great void. He was a leader whom everyone emulated in technique and style. Today, a key 'spoke' is missing from the wagon wheel, and I fear that the wheel will never be the same again. There was only one person made from this mold: Magnante, the musician.

"Unfortunately, I wish I had known him much better during his life, but through his powerful music, we can all know him over and over again."

— John Barsuglia

(Submitted by Joe Biviano)

The following Tribute has been transcribed from a cassette recording prepared by Joe Biviano especially for this book and Tribute to his wonderful friend, Charlie Magnante:

"Charlie was born on a farm in Washington, New Jersey. He was a farmhand for many years, and he got most of his education from his father who knew about the accordion. Charlie also got his early musical training from his father, but from then on Charlie learned it all on his own. He was an avid reader and was always interested in getting information.

"I first met Charlie on the Staten Island ferryboats where he was working on an upper deck with a violinist and another accordionist, and I was working the lower deck. An interesting thing I remember about Charlie's ferryboat days was that when we would come to the end of the 30-minute ride, he would not break or anything else, but would just continue practicing. Charlie practiced like a 'mad demon.' This tells you something of his inner drive and striving for perfection that led him to such heights of excellence in the accordion world. Having studied with him for about 3 or 4 years, I learned many important things from this great artist. We grew to be very good friends during these wonderful years.

"From the ferryboats, Charlie went on to green pastures and became involved with 'The Roxy Gang' which was broadcast every Sunday over WJZ in New York. Then, he was sought after by many other commercial shows, band leaders, and conductors. From this point, Charlie went on to a lengthy, successful recording and broadcasting career. He was featured as the soloist with the famed Music Hall Orchestra, which had noted conductors such as Ernest Rapee and Nathaniel Shilkraut.

Charlie really knocked them on their ears with his technique and style."

— **Joe Biviano**

(Submitted by Dr. Willard "Bill" Palmer)

Enclosed is a Tribute about my dear friend, Charlie Magnante. As I reflected about my memories of this great artist, it was enormously difficult to condense all of the wonderful recollections that I have of this accordion virtuoso. It is with the deepest respect and reverence for his illustrious career that I attempt to describe a man so great as Charlie Magnante:

"When I was just beginning to play the accordion, nothing inspired me more than hearing Charles Magnante on the 'Major Bowes Family Hour,' 'Manhattan Merry-Go-Round,' and his other radio shows. His playing was so crisp and clean that it made me wonder if anyone else could possibly attain such a fine technique. I remember saying to my father, 'Listen to that! I will never be able to play the accordion that well.' And my father said, 'Remember, Bill, he has been at it a lot longer than you have.' Finally, I wrote Magnante a letter. Much to my surprise, he answered with a friendly, full-page reply, urging me to continue practice, and suggested that I acquire the finest instrument I could possibly afford. He didn't mention any brand-names. Eventually, I did get a fine instrument, and it made a lot of difference. But, so did all the practicing I did as a result of Charles Magnante's encouragement. I never equaled that clean, crisp touch that he had, but I did get far enough to play some concert programs with him. What a surprise for me and for my father as well!

"Magnante and I became very good friends. I called him a few weeks before his death, and he was warm and cordial, recalling some of the experiences we had together. Magnante was always a perfect gentleman, a mediator between accordionists who had certain disagreements, and he had only good things to say about everyone. He was one of the great pioneers of the accordion, and his name should be among those at the top of the list in the Accordion Hall of Fame."

— **Bill Palmer**

(Submitted by Mario Pancotti)

I am happy to share what I remember of Charles Magnante for his forthcoming Tribute in your book. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to relate in a small way what I thought of this great man:

"Having known Charles Magnante for well over 40 years, I must say that I seemed to develop some insight into this outstanding and talented individual from the very beginning. I always marveled each time I heard or watched him play because every note was clear and his passages were well shaded with the expressions that the piece required.

"I remember an interesting thing that happened at one of the yearly musical conventions in which Charles took a commercial 2-reed accordion and demonstrated it for a young accordionist to show him how it would sound. Well, he certainly impressed everyone in the room as he made that instrument sound like one of the very best professional models. He demonstrated control and understanding of the instrument that few others could have shown.

"Over the years, his suggestions to improve the instrument were helpful to those of us who were in the accordion manufacturing business, as well as to the many artists who benefited from the improvements. One of the secrets that he

shared with me was that the control of the bellows was the key element in obtaining the correct sound out of the accordion.

"To this day, I still wonder how far Charles would have gone had he played another instrument like the piano rather than the accordion. I cannot help believing that he would have excelled in it as well. "For a man who had no formal musical education or lessons and who was basically self-taught, he nevertheless became one of the greatest artists of all time and always will be."

— **Mario Pancotti**

(Submitted by Mickey Magnante)

I consider myself to be one of the luckiest men in the world to have known and been related to Charles Magnante. I have so many wonderful memories of us together. I am happy to share some of these memorable moments in this Tribute to my wonderful uncle — the "great" Charles Magnante:

"It was always a pleasure having Charles come to our house and watching him get ready for his concerts. I would cook breakfast for him, and he'd eat a hearty breakfast, go out for a walk, and come back to start practicing. He was a late sleeper, but also got to bed early. His normal time to begin practicing in the morning was around 10 o'clock. Charles always watched his diet and was very careful about his food. His wife, Charlotte, always made sure that he had healthy meals, and she watched over him like a little baby. Love flowed throughout his home, and he'd leave little notes in the kitchen and in other rooms, 'Charlotte, I love you.'

"We've had many wonderful memories together — our concerts in Boston at the Sommerset Hotel and in Ft. Myers, Florida. Charles was always a great inspiration to all of the accordionists who came around because he was such a wonderful and clean-living man. Everyone loved him. He was like having a savior around you — always glowing.

"Charles was born in 1905, and he had quite a life. He was unique, undeniably irreplaceable, and the greatest accordionist of the century. He inspired me and many musicians to study the classics first in order to develop good technique — like an athlete preparing for the Olympics.

"Charles always led the way! He had many concerts and musical experiences to prove that the accordion was fit for all phases of music like a great violinist. As a result, this instrument, through many hard knocks, has come a long way from the days of having no shifts on the accordion to having the greatest technology in electronics.

"Anyone who is fortunate to play the accordion today should know it all began with great men like Charles Magnante."

— **Mickey Magnante**

(Submitted by Sylvia Prior)

The following comments are submitted as my tribute to Charles Magnante. Thank you for inviting me to participate in this memorial Tribute:

"When I think of Charlie Magnante, I think of the legacy of musical materials that he wrote and left for us to use. When teachers ask me for arrangements, I refer them to Magnante's arrangements since they are easily understood by students with 2 or 3 years of training, and I know these arrangements will make the student sound as though he's had more years of study! Magnante never complicated his beautiful arrangements as he wished to make the student feel there is no mystery in music.

Music is a study, never a mystery.

"I met Charlie in the mid-1940's, and we renewed our acquaintance in 1954. He was the sort of person who immediately made you feel at ease when you met him. He made you feel you were someone special, rather than he.

"When I called him on the phone, you'd think we had talked daily even though it may have been 3 or 4 years since our previous conversation. This was the same welcome that he gave to everyone in person, even though a long interval had passed. He was a very warm person who had a great love for all of his acquaintances. One thing also became equally evident throughout his career: Through his music, he showed his immense love for the **accordion**! I feel fortunate to have met Charlie in person. Indeed, the accordion is more respected because he gave his life to it."

— Sylvia Prior

(Submitted by Anton 'Tony' Rozance)

I have done much thinking about Charles Magnante since being asked to submit a paragraph about this great artist. And the more I thought about his many accomplishments, the more his greatness became apparent:

"By any standard, Charles Magnante was a marvelous performer. All notes, no matter what velocity, were played as clear as a bell, like the morning dew shimmering in the early morning sun. What a treat it was to hear him daily on NBC's 'Prudential Program'! In addition to Charlie, there was Tony Mattolla and George Wright on the organ and piano.

"Many years ago, my wife Trudie wrote Charlie a letter and asked him a simple question, 'Mr. Magnante, how does one get the technique that you have?' Trudie posed this question to him because we were both teaching full-time in our accordion school in San Antonio, Texas, and we hoped to share his comments with our students. Charlie's reply was quick and to the point, and he sent it on a penny postcard: 'Play Hanon every day!' (Signed Charlie Magnante)."

— Tony Rozance

(Submitted by Anthony Mecca)

Enclosed is the information requested by Eddie Chavez. It is my personal Tribute to the magnificent Charles Magnante.

"Charles Magnante was considered the finest accordionist and a master of the instrument. He played with flawless technique and musicianship. All accordionists looked up to him as their model. He was the busiest accordionist in radio, recording studios, and television. He picked a great crew (Joe Biviano, Gene Von Hallberg, and Abe Goldman) to play with him in the 'Magnante Quartet.' And then in 1939, the 'Magnante Quartet' appeared in Carnegie Hall. My brother Domenic and I were selected to play duets on the same program. What an honor! It was the first accordion concert ever held in Carnegie Hall. I would also like to mention each of the other members who appeared with Charles in Carnegie Hall and honor them in this Tribute. I feel that Charles would indeed want them mentioned also in any Tribute to him about this marvelous event.

"**Joe Biviano**. One of the world's foremost accordionists, who was very much in demand in radio, recording, and T.V. work. His Biviano School of Music was considered the best in the country. As a youth, I studied with him, and he has been my friend and mentor throughout the years.

"**Gene Von Hallberg**. A brilliant

musician, who was primarily a fine arranger and orchestrator. He played the accordion among other instruments. His work was extensive as an arranger for radio, recording studios, and T.V. shows in New York.

"**Abe Goldman**. A prominent organist who was also a talented accordionist. He was in great demand as a recording artist for the studios and radio and T.V. stations.

"**Domenic Mecca**. My older brother had a successful career as a musician and teacher with the Mecca Music School and Music Store in Waterbury, Connecticut. After a full and happy life, Domenic died in January 1986.

"**Anthony (Tony) Mecca**. At the time of the Carnegie Hall concert, I was 17 years old. It was a great thrill to be part of this memorable, history-making musical event. It was a milestone for the accordion. In 1946, I joined the teaching staff of the Biviano School of Music, and at the same time became involved in radio, recording studio, T.V. and club date work. I later started my own School of Music in Westchester County, N.Y. I am still active in the music field in Palm Beach, Florida and in New York."

— **Tony Mecca**

(Submitted by Stanley Bozynski)

I'm enclosing the Tribute you requested about Charles Magnante, the most "prolific" accordion recording artist of all times.

"I first heard of Charles Magnante as a young boy around 1941, when my Uncle asked me if I had ever heard a 'wizard' of the accordion. When I said no, he then played some of Magnante's Brunswick recordings of the mid-1930's. I was dumbfounded, to say the least, as I had certainly not heard accordion music played like that before in my part of the country. It wasn't until the 1950's that I had the pleasure of meeting him at one of his concerts.

"About two years before Charles' passing, I got to know him closely through our correspondence, and we exchanged many letters regarding his recordings. Soon after the release of his first cassette tape, I suggested that he include some selections of his famous 'Magnante Quartet' from the 1930-40 era. He was very receptive to this idea, so I loaned him the recordings which I had, and he included a few selections on his second tape release. I also once sent him a partial listing of hundreds of selections on which I had identified him playing with various orchestral groups of the 1920-30 era, as he had appeared on no less than 27 different labels during the 'Golden Age' for radio and recording opportunities. Upon reviewing my listing, he remarked: 'When I think back, I can't see how any one person could do all the work that I did. I suppose youth is all 'muscle.'

"Charles once made an interesting statement in one of his letters that he'd never heard a playback of any of his 16-inch transcriptions. This is understandable since he wasn't aware that his live radio performances had been recorded for possible playback on later radio programming. These transcriptions were not for sale; however, in later years, they ended up in the hands of private collectors.

"Yes, Charles left his mark on the Accordion World. His brilliant arrangements live on through the hundreds of selections he recorded over his 60-year recording career. He was truly the most prolific recording artist of all time."

— **Stanley Bozynski**

(Submitted by Mort Herold)

Please include the following memories as my Tribute to Charles Magnante:

"When I was a teenager, I never missed a 'Major Bowes' or 'Manhattan Merry-Go-Round' radio program because my accordion idol, Charles Magnante, would always play with his flashing, incredible technique and style. Magnante was in his prime in those days, and no one before or since can surpass his natural-born touch and technique on the accordion. His original recordings of 'Nola,' 'Accordiana,' 'Dizzy Fingers,' and 'Tantalizin' are still classics of their genre. To this day, I marvel at his precision and clarity. And, his innate musicianship still shines through in his imaginative recorded arrangements of 'Carnival of Venice,' 'Dark Eyes,' and so many others.

"Magnante, the man, was kind and generous with his time. At age seventeen, I was in New York, and he invited me to meet with him at the radio station just before 'Manhattan Merry-Go-Round' was to go on the air. Watching the program and hearing Magnante featured with the orchestra was an experience I still remember. And to this day, the mention of the name, MAGNANTE, still evokes a bit of the original thrill of his marvelous sound and personage. Charles Magnante inspired more accordionists than anybody else. The 'Magic of Magnante' will never disappear."

— Mort Herold

(Submitted by Ms. Faithe Deffner)

Enclosed are my comments about the legendary Charles Magnante:

"I met him first on an old 78 rpm disc where his sensitive accordion enhanced the throaty warbling of Marlene Dietrich. Years later, I met him personally when I came aboard the accordion bandwagon of the 1950's. He impressed me always as a brilliant musician, but his mark as a gentle, warm and ever sincere individual remains equally indelible.

"Charles Magnante was a youngster when the accordion was in its earliest stages as a legitimate musical instrument. Many accordionists will tell you that Magnante began his career playing on the boats which ferried between Manhattan and Staten Island, but few are aware that he played for 12 long hours every day and then practiced six more after work.

"The thrust of his career placed as much emphasis on propelling the instrument to new heights as on honing those musical skills which brought Magnante endless acclaim and respect. Although the greatest opportunities for accordionists seemed to be in vaudeville which showcased the visual aspect of instrument and performer, Magnante chose the unexplored vistas for himself and his instrument.

"In a biographical sketch of Magnante, Seena Hamilton, Marks Music Company's ad manager, wrote: 'He was taught by his father, a talented amateur accordionist, and he developed unusual dexterity and style. He haunted the vaudeville houses to hear his hero, Pietro Deiro. He watched Deiro's style, studied his technique, and went on to improvise and develop his own individuality. He developed an amazing technique of his own. When Frank Harling, the eminent composer, wrote a jazz concerto which featured the accordion and included a very difficult cadenza, he auditioned Magnante and hired him on the spot. It was the beginning of a brilliant career.'

"Shortly after that Charles Magnante became a member of the 'Roxy Orchestra,' a symphonic group which had never before used an accordionist. As one of the 110 hand-picked musicians under the baton of

world-famous Ernest Rapee, he was finally in a position to win recognition for his own virtuosity and to expand possibilities for accordionists who would follow.

"Next, he set out to conquer radio and bring the accordion into the homes of millions of listeners throughout the country. His ever-growing radio schedule included a daily 'Coca Cola Show' on WHN, 'Lorenzo Jones' weekdays at 4:00 on NBC, 'The Schafer Review' Thursdays at 7:30 on NBC, 'Waltz Time' on Fridays at 9:00 P.M. on NMC, 'Lucky Strike Hit Parade' Saturdays at 10:00 on WABC, 'Major Bowes Capitol Family Hour' on Sundays at 11:30 on WABC, 'Manhattan Merry-Go-Round' Sundays at 9:00 on WEAF (gleaned from a random listing found for 1938).

"On April 18, 1939, he achieved the ultimate ambition — a Carnegie Hall recital. The first accordionist to appear in that hallowed concert hall, Magnante captivated an audience of over 3,000. The Magnante Quartet, in which he performed with Joe Biviano, Abe Goldman and Gene von Hallberg, was also featured. New York's newspapers and magazines were unanimous in heralding the event with rave notices.

"Charles Magnante was one of the ten founding members of the American Accordionists' Association. He served as the organization's president several times and always distinguished himself as a man of great integrity and sincere dedication to the instrument and the accordion community. Not only did he benefit the accordion in terms of virtuosic representation, he enriched the accordion world with original and brilliant arrangements. He conducted master classes and workshops and served always as role model and mentor to those who looked up to him.

"I remember Charles during the many years when we served on the governing board of the American Accordionists' Association. His influence was great. He commanded and gave respect. He exuded wisdom and was always ready to help. I frequently consulted him on matters of controversy, and he always brought clear thinking and sound judgment to every discussion, putting matters in perspective. I recall once asking his opinion concerning piano and chromatic (button) keyboards, and he told me that his early study was on chromatic, but he was glad that he moved on to piano accordion. His reasoning was simple, but direct: 'If chromatic keyboards were superior, don't you think piano manufacturers would have found a way to equip their instruments with buttons?' Years later, I learned that indeed such a piano had been invented and was briefly played by Franz Liszt, but achieved no lasting success.

"During my term as president of the American Accordionists' Association, we sought to honor some of our accordion greats at a testimonial dinner. Everyone was thrilled at the opportunity to pay homage to Charles Magnante, but sadly he was too ill to attend. He died a few months later, leaving us all a musical legacy which will endure as long as accordionists will be making music."

— Faithe W. Deffner

[Editor's Note: To conclude this Tribute to Charles Magnante, I wish to include a touching letter sent to Eddie Chavez by Charles' son, Dr. Peter Magnante, a physicist who resides in West Brookfield, Massachusetts where he also serves as a "Selectman." His personal memories are a fitting Tribute to his father, and they will help each of us to understand the ultimate greatness of Charles Magnante as father, friend, and artist. Thank you, Dr. Magnante, for preparing these inspiring and enlightening words.]



CHARLES MAGNANTE, THE MAN, RELAXING WITH HIS PIPE

"Thank you for your kind letter and the expressions of remembrance about Dad. Your appreciation for him as a musician and love for him for the human being that he was are, indeed, part of his heritage for me and his grandsons. Your letter with the attachments will always be a part of the papers I keep to pass on to my sons so that they can remember my father and be inspired by his life and, in turn, tell their own kids about him. You are free to use any of my remarks in this letter in your history of the accordion. Although my remarks are somewhat personal, I am sure that the people who knew Charles Magnante will understand his son's respect and love.

"I am not a musician, so you must realize my inspiration from him was derived more from his personal example than by his

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"I am not a musician, so you must realize my inspiration from him was derived more from his personal example than by his

musical accomplishments. Don't misunderstand! I am a great lover of music — a great listener, but not a player.

"My father told me that *genius* was 99% hard work and 1% innate talent. I think that is a remarkable statement from someone who was considered a 'genius' by a lot of accordion enthusiasts. That statement speaks of an innate humility that does not take God-given gifts for granted.

"No doubt Charles had wondrous gifts, but he did not believe in resting comfortably with them. He worked very hard his entire life always improving his musicianship. In the last two years of his life, he told me he was writing the best things he had ever done. He played many hours a day every day each week until he could do it no more at age 80! He certainly believed in hard work and honestly believed that it had to be done to become better and better. To me, that is his greatest legacy: Take your talents and work with them with all your energy every day you live. I don't think I would have stuck with my studies to become a physicist with a Ph.D. if it were not for Dad. His example for trying to achieve the best with what you are given has also influenced his grandsons. David, my son, just became an M.D., and he is doing his internship in Boston. Dad did very well for his family, and we remember him every day.

"I want to tell you a couple of other things about him. One speaks of his kindness and humility. About 10 years ago, I asked Dad if he would come to West Brookfield to play after dinner for the Rotary Club. Although I had been a member for a while, I still felt somewhat like a newcomer to Rotary where some of the membership consisted of two generations from the same family. Here in Massachusetts, a couple of generations are needed before you are no longer one of the 'new people.' I wanted the men of the club to know my father and me together, at least for one short evening.

"Dad gladly came up here from his home in New York to have dinner at the club with the members and to play his accordion for them afterwards. I am sure you can imagine the response to his playing! I still run into people who heard Dad that night and tell me with great appreciation that it was the best night out they ever had at Rotary! Mine, too, but for a different reason. My father's love for me brought him 200 miles from his home to play for a small group of my friends in a small restaurant in a small town in central Massachusetts. I was very proud of him and the added acceptance his music brought to our family in this traditional New England community.

"In 1984 (two years before his death), Dad told me he had recorded some tapes for solo accordion that he was very pleased with. I wrote a letter to WGBH radio in Boston to ask if my father could come to Boston for a radio interview with Ron Della Chiesa, who hosts a wonderful afternoon program called 'Music America.' Ron contacted me quickly and explained that he knew who my father was and wanted to have him spend a couple of hours with him for a live interview one afternoon. Arrangements were made, and Dad came to Boston with me and his grandson, David. I have a tape of Dad's reminiscences and the music played that afternoon — again, one of my treasures. I wanted Boston to hear that Charles Magnante was alive and doing his best music at age 78. I wanted Dad to know I was proud of him."

— Peter Magnante

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MAESTRO ANTHONY GALLA-RINI — ACCORDION PIONEER, TEACHER, AND CONCERT ARTIST

By Willard A. (Bill) Palmer

INTRODUCTION

Among the truly great pioneers of the accordion one name stands out, perhaps above all the others, when we consider those who contributed most to its progress toward acceptance by the most serious connoisseurs of great music. Anthony Galla-Rini's elevation of the image of the accordion may be compared to the contributions made by Andreas Segovia to the image of the classical guitar during approximately the same years, the 1930's through the 1960's, which were, in my opinion, the golden years of the accordion — the time when its popularity in the United States was at its zenith.

While most other accordionists made their appearances playing flashy solos, novelties, polkas, marches, and "pop tunes," Anthony Galla-Rini, more than any other accordionist, to my knowledge, performed and composed more ambitious and worthwhile music. In selecting pieces to transcribe for the instrument, he was careful to choose those compositions that could be accurately rendered on the accordion without loss of important musical content or intent of the composer. He selected pieces that lent themselves well to the timbre, range, and technical possibilities of the accordion. Andreas Segovia, in commenting on his own transcriptions, remarked that pieces played on the classical guitar gave the listener a view similar to looking at orchestral compositions from the large end of a telescope. You heard them reproduced in miniature, but, nevertheless, in accurate and fine detail. This is certainly true of Galla-Rini's excellent transcriptions and of his performances as well. While others were playing "Sharpshooter's March," "Over the Waves," and the like, Galla-Rini was playing the J. S. Bach "Arioso" from his keyboard concerto, BWV 1056. He played music of Gretry, Handel, Albeniz, Rimsky-Korsakov, Wagner, Richard Strauss, and many other master composers. The publications of his arrangements and compositions were always eagerly awaited by the aspiring accordionists everywhere.

It is for this reason that I sought out Anthony Galla-Rini, back in the very late 1930's, when I finished my first five years of college and decided to go to New York City to study the accordion. I was not disappointed with Maestro Galla-Rini as a teacher. He was kind and considerate, but he demanded that not one note, one dynamic indication or one bellows change be ignored. He showed me how to play the accordion more musically, and each of my lessons left me with renewed respect for the accordion, and made me feel that I should concern myself with my own limitations. I remember that after one particularly revealing lesson I remarked, "I have discovered the limitations of my accordion, and they are **me**!"

It was during these years that Galla-Rini contributed so many things to improve the instrument and explore new techniques of playing that dramatically raised the standards of performance. He insisted that the fifth should be omitted from the dominant seventh and diminished seventh chords, thus expanding the harmonic possibilities inherent in the chord buttons. He had his instrument equipped with strategically placed bass registers, and employed them to play left-hand melodies of extended range. He even played solos for left hand alone, startling accordionists who had never dreamed that the accordion was capable of playing solos beyond the limitations of one semitone less than an octave.

I always felt that Galla-Rini brought a very unique and special sound to everything he played. If I could analyze it now, I would say that it was the result of, among other things, his impeccable sense of rhythm, his innate musicality, his thorough understanding of the form and content of the music, and his

complete mastery of the technique of the **bellows**, which he handled like a **bow** in the hands of a master violinist.

Just as there has been only one Segovia, there will only be one Galla-Rini. It is my honor to lead the community of professional accordionists and all lovers of the instrument in a special tribute to Maestro Anthony Galla-Rini, a leader who has brought dignity and respect to our instrument, and who is deserving of the highest praise and recognition for his dedication and his accomplishments.

To complete this tribute, I shall present a snapshot of Anthony Galla-Rini, picturing anew the legacy that he has etched indelibly in the annals of accordion history. His renowned accomplishments speak for themselves and require no platitudes or superlatives to augment his greatness. Recognizing that any pale human attempt to describe his achievements would fall considerably short, I shall nevertheless present a few panoramic scenes from his life. I sincerely trust that this biographical sketch will convey what his many colleagues, friends, students, and worldwide admirers feel should live on in his legacy. I count myself very fortunate to have been a close friend and professional associate of Maestro Galla-Rini.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MAESTRO ANTHONY GALLA-RINI

Anthony Galla-Rini was born in Manchester, Connecticut, on January 18, 1904. His father, John, was a bandmaster who had a great influence on Galla-Rini's early musical development. Although John Galla-Rini was himself only a mediocre musician, he, nevertheless, driven by visions of stage success for a family act produced by himself, carefully trained his children to perform on the vaudeville stage. Anthony's father began teaching him the cornet at the age of four and, then at the age of seven, accordion lessons were added, also taught by Anthony's father. Anthony's two older sisters were already playing the violin and cornet, Clotilde playing the violin and Victoria playing the cornet. Since John Galla-Rini played several instruments himself (accordion, cornet, euphonium, and guitar), he used the collective talent of his family as a means to escape his job in Manchester at the silk mill. He quickly discovered that the audience loved to see children on stage and that they were willing to pay handsomely to see them perform, so he created a very successful road show that featured acts with himself and his children. In those days, John Galla-Rini and son Anthony appeared on stage under the names "Palo and Palet," fictitious names John had created. This invented name was still being used as late as 1921 for the recordings on the Vocalion label by the Aeolian Company. The name appearing on those records was A. Palet Gallarini.

Although the vaudeville acts were quite successful from a business standpoint, it is evident from today's perspective that the children's welfare was not a primary concern to John Galla-Rini. His principal objective was to earn a living — any way he could — and the use of his children's labor, in whatever way was expedient, was culturally accepted during those times. He refused to pay his children anything for their work, giving them only the bare necessities of clothing and shelter. This continued until Anthony reached the age of 14, and he then rebelled and refused to go on stage without any pay. Today, Anthony Galla-Rini holds no animosity toward his father for any misfortune or loss of opportunity that he may have had during his childhood. Indeed, it appears that any temporary misfortune, whatever it may have been, was somehow offset by other life experiences and training during that period. When reflecting on this early experience, whether good or bad morally, one cannot help but ponder whether there would be a Maestro Galla-Rini today had it not been for his father and the childhood vaudeville act.

In 1916, Anthony's sisters, Clotilde and Victoria, left to form their own act, while Anthony remained with his father. Finally, in 1924 Anthony separated from his father and formed his own act, which again included his

two sisters. With the children asserting their own independence, John Galla-Rini finally decided to retire. Anthony remained in Vaudeville until 1932, gaining experience and building a foundation upon which his later career would be inextricably intertwined.

During the 21 years from 1911 to 1932, Anthony Galla-Rini played the Keith, Orpheum, and Interstate Circuits (which later combined and became the RKO Circuit, the letters indicating Radio-Keith-Orpheum), as well as the Pantages and Loew Circuits. Many of his performances were broadcast in all the major cities (as well as smaller ones) from coast to coast in the USA and in Canada. The last theater he played was the Palace in New York City at the time when vaudeville had already begun its decline. During this same period, Anthony had learned to play the piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, trombone, and tuba, including all of these instruments in his act, along with the accordion.

During his vaudeville days, Anthony Galla-Rini appeared on the same programs with the following vaudeville performers who later became motion-picture, radio, and T.V. stars:

BOB HOPE
JACK BENNY
JIMMY DURANTE
MARX BROTHERS
MARIE DRESSLER
BILL (BOJANGLES) ROBINSON
JACK OAKIE
FRED ALLEN
GEORGE BANCROFT
ROBERT EDISON
WALTER HUSTON
JACK HALEY
BERT LAHR
CHARLES BICKFORD
WILLIAM DEMAREST
HARRY LANGDON
CHARLES RUGGLES
ALLA NAZIMOVA
THEODORE KOSLOFF
And many others .....

One might say that Anthony Galla-Rini never had his heart and soul in his musical and artistic expression during the vaudeville days. This is a conclusion that Galla-Rini, himself, will agree, although the experience gained from it proved to be invaluable as time went on.

In 1932, Galla-Rini abandoned all the other instruments, except the accordion (which was his first love), and he decided to concentrate on a career with significantly different objectives than those that had been inculcated in him by his father and that subconsciously persisted long after John Galla-Rini's personal influence and domination were no longer present. The objectives that Anthony wished to stress for the remainder of his professional career were: (1) To teach the accordion as a professionally recognized instrument, (2) To exploit the full potential of the accordion, (3) To compose and arrange music, and (4) To promote the accordion in the concert field where he felt it truly belonged.

In achieving his first objective, Galla-Rini opened his first studio in San Francisco where he experienced great success teaching the instrument he loved. Also, in this beautiful city of San Francisco, he met and married another love of his life, the former Dina Louise Petromilli, daughter of Pasquale Petromilli, owner of the famous Guerrini Accordion Factory. In 1936, Dina Louise gave birth to a son, Ronald Pascal, who is today a prominent nondenominational minister.

While Galla-Rini taught principally in San Francisco, he also established branch studios in the surrounding areas, hiring some of his outstanding students to run them. Galla-Rini lived in San Francisco until about 1936, at which time he and his family moved to New York City. One of the reasons for this move was to further the other career goals that he had set for his life. He had come to believe that these career objectives could best be achieved by moving to New York City where most of the music publishers were located.

On arriving in New York, he was well received by the many artists, teachers, and music publishers who, by this time, were already quite familiar with his fine reputation in San Francisco. Initially, Galla-Rini and his wife were the house guests of Luigi and Louisa Giulietti and their son and daughter, Julio and Anita. Luigi was one of the famous accordion manufacturers in New York. The Giulietti Accordion Manufacturing Corporation is still in operation today and is headed by Luigi Guilietti's son, Julio. *[See p. 292 for the*

history of the Giulietti Accordion Corporation.]

With his outstanding reputation, Galla-Rini quickly established himself in this new locale and began a series of marvelous achievements that he had predicted would result if he moved to New York. He immediately opened a private studio and continued with one of his major career objectives — to teach the accordion and influence gifted students who would become the next generation of professional accordion musicians. Among his many outstanding students are:

[Names are presented below in alphabetical order]

NICK ARIONDO	SILVIO FASSIO
DAVID BRITTAN	BILL HUGHES
LINDA BURMAN	FAY MAJOR
CLAUDIO CASTAGNONE	ALFRED MAYER
VINCENT CESTA	BILL PALMER
SUZI CHANDLER	GARY RUDD
WILLIAM COSBY	AMY JO SAWYER
LOU d'ELIA	KAZUO SHIBUSAWA
LOUIS FANUCCHI	JOAN COCHRAN SOMMERS
OLGA FEJGL	JORGEN SUNDEQVIST

A prolific writer, he began to put his dynamic ideas into print, urging improvements in accordion construction. He also developed an exceptional illustrated accordion method book in 1931. Among his many musical compositions, Galla-Rini wrote two concertos for the accordion and symphony orchestra, and a sonata for the solo accordion. Over his distinguished career, Galla-Rini has performed many concerts throughout the United States and Canada, including the European countries of England, Scotland, Norway, Sweden, France, and Italy.

In 1936, Galla-Rini illustrated and revealed for the first time the actual pitch of the five sets of reeds in the left hand keyboard in an article for the *Accordion News* magazine in New York City. An accompanying chart in that article provided useful information that was eventually used by accordion manufacturers in this country and Europe in standardizing the reed setup for the right hand. Without Galla-Rini's influence, improvements and standardization of the accordion would have come ultimately, but it is undeniable that these improvements were greatly expedited through his efforts. Other major innovations and instructional techniques were: (1) Advocating the omission of the 5th in the dominant 7th chord button in the left-hand bass keyboard, (2) Explaining actual positions and inversions of the chord buttons relative to the register being used, (3) Advocating the use of playing two chord buttons simultaneously, and (4) Determining the ideal placement of left-hand registers in multiple-register models and presenting this standardized placement to factories for adoption.

In 1938, Galla-Rini was chosen as one of the original founders of the American Accordionists' Association (AAA) in New York City. However, due to a professional disagreement, Galla-Rini resigned from the AAA after the majority of its members voted in favor of single-note annotation for the bass staff versus full-chord notation. Indeed, Galla-Rini felt strongly about this matter, but he did not harbor any ill feelings toward those who had disagreed with him. In other areas, the AAA, in agreement with the American Teachers' Guild (ATG), adopted his system to employ "Circles" and "Dots" as a practical shorthand means for identifying the registers and corresponding reeds sounding for the bass and treble keyboards. He also introduced the terms BASS, TENOR, CONTRALTO, ALTO, and SOPRANO as names to indicate the five sets of reeds in the left-hand keyboard. Both of these recommendations were accepted by the joint committee of the AAA and ATG.

Galla-Rini is a founder-member and president-emeritus of the ATG, and he is the past vice-president of the Confederation International des Accordeonistes (CIA). He is also the past president of the Accordion Federation of North America (AFNA). During his lengthy career, he has received many awards and other honors, such as the Diplome' d'Honneur by the Confederation Mondiale de l'Accordeon

(CMA), and his induction into the Arcari Accordion Foundation Hall of Fame (1960). He is also extremely proud of his recognition as a Kentucky Colonel, received while he was in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1970. The title of "Cavaliere dell Ordine della Stella della Solidarieta" *[Translation: Cavalier of the Order of the Star of Solidarity]* was conferred upon him in 1975 by the President of Italy in recognition of his efforts towards strengthening the cultural bonds between the Italian and American people as well as advancing the interests of the Italian accordion manufacturers. Today, he is a Senior Member of the New York City and Los Angeles Musicians' Union Locals.

The distinguished career of Anthony Galla-Rini has spanned over 77 years as a professional accordionist — over 57 years as a teacher and over 50 years as a lecturer. His life story and significant accomplishments have only been high-lighted in this Tribute; however, for an indepth account of his life, I urge you to obtain his authorized biography entitled: *Anthony Galla-Rini* written by Ove Hahn and published by Nils Flacke Musik, Box 429, 126 04, Stockholm, Sweden. Also, a must for the serious musician is Anthony Galla-Rini's book entitled: *A Collection of Lectures*, published by Music Graphics. This book presents his famous lectures (with music examples) which represent his accumulated musical expertise and his life's work in reference to accordion instruction.

Today, Anthony Galla-Rini resides in California where he is very active in promoting the accordion. With his many accomplishments and worldwide recognition as the foremost leader in advancing the role of the accordion, is it any wonder that he is known the world over today as "Mr. Accordion"? The world will probably never again see a master of the accordion like Anthony Galla-Rini.

To conclude this biographical Tribute to Galla-Rini, I asked Maestro Galla-Rini to review my summary of his life's accomplishments and to provide any comments about his career that may need amplification or any other thoughts about the accordion that he would like to impart to the readers of his life story. I feel that everyone will indeed appreciate these inspiring and informative words from Maestro Galla-Rini.

SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS BY MAESTRO ANTHONY GALLA-RINI

I want to express my admiration and thanks to Ron Flynn, Edwin Davison, and Eddie Chavez for their determined efforts to bring into reality a thorough and well-defined history of the accordion in America. Significantly, this book documents the fact that after the accordion came into the limelight (circa 1908), it has never disappeared since then. The spotlight merely moved away from vaudeville after its decline (circa 1932), and began to focus in other directions.

More educational institutions are giving accreditation to the instrument; more serious composers (known and unknown) are writing original music for the instrument; and more symphony conductors are including the accordion in their programs, either as the solo instrument or part of the orchestral score.

I am grateful that I first learned to play many other instruments because after I laid them aside, I began to pour the knowledge I had gained from them into the accordion.

In closing, I wish to express my greatest appreciation to everyone who has helped me to advance the role of the accordion. I dare not attempt to name anyone for fear of omitting someone who helped me along the way. However, I feel I do owe "special thanks" to my devoted wife, Dolly, for her years of love and understanding, despite the many long separations and hardships she endured due to my hectic concert schedule.



MAESTRO ANTHONY GALLA-RINI



EARLY VAUDEVILLE PICTURE: GALLA-RINI FAMILY
(LEFT TO RIGHT) JOHN, CLOTILDE, ANTHONY, AND VICTORIA GALLA-RINI.

[This tribute and biographical sketch would not have been without the tremendous effort of Bill Palmer. No one is better qualified than Bill Palmer to compose this tribute since Bill completed his early accordion studies with Galla-Rini in New York City and has maintained very close ties with him throughout their professional careers. The final copy of this biography has been personally reviewed for its completeness and accuracy by Anthony Galla-Rini, and it is printed with his kind permission and cooperation. Personal correspondence to Anthony Galla-Rini may be directed to his address in Southern California: 971 Borden Rd #104, San Marcos, CA 92069]



EARLY VAUDEVILLE PICTURE: GALLA-RINI FAMILY (LEFT TO RIGHT) JOHN, CLOTILDE, ANTHONY, AND VICTORIA GALLA-RINI.

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MY EARLY LIFE AND PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CHAMPAGNE DAYS OF THE ACCORDION

By Myron Floren

Editor's Note: In 1981, after I had begun the manuscript for my first edition of this book, Myron Floren wrote his own book, Accordion Man — a personal account of his life and professional career. His published autobiography met with instant success as the fans who had followed him during his regular appearances as part of the "Lawrence Welk Show" rushed to read his dynamic story. Throughout his career, Myron has always been in great demand, but today he is in greater demand than ever, still making over 150 personal appearances each year. During his exciting career, Myron has known and worked with most every major accordion artist.

How fortunate I am to have Myron tell his life story in this compendium of accordion history. These personal reflections were composed by Myron while flying from one engagement to another over a period of several months. I can never thank Myron enough for taking time to condense his life story for this new edition of my book as no history of the accordion would be complete without his compelling life story.

In conclusion, I feel impressed to advise any reader who may not have read Accordion Man to do so without delay as it contains so many interesting stories that Myron could not include in this abbreviated version. Myron, thank you for allowing me to include your life story. My thanks also goes to the beloved Lawrence Welk for taking time to add his observations about their mutual association during those memorable Champagne Days together on national television.

Finally, I wish to thank Bill Palmer, a long-time friend of Myron, for writing the warm introductory comments below and for the closing comments about Lawrence Welk at the end of the article.

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A PERSONAL WORD ABOUT MY FRIEND, MYRON FLOREN BY BILL PALMER

The performance of a musical artist can never be conveyed by means of the printed word. Myron Floren's performances can not ever be fully appreciated by merely listening to his many fine recordings. Myron brought something to his playing that was especially effective through the medium of television, because his listeners could see him as well as hear him. By this I do not mean to imply that he resorted to a bag of showman's tricks. He did not! He simply communicated, more than any accordionist I have known, the **joy** of making music on the accordion. Myron was seen and heard by the largest audience that any accordionist before him had ever had.

The popularity of the "Lawrence Welk T.V. Show" ensured that he would have millions of listeners week after week. The Welk show boasted the best musicians available to anyone. They played the kind of music Lawrence Welk wanted them to play, but they could have played **anything** that was put before them. They were also the best entertainers in the business, and Myron was capable of topping the bill with any of them: Tiny Little, the pianist; Dick Kiesler, the violinist; Pete Fountain, the clarinetist; The Lennon Sisters; the "Champagne Lady," and many others. Myron could be giving an accordion solo to follow any of these entertainers with no fear of losing his audience. He always seemed to make eye contact with each one of his listeners as if to say, "I am playing this music especially for **you**."

Myron Floren did not often play concertos and sonatas. Occasionally, he offered a few of the more "serious" original compositions. His specialty has always been ethnic and popular music, but whatever he plays is performed with impeccable technique. He is an excellent

sight-reader. His bellows control is always musical, and he always manages to make his performances appear effortless.

On several occasions, I had the privilege of sharing a concert program with Myron. It was my role to play the classical music, while he played, for the most part, the polkas and popular things. Once, as we stood backstage listening to a preliminary performance by an accordion champion of the Mid-America Accordion Festival contest for which we were appearing, we were both dazzled by the spectacular technique of the young man who was playing. "Wow," I exclaimed, "we have to follow that!" Myron just gave me his warm smile. "Don't worry about it," he said, "we have something to give this audience, and they are going to love it." At the end of the program, he invited me to play a duet with him to close the show. "Do you know 'Clarinet Polka'?" he asked. As a matter of fact, I had written a duet part for one of the Palmer-Hughes books, so I said, "Sure, let's do it." Myron gave **me** the show! As I began to play my part, consisting mostly of exactly the melody he was playing, a sixth or third higher or lower, he looked at my fingers as if he were utterly amazed at my ability to move over the keys so fast. I thought this was very amusing, and we both were enjoying our duet so much that we were able to draw the huge audience into the fun, and we got a standing ovation. Can you imagine getting applause like that with "Clarinet Polka"? With Myron's help, it could be done!

Myron Floren was and is the friend of every accordionist. When Bill Hughes and I presented the Palmer-Hughes Accordion Symphony at the Hotel New Yorker at the NAMM Convention in 1952, Myron dropped in as we were setting up the stands. "Do you need an usher?" he asked. And he proceeded to greet everyone at the door and escort people to their seats. This is typical of Myron, always a gentleman, warm and unselfish; a true "mensch" with compassion and love for his fellow man.

Through his efforts for the accordion and with his own performances, Myron Floren extended the "Golden Age" of the accordion many years beyond that which it could have continued without him. He is deserving of a special place in our hearts, and a very large chapter in the annals of accordion history.

— BILL PALMER
(August 1989)

[Editor's Note: Willard A. (Bill) Palmer is a member of the advisory board of the National Piano Teachers' Association, lifetime honorary member and member of the advisory board of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute, lifetime honorary member of the Texas Accordion Association, member of the advisory board of the Accordion World magazine, member Northwest Accordion Association, member of F.O.T.A., member of the advisory board of the Houston Harpsichord Society, and member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. Dr. Palmer's biography appears in Who's Who in American Classical Music, and in the last five issues of International Who's Who in Music. He has received awards from the American Accordionists' Association and the American Guild of Music. As Senior Keyboard Editor of Alfred Publishing Company, he has authored or edited over 500 publications. He has lectured at Oberlin School of Music, Eastman Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music, Brigham Young University, the Royal Conservatory of Music and the University of Toronto, and at hundreds of other educational institutions in the U.S., Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Postscript by Bill Palmer: At this writing (1992), I have taken up the accordion again. The special occasion was in celebration of Maestro Anthony Galla-Rini's birthday on January 18th, 1992, presented in Dallas by the Texas Accordion Association. I played one selection with him, and about five solos. At this gala event, Galla-Rini celebrated his 88th birthday, and soon thereafter on January 31st, I happily observed another event — my own 75th birthday. I'm glad to resume playing the accordion again, and I've enjoyed practicing and "getting the kinks out." I now plan to play in New Zealand in January 1993.]



MYRON FLOREN

I was born and raised on a small farm near Roslyn, South Dakota. Television hadn't even been discovered, and the main entertainment in those days consisted of neighbors who got together on Saturday night to visit, tell tall stories, roll back the rugs, and do a bit of old-time waltzing or square dancing and naturally quite a few polkas.

When I discovered the accordion, I was only about 4 years old. I recall, as if it were yesterday, how I got interested in the accordion. Quite often, my family visited the Gilbert Lensegrav family, some of our in-laws. They lived on a farm about 2 miles south of Roslyn. There was always music on these occasions as my Dad played the fiddle and others would come to join in the fun and enjoy the social dancing. One night, a farmer by the name of Johnny Bjugan was present; he played an accordion, a semi-tone Hohner often referred to as a "button box" today. That evening, I sat on the floor totally captivated, watching and listening to the accordion music. For some reason, I was hooked on the accordion from that day forward, though I was not yet old enough at age 4 to communicate my inner yearning to learn the accordion.

Just 2 years later, however, after much pleading with my Dad, he finally bought me a beautiful new button box that we picked out of the Sears Roebuck catalog for the purchase price of only $19.95 plus about $2.00 shipping and carrying charges to cover an easy-payment plan. Today, that doesn't sound like a lot of money; but, compared to the cost of other products at that time, it was indeed a great deal of money. For example, that year we were getting only 2 cents a bushel for shelled corn, and corn on the cob was considerably less.

I practiced all of the old familiar songs on that little squeeze box in the morning before school and then after school until midnight. I never got tired of practicing the accordion; I enjoyed it so much. And at that time, I could not yet read music, so I started taking piano lessons from Miss Dorothy Swenson, who was my third and fourth-grade teacher. I took about 10 piano lessons from her, paying for these lessons with eggs. She taught me the basic elements that I needed to know to read music, and I'll always appreciate the drive for perfection that she instilled within me. At the time, however, I didn't care for her methods of teaching as she would rap me on the knuckles with a ruler if I made a mistake. So, with her personal instruction, I began to learn the basic things I needed to know to make additional progress with my accordion.

At age eight or nine, I had already made a great deal of progress with my accordion, considering my age and the lack of regular music lessons. At this time, I was invited to play at the Day County Fair in Webster, South Dakota. This event also served to hook me further on the accordion because it was my first paid engagement — $10 for 2 days, two shows per day. Thereafter, I'd play for anyone who would listen, and I'd play every song I knew. As I learned more songs, my "act" then got longer and longer. I suppose I might have been overdoing it as my Aunt Julia would often caution, "Maybe you should leave some songs for next time." After a while, I took her advice and began to cut down on the number of songs I included in a single performance.

On our battery-operated radio, I would tune in the "Major Bowes Capitol Family Hour" on Sunday mornings from 8 to 9 over NBC and his amateur hour on ABC on Thursday nights from 9 to 10. One thing I noticed was that accordionists almost always won the competition, and this seemed to further reinforce my love and admiration for the accordion. Since Charles Magnante was featured regularly on "Major Bowes Capitol Family Hour," this was one show that I never missed.

About this time, I felt I needed a piano accordion, but the farm didn't produce enough to pay for a new accordion. My Dad had got into politics and was elected County Treasurer. We left the farm, and Dad went into debt to buy me my first piano accordion, costing $180. His friends at the Court House really thought he'd lost his mind. But, Dad had confidence

in me, and he knew that I was determined to pursue an accordion career.

Soon after I got my piano accordion, I was introduced to the *Accordion World* magazine, and this magazine became a very valuable source for motivation and encouragement. John Gerstner, the publisher, later became one of my very good friends. The first issue I can remember had stories about many of the famous accordionists of the day: Charles Magnante, Anthony Galla-Rini, Frank Gaviani, and a picture of an up-and-coming young lady in Kansas City, who was doing great things for the accordion. Her name was Joan Pace, now Joan Cochran Sommers.

Not long thereafter, the war was beginning to heat up in Europe. I was at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and was doing some radio shows at KSOO. At that time, I was known as **The Melody Man**. I got this name from the management personnel at the radio station who thought my name was too hard to remember; they thought another name would be better for show business. Since I did not want to change my legal name, they made a concession and gave me the title, **The Melody Man**.

I was also teaching about 75 students at that time, but looking back, I honestly don't know where I found the time to do the teaching because I had four radio shows a day, jobs at night with "Bill And His Old-Timers," and was taking classes at Augustana College. During my sophomore year, the war had continued to heat up, and I decided to volunteer for military duty. Because of my interest in flying, I decided that I would enlist for flight training in the newly created Army-Air Corps. But, as fate would have it, I was turned down by the examining physician. I'll always remember the words of Dr. Opheim when he broke the news to me. He said, "I'm sorry, Myron, I can't pass you for flight training. You have a damaged heart valve and could never be able to perform any strenuous duties." So, instead, I volunteered for USO camp shows, traveling to the European Theater of war.

When I arrived in Europe, I slept on Omaha Beach my first day on the continent, listening to shell fire only a few miles away. Then, the next day I met Jerry Shelton, whose accordion artistry I had heard with the "Shep Fields' Orchestra." During the next 14 months, we played shows sometimes only a half-mile from the active front lines. We had five people in our troupe: Don Rice, a comedian; Kitty Barrett, an English girl who acted as the stooge for Don's comedy act; Phyllis Clever, a singer; and Sandy Rozell, who played a soprano saxophone in Scottish Kilts 'n combat boots. We really wowed the troops. The G.I. audience was simply the greatest! They truly appreciated our acts and style of entertainment.

When the war in Europe ended, I needed a little time at home to recuperate, and then I planned to go to the South Pacific where the war with Japan was still raging. I arrived home on July 4, 1945. Then, on August 6th, the atomic bomb ended the war with Japan. Now that the war was over, I then began to think of other important things, like spending more time with my childhood sweetheart, Berdyne Koerner, whom I had come home to see in the first place. So, after some hasty discussions and tentative plans, we decided that we should not waste anymore time. We got married on August 19th.

But after saying our marriage vows, it was back to work: radio, teaching, and playing. I had a lot of catching up to do. In the fall of 1946, Joe Howard, a talented song writer, came to entertain at the Sioux Falls Fair. His accordion player was sick, so I was asked to fill in. He persuaded me to try something a bit more challenging. Then, a week later, I was with the "Buckeye Four" in St. Louis doing five network shows a week, plus teaching and other appearances.

In March 1950, my wife and I went to hear Lawrence Welk in person at the Casa Loma Ballroom. He saw me in the audience and invited me to come up and play the accordion. I had a lot of friends there, and I got a

big hand. Lawrence came over to our table at intermission and offered me a job with the band. He was doing one-nighters all over the country and a radio show on Friday nights over the ABC Network. This opportunity led to shows in New York and Los Angeles and many points in between. In the Fall of 1950, we did a show on the Dumont T.V. Network in New York. Shows were still in black and white. From there, we went to Los Angeles, doing shows on KTLA. Our audience at the Aragon Ballroom in Santa Monica grew from 300 to 3,000 in just 4 weeks. Our future seemed rosy, indeed. I was earning $20 a night from Lawrence Welk.

My wife and I now had two children, Randee and Kristie. We needed more than a motel room; so, we splurged for a house in Los Angeles; it cost $17,000. I was promised a loan of $16,000. However, when they discovered I was a musician, they cut the loan to $14,000. But, I then made the mistake of telling them I played the accordion, and they cut the loan to $13,500 thinking I could not possibly support my family and make payments on such a loan.

Things were going great. I was busy every night with the band and once in a while made an outside appearance. I remember one event at the Pasadena Auditorium in which there was a full house. Anthony Galla-Rini was on the show as well as many of the local accordion teachers. What an ovation I got when I first came on stage! Perhaps this speaks of the power of T.V.

In 1955, the Dodge Motor Company was looking for a summer replacement for one of their T.V. shows. The "Champagne Music Makers" were among the three considered. We were chosen right away, and the rest is history. For the next 12 years, Lawrence Welk and the "Champagne Music Makers" were sponsored by Dodge on the ABC Network. Then, suddenly our show was canceled without any warning. Lawrence Welk and his business advisors then sent wires to some 600 television stations offering our show in syndication — a new concept in those days. To our delight, over 400 stations wired back. So, in the fall of 1967, we went from ABC to syndication without missing a beat. From our original 180 stations with ABC, we now had expanded to 275 total stations. We kept about 100 of the ABC affiliates and added the rest from CBS and NBC. Ratings were higher than ever. For 31 years, we appeared weekly on network television. My friends often said jokingly that I had the best known accordion on television and the flashiest ring — a present from Berdyne on our 25th wedding anniversary.

In 1981, Lawrence was nearing 80, and he decided to take it a little easier and retire. Although he had once talked of continuing the band after his retirement, he finally decided that it just wouldn't work to everyone's satisfaction. I had already been working with bands all over the country, so when Lawrence retired, I then had more time to work with many of the other bands. Today, I have about a dozen bands around the country that I can call on for my 150-plus appearances every year. I keep reminding myself, however, that I must begin to lessen the number of my total appearances to no more than 140. Will I do it? I don't know for sure. Time will tell. The demand is there, and I have always found it difficult to turn down the requests of my many friends around the country.

I have in my own small way been doing everything I can to keep the "big band" idea alive. To me, the accordion has always been popular. Undeniably, however, the guitar has overshadowed it beginning with the "Beatles" and the keyboards and speakers with their tremendous volume. This appealed to the new generation of young people. But, to me, the accordion has never left.

It has been my pleasure to know and at times work with accordionists all over the world, and I count them as my greatest friends. I envy and appreciate their talents and dedication to my favorite instrument: Frosini, Pietro Deiro, Sr., Anthony Galla-Rini, Art Van Damme, Joan Sommers, Bill Palmer, Bill

Hughes, Joe Biviano, Charles Magnante, Charles Nunzio, Frank Marocco, Frank Gaviani, Pietro Deiro, Jr., Maddalena Belfiore, and on and on.

I think all accordionists should thank Lawrence Welk for featuring the accordion on national T.V. Over the years, we featured Charles Magnante, Art Van Damme, Bill Palmer and Bill Hughes, Frank Marocco, Johnny LaPadula (Largo), Frank Yankovic, and many others. Whether you appreciated their various styles or not doesn't really matter. The show kept the accordion in front of the public. The show also popularized the beautiful instrument that we all love, and it paved the way for so many talented young artists who are well known today — perhaps even famous — because of the opportunities afforded them through the efforts of Lawrence Welk.

Since 1939, I have been privileged to be on radio, T.V., and the show circuit. The "Lawrence Welk Show" ended in 1981 after 32 years on the various networks. Now, it is seen on public T.V. so the image lives on. How long will it live? No one can say for sure, let alone Lawrence or me, as we could be perceived as somewhat biased in our personal judgments. Over the years, I have worked with bands all over America doing what I can to promote the accordion: shows, dances, Octoberfests, and sometimes even symphony orchestras.

As I now begin to trim down my schedule (after all, I'm a grandfather with six grandchildren, five daughters, and four sons-in-law), I must devote more time to my family and to my darling wife Berdyne, whom I love now more than ever. She has been by my side supporting me in all my many activities for 43 years as of August 19, 1989. Without her loving support, I could never have achieved my many successes. I have enjoyed life to the fullest, and I have tried to treat everyone with the proper respect along the way. With many more years to go, God willing, I hope to meet many of you who are reading this article or who may have read my life story, *Accordion Man.* I'll be looking for you at one of my future engagements across the country. GOD BLESS YOU ALL!

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SOME CLOSING COMMENTS BY LAWRENCE WELK

Like my good friend, Myron Floren, I too was born on a farm and became fascinated by the accordion at a very early age. In fact, my earliest clear memory is of crawling across the kitchen floor of our sod farmhouse towards my father, who was playing the push-button accordion he had brought from the old country. I was drawn as if by a magnet, and when he allowed me to press my fingers on a few of the pearl keys, and produce a few wavering notes on my own, I was in heaven!

I practiced on a variety of cheap instruments during my boyhood, but when I was 17 I went into our town of Strasburg, N.D. to hear a famous accordionist of the day, Tom Gutenberg. He had the first piano accordion I had ever seen, and when I heard him play I knew I had to have one just like it. I finally talked my father into advancing me $400 to pay for it. That was a fortune in those days and he agreed only after I promised to stay and work on the farm until I was 21 and turn over all the money I made playing at barn dances, weddings, birthdays and name-day celebrations to the family. I stuck to my promise but on the day I turned 21 — March 11, 1924 — I left home, armed only with my accordion, a few dollars in change and boundless optimism.

I began forming a series of bands — just a drummer and myself to begin with. We were in the heart of the polka country where the accordion was very popular, so that helped. And in 1927 we landed a spot on WNAX radio in Yankton, S.D., which turned out to be a tremendous break. It made us known over a four-state area, and by the thirties we had enlarged the band to 10 pieces. By the forties, we were comfortably ensconced in the Trianon Ballroom in Chicago for the next ten years.



LAWRENCE WELK

It was in 1950, while the boys and I were playing a guest engagement at the Casa Loma Ballroom, that I spotted Myron in the audience. I had heard how good he was so I invited him to play. One listen and I hired him.

My agent, Sam Lutz, thought I was crazy. "Are you nuts, Lawrence?" he sputtered. "Would Tommy Dorsey hire another trombone player? Would Benny Goodman hire another clarinetist?" Even the Trianon boss, Andrew Karsaz, got into the act. "Welk," he said with a worried look, "they tell me this new accordion player plays better than you." "Mr. Karsaz," I said, "that's the only kind of musician I hire!"

I have always been grateful that I found Myron. He came West with us and was on our television show from the beginning, serving not only as a member of the band and a soloist, but my right-hand man and very good friend. Our listeners liked him as much as I did and he became one of the true stars of our show. I owe this fine gentleman and artist a debt of real gratitude.

I still love the sound of an accordion. Today, when I visit my office, I often pick it up and play "I Love You" over the intercom. When the office staff hears that, they know "Lawrence is here"! I'm also pleased to note that the instrument has made quite a comeback in recent years with the zydeco music and all. Even the polka is getting popular again! Well, as far as I'm concerned the accordion has always been popular. It is a wonderful musical instrument and it has given me a life of joy far beyond anything I could have dreamed.

— **Lawrence Welk**
(September 1989)



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[SOME CLOSING COMMENTS ABOUT LAWRENCE WELK BY BILL PALMER]

Bill Hughes and I were among the many accordionists who, through Myron Floren's influence appeared on the "Lawrence Welk Show." Possibly because he did not play very often after Myron was engaged as his accordionist, some people had expressed to us the belief that Lawrence Welk was only a "front man" for the orchestra. But, when we heard him rehearse the orchestra, we came away believing that he was a musician par excellence. He sat in the control room, listening through headphones. In one of the selections they were rehearsing which required a vocal chorus with the orchestra, he stopped the performance many times and called the names of singers who were not doing the music exactly as he wanted it. He must have gone through that one selection at least a dozen times to achieve the perfection he demanded. Bill Hughes remarked, "Lawrence Welk has an ear like Toscanini!" Lawrence Welk was smart enough to hire the best musicians, but he was also good enough to get the best from each one of them. He was responsible for his own remarkable success. Because of his popular T.V. programs, the accordion was kept before the public for many years, and he, too, deserves a special place in accordion history.



LAWRENCE WELK *and his Champagne Music*

SAM J. LUTZ artists personal management
1020 North Vine Street
Hollywood California 90038

[Eddie Chavez and Edwin Davison were in constant touch with Myron Floren, Lawrence Welk, and Bill Palmer during the complex arrangements and writing of this story. Special thanks go to Bill Palmer and Lawrence Welk for their illuminating comments, and to Bernice McGeehan, who assisted in preparing the remarks of the ever-popular Champagne Music Maker, Lawrence Welk. Editor's Postscript: On May 17, 1992, Lawrence Welk died at the age of 89 due to complications resulting from pneumonia. The accordion world has experienced a great loss with the passing of this "giant" of the entertainment field. Indeed, we hope that the wholesome and easy-listening "champagne" music we have enjoyed over the years through his television programs will live on and continue to provide his own wonderful style of entertainment for many generations to come.]

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FRANK YANKOVIC — AMERICA'S POLKA KING

By John Buday

Editor's Note: Can you imagine a book about the accordion in America without Frank Yankovic? I couldn't either, so I contacted his very close friend John Buday to ask if he would write a concise account of Yankovic's dynamic career. John talked with Frank, and I then wrote Frank Yankovic to explain the nature of our book and how important it was to include him in it. Luckily, Frank agreed to be in the book and would cooperate with John Buday in making the necessary information available. John already knew many personal things about Frank; however, he needed dates and other key facts in order to fill in what he already knew, so he could keep the story as accurate as possible. Frank suggested the use of his own autobiography, The Polka King: The Life of Frankie Yankovic As Told to Robert Dolgan, to help fill in the story. This made it much easier on Frank, who was much too busy to help write the story as he is still playing engagements all over the country. Although Yankovic's autobiography is no longer in print, Frank furnished me his own copy to read, and I found it to be a wonderful, indepth account of his remarkable career. Much of the credit is also due his superb writer, Robert Dolgan, who is of the same ethnic heritage as Frank and who was raised in the same neighborhood as Yankovic. After reading the compelling autobiography, I wrote Frank Yankovic and Robert Dolgan to urge them to talk with the book's publisher, Dillon/ Liederbach, Inc., and to consider the possibility of reprinting it.

If the readers of this condensed story feel as I do, there will undoubtedly be a renewed demand by readers to get a copy of Yankovic's beautifully written book. After reading this article by John Buday, if you want to read the complete life story of the Polka King, write to the publisher or author to register an interest in the possible reprinting of his autobiography. Finally, I want to thank John Buday for making this story possible.

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Frankie (Frank) Yankovic! This living legend was born on July 28, 1915, in Davis, West Virginia to parents of Slovenian heritage. The small republic of Slovenia was, until recently, part of Yugoslavia. Extremely proud of his heritage, Frank points out that the Slovene people are a most intelligent and civilized race and has one of the highest literacy rates in the world. His father, Andy, and his mother, Rose Mele, were both born in Slovenia. Each came to this country on their own as they did not know each other in the old country. Shortly after coming to this country, however, they met and were married in 1910.

Frankie recalls many rich childhood memories of growing up in the ethnic Slovenian communities. The Yankovic home was the frequent meeting place for family and friends as well as for bachelor boarders whom his father regularly took in as a means of "supplementing" the family income. His dad also supplemented the family income by another sideline — bootlegging. This was not something that Andy tried to hide from the kids; indeed, they were very much aware of it and accepted it as a way of life. In those days of Prohibition (1919-1933), quite a few people openly violated the law, and even though all the saloons were closed, people continued drinking in speakeasies and in private homes. Thus, Frankie was not ashamed of his dad's bootlegging avocation. He still has vivid memories of his dad's cooking wine and whiskey in copper kettles; it would take his dad all night to make it. Frankie found the process intriguing. Today, he says with some assurance, "I can probably still remember how to cook up a little whiskey today if I had to."

Music was always a part of Slovenian life at birthdays, weddings, lodge meetings, festivals, etc. "Slovene music was more than just sound," Frankie says. "It represented a way of life. Everyone in the neighborhood grew up on it and stayed with it. You'd go



AMERICA'S POLKA KING
FRANK YANKOVIC

to a wedding in those days and see those gorgeous, spirited Slovenian girls gliding and whirling through the polka. The combination of these laughing girls and the music I loved made a lasting impression on me. I still think that the Slovene polka, danced properly, is the prettiest dance on earth."

Frankie Yankovic's fascination with the accordion was as great as it was for the pretty, laughing girls dancing the Slovenian polkas. In those days, everyone called the button box accordion a "cheesebox," and those who played them were called "cheesebox players." One of the family boarders, Max Zelodec, owned a beautiful "MERVAR" button box accordion. Frankie would watch with amazement as Max would pick up his button box after supper, and the rest of the family and boarders would join in singing. Frankie wasn't old enough to own a cheesebox; but, he would pretend he was playing one by using a little footstool from the kitchen. The stool was shaped almost the size of an accordion. Although he made no sound with his improvised accordion, Frankie made quite an impression on everyone by making all the appropriate gestures and movements as though he were playing.

Max Zelodec gave Frank his first instructions on playing the accordion. All instruction was done "by ear," and Frank learned so quickly that he began to play a little for boarders and neighbors. Their association continued for quite a while, and Frankie making excellent progress for his very young age, quickly absorbing everything that Max taught him. Then, unfortunately, Max died suddenly. After Max passed away, Frank found that the accordion had been left to him. Although sad at Max's passing, he experienced great joy that the instrument had been passed to him. It was indeed a beautiful instrument, and he treasured it dearly.

With his own button box accordion, Frankie's ability with the accordion really started to develop. He took the accordion with him everywhere he went. When the boys played baseball in the street, he'd keep the accordion on the porch and play it when his side was batting. Then when it was his turn to bat, he'd run down the steps to the plate. If he hit a home run, he'd come back and bang out a real lively polka. If he made an out, he'd go back to the porch and play some more. Everyone said it was nice to play ball with polka music in the background.

By the age of 15, Frankie had mastered the button box, playing three- and four-finger chords on every note. "A lot of people will tell you even today that I am a great button box player, better at that than the piano accordion," Frankie says. Even today, he still takes the button box accordion on jobs, but he only plays it upon request.

After playing the button box accordion for six years, Frankie talked his parents into buying him a piano accordion. His father was against this as he did not want his son to be a band leader because he felt musicians couldn't make a good living. However, Frankie's mother saw how interested he was in playing the accordion, so without her husband's knowing it, she purchased Frankie's first piano accordion, a beautiful instrument obtained for the sum of $500. Knowing how her husband felt, Mrs. Yankovic told Frankie that he could not practice in the house. Frankie agreed and set up a small area in their garage. Since the garage was not attached to the house at that time, there was no heat. But, despite the lack of heat, Frankie would practice for hours each day.

Frankie was discouraged at first because he found it quite difficult to master the keys since they were so different than the setup of buttons on his button box accordion. He also kept in the back of his mind the admonition that his mother gave him when she bought the piano accordion: "You'd better learn to play that accordion; I stuck my neck out for you, so don't let me down!" So he practiced harder and harder until he had learned a few numbers really well. Then one night after dinner, Frankie felt he was ready to let his father hear him play. So he went out into the garage,

brought back his accordion, and stood in front of his father. He then began to play all of the numbers that he had memorized and perfected. His father was amazed as he had no idea that Frankie had achieved such proficiency. As he played, Frankie could recognize a change in his father's attitude by the smile on his face. That smile gave Frankie the okay he was seeking from his father. He'd won his father over with his music, and his father gave his permission to continue. Thankfully, he no longer had to practice in the garage. He then went on to receive his formal musical training with talented teachers like Michael Notari and Joe Trolli.

Frankie Yankovic got his real start during the 1930's. He says: "Those were dynamite days for me, a blend of hard work and lots of fun. I didn't know it then, but I guess they were the best of times. When you're working your way up, you always think you're struggling too hard and that the fight isn't worth it. Then, after you finally get somewhere, you realize that you were happiest when you were battling toward a goal. And, believe me, it's a lot easier getting to the top than it is to stay there."

His first band was composed of Al Naglitch on piano, Jim Hocevar on guitar, Lee Novak on drums, Bill Dunlavey on saxophone, and Skufca on banjo. Frankie and his band built their reputation gradually. They played weddings for $1 an hour or $5 for four hours. Nevertheless, they were very glad to get it. Over the years, his reputation steadily grew, and he has attributed this growth to several things: "We had a cheerful bunch in the band. I never could stand to have any sourpusses playing in the band, and people would follow us around wherever we went. I had a lot of friends because I always made a point to mingle with the people at intermission, and I always tried to consider the older people. I'd always tell my guys: C'mon, let's act like we're alive, like we're having a good time. It made a big difference." ***[For the remaining story, the name Frank will be used, although both names are used interchangeably by his many friends.]***

He got his big radio break in 1932 when asked to play on Dr. Malle's Sunday radio program over Radio WJAY in Cleveland. He played on this program every Sunday for years, getting terrific exposure. Later, when the new show's owner (Heinie Martin) switched to Radio WGAR, Frank went with him. This proved to be a good move because the Heinie Slovenian Radio Show became an institution in Cleveland that lasted 20 years. Heinie Martin also helped Frank break into the recording business by recording two 78 rpm records on the Yankee Label. But since Frank wasn't a member of the musician's union, he wanted to avoid any trouble. So he left their names off the label and substituted "Music By The Slovene Folk Orchestra." Everyone naturally knew it was played by Yankovic and his group, so when they took the records to the Mervar Music Store, the only Slovene record store in Cleveland, all 1,500 records (that's all they could press) were sold in a couple of weeks.

When World War II broke out, Frank was only 26. He was already married, and he and his first wife June had been blessed with two children. Frank was playing every night with his band, keeping up with the growing demand for his popular group, "The Happy Slovenians." As the war progressed, he realized that things would soon begin to change as the war impacted his life — as it did the lives of most everyone else. When he got his induction notice on February 17, 1943, he asked for extra time to get ready because he owned a night club and couldn't just leave it overnight. Fortunately, the Army agreed to give him an extra 30 days to make all the necessary arrangements. Then, he was off to Fort Knox, Kentucky for his basic training, and from there to Camp Fannin, Texas where he was in the First Infantry Division, training and awaiting orders to be shipped overseas as a replacement. Naturally, he took his accordion with him when he joined the Army. Needless to say, he soon began to entertain the men at the camp and

play at the Officer's Club. He liked that because it got him out of KP duty.

While awaiting orders to go overseas, Frank went home on leave, got his band together, and obtained a business agreement with Heinie Martin to have a final recording session until he returned from the war. Frank and his band pulled out the "stops" and recorded 32 sides in one afternoon. Then, Frank turned the job of distribution over to Heinie Martin and Fred Wolf, who was president of the International Radio Stations.

Word then came to go overseas. Frank was shipped to Scotland aboard the Queen Elizabeth, but it wasn't a pleasure cruise as the soldiers were packed in like sardines. In Scotland, he was taught how to use a flamethrower, but he doesn't know why they picked him for that. He says: "It was one of the most dangerous jobs in the Army. You had to get close to your target, within 25 feet or so. You had to learn to go in low on your belly carrying the flamethrower. It was a suicide job. Fortunately, I never actually had to use the flamethrower in combat. But, I knew how to do it if it had been necessary."

From Scotland, he went to England. Then, in late 1944 his unit moved into France and then on to Germany where the Allies began engaging the enemy on its own turf. Frank was in the famous "Battle of the Bulge," and when his unit moved into Germany, they fought one of the hardest battles of the war at Aachen. This was the first German city to be taken by the Allies, and the Germans were fighting with all their might as it was their homeland. The battle for Aachen lasted for weeks.

During the last months of the war, Hitler was throwing everything at his disposal against the Allies. It was mass confusion everywhere, and the weather was bone-chilling cold. One night in the midst of the chaos, Frank and about 12 other soldiers had been cut off from the rest of the forces and got lost. Not knowing where they were, they decided to remain where they were until daylight, hoping to stay alive through the night. Finally, they fell asleep. The next morning they awoke covered with snow and practically frozen to death. When their troops found them, the soldiers could barely move. They were provided the best possible care — even flown to Paris and then to England. However, it was not clear what the prognosis would be. It was apparent to the doctors that gangrene had set in as the feet and hands had turned as black as paint. The young doctor attending Frank told him that to save his life, he needed to amputate his feet and hands and that no time could be wasted making a decision to amputate.

But, Frank just couldn't agree. He couldn't face going home to his wife and family without his hands and feet, so he refused to let the doctor amputate. The doctor said, "All right, but you're a dead man." But the good Lord must have been with Frank because after continuing penicillin shots for several weeks and with the prayers of everyone back home, the black color started to fade. Although his recovery didn't improve overnight, he did ultimately heal almost 100 percent.

The young doctor who had recommended the amputation even came by and apologized, but Frank didn't blame him. Then the doctor said, "I understand you play the accordion. It would be good therapy for you to play. I'll get you one." They brought him an old piano accordion, and Frank couldn't play anything at first. But, the doctor was right about this; it did prove to be good therapy. After about a month, he could play like he wanted, and then he began to have some fun playing polkas in the hospital for the other guys.

When Frank left the hospital, they assigned him to Special Services to entertain the troops. He even formed a hillbilly band that traveled all over Europe. One time he even performed for General George Patton and the famed Third Army. During some of his bigger concert band performances, he once played a show, and the sergeant-in-charge of the show was Sidney Mills, whose uncle owned Mills

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Publishing Company in New York, one of the biggest music publishing houses in the country. Sidney took a liking to Frank and told him to be sure to look him up after the war. Frank did, and the rest is history. Mills Publishing has printed all of the Yankovic music books for which Frank still collects royalties.

Following the war, Frank says: "I returned to the biggest boomtime I had ever known. Every polka spot in Cleveland was jumping like crazy." Since Frank still owned the bar in Cleveland, he continued running it and also formed up with his former 4-piece band with Hokey slapping the bass fiddle, Naglitch on piano, and Georgie Cook on banjo. Then, Johnny Pecon, a fine chromatic accordionist played at Frank's bar, and they got to know each other quite well. Soon, Johnny joined up with Frank's group, and they played together for many years with recording contracts, music publishing deals, and appearances all over the country that made the name Yankovic synonymous with the polka in America. Later, for a sideline, he even bought a restaurant with his good friend and partner, Jimmy Jerele, and it became a popular and successful venture. It was called "Yankovic Steak House."

Frank Yankovic and his famous "Yanks" have had many recording contracts with RCA Victor and Columbia records. In all, he has recorded over fifty albums and an unknown number of singles. Usually, the Columbia representatives were pretty astute and knew what would sell — but not always. Once Frank recorded "That Night in May" on side one of a record, but he still needed Columbia's agreement for side two. Frank suggested "Just Because" for the other side, but Columbia said, "No, the Sheldon Brothers recorded it, and it didn't work. Let's try something else." Frank argued with them and after much dickering finally said to them, "All right. I'll make a deal with you. If you let us record this song, I'll buy the first 10,000 records myself." That argument convinced them, and they recorded "Just Because" without a rehearsal, with Pecon and Frank harmonizing on the vocal. They didn't know it then, but they were making polka history. During the first week, 25,000 records were sold in Boston, and this was repeated all over the country. It became their first million-copy record. Frank is proud of the fact that a copy of "Just Because" is in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., where it is a permanent piece of "Americana." Many other recording successes followed, and then came the "Blue Skirt Waltz" — another million-copy record. Today, Frank gets more requests for these two songs than any other. But, for an unknown reason, he's never had another million-copy record.

Frank Yankovic is indeed America's Polka King — a title he won at the peak of his career in 1948 at a contest held in the Milwaukee Auditorium. The contest was sponsored by the major record companies, and all of the major bands were competing: Sammy Madden, Louis Bashell, Lawrence Duchow and his "Red Ravens," the "Six Fat Dutchmen," and, of course, Frank Yankovic and his "Yanks," which included Johnny Pecon, Georgie Cook, Whitey Lovsin, Church Srnick, and Al Naglitch. The *Milwaukee Journal* covered the event. Frank's band started off with "The Three Yanks Polka," named after his first three children. The crowd went wild and insisted that they play it a second time — and then a third time. It was very difficult getting off the stage. Finally, when the votes were counted, the "Yanks" had won 8 to 1 over the next band. Two years later, there was another contest of polkas versus jazz in which the "Yanks" competed against Duke Ellington. Before the ballots were even counted, Duke Ellington came to Frank and said, "I don't have a chance against 'Polkas' here in Milwaukee," and the results confirmed it as the "Yanks" came out way on top. Yankovic still holds the "Polka King" title today as there has never been another contest.

In other honors, Yankovic and Li'l Wally Jagiello were the first persons to be inducted into the Polka Hall of Fame in Chicago

Publishing Company in New York, one of the biggest music publishing houses in the country. Sidney took a liking to Frank and told him to be sure to look him up after the war. Frank did, and the rest is history. Mills Publishing has printed all of the Yankovic music books for which Frank still collects royalties.

Following the war, Frank says: "I returned to the biggest boomtime I had ever known. Every polka spot in Cleveland was jumping like crazy." Since Frank still owned the bar in Cleveland, he continued running it and also formed up with his former 4-piece band with Hokey slapping the bass fiddle, Naglitch on piano, and Georgie Cook on banjo. Then, Johnny Pecon, a fine chromatic accordionist played at Frank's bar, and they got to know each other quite well. Soon, Johnny joined up with Frank's group, and they played together for many years with recording contracts, music publishing deals, and appearances all over the country that made the name Yankovic synonymous with the polka in America. Later, for a sideline, he even bought a restaurant with his good friend and partner, Jimmy Jerele, and it became a popular and successful venture. It was called "Yankovic Steak House."

Frank Yankovic and his famous "Yanks" have had many recording contracts with RCA Victor and Columbia records. In all, he has recorded over fifty albums and an unknown number of singles. Usually, the Columbia representatives were pretty astute and knew what would sell — but not always. Once Frank recorded "That Night in May" on side one of a record, but he still needed Columbia's agreement for side two. Frank suggested "Just Because" for the other side, but Columbia said, "No, the Sheldon Brothers recorded it, and it didn't work. Let's try something else." Frank argued with them and after much dickering finally said to them, "All right. I'll make a deal with you. If you let us record this song, I'll buy the first 10,000 records myself." That argument convinced them, and they recorded "Just Because" without a rehearsal, with Pecon and Frank harmonizing on the vocal. They didn't know it then, but they were making polka history. During the first week, 25,000 records were sold in Boston, and this was repeated all over the country. It became their first million-copy record. Frank is proud of the fact that a copy of "Just Because" is in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., where it is a permanent piece of "Americana." Many other recording successes followed, and then came the "Blue Skirt Waltz" — another million-copy record. Today, Frank gets more requests for these two songs than any other. But, for an unknown reason, he's never had another million-copy record.

Frank Yankovic is indeed America's Polka King — a title he won at the peak of his career in 1948 at a contest held in the Milwaukee Auditorium. The contest was sponsored by the major record companies, and all of the major bands were competing: Sammy Madden, Louis Bashell, Lawrence Duchow and his "Red Ravens," the "Six Fat Dutchmen," and, of course, Frank Yankovic and his "Yanks," which included Johnny Pecon, Georgie Cook, Whitey Lovsin, Church Srnick, and Al Naglitch. The *Milwaukee Journal* covered the event. Frank's band started off with "The Three Yanks Polka," named after his first three children. The crowd went wild and insisted that they play it a second time — and then a third time. It was very difficult getting off the stage. Finally, when the votes were counted, the "Yanks" had won 8 to 1 over the next band. Two years later, there was another contest of polkas versus jazz in which the "Yanks" competed against Duke Ellington. Before the ballots were even counted, Duke Ellington came to Frank and said, "I don't have a chance against 'Polkas' here in Milwaukee," and the results confirmed it as the "Yanks" came out way on top. Yankovic still holds the "Polka King" title today as there has never been another contest.

In other honors, Yankovic and Li'l Wally Jagiello were the first persons to be inducted into the Polka Hall of Fame in Chicago

in 1969. Frank was extremely proud of this honor as well as his receiving the Polka Grammy in 1986. His group has changed over the years with some of his sideliners leaving for either financial reasons or going on to form bands of their own. Although he's had a few setbacks along the way, he has always bounced back with the same vigor and drive that he had before. He has played in every state in the union and in many other countries: Canada, Germany, Spain, and Yugoslavia. Indeed, he has made a lot of money in his day — and also lost a lot to people who had their own selfish interests at heart. But, Frank doesn't spend much time worrying about those losses because money was not what drew him into the entertainment business. It was then and remains now his first love: **Making others happy through music**.

Frank enjoys the greatest popularity in Cleveland where he had his own T.V. show, "The Yankovic Hour," on Channel 5 (WEWS) each Sunday for over 27 years. Since he traveled and couldn't be on the program every week, the name of the show was changed to "Polka Varieties." When Frank was out of town, the station hired local bands to take his place. Paul Wilcox did a fantastic job as the host of this popular program. Frank also had his own T.V. shows on Channel 9 (WGN) in Chicago for 3 years and on Channel 7 for 2 years in Buffalo, New York. Both shows were called "The Frank Yankovic Show: America's Polka King."

He has also played on many other television programs over the years. He played for Johnny Carson twice, once in New York and 20 years later in California. Frank remembers a compliment Johnny Carson gave him by calling him the biggest man in "polka music." And, Johnny told the network audience that he would always remember when Frank and his "Yanks" came to his own hometown of Norfolk, Nebraska. He said that their arrival was always the biggest event of the year in Norfolk. Frank Yankovic has also appeared in recent years on the "Phil Donahue Show." In earlier years, he appeared four times on the "Lawrence Welk Show" and also on the following well-known programs: "Arthur Godfrey Show," "Pattie Page Big Record Show," "Jackie Gleason Show," "Kate Smith Show," and "David Frost Special."

Frank Yankovic married his second wife, Pat, on June 28, 1969, and they had two beautiful children. Moving to Las Vegas, they built a home in Henderson, Nevada. Frank lived 2 years in Nevada until his divorce from Pat, whereupon he moved back to his beloved Cleveland to continue his demanding recording and personal appearance schedule. His many friends helped him to get through this difficult period, and as Frank thought about his future, he had no intention to remarry as his busy schedule of appearances left little time for him to even think about his future happiness.

On Frank's 70th birthday, he was honored by a party at which many of his friends attended. Among the guests was a lady-friend acquaintance from Herminie, Pennsylvania who had entertained Frank and the "Yanks" in her home many times for dinner when they played in that area of the country. They had been just good friends over the years and had corresponded occasionally. After Frank's move to Las Vegas, they had lost contact. But for Frank's birthday, this lovely lady, Ida, traveled all the way from Herminie with two busloads of friends to join in the celebration of Frank's 70th birthday. After this visit, Frank again began corresponding with Ida, and about a year later when he was playing for a wedding in the Pittsburgh area, he sent her an invitation asking her to please come. Not knowing if she would come, he didn't want to get his hopes too high. But, then when he arrived at the wedding, he saw Ida waiting for him.

The following day Frank was scheduled to be the Grand Marshall at Enon Valley, Pennsylvania, and he invited Ida to accompany him at this important function. With so much activity, he had very little time to be with her, but later when Frank was being interviewed for a radio program, he told the reporter, "I want

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you to meet Ida. I want her to be my wife if she will have me." To this spontaneous proposal, Ida accepted, and on December 27, 1986, they were married in Frank's home on 262nd Street in Cleveland. Ida's children from a previous marriage and Frank's children, along with their closest friends, attended the wedding. Following the wedding, a small reception was held at the Sterles Country House.

Today, Ida is a tremendous asset to Frank. Ida is also of Slovenian descent, and she understands the needs and pressures that are always present in his busy schedule. She is an equal partner and loves to travel with Frank to all his engagements. Additionally, she takes care of many of the administrative and business responsibilities and personally operates all of the cassette and record sales. Frank and Ida are very happy and hope to continue traveling across this great country playing his happy polka music.



FRANK YANKOVIC RECEIVING THE POLKA GRAMMY AWARD IN 1986. ALSO IN PHOTO IS JOEY MISKULIN (L), FRANK'S ACCORDION PLAYER, WHO PRODUCED THE GRAMMY ALBUM. JOEY MISKULIN PLAYED WITH FRANK YANKOVIC FOR 27 YEARS BEFORE MOVING TO NASHVILLE TO BEGIN A RECORDING CAREER OF HIS OWN.

[The final copy of this story has been reviewed for accuracy by Frank Yankovic, and it is published with his kind permission and cooperation.]

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DICK CONTINO — THE "RUDOLPH VALENTINO" OF THE ACCORDION

By Edwin Davison

Editor's Note: Here's Dick Contino! For a period during the writing of this book, it seemed almost impossible to contact Dick Contino to obtain his life story. Finding him is not easy due to his extremely busy concert schedule and his need for privacy during his limited free time. But, find him we did! And, through his musical and public relations director, Corky Bennett, we were provided all the necessary information needed to tell this story. Dick Contino came from humble beginnings and worked hard to develop his musical talent. He was indeed ready when the big opportunity arose to appear on the radio during the late 1940's. He amazed the national audience as he continued to win the Horace Heidt talent contest for thirteen straight weeks. Catapulted to stardom by this instant success, he has delighted audiences everywhere since those early days. The accordion would not, in all probability, have achieved the same degree of popularity during the 1950's and 1960's without Dick Contino. Inducted into the Accordion Hall of Fame in 1957, he was the third person in the accordion field to be honored with this award. As stated elsewhere in this book, Joe Petosa drew an interesting parallel about the respective influence of Elvis Presley and Dick Contino on America's youth: Elvis popularized "rock and roll," while Dick Contino popularized the accordion. Thank you, Dick, for your story.

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Dick Contino was born of Italian parentage on January 17, 1930, in Fresno, California. His father, a butcher, also played the accordion and gave Dick his first accordion instructions. After school and on weekends, Dick worked as a delivery boy in his father's butcher shop. He always kept his accordion nearby and practiced many hours every day between deliveries.

An all-round American boy, Dick joined the football team at Fresno High School and played fullback until his father found out about it and forced him to stop. Having to stop football, however, did not end his popularity at school. He played his accordion at school assemblies and at other special functions, and this exposure brought him such popularity that he easily won the class presidency during school elections.

After graduating from high school in 1947, Dick entered Fresno State College to study the arts, but after a semester he left college, deciding that his first love was his music and the accordion. He then went back to work with his father in the butcher shop, devoting all of his spare time to practicing the accordion. His ambition was to become an accordion soloist and to help popularize an instrument that had not been fully recognized in the entertainment world. During those days, entertainment jobs were not easy to find, so his family decided to move to Los Angeles where they thought there would be some greater opportunities to break into the entertainment world.

Dick was interested in getting on a national broadcast, confident that if he could play his accordion before a national audience, he could break into "show business." And a great opportunity did come! Was this break due to luck, chance, or providence? Whatever the reason, Dick was ready and willing to accept the opportunity to demonstrate his ability before the American public. His great break and subsequent rise to stardom was tied to the career of Horace Heidt, a master showman and an old friend of many years to audiences across America. Horace Heidt had just come out of retirement to go back on the air with his "Original Youth Opportunity Program," a show dedicated to bring before the American people the finest in entertainment presented by the talented youth of America.

Mr. Heidt realized that many talented youth living throughout the country would never have the opportunity to leave their community and take a chance in Hollywood or



DICK CONTINO

New York. Consequently, he wanted to provide a new "door of opportunity" for these youth to demonstrate their talent and win national recognition in their chosen fields. Instead of a typical Hollywood premiere of the new show with much fanfare, Mr. Heidt scheduled his first broadcast from a typical American city: Fresno, California. An "advance man" was sent to Fresno to search for talent to represent that city and compete for fame and fortune. The American public would act as the judge.

At this same time, the Contino family was preparing to move to Los Angeles, and Dick's mother sent him to the Fresno Musicians' Union to get his transfer to the Los Angeles Union. When Dick entered the Fresno Union, the secretary introduced him to the Heidt talent scout who asked him to audition for him the next day. Dick was filled with such hope and excitement that he did not tell his parents about the audition, not wanting to build up their hopes and then have them disappointed if the audition were not successful. At the audition, the "advance man" was so impressed with Dick's performance that he then arranged for him to personally audition for Mr. Heidt.

At long last, Dick Contino was beginning to feel his dream may come true. After auditioning for Mr. Heidt, he was told that Mr. Heidt was very impressed with his performance and that he had been selected as one of four contestants to appear on the initial Philip Morris broadcast to compete for the weekly prize of $250, the quarterly prize of $750, and the annual prize of $5,000. Now he could tell his parents! He was naturally elated with this opportunity, but it would take quite a while to comprehend its true significance and potential impact on his budding career.

On the otherwise calm night of December 7, 1948, Dick Contino made his appearance on the very first Horace Heidt-Philip Morris broadcast. Dick had selected a rendition of "Lady of Spain," and after he had played this number for the audience, the bobby-sox audience stomped, clapped, and yelled with the utmost frenzy, declaring him the winner by a margin of fully 30 points on the electric applause meter. The $250 prize was unquestionably won by this young California native.

Intense competition followed for twelve more straight weeks. The program format was the same throughout with the contestants changing from week to week. From California to Broadway, the overpowering results of the applause meter were the same each week. Then, at the first Horace Heidt Quarter Finals, Dick Contino stepped up to the microphone at radio station WNBC in Manhattan and slapped out "Bumble Boogie," romping away with the $750 prize. Another successful step had been taken toward winning the grand prize that would be presented to some lucky winner a few weeks in the future.

Finally, the long road to the Horace Heidt Grand Finals had arrived. This grand finale was held in Washington, D.C., and there had been over 10,000 contestants in this series of contests over the thirteen-week contest. Interestingly, two of the other contestants in the Grand Finals were Johnny Carson and Al Hirt. Nevertheless, when Dick Contino stepped to the microphone, the results were the same: Dick won the grand prize of $5,000. Not only did this achievement propel him into a professional career, but it also was a major influence on the listening audience who had literally come to idolize him during the 13-week contest. During the contest and in the months and years following Dick's appearance on the Horace Heidt contest, accordion schools across the nation began to report record enrollment of students. There is little doubt that there was a correlation between Dick Contino's successful performances on national radio and the increased interest in the accordion.

Following his initial appearance on the Heidt show, Dick was afforded priceless radio and vaudeville appearances as a featured member of Horace Heidt's "Musical Knights." With this exposure, Dick Contino became a permanent member of the group and earned approximately $30,000 during his first year of

show business, touring theaters and auditoriums from coast to coast. During this time, he cut his first record album with the "Horace Heidt Orchestra," which provided a new avenue of publicity and created a large fan club throughout the United States. This first album was on the top five album list for months after its release. Indeed, this true success story reenforced the idea to the American public that America is still the land of opportunity.

Dick Contino served with the U.S. Army from 1952 to 1954, spending 16 months entertaining the Armed Forces in Korea. During his career, he has also entertained servicemen in Europe and in Viet Nam, as well as in veterans' hospitals throughout the country. He has enriched many lives during these tours. Like many of the other performers, performing for the U.S. serviceman is a priority and love that he will strive to continue.

What sets Dick Contino apart from many other entertainers is a combination of innovative musical styling and a personal philosophy developed through the experienced turmoil of early stardom and the vicissitudes of show business. A master accordionist, he has been referred to by audiences and critics alike as a musician capable of transcending the limitations of his instrument — a true genius of the accordion.

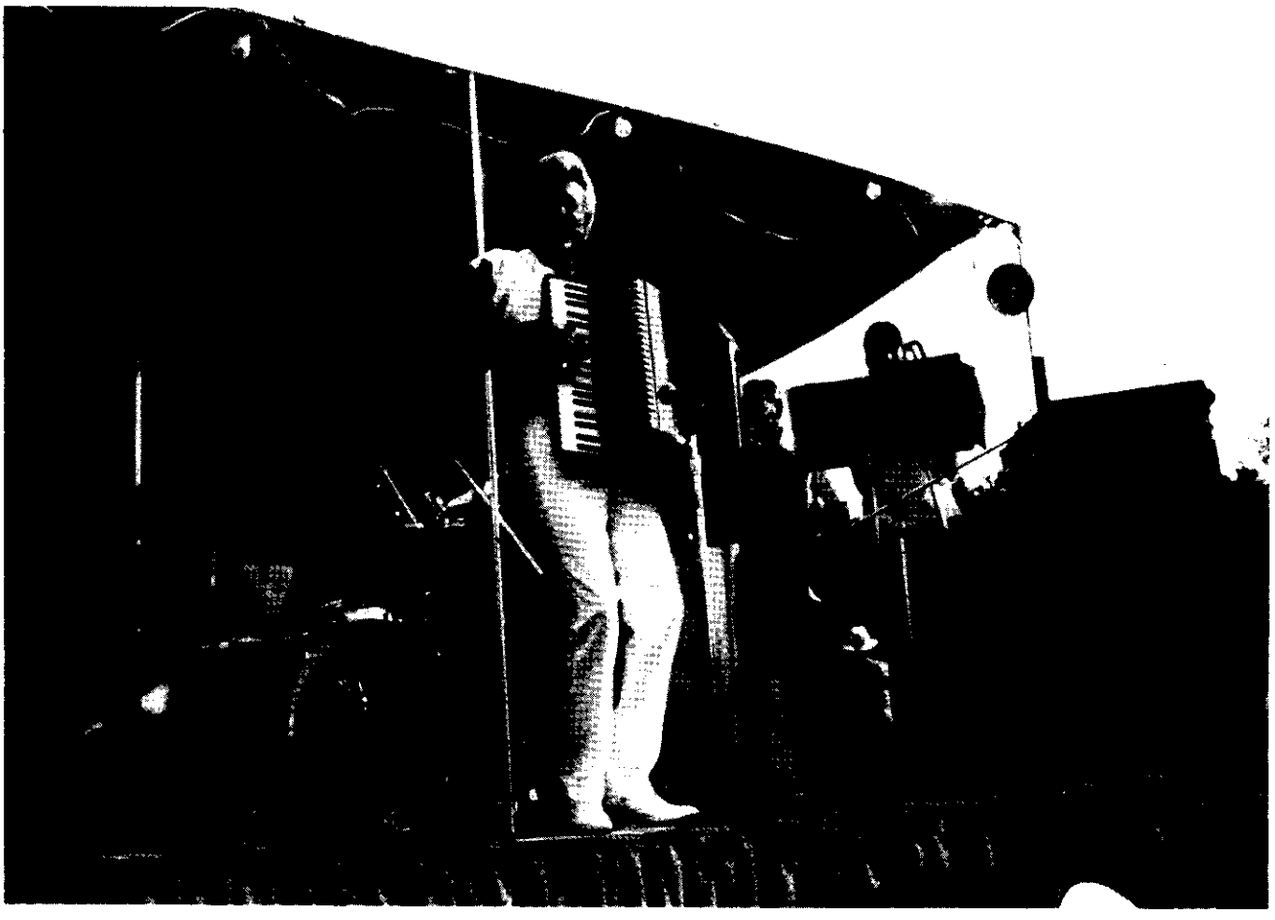
In show business practically all his adult life, he has attained an inner peace that makes him a delight to be near. Dick states his personal philosophy like this, "I allow my life to consume my art, rather than let my art consume me." Famous for his distinctive "bellows shake" playing technique, he is able to coax out of his accordion a warmth bordering on passion. Contino is very intimate with his audience. About this relationship, he says, "I treat my audience like a love relationship. I feed it and it feeds me." On stage, he presents himself in a spontaneous manner, delighting the audience. He is best known for "Lady of Spain," "The Sabre Dance," "Tico-Tico," and "Granada." Dick Contino has indeed bridged the gap of the ages by playing a combination of nostalgia along with the currently popular songs of today's generation. He also surprises his audiences with his fine vocal stylings.

Dick Contino appeared on the "Ed Sullivan Show," and he toured Russia with the Ed Sullivan Troupe during a cultural exchange between the U.S. and Russia. He also appeared on the "Merv Griffin Show," "Two on Two" (a Chicago T.V. program), a local Indianapolis T.V. show, and on the national T.V. program "Days of Our Lives," in both an acting and a musical role. He has appeared on virtually all the major stages and television shows during his professional career.

Dick Contino's successful career includes many records and albums for Mercury, Dot, Hamilton, and Magnolia labels. As of 1989, he has recorded 12 albums on the major labels and has sold over 6 million records. Most recently, he has recorded two albums on the Mercedes McGee label: "Yours" and "The Legend."

His popularity continues to grow each year as thousands of new fans discover his unique entertainment abilities. Orlando and Vera Serra, the directors of Dick Contino's fan club, work hard to support the fans with buttons, posters, pictures, etc. At one time, the fan club numbered well over one million, and, today, the club is still very active, having over 3,000 fans.

Today, Dick Contino maintains an unbelievable schedule and played to over 250,000 people in 15 cities last year, breaking house records in city after city. Noted for his high-energy performances and show-stopping arrangements, he is able to completely captivate an audience with his charm, good looks, and technical virtuosity. Dick is a delight to see and an entertainment director's dream. At one of his recent stints as headliner in the Holiday Casino's "Keep Smilin' America" review, he obtained such a rave review that the appearance resulted in a long-term agreement with this Las Vegas resort. Those who have seen Dick in one of his many appearances will agree that "**Nobody Does It Better!**".







DICK CONTINO IN CONCERT (SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS)

[This biographical account was made possible through the kind assistance of Corky Bennett, the publicist and musical director for Dick Contino. This article has been reviewed for accuracy by Dick Contino and is printed with his permission and cooperation. Booking information is available from Corky Bennett Productions, P.O. Box 18000-57, Las Vegas, NV 89114. The Dick Contino Fan Club may be contacted C/O Orlando & Vera Serra, 1121 Brentwood Lane, Mt. Prospect, IL 60056. Telephone: (708) 392-4419.]







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JOHN MOLINARI — ACCLAIMED SAN FRANCISCO ACCORDIONIST

By Diva Molinari and Tony Rozance

Editor's Note. John Molinari was indeed one of San Francisco's finest accordionists. He lived and obtained his accordion training in San Francisco when it was still the accordion capital of the United States. Originally studying piano with the famous teacher Adolph Fink, he then transitioned to the accordion to become one of the foremost accordionists from the San Francisco area. To fully tell the story of this acclaimed artist, I have obtained most of the information about his career from his wife and then obtained supplemental information from one of John Molinari's close friends, Tony Rozance, a legendary accordionist from San Antonio, Texas. The world truly lost a great artist with the passing of John Molinari. His influence extended far beyond the San Francisco area to cities throughout the United States, Canada, Scandinavia, and the Soviet Union. He founded Accordia Records in Oakland, California, and this company made significant contributions to the advancement of the accordion. He is best remembered for the record he distributed in the United States to commemorate the Centennial of Frosini's birth: "Pietro Frosini: Original Recordings 1920 - 1935." [See Appendix, p. 80.]

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John Molinari was born in San Francisco in 1912. When only 4 years old, he was given a little 2-bass semi-tone accordion. On his own, he picked out familiar melodies of the day to the enjoyment of his family and friends. As he grew older, his talent for music became very apparent, and when he was 12 years old, he began to receive regular, serious instruction. When only 15 years old, he was already appearing in vaudeville at local theaters as well as on radio stations. His appreciation of the accordion, his natural talent, and his years of dedicated study culminated in an extremely successful accordion career. Indeed, he was an artist who possessed a brilliant accordion technique and solo repertoire that was enjoyed by fans and admirers the world over.

At one point in his training, John also studied piano, harmony, counterpoint, and the art of arranging with Adolph Fink — an influential teacher who was a former student of Antonin Dvorak and who was once an arranger for Victor Herbert. This training provided a firm musical foundation for John as he progressed to the accordion in his early youth.

During World War II, John toured the South Pacific for the USO camp shows, where he featured many arrangements and developed a "musical act," an expression in the entertainment field. After the war, his engagements extended to the concert halls, night clubs, and hotel supper clubs throughout the United States and Canada. These performance years were during the "Golden Age" of the accordion, and John Molinari was at the entertainment forefront. His many featured bookings included appearances at the Wedgewood room of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, the Flame Room of the Radisson Hotel in Minneapolis, and the Olympic Hotel in Seattle. In his hometown of San Francisco, some of John's major bookings included the Venetian Room of the Fairmont Hotel and the Peacock Court of the Mark Hopkins Hotel.

John Molinari also appeared at the San Francisco Opera House with the well-known dance team of Veloz and Yolanda, one of a series of engagements with them. When John Molinari accompanied Veloz and Yolanda to San Antonio, they appeared at the Texas Theater, and John provided the dance team's sole musical background during the entire performance. His music was complete and full. Many of the patrons found it difficult to believe that the complex dance and music routine could be performed so well with just *one* accordion for accompaniment. (This really proves the versatility of the accordion.) Then, at intermission, John played three or four solos, and the audience went wild. After the numbers, the audience did not want him to quit, so



JOHN MOLINARI

they continued to applaud. This was especially interesting because the audience was principally interested in dance rather than the accordion. Finally, Veloz came out while John was still being applauded and continued with the dance program.

John Molinari also toured with the opera soprano, Jarmilla Novotna, booked by community concerts. This appearance created a great deal of interest and obtained rave notices from the press. At about this period of his career, John appeared on national radio as a soloist with Fred Waring. His performance received the unanimous acclaim of critics. He also toured with the famous "Ice Capades" during his career where he was responsible for conducting the orchestra and coordinating all of the taped voices and chorus with the orchestra — an extremely difficult job.

Enthusiastic audiences across the country repeatedly made requests for records of John's various performances, and this interest brought about an opportunity to get into the recording business. At the same time, he was asked to publish recorded accordion instructions. So, to meet this expressed demand for recordings, John decided to launch into a new venture whereupon he began his own recording company, Accordia Records, in Oakland, California. John recorded many 12-inch L.P. albums of both classical and semiclassical selections. Some of his popular recorded albums are: "Accordion Concert," "Classic Favorites," "Accordion Variety Concert," "Molinari Accordion Solos," and "International Virtuosos of the Accordion." John also distributed albums of many foreign artists, including Veikko Ahvenainen, Veikon Hanurikvartetti, and Maurice Vittenet.

These recordings were distributed in many countries throughout the world, including Iceland, England, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Turkey, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. Following the distribution of these records, John began to receive numerous requests for concert tours to several of these countries. He also held several concerts at the N.A.M.M. music conventions in both New York and Chicago.

In 1967, John Molinari and John Jr., also an accordionist, toured the Scandinavian countries and the Soviet Union with Veikko Ahvenainen of Finland. These tours included both radio and television appearances in addition to the concerts. John Molinari is believed to be one of the first American accordionists invited to perform in Finland — an honor John cherished. Due to the intense popularity of the accordion in the Scandinavian countries, John participated in many accordion festivals and concerts with Veikko Ahvenainen over a period of several years. He loved to perform in these countries as the audiences were so warm and responsive.

The world truly misses this outstanding concert artist and accordion virtuoso. His friends and admirers will long remember him for his unusual dexterity and marvelous technique and interpretation that have placed him among the ranks of the leading artists of the "Golden Age" of the accordion."

[The final copy of this biography has been personally reviewed for its completeness and accuracy by Diva Molinari and Tony Rozance. We appreciate very much their assistance and cooperation in making John Molinari's story available for this book.]

ARTHUR METZLER — HIS LIFE AND LOVE FOR THE ACCORDION

By Edwin Davison

Editor's Note: This biographical sketch of Arthur Metzler is a concise account of his life and accomplishments in the accordion field. As a protege of Andy Rizzo, he tells us what it was like to study under this famous teacher. Like many other accordionists featured in this book, Metzler received his early musical training on instruments other than the accordion. This training provided him with a vast musical reservoir to draw on throughout his career. He has been involved in every aspect of the accordion profession — teaching, writing, composing, concertizing, and performing. Art Metzler is known not only for his tremendous talent as a musician, but also for his talent as a cartoonist. His original cartoons have received wide national acclaim and are sought after by all of the accordion publications as a means of promoting the accordion. Art Metzler has enriched the accordion world throughout his remarkable career. His delightful "Father Time" cartoon (See p. 245) donated for publication in this book will be enjoyed by everyone. Without question, this cartoon is ideally suited to this book. Thank you, Art, for allowing us to include your life story and for donating this creative cartoon.

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Arthur (Art) Metzler was born in Chicago, Illinois, on May 27, 1915. His grandfather played the Austrian button accordion, and Art's father played the concertina. Several of his cousins played the concertina also, and when he heard the music from their instruments, Art would imitate them using a small, "red" metal toy box. He was about 4 years old at that time.

When Art was about 12 years old, his father brought home a piano accordion, and the tone of this accordion really fascinated him. Seemingly quite odd, his father put the instrument in a closet, and never played it. When no one was home, however, Art would take it out of the closet and try to play it.

One day, Art took it out into the back yard to play for some of his friends, and his father unexpectedly arrived home, catching him playing it. He received a severe scolding from his father who told him never to take it from the closet again, or he would receive a spanking. What Art did not know was that the accordion had been stolen by a man who owed his father some money, and the man had given the accordion to Art's father to settle the debt. The stern warning, however, did not stop Art from taking the accordion out of the closet to play.

Several months later, Art had once again taken out the accordion and was playing it when his father caught him in the act. By this time though Art had already learned to play several songs, and his father was quite impressed. So, instead of giving Art a spanking, his father said he thought he would try to find an accordion teacher to help him study the instrument. In those days, there were not many accordion teachers, and one could not be found. In the meantime, Art continued to play by ear. He played in school stage shows, for classmates, and whenever there were parties or other affairs.

When Art was about 15 years old, his father found an accordion teacher named Leslie Groff, who was a pianist more than an accordionist. This teacher gave him a scholarship, enabling Art to study piano along with the accordion until he went to Lane Tech High School. At Lane Tech, he played bass violin in the school's orchestra, and it was there that he met a very fine accordionist, Frank Messina, who played cello in the orchestra. Art and Frank struck an immediate friendship, and they soon began playing accordion duets for many school activities. Since Frank was a student of Andrew Rizzo, he introduced Art Metzler to Mr. Rizzo, and Art began his many years of intensive and productive study with this great accordion teacher.

After Art had studied with Andy Rizzo



ARTHUR METZLER



TOP			JOHN VACCA	MARTIN BATER	CASIMER WYSOCKI	SAM PORFIRIO	
2ND ROW	ART VAN DAMME	WALT BARTO	FELIX WOODS	ARGANTE CIABATTARI	FRANK LITUS	BILL CARVSO	
1ST ROW	ART METZLER	JOE BAILITZ	JOHN WILKUS	JOE RIZZO	TED BRAFMAN	ANI RIZZ	



ERNEST NGLAND	RUDY WALACH	GUSTAVE SORGANTE	TOMMY TERRITO			TOP ROW
RAY KARGE	MIKE LITUS	GENE HABENICHT	DOC SHISSNER	WALTER JANK	ARMANDO COSENZA	2ND ROW
Y O	ENRICO MASTRO-NARDI	MANNY QUARTUCCI	ROMEO BRUNO	CHESTER SYSLO	NICK MESSINA	1ST ROW

IC (CHICAGO -- CIRCA 1936)

ARTHUR METZLER (AGE 21) WITH HIS BEAUTIFUL ITALO-AMERICAN ACCORDION IN 1937. IN THIS SAME YEAR, HE GAVE A CONCERT PERFORMANCE OF ALL CLASSICAL MUSIC IN CHICAGO'S PRESTIGIOUS KIMBALL HALL TO A SOLD-OUT AUDIENCE.





for a short time, Mr. Rizzo was so impressed with Arthur's talent that he gave him a "free" scholarship. He placed Arthur in the "Rizzo Accordion Ensemble" which gave him the challenges and opportunities he needed at that point in his studies. Also, Mr. Rizzo gave Art a great many jobbing dates which provided extensive, early job experience. Art played with "The Ray O'Hare Society Orchestra" and worked later with the WLS radio station. He traveled all over the Midwest, playing at theaters and state fairs. One of his earliest successes was winning a Gold Medal at one of Andy Rizzo's accordion ensemble contests.

In those days very little music had been published for the accordion, as the accordion was still in its infancy. Thus, Metzler said that Andy Rizzo taught his students to read piano music and transcribe it for the accordion by reading the bass clef and knowing the required harmony. Rizzo would then make corrections during a lesson if the harmony was wrong in the left hand. What a wonderful favor he did for his students! He was essentially teaching them to "arrange" for the accordion. He was not only teaching his pupils to play, but he was molding them into real musicians. Sometimes, Mr. Rizzo played duets with Art at the "Bjornson Male Chorus," a Scandinavian club. Andy Rizzo was an exceptional accordion artist, had a splendid personality, and inspired students to reach their full potential.

In 1936, the "Rizzo Accordion Ensemble" held a concert with the "Bjornson Male Chorus" at the Logan Square Masonic Temple in Chicago. Art played music by Edvard Grieg, the great Norwegian composer. He also played several duets with Art Van Damme, the famous jazz accordionist who was also a member of the accordion ensemble. The two "Arts" enjoyed working together and played many duets in concerts for music schools and clubs throughout the Chicago area.

On April 4, 1937, Arthur Metzler gave a grand concert performance in Chicago's prestigious Kimball Hall. This was an important event as it was the first solo accordion concert, recognized for its importance by Chicago's music critics, ever held in this concert hall. This event was a proud moment for Arthur, who was only 21 at the time, and Andy Rizzo, who was so honored to present Arthur in a program of all classical music before this sold-out Chicago concert audience which had paid 45 to 65 cents for their choice of seats. In those days, that was a large sum for admission. Because of the importance of this event to Chicago's history and to the legacy of Art Metzler, I want to present a first-hand synopsis of the tension, musical expression, and public feeling that was experienced at this momentous event. The article by music critic Louis Siquier, the Editor of the *Accordion News* magazine, describes Arthur Metzler's exciting concert performance at Kimball Hall in the most vivid detail:

> "A regular dignified public concert. Art Metzler, native Chicagoan, put it over and held his own. Art pumped out one of the toughest programs ever plunged into by any concert accordionist.... Over 600 souls, accordion-thirsty, listened to piece by piece flowing from Metzler's fingers, displaying the same respect and interest present at violin, piano, or cello concerts of the top type.
>
> "Metzler opened with Chopin's Polonaise Militaire, Opus 40, No. 1, picked just right to prepare the audience, as this composition embraces nothing much for an accordionist of Metzler's caliber. Minute Waltz, Opus 64, No. 1, by Chopin ensued, and here is where Metzler started to grow to large proportions, as the composition requires taste and daintiness, especially to take the um-pa um-pa of the accordion bass which he played softly and lightly. Then, yes, the Prelude in C# Minor Opus 3, No. 2 by Rachmaninoff. No, it was not rendered vaudeville or show-like. It was concert-like, interpreted with feeling and fullness of expression, not for gallery applause. This Prelude, so often desiccated or trampled upon by full-mouthed accordionists, shown with sterling brilliance under

the commands of Metzler's heart; the happiest performance ever heard by this writer.

"Here enters another composition, usually massacred — Rossini's Overture to Semiramide. What marvelous bellows technique Metzler exhibited. Perfect control and accent, plus ease. The staccato movements, clean and accurate — the whole piece a precious program bit.

"The ten-minute intermission period interrupted the spell shared by the entire audience, warmed to a high pitch and full of commentative praise. Yet the program was not over and the second part presented an unusually steep musical slope. Frankly speaking, this writer's mind was shadowed with occasional doubts as to whether Metzler would make it, so he went back stage to poke a few jokes with Metzler ... and tried to peep into his soul to observe the threads of his stamina....

"The curtain once again [was] drawn aside. Metzler went on with the First Peer Gynt Suite, Opus 46, by Grieg, played in its entirety.... This Grieg Suite was originally composed for orchestra. Metzler made the accordion work at its best and, of course, it gave so much and no more.... Metzler more than repaid the audience by his vivid and colorful passages that in some points surpassed piano performances. The reed tone filtered through the audience with a thrill and set aflame everyone's imagination.... Finally, William Tell Overture, also Rossini's, was begun. Metzler once more came to earth, well-poised and balanced, with excellent bellowsing and roundness of execution, making the very best of this operatic overture written for orchestra. The public went frantic — everyone with hands raised, clapping to red-heat."

What a tribute the above critique was to Arthur Metzler, who stepped confidently into the concert arena in front of friends and critics alike to perform at the peak of excellence. What more can one ask? Indeed, as the review documents, his performance was an outstanding personal achievement and one that made Andy Rizzo equally satisfied with the professional accomplishment of his student.

In 1939 Arthur Metzler appeared again in concert at Kimball Hall where he played the complete 31 pages of George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" with a symphony orchestra under the direction of his teacher, Andy Rizzo. This performance was a tremendous success.

Following these two concerts in Kimball Hall, Art met Dr. Alex Jacobson, a renowned dentist who was also an accomplished musician and artist. He had heard Art's concert performances, and was so inspired with what he heard during those concerts that he asked Art to teach him the accordion. So, for about 6 years, Dr. Jacobson took lessons from Art, and they became very close friends. During this time, Dr. Jacobson sponsored several recitals for Metzler at the Orthodox Jewish Center of Hyde Park in Chicago. Years later, they collaborated and published several accordion instruction books: *Preparatory Text for the Piano Accordion* (1949) and *Classics by the Great Masters* (1969) written for the free-bass converter accordion.

Because Art had written arrangements for the "Rizzo Accordion Ensemble" and had written several original compositions for the accordion, Mr. Rizzo suggested that Art study composition with the famous composer, Florian Mueller, who was the first oboist with the "Chicago Symphony Orchestra" and a professor at Roosevelt University. Although he started lessons with Dr. Mueller, his studies were interrupted because of World War II.

Because of his unusual talent, Art was assigned as a chaplain's assistant in the Army in Europe, playing for the wounded in field hospitals, Army shows, and even for the Royal Family and Prime Minister of Belgium. And, every time the Army advanced, Art had to get together all of his field gear and equipment, including his accordion, and carry all of it with the help of a few of his Army buddies who loved his music. It was the only entertainment they had in the battalion.

After the war, he continued his studies with Dr. Mueller at Roosevelt University and played with a trio in night clubs and in all the large Chicago downtown hotels. Then, in 1946 Art founded his own music school in his home, and he taught accordion for the Patek Music Company in Chicago which had a staff of seven other teachers. A great many of his students won contests, and some became professional accordionists. Art has written over 750 original compositions and arrangements for the accordion. He also wrote many original compositions for his students, including: "Spanish Flavor," "Sparkling Gems," "Parisian Holiday," "Hittin' the Sack," "March Jubilant," and "Fantasia." They have been especially admired by his students as they are typical of his creative expression and musical style.

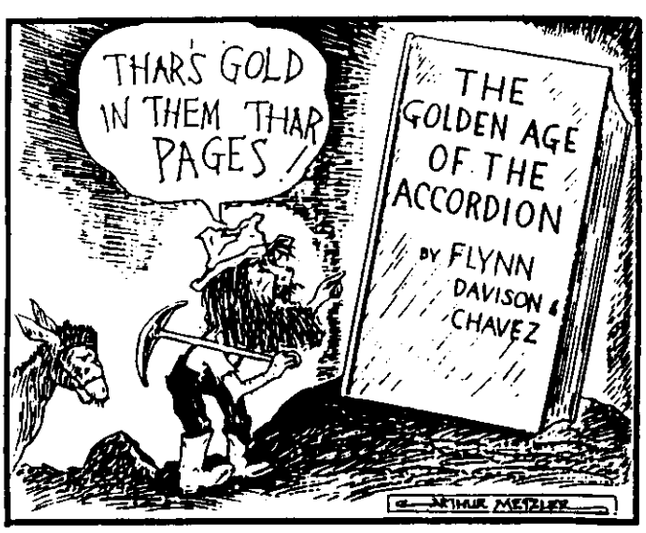
Art has written a number of compositions that have been dedicated to many of his friends and famous artists, among whom are the famous Charles Magnante, Myron Floren, and a large work dedicated to his teacher Andy Rizzo, called "The Symphonic Accordion." This composition was written for an accordion ensemble and was performed by Rudolf Wurthner in Trossingen, Germany (Hohner, 1960). Another important composition was his "Concerto for Two Accordions" that he dedicated to the Accordion Teachers' Guild. It was first performed by Enrico Mastro-Nardi in Peoria, Illinois on September 27, 1987 in his concert. (This Concerto takes one-half hour to perform.) I should also mention Arthur Metzler's beautiful "Rhapsody in C Minor" that he wrote for the accordion.

Andy Rizzo probably printed the first paper devoted to the advancement of the accordion as far back as 1934. The paper was called *Rizzo Accordion Ensemble News*. Arthur was the cartoonist for that newspaper.

His hobby has always been cartooning. He would sometimes draw a cartoon on the music that his students played to help create more interest for their instrument. During the war, he drew cartoons for the special service and sent some of them home to his family. His wife took them to the *Chicago Tribune*, and they offered him a job in the art department following his discharge from the service. When the war ended, however, he didn't accept this position because he loved the accordion so much more, and he wanted to be active in the music field.

Arthur Metzler belongs to the Accordion Teachers' Guild (ATG), Friends of the Accordion (FOTA), Chicago Accordion Club (CAC), and the Northwest Accordion Society. He is the staff cartoonist and honorary contributing member of these associations. His cartoons also have appeared in other accordion newsletters in this country and in accordion cartoon calendars ('89, '90, & '91) printed by Green Mountain Letterpress.

He is currently living in St. Petersburg, Florida where he plays his accordion with the "Barney Barnheart Band" in the Tampa area. Barney, the band leader, is a circus drummer. Everyone in the band is a true professional. Art has performed in the famous Busch Gardens, Cypress Gardens, and many other famous places.



CARTOON SKETCH BY ARTHUR METZLER ABOUT THIS ACCORDION BOOK

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CARTOON SKETCH: "FATHER TIME"
(Courtesy of Arthur Metzler)

[This biographical sketch was recommended for inclusion in this book by Eddie Chavez, who made all of the personal contacts with Arthur Metzler to obtain the information for preparing the article. The final copy of this biography has been personally reviewed by Arthur Metzler, and it is printed with his kind permission and cooperation. Correspondence or requests for his hundreds of original music compositions may be sent to him at 8100 9th St. N. #208, St. Petersburg, FL 33702.]



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MY CONCERT TOURS TO RUSSIA AND SASKATCHEWAN

By Leo Aquino

Editor's Note: Leo Aquino, noted concert accordionist from Vancouver, British Columbia, has completed numerous concert tours during his distinguished career. Because of the importance of such tours and the interest they present, I felt that two of his concert tours should be featured in this book. No one could describe these tours as vividly as Leo, himself; thus, I have asked him to relate again — as he has previously in other publications — his great experiences on the concert trail in Russia and Saskatchewan. As you read these travel accounts, you will quickly realize that Leo is as expressive in his writing as he is in his concert performances. No doubt, you will delight, as I have, in his imaginative descriptions of these concert tours. After reading these marvelous accounts, one cannot help being struck by the fact that while concert tours provide many exhilarating moments for the concert artist, the tours also have many difficult moments. Such experiences are undoubtedly typical of those encountered by the great artists during the early days of the accordion. As Leo points out, the concert artists sometimes do not receive the honor, recognition, or remuneration they deserve for their years of training and hours of concert preparation. The Saskatchewan Province tour took 15 days to cover 2,300 miles during which Leo presented 27 concerts. In the Soviet or Russian tour, he played concerts in six of the major Soviet cities. In the segment concerning the Soviet Union or USSR, we know that some geographic points of reference have been overcome by the momentous events that led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. For purposes of this article, however, the original geographic names have been retained as they were at the time of Leo's visit to the Soviet Union in 1978. I greatly appreciate the time Leo has spent in the preparation of these concert tour summaries. Without these detailed accounts, we might not fully realize the sacrifices a concert artist must make to provide performances that are sometimes taken for granted by an audience. Thank you, Leo, for sharing these enlightening and exciting experiences with your U.S. neighbors.

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CONCERT TOUR TO THE SOVIET UNION: LEO AQUINO — 1978

Background: Several years ago, a dear friend, violinist Arthur Polson, the concertmaster of the Winnipeg Symphony, played my recording of light Frosini pieces for George Zukerman. As a result, Mr. Zukerman offered me a Canadian tour through his agency, **Overture Concerts**. Accepting this offer, I joined forces with a marvelous soprano, Heather Gayle. In our program, Heather did a group of folk pieces, and we also did several groups in which I accompanied Heather in arrangements such as "Seguidilla" (from Carmen), "Solveig's Song" (Grieg), "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5" (Villa-Lobos), "Mio Babbino Caro" (Puccini), and "Adele's Laughing Song" (from *Die Fledermaus*). We would finish the $1^1/_2$-hour concert with a group of lighter things from "Sound of Music," "My Fair Lady," and the "Wizard of Oz." We went as far as Chapleau, Ontario, and then worked our way back through Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Yukon, and British Colombia, playing 20 concerts during a 6-week period. It was an unusual combination that people had never heard before, and the response was better than we'd hoped for.

Mr. Zukerman then asked me if I would care to do a solo concert tour in the Soviet Union. Suppressing a state of mild hysteria, I calmly answered, "Yes." To obtain the necessary travel clearance, I had to submit an hour-long tape of solo work, photographs, reviews, and sample programs to the Gosconcert Agency in Moscow. Six months followed before hearing from them, but they finally sent me an invitation to conduct the tour, apparently

pleased with the audition material. After allowing myself an evening of mad-Pagan celebration, I began a heavy practice schedule. I had to add to the material which I had used in my Canadian tour, so that I could come up with a program lasting $1^1/_2$ hours, including intermission.

..... RUSSIAN TOUR REVISITED .....

I arrived in Moscow on April 5, 1978, at 8:30 P.M. Moscow time. The time difference between Moscow and Vancouver is 11 hours, so the "jet lag" was terrific as my flight had taken 18 hours, including a 2-hour stopover in Frankfurt, West Germany. By the time I arrived in Moscow, I was exhausted. The weather was cold and overcast, but not raining. The airport checkout took almost an hour. I was met by my assigned guide, Anatoly Belaborodov and, to my delight, Yuri Kazakov, one of Russia's leading concert accordionists. Yuri was waving a small bouquet of carnations to catch my attention. Going to the hotel in the cab, we had intensive conversation as I gawked at the sights. I stayed overnight at Hotel Berlin, which was very old, but clean and comfortable. I slept as if drugged, but didn't feel refreshed by the time I had to catch my plane the next morning to concert number one. For about 3 days, I felt as if I were under water. I felt as if my first concert were being played in a dream. I played six concerts in all in the following cities: Kishinev (Capital of Muldavia), Odessa (On the Black Sea), Riga (Capital of Latvia), Vilnius (Capital of Lithuania), Gomelj (In Byelorussia), and Leningrad.

Every city has a Philharmonic Hall. Cultural activities are terrific; there are performances every night of the week and often two concerts a day on weekends. The halls are generally old, but clean and elegant, with marvelous acoustics. The audiences at each concert averaged about 600. In Riga, the audience was slightly smaller (about 450), but in Leningrad, the hall was filled to capacity (about 850). The response was about the same in each concert — healthy applause throughout the program, and then at the end, it seemed to escalate to the point where they were clapping in unison, and in some cases, were even stamping their feet. (Talk about an ego-building experience.) In Riga, the audience was not only smaller, but a little less demonstrative. Nonetheless, there were just as many crowding in backstage afterwards as with the other audiences. In Gomelj, there were about 30 young people who came backstage after the concert. They were all music students (about half of them were accordion students), and they had traveled about 90 miles by bus. I took a picture of all of us standing on stage. They asked me many questions about life in Canada, about my accordion, and also requested that I send photostats of the pieces in my Latin group.

The audiences in Leningrad are quite "intellectual" and made up of university professors, teachers, engineers, scientists, etc., as well as the usual concert-going musical crowd. I was told this by the lady who represented the Gosconcert Agency in Leningrad, almost to suggest that I shouldn't be too disappointed if the general response wasn't as enthusiastic as in other places. Also, three top-ranking Russian accordionists (Bayanists) came to meet me before the concert to wish me luck. They were Anatoly Kuznetsov, Sergei Slepokurov (who had won a gold medal at a competition in Paris in 1974), and Alexander Dmitrayev. They called me "colleague." Their sincerity was unmistakable. When they wished me well, I knew it was genuine. I'm glad to say I played what I felt was a fine concert.

I must have met with this intellectual audience's approval because they not only applauded in unison for the last three pieces, but rose to their feet to demand encores. After it was over, the three Bayanists shook my hand vigorously and fairly beamed with enthusiasm and friendship. Alexander Dmitrayev and Sergei Slepokurov and his young wife visited me in my hotel room, and we carried on an interesting conversation through my interpreter

for about an hour and a half.

Alexander Dmitrayev gave me two albums of his own solo work, lavishly autographed with his best wishes. His playing on these records is strong and sensitive, showing the finest musicianship that is second-to-none! There are quite a number of excellent accordionists in the Soviet Union, and part of the reason is that they are able to use the accordion as a major in their universities. Their Bayans are essentially free-bass instruments with button chromatic treble keyboards. Their bass goes down more than a full octave lower than ours. One thing, however, surprised me very much: Their instrument has much less power and projection than a good stradella. Therefore, to my knowledge, Bayanists always use some form of amplification when playing concerts. The stradella on my Tonaveri accordion, on the other hand, has so much tone that I didn't need to use an amplifier in any of my concerts. I found it amusing to see the puzzled looks on so many faces backstage after each concert. Many people were convinced that I'd used some kind of amplification, but that I had managed to keep it mysteriously hidden.

To my amazement, I saw three accordions that had piano treble keyboards in a music store window in Leningrad. I bought some beautiful sheet music in this store for about 25 percent of what it would cost in Canada.

Because it was a working tour, my opportunities for sight-seeing were very limited because we didn't stay in one place very long, and much of my spare time was spent travelling or practicing. However, in several cities, arrangements were made to take me around by car to see the sights. Admittedly, I kept looking for signs of oppression or deep despair on the faces of people on the streets and in stores ***[Editor's Note: This was before the changed conditions in the Soviet Union brought about through Gorbachev's Glosnost and Perestroika]***. But, I couldn't see any evidence of this at all. People seemed somehow less hurried than persons in the West — but quite relaxed and at ease. I could see people walking along the streets — sometimes in groups — chatting, laughing, smoking, carrying valises and dressed much like us. The streets were exceptionally clean in every city (even side streets); it somehow seemed a point of pride. The department stores had window displays which were surprisingly similar to our own, with manikins, fabrics, lots of color, appliances, etc. There aren't as many privately owned cars, nor as many people living in houses; it's mostly apartment dwelling. Part of the reason is that there is just so much population that the first priority is simply to provide shelter in the simplest, fastest way. There isn't time to get fancy just yet. They are behind us in terms of general luxuries also. However, everyone is employed, and there is very little crime. One can walk in safety anywhere at any hour in any city. Every hotel room had a color TV (which was tube not transistor). But, it was very fine-grained and had an extremely sharp picture.

I thought the food was very good, though comically, in just about every restaurant the typical menu would have about 30 items on it, but only 8 or 10 would be available. I found this annoying at first; but, then I noticed how fresh and unprocessed everything tasted and realized the connection between this and the lack of "frozen goods" in the Soviet Union. Cucumber salads were always available, even at breakfast, covered with sour cream having the taste and consistency of an exceptional yogurt. There was an abundance of steaks and chops, chicken, eggs, greens, and fish. And, oh yes, one could always get mineral water in small bottles about the size and shape of beer bottles. These waters came from natural springs and differed slightly in taste from various districts in the country. I became very fond of it, and I have now taken to buying mineral water which is available to us also and is very healthful. The cost of food is less than half what it is in Canada. There are many tourist hotels, buses, and restaurants everywhere that cater to people visiting from other countries. The restaurants have menus written in

French, English, German, as well as Russian, and usually waiters that speak a number of languages. The cost of taxis is about half. The buses and subways cost about 7 cents. The subway system in Moscow is easily the best in the world, and every one of the 128 stations looks like the inside of palaces or art galleries, with marble walls and floors, often having unbelievable chandeliers, tile-mosaic murals, bronze statuary, etc., I brought back a packet of postcards showing about a dozen of these stations, and the friends who looked at them were stunned by their beauty.

At the tour's end, I stayed at the Metropol Hotel in Moscow which was not "old world" but was up to date like our large Sheraton or Hilton hotels. My guide, Anatoly, became ill half-way through my tour and was replaced by Raya, a woman in her mid-40's who had a terrific sense of humor. She had taken on a touring guide job simply because she was bored with being a housewife. (Maybe they are not as different from us as we think.) Both of these guides did everything in their power to make me comfortable and help me in every way. There was no feeling of "watch-dogging" in our relationships at all. Anatoly was a jazz buff, and he listened to the "Voice of America" all the time. He knew more about all the jazz greats than I did. He also loved science fiction and books on UFO's. Raya had just finished tour-guiding the "Pro-Arts Chamber Orchestra" from New York. She told me many funny stories.

My fees for the concerts were paid half in Rubles and half in Canadian money. Since Rubles cannot be taken out of the country, the unspent balance must be turned in at the end of the tour. Only half of my airfare (one direction only) was paid by the Gosconcert Agency. The other half (about $1,000) "ought" to have been paid by the Canada Council; but, it was not. The Canada Council pretends to provide financial assistance to worthy cultural causes, yet they have often allocated funds for causes which are downright obscene. I feel that my tour represented a Canadian cultural "first." Yet, I received no assistance whatever, perhaps because of the political tension which existed between Canada and the USSR.

I traveled for 13 hours on a third-class train to Gomelj. Each compartment had four bunks. It was crowded and stuffy, and the trip seemed endless. But, it did have its humorous side. In the compartment with Raya and me were two men in their mid-30's and another woman of about the same age named "Masha." Masha took a shine to me and kept telling Raya (in small installments in Russian) that she would like to take me home to her farm in Karkov to fatten me up and put some color in my cheeks. As an added inducement, she mentioned that she had 2 goats, a horse, 40 chickens, 2 cows, and a nice farmhouse with a swimming hole. When I asked if there was a dining car on the train, Raya shook her head, but said, "Never mind, something will happen." It sure did! Once Masha became aware that we were hungry, she reached into her duffle bag and produced a small ham, some dark bread, a huge cucumber, onions, sausage, cheese, hard-boiled eggs, and carrots. The two men came up with some napkins, knives and forks, and the inevitable Vodka! We didn't go hungry! I ended up playing some polkas and other light pieces. I swear, the whole train ended up standing in the aisle to listen.

At the Moscow airport, making ready to come home, Raya saw to it that I was checked through with as little delay as possible. She seemed always to be thinking ahead to make it smooth for me (like the time she phoned ahead to secure tickets to the Bolshoi for me to see a performance of Carmen on my last night in Moscow). What she didn't foresee was an overweight luggage charge at the airport. The charge came to 108 Rubles or about $180 in Canadian dollars. She was shocked and let out a gasp as if it were happening to her. She then took the papers back to the weighing counter and carried on an animated conversation with the women in charge. About 5 minutes later, she came back very pleased to announce that they had canceled the excess



LEO AQUINO IN RELAXED POSE BESIDE HIS SOVIET CONCERT PROGRAM POSTER.

baggage charge. Then Raya asked me if I had any souvenirs left in my bag to give to the two girls as a token of thanks. I most certainly agreed, but I had given away most of the souvenirs I had brought with me, except for a few pair of pantyhose. She gave them to the girls who seemed surprised and delighted. In an article that appeared in the leisure section of the *Vancouver Sun* on May 12, 1978, this incident was somehow revised to read as follows: "And, of course, there were the excess baggage charges when he was leaving the country, a problem that magically disappeared when he dug into his luggage and produced a few Canadian trinkets and some pantyhose." The Russians were made to look bad again, even in an instance in which they ought to have been admired for their exceptional courtesy.

In fact, I wonder if there is any other country in the world whose airport officials would be inclined to cancel such a large excess baggage charge as a courtesy to a touring accordionist. Another courtesy that was regularly extended to me along my route was allowing me to board the aircraft ahead of the other passengers by as much as 10 or 15 minutes.

All in all, my short tour left me with the impression that the Russian people with whom I came in contact proved to be warm, friendly, generous people who treated me with exceptional consideration. And, I am grateful that they liked my work as a concert accordionist enough to invite me to do another longer tour in the future.

CONCERT TOUR TO SASKATCHEWAN — 1989

Background. On February 26, 1989, I began a tour of school concerts in Saskatchewan, which had been organized by the Overture Concerts Agency (Vancouver) in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Junior Concert Society. Eight months earlier, I auditioned with Pacific Showcase '88. The audience was made up of representatives from many school districts in the Prairie Provinces.

Tour offers resulting from such auditions are accompanied by an outline including: Suggested time of year, length of tour, number of concerts, and approximate financial details. Acceptance puts the machinery in motion, and within several months, an itinerary magically appears.

After waiting for a short time, I received my itinerary through the mail, and I happily began the necessary preparation for a different type of concert tour — a tour of school concerts to acquaint students in the remote regions of Saskatchewan with the melodious sounds of the accordion.

SASKATCHEWAN TOUR REVISITED

My Prairie tour began like a scene from "Raiders of the Lost Ark." On my last night



LEO AQUINO IN RELAXED POSE BESIDE HIS SOVIET CONCERT PROGRAM POSTER.

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in Vancouver, I played a 4-hour dance job with my 3-piece combo and got to bed at 3 A.M. Then, I was up at 7 A.M. to catch an 11 o'clock flight to Regina. The flight was delayed twice, then canceled. Six hours later, I finally boarded a 5 P.M. flight. In Regina, I set my watch ahead 2 hours and picked up a rental car. I loaded my luggage and accordion into a 3-cylinder Chevy Sprint and set off into a pitch-black night, against a howling snow storm. It was 27 degrees below zero, and I was headed towards the Manitoba border. My first stop, Rocanville, was a distance of 150 miles.

The wind was blowing snow drifts across my path like winding gray snakes. Aside from a couple of trucks, there was no traffic at all. If I had spun off the road or if there had been a whiteout, I would have quickly found myself in a life-threatening situation. These thoughts accompanied me on a drive that, at my cautious speeds, lasted for hours. Fortunately, neither fear materialized.

I arrived at the motel at 3 A.M. This white-knuckle drive left me more exhausted than I can ever remember. I had so little focus that I could hardly think what to do to get to bed. I saw white spots dancing before my eyes, even in my sleep. When I described this traumatic experience to people who lived in these areas, they advised me to always keep some candles in my luggage. If stuck somewhere on those vast prairie spaces, a simple thing like opening the car window a crack and lighting a small candle can prevent one from freezing to death. This is a piece of advice I'll never forget.

At 9:30 A.M. the next morning, I began my first school concert. I was tired, but once I got into the program I felt good. Playing for young people from 6 to 17 or 18 years of age was rewarding, and talking to them was very educational for me too. The classes varied in size from 90 to over 400 students. The program required a lot of thought. It had to be designed to appeal to a wide age spread, keeping in mind the limited attention span of the younger students.

For the same reason, the dialogue must be as interesting as possible and not long-winded. All of the concerts were held in gymnasiums, with primary grades sitting closest to me on the floor. It was quite something to see all these small, inquisitive faces peering up at me. The higher grades sat behind them, either on the floor or in chairs. I was introduced by the principal who told the students where I was from and gave some brief remarks about my background.

I asked my audiences how many were familiar with the accordion. What a jolt it was to find that in most schools, the majority of these prairie school children had never seen an accordion before and knew nothing about it. I promised to show them some interesting things about the accordion later in the program. Then I explained that all the pieces on my program were written originally for piano, violin, or orchestra, and arranged for the accordion by myself or other accordionists. My program included:

Dance of the Comedians, Parade of the Wooden Soldiers, Flight of the Bumble Bee, Bumble Boogie, La Cumparsa, Fiddle Faddle, The Syncopated Clock, Sleigh Ride, Espana Cani, Kitten on the Keys, Hora Staccato, and Hungarian Rhapsody # 2.

Following Bumble Boogie, I talked to the students about the accordion. For example, I mentioned that on the piano, the loudness or softness of a note depends on how hard, or gently, a key is struck. I explained that the accordion doesn't work this way, demonstrating by striking a treble key firmly a few times with no resulting sound until the bellows are in motion. I then explained that this is because the accordion produces its sounds by blowing air through steel reeds. To demonstrate this, I had with me a large model of an accordion reed which I had made out of cardboard. (It fit snugly against the inside back of my accordion case.)



LEO AQUINO



TRIO ANJOLEO (CIRCA 1977)

The reed was a working model, made in every respect like an actual accordion reed. I was able to push the reed through its slot, showing also how the same airstream vibrates the reed and keeps the leather (because it is lighter than steel) out of the reed's way as it vibrates. This segment also included a demonstration of the different sets of reeds in both hands and the ways they are combined by means of registers. I covered the essentials and kept it brief. After almost every concert, I had members of the teaching staff remark that before this demonstration, they had no idea how an accordion worked.

After the LeRoy Anderson pieces, it was time for a second break and some questions. The question period itself was an interesting challenge. Each concert raised nearly the same questions:

How many lessons did you take before you were able to play a song?
How much does an accordion weigh?
How much does an accordion cost?
How old was I when I first started taking lessons? (10)

Now, here comes the inevitable followup question that lets the cat out of the bag: **How long have you been playing the accordion?** Answer. "How good is your arithmetic? I started in 1940." (It usually took 4 or 5 seconds for a ripple of surprise to start.) Forty-nine years! (I know, I know, I'm just as amazed as you are!)

In four of the schools, I was taken by surprise by a brazen little question insisting to know how much money I made. A brilliant answer popped into my mind, which I have adopted as a standard reply: "Between one thousand and two thousand times less than a hockey player!"

During my tour, I covered every corner of the province. For those of you who enjoy pouring over maps, here is a list of towns I visited: Rocanville, Esterhazy, Estevan, Bienfait, Lampman, Fort Qu'Appelle, Punnichy, Melfort, Nipawin, Meadow Lake, Goodsoil, Edan, Saskatoon, Kerrobert, Coleville, Eston, Maple Creek, Vanguard, Swift Current, Gull Lake, and Cabri.

Anyone who tours must be prepared to endure restaurant food, lonely motels, and endless miles of driving. In the Prairies the roads are long, straight, flat, and go on forever! At night, I sometimes dreamed of road surfaces coming up at me. Only three times along my tour did I enjoy some personable company for lunch or dinner. Once I was treated to supper by a most interesting lady who is the Saskatchewan Junior Concert Society Representative.

All hardships aside, these presentations turned out to be a delightful experience to me. It is my fond hope that these concerts may have brought some memorable entertainment to these young students and aroused some curiosity and interest in the accordion.

[This article was suggested by Edwin Davison after reading Leo Aquino's article entitled, "Accordion on the Prairie" appearing in the Summer 89 issue of Accordion World magazine. Then, Eddie Chavez, who has corresponded with Leo for years, recommended combining that article with a previous article of an equally fascinating tour that Leo made to Russia in 1978. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Leo for sharing these experiences. Though born in Vancouver, Leo is equally at home in the United States, having lived for several years (1946-49) in Portland, Oregon where he graduated from Jefferson High School. Indeed, Leo still considers the U.S. to be his second home. After graduating from high school, he moved back to Vancouver where he established an extremely successful career. He has recorded three important cassettes of his musical works (and working on his fourth). Any correspondence or requests for these cassettes may be sent to him at: 1620 Westover Road, N. Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7J1X6]

MY CAREER AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAM OF ACCORDION INSTRUCTION

By Joan Cochran Sommers

Editor's Note: This story by Joan Cochran Sommers is a beautiful addition to this book as it highlights an important segment of the diverse accordion field — the universities that offer college-level music courses with the accordion as an approved instrument. Bill Palmer, formerly an associate professor with the University of Houston, shared elsewhere in this book some of the experiences he and Bill Hughes encountered in establishing and maintaining a comprehensive university program designed for the accordion. Joan Sommers is widely recognized for her exceptional work in establishing a pace-setting, university-level program. The program established at the University of Missouri - Kansas City, Conservatory of Music, is highly respected by music departments across America for its comprehensive program and outstanding graduates. The impact of great professors like Palmer, Hughes, Herold, Sommers, Davine, Schmidt, and others will have a lasting influence on the advancement of the accordion. The students in such programs whose lives have been influenced by such talented instructors will indeed make many outstanding achievements during their own accordion careers as musicians, composers, conductors, etc. The sacrifices these professors have made and are making today in educating future generations in the fine arts should be appreciated by all serious lovers of the accordion. Joan, we salute you! Thank you for taking time to tell us about your professional career.

.....

I was born Joan Pace to my parents, John and Madeline Pace, who supported and encouraged my love for the accordion from age 9 on. I was introduced to the accordion at a very early age, but in a rather unconventional way. I didn't hear someone play the accordion or have a sudden inspirational or emotional experience that influenced me to take up the accordion. No, I was *chosen* to play the accordion. How? By whom? Well, you might say I was one of those ***fortunate*** persons chosen by a door-to-door salesman who had come to my parents' door to find students. In those days, it wasn't an uncommon technique for salesmen to knock on doors seeking prospective accordion students. In fact, the salesmen were so selective that they chose both my brother and me to take lessons. But, we loved it. I liked it enough to stay with the accordion for my life's work.

I remember also the early tutelage of Cecil Cochran, whom I married after graduating from school. Mr. Cochran was a fine musician, one who played all the brass instruments and understood a great many others. He also played the piano and the accordion enough to teach a great many students. He instilled values and understanding in his students, some of which were the understanding of the acts of being musical, the necessity to listen not only to oneself but to all others, the art of breathing like a singer or a wind player, and the value of feeling the "**pulse** as well as the **beats**." He contributed much to the development of the accordion.

Mr. Cochran died 13 years after our marriage. I then remarried, after being a widow for 4 years, to another wonderful musician — a fine tenor, whose specialty is the French Art Song, but who knows every line in every opera. He speaks seven languages. We have one child, a daughter (Cathy), who is now in college majoring in advertising and journalism. She plays chromatic C system accordion very well, but does not wish to become a professional musician.

I've been lucky to do a tremendous amount of traveling with my accordion. I've met some of the most brilliant and fascinating people in all parts of the world, and I've seen many of the most spectacular sights in the world — all because of the accordion.

The profession of teaching has been



JOAN COCHRAN SOMMERS

equally good to me. I have had some extremely talented students, many of whom have gone into music and its related fields and made very successful careers. Some of them made wonderful names for themselves during their student days as contestants in both the U.S.A. and world competitions. Students have come from the states of New Mexico, Rhode Island, Florida, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, New York, New Hamshire, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Virginia, Texas, Connecticut, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan as well as the countries of Canada, Finland, Poland, The Peoples' Republic of China, Norway, and New Zealand.

Today, I serve as an Associate Professor of Music at the University of Missouri - Kansas City (UMKC) where I also serve as the Assistant Dean for Continuing Education in the Conservatory of Music. I am happy to say that I teach the accordion as a fully accredited instrument, and this accreditation has been in existence since 1961. Of interest to potential students, there are many scholarships available for accordion students at UMKC. It is possible for students to earn not only the Baccalaureate, but also, the Masters and the Doctorate degrees, using the accordion as the performing instrument. At this point in time, however, I would not recommend that students earn their graduate degrees in "Performance" because it is important that they make themselves valuable by earning those degrees in an area such as Theory, History and Literature, Composition, Conducting, or even non-music areas, such as Law in order to ensure that they can earn a living. I mention law specifically because some law schools around the country have found that musicians are good law students. Many musicians earn their first degree in "Performance," and then branch out into other areas. This is not unusual or uncommon; it is quite wise, I believe.

The University of Missouri - Kansas City is a well-respected university with the Conservatory of Music as one of its schools. Its 6-year medical program and its law school have garnered national recognition. The music program is extensive, offering both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Accordion students are treated the same way as any other musicians! They take the usual music courses such as Music Theory, Music History and Literature, Ear Training, Private Lessons in Accordion Performance, Accordion Orchestra, Accordion Chamber Music, Accordion Pedagogy, Accordion Literature, and Accordion Arranging, as well as the other required university courses. Since it is a Conservatory (but within the University), students must take far more than the music courses offered in a conservatory. One of the most important things accordionists must learn is to work with other musicians! Often, they learn to work as soloists, but to introduce the accordion to as large an audience as possible, it is imperative to integrate the accordion with other serious musical endeavors. That is why our senior recitals often include at least one chamber music selection with the accordion being featured with any number of instruments (strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion). One of the most satisfying combination for accordion is with choirs! In my opinion, the accordion is least successful with the piano because of the problems of intonation. Rarely is it possible to find an accordion and a piano exactly in tune, whereas all other combinations can tune to the accordion.

The Accordion Teachers' Guild, International also holds an important place in my priorities. I am currently beginning a 2-year term as President of this esteemed organization, a post I have held previously during the years 1977-80. In August, 1990, the Accordion Teachers' Guild (ATG) National and International Competitions will be held in Kansas City, Missouri, and as president I will serve as the General Chairperson of this competition. I also served as the General Chairperson of the Coupe Mondiale held in Kansas City in 1981. I would like to recognize some of my students who went on to become a contest winner at the various competitions: Lisa Vasta (ATG-Coupe

Mondiale), Monica Slomski (ATG-Coupe Mondiale 3rd), Don Severs (AAA-Coupe Mondiale), Jeff Lisenby (ATG-Coupe Mondiale 5th), Robert Sattler (ATG-Coupe Mondiale), Jeff Lisenby (ATG-Coupe Mondiale), Karen Fremar (AAA-Coupe Mondiale 3rd), Pam Barker (ATG-Coupe Mondiale 2nd), Karen Fremar (AAA-Coupe Mondiale Entertainment 1st), and numerous other winners in state and regional competitions.

Some of my time is currently spent as Chairperson of the Music Committee of the Confederation Internationale des Accordeonistes and a member of the Executive Board. This prestigious body is an umbrella organization for all of the national accordion organizations and is affiliated with other international music organizations. It was founded in Paris in 1935, and subsequently reconstituted in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1948. The annual world competition known as the Coupe Mondiale is held under its auspices. The Music Committee is responsible for the musical aspects of the organization, but as in any democratic organization, it does not always have all of its suggestions approved.

It might be interesting to some to know how players are selected to compete at the annual Coupe Mondiale and what the Confederation seeks to promote. Principally, its primary aim is to elevate the status of the accordion in the world of music. The Confederation, through its World Accordion Festival and Coupe Mondiale, has increasingly been successful in establishing continually rising standards of performance with the instrument. With the introduction of the Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals in 1961, the Confederation hoped to dispel the misconception of seeking "the best player in the world." Also, the organization has increasingly recognized the importance of securing the interest of the younger generation through the inauguration of a special international competition for Juniors.

In other areas, I have served as the American adjudicator/ delegate to the CIA World Congresses held in Auckland, New Zealand; Cannes, France; Lodz, Poland; Eindhoven and Arnhem, The Netherlands; Stockholm, Sweden; Paris, France; Bialystok, Poland; and Folkestone, England. In 1980, I was awarded a research grant to attend the Vogtland Music Days in Klingenthal, East Germany, where I made a study of the instruments (bayans) and music used by the competitors of the U.S.S.R. I was also awarded several teaching enhancement awards at UMKC so I could travel and do research or whatever else I thought would help enhance my own teaching capabilities. It was indeed an honor to receive these awards.

In 1988, I was invited by the All-China Accordion Teachers' Association to teach, rehearse orchestras, and give master classes, lecture, and perform both as soloist and in chamber music for accordion and other musical instruments. This drew over 250 of the leading accordionists from throughout China. Previously, I have taught in Norway and Poland. All of these trips hold many memorable experiences for me, and I hope that I have helped, in some small way, the musicians and students in those countries. I know they helped me!

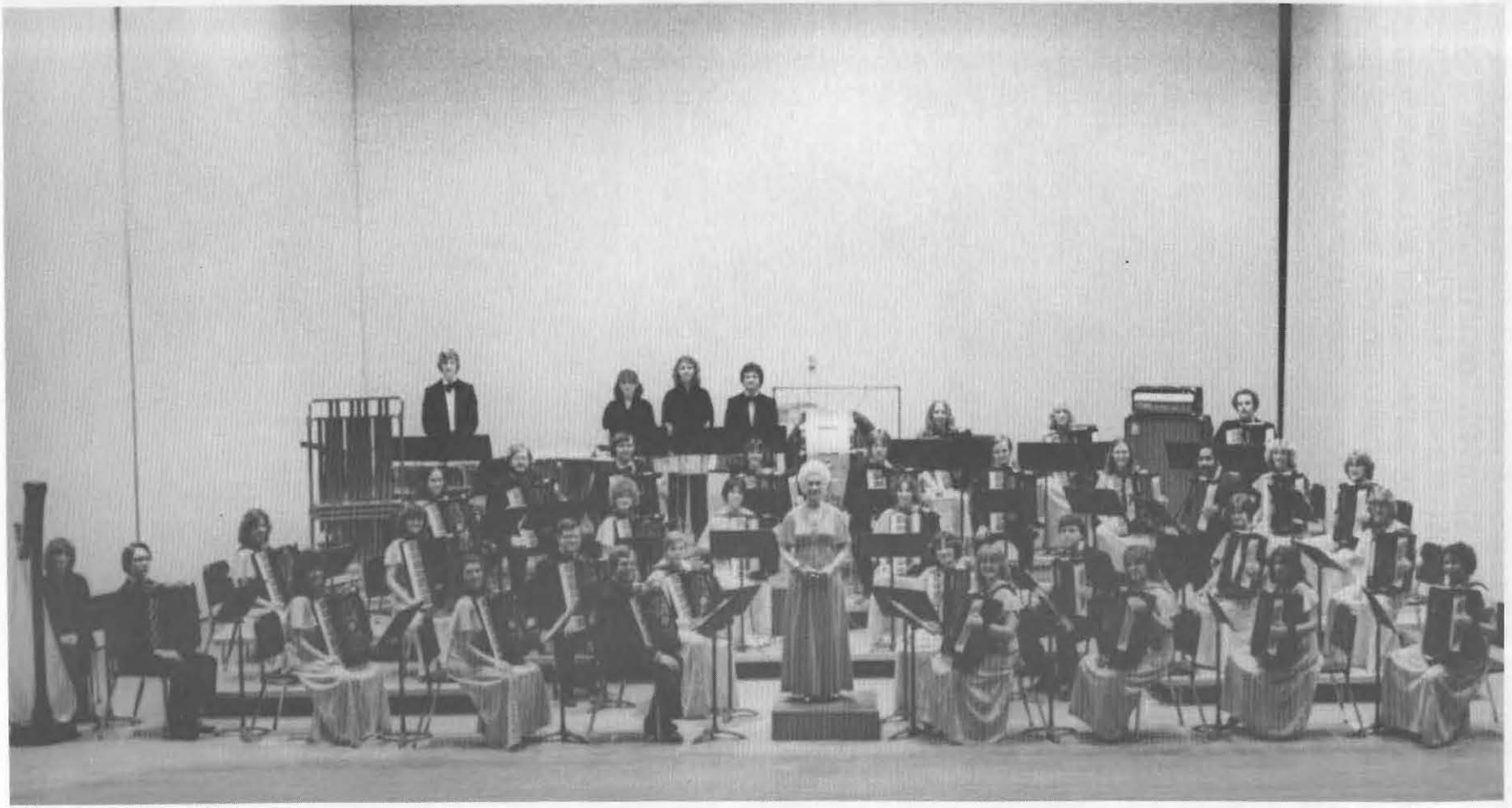
The University of Missouri - Kansas City is well known for its accordion orchestra. Over the years, the UMKC Accordion Orchestra has toured Germany, Switzerland, Austria, England, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, and the Soviet Union giving concerts. For several years, the Accordionaires, a 15-member group performing popular music, toured under my direction in several overseas military commands, including the Northeast Command (Greenland, Newfoundland, Labrador), the Pacific Command (Guam, Japan, Okinawa, Philippines, Korea), and the European Command (West Germany, Berlin). These tours were sponsored by the Department of Defense, National Music Council, and United Service Organizations. All of the group's expenses were fully paid with no expense to UMKC, and each member received a per diem for each day of the tour. At each base, we performed a 70-minute show with no intermission. I played along in the group since it was never popular to have directors of such groups. We were very wholesome-looking people who had a great



LARGE GATHERING OF FAMOUS ACCORDIONISTS AT COMMEMORATIVE DINNE THOSE PRESENT ARE ANTHONY GALLA-RINI, JOE BIVIANO, FRANK GAVIANI, C MOLINARO, PIETRO DEIRO, JR., THERESA COSTELLO, JOAN COCHRAN, CECI MARTIGNONE, DR. ALFRED MAYER, DOM TRIMARKIE, JIMMY BLACK. FOREIGN DOGLIO (VENEZUELA), AND GUS MAURO AND HELEN MILNE (CANADA). THIS OTHERS PICTURED IN THIS PRICELESS PHOTO. (Photo Courtesy of Joan Cochran S



R IN NEW YORK CITY WITH MANY FOREIGN GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE. AMONG ARMEN CARROZZA, MERVIN CONN, JULIO GIULIETTI, DANIEL DESIDERIO, RUDY L COCHRAN, CHARLES CAMILLERI, GRACE OWEN, HUGO HERRMANN, MILLIE GUESTS: ORESTE ANZAGHI (MILANO), CHARLES DAMAELE (BELGIUM), DOMINGO PHOTOGRAPH WILL BE A CHALLENGE TO THOSE WHO WISH TO IDENTIFY THE ommers)



THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - KANSAS CITY ACCORDION ORCHESTRA
Directed by Joan Cochran Sommers, April - 1979

pride in representing the accordion and UMKC, and the audience loved us. We played both popular and serious music, and we had very full-sounding arrangements played by good musicians, each a soloist in his own right. We made a point of sharing our stateside talk with everyone for whom we played. We played both NCO and Officers' Clubs during our tours, as well as every conceivable spot on a base, on ship decks, at outposts where we had to be taken in by helicopter, in hospitals, and over radio and T.V. Sometimes, we also gave shows for the local population. These tours provided one of the most valuable experiences my students and I have ever had; I was very proud of my students' professionalism. I'm extremely proud of the UMKC Accordion Orchestra as it has released several best-selling records, including the best of original accordion music, as well as outstanding examples of arrangements for the orchestra alone and with choral groups.

I do not believe there have been other universities offering the wide range of accordion subjects such as UMKC has, and this has been one of the greatest strengths of our program and its graduates. Another plus has been the opportunity for accordionists to become important in the musical life of the university, since all classes, including every accordion offering, have always been held on campus in the Conservatory. It is good for the accordionists, but it is also a subtle way of indoctrinating other musicians in the musical value of the accordion.

[Editor's Note: The following summary further highlights the accomplishments and major works of Joan Cochran Sommers.]

[CAREER HIGHLIGHTS]

PUBLISHED ARRANGEMENTS FOR ACCORDION SOLO

Mozart: Fantasia K397
Soler: Sonata No. 84
Scarlatti: Sonata No. 56
Beethoven: Six Variations on a Theme by Paisiello

RECORDINGS ISSUED

55 Accordions in Concert — Conducted by Joan Cochran
The Accordion Orchestra of the University of Missouri - Kansas City
The University of Missouri - Kansas City Accordion Orchestra
An American Family Christmas — Choirs and Ensembles of the Conservatory

ACCORDION ORCHESTRA ARRANGEMENTS

(Manuscript not published, but performed on public concerts and broadcast on National Public Radio, KCUR-FM and affiliates.)

Mendelssohn: Hebrides Overture, Op. 26
Boellman: Toccata from Suite Gothique, Op. 25
Anderson: Serenata
Milhaud: Scaramouche for Alto Saxophone & Orchestra
Rimsky-Korsakov: Capriccio Espagnol (last 3 movements)
Joplin: The Easy Winners, Ragtime Dance, Maple Leaf Rag
Herbert: March of the Toys
Gounod: The Jewel Song (soprano-orchestra)
Kern: Medley from "Show Boat"
Mendelson: Christmas Collage
Berlioz: Roman Carnival Overture
Enesco: Romanian Rhapsody No. 1
Rimsky-Korsakov: Festival at Baghdad from "Scheherazade"
J.S. Bach: Fantasia and Fugue No. 537
Bartok: Two Romanian Dances
Dvorak: Slavonic Dance No. 10
Delibes: Danse des Heures, from "Coppelia"
Verdi: Sempre Libera (soprano-orchestra)
Various: Sentimental Journey, 40's medley
Gershwin: Gershwin Medley
Rodgers and Hammerstein: A Portrait (Medley)
Grieg: Holberg's Suite
Zolotariew: Rondo Capriccioso
Liadov: The Musical Snuff Box

RESEARCH

An Analysis of Coupe Mondiale Scores (Confederation International des Accordeonistes (CIA) (1985) Paris, France
Beginner's Accordion Method Books - I and II (Co-author) Accordion Institute of America (1952)
Music Performed in Competitions Coupe Mondiale 1955, 1959, 1969, 1974-1985 Junior Tape Competition 1976-1985 (CIA) Bialystok, Poland

Accordion Activities in the United States (CIA) (1987) Arnhem, The Netherlands

Arrangements for accordion solo published by Deffner Publications

Designer: Left-hand switch system, Titano Accordion Co.

Co-Author: First widely used full chord method books

Formulated: Courses of study for students enrolled in the following accordion classes: Therapy/Music Education, Accordion Techniques, Accordion Orchestra Arranging, Accordion Literature, and Accordion Pedagogy

PERFORMANCE BACKGROUND

Soloist - Chicago, Illinois, ATG (July 1987)

Soloist - Shanghai, Peoples Republic of China (July 1988)

Soloist - World premiere performance of "Concerto for Accordion" (Stewart), Town Hall, New York (1959)

Soloist with the Kansas City Civic Orchestra in "Rubaiyat"

Soloist with UMKC String Orchestra in CONCERTO (1975) (Surdin)

Soloist with Mid-America Accordion Orchestra in CONCERTO (1959) (Stewart) in Town Hall, New York

Solo performances at Mid-west accordion festivals

U.S. Solo Champion (1955) Coupe Mondiale, Brighton, England

U.S. Solo Champion (1956) Coupe Mondiale, Biel, Switzerland

Community performances in Cedar Rapids and Des Moines, IA, Kansas City, MO, and Greater Kansas City Area

World premiere performance in Carnegie Hall of "Suite for Accordion" (1959) (Horhaness)

World premiere performance in Kansas City of "Psychiatry for Accordion and String Quartet" (1963) (R. R. Bennett)

Orchestra member: AAA-US Orchestra, Washington D.C. (1976)

Orchestra member: AAA-US Orchestra, New York (1978)

Concertmaster: ATG-US Orchestra, St. Louis (1979)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Associate Diploma - Accordion Institute of America in conjunction with the British College of Accordionists, Trinity College, London, England

Licentiate Diploma - Accordion Institute of America in conjunction with British College of Accordionists, Trinity College, London, England

High School Diploma - William Chrisman H.S. (Missouri)

Private study - Cecil Cochran, Anthony Galla-Rini, Willard Palmer, Leo Scheer

Master classes - Anthony Galla-Rini, Willard Palmer, Bill Hughes, Charles Magnante, Joe Biviano, Charles Nunzio, Friedrich Lips, Morgens Ellegaard

Private and class study in conducting: Hans Schwieger and Leo Scheer

Private and class study in music theory: Anthony Galla-Rini

Organ coaching: Cammie Johnston

PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS & AWARDS

Received Music Award From Sigma Alpha Iota, International Professional Fraternity for Women in Music	1991
Presented an Invited Paper in Mietne, Poland on "The Accordion in the United States: Past Present and Future"	1991
U.S. Adjudicator at First International Competition for Bayan and Accordion — Moscow, USSR	1990
Chairperson, ATG 50th Anniversary Activities and International Competitions for Classical and Entertainment Accordion	1990
Confederation Internationale des Accordeonistes	
U.S. Delegate - Arnhem, The Netherlands	1987
U.S. Delegate - Bialystok, Poland	1986
U.S. Delegate/Adjudicator - Paris, France	1985
U.S. Delegate - Folkestone, England	1984
U.S. Delegate - Hamburg, Germany	1982
U.S. Delegate - Kansas City, U.S.A.	1981
U.S. Delegate/Adjudicator - Auckland, New Zealand	1980
U.S. Delegate - Cannes, France	1979
U.S. Delegate/Adjudicator - Lodz, Poland	1978
U.S. Delegate - Stockholm, Sweden	1974
Chairman, International Music Committee	1978-90
Member, International Music Committee	1977-78

[The final copy of this article has been reviewed for accuracy by Joan Cochran Sommers, and it is published with her kind permission and cooperation. Personal correspondence to Ms Sommers or requests for additional information about the music programs offered at the UMKC Conservatory of Music should be addressed to her at University of Missouri - Kansas City, Center for the Performing Arts, 4949 Cherry, Kansas City, MO 64110-2499.]



Photo Credit: Bastogne Photography

AMERICAN ACCORDIONISTS' ASSOCIATION JUDGES AT A FESTIVAL IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS SOMETIME DURING THE 1950's. PERSONS IDENTIFIED THUS FAR ARE LISTED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT BY NUMBER AND ROW. UNLISTED PERSONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN IDENTIFIED. FRONT ROW: (2) LOUIS IORIO (3) CHARLES MAGNANTE (4) RUDY MOLINARO (5) JOE BIVIANO (8) JOAN COCHRAN (9) BILLYE JUNE EVANS AND (11) THERESA COSTELLO; MIDDLE ROW: (1) CLIFF SCHOLL (3) TONY DANNON (6) ANTHONY GALLA-RINI (7) FRANK GAVIANI (9) LOUIS RONCHETTO; TOP ROW: NONE IDENTIFIED THUS FAR. IF YOU CAN IDENTIFY ANYONE ELSE, PLEASE CONTACT THE PUBLISHER SO THEIR NAME CAN BE INCLUDED IN THE NEXT EDITION. (Photo Courtesy of Joan Cochran Sommers)

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ABOUT MY CAREER WITH THE ACCORDION

By Robert Davine

Editor's Note:** I am delighted to include a new article in this revised edition of The Golden Age of the Accordion. Although the authors were very much aware of the tremendous impact Robert Davine has made to the advancement of the accordion, we were not able to make the necessary arrangements to obtain his story in time to meet the deadline for the previous edition of this book. We are thankful that he has taken time to share his life story in this revised edition. Acclaimed as a true virtuoso of the concert accordion, Robert Davine is one of the few gifted musicians whose artistry releases the exciting range of tone and color intrinsic in the character of this unique instrument. An artist with an international reputation as a distinguished soloist, chamber musician, and teacher, Robert Davine is professor of accordion and music theory at the Lamont School of Music, University of Denver. He has been in this position since 1954 and has trained many talented music students who have gone on to establish their own successful musical careers in the arts at colleges and universities across the country. He holds degrees from Northwestern University and studied with Andrew Rizzo, Joseph Biviano, John Kirtland, Anthony Pennetti, and Joseph Mann. Mr. Davine has performed with the Denver Symphony Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Aspen Festival Chamber Players, the Mantovani Orchestra of London, the Paganini String Quartet, the Norwegian Broadcasting Company, Oslo, and the Flagstaff Musical Festival Orchestra. For many years he was staff accordionist for the National Broadcasting Company. In 1984 he was invited by the Ministry of Culture, People's Republic of China, to perform and give master classes. He was the first American accordionist invited by that country. His artistry has inspired new compositions by composers Normand Lockwood, Cecil Effinger, Max DiJulio, Jean Berger, Wendel Diebel, and Robert Yekovich. He records for the Crystal Record Company. In addition to teaching and playing, Mr. Davine is currently writing a book on the history of the accordion and its literature. With his personal knowledge and skills as an educator, researcher, and musician and theorist of distinction, his publication will undoubtedly cover many subjects that have not been previously published. Thank you very much, Robert, for this indepth synopsis of your life and these vivid recollections about the accordion during your distinguished career.

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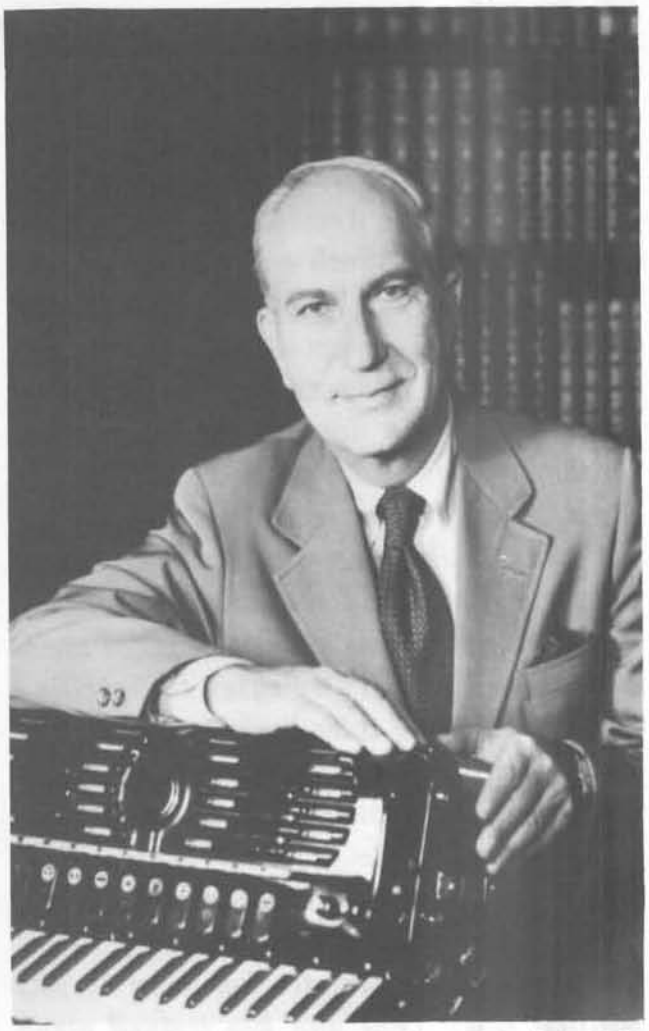
Accordion: evocative, charming, powerful, soulful. These and many more adjectives are appropriate when describing emotions generated by this versatile instrument. Structurally, the accordion is a marvel of efficiency in a compact form. Musically, it has a vast palette of tone colors and a flexibility that make it an excellent ensemble and solo instrument.

From my first introduction to this unique instrument at age nine, I have always been captivated with the sound and musical capabilities inherent in its construction. I was drawn to the accordion as a result of attending a dance recital with tango artists Volaz and Yolanda with Gerald Shelton playing the accordion. This highly charged and emotional music performed on the accordion convinced me to learn this instrument. My first teacher was Joseph Mann, who was encouraging and demanding. I found Mr. Mann to be a wonderful person who gave me the incentive to practice. His advice about how to practice in an organized fashion has remained with me to this day. During the time until high school, I participated in every school program, recital and group performance available to me. During high school there was more opportunity to play in almost every genre: solos, bands, pit bands, and jazz combos. Needless to say, this was wonderful experience and exposure for the accordion.



ROBERT DAVINE PERFORMING AT THE NATIONAL BROADCASTING CO. (1953)



ROBERT DAVINE IN HIS STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER (1991)



THE LAMONT ACCORDION QUARTET (1961) — PERFORMED CONCERTS AT COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES THROUGHOUT COLORADO. (L-R) ROBERT ROMITTI, ROBERT DAVINE, RAYMOND RAMSAY (BASS), WILLIAM KAPLAN, AND EDWARD MALESICH (IN FRONT).

As I experienced performances by great artists on the piano and various orchestral instruments, the need and desire for serious study on the accordion became apparent and a reality. By the time I had completed high school, the necessity of playing with other instruments became mandatory if I wanted to perform professionally. Because of the encouragement and musical demands of my mother, an outstanding musician and pianist, adapting to various styles of music soon became my prime objective. As a result, understanding the music itself became the first priority; then the accordion was simply a medium of expression for the music.

After acceptance to Northwestern University School of Music as a theory major, I continued accordion study with Andrew (Andy) Rizzo in Chicago. He was a meticulous musician in every respect: technique, phrasing, and the importance of bellows control. He often told me: "Remember, no matter how simplistic this sounds, the control of the bellows is the heart of the accordion." Studying with Mr. Rizzo opened many musical doors — especially hearing outstanding performers such as Mort Herold, Art Van Damme, Vincent Geraci, Arthur Metzler, all students of Andy Rizzo. Another of my teachers, Joe Biviano, was a very unique teacher in that he was able to explain just how important reading from non-accordion music can be in an ensemble. Since he was playing in the New York studios when I was studying with him, explaining problems of registration was, at that time, a completely new experience for me. In essence, I grew to respect the accordion more and more after working with Joe Biviano.

Absorbing musical styles through actual performance can be a great learning experience. One such memorable experience was working with the famed cellist, Ennio Bolognini at Orchestra Hall in Chicago. I soon learned that nuance, phrasing and articulation are the mainstays in all of music, and of absolute importance when playing in an ensemble setting.

After earning the B. Mus. and M. Mus. degrees at Northwestern, I accepted a position as a part-time instructor of accordion and theory at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in 1951. During this time, I performed various engagements, including soloist with the Golden Gate Concert Band and at the CBS studios in San Francisco.

In 1952, I joined the music staff at NBC in Denver as a member of an eight-piece ensemble playing ten to twelve broadcasts per week, both locally and coast to coast. In the days of radio broadcasting, musicians were required to sight-read a wide variety of music on short notice. The ability to analyze chord structures and contrapuntal textures saved me hours of time, since there were few parts actually written for the accordion. Working in radio as an accordionist was an enormous challenge — technically and musically. As many accordionists know, Charles Magnante was on the "cutting edge" of studio work, and I listened to him at every opportunity. I met him in New York and later in Denver, and we remained friends until his death. His encouraging words were: "Get an education."

In 1954, while still a staff member at NBC, I was invited to initiate a degree program in accordion at the University of Denver, an accredited, independent coeducational institution founded in 1864. The Lamont School of Music was established as part of the University in 1923. From that time to the present, the objective has been to give students high quality instruction in all disciplines of music as well as a liberal arts experience. Over the years, the Lamont School has merited a national reputation for musical excellence in performance, education and research. Our select student body of undergraduate and graduate students from the United States and abroad bring diverse experiences, traditions and backgrounds to enhance our close-knit atmosphere of commitment and growth. At present, enrollment is about 6,500 students, of whom 3,000 are undergraduates. The University of Denver seeks in prospective students serious educational aims and high standards of scholarship and personal

character. The Committee on Admission selects students whose backgrounds show that enrollment at the University of Denver will be mutually rewarding.

The result of any program is the accomplishment of its objective: to train and develop talented people as skilled, versatile musicians and accordionists. During my years at the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music, I have had the greatest pleasure in accomplishing all the things that a professor should be doing for his students: training, guiding, motivating, supporting, correcting, and confidence-building. The present program has remained essentially the same since I established it in 1954. The accordion has been an integral part of the performance curriculum, and over the years this program has drawn students from 26 states and 6 foreign countries, including the People's Republic of China, India, Norway, Sweden, Holland, and Italy. The following degrees are offered with a major in accordion: B.Mus., B.Mus. Ed., B.A., and M.A. The program in accordion does not include an accordion band, but rather develops small ensembles of accordions and ensembles of various instruments, including the accordion.

The following is a brief list (arranged alphabetically) of some of the graduates who have earned the M.A. degree at the University of Denver and their present academic degrees and professional positions:

Daniel Binder, (Ph.D., Ball State University), accordionist, historian, Chairman of Music Department, Lewis College, Illinois.

Severo Garcia, accordionist/theorist, Chairman, Music Department, Porterville College, Porterville, California.

David Lindsey (Ph.D., North Texas State University), accordionist/theorist, staff member at North Texas State University, performer with the Dallas Symphony.

Ru Yin Liu (Ph.D., Columbia University), accordionist/historian, private teacher and researcher, Ottawa, Canada.

William Popp, solo accordionist and arranger/composer, United States Air Force Strings, Washington, D.C.

Robert Yekovich (Ph.D., Columbia University), Dean, North Carolina School of the Arts, University of North Carolina.

Experience plays an important role in performing and teaching. The following are some reviewed recitals and concerts which I have given over the years:

Ennio Bolognini Concert Ensemble, Orchestra Hall, Chicago, Illinois (1952).

Aspen Music Festival Chamber Ensemble, Aspen, Colorado (1988).

Soloist: Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1986); Denver Symphony Orchestra, Denver, Colorado (1952, '56, '65, '81, and '85); Festival Orchestra, Flagstaff, Arizona (1986).

Solo Recitals: Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico (1979); LaSalle College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1982); Loretto Heights College, Denver, Colorado (1979, '80); Norwegian Broadcasting, Oslo, Norway (1975); Spokane Festival of the Arts, Spokane, Washington (1956, '75, '82); *S.S. Queen Elizabeth II* (Cunard Line) (1975).

Member: Mantovani Orchestra (1954); Paganini String Quartet (1952); Los Angeles Lyric Opera Orchestra, performing in Denver, Colorado (1979).

Artist in Residence: City of El Paso, Texas. A five-day residency which included eight concerts for colleges, schools, and the general public (1986).

International Invitation: Performances and master classes by invitation from the Ministry of Culture and the Chinese Musicians' Association (1984) — the first

accordionist invited by this organization in Beijing, China.

Concert Performance: Concerts of Russian Music, Denver Museum of Natural History (1989).

I am grateful to a number of fine composers who have written outstanding musical compositions for the accordion. My experiences with composers writing for me has been fulfilling and interesting — interesting because each composer views the accordion from a different perspective. Normand Lockwood exploited superimposed chords and interesting registrations, Cecil Effinger gave great importance to lyricism and harmonic movement in contrapuntal fashion, Wendel Diebel applies impressionistic devices (always sensitive to blending with other instruments), Ted Zarlengo uses the accordion as a woodwind section, Max DiJulio has the concept of the accordion using full-bodied chords with a jazz influence, and Robert Yekovich employs complex but highly effective rhythmic figurations coupled with the accordion's ability to accent passages in a very percussive way.

COMPOSER — COMPOSITION

Normand Lockwood — Sonata Fantasia for Solo Accordion, Suite for Accordion, Clarinet and Bassoon, Mosaic for Accordion and Flute

Cecil Effinger — Nocturne for Solo Accordion

Ted Zarlengo — Suite for Accordion, Piano and CelloWendel Diebel — Concerto for Flute, Accordion and Strings

Robert Yekovich — Concertina for Accordion, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon

Max DiJulio — Three Waltzes for Solo Accordion

James Faulconer — Sonata for Solo Accordion

Duane Hoeller — Music for Accordion and Woodwind Quintet

Philip Werner — Rhapsody for Accordion and Orchestra

CONDUCTORS WITH WHOM I HAVE PERFORMED

Fred Hoeppner, Denver Symphony Orchestra
Saul Caston, Denver Symphony Orchestra
Vladimir Golschmann,
Denver Symphony Orchestra
Bruce Hangen, Denver Symphony Orchestra
Irwin Hoffman,
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and
Flagstaff Musical Festival Orchestra
Daniel Welscher,
Aspen Music Festival Orchestra
Montovani, Montovani Recording Orchestra
Edward Rogers,
National Broadcasting Orchestra (Denver)
Joseph Gallicio,
National Broadcasting Orchestra (Chicago)
Rolf Talmi, Israel Philharmonic

RECORDINGS

Premier Record Co., Denver, Colorado: An album of solo and ensemble works.

Crystal Record Co., Los Angeles: An album of chamber music with strings and solo works written for the accordion. Compositions by Diamond, Effinger, Lockwood, Pino, Lang, Seiber, Volpi, and Gart.

RESEARCH

The History and Development of Free Reed Instruments

Music Written for the Concertina as a Virtuoso Instrument, 1809-1890, London, England. Composers include Bernhard Molique, George MacFarren, Edward Silas and Gulio Rigondi. Research was carried out at the following: British Library, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Bodleian Library, Oxford University; and University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland.

PUBLISHED ARTICLES

The Interrelationship Between the Music of India and Twentieth Century Western Music. Ars Musica of Denver, University of Denver Press, 1988.

The Accordion as a Chamber Instrument. *Accord* magazine, Ernest Deffner Publications, New York, 1978.

HONORS

Lamont School of Music, University of Denver, presented the following recognition:

FACULTY MEMBER OF DISTINCTION: FOR INITIATING AND DEVELOPING A UNIQUE PROGRAM IN ACCORDION STUDY WHICH IS NOW A VIABLE PART OF THE CURRICULUM.

Northwestern University Alumni Honors Concert. For Artistry in performance.

INSTRUCTORS WITH WHOM I HAVE STUDIED AND AREA OF MUSIC STUDY

Accordion: Anthony Pennetti, Joseph Biviano, Andrew Rizzo, Joseph Mann, John Serry, and Eugene Ettore

Music Theory: John Kirtland and Anthony Donato

Music Composition: Robert Delaney and Philip Werner

Chamber Music: Charles Foidart

In summary, the challenge of accordion performance presents the problem of constructively applying the basic principles of musicality: articulation, phrasing, dynamics, and stylistic features of a particular composer. Through the function of these nuances and concepts, the performer will come to appreciate what is meant by "the art of musical expression." The accordion does have enormous capabilities of expression, and it is the responsibility of serious performers to exploit these capabilities in an artistic and tasteful manner.

[The final copy of this article has been reviewed for accuracy by Robert Davine, and it is published with his kind permission. Personal correspondence to Professor Davine or requests for information about the music curriculum and programs offered at the Lamont School of Music should be addressed to him at the University of Denver, Lamont School of Music, 7111 Montview Blvd, Denver, CO 80220.]

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY ACCORDION NOTES

By Sylvia Prior

Editor's Note: ***In any matter in which the truest account of an event is desired, it is important to find an eyewitness to the event. Sylvia Prior is such an eye witness to history! Her account of early accordion history in Southern California is an important addition to this book. She has known so many of the great accordionists from the "Golden Age" of the accordion. As she vividly describes the persons and events, it seems as if we are there. Sylvia enjoyed close friendships with many accordion artists and teachers through her father's accordion school and music publishing house. She has been associated with the accordion during her entire life, so she understands the setting in which events were taking place. We are fortunate to include her memories of those wonderful days. Today, Sylvia stays incredibly busy in her many activities: The Sylvia Prior Music Studio, Prior Music Publications, West Coast representative for the Giulietti accordion line, jobbing accordion music to dealers and studio operators, and fund raiser and volunteer worker for the Los Angeles-based Accordion Federation of North America (AFNA). Thank you, Sylvia, for these recollections of early twentieth century accordion history.***

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To write on any subject, it is necessary to have a subject or a person around which to build the story. In this instance, I have both a subject, the accordion, and a person, my father, Sylvester (Syl) Prior. My father's life (December 1894 - March 1955) spanned many important years in the history of the accordion, and it is against this backdrop that I shall relate some of the events and encounters I have had growing up with the accordion business. I begin by saying that my own life has totally revolved around the accordion since birth. Being born in a hospital was expensive even in those days, so my father was faced with earning the $150 needed to cover my mother's hospital and doctor bills by sidelining in a silent film.

Father was born in the "Little Italy" section of New York City to immigrant parents. In 1900 his parents, Antonio and Maria (Damiano) Priore, migrated to Los Angeles with their two sons and three daughters. One of Antonio Priore's first actions was to Americanize his name from Priore to Prior.

Of primary importance to Antonio was obtaining a musical education for his children. So, Antonio retained the very best available instructors for weekly music lessons. Since the two youngest children, Sylvester and Josephine, showed the most serious interest and talent, they were the first to receive musical instruction. The untimely loss of Antonio (1912) made drastic changes in the family's life style, but Sylvester and Josephine were kept busy in their musical education, with Sylvester branching into the accordion field rather than seeking a formal education. At the time he was using a Soprani bass-system accordion, and he quickly became an accomplished accordionist, aided by his excellent piano background.

In 1914 Pietro Deiro was appearing on stage at the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles, and Carmine Prior, the eldest son and now patriarch of the family, invited Deiro to their home to listen to my father, Syl. Pietro graciously accepted the invitation and was amazed at the accomplishments of this young man. After listening intently and offering some words of advice and encouragement, Pietro insisted that Carmine should order a stradella bass system accordion for Syl from the well-known Guerrini factory in San Francisco.

From this early introduction to Pietro Deiro, Syl began his career from motion pictures to one of the foremost accordion teachers on the West Coast. Syl was often referred to as a "Teacher of Teachers." His friendship with Pietro Deiro endured throughout the remainder of their lives. In 1963 I took over as the Deiro Music representative for the Western

area of the United States, and I retained this position until Pietro Deiro, Jr. retired in 1983. Today, Pietro Deiro, Jr. and I still enjoy a wonderful line of communication; the Prior-Deiro friendship has endured from fathers to children over a period of 75 years.

The Southern California setting provided Syl with a golden opportunity to use the accordion in the just-emerging field of silent movies. The portability of the instrument made it a prime asset to the movie industry for on-location sidelining and for providing mood music to create the atmosphere dictated by movie scripts. There are many happy memories that my father related to me concerning this phase of his career in the movie industry. Most frequently related was the fact that he was proud to have paid for the entire cost of my birth by playing in a movie featuring Florence Lake. Also, he often told me about the "happy music" he was asked to play when working with either Pola Negra or Gloria Swanson. Since they had such sensitive dispositions, they would cry at anything sounding less than happy. Tales of his work on Rudolph Valentino pictures and a friendship born from their mutual Italian heritage intrigued Syl's three daughters.

The next phase of my Father's career was teaching. He had been asked by many adults to open a studio, so in early 1917, Father's Los Angeles accordion studio was born. The addition of a studio in San Pedro and the rapid increase in student enrollments by 1926 meant a decision was necessary. At the time, this neo-instrument was creating great excitement in the adult community. Years of excellent musical training gave Syl the ability to chart a course of individualized study for students that would guarantee the finest results obtainable anywhere in the country.

With the increase of students and the need for more accordions, Syl aligned himself with the Excelsior factory in New York City. In those days, it was common practice for teachers to be personally involved in the selection and sale of instruments to the students. In this teacher-student/seller-buyer relationship, it was always felt a teacher would not sell anything that would result in a negative relationship between teacher and student. This format is followed today.

Syl Prior's first catalog with the Excelsior line was printed around 1923. Then, within a year, it was revised in order to feature the Syl Prior model of a smaller, 120-bass ladies-size accordion that father had designed for his sister, Josephine, who played with dance orchestras from 1925-49. It was manufactured by Excelsior and remains a popular size today. I vividly remember the wooden prototype my father made and took to Excelsior for their model. I kept this wooden model for many years, but like so many things, it was finally discarded. We continued our relationship with Excelsior right up until my father's passing in 1955. Since then I have continued a wonderful line of communication with the two daughters and two sons of the late Egisto Pancotti, the eldest of the Pancotti brothers, who owned the Excelsior accordion factory.

In addition to the Syl Prior Studio, the Andy Ferraro Accordion Studios had an important influence on the promotion and advancement of the accordion in the Southern California area. Andy was a World War II veteran, who left his home in Northern California to start a very successful enrollment program in Southern California that mushroomed within a few years into studios from Los Angeles in the south to Watsonville in the north. Andy still maintains a studio in this area. There were many other fine accordion studios in the 1950's and 1960's, indeed too numerous to mention, so I can only mention the larger ones. I apologize for those that were omitted.

During the years 1930 through 1950, there were many names which rose on the accordion horizon, names of numerous Prior students, as well as others who migrated to the area. Early 1930's arrivals were names like Howell and Aretta, Pietro Roletta, and Mr. Ricchio. One of Syl's adult students, Parry Harbartson, was studying in order to open a



SYL PRIOR (L) AND A STUDENT MR. FABRIS, (CIRCA 1925)



JOSEPHINE PRIOR, CO-TEACHER WITH ACCORDION DESIGNED BY SYL PRIOR



THE PRIOR SISTERS (L To R) DORTHY MAE, SYLVIA, AND PATSY, KNOWN AS THE "THREE LITTLE ACCORDIONISTS OF CALIFORNIA" (CIRCA 1931)



SYLVIA PRIOR AND DAUGHTERS SYLVANA LOUISE (STANDING), & ADRIAN JO (ACCORDIONIST) — DECEMBER 1989

studio, and this was an opportunity to turn San Pedro students over to a competent instructor. In this way, Syl could concentrate on only one studio which was operating seven days a week at that time. Mr. Harbartson continued to expand, and he became a very successful teacher in Southern California.

Around 1948, another of Syl's students, Milton Mann, was creating his niche as a teacher. He had been teaching for a music store in Santa Ana, and then opened a large operation that unquestionably had the greatest total enrollment of any studio in the area. The Milton Mann Studios ceased around 1982 when Milton retired. Two brothers, Bill and Dan Borzage, will long be remembered. Both played the accordion, and they did a considerable amount of studio work. Their brother, Frank, was a movie director and recipient of the "first" Academy Award, one of several he received. The Borzages' sister, Dolly, is the wife of Anthony Galla-Rini, two of my very dear friends.

From 1925 through 1950, many accordionists, including a number of students from the Syl Prior Studio, gained recognition in dance orchestras across the country. I can remember Vic Colin and Vince Caruso, who joined dance orchestras and traveled extensively. Xavier Cugat contacted my father (early 1930's) and they spoke about Syl's student, Billy Hobbs. Bill became a member of the Xavier Cugat Orchestra in 1930 or 1931, and he remained with Cugat until World War II changed the lives and direction of our generation.

The success of the motion-picture industry brought many fine musicians to the Southern California area. Two of Syl's students, Edo Banto and Al Tracey, along with another young accordionist, LeRoy Krubl, were doing much of the movie industry's studio work. Also, there was the never-to-be-forgotten Johnny Kiado, as well as others unknown to me. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the music of the Laurel and Hardy comedies, the "Music Box Cuckoo" theme. The writer Marvin Hatley, another of Syl's accordion students, became the musical director for the Hal Roach Studios. Incidentally, Mrs. Hal (Marguerite) Roach, her son (Hal Jr.), and her sister, (Harriet Nichols) all studied with Syl Prior in the early thirties.

After World War II, an entire new group of accordionists arrived in Hollywood. Each made their niche in the business, and I shall mention those I can remember. Naturally, I apologize to anyone whom I have left out. Regrettably, Eddie Carver's life was shortened, but I am sure many remember him, as well as Steve Payetta. Still doing studio "calls" are Carl Fortina, the Paramount Studios' contractor, Frank Messina, Ray Klein, and the esteemed Frank Marocco, all currently working the motion-picture/TV studios. Frank Marocco has emerged as a very positive personality in our industry. Besides being the "studio first call accordionist," Marocco, along with several other accordion enthusiasts, formed "Friends of the Accordion" (FOTA) on October 15, 1985. FOTA is a social group that meets monthly, and it has done a great service to spark life into the accordion industry and promote a positive image of the accordion. I am sure that the success of FOTA has prompted many of the other newly organized accordion groups to do their part for our beloved instrument.

Now I include a man whom we didn't meet until 1946. He settled in Los Angeles during the war years and conducted many USO overseas shows with top entertainers. He was Tito Guidotti or just plain Tito. Paul Whiteman was requested by *Collier's* magazine to select "The All-America Swing Band." In the September 10, 1938 issue of *Collier's*, the selections were released. Tito was among those who were selected. Others included Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Louis Armstrong, Joe Venuti, Artie Shaw, Bobby Haggart, and Gene Krupa — to recall only a few. Mr. Whiteman said, "Now, I am adding an accordion to my swing band. Tito is the man. Just plain Tito, who can do more things with an accordion than were ever

SOME MEMBERS OF "AAA" MEETING AT LINCOLN HOTEL IN 1938 TO GIVE TITO GUIDOTTI AN HONORARY MEMBERSHIP. L TO R: BOB LYNDHOLM, GENE VON HALBERG, JOE BIVIANO, TITO GUIDOTTI, PIETRO DEIRO, PIETRO FROSINI, AND CHARLES NUNZIO.



thought of. He is the only one I ever heard who can successfully swing an accordion."

There are pioneers in each field, and indeed Tito was a leader that many accordionists looked to for guidance during the period that the accordion was emerging in the jazz field; Tito helped to provide that sense of direction. He created a sensation with his "Swingtette" (three accordions, string bass, and guitar), and he wrote the arrangements himself. Within twenty-five years, he had written material for the ambitious classical students and did so in a modern, avant-garde style, featuring material for the chromatic free-bass accordion. He shall long be remembered for his great contributions as an early pioneer: Tito Guidotti (October 1910 — January 1982).

Tito and I were married March 7, 1948, and from this marriage were born two wonderful daughters, Adrian Jo (J.D.) and Sylvana Louise (M.D.). Both daughters are fine musicians, and if Adrian Jo had pursued a career in music, she would have unquestionably followed her father in the jazz field. Sylvana's forte is the classics, but each of them is a credit to their chosen professions law and medicine, respectively.

If I should write about each of the accordionists I have known in my lifetime, I would have to write an entire book. But, these thoughts are only some of my memories of the accordion and how it totally influenced and shaped my life. I would need to mention many other accordionists that I have had to leave out of this short account, but who, nevertheless, figured significantly in Southern California during the early years.

In my 78 rpm collection, I have records featuring Carlos Fessia and Dan Cervo, both interesting accordion players of the twenties and thirties. Then, there was Jerome Damonte, a master of the keyboard who never reached the magnitude due him. Anthony Galla-Rini, warmly known as "Mr. Accordion" to the world and "Tony" to his friends, is still going strong here in Southern California. I first met Galla-Rini when I was only 6 years old. In the past 40 years, we have enjoyed a wonderful friendship. Tony and his wife, Dolly, are very dear to me; our mutual love for the accordion has been a common thread during our careers. (Tony settled in Southern California about 1945.)

In the mid-twenties father had a student, Pines Caviani, who returned to his home in Iron Mountain, Michigan where Pines opened an accordion studio. Syl was exceptionally proud of Pines Caviani's primo student, Art Van Damme, who needs no introduction to the accordion world. We first met Art in 1931, when he was a teenager and on the road with his teacher, Pines Caviani. They made a second tour in 1933. My husband Richard Westhouse and I are proud to have Art and his wife Dorothy as our wonderful friends. Art and Richard, both coming from the Chicago area, are big "CUB" and "BEAR" fans. Art continues to record and performs many concerts overseas.

Jimmie DiMichel had but a single student, but what a star! That student was Jimmy Haskell. He started as an accordionist, then turned to writing and became a studio writer and Grammy Award winner. Myron Floren is, of course, now considered a Southern Californian, having settled here around 1950. Tommy Gumina became a California native in about 1953, and he is certainly one of the greats of JAZZ. Tommy gained national recognition as featured accordionist with Harry James. He toured for several years with the orchestra. He and clarinet "great" Buddy DeFranco formed a jazz group and did concerts and recordings. However, Tommy wanted to get into manufacturing, and he is the owner of Polytone Musical Instruments which features amplifiers. In 1950, Ernie Felice created much excitement with a "new sound," but medical problems forced an early retirement.

I wish I could have mentioned all of the accordionists who have been in this area and played the various "jobs," but I could not include everyone due to the limitation of space for this article. For this, I sincerely apologize.







ABOVE: SYL PRIOR AND FRIENDS — (L to R) GAVIANI, FRIEND, PIETRO DEIRO, DAN B AND SYL PRIOR (CIRCA 1934)

AT LEFT: SYL PRIOR OUTSIDE HIS HOME (CIRCA 1932)

AT IMMEDIATE RIGHT: (L to R) FRANK PIETRO DEIRO, & SYL PRIOR (CIRCA 1933)

AT FAR RIGHT: PIETRO DEIRO (CIRCA 193

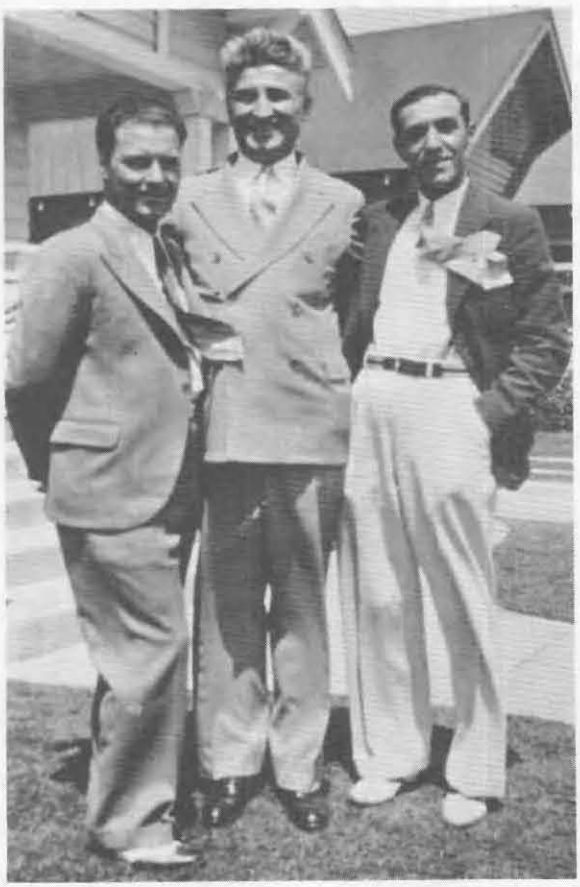




R) FRANK
ORZAGE,

GAVIANI,

2)







STANDING L TO R: MYRON FLOREN, NIK NEVEL, SYL PRIOR, and SYDNEY DAWSON CONGRATULATING CHARLES MAGNANTE FOLLOWING A CONCERT IN LOS ANGELES (1954)

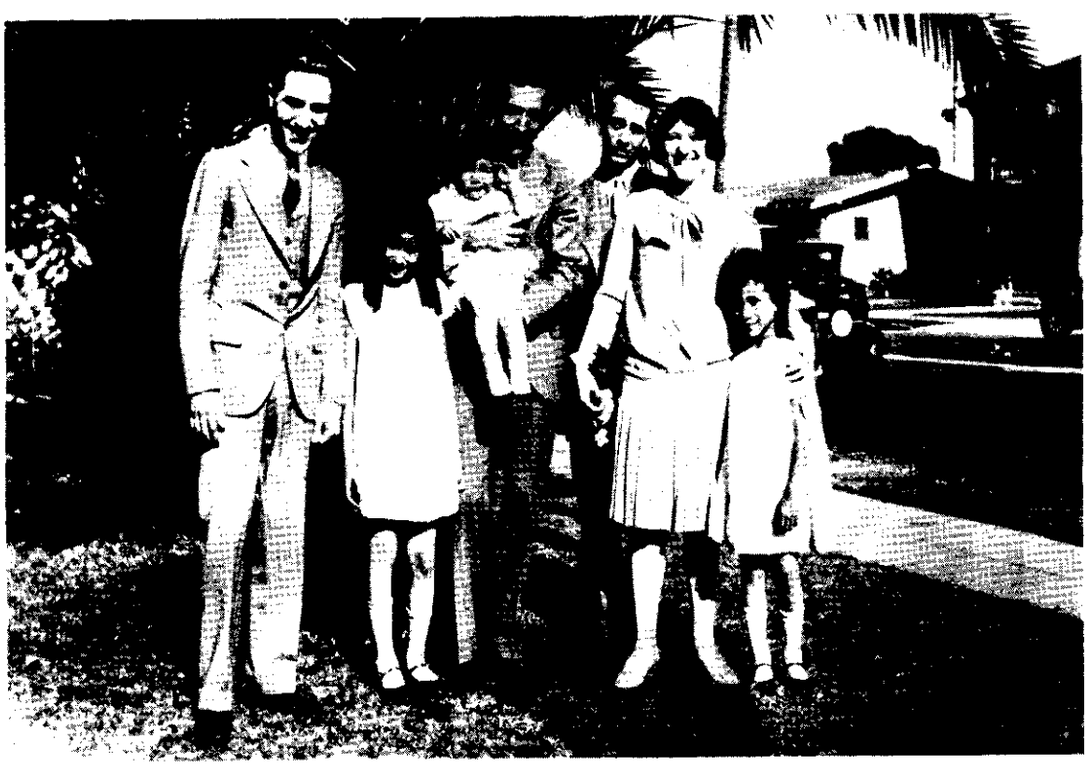
In closing this chapter about the accordion in Southern California, I must conclude that we were truly fortunate many years ago when a woman transplanted herself to our city. She is (as far as I know) the only woman ever accorded the honor of being on a *Down Beat* jazz poll — the one and only Alice Hall! Alice has been working with Friends of the Accordion (FOTA), and she is extremely enthusiastic in her quest for new members.

This article would be incomplete if I failed to include the Accordion Federation of North America (AFNA); October 1955 was the birth of the organization — then named The Accordion Association of Southern California. Anthony Aretta and Andrew Ferraro were co-founders, and Tito Guidotti was a founding charter member. April 1956 was the "First Annual Music Festival," and I was the coordinating secretary for the event. I have served annually on countless committees over these 34 years and was elected as its first woman President in 1974 and again in 1980. AFNA will stage its 35th Annual Music Festival in August 1990. I'm proud that I've been involved in promoting the musical education for our youth.

Obviously, I've made many friends — I cherish each one. They have made my life so rich and pleasurable. I thank both my mother and father for their part in giving me a musical education from the time I was four years old, and for my wonderful husband Richard Westhouse, whom I proudly married in 1967. If anyone were to ask if I would have preferred a different direction for my life, I would say, "**No! I love it as it is.**"

And, finally I thank God for letting me stay around for these past 67 years! A final thanks to Ron Flynn for his dedication to the accordion and all the efforts he has put forth in this revised book on the accordion in association with Eddie Chavez and Edwin Davison. Much success to all of you!

[This article has been reviewed for accuracy by Sylvia Prior, and it is used with her kind permission. Any correspondence to Sylvia should be addressed to her at the Sylvia Prior Music Studio: 14947 Vose St., Van Nuys, CA 91405.]



L to R: ANTHONY GALLA-RINI, DOROTHY MAE PRIOR, SYL PRIOR (HOLDING PATSY PRIOR), HARRY STIMMEL, VICTORIA (GALLA-RINI) STIMMEL, AND SYLVIA PRIOR, STANDING OUTSIDE SYL PRIOR'S HOME IN LOS ANGELES (CIRCA 1928).

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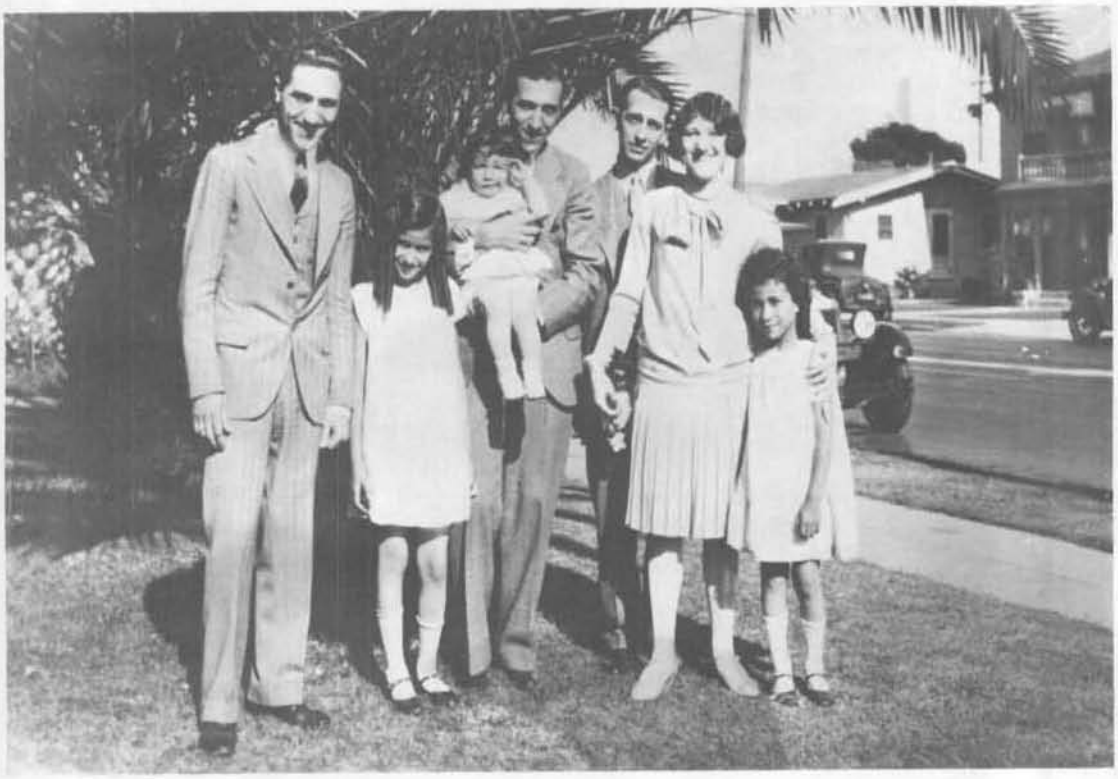

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THE ACCORDION

By Toni Charuhas Meekins

Editor's Note: Written almost 40 years ago, Toni's extraordinary book, The Accordion, was originally published under her maiden name Charuhas. In this chapter reprint, we have updated the author's byline with her married name (Meekins), while retaining the name Charuhas for subsequent personal references. Toni Charuhas researched and wrote this information in the early 1950s during graduate school. She submitted it to the faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The Catholic University of America, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Music. Her master's thesis was published in 1955 by the Accordion Music Publishing Company owned by Pietro Deiro, Jr. I wish to thank Toni Charuhas and Pietro Deiro, Jr., for permission to reprint the first chapter of the book, The Accordion, the Introduction by Pietro Deiro, Jr., and Toni's biography and photo. This book has been out of print since 1972, so we are especially proud to republish a portion of it, as it is a significant piece of research about the historical roots of the accordion. This research by Toni Charuhas truly deserves a place in accordion history as it typifies some scholarly research about this beloved instrument. After several readers wrote to us suggesting that we include a brief history of the accordion's development in our next edition, we contacted Pietro Deiro, Jr., for permission to include Toni Charuhas' well-written historical account. Fortunately, we received his signed permission just before this revised edition went to print. Another suggestion received from readers was that we should include a diagram of the internal working parts of an accordion. After searching through many accordion catalogs, we found a fully disassembled accordion in an old Excelsior catalog. We have included the reproduction at the conclusion of this article, and we are especially grateful to Mario Pancotti, Excelsior Accordions, Inc. of New York City, for his kind permission to use it.

INTRODUCTION BY PIETRO DEIRO, JR.

The origin and development of the accordion has always presented a subject of intrigue and a challenge to accordion enthusiasts. In this complete text, the author proceeds from its origin in China through the Roman and Greek eras, where it associates with other instruments, long since faded, and finally emerges as the piano accordion that we so affectionately call a miniature organ.

It contains a wealth of information on the accordion, its history, its construction, and its ideals. Although it is primarily written for accordion lovers, it is exceptionally fitted for those just beginning to become conscious of the potentialities of the accordion as a true musical instrument. You will be astonished at what it discloses, that is, what a world of difference it can be between just playing the accordion and knowing intelligently both its history and ideals.

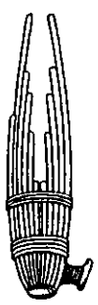
CHAPTER I — ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

The modern piano accordion is rapidly making great strides in the legitimate musical world. From a novelty instrument played on ferryboats, in taverns and at square dances, it has made its way into conservatories, universities, schools, concert halls and symphony orchestras. Just as there can be no comparison of the first crude water organ of yesterday to the magnificent pipe organ of today, so there cannot be a comparison between the first clumsy accordion of the early 19th century to the rich and sensitive instrument of the present. It took many years for the organ to develop; the piano accordion, as such, is practically a "baby" in the world of musical instruments, although, relatively speaking, it has had a tremendous growth and development in a very short time. In spite of the fact that in its present state it can well hold its place as a complete and satisfying solo instrument, its manufacturers are constantly seeking to improve

and perfect it. Before discussing the present day accordion, let us turn back the pages of time and trace it to its origin.

One might be under the impression that the accordion is a new instrument just recently invented and that its history could not date back very far, at most perhaps a little over a century. This is not so, for one of the parts of the accordion dates back to centuries before Christ. We say "parts" because the piano accordion is made up of many varied components. It utilizes the principle of the free reed; it has bellows, a keyboard, push-buttons, and it is portable. Each of these items may be traced to different eras in antiquity. In order to get a complete picture of the piano accordion it would be well to go to its very beginning and follow its evolution up to its present state.

The Cheng



The seed from which the accordion was eventually to evolve is to be found in the Cheng. This instrument is an ancient Chinese instrument which can be traced to mythical times in China. It is played by blowing into a wooden mouthpiece which is attached to a gourd and into which is fitted 17 bamboo pipes of different lengths. The exact date of the first Cheng is unknown although Curt Sachs, the noted librarian and historian, states that in China its invention is attributed to Emperor Nya-Kwa in the third millennium before Christ. It was invented as an imitation of the bird Phoenix with its body, head and wings. It is not mentioned before about 1100 B.C., and no earlier picture of it can be found than the one in the University Museum in Philadelphia which is on a votive stele dated 551 A.D. On the other hand, according to tradition in China, music was invented in 2953 B.C. by the first of five divine rulers. His name, Fu-hsi. A mythical female sovereign, said to have been his sister, succeeded him and she has been accredited with the invention of the Cheng. Her name was Nu Wa. But since an invention in Chinese legend and mythology is invariably claimed for some Emperor or Empress, not much heed need be given it. So much for the invention of the Cheng. Let us go on and see how it is made.

Although the Cheng or Sheng (Japanese Sho) originally was made with a gourd, today it is replaced by wood, cut into similar shape. Its neck serves as a mouthpiece and air conduit while its body forms a windchest to feed the pipes. The wind produced from the human lungs enters through the windchest and sets vibrating a free reed. It is this same free reed which produces the sound in an accordion and places it in the category of a reed instrument. In mentioning reed instruments, the historian Geiringer specifies that there are five different kinds of reed instruments, one of which is the kind having a single (hard) freely vibrating reed. This type of reed is known as the free reed. It is called "free" because it has an elastic tongue which vibrates freely within a frame and by its vibrations causes a stream of air to sound. The pitch and quality of the tone is determined by the material of the tongue. Instruments such as the harmonium, the accordion, the mouth organ, etc., employ this type of reed.

Here we have the beginning of our accordion. It still has a long and fascinating journey to travel through the annals of time before we can find it a complete unit. Its various parts will appear in funeral processions in China, wooing games in Bengal (Cheng), in convents as accompaniment to the singing of nuns (in the form of the regal), in the 12th century in England as a secular instrument (portative) and finally before Pope Pius XII to receive its official sanction as an accordion.

Now lets go back to the Cheng with its free reed and follow it to Europe. The Cheng was an instrument sweet enough in tone to charm the most critical and exacting European ears. A single Cheng is capable of playing

harmony, duets or even chords as well as a gentle shake. It has a remote, minute and very sweet tone, somewhat like the tone one would imagine a miniature pipe organ to have. To the Cheng were attributed strange powers, and it was considered a sacred instrument in Confucian temple ceremonies leading the temple orchestra on all feast days.

Before we take the Cheng and leave China, it might be well to mention that its free reeds were cast out of many different kinds of metals and sometimes even fashioned out of gold. They also varied a great deal in shape.

It is said the Cheng could be found in many Asiatic countries and could have been brought to Europe by missionaries or at an earlier date by returning crusaders, or perhaps still earlier by the Asiatic caravans which traveled thousands of miles of desert in their trade routes. However, we do know that in the 18th century the free reed takes a trip to Russia where it meets a musician by the name of Johann Wilde. This Mr Wilde, known as the inventor of the nail violin, purchased or was given a Cheng in St. Petersburg and learned to play it. When the physicist Kratzenstein from Copenhagen heard him and examined the free reed of the Cheng, he suggested to the organ builder Kirschnik in St. Petersburg that he introduce the free reed into the organ. The latter, however, made no organ with free reeds. He only made organ-pianos. It was the well-known Georg Joseph Vogler in Darmstadt who built the first organ with such reeds, and from his free reed organ there sprang a great family of reed instruments such as harmoniums, mouth harmonicas and accordions. All this took place from 1800 on.

Before going into the 19th century with its invention of the accordion, let us see what other phases of the accordion were in previous use. It would be well to trace its bellows and portability. The use of bellows in Greek and Egyptian forges before 1500 B.C. is known. Also there are reports of small, portable, accordion-like organs that have been excavated from ruins.

The earliest report is to be found in two terra-cotta figures unearthed at Susa, in Persia. These figures are said to date from 800 B.C. and represent players upon accordion-like organs.

Also the fragment of a figure of a musician playing upon a small portable instrument firmly fastened to his chest and with one hand appearing to operate a bellows was excavated at Tarsus in Cilicia and dates to about 200 B.C. In Chinese Turkestan on the site of ancient Khotan another figure was found again with the small organ fitted to the player's chest.

Small pneumatic organs which were portable and had hand bellows seem to have been in use amongst the Islamic peoples. An organ described by the Arabic writer, Ibn Ghaibi, is said to have been of the portative type. A supposition exists that Syria had this type of instrument also. It is known that many centuries later, small portatives were introduced to the west by Byzantine envoys to Charlemagne's Court and that these instruments were in all probability made by Syrians or Arabians.

It is also known that to relieve the strain of mouth blowing a primitive hand-bellows was added to the instrument called the Pipes of Pan.

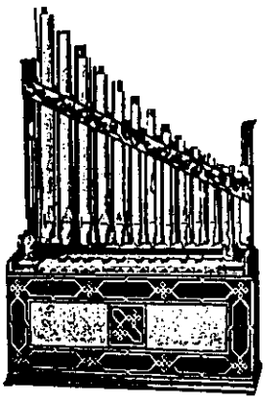
Ancient Rome also seemingly had portable organs, for in a poem ascribed to Virgil (30 B.C.) there is reference made to a woman musician who introduces wind into the pipes of a portative organ by means of a pair of bellows which she holds under her arms and manipulates.

Fragments of a Roman portative organ dating back to 63 A.D. have been excavated at Pompeii (in 1876) and may be found in the Museo Nazionale at Naples. When it was found, it had a chain attached to it long enough to go around a man's neck. It had 3 rows of about 15 rectangularly shaped holes, similar to those securing the free reeds in a concertina, contained in a damaged bronze plate. Since these holes were arranged at irregular intervals, and did not appear conveniently arranged for blowing into by the mouth, it may be inferred that the instrument may have had hand-bellows

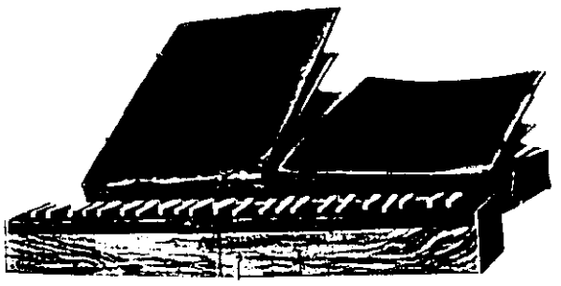
that had perhaps been lost.

The well-known historian of the accordion, Mr Hilding Bergquist, has felt that in all probability as more and more excavations are made that there may be unearthed still more ancestral specimens of instruments containing the characteristics of our accordion family and that specimens embodying all constructional details intact, may conceivably be found some day.

The Portative



In the Middle Ages, there were two predominant portable instruments, the Portative and the Regal, both of which can be related to the accordion family. In Europe the portative made its first recorded appearance in England during the 12th century, and by the 13th century it was distributed all over Western Europe, becoming one of the most important elements in both chamber and orchestral music. Its popularity was no accident, for quite apart from the clearer, pure, mellow tones which would have singular attraction for Renaissance ears, it was remarkable for its technical efficiency, while thanks to its keyboard mechanism it was remarkably easy to play. The portative was a small, portable, and easily playable hand-organ. It was strapped on to the player who operated the lever keys or small push-buttons with the right hand and worked the bellows with the left hand. It was equipped with anywhere from 6 to 30 pipes in one, two or three ranks. The portatives were built with two ranks of keys only to save space, since at that time they had no chromatic scale. Later, in the Renaissance, it invariably was provided with a regular chromatic keyboard furnished with two ranks of keys, and producing all the notes of the chromatic scale. In spite of its improvements, the portative was on its way out, for it was too small, feeble in tone and unsuitable for chord playing to be used in the new Renaissance music. When we reach the Baroque and Rococo periods, we find the portatives in use principally in processions. The portatives have become incomparably heavier, and two or more persons are required to serve them. The added weight stems mostly from the fact that registers were added to them. The portative sometimes was referred to as organeto, and Franceso Landino, the famous medieval Florentine composer and organist, had achieved an interesting reputation through his performance on the instrument. It is quite possible that Landino (1324-1390) may have written music for the portative although no record of such music exists. However, we are told a Michaelangelo Rossi in the 17th century did write a Miniature for a Portative Organ. This composition has been played on the modern organ by E. Power Biggs.



The Bible-Regal

And now let us take a look at the Regal. The Regal is the instrument from which the modern harmonium was modeled, but it had beating reeds instead of free reeds. The beating reed which is employed in the organ derives its name from the fact that the reeds touch the sides of the frames. It was introduced in the 15th century, but it is not known whether it appeared first in the Regal or as part of an organ. References have been made to the Regal being used in convents to accompany the singing nuns.

The Regal received the name Bible-Regal in the 16th century when George Voll of Nuremberg adopted its shape to the form of a Bible-like book when closed. The Bible-Regal

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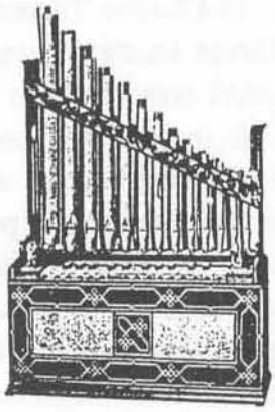

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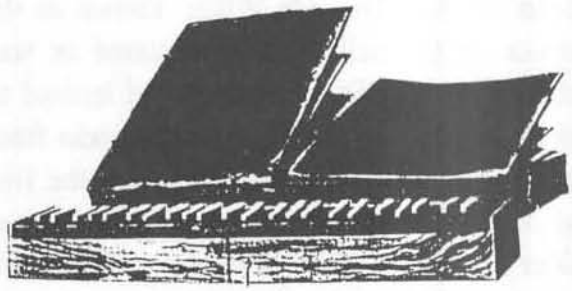

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The Regal received the name Bible-Regal in the 16th century when George Voll of Nuremberg adopted its shape to the form of a Bible-like book when closed. The Bible-Regal

had twin bellows which could be taken off and folded up. In order to make it easy to transport, the folded instrument was packed into the bellows and the closed instrument gave an appearance of a Bible. The Bible-Regal was an instrument well calculated to delight and gratify the people of the 16th century who were inclined to be enthralled and fascinated by unique mechanical wonders.

The Regal was employed in the 17th century chiefly as an instrument for the execution of the thorough-bass. It was peculiarly fitted to accompany a choir of trombones, on account of its powerful, snarling tone. Monteverdi (1567-1643), popular composer of that period, used the Regal in his opera "Orfeo" which was orchestrated for 36 instruments and which is said to have embodied what are still regarded as new conceptions in opera. The 18th century, with its love for the sentimental, took exception to the rigid, harsh, and unaccommodating tone of the Regal. Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), who composed, collected musical biographies and wrote on theory, particularly disliked the Regal which he described with characteristic bluntness as "extremely loathsome." Thus, the Regal was not destined to survive beyond the middle of the 18th century.

In short, we can see that before the 18th century, there were three ancestral instruments of the accordion. The Cheng and the accordion owe their relationship to each other through the fact that their sound is produced by a free reed which vibrates. The difference is that in one the air is created by the human lungs, and in the other by the action of a bellows. The relationship of the accordion to the portative lies in that both are strapped to the player, and the left hand in both operates bellows, while the right hand operates keys or buttons. Their difference lies in the fact that the portative has pipes while the accordion has free reeds.

The Regal and the accordion are related inasmuch as they both are reed instruments, but the Regal has the beating reed while the accordion has the free reed. Both have in common bellows and a keyboard. Music on both the Regal and the portative is created by the right hand only. On the accordion it is created with both hands. The accordion, portative, and regal have bellows, and all three are portable; in that respect, as cousins often do, they outwardly resemble one another. Here their resemblance ends, and we find a truly closer relation in the accordion's true ancestor, the Cheng; for regardless of how the wind on either instrument is produced, the outcome is the sound that can only be created by the vibration of a free reed. This sound differs widely from that produced by other types of reeds, having a unique beauty of its own. When in the 18th century, European organ-builders, acousticians, physicists, etc., heard this remarkable free reed, they obviously were fascinated by it for a wealth of free reed instruments appeared in the early 19th century. These instruments varied in size and type. Some were portable, small and mouth-blown like the "blow accordion," harmonica, aeolina, and symphonion. Others were bellowsed by hand, like the accordion, bandoneon, lap-melodeon, concertina, and rocking melodeon; and still others were large, "organ-like" stationary instruments, such as the seraphine, harmonium, and melodeon.

Some dictionaries attribute the invention of the accordion to Cyrillus Damian of Vienna in 1829. But authorities differ, and the consensus of opinion is that it was first built in 1822 by Friedrich Buschmann of Berlin, and was called the Handaoline. The first accordion, like most new inventions, was clumsy, heavy, and rather ugly in sound. Because of the unique principle of the left hand single bass buttons producing fixed chords, it was named Accordion by the above named Damian. This early and rather crude accordion had an oblong form and had four buttons on the bass. Each button acted on two reeds and encompassed one octave in the diatonic scale. These buttons were so arranged that each note could be accompanied by a tonic or dominant harmony.

When additions were made later of the chromatic scale, the instrument was capable of a more varied melody and harmony. In its beginning, the accordion operated on the same principle of the harmonica, that is, it played one tone when blowing and another when drawing. That type of accordion was known and still is known as a semi-tone accordion. However, this system has been eliminated and now the accordion plays the same tone whether the bellows are being opened or closed.

A contemporary instrument of the accordion was the concertina. This instrument was invented by Sir Charles Wheatstone in 1829 and at first called the "Symphonion with Bellows." It was submitted to public notice in June, 1833 and on December 27 of that year was renamed the "concertina."

The concertina rapidly became a complete concert instrument with many concerti being written for it and numerous virtuosi appearing to perform them. In pathetic contrast, the accordion made very little progress and although the application of the piano keyboard was made by Bouton of Paris in 1852, the piano accordion did not come into popular use until the beginning of the 20th century.

Let us take a look at the many kinds of accordions that appeared during the 19th century. Upon hearing the accordion, the various European instrument manufacturers decided to make some themselves and as a result, many different systems of key orders were evolved, such as the Dutch, French, Belgian, German, Italian, Russian, etc.

The German type of accordion, known also as melodeon, had up to four registers and had as a rule 2 basses and one row of ten treble keys. Later it had 2 rows of 19 treble keys and four basses. The early Italian type had 4 basses with one row of 10 treble keys or two rows of approximately 21 treble keys with 8 basses. This type had no registers. Both the German and Italian types were also made in chromatic tuning, and from these instruments developed the chromatic accordion.

In 1882 a new type of keyboard appeared for the piano. It was invented by Paul von Janko. This keyboard consisted of six rows of short keys elevated slightly over each other in step formation. In all probability this was the keyboard from which European accordion keyboard designers evolved their own modified versions of key formations. These systems are known as chromatic since they facilitate the execution of the chromatic scale.

Going back to the early accordion, it is said that the intonation of the scale to which they were tuned was thought to be neither tempered nor untempered. The sound of the instrument caused acousticians to marvel and acclaim it a fortunate chance of mechanical invention. This peculiar accordion scale they claimed always had been in the nature and rationale of music and existed long before the advent of the accordion.

As early as 1850 the accordion was given chromatic notes by Walter, a Viennese, but it seemingly had no uniform-tone at that time. It is stated that in 1892, Armand Loriaux, a Belgian, first gave the accordion uniform-tone. It is probably from around that time that our chromatic step formation keyboards of the type known today first appeared in Europe. Other chromatic keyboard arrangements, however, had several equally arranged rows of small, round buttons, constructed so as to be depressed into the keyboard, and so differing in this respect from the step-formation keyboard, although the fingering was the same.

The chromatic accordion had three rows of treble buttons. Modern chromatic button accordions can possess 102 treble buttons in five banks giving a range of five octaves — rows four and five duplicating rows one and two, respectively, to allow alternative fingering.

The bass section of the accordion was being developed and from one fundamental bass row (single tones) and major chord row, other rows were added until we have our present standard bass keyboard which has, besides the two rows mentioned, a row of minor chords, a row of seventh chords, a row of diminished chords, and an added row of

single tones called the counter-bass row. There are also 140 bass accordions with an added minor counter bass row. To this 140 bass may be added a row of augmented chords forming a 160 bass accordion. Both these types are in use by some professional players, but the 120 bass accordion is the standard.

It can readily be seen that to present a complete picture of the evolution of the accordion family of instruments would be a tremendous undertaking and one far too enormous in scope to be encompassed in one volume.

Even today there exist several types of accordions. In Europe the chromatic accordion is still in use, although it is rapidly being overtaken by the piano accordion. At present the most popular and widely used and manufactured accordion is the piano accordion, and it is with this type of accordion we will concern ourselves. ***[Editor's Note: The author's assessment of the popularity of the piano accordion vs the chromatic accordion was stated in 1955 when her article first appeared. Indeed, the author would likely offer a different comparative assessment today as the chromatic accordion is still the predominant accordion in Europe.]***

Although the first piano accordion originated in Europe during the second half of the 19th century, it did not appear in America until 1909. At this time Pietro Deiro introduced his improved piano accordion and was the first to play one before a public audience. This historical event occurred at the Washington Square Theatre in San Francisco. In 1910 commercial manufacture of accordions commenced but they were not produced by mass production until approximately 1918. It is a well known fact that we owe the improvement of the piano keyboard as it exists on the piano accordion today to Pietro Deiro. He improved the accordion piano keyboard by enlarging the keys in both length and width. Originally the keys were quite narrow and were 2 1/2 to 3 inches in length.

As we view our present piano accordion, we find it far removed from the primitive, crude instrument first invented and called an accordion. It is no longer cumbersome and clumsy to play. The accordion of today is fast becoming accepted as an instrument of true value and merit, and we find, as a result of its new found prestige, that several contemporary composers already have written concertos for accordion and orchestra some of which have been performed by a number of our great symphony orchestras.

It is truly an instrument worthy of consideration and recognition as we shall see as we go on further to discuss its merits and possibilities. [End of Chapter]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR - TONI CHARUHAS



Toni Charuhas, an accordionist since the age of twelve, experienced her greatest disappointment only when refused permission to major in the accordion during her college years. Selecting the pipe organ in its place, she entered the Catholic University of America and acquired a Bachelor's Degree in Music. Not content with her laurels, Toni started immediately on a Master's Degree. It was at this time that her ambition for accordion came to the fore, and she used the subject "The Accordion" as a thesis. Its approval and enthusiastic comments by the faculty led to its publication two years later.

During her college studies, Toni continued with her interest in the accordion and studied with such notables as Sylvia Kaplowitz, Joseph Biviano, and Mr Lanaro in Rome, Italy. [She performed] with various concert ensembles in and around Washington, D.C., her birthplace.

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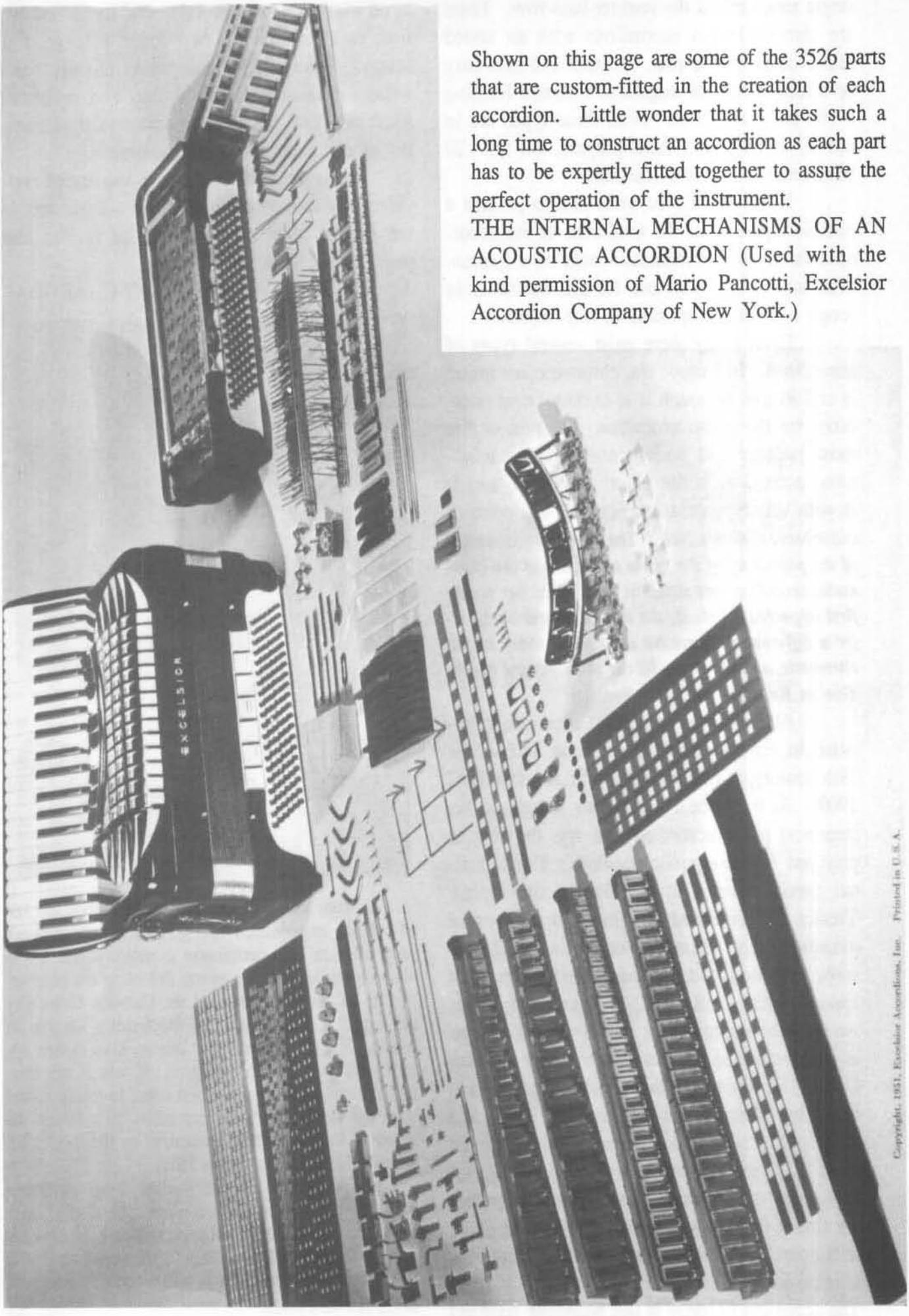
Shown on this page are some of the 3526 parts that are custom-fitted in the creation of each accordion. Little wonder that it takes such a long time to construct an accordion as each part has to be expertly fitted together to assure the perfect operation of the instrument.

THE INTERNAL MECHANISMS OF AN ACOUSTIC ACCORDION (Used with the kind permission of Mario Pancotti, Excelsior Accordion Company of New York.)



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JOE PETOSA — THE MAN AND LEGACY BEHIND PETOSA ACCORDIONS

By Edwin Davison

Editor's Note: Throughout this book, I have included the rich historical roots of the accordion in the United States — both the talented artists who have played them and the craftsmen and companies who have manufactured them. Some of the stories are being told for the first time in print; others are simply being retold, expanded upon or updated for historical purposes. But, in the world of accordion all is not yet history; history is still in the making. The name Petosa is deeply rooted in the history of Seattle, and the Petosa story must be told in both the past and present tenses as Joe Petosa is still very much at the helm of the Petosa Company. This firm has the expertise and capability to perform a wide range of services, including complete accordion overhauls and even the manufacturing of one of their custom model piano accordions for special-order customers. Most firms have long since transferred their entire operations to Italian factories, but Petosa does still make a limited number of this one particular model upon special request. With Joe's immense dedication to the accordion and to the legacy that his father, Carl, began in 1922, Joe has earned his rightful place in history. I am very grateful to Joe Petosa and his wonderful family for their help in obtaining this information about the Petosa company.

.....

The year was 1922. The man, Carl Petosa, began something that simply will not stop. Undoubtedly, he did not know that he was destined to begin a legacy that would pass to his son, Joe, and then on to his grandsons, Carl, Dean and Joe Jr, who would carry on the same tradition spanning better than a half century of accordion manufacturing. As a child in Italy, Carl loved the accordion. He recalls, "I was crazy about accordions, and I was determined to have one. My father said, 'No, they cost too much.' We argued frequently about this until finally with the first money I earned, I bought one." After Carl learned to play well, he decided to learn all about them.

When he later immigrated to America, he settled in San Francisco where he served an apprenticeship at the Guerrini Accordion Company, learning every aspect of accordion manufacturing. When Carl had learned everything about accordion building, he decided to start his own business. So, in the basement of his home in Seattle, he single-handedly devoted himself to the task of constructing high-quality instruments. Imagine him in those first, humble surroundings, hunched over his workbench, completely absorbed in his work and totally oblivious to everything and anything else. Here, he meticulously and painstakingly measured, hand-cut, sawed, shaped, and molded pieces of wood, metal, and celluloid which were miraculously transformed over several months into beautiful hand-crafted accordions of the highest quality imaginable. He had no assistants; he was a one-man operation. Just how many accordions he built in this way will never be known. We know, however, that many of these accordions are still in sound, playable condition today.

Carl Petosa's son Joe helped in every aspect of the business. Joe began playing the accordion at age 10 under the tutelage of Joe Parente and Anthony Facciuto, his first and only teachers. By age 12, it became apparent that Joe could become a serious musician. But he also had a keen interest in learning to build accordions, and his father was eager to teach him the trade. Joe recalls that he was faced with a difficult decision as there was not time for accordion lessons and hours of practice if he wanted to devote himself to learning the complex trade of accordion building. After much agonizing, Joe made the difficult choice to follow in his father's steps, focusing on the art of building accordions rather than playing them as a career. Reflecting on this choice, Joe has come to the conclusion that in reality he had little, if any, choice: "My brother became a school teacher and my sister



PETOSA'S FIRST ACCORDION SHOP - CARL PETOSA (L); JOE PETOSA (R)
(Shop was first opened in 1922; Photo was taken in 1955)



CARL PETOSA WITH THE FIRST ACCORDION HE BUILT IN 1922.



JOE PETOSA (L) AND CARL PETOSA (R) IN PETOSA EARLY SHOP (CIRCA 1935).

got married, so I was left to join the family business." But, regardless of the reason, we can be sure that Carl was pleased that his son Joe made this eventful decision.

When asked by *Accordion World* if he has ever had any regrets about choosing his father's profession, Joe said, "No, not one. Making accordions is what I love to do. I can never imagine retiring. Life would then lose its meaning. You can't stop doing the thing you love just because you've reached a certain age." It is also apparent that Joe is equally happy that his own three sons have followed him in the trade and are actively involved in the business. Not only do they play the accordion, but they help him in every aspect of the business.

The Petosa Accordion Company is located at 313 N.E. 45th St., in Seattle. It has been at this location since 1955 when Carl and Joe moved from their small shop where the firm had its original beginning. At this location, Joe Petosa and his father worked together until Carl's death in 1959. They also had the foresight to expand the business in 1946 by negotiating with a factory in Castelfidardo, Italy, where Petosa accordions would be manufactured, but where design, quality, and construction would be controlled by Petosa in Seattle. The accordions are then shipped to Seattle for final adjustments. When the instruments arrive from the factory, they are taken apart and thoroughly checked and tuned to ensure that every Petosa accordion is in perfect condition before delivery to the purchaser.

As in the early days, it still takes a year or longer to build an accordion. Says Joe, "You can't hurry quality. The time involved in making each accordion makes higher production impossible. The wood used in the instruments must first be aged for 20 years before it is ever cut and shaped into accordion pieces. After a case is glued up, it must dry and age another 6 weeks. A quality accordion is like a violin. You can't just stamp one out, making one on an assembly line."

A Petosa accordion begins its life as a seasoned mahogany veneer plywood box which is then covered with burnished celluloid and filled with some 3800 handmade parts. The parts, being handcrafted, are not basically interchangeable from one instrument to another. The keys are not simply molded plastic, but rather, they are made with fine walnut wood that is lightened, shaped, and polished to a glowing hue. Some models have a sound chamber engulfing two banks of reeds that is varnished to a mirror sheen. Indeed, the interior finish gleams, indicating fine craftsmanship. With moderate care, an accordion of this quality will definitely outlive its owner or the craftsman making it. The top-of-the-line professional Petosa model is individually custom made by Joe, himself, or his long-time assistant, Giuliano Bugari, a master accordion builder who came over from Italy to help in the company. Today, the professional model accordions, costing approximately $9,000, are the only ones still made in Petosa's Seattle shop; all others, including the $15,000 Bayan free-bass model are being built by select Italian craftsmen at the factory in Italy. The Petosa company is also abreast of the current state of the art in support of the electronic accordion and the MIDI. Persons seeking an electronic accordion or MIDI capability will find that Petosa can provide the most advanced electronic accordion models and the Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) system.

It is interesting to hear Joe describe the accordion: "At the heart of the instrument are the 448 reeds that sing in the wind from the bellows. Swedish blue steel makes the best reeds, and we use only the top of the ten grades for PETOSA accordions." The reeds were made in the Seattle shop until around 1935; now, they are made exclusively at the factory in Castelfidardo by an employee who is totally dedicated to the art of honing the metal and cutting out the reeds. But, the fine tuning is still done at the Seattle shop. The rough tuning is done with the reed blocks outside the body of the instrument while the fine tuning must be done with the reed blocks in





ABOVE: JOE PETOSA BESIDE THE PETOSA BOOTH AT INTERNATIONAL TRADE SHOW HELD ON GROUNDS OF THE SEATTLE WORLD'S FAIR IN 1962.

AT LEFT: JOE PETOSA WITH BEAUTIFUL PETOSA ACCORDION IN FRONT OF THE PETOSA ARTISTS' GALLERY IN PETOSA'S MAIN SHOWROOM.
(PHOTO CREDIT: CARY TOLMAN, SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER)



ACCORDION UNDERGOING MAJOR OVERHAUL ON WORKBENCH IN PETOSA'S REPAIR SHOP IN SEATTLE. THIS IS TYPICAL OF ACCORDION REPAIR SHOPS TODAY.



THIRD GENERATION PETOSA BROTHERS
Carl (L), Dean (Center), Joe Jr (R)

place. In the tuning process, Joe Petosa or Joe Petosa, Jr., files the end of a reed for a sharper note (higher tone) or scratches the base to get a slower vibration (lower tone). This is the same process that has been used for more than one hundred years to obtain the precise pitch needed for each individual reed played on an accordion.

The Petosa's are proud to have a long list of professional artists who play their accordions — renowned names, such as: Anthony Galla-Rini, Dick Contino, Jorgen Sundeqvist, Louis Fanucchi, Walter Eriksson, Ed Allenbach, Dr. Marcel Andrade, Robert Atwood, Fr. Joe Baccellieri, Nick Ballarini, Sylvia Marie Barber, Pete Barbutti, Chuck Berger, Ponty Bone, John Bonica, Stan Boreson, Gene Boscacci, Corky Brumble, Bert Carlson, Tom Collins, Cassie Conolly, Tom Demski, Al Fabre, Anthony Facciuto, Henry Gentile, Gordon Groening, Renaldo Guerra, Eileen Hagan, Gary Hausam, Eddy Huttinger, Horace Lazzari, Ray Lewis, Tony Lovello, Steve Lundquist, Herb Marks, Jerry Marsh, Bob Mascagno, Ken Olendorf, Joe Parente, Bill Patacchia, Roger Perschke, Nick Saladino, Charlie Sauss, Dr. Norman Seaton, Sharon Seaton, Dennis Shadduck, Ray Stahla, Bob Stoebel, Sylvia Storaasli, Frank Sugia, Ted Thull, Arthur Trapp, Grigor Tritchkov, Charles Troiano, Tom Turigliatto, Marv Weber, Tony Yazzolino, and many others.

Petosa recalls with excitement that the accordion got a great boost just after World War II with the rise of the popular player, Dick Contino. "In that era, he was like Elvis Presley. He was just it! Dick Contino started the boom, and it lasted quite a while. Then came the Lawrence Welk Age, and later the waning of the accordion's popularity as the guitar rose in serious competition." According to Petosa, his business has stayed relatively steady throughout this period of decline because the Midwest is very strong in ethnic origin and his company has been totally dedicated to the professional, not the faddist. Joe Petosa is quite optimistic about the future of the accordion. He believes that its popularity in the United States will indeed rise again and that we have already begun to see signs of its resurgence as some popular rock stars have adopted the instrument for their groups. The Petosa company will be right there to support this accordion renaissance.

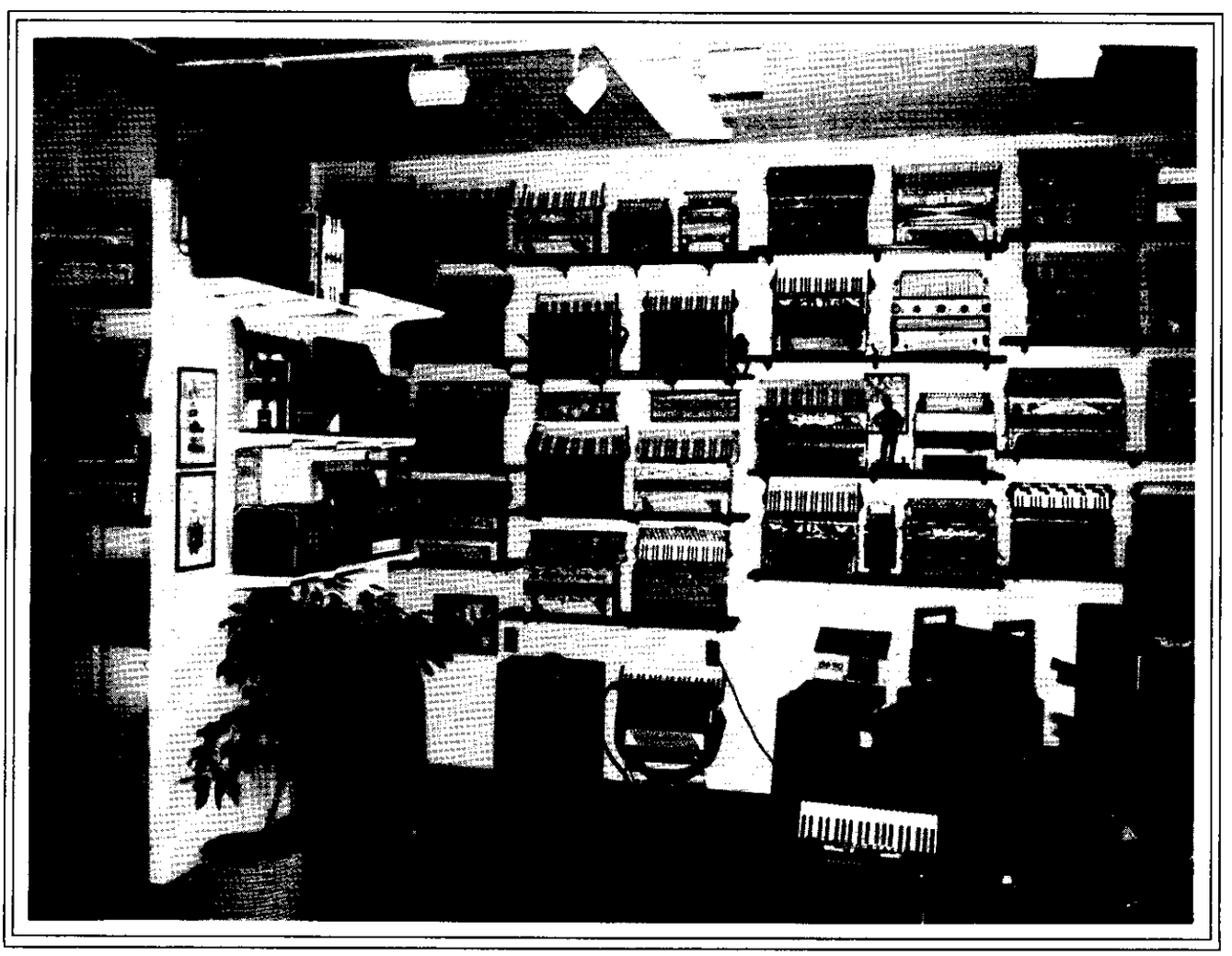
Petosa likes to explain the accordion to novices who know nothing about the accordion. His vivid description deserves repeating: "It's an odd hybrid, a reed-wind instrument with a keyboard, and is technically a member of the organ family. Its archetype is the 'Cheng,' a Chinese organ with reeds rather than pipes which dates from 2700 B.C. The Cheng was conceivably brought back by Marco Polo. The accordion, itself, more or less as we know it, was reputedly invented in 1829 in Vienna. It consists of a bellows with folds that blows air over reeds, to which is attached a keyboard of up to about four octaves. As keyboard instruments go, it's particularly physical. The right hand plays the melody on the keyboard (sometimes rows of buttons, not piano keys), while the left hand works the bellows in and out, manipulating the little buttons for the bass harmony."

Would you like to see some of the antique accordions from years' past? Then you'll want to visit Petosa's museum — the only one of its size on the West Coast. There are over 100 accordions in the museum, with about 50 accordions on display. Some accordions date back before the 1900's. He is especially proud of a piano accordion on display as it is the first piano accordion ever made by Paolo Soprani in 1907. According to Joe's research, this is the year that the piano keyboard was adopted, and prior to this date, Soprani only made button or chromatic accordions. Also on display is a rare uniform keyboard accordion patented by John Reuther. Joe even has some of the early Guerrini accordions that his father made while working for the Guerrini company in San Francisco. Also on display is a assortment of very early Excelsior, Dallape, and Italo-American accordions. Then, of course, there are some beautiful Petosa accordions, which were made

in Seattle by Petosa in 1922 and beyond. When in the Seattle area, a visit to the Petosa Accordion Museum is a must!

If Grandfather Carl Petosa were still alive, he'd be proud of the accomplishments of his son, Joe, and his three grandsons, Carl, Dean, and Joe Jr. This company has indeed flourished, even in otherwise unfavorable circumstances for the accordion industry. The artists who play a Petosa are proud to do so and are thankful to this Seattle family for its dedication and insistence on quality. Of course, over the years, some things have changed dramatically, such as, better materials, sophisticated and up-to-date tools and equipment, and highly refined methods and expertise. But, the original pioneering spirit and the truly insatiable desire for optimum quality and enduring excellence is still the basic credo — the long-sought dream of its founder, Carl Petosa. Now, it is no longer a dream; the dream is a manifest reality. The legacy left by Carl Petosa has continued for three generations, and it will undoubtedly continue for many generations to come in this remarkable Petosa family.

[This history of Petosa was obtained by Eddie Chavez, who made all of the personal contacts to obtain the necessary material. The final copy of this story has been personally reviewed by Joe Petosa, and it is printed with his kind permission and cooperation. Additional information about the complete Petosa line of accordions may be obtained from Petosa at 313 N.E. 45th St., Seattle, Washington 98105. Phone: (203) 632-2700.]



ANTIQUE ACCORDIONS ON A WALL OF PETOSA'S ACCORDION MUSEUM

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ANTIQUE ACCORDIONS ON A WALL OF PETOSA'S ACCORDION MUSEUM

THE GIULIETTI ACCORDION CORPORATION: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

By Jack Kenley

***Editor's Note:** I am greatly indebted to Jack Kenley for writing this informative account of the founding of the Giulietti Corporation and its innovative president, Julio Giulietti. In this story, Jack Kenley tells us about the early beginning of the company as well as the historical background of accordion manufacturing in Castelfidardo, Italy, the world capital of accordion manufacturing. Much of this information was gathered by Jack during long flights with Julio to attend accordion contests and festivals as well as lengthy discussions in hotel rooms all over the world. Jack Kenley, a professional accordionist himself, studied for a short time under the famous teacher, Joe Biviano. In addition to his love for the accordion, Jack developed an equal love for flying during his teens. During World War II, Jack was a factory test pilot for CON-SAIR Consolidated. After the war, he continued with a full-time career as an airline pilot, flying all over the world except in China and Russia. He has played the accordion in clubs and on radio stations around the world, and now that he is retired, Jack devotes himself exclusively to the accordion. For the past several years, Jack has accompanied his longtime friend, Julio Giulietti, during several visits to inspect the factory in Castelfidardo. The name Giulietti has long been known here in the United States and elsewhere for its reputation as a superior quality instrument. I am proud to highlight the history of this dynamic company and recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Julio Giulietti, who has led the company to new heights of excellence during his lengthy tenure as president. Thank you, Jack, for this valuable contribution.*

.....

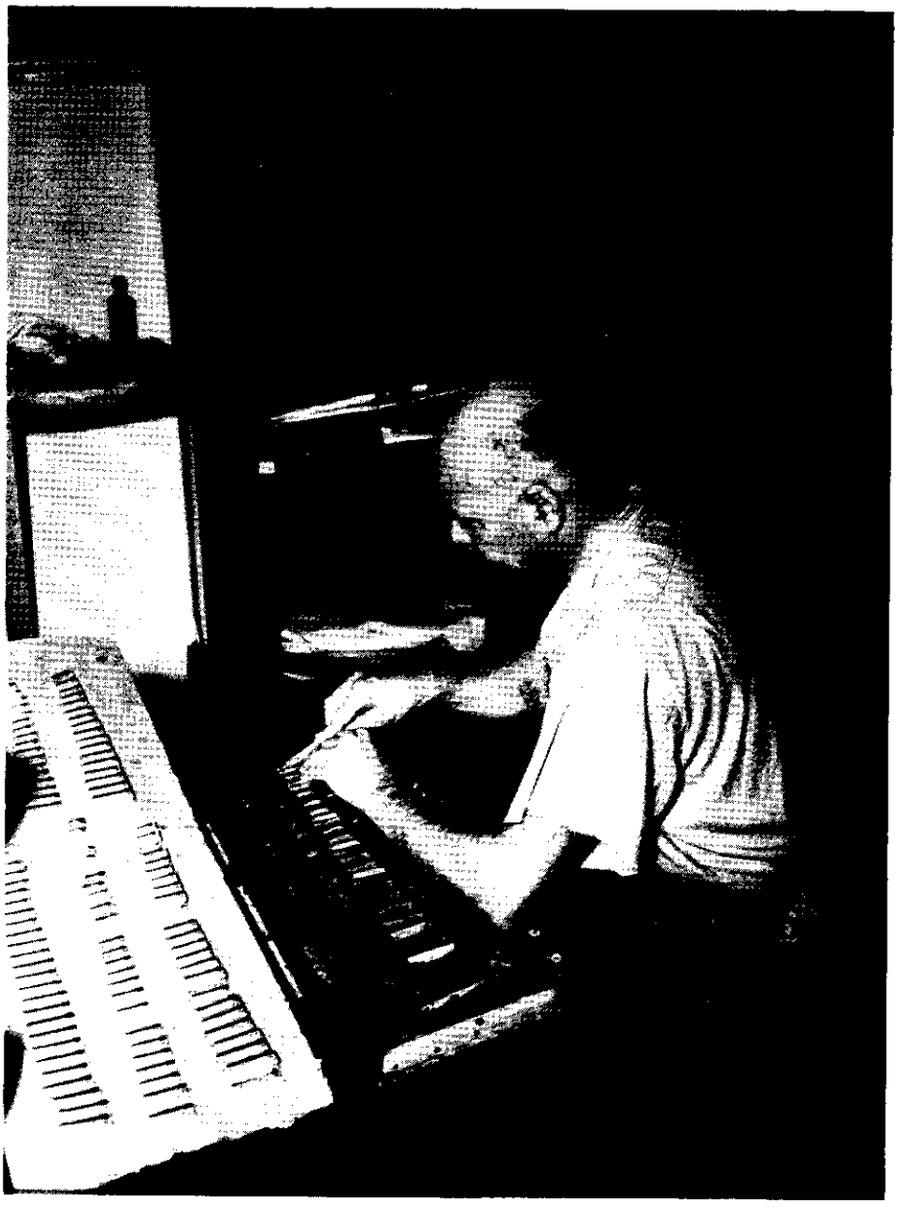
The history of the Giulietti accordion name can be traced back more than 75 years to the Italian town of Castelfidardo, a small, growing town that would later come to be known as the accordion capital of the world. Luigi (Louis) Giulietti, though not born in Castelfidardo, moved there from the nearby town of Recanati as a young man. In this picturesque city he learned the accordion trade and later immigrated to the United States where he made a lasting impact on the growth and development of the accordion in America.

Louis liked to tell everyone about life in Castelfidardo and how this small village came to be the accordion capital of the world. He often told this story: A pilgrim from either Austria or Czechoslovakia was on his way to Loreto, Italy, and he stopped one night at the home of a farmer, asking for shelter. This pilgrim had a small accordion with him, and one of the farmer's sons begged to buy it from him. The weary pilgrim agreed, and the son who purchased the small accordion was none other than Paolo Soprani, the father of accordion manufacturing in Castelfidardo and founder of the Soprani Accordion Company.

The first accordions had brass reeds, not steel reeds as we have today. One of the most difficult jobs that Paolo Soprani had in duplicating the pilgrim's accordion was making the brass reeds. Not being an expert at that time in accordion construction, he had to learn by means of simple experimentation. And, since he didn't know that reeds could be made of steel, the first accordions he manufactured had brass reeds — just like the first accordion purchased from the pilgrim. But, the brass reeds presented a difficult problem in production as they had to be individually hammered out to obtain correct reed pitch, rather than filed as is done with steel reeds (brass cannot be filed).

Some time later, Soprani discovered that steel reeds were superior to the brass reeds. Louis Giulietti's father-in-law was one of the first craftsmen to begin making the steel reeds and eventually almost all of the family (of about 13 children) became reed makers to keep up with the increasing demand for accordions.

Louis learned the art of reed making from his future wife, Louisa. He had to walk



MR. LOUIS GIULIETTI
Founder of
GIULIETTI ACCORDION CO.

many miles from his home in Recanati to Louisa's home in Castelfidardo to learn the trade. During these lessons, he learned more than reed-making as he fell deeply in love with Louisa. After their marriage, reed making became a family operation; Louisa worked alongside Louis, making some of the finest reeds in the world. Louisa always liked to joke to friends and relatives that she was a better reed maker than Louis since she had taught him everything about the art. Louis developed such skill that he was also in demand as an instructor for the apprentice craftsmen, teaching them the intricate art of reed making.

Having developed considerable expertise, Louis agonized somewhat concerning his career and where it might eventually lead him. Life had become increasingly difficult for him and his family during these days as times were very tough. At one very critical time in his life, he was working at the Soprani Company and was having difficulty making ends with all the financial responsibilities for his family. So, he approached Mr. Soprani and asked him politely for a modest raise. As was the tendency among employers in those days, Mr. Soprani was not the least impressed with this request for a raise, so he blurted out: "No, I'll give you no raise.



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JULIO GIULIETTI
(RECEIVING FASHION AWARD AT NAMN MUSIC TRADE CONVENTION - 1953)

You're poor, and you'll always be poor. So, forget it!" This insult so incensed Louis that he went home and told his wife he had decided to immigrate to America where opportunities would undoubtedly be better.

So, in 1914, Louis Giulietti gathered together his meager possessions and, leaving his family behind, immigrated alone to the United States to look for opportunities that were being denied to him in Italy. He didn't realize at that time how great his opportunities would be in America and that he and his son, Julio, would come to build and operate the Giulietti Accordion Corporation, a trend-setter within the accordion industry.

Upon arrival in America in 1914, Louis first settled in Chicago where he set up an accordion manufacturing company with two other craftsmen: Cameranesi and Orlandoni. Also, he later became associated with the Piatanesi brothers (Bramante, Demo, and Finau), and together they formed a partnership. Although not originally called Italo-American, this company was in fact the original company that became known as the famous Italo-American Accordion Company of Chicago. It was actually some years later that Pietro Frosini came up with the idea to name the company "Italo-American" since the owners were from **Italy**, and they were manufacturing accordions in **America**.

After manufacturing accordions for several years in Chicago, Louis Giulietti sold out his shares of Italo-American and decided to move to New York for greater opportunities. In 1919, he traveled to New York where he boarded with the Galizi family, who owned the well-known Galizi Accordion Company. He lived with them for a short while and did some tuning for them until he became established on his own. He soon found a partner by the name of Ricci, and they formed a firm by the name of Giulietti & Ricci. But, they didn't agree on everything in the business so Louis decided to try it on his own by establishing the Giulietti Accordion Corporation in 1923. This firm has been under continuous family ownership with no other owners or partners.

After 9 years of living alone in this country and having to support his family back in Italy, Louis finally was in a financial position to bring his family to America. In addition to the money required, there were many necessary arrangements to get approval for his family to join him. But arrange it he did, and in 1923, he welcomed his loving wife and maturing son Julio as they arrived in New York onboard an ocean liner. It was a grand reunion. Julio, at age 13, was well prepared to help his father in his company as his mother had already taught him the art of reed making; he had also learned to play the accordion while in Italy.

During the next 3 years, Julio spent his days in school learning English. Then, in the evenings he practiced the accordion and worked at the factory with his father. In these formative years, Julio made great progress on the accordion under the instruction of Charles Magnante. Julio considers himself fortunate indeed to have been able to take lessons from this great accordionist. Julio once told a very interesting story of his lessons with Magnante: "During my lessons, I would play my practice pieces for Magnante's approval, and as I was playing these pieces, I could see out of the corner of my eye that Magnante was carefully following each piece on his own accordion, fingering the notes on the keyboard, but without using the bellows." Charles Magnante was indeed a tremendous teacher who gave 100% of his effort to his students.

At the same time, Julio was also developing equal skill in the accordion-making trade. He had become a very skilled reed maker through his dad's and mother's efforts, and his dad decided to change the name of the company to Giuliette & Son Accordion Company. Julio had by this time become an accomplished accordionist and decided to open an accordion studio at the request of some friends and prospective students who wanted to take lessons.

Naturally, when the war came, this temporarily interrupted Julio's career. Since he

was not a citizen at the time, he was told to either join up or go to a concentration camp for the duration of the war. Julio was naturally insulted by this preposterous proposition that questioned his basic loyalty. Julio retorted that he was just as American as the person making the insinuation of disloyalty, but the person only laughed. After this incident Julio joined the Army, and he was assigned to a very critical job as a first-aid specialist in the Medical Corps upon completion of basic training. He was then shipped out to the West coast to the Los Angeles Port of Embarkation to await shipment to a battalion unit overseas.

Julio had his accordion with him and was playing it in the barracks when a major in charge of the Officers' Club stopped to listen to him. The major asked him if he would like to play that evening at the Officers' Club for a special dinner affair, and Julio joked that he would if he would give him a steak dinner. The major was elated and told him that if he would play, he'd be happy to give him *two* steak dinners. So, Julio agreed to play for the Officers' Club function, and the major kept his end of the bargain — two steak dinners.

Julio's appearance at the Officers' Club obviously created the need for more entertainment because before the night was over, the major said, "Soldier, I have my office above the main PX. Come to see me tomorrow because I have a good proposition for you." When Julio arrived to see the club officer, the major asked for his dog tag number so he could call headquarters to request a change in Julio's assignment. But, after a long conversation with headquarters, the major hung up the phone and turned to Julio saying, "Shucks, they can't change your assignment because you are a first-aid specialist. Due to your special skills, they cannot replace you with another soldier or release you from going overseas." Then, the major suddenly got another idea and asked if there was any condition that might require some medical attention. Julio said, "Yes, I have a hernia." As soon as he mentioned that, the major picked up the phone again and called one of the doctor's at the hospital. He asked the doctor, "Do you remember the accordionist at the Officer's Club last night?" Then, he asked if the doctor would admit Julio to the hospital, and the doctor agreed. This canceled Julio's orders, and for the rest of his Army career, Julio was kept on limited duty due to his hernia. So, for the next 27 months, Julio played for troops going out and coming in at the Los Angeles Port of Embarkation.

During those days, the Army went to great length to maintain the highest morale among the men and women fighting the war. And, Julio worked very hard to do what he could to entertain the troops. He got together with some other GI musicians and created a tremendous quartet in the camp. Every Tuesday evening, Sammy Greene, a terrific black tap dancer, and Julio would go to the hospital's amputee ward to cheer them up. For their exceptional service to these soldiers, the members of the quartet were decorated. After the war ended, Julio was the first one of the quartet to be discharged, as he was over 35 years old at that time. Upon return to civilian life, he started teaching again and also helped his father continue to build the company into a major accordion company for the next 7 years.

Then, in 1950, Louis Giulietti got very sick and after a short illness, he died the same year. After his father's death, Julio had to quit playing professionally to become the president of the company. He worked exceptionally hard to continue its operation, expand its line of accordions, and develop a world-renowned reputation for the Giulietti accordion. Julio is a man of vision who felt a great responsibility for the future of the company. He wanted to build up the company in an effort to perpetuate his father's own aspirations and earlier accomplishments. Even though Julio was proud of their professional line of accordions bearing the Giulietti name, he envisioned the accordion in a new era. It was then that he decided to add many new, popular-priced models to his professional, custom-built line.

At this time, Julio decided to go to his

native Italy to discuss with the craftsmen in Castelfidardo his tentative plans for the development of some new accordion models. The accordion was then the number one keyboard instrument in sales. Julio spent 9 weeks in one of the factories, discussing improvements and making all the necessary arrangements for establishing the new line. On his return to the U.S., Julio displayed at the Musical Trade Convention in Chicago in 1951, and then travelled throughout the U.S. establishing Giulietti accounts at major music dealers in each city. During this period, his sales were running over 250 instruments a month.

Over the years, Julio Giulietti has been recognized for many personal accomplishments and manufacturing achievements. His years of effort have been well rewarded. In 1953, during the NAMN Music Trade Convention, the Giulietti Accordion Corporation received the **Fashion Academy Gold Medal Award** for its outstanding tone and smart, distinctive design. This award is the highest manufacturing honor a company can receive. There is no question that this award did much to advance the Giulietti accordion as a top instrument for artists. Then, in 1959, his ceaseless efforts to further improve the accordion led to the receipt of the much coveted **AAA and ATG Achievement Award**. Their national poll elected Julio as the manufacturer who had made the most mechanical improvement to the accordion.

In 1960, Julio Giulietti made perhaps his greatest single contribution to the accordion industry — the Giulietti Free-Bassetti System. It was at the Chicago NAMN Trade Convention that the famous accordionist, Leon Sash, introduced this Free-Bassetti System at the Giulietti-hosted Accordion Concert. The system has become extremely popular over the years and is still in great demand by those who wish to have a full 4 1/2 octave range in the left hand. Today, Julio is very proud of the many professional and younger accordionists who have adopted his Free-Bassetti System accordion. During the 1963 NAMN Trade Convention in Chicago, Julio presented an all-Free-Bassetti System concert which was warmly received and applauded by the American accordion dealers.

Also in 1963, Julio Giulietti was elected to the **Arcari Accordion Hall of Fame** which is one of the highest honors that can be achieved in the accordion world.

In his many travels across the country, he is often asked his opinion about the decline in popularity of the accordion. Julio feels that although the accordion is practically extinct in some parts of this country, that it will nevertheless make an eventual comeback because it is such a versatile and practical instrument. Not only is it an all-around solo instrument with which you can entertain yourself, but it is also portable, giving you a greater possibility of making a living with it than an instrument like the piano.

In Europe, the accordion does not lack in popularity. So, Julio recognized the potential of foreign markets and developed a marketing strategy for distributing the Giulietti accordion throughout Europe.

Today, Julio is actively engaged in producing and developing innovations for the accordion so that the Giulietti line keeps pace with the times, and new visions are advocated for the accordion. "Progress" is alive and well in the Giulietti Corporation. As in the past, Julio is in the forefront of progress and remains a leader in the accordion industry.

[This history of the Giulietti Accordion Corporation and its president, Julio Giulietti, was arranged with the efforts of Eddie Chavez, who is a personal friend of both Julio Giulietti and the author of the article, Jack Kenley. Eddie coordinated all the actions needed to complete this article. The final copy of this article has been reviewed for accuracy by Julio Giulietti, and it is printed with his permission and cooperation. Additional information about the Giulietti line may be obtained from the Giulietti Accordion Corporation at 3 Cross Street, Westfield, MA 01085. Phone: (413) 562-1584.]

COLOMBO & SONS — SAN FRANCISCO'S PREMIER ACCORDION COMPANY

By Edwin Davison

Editor's Note: This premier accordion company is one of the oldest accordion companies in the United States as its history goes back to 1907, when Colombo Piatanesi and Pasquale Petromilli purchased the Guerrini Accordion Company. Colombo & Sons Accordion Company is mentioned many times throughout Part I of this book, including an extensive pictorial history of the company's early accordion models and literature. I am extremely proud to give Gordon Piatanesi an opportunity to tell us more about the early beginnings of Colombo & Sons Accordion Company and describe its present operations. Although the company is no longer located in San Francisco, it is inextricably linked to San Francisco by its historical roots to this picturesque city. Colombo Piatanesi, the company founder, worked hard to advance the accordion, and his successors have followed in his footsteps and have made many additional advancements for the accordion. I sincerely appreciate the cooperation of Gordon Piatanesi in the development of this story.

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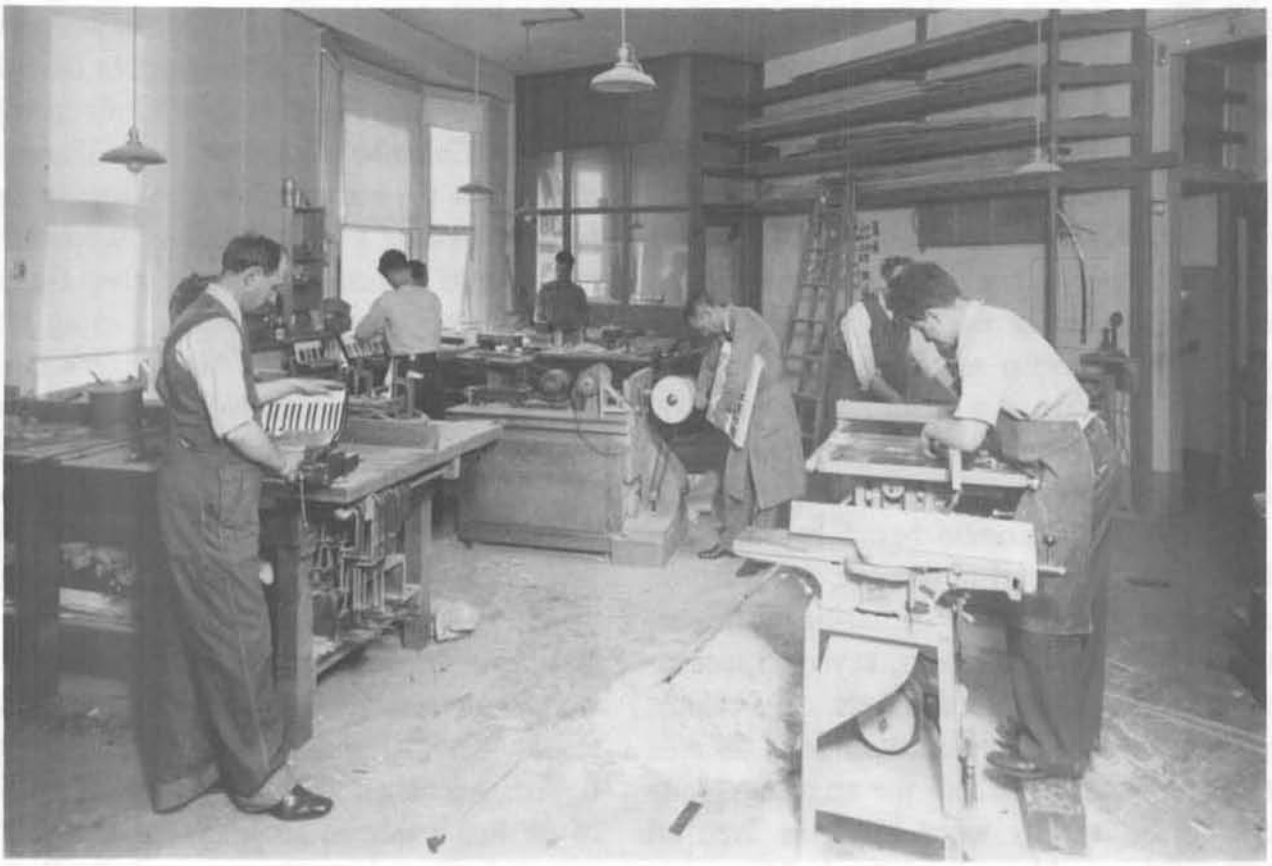
In the year 1907, Colombo Piatanesi immigrated to America from Castelfidardo, Italy with his immediate family. Like so many other early immigrants, he came to America to obtain a better, more modern life for his family and to find an area where he could prove his skills as an accordion builder. He first settled in Chicago, but he stayed there for only a short while. Then, late in the same year, he took his family and moved them farther West to San Francisco, California, where he permanently established himself and his family. Upon arriving in San Francisco, Colombo met up with Pasquale Petromilli, whom he had known back in Italy, and they decided to purchase the Guerrini Accordion Company from Paul Guerrini, who had decided to move back to Italy to rejoin the family business in Italy.

The Guerrini Company had one of the finest reputations as an exceptional accordion builder. Construction of the Guerrini accordion was done strictly by hand as were all the early accordions manufactured in the U.S. The finished product was a marvel to behold and play. Naturally, it was quite a challenge taking over a company having such a distinguished record and successfully carrying it on to new heights of excellence.

Having been born in Castelfidardo, Italy, the World Capital of accordion manufacturing, Colombo Piatanesi had learned the art of accordion construction from the great Italian masters of the trade. He was a perfectionist, and he demanded the "highest standards" of himself and his craftsmen. "Quality" was his motto; no matter how long it took to produce a top quality instrument, he had the patience needed to follow through until the accordion met his high standards of quality. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that the Guerrini accordion was regarded by many as one of the best accordions produced in the world during this period. In 1915, the "Panama-Pacific International World Exposition" was held in San Francisco. At this exposition, accordion manufacturers from all over the world exhibited their instruments, and the Guerrini Company took the top award for quality in construction, appearance, and performance. Some of the buildings that housed this World Exhibition and Fair are still standing, and they are known as the "Palace of Fine Arts."

In 1927, Colombo's two sons, Gary and Faust, became anxious to involve themselves in the accordion trade and were looking for an opportunity of their own. So, to help Gary and Faust break into this field, Colombo decided to sell out his share of the Guerrini Accordion Company and establish a new firm which he could share with his sons. He then sold out his share and started the firm of Colombo & Sons Accordion Company, a name that aptly describes the involvement of father and sons and the passing of technical skills from one



FACTORY — COLOMBO & SONS, 126 COLUMBUS AVENUE, SAN FRANCISCO



(Left to Right) MARIO ZANONI, ANGELO PIETRI, CHUCK ZANONI, FAUST PIATANESI, GUSTAVE (ERNEST) OLUND, ERIC GYLLING, ROBERT BALLESTRAZZE AND JOHN MONTEVERDI — CIRCA 1940.

generation to the other. Pursuing the tradition of excellence that they had maintained at the Guerrini Company, Colombo and his sons dedicated themselves to the task of continuing to build only top quality instruments. Naturally, with the two younger sons came new ideas, and these ideas led to major improvements that had not existed even in the finest Guerrini accordion. The Colombo accordion quickly became known worldwide as a premier accordion company in its own right and was used by some of the greatest professional accordionists of the day.

As the Colombo brand became well known and increased in demand, the company expanded its operation by hiring additional technicians: cabinet makers, keyboard specialists, machinists, and reed makers. The cabinet makers were specialists in constructing the reed blocks and wood shell of the accordion. Only the highest quality wood imported from all parts of the world — wood that had been seasoned from 20 to 25 years. The keyboard specialists were responsible for only one thing: Constructing the finest quality keyboard possible. The machinists specialized in making the bass machine and all the metal parts needed for the bass mechanism. Finally, the reed makers and tuners had the special talent to create the reeds needed to bring this wonderful instrument alive. All of the technicians worked under the experienced eye of the master technician, Colombo Piatanesi, who took pride in every instrument manufactured by these craftsmen. As each part of the accordion was assembled, Colombo carefully checked it personally. When custom models were being built, he followed every step of their design and manufacture as though they were his own.

Colombo Piatanesi was active in the company until his death in 1941. His two sons, who had many years of experience in supervising the overall operation of the company, were now in charge. Years of experience with their father as the master teacher had prepared them for this day, and they were eager to demonstrate their ability to lead the company to new heights.

Since the company had experienced considerable growth over the years in the mid-30's, Gary and Faust needed administrative help; so, Colombo's daughter, Anna Piatanesi, also joined the company as an executive secretary, providing a great degree of support. In the early 40's, another family member, Gordon Piatanesi, began working in the factory after school. By 1947, Gordon had become qualified in all aspects of accordion building, and he also had begun to work full time in sales. He had started off with construction of the accordion shells, then progressed to keyboard construction and bass mechanisms, and finally learned the art of reed work, installation, and tuning.

As the company continued to grow, it worked increasingly hard to maintain its reputation. Keeping pace with progress, Colombo & Sons Accordion Company manufactured one of the first amplified accordions and served as one of the first electronic accordion distributors for the eleven Western States.

Prior to World War II, in the late thirties, Colombo & Sons began importing some of the less expensive commercial-grade accordions from the Piatanesi family in Italy. And, by 1954, Colombo & Sons — along with most other companies in the U.S. — had begun to import up to 50% of their line from the Italian companies that could meet their standards of high quality. By the end of 1954, the last Colombo accordion was manufactured in the U.S. Thus, in 1955 Colombo & Sons had begun a new era as all of the Colombo accordion line would thereafter be constructed in Castelfidardo, Italy.

In 1981, Gordon Piatanesi became the sole owner of Colombo & Sons, and at this time he restructured the company into a corporation arrangement. As the sole owner, Gordon maintained the same high standards that had been established in the past: top quality materials, seasoned wood, and only the finest reeds. With these standards in mind, he created a special model: The Custom Colombo. These models are completely disassembled upon receipt from Italy, and any defect is



GORDON PIATANESI (L) AND PAUL PASQUALI (R) IN THE COLOMBO & SONS SHOWROOM. GORDON IS HOLDING AN ANTIQUE COLOMBO ACCORDION BUILT IN 1910 BY HIS GRANDFATHER COLOMBO PIATANESI. PAUL PASQUALI IS HOLDING AN ELKA MODEL MIDI ACCORDION WHICH CARRIES THE COLOMBO BRAND NAME TODAY.

(Photo Courtesy of Victoria Rouse: 1990 — All Rights Reserved)

corrected. Final tuning and keyboard adjustment is also accomplished during this final inspection. The reeds that are used in a Custom Colombo are handmade and must pass two special testings before they can qualify for installation in a Custom Colombo.

In 1987, Colombo & Sons added a new partner to the corporation: Paul Pasquali. He has exceptional qualifications and has been a great asset to the continued progress of the firm. He has an indepth knowledge of the accordion, electronic accordion, and MIDI accordions. He is also a professional musician, and with his knowledge and performance, sales has significantly increased in the electronic accordions. When the MIDI accordion was added to the Colombo line, Paul immediately adapted to this new addition and gave classes and MIDI demonstrations to educate the general public, semi-professionals, teachers, and dealers. He loves to share this new technology with everyone, and the public is eager to learn about these electronic advancements in the accordion.

Paul Pasquali is an enthusiastic young man, who is up to date on the latest electronic sound modules which blend beautifully with the accordion reeds. Not all electronic sounds blend with accordion reeds, so attention in this area helps to make a good marriage between reeds and the electronic sounds.

All of the accordions handled by Colombo & Sons, whether conventional acoustic, electronic, or MIDI, still go through a series of tests and inspections as in the past. Gordon Piatanesi considers these steps a "must" in order to ensure the consistent quality expected of the Colombo accordion. Gordon Piatanesi looks to the future with pride in his past accomplishments, and as the grandson of Colombo Piatanesi, he feels a great responsibility to continue with the same dedication and feelings for the accordion that Colombo exhibited in order to produce the highest quality instrument possible.

The accordion business has been good to the Piatanesi family; it has been loved by Colombo, his daughter Anna, two sons, Gary and Faust, and his grandson, Gordon. And, perhaps Gordon Piatanesi's greatest hope is that his two sons, Thomas and Scott (who now have their fingers slightly involved in the business), will follow in his footsteps and continue the legacy of Colombo & Sons.



(L TO R) PAUL PASQUALI, ART VAN DAMME, AND GORDON PIATANESI (May 1991, San Francisco)



GORDON PIATANESI (L) AND LEO AQUINO (R), AT THE COTATI ACCORDION FESTIVAL (Aug 91)

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COLOMBO'S SPECIAL POLKA MODEL ACCORDION TYPIFIES TODAY'S MODERN DESIGNS

[The final copy of this story has been personally reviewed for accuracy by Gordon Piatanesi, and it is printed with his kind permission and cooperation. If additional information is needed about the complete line of Colombo accordions, the company may be contacted at 1201 Andersen Drive - Suite O, San Rafael, CA 94901 or phone (415) 457-2222.]

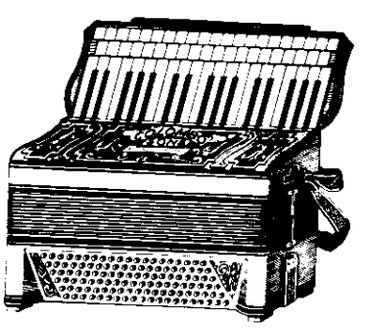
Colombo & Sons  Accordion Corporation

Colombo Piatanesi

Originator









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Colombo & Sons Accordion Corporation



Colombo Piatanesi
Originator







THE IORIO FAMILY — EARLY ORGAN AND ACCORDION MANUFACTURER

By Edwin Davison

Editor's Note: ***The Iorio family has a long, esteemed history in organ and accordion building that can be traced back to Italy — the only current U.S. accordion company that has traced their Italian lineage as far back as 1842. The Iorio family's ancestors first built customized pipe organs for churches throughout Italy; then, at some point they also began to manufacture accordions in Italy — later moving to America and continuing this trade in New York City. Elsewhere in this book, Biaggio Quattrociocche tells of his early association and blood relation to this pioneer accordion-manufacturing family. The Iorio accordion business has enjoyed many "firsts." It has grown from the company's inception in 1907 to the current SYN-CORDION Musical Instruments Corporation in Englewood, New Jersey. This company has indeed kept pace with the progress in electronic technology and applied the new technology to the accordion. I am proud to feature this company and tell about the significant impact that the early Iorios (Frank, Augusto, Candido, and Amedeo) and today's generation Amedeo Iorio [called Al] and his son, Ken, have had over the last 82 years. We appreciate the assistance of Al and Ken in the preparation of this article.***

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When the Iorio family members immigrated to the United States at the turn of the century, they came with the highest hopes and aspirations. They didn't need to learn the art of accordion building upon arrival in America because they had already acquired the complex skills associated with this trade in their native Italy, including the art of organ making. The Iorios were self-reliant, industrious, and fully prepared to make their mark on the accordion building trade in America.

The Iorio legacy is quite interesting. Al Iorio, the current president of SYN-CORDION Musical Instruments Corporation, is understandably proud to trace his roots back some 150 years to his great grandfather, Augusto, who was the patriarch of the family. In Italy the early Iorio family built church reed organs in Rome and owned a music business that sold musical instruments to the Italian elite and churches. One of the works that the Iorios were most proud of was the cathedral organ built for the "Villa Borghese," which is now a famous park in Rome, Italy. Many of the pipe organs built in those days were the size of half a small house, and they would take over a year to build. In the mid-1800's, Augusto Iorio, an organ apprentice, applied the skills acquired from his forefathers to the manufacturing of accordions.

Before immigrating to America, Augusto Iorio and his 17-year-old son, Frank, regularly played duets on their piano accordions, having established a fine reputation as excellent performers. In 1900, they teamed up with Amedeo Iorio to form a trio and went on tour in France. They played in many of the big cities and earned enough money to make plans to immigrate to the United States. The first member of the Iorio family to come to America was Amedeo Iorio. When he arrived in America, he started to work for the Cerabino factory doing repair work and building small accordions. A few years later, when Augusto came to New York, he also went to work with Cerabino for about one year, and then he was offered a higher paying job with the Bernardino company in uptown New York. In the ensuing years, Augusto's two sons, Frank and Candido, and Amedeo's two sons, Arthur and Hugo, also immigrated to New York.

After the large Iorio family had immigrated to New York, there wasn't enough work for everyone in the accordion factories, so Frank, Candido, Arthur, and Hugo worked for a while in piano factories. Then in 1907, some members of the Iorio family set up a small shop at 44 Baxter Street in "Little Italy," thus founding the original Iorio Accordion

Company. It was established by Frank Iorio, Augusto Iorio, Candido Iorio, Alex DeLisi, and Biaggio Quattrociocche. ***[Editor's Note: Biaggio Quattrociocche did not stay in accordion manufacturing as he decided to found his own accordion music publishing house in Stubenville, Ohio — later moving the firm to Los Angeles.]*** Over the years, the Iorio Accordion Company has been in several other locations, including Cresskill, New York.

By 1923 the Iorio Accordion Company had already established one of the finest reputations among the many accordion manufacturers in New York and other parts of the country. Augusto's son, Candido had already invented the double tone chamber, along with a long list of refinements that included invisible bass and treble shifts, aluminum plate shift mechanisms, and celluloid cases. The early firm's top accordion model, the "Maestro," was one of the finest accordions available at the time, and Candido Iorio devoted a lifetime to building and improving this accordion and the others in the Iorio and Candido lines.

To Candido, the slightest deficiency in an instrument was intolerable. In 1939 the Iorio Accordion Company was located in the Carl Fischer Building in New York; it employed over 50 master workmen, each of whom was a specialist in a portion of the Iorio accordion. They were deeply concerned in the perfection of the product they made. Candido Iorio was known as a sensitive genius who scorned innovations whose only value was the cheap fanfare of sales arguments. He avoided the bizarre and the garish and spurned the paid testimonials of accordionists. Indeed, Candido has earned his place in history as a great pioneer during the early years of this historic company.

Al Iorio has continued to offer the very best leadership for the company. He has made many innovative improvements to the conventional accordion during his years of leadership. Among these was his invention of the "Amplisonic" tone chamber, developed in 1954. Al was educated as a mechanical engineer at the Stevens Institute of Technology. Al first worked for Fairchild Aviation Corporation on aerial cameras. During World War II, he joined the U.S. Air Corps and served with a B-29 squadron on Guam. When the war ended, he joined his father, Candido, in the accordion factory where he has devoted his life to this company. Always seeking to provide the accordionist with a better means of expression, he developed the Accorgan, a pioneering application of electronics to the accordion, which is the most popular model sold by the company today. According to Ken Iorio, sales manager and son of Al Iorio, the company's accordions were the first to use computerized technology in accordion/organ units. The Iorio Accorgan made its debut in 1959 at the NAMM Convention at the Hotel New Yorker in New York City. Public and dealer reaction to this amazing new instrument were spontaneous and enthusiastic. Al Iorio obtained several patents for the accordion/organ which he later licensed to the accordion industry, including Cordovox, and in turn, other allied patents have been assigned to the Iorio company by James Borell.

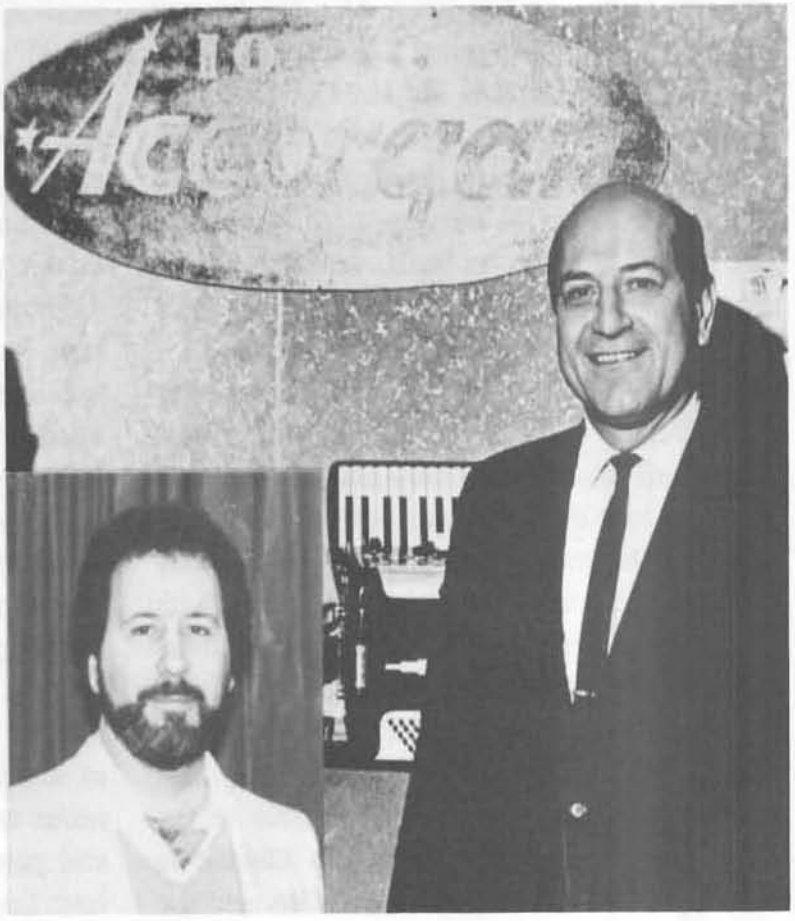
The Iorio Accorgan has always been abreast of the latest electronic engineering techniques, and Al Iorio quickly applied them to this electronic marvel, from Series A through Series I. The Accorgan is a complete orchestra at your fingertips, and it is indeed changing the image and use of the accordion. Normally in the past, people wouldn't hire just an accordionist for a wedding or party, but now with the advent of the Accorgan (with its polyphonic and homophonic sounds), a single accordionist can be hired because it's comparable to hiring an entire band. This invention with its improvements in state-of-the-art technology has revolutionized the industry.

The Accorgan can produce over 1200 tonal combinations. Thus, it provides a terrific potential. The accordionist is not only an accordionist, but also an organist. With an Accorgan the accordionist has the full range of an organ console. The performer can play the



AMERICA'S FIRST AND FOREMOST
ACCORDION FACTORY -----1907
IORIO ACCORDION CO. New York

RIGHT TO LEFT: FRANK IORIO, AUGUSTO IORIO, ALEX DE LISI, CANDIDO IORIO, AND BIAGGIO QUATTROCIOCCHE.



AL IORIO (TOP) AND KEN IORIO, LOWER LEFT INSET (CIRCA 1964)



CANDIDO IORIO



IORIO ACCORDION FACTORY (CIRCA 1939)
CARL FISCHER BUILDING, NEW YORK

SELECTED PICTURES OF IORIO FAMILY AND EARLY IORIO FACTORY

organ without the use of the bellows, or he can command a fully HI-FI amplified accordion which can be played independently of the organ. Better still, one can play both the organ and amplified (or unamplified) accordion simultaneously which results in magnificent Accorgan tonal combinations. This modern capability is due to the technology associated

with microchips, memory tabs, and programmable features built into the accordion. In short, the Accorgan performer controls two great instruments from one keyboard, without changing wires, plugs, or positions. Thus, from the income-booking angle, the Accorgan makes practical sense — the first truly new instrument implementation in the last 30 years.

Some Iorio accordions today come with optional features ranging from independent rhythm sections to microprocessor technology that can be converted to 36 programmable preset combinations in the treble section, and at the same time, compute the correct bass and chord tonal effects.

The SYN-CORDION Musical Instruments Corporation ***[Present Iorio company name]*** practices some of the most aggressive marketing techniques in the industry through telemarketing, direct mail, and advertising in the major trade magazines. Its mailing and phone lists reach over 8,000 people. They also sponsor live demonstrations of their I-Series and Syntara II Accorgans using today's leading accordionists such as Eddie Monteiro, who is ranked by George Shearing as one of the Top 10 musicians.

Since the Accorgan was introduced, it has been demonstrated by leading artists and dealers throughout the U.S. In 1981 within the span of one week, 25 demonstration shows were held in the following cities: Detroit, Saginaw, and Grand Rapids, Michigan; Indianapolis and South Bend, Indiana; Davenport, Iowa; San Francisco and Redding, California; Seattle, Washington; Worcester, Massachusetts; Hartford, Connecticut; Cleveland, Ohio; Buffalo, Schenectady, and East Elmhurst, New York; Miami Beach, Florida; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; College Park, Maryland; Minot, North Dakota; Grand Junction, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; Newark, New Jersey; and Montreal (Quebec) and Scarborough (Toronto) Canada.

Each year the popularity of the Accorgan continues to increase, and it is now being handled by many music stores throughout the country. An associated business, Iorio SYN-CORDION Music, serves the specialized needs of accordionists through the distribution of Sano musical instrument products, such as the Sano accordion line, electrical pickups, bass generators, and the SAN Service Department which can meet every electronic and accordion repair need, including MIDI retrofits.

Because of the high costs of American labor and overhead expenses, the Iorios import their entire accordion line from Italy, including accordion parts needed for repairs. Since the Iorios don't manufacture their instruments in the U.S., they have kept their staff to six people, including three family members, Al, Ken, and Gloria Iorio. Their in-house technicians are extremely well versed in electronics and computer literacy, as well as all aspects of the standard acoustical accordion.

The Accorgan combines electronics with human talent. Ken Iorio explains, "It will make more soloists out of accordion players and will entice more children to begin playing the accordion. An Accorgan doubles your capacity and makes you sound ten times better; it is not a threat to musicians. The threat lies in big-screen music videos and disc jockey shows in nightclubs which once featured live music. We must keep live musicians in business and encourage more of them in the future."

Al Iorio is most proud of the fact that his company is still a family-owned business and that the business will be continued by his son, Ken, far into the 21st Century. Today, as in the past, this "hallmark" company offers musicians both "quality" and "service" at an affordable price.

[The final copy of this story has been personally reviewed by Al and Ken Iorio, and it is printed with their kind permission. Information about the complete line of Iorio accordions may be obtained from the SYN-CORDION Musical Instrument Corporation, 117 Cedar Lane, Englewood, NJ 07631. Phone: (201) 568-7943.]

THE DEFFNER LEGACY: ERNEST DEFFNER, INC., PANCORDION, INC., AND TITANO ACCORDION COMPANY

By Dr. Salvatore M. Febbraio

Editor's Note: Throughout this book, accordion artists have expressed a special appreciation for the personal dedication and major accomplishments of Faithe Deffner during her illustrious career. I also wish to state my own admiration of her many accomplishments which are enumerated in this history of the accordion firms that she has so capably run for many years. Following in the footsteps of her husband, the late Ernest Deffner, she has successfully advanced her own accordion lines, but has gone beyond mere self-interest and has channelled her seemingly boundless energy in the advancement of the accordion through important activities, memberships, and official positions held in national and international accordion organizations. With her background, love for the instrument, and close association with most of the great artists of our time, she is particularly suited in her role as one of the principle representatives and accordion spokespersons at national and international gatherings. Her accomplishments as a U.S. delegate to the Confederation Internationale des Accordeonistes and her continuing work with the Coupe Mondiale require considerable personal sacrifice, and the results have been admired by all. On behalf of her many friends and the entire "accordion world," I applaud Faithe Deffner for her past and present endeavors to promote and advance the accordion. I especially wish to thank Dr. Salvatore M. Febbraio for preparing this beautifully written story of the "Deffner Legacy." His own biography appears at the end of this article.

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In 1923, a young man named Ernest Deffner took his first job in the music business. By 1934, with a thorough knowledge of the musician's needs, he founded his own firm. Integrity, personalized service, old-world craftsmanship and genuine values were the principles upon which Ernest Deffner built his business, and these remain the very same principles which guide the firm today.

Deffner joined forces with Roberto Pancotti, who left his family-owned Excelsior Accordion Company to develop and patent a series of accordion innovations which had profound effect upon the instrument's constructional development. Their newly founded firm, Pancordion, Inc., purchased the old Wurlitzer accordion factory in Long Island City, New York. Here, they built hand-made Pancordions featuring Directone, a patented advancement which added 35% more carrying power to the acoustic instrument and unified bass and treble sounds so they reached the listener as a blend rather than as separate sides and voices of the instrument. The new line featured elongated treble registers — sleek bars across the length of the grille affording access to simple tonal changes from any keyboard playing position, even while sustaining a note.

Pancordions quickly found acceptance among professional accordionists, many of whom offered new ideas for further development. Lawrence Welk, Myron Floren, Frankie Yankovic, Don Lipovac, Billy Costa, Milt DeLugg, Bobby Creach, Maddalena Belfiore, Dick Metko, Paul Norback and other noted professionals chose Pancordions to further their careers. The new, modernized Pancordion factory occupied a full floor in a large commercial building, where more than 40 craftsmen were employed in an effort to meet America's seemingly insatiable desire for fine hand-made accordions during the late 1940's and throughout the 1950's. Among Pancordion's craftsmen were John and Angelo Magnante (Charles Magnante's brothers), Natale Frosini (Pietro Frosini's brother), the Pancotti brothers (Roberto and Archimedes), and others whose names bear historical importance in the accordion world.





THE PANCORDION, FORMERLY THE OLD WURLITZER, FACTORY (CIRCA 1950)

When it became necessary to develop an Italian-made line, Deffner dispatched a top contingent of Pancordion craftsmen to the factory of Cav. Sante Crucianelli, to set up for the high quality production which the growing American market demanded. Crucianelli became Pancordion's Italian affiliate and Ernest Deffner's sales network began distribution of the growing production. Under its brand names of Crucianelli, Panitalia, and Video, the firm satisfied the needs of emerging dealerships and accordion schools during the instrument's postwar heyday.

In 1960, the Deffners expanded their accordion interests through the acquisition of Titano Accordion Company, a firm founded by Minneapolis-based Edward and Dorothy Traficante, who sought to develop a line for use in their chain of accordion schools. Domestic and international distribution was greatly increased by the new owners.

Titano worked closely with leading accordion classicists such as Bill Palmer and Bill Hughes (famed for their Palmer-Hughes Accordion Course), Robert Davine, William Schimmel, Pauline Oliveros, Donald Balestrieri, Carmelo Pino, Frank Marocco, Anthony Galla-Rini, Joan Cochran Sommers, Harley Jones, Yuan Fang, Carl Elmer, Lloyd LaVaux and others. The firm pioneered the development of free bass as an adjunct to the stradella bass system (the free bass disengages the pre-set bass chords, permitting the player to form desired chords or play single notes, as the music may require). While other free bass systems bore no relation to the standard stradella basses, Titano's converter accordions used the very same note sequence that accordionists already knew from their stradella basses, while adding neither size nor weight.

In the mid-1960's, the Deffners introduced the Tiger Combo'Cordions, compact and colorful accordions featuring quint treble tuning for "piercing lead or swinging chords in audio colors to flip the crowd," according to *Hullabaloo* magazine's description. The Combo'Cordions were styled with a new, slanted grille to show off flying fingers. They were designed to bring accordion into the rock era long before keyboards were firmly entrenched. Unfortunately, accordion dealers were more interested in maintaining the status quo, and Combo'Cordions had only limited distribution success.

Faithe Deffner initiated the Combo'Cordion concept as well as other timely innovations to update the instrument. She brought a background of public relations, marketing and journalism to her husband's firm which she joined in the 1950's. The couple worked very closely together, complimenting each others skills and personality. Mrs. Deffner's early music training had been on violin, but she quickly familiarized herself with all aspects of the accordion — both musical and mechanical. She studied with Billy Costa on 48th Street in New York City, the mecca of all music activity at the time. Costa was a superb musician and teacher, and a leading studio accordionist and recording artist with big name bands such as Hugo Winterhalter's.

When, after a lengthy illness, her husband passed away on January 21, 1971, Faithe Deffner formally moved from the firm's vice presidency to the presidency. Accordion popularity was beginning to wane and her background enabled her to serve as a catalyst for the coordination of intensified efforts to benefit the whole accordion community. Mrs. Deffner deplored the petty, egotistical frictions among the remaining accordion distributors and sought to unify their efforts to heighten accordion interest to the general public. She was appointed director of the Accordion Industry Council.

The Deffner firms intensified their staunch support for accordion programs of an institutional nature and began to assume a greater role within the international accordion community. Mrs. Deffner's participation in national and international music events, and many years of service as the U.S. delegate to the congresses of the Confederation Internationale des Accordeonistes, provided

constant opportunities to initiate cooperation, exchange and interaction among accordion devotees. As a board member of the American Accordionists' Association, she served on the Executive Committees of the 1969 and 1976 Coupes Mondiale in the U.S., edited the A.A.A. *Newsletter* and annual journals, and was put in charge of accordion public relations.

Over the years Titano accordions became the standard for use in colleges and universities which offered the instrument as a major course of study. The first such program became available in 1946 at the University of Houston in Texas, where it was introduced by Bill Palmer to scores of young accordionists who majored on the instrument. Through Palmer's wide experience in the arena of higher education and his memorable concert work with the late Bill Hughes, Titano accordions were further perfected to meet the rigid standards required for advanced music education as well as concert performance.

The Deffner's daughter, Verne, had been "helping out at the office" of the family's music business ever since she was a little girl. She grew up in a home filled with music and frequented by musicians. At seven, she was studying accordion, piano and guitar. She attended Mannes College of Music in Manhattan. At Adelphi University, she majored in journalism and edited the arts and music section of her college's newspaper. After a stint at a public relations firm which handled entertainment personalities and rock groups (including Paul McCartney and Wings, Linda Ronstadt, The Grateful Dead, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Steve Martin and Barry Manilow), she returned to work with her mother and became vice president of the family's musical instrument and music publishing firms.

In the late 1970's, the Deffner team decided to utilize their combined journalism backgrounds in *Accord*, a high quality accordion magazine of international scope. As *Accord*'s editor, Faithe Deffner said she undertook the task of translating personal enthusiasm for the instrument into a "challenging new publication which would represent and celebrate the diversity of the accordion community in a prestigious format." The project was a great success and *Accord* was resoundingly appreciated world-wide. However, as Mrs. Deffner's activity within the American Accordionists' Association grew, time limitations caused her to interrupt publication of the magazine which she hopes to resume in the future.

Always a strong exponent of accordion student bands and studio activity, the Deffners worked closely with music schools in this country and abroad, developing unique programs for student enrollment and creative teaching procedures. In 1978, Faithe Deffner embarked on yet another career, collaborating with Lindy Baumgarten, a distinguished accordion teacher and past president of the Canadian Accordion Teachers Association. Together, they founded Keyboard Study Centers in New York. Mrs. Deffner functioned as educational director and Mrs. Lindy (as she is fondly called) utilized her teaching skills to develop outstanding accordion students, accordion bands and orchestras. The school grew rapidly and took many top honors at national music events.

As A.A.A.'s president, Mrs. Deffner and her contest chairman, Roger Latulippe, introduced new concepts to bring national competitions to public attention at Disney World in Orlando, Florida in 1985 and during the acclaimed Accordion Fantasy Cruise to Bermuda in 1986 (when the decks were filled with many of the 700 participating accordion enthusiasts who played "Anchors Aweigh" as the ship left the New York harbor and sailed past the Statue of Liberty). During her administration, thousands of accordion press kits were distributed among all facets of media to familiarize opinion-makers with the many attributes of the accordion and to equip them with the information required to create positive articles. This tactic yielded dividends when the major media segments began to report an accordion "renaissance" which grew into the current self-fulfilling prophesy, as popular musicians vie with each other to be first to feature the

exciting and versatile accordion.

The cover of the December, 1987 issue of *Keyboard*, a widely read magazine, proclaimed "Accordion Power" to the music world, heralding "The neglected step-child of the keyboard family" as "rock's new main squeeze." Journalist Bob Doerschuck reported, "Suddenly we are hearing it all over the radio, on albums by Paul Simon, Los Lobos, Talking Heads, Bruce Hornsby, and the Hooters. It's turning up in fringe music too, from Soho clubs to concert halls. Even the ethnic styles are catching on, with Buckwheat Dural's zydeco accordion rocking *Late Night with David Letterman*, Terrance Simien cooking up a spicy Cajun soundtrack to The Big Easy, and Tex-Mex innovator Steve Jordan putting the squeeze on Jimmy Hendrix's 'Purple Haze' for Born in East L.A." Doerschuck credited Faithe Deffner as the accordion industry spokesperson who helped, as he delineated the accordion's new connection with John Cougar Mellencamp, Elvis Costello's group, Joe Jackson's "*Big World*," Bruce Springsteen, and a host of other important popular music names.

When A.A.A. celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1988, Faithe Deffner raised more than $30,000 for the organization to sponsor a mammoth international competition which attracted 29 competitors from ten countries. She also served as vice president of the Accordion Teachers' Guild, honorary vice president of the Accordion Federation of North America, and remains very active within the Confederation Internationale des Accordeonistes (C.I.A.), which sponsors the annual Coupe Mondiale in a different country each year.

As some of the old-time accordion publishing houses ceased to issue new material or reprint slow-moving works, Faithe Deffner recognized the need for ongoing augmentation of accordion literature, and she directed the firm's resources into publishing music for the accordion. Today, Ernest Deffner Publications is known and respected world-wide, and it publishes works by many famous composers,



ERNEST AND FAITHE DEFFNER AT A 1958 ACCORDION CONVENTION

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ERNEST AND FAITHE DEFFNER AT A 1958 ACCORDION CONVENTION

including Jindrich Feld, John Franceschina, Carmelo Pino, Ernst Krenek, William Schimmel, Palmer-Hughes, Otto Leuning, Douglas Mews, Gary Davern, Karen Fremar, Anders Groethe, Anthony Galla-Rini, Addie Cere, Andrzej Krzanowski and Alan Leichtling.

In addition to its own publications, the firm distributes Mosti Music, Alfred Publications, Ars Nova Publications, Aretta Publications, Music Graphics, Centre Didactique de Musique La Croix (Switzerland), Highland Music, Josef Preissler (Germany), Edizione Berben (Italy), Heinz Oettinger (Germany), Harmonia (Austria), Astier (France), Hohner (Germany), and Waterloo (Canada).

The newest advancement which the firm has introduced in recent years is its ED Master MIDI kits which enable the accordionist to use the instrument as a command post for all the latest electronic sound modules available to musicians, while retaining the beauty of the acoustic accordion. No other instrument can match the abundance of enhancement possibilities of the MIDI accordion, and no other instrument is as perfectly suited for MIDI. The accordion's right or treble side provides monophonic and polyphonic plus split keyboard capacity, and the left side affords both basses and chords, yielding a total equivalent of four or more keyboards in addition to a full-voiced acoustic accordion — all in a single portable instrument. MIDI may be ordered on any new Titano or Pancordion; it can also be built into the accordionist's own instrument.

Deffner Affiliates maintain the largest stock of accordions and accordion parts in the U.S. The firm distributes accordion repair parts, tools and accessories to shops and repairmen throughout North America. It manufactures and installs monaural and stereo pickups for all brands of accordions as well as in its own Pancordions and Titanos plus the Hohner line which it distributes. Its product line includes amplifiers, straps, cases and all accessory items including Elka products. Accordion music, cassettes and LPs, books and accordion novelties are also available.

MIDI kits and installation on all brands of accordions is done on the premises. In addition to a complete MIDI retrofit service, new accordions may be ordered with MIDI built in. The firm offers a full repair service, from tuning to bellows-making to total overhauls and rebuilding.

[Deffner Affiliates welcomes inquiries concerning their accordion lines, accessories, amplification, MIDI, and factory repair facilities. A cassette by Mat Mathews demonstrating MIDI features and sound applications is available for $5. Inquiries should be addressed to P.O. Box 608, 230 Herricks Road, Mineola, New York 11501, U.S.A. Telephone: (516) 746-3100. FAX 516 746-7085.]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. SALVATORE M. FEBBRAIO



Dr. Febbraio has been a close friend of the Deffner family for many years, during which he watched accordion history in the making as events unfolded within the firms.

Born in Mount Vernon, New York, he graduated from Mount Vernon High School in 1953, pursued his music career at the Manhattan and Julliard schools, Fordham University Graduate School and received the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Master of Music (M.M.), Master of Music Education (M.M.Ed.), Bachelor of Music (B.M), and Professional Diploma in Administration and Supervision of Education (P.D.).

In 1956, after a successful career as a concert artist on television and radio, he founded the Febbraio Conservatory of Music which he presently serves as executive director. Dr. Febbraio is also the administrator of the external degree program of Trinity College of Music of London, New York Centre in the United States. His former students have performed on the concert stage, Broadway and throughout the world, and remarkably for six presidents — Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Reagan and Bush.

Dr. Febbraio is listed in the "International Who's Who in Music" published in Cambridge, England and "Who's Who in Classical Music." He is a several times published composer and has served as consultant to the New York State Education Department for Collegiate Academic Review and as an adjudicator in national, regional and international music competitions. He is an active member of the Doctorate Association of New York Educators, Music Educators' National Conference Research Fellow, Musicians Association Local 38 and on the Governing Board of the American Accordionists' Association.

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THE GABBANELLI STORY: A HISTORY OF THE GABBANELLI ACCORDION

By Julius V. Tupa

Editor's Note: Since two of the authors of this book are Texans, they were especially excited to obtain the story of the Gabbanelli accordion. This family-operated business, with its factory in Italy and its business operation and distribution in Houston, has captured a sizeable part of today's accordion market, particularly in the South and Southwest areas of the United States. With considerable business acumen and technical "know-how" in accordion construction, John Gabbanelli markets over 100 accordions each month in his expanding special market. John is a true success story; when he came to this country, he did not even know English. Yet, he overcame many obstacles and has established a booming accordion business that rivals some of the accordion companies during the early days of accordion manufacturing in the United States. Though he specializes in "specialty" accordions (diatonic, Hispanic, zydeco, etc.), due to the present demand of the market, the Gabbanelli factory manufactures the standard acoustic piano accordion, as well as the advanced MIDI models, and markets their accordions world-wide. Thank you John, Louise, and Julius for this great story.

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It is an undisputed fact that the town of Castelfidardo, Italy has been recognized for decades as the foremost accordion manufacturing city in the world. From this accordion "Mecca" came many accordions which have found their way to musicians living in all four corners of the world. Today, there are numerous accordion manufacturers in Castelfidardo making many different styles and models of accordion.

Paolo Soprani was destined to "invent" the modern accordion. In 1863, a farmer's son met an Austrian pilgrim who was seeking shelter at his abode. This pilgrim played music on a mysterious box, perhaps a copy of the accordion patented in 1829 by the Viennese, Cyrillus Damian. This "box" ended up in the possession of Paolo, who took the box apart and examined it.

In 1864, with the help of his brothers, Settimio and Pasquale, young Paolo started building his first accordions in the cellar of their farmhouse. He sold them at fairs and markets in the neighboring towns and soon moved to the center of Castelfidardo to open a factory. Gradually, Castelfidardo grew and became the center of the Italian accordion industry.

The first member of the Gabbanelli family to learn the accordion trade was Elio Gabbanelli, founder of the Gabbanelli Accordion Company. He was born in Castelfidardo on September 11, 1903. At an early age, Elio began working as an apprentice at the Paolo Soprani accordion factory — the first accordion factory in Castelfidardo. He worked there for a considerable period of his childhood, and as he grew older, he was respected by everyone for his hard work and his ability to learn quickly.

Through the years, he worked at various accordion factories, including the Crucianelli factory in Castelfidardo and the Silvestrini factory in Mondolfo. During the his early apprenticeship, Elio Gabbanelli learned every aspect of the accordion manufacturing business. His employers were very impressed by young Elio's diligence, by his constant design improvements, and by his love for the accordion.

In those early years, Elio would come home after a full day's work in the factory and work late into the night to design his own models, building his own prototypes — always striving for perfection. Elio kept dreaming of the day when he would have his own accordion factory where he could build new and innovative accordions that he had envisioned in his mind.

In 1929, he made the decision to realize his dream. At the time, he was already

married to Maria Mariani of Mondolfo. Like so many before him, he started his own factory in the basement of his home. It wasn't long before his new designs and his new accordions earned him the respect and admiration of his peers. However, economic success did not come until after World War II.

American G.I.s started buying accordions and bringing them back home. From the 1950's into the 1960's, the demand for accordions grew so fast that just about every household in Castelfidardo was involved in building parts and subassemblies for accordion manufacturers. With this boom, the demand for Gabbanelli's accordions went through the roof, and at the same time, he continued to build accordions for other manufacturers, so they could fill their own orders. During this period, Gabbanelli employed between 40 and 50 people. The Gabbanelli accordions were shipped to the United States, Greece, France, Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and many other nations around the world. The most popular were the Gabbanelli piano and chromatic accordions.

In time, the Gabbanelli family grew in size; there were six children, four boys and two girls. Of course, all the boys worked hard at learning their father's trade and the creative techniques he used to produce his famous accordions. The eldest son, Marcello Gabbanelli, became head of the finishing section in the manufacturing division. Ubaldo, the second son, took over the responsibilities of the woodworking department, and Gianfranco (John) was responsible for the tuning and reed section, while the youngest brother, Anacleto, worked alongside his father in the factory.

Soon Elio Gabbanelli opened a second operation, which produced accordions under the "Aquila" brand name. He also became the first to manufacture acoustic and electric guitars in Castelfidardo. He covered the whole body of the guitar in celluloid, in many of the colors used on accordions. The demand for these guitars became so great that it began to interfere with the accordion business. Consequently, Elio had the Eko Company take over that business. Elio was constantly innovating and trying to meet the needs of his customers while predicting the trends of the future.

Shortly after this period of tremendous growth, Elio Gabbanelli got very sick. He had the first of many heart attacks, and his health ultimately slowed him down to the point that he turned over the operational control of the factory to his sons, but kept himself involved in the decision-making and goal-setting process of the company. Quality and dependability were a priority when Elio build his first accordion, and they continually remained his top priority at the factory.

In the late 1950's, the accordion market in the United States opened up considerably. Don Noble, Pete Reno, and many others were tireless promoters and salesmen, and they became established dealers and distributors of accordions from the Gabbanelli factory. They sold Gabbanelli accordions under their own brand names. Pete Reno asked the Gabbanellis to start producing the diatonic accordion because he saw a major new market. It turned out to be a very popular accordion, and Reno promoted it successfully under the Reno name.

Gianfranco (John) had always dreamed of coming to the United States, so he jumped at the chance to promote and sell Gabbanelli accordions in the America. Pete Reno sponsored the young John, who came to Houston in 1960. Like so many others who came to this new country, he was alone, unable to speak the language, and had very little money. Nevertheless, he had boundless optimism about his future in the United States.

John Gabbanelli's many years of dedicated work with accordions made him a valued asset to Pete Reno, who employed John to repair and tune accordions. He soon made quite a reputation for himself and was recognized by music store owners in and around Houston. Soon thereafter, Lynlee Hatch, the owner of the University School of Music in Houston, asked John to repair and tune instruments for

her students. This was the start of a thriving accordion repair business, and to this day, former students from the University School of Music contact him to repair and tune their instruments. Even the owner of one of the largest accordion repair shops in Houston, John Mrnustik, frequently came to John and asked him to repair and tune accordions for him as well.

In time, John Gabbanelli made the acquaintance of Bill Palmer and Bill Hughes. Palmer is still regarded as one of the world's foremost accordionists. He taught at the University of Houston, led an accordion orchestra which toured and played concerts across the United States, and still writes many music instruction books for piano, as well as the famous Masterwork series of music scored by the great masters. Palmer and Hughes often referred their students to Gabbanelli for repairs and tuning work, as did Jo Ann Coffman of the Coffman Conservatory of Music in Pasadena, Texas.

Over the years, the accordion of choice in Texas and throughout the South has primarily been the piano accordion, and to a much lesser degree, the chromatic accordion. The market was dominated by a few manufacturers, and players and dealers alike exhibited considerable resistance to a "new" brand of accordion.

In 1963 at the University of Houston, John Gabbanelli met Seldon Goldenberg, a salesman for C. Bruno & Sons in San Antonio. At this meeting, Goldenberg introduced Gabbanelli to Mr. Fink, then the president of C. Bruno & Sons. The meeting went well and C. Bruno & Sons began placing orders for Gabbanelli accordions. The only hitch was that they wanted to market the instrument under the brand name of "Santamarsala." For several years, the Gabbanelli factory produced this accordion, but eventually lost the business when the distributor started to import an inferior copy of the Gabbanelli accordion from a manufacturer in another country.

At the time, only a small segment of accordion players worked with the diatonic accordion, and they were limited to one or two brand names. These were primarily Czech, Polish, German, Mexican, and Mexican-American, and zydeco musicians who played recreationally and professionally. John soon perceived the potential for this market and asked his family in Italy to send diatonic accordions. When they arrived, John went to San Antonio and sold his diatonic accordions directly to the music stores. He did the same thing in Corpus Christi and in McAllen, Texas.

Certain that he was on the right track, he started contacting Hispanic professional musicians and solicited their opinions of his accordion. He was elated when he learned that they liked his accordion. He listened to their suggestions and incorporated many of their ideas to give them the accordion and sound they wanted. John loved design work, and he designed and redesigned his accordions to provide the styling and sound that pleased him and his customers. At first, the Gabbanelli accordions were white and black, but soon as many as 13 different colors were available on Gabbanelli accordions.

The new accordion generated much excitement in the market. Soon, other segments of the music world took notice, and Cajun and zydeco players started to ask questions about the accordion that could be redesigned, manufactured, and even handmade or modified to fit anyone's personality or style of music.

John saw possibilities in the Cajun music market of Southern Louisiana that had not been captured by any of the other manufacturers. He personally enjoyed that style of music and decided to make a Cajun accordion himself right in Houston. He made each accordion by hand, from cutting the wood to painting the finished instrument. One by one, he sold his custom-made "Cajun" accordions in the Southern Louisiana market. After some time of 14-hour days of hand-manufacturing accordions, John realized that this venture was not practical. He did, however, keep all the parts necessary, and to this day, he sometimes

builds one or two for special customers.

In the 1970's, John was contacted by the well-known and respected Hispanic recording artist, Raymon Ayala, who had seen another musician using a Gabbanelli accordion. Ayala had liked the looks and tonal quality of the accordion so much that he just had to see and play one for himself. Needless to say, Ayala became another Gabbanelli convert, and soon other Hispanic musicians were requesting more information from their music dealers. This resulted in soaring sales of the Gabbanelli accordion to Hispanic musicians.

In gratitude to Raymon Ayala and all he has done for the accordion, John designed a new accordion model and named it the "R. Ayala." It was made available to the public with three to five treble switches and bears the tri-colors of the Mexican flag in three vertical rows of red, white, and green. It is engraved and inset with colored rhinestones. It was an immediate hit and soon became the most popular Gabbanelli accordion to date. It is often imitated by other manufacturers, but many of the professional Mexican musicians feel it is an honor to own a Gabbanelli accordion and show off the colorful instrument on the covers of their recordings.

Unfortunately, Elio Gabbanelli did not live to see the success of the instruments in the United States and Mexico. He passed away in 1972, believing that his sons would continue the tradition of excellence he started when he founded the Gabbanelli accordion factory in Castelfidardo.

Shortly after their father's death, the Gabbanellis co-founded SEM, another accordion factory. After a short period, Marcello, the oldest, retired from the business, and the youngest son, Anacleto, remained at SEM, while Ubaldo took over the reign at the Gabbanelli Accordion Company. Today Ubaldo and Anacleto share their father's goals and ambitions, continuing the long tradition of innovation in design, the constant striving for perfection, and the never-ending quest to satisfy their customers.

With the combined efforts of Ubaldo and John, the Gabbanelli accordion has found its place in the American accordion market. In the years that followed Elio's death, new models have been added, and the older models have been improved. Today, a full lineup of piano accordions are carried, ranging from 26 treble keys up to 41 treble keys, with or without engraving. A MIDI system was also added, giving musicians the opportunity of a wider variety of sound, which compliments all lines of Gabbanelli-manufactured accordions.

In addition, the Gabbanellis were among the first to design and manufacture the two-tone diatonic accordion, which gives musicians two keys of tuning on a single accordion, allowing them to play a wider selection of music. This accordion is available in a variety of colors, depending on taste.

Another addition was the "Model 101" accordion. This is a light-weight, 34-button diatonic accordion without treble switches. It was designed as an economy accordion for recreational and professional musicians who are not able to purchase the more expensive models, but still demand the same tonal quality, durability, craftsmanship, and dependability inherent in top-of-the-line Gabbanelli instruments.

The latest versions of the Gabbanelli accordion/organ creation are the model CH 1 and CH 2 series instruments. They are available with real-time arranger, an accordion MIDI expander, 41 treble keys, and 120 basses. These instruments have hand-finished reeds with four sets of treble reeds, five sets of bass reeds, as well as 11 treble registers and five bass registers. One model is available with direct MIDI; the others are equipped with a sophisticated MIDI controller mounted on the grill. A musician may recall up to 99 preset sounds and 50 performance registrations with the use of a single button. John believes this accordion is the wave of the future and should appeal to many musicians.

Since innovation in design is a hallmark of the Gabbanelli accordion, Ubaldo and John Gabbanelli undoubtedly hold many bold

Gabbanelli Accordions

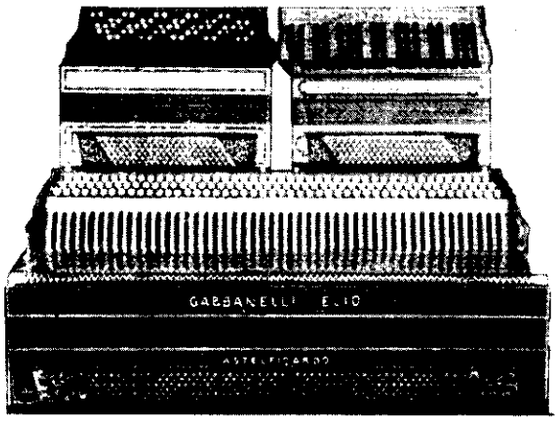
MANUFACTURED IN ITALY



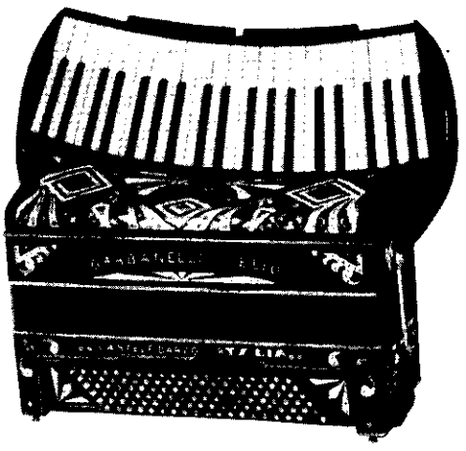
JOHN GABBANELLI IN HIS HOUSTON, TEXAS SHOP.



GABBANELLI ELIO & FIGLI ACCORDION CATALOG CASTELFIDARDO, ITALY (1940).



N. 51 - Fisarmonica a pianoforte - 120 bassi



PIANO AND CHROMATIC ACCORDION. SPECIAL-MADE WITH 300 BASSES AND 243 TREBLE KEYS.

PIANO ACCORDION WITH A UNIQUE CURVED KEYBOARD. 120 BASSES AND 41 TREBLE KEYS.

SELECTED GABBANELLI MODELS FROM A 1940 CATALOG

Gabbanelli Accordions

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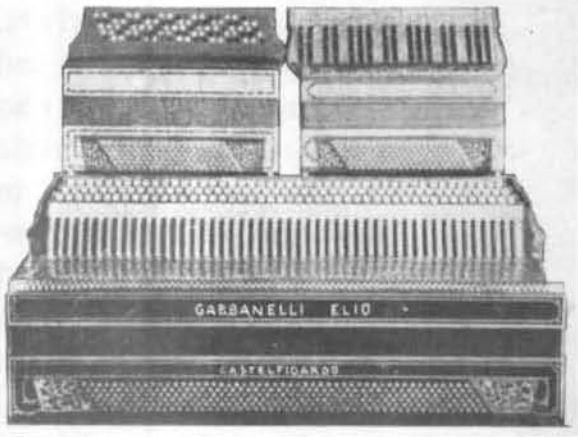

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surprises for future production. One thing is certain, the Gabbanelli tradition will most certainly be carried on by John and Ubaldo's children.

John and his wife, Louise, still live in Houston. They have three children, Joey, Michael, and Mary Ann. In Italy, Ubaldo and his wife, Tula, also have three children: Elio, Jr., Irene, and Patrizia. Elio, Jr. is already working with his father in the family-owned factory. He will most certainly carry on the tradition of Gabbanelli accordion-making started by his grandfather.

The rich Gabbanelli history and the passion they pour into their craft cannot be totally appreciated or easily condensed into a chapter of a book. One must see for himself to get a sense of the consuming energy that drives John and Ubaldo Gabbanelli. They follow in the footsteps of their father, Elio, lavishing attention to the smallest detail on their instruments. One must become truly acquainted with the Gabbanelli brothers in order to gain understanding of what the word "accordion" means to the Gabbanelli family.

[This article was suggested by Dr. Norman Seaton, who also suggested that we invite Julius Tupa, editor of The Texas Polka News, to author the article. Julius accepted the invitation and has done a superb job. Thanks also goes to John Gabbanelli and his lovely wife, Louise, who spent many hours researching and outlining material and other information needed by Julius in the preparation of this article. For information about the line of accordions and repair services, contact John Gabbanelli at his business address: 9402 Bevlyn, Houston, TX 77025. Telephone: (713) 668-9084. FAX Number: (713) 668-9084.]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: JULIUS TUPA



Julius Tupa lives in Houston, Texas. He has spent many years in the music business as a musician, band leader of a Western swing band, and currently a polka band. Julius has studied and researched the polka industry for the last 10 years as a radio personality and as a newspaper publisher of *The Texas Polka News* that deals with the polka music industry in Texas. He is a key promoter of various polka music festivals across the country and is actively producing polka records and tapes as well as polka videos.

Most recently, Julius Tupa organized the Texas Polka Music Association, and in March of 1991, he held the First Annual Polka Music Awards and Festival in Belton, Texas. The Polka Music Association was founded to honor and reward those who are carrying on polka traditions and to educate and improve the quality of polka music in Texas. Recognition and awards were given to musicians, band leaders, writers, record producers, D.J.'s, and polka music pioneers who brought this form of music to this country, and to those who are striving to improve this form of music and preserve the polka heritage that has been passed to the current generation.

Julius Tupa is now working with other polka D.J.'s throughout the country to promote and gain the acceptance of polka music as an art form for equal time on television and commercial broadcast radio. If interested in information about Julius Tupa's current polka activities or sponsored polka events, write to *The Texas Polka News*, P.O. Box 800183, Houston, TX 77280.

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JOE SPANO — IN SEARCH OF PERFECTION: TEACHER, MUSICIAN, AND ACCORDION DESIGNER

By Ellen & Cassie Conolly and Diane Schmidt

Editor's Note: Including the life story of Joe Spano in this book was a must! He has lived in the beautiful city of Seattle for almost seven decades where he has pioneered the development of the accordion in the Northwest United States. Throughout his lengthy career, he has made outstanding contributions to the advancement of the accordion in three major areas: teacher, musician, and accordion designer. Indeed, his legacy will place him high on any scale of excellence in comparison with the other accordion pioneers. His students, in particular, will long remember his love for the accordion and his key influence in motivating them to achieve their highest potential as winners at national and international championships. He has been a dynamic innovator who designed and imported the famous Tonaveri accordion which has great popularity with accordionists the world over. Thank you, Joe, for allowing us to include you in this book. I also wish to thank the authors, Ellen & Cassie Conolly and Diane Schmidt for permission to use their updated and expanded version of their original tribute to the remarkable Joe Spano.

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Within the accordion community of the Northwest, Joe Spano is considered almost legendary. His creativity, sense of purpose, and dynamic leadership have produced major achievements throughout his career. When assessing the real impact that an accordionist has on the development of his instrument, one must look beyond the accordion community to the world of music in general.

Accolades here are far more difficult to earn, given the stereotyped image of the accordion. Nonetheless, Joe Spano has won the praise of such internationally acclaimed artists/organizations as Luciano Pavarotti, Sergio Mendes, the "Cleveland Orchestra," and the "Philadelphia String Quartet."

Joe Spano is well known for his dedication and devotion to the accordion, its music, and its students. His quiet, low-key manner puts the visitor to the Spano Accordion Center in Seattle at ease immediately. Though he is a man of many noteworthy accomplishments, Joe prefers to speak of other things.

Teaching accordion was a natural step for this talented young man. Thus, at the age of 15, Joe launched himself into his life's profession. By 1950, he was ready to open his own studio in partnership with Frank Iacolucci. Spano's interest in the accordion does not only center on teaching.

Joe expanded his abilities into expert accordion servicing skills, reed tuning, accordion design, and music transcription for the accordion. In all of these areas, Joe Spano has excelled and received international acclaim.

Joe grew up in the Seattle area at a time when accordion music was heard everywhere. At age 9, he began playing banjo, but at age 11, he tried the accordion, and said, "The accordion felt perfect in my hands, and I've been playing ever since."

Today, Joe plays at least four nights weekly with his four-piece combo. The group, in existence for the past 30 years, includes accordion, bass, sax/clarinet, and drums played by his son, Rick Spano. It's hard to believe that Joe had only two years of formal lessons. His teacher played a chromatic accordion, and Joe a piano accordion. As Joe says, "This might seem unusual, but it worked very well for us."

Joe retired from teaching eight years ago. His career was long and distinguished. His students included three U.S. National Accordion Champions, one Canadian National Champion, and one World Champion. Jackie Hofto was the U.S. Champion (1966), Diane Schmidt (1970), and Mike Williams (1976).

Diane went on to the coveted World Championships, held at Salsburg, Austria in 1970. In 1980 his student, Gail Shuberg, became the Canadian National Champion. In all, Joe Spano can easily boast of well over 100 national winners in their respective age divisions. Joe's decision to retire from teaching came at a time when the demand for accordion lessons had lessened and, he said, "I found I just had too much to do."

"Teaching," Joe says, "is life's most rewarding experience. When you take students, work with them, and see them grow and develop a love for music and the instrument as they advance in technical skill... well, it's just the most rewarding thing I've ever done." Further, he attributes his success as a teacher and the success of his students to one primary factor: **MOTIVATION**. "All of the talent and exercises in the world are of no value," Joe says, "if the student is not motivated. The student must earn a teacher's respect and work for them. I asked my students to participate in recitals, bands, concerts, contests, etc., and this maintained their interest, gave them confidence, and caused them to progress."

Joe Spano is still actively involved with Spano Accordion Center, is at the head of the Northwest Accordion Teachers' Association (NWATA), and continues to play for appreciative audiences regularly.

Joe's work with NWATA began in 1953, when he and Frank Facolucci founded the organization. He has always been involved with organizing the NWATA annual contest which is a source of inspiration for participants and spectators alike. Both Charles Magnante and Galla-Rini have participated as finalist judges.

Joe says there is a common quality he sees in outstanding accordion students:

> "Talent and an inborn feeling for music is a must. Student personalities can be different, but that creates a wonderful challenge for a teacher. But, they all have the desire and determination to work hard to develop their talent. They possess the self-confidence that comes from knowing what they are doing."

Joe is well known for his arranging and transcribing of music for the accordion. He has hundreds of arrangements to his credit, and he is also very proud of his original composition: "Carnival in Brazil." Concerning this composition, Joe says, "It was quite an experience. I decided I enjoyed arranging music much more."

Joe holds an interesting and thought-provoking theory about the decline of the accordion's popularity. Contrary to the belief that the accordion declined in popularity due to overpromotion, he feels that the rising popularity of 'Rock and Roll' was the principle cause:

> "In the early 1960's, the rock and roll groups were looking for a keyboard instrument to augment their sound, but the piano wasn't portable nor was it loud enough, and the portable electronic keyboards hadn't been invented yet. Although the accordion was well-suited for the rock and roll music, it could not compete with the volume of the electronic guitars. Amplifying the accordion did not help because of unwanted feedback; the organ accordion had only begun to be introduced. Then, the Farfisa portable organ was introduced. That was the beginning of the electronic keyboards and the demise of the accordion with the younger generation. Recently, however, the accordion is being reintroduced in all sectors of the music world. Now, people are rediscovering the great potential of the accordion."

Joe was not totally satisfied with the available accordions in the late 1950's. So in 1960, he became involved with designing and importing special custom accordions from Castelfidardo, Italy. He wanted to create an accordion that would meet the demands of the advanced player. Thus, Tonaveri was born. Joe designed it with an eye to the critical

elements of internal compression, reed response, tonal balance, and weight distribution. It took two years to take his dream from the drawing board to reality. In 1962, the first Tonaveri arrived in Seattle, and this line has been marketed continuously ever since.

Since then, Joe has made many refinements to his accordion design, and he has regularly added to the line. Free-bass, electronic, and MIDI models are now available. Over the years many professionals and top accordion students have received national acclaim using their Tonaveri accordions — a great tribute to the Tonaveri name.

What's new to come in accordions? Electronics, MIDI, fine free-bass, and traditional models. They're all nearly perfect. All are available today in the Tonaveri line, and others. The accordion is becoming an increasingly popular instrument in Asian countries. Its popularity is growing faster in Japan than any place else in the world today.

Spano Accordion Center already handles several entry level accordions imported from China. Joe suggests that market factors (pricing strategies, competition, supply and demand) may cause an increasing share of the market to shift from Italy to China. He also predicts the quality of these instruments will improve as the market grows. Watch out Castelfidardo!

As this book was being printed, our beloved friend, JOE SPANO, passed away on July 24, 1992. The entire "accordion world" mourns his death and will miss him greatly.



JOE SPANO AND
TONAVERI ACCORDION



SPANO ACCORDION MUSIC CENTER STAFF:
(L to R) JOE SPANO, MIKE ARRALDE,
DIANE SCHMIDT, AND RICK SPANO.

[Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the Summer 89 edition of the Accordion World magazine. The original Accordion World was a very successful monthly magazine published in the 1940's, 50's, and 60's by Mr John Gerstner; the present Accordion World magazine is a quarterly publication of the same name endeavoring to follow in the fine tradition established by Mr Gerstner. Information about the Tonaveri accordion line may be obtained from Joe Spano, 2002 SO. 272nd St., Kent, WA 98166. Mike Arralde and Diane Schmidt have recently moved and may be contacted at Mike Arralde's new accordion business address at 1023 S.W. 136th Street, Seattle, WA 98166.]

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SPANO ACCORDION MUSIC CENTER STAFF: (L to R) JOE SPANO, MIKE ARRALDE, DIANE SCHMIDT, AND RICK SPANO.

[Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the Summer 89 edition of the Accordion World magazine. The original Accordion World was a very successful monthly magazine published in the 1940's, 50's, and 60's by Mr John Gerstner; the present Accordion World magazine is a quarterly publication of the same name endeavoring to follow in the fine tradition established by Mr Gerstner. Information about the Tonaveri accordion line may be obtained from Joe Spano, 2002 SO. 272nd St., Kent, WA 98166. Mike Arralde and Diane Schmidt have recently moved and may be contacted at Mike Arralde's new accordion business address at 1023 S.W. 136th Street, Seattle, WA 98166.]

JOHN BUDAY — CLEVELAND'S ACCORDIONIST "EXTRAORDINAIRE"

By Edwin Davison

Editor's Note: John Buday is a legend in Cleveland. He has enjoyed a distinguished career as an accordionist, a repair technician, and an accordion builder/engraver. People from all walks of life visit John Buday's accordion shop for accordion service, but also just to talk to this pioneer accordionist. He has been featured in newspaper articles and accordion newsletters over the years as his opinions about the accordion are eagerly sought by those who are writing articles about the accordion. He has a most interesting background, and we are very proud to feature John Buday in this book. He learned accordion repair and the art of engraving from the old masters. These skills, particularly quality accordion engraving as done by John Buday, is practically a lost art in this country. He has probably done more accordion engraving than any other person presently living in this country, and he is currently thinking about writing a book on the "Art of Engraving." When in Wadsworth, Ohio, feel free to visit his accordion shop. Thank you, John, for allowing us to include your life story.

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John Buday, son of Mike and Anna Buday, was born in Cleveland, Ohio on December 1, 1918. John has vivid recollections of the accordion as far back as he can remember. When he was only about three or four years old, he remembers the beautiful sounds from the accordion that his father played on the accordion. This early exposure to the accordion made a definite impression on him. John admired the accordion only from a distance when his father was around because his father didn't want it to get broken. So, John would wait until his father was gone, and he would touch it and later tried to play it. Then around age seven, his father caught him. But, instead of spanking him, his father asked John if he would like to have an accordion. "Yes," John replied. So, his father allowed him to continue playing with the accordion for several months.

Then, when his father saw that John was really making an effort to play but was doing it all wrong, his father made arrangements for accordion instruction from Mr. Nick Shkorka, a close personal friend and owner of the Shkorka Accordion Manufacturing Company. Mr. Shkorka also ran an accordion school which was located above the factory at 4600 Broadway in Cleveland. This school was a fairly large school at the time which had teachers of Russian, Italian, Polish, Bohemian, Slovenian, Croatian, and Lithuanian origin.

Next, came the great day when his father bought John his first accordion. At age eight, his father bought him a new white pearl, 48-bass accordion that was a perfect size for him. At the same time, his father also purchased a 48-bass accordion for John's 10-year-old sister, Helen, who was along with them.

After getting this beautiful accordion, his father made arrangements for accordion lessons, and the children were given a Leo Persanti method book. They had lessons every week, but his sister preferred the piano, so she began taking piano lessons while John stayed with the accordion. At first, John didn't like the accordion lessons, but in those days, "You did what you were told," he said. But, his attitude quickly changed, and when John was 14 years old, he'd made exceptional progress on the accordion. Then, Mr. Shkorka told John's father to take him to Mr. Michael Notari for additional instructions where John studied for over five years. Mr. Notari always cautioned his students never to copy another accordion player, but to develop one's own style. This advice stuck in his mind and guided him in developing his own distinctive style. John has played the chromatic accordion since a child; he prefers the chromatic keyboard, but he can also play the piano accordion.

Also, when John was 14 years old, his father made arrangements with Mr. Shkorka to let him go to the accordion factory every day during the summer. John was pleased with this arrangement as he loved everything about the

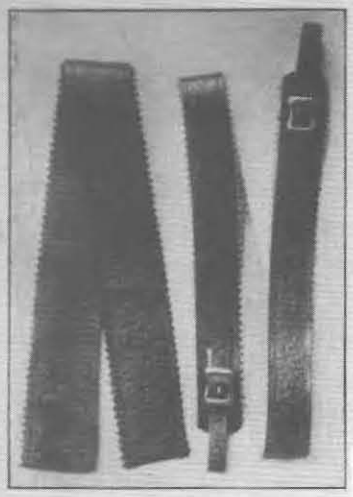
accordion and this was an opportunity to learn the complex process of accordion building and repair. John went to work at 8 A.M. and stayed until noon each day. Then, he went home, had lunch, took a shower, and went out to play baseball and other such things with his friends. Even at this early age, Mr. Shkorka let John do many of the repairs that came in, so he became well versed in the workings of the accordion. John continued working at the Shkorka factory during his high school years.

Following high school, John went to New York where his father had made arrangements for his full-time employment with Mr. Emil Kulagin, the owner of the Volga Accordion Manufacturing Company. Since this job was in New York, John needed a place to live, so Mr. Kulagin allowed him to stay in a room at the rear of the factory. Here he worked for his keep and expanded upon his previous experience in accordion building by learning the intricate art of tuning and installing reeds. He also learned the art of accordion engraving from Mr. Budnik. These skills were learned strictly as an apprentice as there were no "How-To" books available on such skills. John learned quickly and mastered all of the skills that the "old masters" taught him. John had Saturday off each week, and he was allowed to do anything he wished. During this free time, he often visited the other accordion factories and talked to the other factory workers, learning different techniques and skills. When he told them that he worked for Mr. Kulagin at Volga, they would welcome him in because they knew his boss well. After coming back to Cleveland, John worked for Grossman Music Corporation in the accordion department and put his many skills to work with this important firm.

In 1936, John began playing society engagements and had his own 5-piece orchestra that he booked all over Cleveland. He was also asked to play solo at the Cleveland Exposition every night at the Russian Village in the "Streets of the World." Since he knew many Russian songs, this was very easy for him. He also accompanied a young lady who sang very well. From these early beginnings, John expanded to a variety of work, including parties, weddings, and night clubs. Then, in 1939, he continued with his orchestra work, playing with the "Ed Pepper Orchestra" at the Terrace Gardens. After a few months, Ed Pepper had an opportunity to take over a 14-piece orchestra. This created a spot for John Buday to take over the orchestra at the Terrace Gardens.

After World War II, John had several stints in orchestra and night club work. He played with the Andy Anderson Orchestra from Hollywood, California, and this was followed by a contract in Panama City, Florida at a night club with a 7-piece orchestra. After this contract, John returned to Cleveland where he rehearsed and joined up with a girl leader, Judy Lynn, who had a quartet (violin, bass, guitar, and accordion). She was an excellent violin player and singer. The group went to Rockford, Illinois, where they played at a local hotel and also did a remote radio broadcast.

Due to the illness of his mother, the family was advised to move to a warmer climate; so, they packed up their belongings and moved to Miami, Florida. There, John joined the Miami Federation of Musicians and began playing on weekends only as there was a waiting period before he was allowed by the union to play steady work. After the waiting period, John joined the "Vic Alfan Orchestra," who was engaged at the Naval Officers' Club in Opa-Locka, Florida. Florida held many opportunities for John Buday; he played with many other orchestras, and then he was offered a radio contract with the Versailles Hotel for a morning show, "The Versailles Hour," broadcast from 10 to 11 A.M. Then, at night, he would play with the Jimmie Christie Orchestra on the hotel's patio. He also played at the following exclusive Florida restaurants and clubs: The Valhalla Restaurant in Hollywood, The Georgian Supper Club in Dania, and The Hannons Supper Club in Hallandal. One other major engagement that John recalls was his time with "The Jones Boys' Trio" featured at



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JOHN BUDAY,
age 8 years, uses accordion No. 4.

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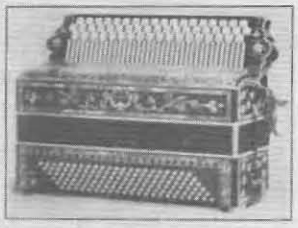
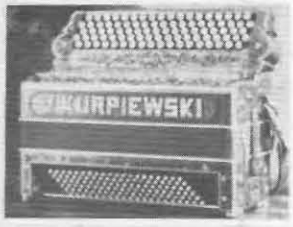
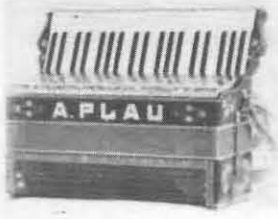


Chromatic Accordion, 96 notes in 4 reeds, 152 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. Price $160.00. No. 1.



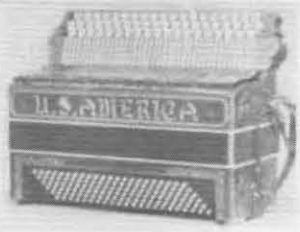
Chromatic Accordion, 5 rows 96 notes in 5 reeds, 152 basses in 5 reeds, aluminum plates, covered with celluloid of gold color. Price $175.00. No. 2.



Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid of gold color. Price $150.00. No. 3.



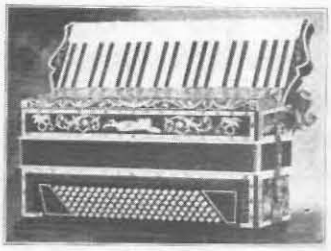
Chromatic Accordion, 87 notes in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. Price $200.00.



Chromatic Accordion, 96 notes in 4 reeds, 120 bronze plates, 152 basses, covered with celluloid of gold color. Price $175.00. No. 9.



Chromatic Piano Accordion, 41 notes in 4 reeds, 144 basses in 5 reeds, aluminum plates, covered with gold celluloid. Price $150.00. No. 10.



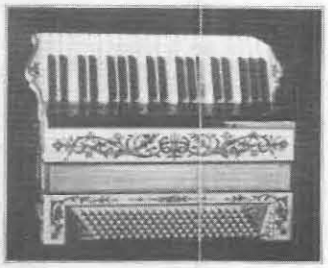
Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, aluminum plates, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. Price $150.00. No. 11.



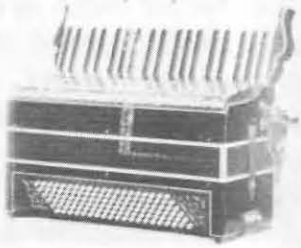
Chromatic Accordion, 4 reeds, covered with Price $200.00.



Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. Price $97.00 No. 16.



Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, ornament. $125.00. No. 17.



Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. $125.00. No. 18.



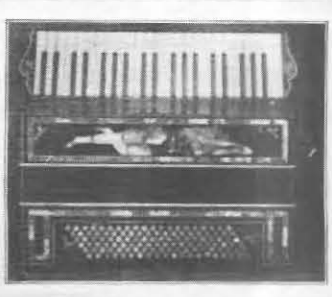
California Style Velvet lined Price



Piano Keyboard, 39 notes in 3 reeds, shift key, 60 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. Price $225.00 No. 23.



Chromatic Accordion, 96 notes in 4 reeds, 120 basses in 5 reeds, celluloid covered, pearl ornament. $150.00. No. 24.



Piano Keyboard, 42 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. Price $175.00. No. 25.



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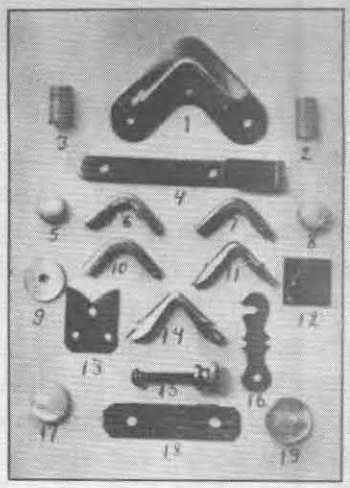
HELEN BUDAY,
age 10 years, uses accordion No. 6.



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an, Croatian, Lithuanian who teach by music or by ear



, 48 basses in
ade for boys
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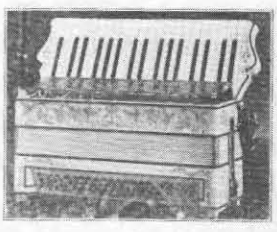
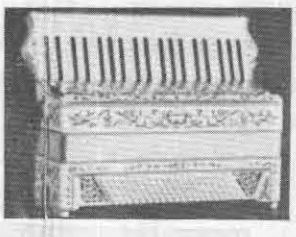
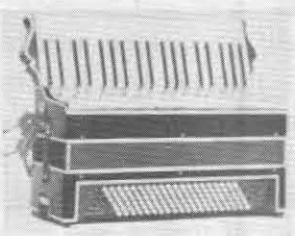
Square Case, flannel lined. **Price $12.00.** No. 5.
Velvet lined. **Price $15.00.**



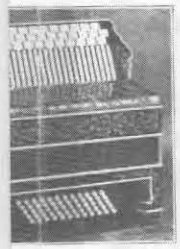
Piano Keyboard, 37 notes in 2 reeds, 48 basses, covered with celluloid, for boys and girls. Strong made. **$200.** No. 6.



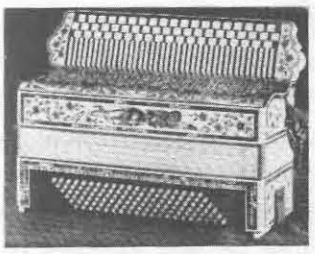
Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. **$325.00.** No. 7.



Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. **$325.00.** No. 8.



37 notes in 2 reeds, 60 basses in
black celluloid, small size for boys.
No. 12.



Chromatic Accordion, 46 notes in 4 reeds, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. — **Price $450.00.** No. 13.



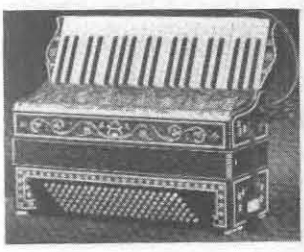
Chromatic Accordion, 52 notes in 4 reeds, 132 basses in 6 reeds, celluloid covered. Special made. **Price $650.00.** Same in 46 notes, 120 basses, in 5 reeds. **$550.00.** No. 14.



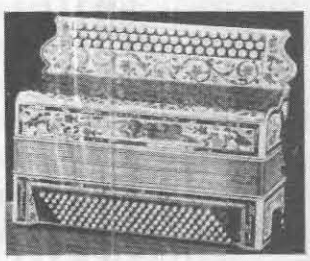
Piano Keyboard 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. **Price $250.00.** No. 15.



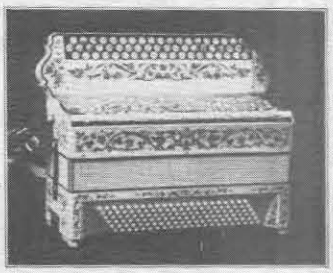
ase, flannel lined. **Price $15.00.**
18.00. No. 19.



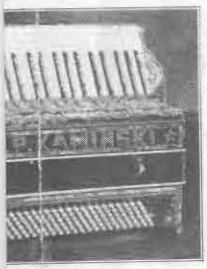
Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. **$250.00.** No. 20.



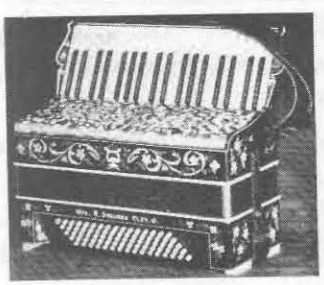
Chromatic Accordion, 46 notes in 4 reeds, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. — **Price $415.00.** No. 21.



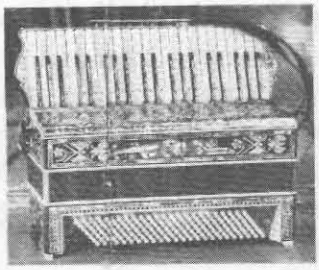
Chromatic Accordion, 46 notes in 4 reeds, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with white celluloid. **$350.00.** No. 22.



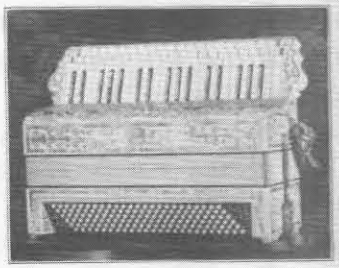
Piano Keyboard, 43 notes in 4 reeds, brass key, 33 basses in 6 reeds. Very ... covered with celluloid, pearl ... **Price $825.00.** No. 26.



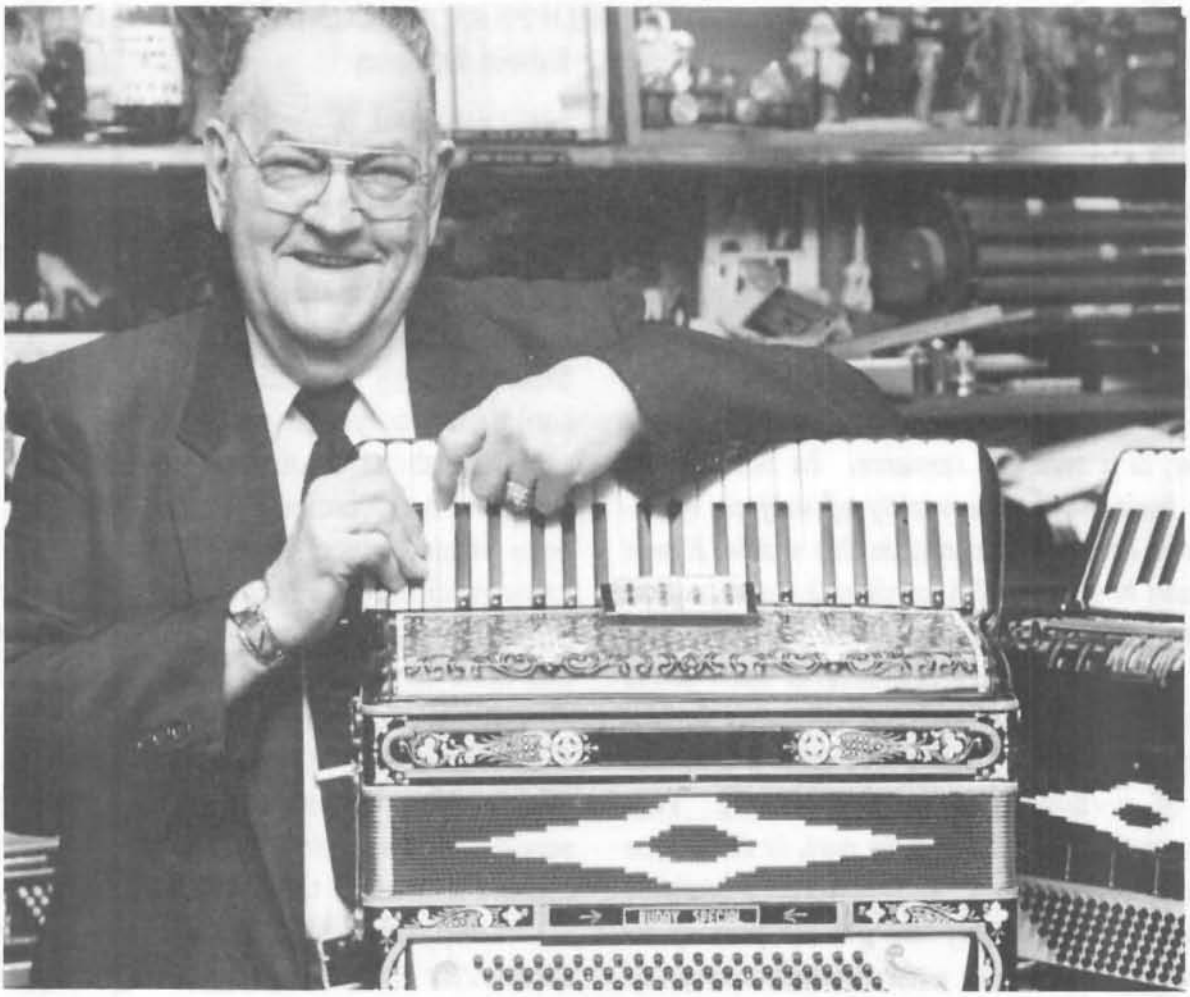
Piano Keyboard, 39 notes in 3 reeds, shift key, 80 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. **Price $225.00.** No. 27.



Piano Keyboard, 47 notes in 4 reeds, new long shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. **Price $500.00.** No. 28.



Chromatic Accordion, 52 notes in 4 reeds, 144 basses in 6 reeds, celluloid covered, pearl ornament. Special made. **Price $675.00.** Same with 46 notes **Price $575.00.** No. 29.





JOHN BUDAY WITH TWO ENGRAVED ACCORDIONS

ACCORDION-O-RAMA — THE SHOPPERS' ACCORDION WORLD

By Edwin Davison

***Editor's Note:** If you have ever visited the Accordion-O-Rama in Manhattan, you have seen a grand institution that has served the needs of accordionists since 1949. I'm heartened by its success and amazed at its present scope of business operations. If you've ever had questions about the accordion, but didn't know who to ask, Mr. Gerald Shearer, Accordion-O-Rama's owner, is a valuable resource. In this book, I have included a wide variety of subjects of interest to accordionists, and in this article, Edwin Davison has featured Accordion-O-Rama, a firm devoted exclusively to accordion sales and service. Although there are several such firms throughout the USA, perhaps none has such a large sales volume or has had such a long period of continuous business operation. This national reputation is due, in part, to its unique location near the heart of Manhattan's business district. But probably the greater part of its success is due to the comprehensive range of sales and service that can be obtained under one roof. Accordionists are regularly drawn to New York just to visit and shop at this favorite accordion "Supermarket." So if you are planning a trip to New York, remember to visit this landmark institution and spend some time with the sales personnel or craftsmen specializing in various accordion services. I am very grateful to Gerald and Peter Shearer for their help in obtaining this story about ALAS Accordion-O-Rama.*

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Need a new accordion? Need your favorite accordion tuned or repaired? These are typical problems, but where do you go for assistance? If you're lucky, there may be a sales store or a skilled technician who can repair even the most difficult problems right in your immediate locale. But, if you're not fortunate enough to have these services nearby, you may have to travel with your instrument a considerable distance or ship it by air or ground. This article provides information that will be helpful in these typical situations and many others as well.

Feel adventuresome? Then, why not go to New York City to see one of the world's largest accordion shops? In all probability, it is the busiest accordion shop in the United States. Many accordionists say that if you could visit only one shop, among the many excellent shops throughout the country, you should visit Accordion-O-Rama. This firm has been around since 1949 — long enough to know its customer's needs and establish a solid reputation. Accordion-O-Rama is featured in this book to depict how it must have been in almost every accordion shop in the United States during the "Golden Age of the Accordion." Also, it describes some of the typical services that are provided by today's comprehensive accordion sales and service shops.

Accordion-O-Rama is a service-oriented center. It has been pretty much a specialty store since it was begun in 1949. Gerald Shearer was originally a tap-dancer in Italy several years before World War II. During that period, he became familiar with many of the musicians and the local accordion manufacturers. Then, after completing his U.S. military service, he went into business for himself, not thinking that the business would mushroom to the extent it has. "At that time," he said, "we were simply a tiny manufacturer's outlet where New Yorkers could get a great deal on accordions in any price range."

Then, as well as today, the merchandising concept was the same: Cater to the customer's needs and personal tastes. Mr. Shearer has always felt that he could best serve these needs by having a large number of accordions from which the customer can choose. "Today," he says, "we have expanded the accordion like no one else. We cover all aspects of the accordion — sales, service, and even some parts."

Accordion-O-Rama is not a one-man operation; nor is it a one-room shop. When

the Walt and Lills Acres in Hollywood, Florida.

In 1951, John Buday decided to move back to Cleveland as his wife, Stephanie, was pregnant and wanted to return to her home in Cleveland. When they arrived back in Cleveland, John was asked to play with the "Al Berardi Orchestra," a group which played all Society music — a style of music that he has always enjoyed playing. Since John wanted to spend more time with his wife and children, he decided to open an accordion shop; however, business became so good that between his accordion business and his playing with the "Al Berardi Orchestra," he had even less time at home than before. John became so popular in the area that he even played many times with the "Frank Yankovic Orchestra," and they have maintained a close relationship over the years. Even today, when Frank Yankovic needs to consult a close friend, he drops by the Buday Accordion Shop to talk with John, one of his most trusted friends. ***[Editor's Note: The Buday Accordion Shop relocated in late 1990 from Cleveland to a new facility in Wadsworth, Ohio.]*** Then, they go out to have lunch or dinner together. John does all of the tuning for Frank, who likes to have his accordion tuned "dry." Once, John even rebuilt the entire bass section of Frank's accordion which had been crushed by the airline handlers.

John was at the same location on West 25th Street from 1951 to 1990. Business grew over the years. John not only repairs accordions, but he's also built several accordions — 12 according to his count — and he still has two of them in his shop. Although these BUDAY SPECIAL accordions are technically for sale, John emphasizes that there is no "price tag" on them. About 8 years ago, he also built eight Slovenian button box accordions out of genuine Mervar parts that he had acquired over 20 years ago. Today, he stocks over 100 accordions in his store; however, he stopped importing accordions in 1950. His accordion business consumes about 80% of his time, and he is trying to limit his orchestra work to 20% or less to give himself more time for relaxation.

John is one of the few individuals in this country who has the ability and skill needed to do accordion engraving and inlay work. Extremely busy, he is not as anxious today to expend the large number of hours needed to accomplish accordion engraving, but the demand is still there, especially from the accordion manufacturers (Petosa, Imperial, Colombo & Sons, Star Concertina, etc.) He, therefore, tries to limit the jobs that he accepts for custom engraving. Don't expect him to do it quickly because he is very busy running his popular accordion shop and meeting the many other demands of his many customers.

John may never stop. He is totally against retirement. He says, "How can you retire, when you are doing what you like to do?" He also likes to keep up with his accordion playing and plays occasionally with the Sheldon Hendershott Orchestra, a society orchestra. Without John Buday, who will engrave our accordions or custom nameplates? Let's hope that John does not retire until he has trained someone to follow in his footsteps — someone who can continue the beautiful engraving that he does so well. It would be sad indeed if he does not train someone in this unique form of art. Hopefully, he will find the right person and pass along the secrets that he learned as a young man from Mr. Budnik at Volga Accordion Co.

John and Stephanie Buday have enjoyed a full, happy life. They have two married daughters, Linda and Nancy, and four grandchildren, Natilie, Paul-Mike, Joey, and Sarah.

[The final copy of this article has been reviewed for accuracy by John Buday, and it is published with his kind permission and cooperation. Send any correspondence or service inquiries to the Buday Accordion Shop at 737 Highland Avenue, Wadsworth, OH 44281 or phone (216) 335-0426.]

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Piano Keyboard, 39 notes in 3 reeds, shift key, 80 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. **Price $225.00. No. 30.**



Chromatic Accordion, 46 notes in 4 reeds, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with white celluloid. **$350.00. No. 31.**



Piano buttons, 25 notes in 3 reeds, 60 basses in 4 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. **$255.00. No. 32.**



Chromatic Accordion, 46 notes in [illegible] basses in 5 reeds, covered with [illegible]



Vienna system, 25 keys in 3 reeds, 12 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, engraved. **Price $175.00. No. 37.**



Piano Keyboard, 42 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. **$235.00. No. 38.**



Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 4 reeds, covered with celluloid. **$290.00. No. 39.**



Piano Keyboard, 39 notes in 3 reeds [illegible] in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. [illegible]



Chromatic Accordion, 46 notes in 4 reeds, 122 basses in 5 reeds, aluminum plates, covered with white celluloid, pearl ornament. **Price $535.00. No. 44.**



Chromatic Accordion, 46 notes in 4 reeds, 122 basses in 5 reeds, aluminum plates, covered with white celluloid. **Price $500.00. No. 45.**



Piano Keyboard, 45 notes in 5 reeds, new long shift key, 160 basses in 6 reeds with shift tone, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. **Price $825.00. No. 46.**



Chromatic Accordion, 52 notes in [illegible] in 6 reeds, pearl keys and [illegible] special made. **Price $[illegible]** [illegible] basses in 5 reeds. **Price $[illegible]**

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st class workmanship which makes them hard to beat



4 reeds, shift key, 120 ... $350.00. No. 33.



Piano buttons, 35 notes in 3 reeds, 40 basses in 3 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. $250.00. No. 34.



Chromatic Accordion, 40 notes in 5 reeds, 26 basses in 5 reeds. Price $[illegible].00. No. 35.



Vienna system, 25 keys in 3 reeds, 12 basses in 3 reeds, covered with celluloid, engraved. Price $175.00. No. 36.



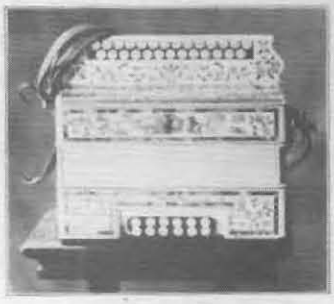
shift key, 80 basses ... Price $225.00. No. 40.



Piano Keyboard, 41 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 120 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. $250.00. No. 41.



Piano Keyboard, 29 notes in 4 reeds, shift key, 80 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid. Price $225.00. No. 42.



Vienna system, 35 keys in 4 reeds, 12 basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. $200.00. No. 43.



4 reeds, 132 basses ... pistons of pearl ... with 46 notes, 120 ... No. 47.



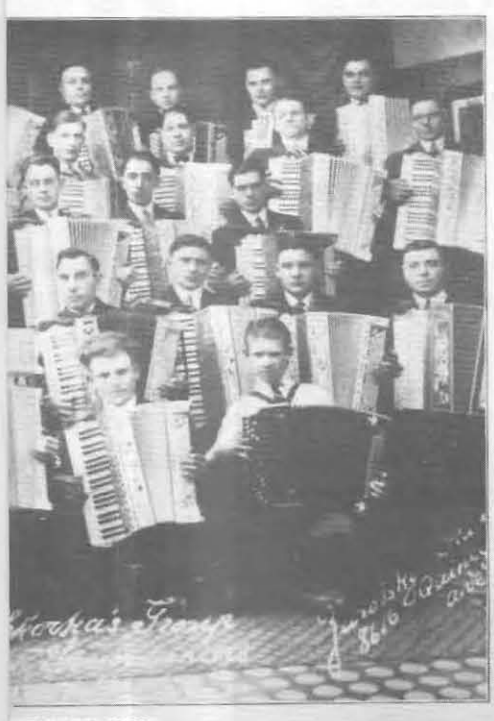
Chromatic Accordion, 52 notes in 4 reeds, 132 basses in 6 reeds. Colored celluloid case and keys, special made. Price $600.00. Same with 46 notes, 120 basses in 5 reeds. Price $500.00. No. 48.



Chromatic Accordion, small size, 40 notes in 4 reeds, 108 basses in 5 reeds, covered with white celluloid. — Price $351.00. No. 49.



Vienna system, 25 keys in 4 reeds, 80 chromatic basses in 5 reeds, covered with celluloid, pearl ornament. — Price $[illegible].00. No. 50.



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Taperet case.
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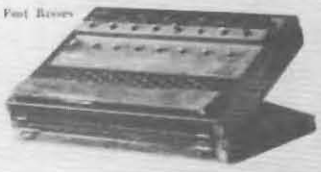
Foot Basses





N. SHKORKA



A. A. IVANOFF

& Pub. Co.

entering this store (on the 11th floor of 16 West 19th St.), you are immediately impressed with the large number of accordions — rows of accordions, stacked to the ceiling on shelves around the walls. There are plenty of accordions from which to choose; Accordion-O-Rama does not specialize in any one brand. Their brochure includes many of the popular brands that one would expect: Arpeggio, Avanti, Alas, Bell, Cintioli, Dallape, Excelsior, Excelsiola, Frontalini, Hohner, La Prima, Marca D'Oro, Sano, Nunziola, Paolo Soprani, Serenelli, Sonart, Scandalli, Sonola, and many others. All of these accordions have been completely serviced and approved by the tuning and service experts to be new or as good as new, and each accordion, regardless of its original manufacture date, comes with a new accordion guarantee.

To manage this complex operation, there are specialists working within each department — separate people who do the tuning, the repairs, and the electronic work. Each one is a specialist in his particular area. Even the sales is largely specialized, having separate salespersons to assist with either the electronic accordions or standard acoustic models. With such a large selection of accordions, a customer can easily become confused when making a decision about which accordion to purchase. It is at this point that the professional sales staff provides valuable assistance. Pressure tactics are never employed at Accordion-O-Rama. Mr. Shearer related that while he has sold as many as 29 accordions to a single individual, the customer who only purchases one accordion receives the same personal attention. If you don't know what a MIDI or tone chamber is or the difference between the Stradella or Bassetti bass systems, the Accordion-O-Rama sales staff is happy to explain. Mr. Shearer emphasized, "I'd just as soon sell a customer a rebuilt student model as a professional Gola. After all, we expect to find homes for them all!"

Accordion-O-Rama's prime location in Manhattan has allowed Mr. Shearer to meet many of the famous accordionists over the years. "Years ago," he said, "when Lawrence Welk needed an accordion for a TV special, we brought one up to the TV studio and got to go on the TV set during the production." His clientele is not always as well known as Lawrence Welk; but, he says, "We've been selling to more and more really famous stars in current years. Although I really like all kinds of music myself, I hadn't been aware of Bruce Springsteen or Billy Joel when their groups *first* got accordions from us, but since then I've learned about them. One never stops learning. I remember once when I asked one very nice girl if anyone ever told her that she looked like Bette Midler. She replied, 'No, I am Bette Midler.' She was already famous by then, but not a movie star yet."

Affirming his belief that the accordion is now coming up again, Mr. Shearer said that he has recently sold quite a few accordions to some up and coming stars like Kenny Margolis with the "Lucky 7," Rip Torn, and Jim McDonnell with "Loup Garou" and Nathan Williams. Others who are not even semi-stars like "Pinballs," who are turning down gigs because they don't have enough time. In fact, Mr. Shearer had to make several calls before finding someone free to go on an $11,000 Alpine tour during the summer. He laughed, stating: "I would have gone myself; but, I know my limitations, and I don't look especially good in Lederhosen."

One of accordion's most ardent supporters, Mr. Shearer exudes his love for it. Says he, "What is really nice about this business is the product. Although the accordion itself is a very powerful instrument (which probably explains its tremendous potential and persistent resurgence), I'm not just selling an instrument. I'm also selling *your ability*. It is very rewarding to have someone who is a perfect stranger tell you that the accordion was the best thing he or she ever bought! And, it's very true that no matter how much you spend on flashy cars or other material goods, the accordion can really bring out your ability in a nice way, without being ostentatious." He explained that the

ALAS ACCORDION-O-RAMA

INTERIOR OF ACCORDION-O-RAMA, FEATURING HUNDREDS OF ACCORDIONS

whole generation of poking fun at accordions may have gotten some impetus from its being overdone. People like George Carlin were typecast as being "potheads," and the accordion also got "typecast" as a one-song instrument! When many people went for acid rock music, the accordion just wasn't "Jimmy Hendrix's" instrument. So, it fell in national popularity, but many **more** people tell us **they love it** and always have!

Over the years, Accordion-O-Rama has had many fine repairmen: Nick, Delio, Charlie, Isauro, the Marios, and even John Reuther, author of the self-help book: *Accordion Repairs — Made Easy*. Mr. Shearer laughed and said, "Now, John Reuther really should have been a comedian. He loved to tell jokes all day long. In fact, he liked to help us out so much that, after his retirement, he asked to work for free during the summers just to sell accordions and talk with our customers. Before he died, he gave me an autographed copy of his accordion repair book. When John Reuther and Isauro were working together to put a uniform keyboard on a new accordion, I nearly lost my shirt, but it was fun and turned out all right. This was his last job." ***[Editor's Note: In a letter to Eddie Chavez, dated March 1982, the late John Reuther wrote about his association with Accordion-O-Rama: "I recently bought from Accordion-O-Rama a Giulietti accordion on which I intend to build a uniform keyboard for myself. It has a switch on the bass side changing from the Stradella bass system to single notes in 3 octaves. Also, I recently built a uniform keyboard for Accordion-O-Rama, the largest dealer in all makes of accordions in New York. This is the first keyboard I have made since 1951, but I still know how to do it!"]***

"In running a business of this type," Mr. Shearer said, "You've got to go along with the momentum of the accordion because just after you get used to the idea of sticking to the tried and true, someone will make a hot-pink accordion, and you sell two *before* they come in the door. So, one learns to go with change. On the other hand, some ideas that are really good, like the uniform keyboard, never seem to catch on. I also had a bad experience in which Excelsior decided to try a new glue on their accordions. For a year or so after we imported the first ones with the new glue, there were no problems. But, then 'Excelsior-itis' set in, and they all got sticky valves. This experience really taught me not to experiment but to stick with what is proven. It is really quite a balancing act to keep up with the new momentum, while maintaining a high degree of sustained quality that is expected in this business."

"Also, every time I think I've seen everything, something new comes along. Recently, a customer came in with a Russian accordion that looked like a diatonic and played chromatic, but it only had two rows. It may not have seemed anything unusual to a novice, but I wasn't sure if that customer was just describing the accordion incorrectly or if it was really something new."

Today, Accordion-O-Rama imports accordions into the United States, trades them on any basis, and performs even the most major repairs. And, everything is done **right** with a **full** guarantee. "We are probably the only place in New York that has sold an accordion to Taiwan rather than buying one from them," Mr. Shearer beamed proudly. We even sent an electronic accordion system to Japan.... Next year, we may try sending 'pigeons' to Venice."

Speaking of the new electronic technology that is available today, Mr. Shearer said, "The advent of the electronic accordions has created a whole new field for accordion dealers. If you don't mind taking some lessons about the computer, then computers can teach you. While this new technology does not please everyone, there is, nevertheless, a large number of accordionists now experimenting and adopting this new technology."

Commenting on the electronic accordion and the new MIDI, Mr. Shearer had this to say: "Interestingly, the electronic accordions are coming around 'full circle.' We started out with the tube models which had an accordion,

a tone generator, and a separate amplifier. Today's MIDI outfits come the same way. The typical MIDI unit (DX-7 without the keys) is called a Tone Generator. Actually the 'tone generator, expander, and module' terminology are the same. The big improvement in today's setup is that the controller (accordion in this case) can be connected to many brands and models of tone generators, and it can be used with more than one tone generator at a time. This advantage is also somewhat of a disadvantage. Having generalized tone generators that are able to do so much requires you to make it work right with the accordion — the way you want it to. This requires quite a bit of instructions, since there are so many possibilities. The final leg of the 'circle' is that now some companies like Hohner and Farfisa have made MIDI compatible modules that are made for the accordion and can still be used with additional modules to expand the horizons of the instrument without sacrificing the ease of operation. Hence, we are back to the dedicated module, but we can go further!"

However, this is only one of the possible choices at Accordion-O-Rama. Whether MIDI or standard accordion is your choice, you can find the accordion you like at this historic "Shopper's World."

[The author first envisioned this article because he wanted to include a story about this segment of the accordion business. Eddie Chavez then contacted Accordion-O-Rama and Mr. Shearer responded with a wealth of information about the comprehensive services available at full-service accordion centers like Accordion-O-Rama. A new 90-minute videotape, recently made by Mr. Shearer, gives an exhilarating tour of Accordion-O-Rama. Customers can see the many accordions available and can hear hi-fi recordings of both acoustic and electronic accordions. A second 60-minute videotape on "The Basics of MIDI" is a technical discussion (not a music lesson) of what MIDI is and how it works. The emphasis is on how MIDI relates to keyboards and accordions. Both videotapes are highly recommended for those who wish to see a wide variety of accordions displayed and hear the MIDI accordion used to its full potential. The final copy of this story has been reviewed by Mr. Shearer, and it is printed with his permission. Inquiries about this firm or requests for the videotapes ($25 each or $45 for both) should be directed to ALAS Accordion-O-Rama, 16 West 19th Street, New York, NY 10011. Phone: (212) 675-9089.]



JIMMY MacDONNELL (L), LEADER OF LOUP GAROU, AND PETER SHEARER (R), OWNER OF ACCORDION-O-RAMA STORE ('91). PHOTO CREDIT: NEWSDAY/DONNA DIETRICH.

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MY LIFE AND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE WORLD OF ACCORDION REPAIR

By Emil Baldoni

Editor's Note: How glad I was when Emil Baldoni accepted the invitation to include his life story in this book. Too often, we forget to admire and fully appreciate craftsmen like Emil Baldoni, who gave their untiring support to the many accordionists throughout the United States. With few exceptions, accordionists are not skilled in the fine mechanics of accordion repair. In emergencies, we have all attempted minor repairs, but wouldn't the accordionist be in a predicament without the help of professionals such as Emil Baldoni? Though he operated from his home base in the New York City area for his entire life, his influence was far-reaching indeed. He traveled to Italy for numerous consultations with factory representatives of major accordion corporations, and he repaired accordions for many of the famous musicians in this century. For his life-long contributions to the world of accordion manufacturing and repair, we applaud and honor him for his genuine dedication to the trade and on behalf of thousands of accordionists whom he has helped over the years.

.....

On July 14, 1913, I was born in Brooklyn, New York. And then about one year later, my family moved into a house that was owned by Anthony Galla-Rini's father. What a small world!

First, let me give some background about myself and tell how I got into the accordion business. To the best of my recollection, the first accordion firm to be opened in New York was my own father's shop. My father and his partner established a business known as Baldoni and Bartoli at 60 Mulberry Street in Manhattan (N.Y.C.). It was opened for business in 1908. In the beginning, they sold diatonic accordions that had about 15 treble keys and either 2, 4 or 8 bass buttons. Later they began selling and repairing piano and chromatic instruments. Unfortunately, my father passed away on May 10, 1918, when he was only 28 years old, and I was just 5 years old at that time. Shortly thereafter, the exclusive rights of the name Baldoni & Bartoli firm were sold to Mr. P. Bartoli. As I mentioned, this firm remained at the same address on Mulberry Street for 68 years until Mr. Bartoli retired in 1976.

As I grew older, I became familiar with all of the accordion companies that were started during these early times. One of the first accordion manufacturers was the firm of Candido Iorio which was founded sometime around 1907. They may have manufactured the first piano accordion in New York. I am positive they pre-date all other firms I am going to mention.

The Galizi Brothers were located at 215 Canal Street in Manhattan (their factory was in Brooklyn). Also located in Manhattan was Luigi Giulietti on Baxter Street. Enrico Ricci was located at 1308-72nd Street in Brooklyn. This gentleman was uniquely talented as he could build every part of an accordion by himself, except for the bellows and reeds. The Strongaroni Brothers (Phil and Eddie) opened a company known as the Harmony Accordion Company. They soon became associated with Mr. Ricci and also married his two daughters. The Excelsior Accordion Company was established in 1922, on Mulberry Street in Manhattan. One other great firm was established by Emilio Catena, a great reed maker. Certainly, there were other firms, but the ones I have mentioned were the nucleus of the accordion business in New York.

From the beginning, my life was involved in the accordion business in one way or another. All the people from the various firms I have named lived in the same vicinity. On weekends, we often got together and enjoyed many activities. When I turned 14 years of age, I began an apprenticeship with the firm of Mr. Ricci, whom I mentioned before. He was a one-man operation. After hiring me, he taught me how to make bass machines, how to

put in valves and springs, and how to set it all up. I spent about a year or so with Mr. Ricci, and then I went to work for the Galizi Brothers where I continued to work on bass mechanisms. Then, little by little, I learned how to build every part of the accordion. I found this business very rewarding as I loved anything mechanical. In those days, of course, there were not many switches; in fact, there was generally only a single switch.

Besides making bass machines, I became very proficient in installing accessories on finished accordions, as well as the grill work, etc. Eventually, I went out on my own, making bass machines in my own little shop for various concerns such as the Giulietti Corporation and a couple of firms in Philadelphia.

Shortly thereafter, my stepfather, whom my mother had married in 1925, learned how to make bellows. So, with his assistance and instruction, I also soon became proficient in making bellows. For a number of years, my stepfather and I made bellows and bass machines in great numbers for the Excelsior and Italo-American companies. I continued to work on these parts of the accordion up to 1940. Around this time, shortages of materials began to occur, and it became evident that insufficient materials were available to continue manufacturing. The state of the world was so unstable in 1941, due to Hitler and Mussolini, that I went to work for an aircraft company known as the Brewster Aeronautical Company. Little did I realize that the experience gained at this company would later help me in revolutionizing the way accordions were built.

Starting as a scrub boy, I cleaned up dirty spots on the airplanes and progressed to many other jobs working on the wing assemblies that folded up for operation on aircraft carriers. Eventually, I worked on every part of the aircraft, and I soon became much more particular in measurements because I realized the interrelationship of mating one part to another. When the wheels went up into the wheel wells, they had to fit perfectly or else they would jam. I continued to do this work for two years. Then, I got a very lucky break as there was an opening in the Brewster experimental aircraft department. My lead man was asked to choose one of his "best" men to send to the experimental department. Fortunately, I was chosen to go to that department where I learned to work with airplane blueprints and mock-ups. This job was extremely challenging and rewarding even though I worked 10 hours each day, 7 days a week. I worked in this experimental department until 1944.

Then, in the Spring of 1944, I was inducted into the Army. I was on active duty for only 8 months at which time I was discharged, not having seen any action. Waiting at the door, was Mr. Pio Luchetti, who had learned that I was out of the Army. He wanted to offer me a job in his accordion firm. The name of his company was the Art Novelty Company, which a year later became the Pancordion Company. Although they wanted me to remain with them, I decided to leave in the Spring of 1945 to establish the Ace Accordion Company in association with two friends, Joseph Nalbone, a fine cabinet maker, and Aldo Mencaccini. Between the three of us, and the knowledge I had picked up while working in the Brewster experimental department, we began to manufacture one of the finest accordions ever made in America.

In the early days of accordion manufacturing, a craftsman would take a piece of wood and custom fit each accordion part. Although the parts of an accordion matched perfectly, there was hardly any interchangeability of parts from one accordion to the other. So, from my experience in the experimental department, I started to build jigs for use in constructing all of the accordion parts. Thus, through the use of jigs, everything began to fit from one accordion to the other, and this greatly simplified and streamlined the accordion-building process.

My partners and I continued manufacturing Ace accordions for the next 8 or 9 years. However, we never got into the import business in any great quantity. Unfortunately,

Aldo Mencaccini left the company to go on his own and opened the Bell Accordion Company, also a very fine accordion. ***[Editor's Note: A fire destroyed the Bell accordion factory located in Northvale, New Jersey on February 6, 1985 — destroying all of the contents. Today, Aldo Mencaccini sells imported accordions, manufactures DUOVOX amplifiers and speakers, and runs a full-service accordion service shop in his new location at 126 Route 303, W. Nyack, New York 10994.]*** Throughout our association in the Ace Accordion Company, we gained a renowned reputation from many great musicians of that day for our fine accordions. During that time, we began to make outside connections with music companies to market our Ace accordions, and we also represented their lines of accordions. We also represented the Venuti models (Sorkin Music Co.) for a number of years. Then, we went back on our own. Finally, in 1955, we became associated with the Traficante Accordion Company in Minneapolis. They had a fine line of accordions known as Titano, and we, of course, had the American line of Ace accordions. We seemed to complement each other, and we had an excellent business association.

After becoming associated with Traficante, the first thing I was asked to do was to visit Italy to help improve the Titano accordion. It was a very good accordion, but mechanically it left a lot to be desired at that time. Again, this is where my prior experience with the Brewster experimental department paid off. Various improvements were made to the Titano line that are still incorporated on the models today. In addition to being a troubleshooter, I became the sales representative for the entire Eastern seaboard. In 1956, I again went to Italy to further improve the Titano, and I must say the Italian owners were very, very cooperative. They went all out to please us and do what we asked. And, it showed in the end as the Titano is an extremely fine instrument today.

In July 1955, at the first accordion convention I attended with Mr. Traficante, I met Mr. Bill Palmer and Mr. Bill Hughes. I began to learn from them what they were looking for in the bass mechanism — like being able to play single notes in the left hand without having to use switches. They did have something at this time that the factory had made in Italy, but it was very complicated and had problems with jamming. The system had to be handled very carefully. On my first trip to Italy, I had also discussed this subject. I worked with two Italian technicians, and we devised an almost foolproof system in which the sound was correct. We called it the sliding carriage converter. It worked very well. I will take some credit for the single bass mechanism known as the converter. This converter system enables musicians and students to play Bach and others without changing a thing; thus, music could be played as it was written. The converter offered them this opportunity to do so. In time, more and more people got into building converters and made some additional improvements. Now, they are perfect and in use by many musicians today.

In 1955, Traficante sold out to Pancordion. I stayed with them for a while, but then went out on my own and imported a line of Ace accordion models. Things went along very fine for a while, but it soon became evident that the accordion business was in a downtrend. There were less and less sales, and at the same time, the cost of accordions continued to increase, making it doubly difficult to sell accordions.

So, something had to be done, and I advertised that we repaired all types of accordions — all kinds. This strategy began to take hold. Dealers had many accordions that they had obtained at the lower prices; so, when they had a sale, they would send us any trade-in to have it renovated. This was much cheaper than buying a new accordion to sell at the increasing prices, and the dealer was able to lower his used inventory and sell accordions. Thus, accordion repairs became beneficial to the dealer and to myself. I no longer import accordions today. I only do repair work, performing repairs

for accordionists who have had their accordion for some time and need renovation, tuning, or other such repairs.

I take pride in my work, attempting to make it as fine as possible and doing my utmost on these repairs. The Ace accordions are not in existence any longer; they closed 2 years ago in 1986. I still maintain a complete repair shop and still consider it a challenge to repair accordions. I love to do this work; it's in my blood.

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Throughout my career, I have had the pleasure of knowing many of the great accordionists of this century, such as Pietro Frosini, Charles Magnante, Charles Nunzio, Bill Palmer, Bill Hughes, Carmen Carrozza, Robert Davine, and many others. Regarding Pietro Frosini, he was the first artist to play single notes in the bass. In later years, he had 102 single bass notes, with some bass rows running chromatically and other rows positioned so that adjacent buttons (of the same note) produced that note an octave lower or higher without jumping seven buttons. He did not use his thumb in playing the bass. He used four fingers. The little finger was used for most of the fundamental bass work, leaving three fingers to form chords in the various inversions. He was a very fine composer and musician. I want especially to thank Bill Palmer, Robert Davine, and others for the confidence they have had in



ABOVE: EMIL BALDONI WORKING IN HIS MANHATTAN SHOP IN NEW YORK CITY.



IN PHOTO AT RIGHT: ALDO MENCACCINI (L) WITH EMIL AND JOSEPHINE BALDONI (R) FOLLOWING A TRADE CONVENTION IN NEW YORK CITY (1974).

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— July 15, 1989
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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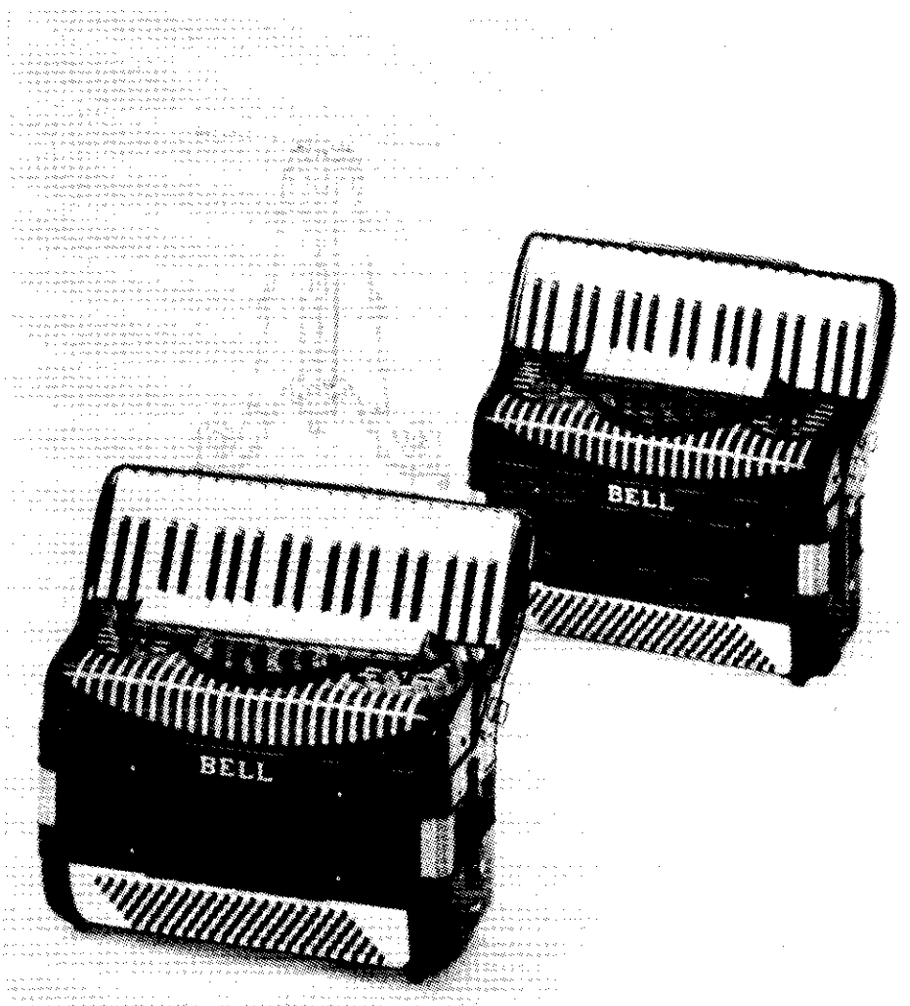

TWO ACCORDIONS TAKEN FROM AN EARLY 1960 BELL CATALOG
(Courtesy of Aldo Mencaccini, Owner and Founder of BELL Accordions)

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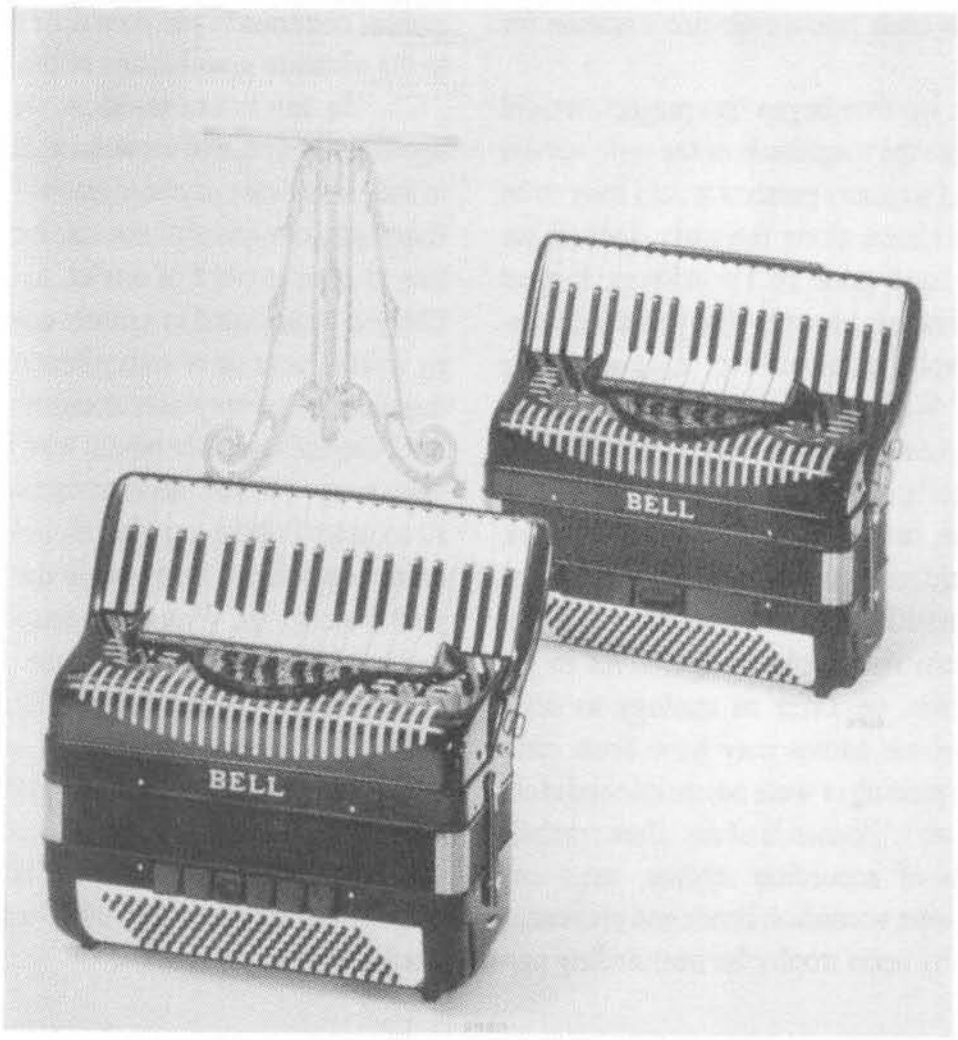

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END NOTES

As mentioned in the introductory pages, this revised edition has updated material in various articles and has added new articles and photographs, thereby preserving an even greater portion of the "Golden Age" of the accordion for future generations to read and enjoy. We thus conclude this edition with a tremendous feeling of accomplishment. At the same time, however, we recognize that no single book can fully document this resplendent era of history. Undeniably, much remains to be done in the future.

This edition is considerably more comprehensive than the previous edition. Our goal was to build upon the previous edition by incorporating several suggestions submitted by our readers. We hope that these new features (improved cover, double-column text, increased number of photographs/articles, and the comprehensive index) will make this book into a collector's edition for accordionists.

When we first began this project, we did not fully realize the magnitude of the task, nor did we realize that so many persons would have to be asked for assistance along the way. Indeed, we could never have gone so far without a great number of wonderful people who provided valuable photographs, catalogs, and other accordion information. Without their assistance our book, *The Golden Age of the Accordion*, could never have been published.

As we send this revised edition to the publisher, there remains a deep sense of regret that so much more still needs to be done to fully cover the artists from the "Golden Age." As in the previous edition, we offer an apology to those individuals whose names may have been mentioned only in passing or were not mentioned at all. Indeed there were thousands of excellent teachers and hundreds of accordion studios, large and small. There were accordion bands and orchestras that won trophy upon trophy for outstanding performances. Many were featured in international concert tours. There were big dance bands and small ensembles which prominently featured outstanding accordionists. Without these, there would have been no "Golden Age." But without any financial underwriting and with the high cost of re-publishing a book of this size, practical economics limited the total number of pages so that the price of this edition could remain within the means of everyone who loves the accordion.

If this new edition is as well received by the accordion world as the previous edition, we hope to be able to produce other volumes covering contemporary U.S. and international accordion artists. These talented artists whose abilities rival those of the greatest pioneers, along with the younger devotees whose technical abilities are keeping pace with ever-rising standards of performance, continue in our own time to call attention to the ultimate possibilities of the accordion.

In any future revision, we wish to build upon this edition, and we welcome those who wish to submit articles or photographs for inclusion in future editions or supplements. Indeed, we would like to offer a word of advice to artists who are likely to be included in a future edition. Start now by writing your story and collecting suitable photographs to portray and document your career. Seek the assistance of others who may help write your story. If you need assistance from Flynn Associates Publishing Co., do not hesitate to inquire how we can help you in the preparation of your manuscript. With close cooperation, we can make the next edition even better.

In closing, special mention must be made of Maestro Anthony Galla-Rini and Dr. Willard (Bill) Palmer for their words of advice and encouragement during this lengthy project. How grateful we are for their invaluable contributions and their helpfulness in preparing the Foreword and the Book Review.

RON FLYNN EDWIN DAVISON EDDIE CHAVEZ — 1 January 1992

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GALLA-RINI
Concert Accordionist

HERE IS WHAT ANTHONY GALLA-RINI SAYS ABOUT THIS BRAND NEW BOOK WHICH DOCUMENTS MANY OF THE INTERESTING HISTORICAL EVENTS ABOUT THE ACCORDION AND INTRODUCES MANY ARTISTS WHO LIVED DURING THE "GOLDEN AGE OF THE ACCORDION."

This book is a must for every accordionist, accordion student, and accordion enthusiast across the United States. The historical approach used by the authors present an interesting and definitive coverage of the growth and development of the accordion in the United States.

This is a book that one will read over and over for enjoyment as well as for historical reference. Until now, no one had attempted to write such a comprehensive account of accordion history, as seen through the eyes of the great musicians engaged in the process of making that history.

Heavily illustrated with interesting photographs of early accordionists and accordion memorabilia, this book is extremely valuable for the illustrations alone. The historical account of the accordion in early San Francisco is a key story in the book, as San Francisco was the accordion capital of America for many years.

Organized by area of the country, the book introduces the key pioneers from the "Golden Age of the Accordion" and tells their interesting life stories through a collection of biographic and autobiographic articles.

So thorough is the book that the authors even covered accordion manufacturing, sales, and repair service in the United States. These firms were given an opportunity to tell their history and discuss their accordion lines or service specialties. Their addresses are included for those who may wish to request brochures or other information.

Significantly, this book documents the fact that after the accordion came into the limelight (circa 1908), the accordion has never really disappeared since then. The spotlight merely moved away from Vaudeville, after its decline (circa 1932), and began to focus in other directions.

I believe every accordionist in America, after reading this book, will applaud the efforts of Ron Flynn, Edwin Davison, and Eddie Chavez who teamed up to write it. Their love for the accordion is apparent. They have done a great service through their determined effort to publish this comprehensive, well-documented history of the accordion in America.

—Maestro Anthony Galla-Rini, Concert Accordionist, Composer, and Lecturer

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