NEWSLETTER OF THE

SAN FRANCISCO

# BAY AREA ACCORDION CLUB

# MARCH MEETING

By Bob Berta

The March meeting proved to be very exciting! The selection of performers was outstanding and there was news that...can it be true...another BETTER location may have been found for our meetings.

President Dominic Palmisano opened the meeting. Then Frank Montoro gave the treasurer's report; we have \$7,905 in the bank, so we are doing very well. Frank announced that he will and Algis Ratnikas will co-

chair the annual BAAC picnic on June 5th. Give **Frank** or **Algis** a call if you can provide some help.

Next, **Dominic** announced that we may have a couple new locations to choose from. Both are in San Francisco; both have plenty of parking and are excellent facilities. One is at St. Stephens Parish near Stonestown; the other possibility as reported by **Tony Di Bono** is the Spanish Cultural Center located at 2850 Alemany. Both locations are being further investigated.

Marian Kelly next gave us an update on the efforts of the club to help our "adopted" member Vladimir Kallistov to petition for immigration to the U.S.

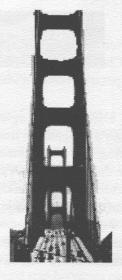
Most of the members are familiar by now with the story of Vladimir and our attempts to bring this talented fellow to the United States. Marian read a letter she composed, signed by the board, which will go to the immigration attorney as an aid in Vladimir's case. I for one am on pins and needles waiting for a happy conclusion in this case. Marian echoes my thoughts that Vladimir is perhaps the

cont. on p. 4





Reno Di Bono



MARCH, 1994

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

March 26th, Saturday. Veikko Ahvenainen at the German-American Club, 230 Plymouth, Santa Cruz, 6:30 P.M. Includes dinner, entertainment, dancing. \$10.00. Call Dennis Reader at 408-728-1988 for info.

April 4th, Monday. Accordion band rehearsal at House of Parties. 7:00 P.M. See notice on p. 3.

April 5th, Tuesday. BAAC General Meeting in Daly City, 285 Abbott Avenue. Performers include Al Enos, Clude Forsman, Bill Dickey, Bob Smith, Algis Ratnikas, and Peter Di Bono. Don't forget: nominations from the floor for officers and board for the upcoming year will be accepted only at this meeting. Election to be held at the May meeting.

April 13th, Wednesday. BAAC Board Meeting, 7:30 PM. Ed Massolo's home, 612 Lassen, So. S.F. 415-589-8409.

May 3, Tuesday. BAAC General Meeting held at Donworth Hall, 22nd and Eucalyptus. Ladies' Night! This is also Election Night. List of candidates will be published in April Newsletter.

June 5, Sunday. BAAC Annual Picnic, Elks Club, Palo Alto. Save the date! The June general meeting, has been cancelled.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In case you haven't heard, the Bay Area Accordion Club has a new President. A new temporary President until the end of June.

The Board of Directors accepted Dominic Palmisano's resignation from his position as President at the last meeting. According to the bylaws, the Vice President is to perform presidential duties in the absence of the President. Since I have been that V-P, I will take over Dominic's tasks until a new President is elected. For the moment, we will have no Vice-President.

I don't intend to accomplish anything earthshaking (heaven knows we have enough of that around here!), but I do want to listen. I want all of you to feel that you can call me and make any suggestions that you care to. The Board and I care about your opinions. My phone is (415) 854-1896. Alternatively, of course, you may call the BAAC number, (415) 974-9210 and leave a message. I would greatly appreciate suggestions along with critical comments, and I warn you that I may encourage members to suggest and help implement solutions to problems.

The big issue on the table at the moment is still our meeting location. Too many members are unhappy with the Abbott Avenue location, so the Board decided at its March meeting that we must change again.

This time, the Board will not make the final decision about our meeting place. Rather, we will choose a couple other locations, schedule a meeting or two at each of them, giving ourselves an opportunity to try them out. Then, probably in September, we will ask the membership to vote and decide which location they prefer. For starters, we will hold our May meeting at Donworth Hall at St. Stevens' Parish, 22nd and Eucalyptus, right next to Stonestown. Three big cheers to Frank Panacci for his work in locating and tying down this hall for us. I won't try to sell any of you on the desirability of Donworth, but I will say that there is plenty of nearby parking, a fine stage for performers, and that the size and price are about right. Please plan to attend our Ladies' Night meeting in May and form your own opinions.

A little philosophy.....I think that obtaining complete concensus from a club of our size will never be possible. We are a diverse group, held together by the important common thread of the instrument many of us have played all our lives. Differences of opinion are bound to result from our own differences in style and experience. But we must nevertheless be able to settle on courses of action appropriate to the club goals and to ask and expect everybody's cooperation. Your officers and Board of Directors are there to represent the membership and the members' ideas but to handle most of the nitty gritty stuff of running the Club. In order to represent you, we need both your opinions and your cooperation. Please help us obtain concensus on the issue of our meeting place as well as on any other potentially divisive issue which may arise.

You may count on me, in these few months, to listen as best I can and to work hard at pulling together and strengthening our Club.

Marian Kelly

# March Board Meeting

#### Synopsis

- Letter from Dominic Palmisano resigning his status as President was read. The Board will write him a letter thanking him for his many contributions to our Club.
- Treasurer's Report showed \$7562 in the combined accounts.
- The Nominating Committee gave a progress report. They are doing an excellent job recruiting people for officers' and directors' positions for the upcoming year. (Election at May meeting.)
- Plans for the picnic were reported by A. Ratnikas and F. Montoro. They are doing a great job.
- A monthly payment to the Editor of the newsletter was approved. The job is time-consuming and requires an unusual regular commitment.
- It was agreed that the Abbott Avenue location is not working as the site for our general meetings. The decision of where to move will be made by the membership after we have tested a couple locations. The first test will begin in May (provided Frank Panacci can obtain a go-ahead from the church) and will be at Donworth Hall, part of St. Stephens' Parish, at 22nd and Eucalyptus, near Stonestown Shopping Center.
- Ed Massolo will contact the Northwest Accordion Club to try to work out a guest exchange with them. BAAC will pay for one of our members to travel to their meeting and perform; they would reciprocate. This system will also be tried with other clubs.

#### NEWS FLASH!!

Art Van Damme announces the release of his first CD, appropriately titled "State of Art." It contains 18 selections from 8 albums, including: Wave, Laura, Cheers, Shiny Stockings, Cute, Here's That Rainy Day, I Get a Kick Out of You, All the Things You Are and more.

To add it to your accordion library, send \$19.95 check or money order (price includes shipping) to:

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### ACCORDION BAND PRACTICE

All BAAC members are welcome "baac" to our old hall on the first Monday of each month. There is no door charge, courtesy of Roy Lagomarsino.

Domenic Saso is the conductor; refreshments are no-host.

Bring your accordion and a music stand and join us! Stay to jam afterwards. Remember...the first Monday of each month, from 7:00 PM until you can't squeeze anymore, at the House of Parties!

For info, call Roy at (415) 282-3288 or Domenic at (415) 587-7557.

See you there!

# Accordions, accordin to GORDON

by Gordon Piatanesi

Volume I. Number 1

In the 47 years that I have been selling Accordions, I've seen many players who have purchased Accordions from dealers, newspaper advertisements, garage sales, or whatever, asking why the Accordion they purchased is uncomfortable for them.

Usually we discover that their keyboard is either too small or too large. When you buy a pair of shoes, you try them on first to be sure they fit well. So it is when you buy an Accordion; you must seek out the correct size. The keyboard must fit your fingers. In the Accordion field, there are six different size 41 key keyboards available, namely 14 1/2", 15 1/2", 16 3/4", 17 1/2", 18 3/8", and 19 1/4". Measurements are taken from the low F white key to the highest A key. Various brands may vary 1/4" to 3/8", but the above sizes are pretty standard with most manufacturers.

If you are a 7-year old youngster with small hands, you need the 14 1/2" key-

board. If you are a young lady with medium size hands, more than likely you should have the 16 3/4" or 17 1/2" keyboards. An adult with large hands should be evaluating the 19 1/4" keyboard.

A beginner who plays single notes on the keyboard may be less concerned with size. As a student progresses and begins to play chords, the importance of keyboard size becomes obvious. Imagine a big hand trying to squeeze a finger between two black keys to hit the white key on a small keyboard and finding there is not enough room.

Another keyboard concern is action. Some units have deep action, where a key will depress up to 1/2". Other actions where depress the key only 3/16" and others which depress the key anywhere between those two limits. If you're a speed player, you may prefer the shallower action because you will be able to play more quickly with a 3/16" drop. A deeper action might be preferable for a

accordionist who plays lots of chords.

The amount of spring in keyboards also varies. You can choose between a light touch spring or heavy action spring. There is a limit as to lightness, as you don't want to have action so light that air leakage will occur from keyboard valves.

Hopefully the above information will be helpful to you. Next month watch for hints on the different types of tuning available.



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### March General Meeting, cont.

greatest midi accordionist we have ever heard. Responses that **Marian** has heard from the likes of **Joe Petosa** and **Frank Marocco** confirm that impression

Next on the order of business was the appointment of three members to join Board members Josephine Hornbrook and Ed Massolo to form a five-person nominating committee. Glen McClelland, John Puppo, and Domenic Saso were kind enough to volunteer. They will present their recommendations for officers and board at the April meeting.



Tom Cordoni

Finally, after all the excitement and anticipation, we got to the real reason for the BAAC meetings, music! Our MC **Domenic Saso** stepped up and introduced the first of a fine lineup of players, **Leo Troitzky. Leo** played a wide range of music, from Glenn Miller big band to a Russian medley, and *Siboney*. He played very well, and I particularly enjoyed the Russian medley.

Next up was **Reno Pucci** who brought along a 1930's vintage Guerrini with an additional augmented chord row. He played a selection of music designed to feature the augmented chord. The excitement of the night was provided by **Reno** when his accordion strap (also 1930'svintage?) broke, and he illustrated one of the

best "saves" I have witnessed. A collective sigh from the audience was heard as his quick reflexes prevented that wonderful accordion from boucing on the floor. I wonder how many members rushed out the next day and purchased new straps to prevent their own beloved accordions from demolishing themselves after witnessing **Reno's** close call!

**Tom Cordoni** took the stage next. While he couldn't match **Reno's** "excitement", he provided outstanding renditions of *St. Louis Blues, Cuba Libra Cha Cha*, and an

Irish medley in honor of the upcoming St. Patrick's Day. Tom has a very musical style, and I really enjoyed the Cha Cha. After hearing his Irish medley, I remembered a quote I once heard..."There are more people who claim to be Irish than there are Irish." Having visited Ireland and having been entertained by Irish musicians a few years back I can see why...they have a rich cultural history of really neat ethnic music. On St. Pat's Day, I become Bob O'Berta.

After the break Frank Montoro took the stage with

his midi accordion. He played a wonderful flamenco piece, *Granabins*, featuring classic guitar sounds which were very faithful to the intonations of the guitar, and illustrating the capabilities of his Midi. His other pieces, *All I Ask of You*, *Piel Canela*, and a Tarantella were delightful. **Frank** is a very busy professional accordionist, and those who have heard him play can see why!

Reno Di Bono was up next with fine performances of Dizzy Fingers, Jealousy, Twilight Time, and Don't Get Around Much Anymore. Reno has a very smooth keyboard style. I particularly enjoyed his arrangement of "Twilight Time."

Last but not least was Marian Kelly. She played a couple of unusual pieces which were crowd pleasers. First was a tune with the strange name of *Pupazetti* which was a delight. Next was the old standby *Fascination* as arranged by Galla-Rini. Her final piece was *Green Light* by Charlie Magnante, which is a musical simulation of driving through traffic. It was complete with blaring horns, rapid stops, jackrabbit starts, and was a fun exercise for the audience.

See you all next month. Don't forget to Practice, Practice, Practice!



Frank Montoro

#### CONCERTINA TUNING AND MAINTENANCE

The following information was excerpted from an article by Mr. Don Nichols of Vienna, Virginia which appeared several years ago in Concertina & Squeezebox magazine, edited by Joel Cowan. This magazine is something which any person who is interested in either Concertinas or Accordions (at least button accordions) should get. It publishes articles on technical topics, playing styles, players who are (or should be) well known, manufacturers of the instruments and gatherings of those who play them. The current subscription address is Concertina & Squeezebox, P.O. Box 6706, Ithaca, New York, 14851. Write them for further info.

The techniques described in the article generally relate to the tuning and maintenance of English Concertinas. They are applicable to Anglo Concertinas which have been manufactured in England or according to the construction practices common in England. Some, but not all, of the information is also applicable to the tuning and maintenance of Accordions, Melodeons, and Anglo concertinas manufactured in Germany, Italy and other locations. You will not, therefore, be able to follow Don's suggestions as a recipe for tuning your own instrumen, but rather, you must pick and choose if you are looking for guidance. However, Don's article is obviously of interest to all accordionists because it is full of careful, detailed observations and analysis. You won't fail to understand a great deal more about tuning when you have finished reading his suggestions.

Don (Nichols) stated that having once been in the position of being a courageous amateur, he could sympathize with a person's desire to know more about the repair and/or maintenance of an instrument which is most likely to be acquired in an extremely used condition. Even those in good condition still need occasional tweaking. They also fall prey to problems such as airborne cat hair which can stop a reed instantly. Don was fortunate enough to meet Neil Wayne (the noted English concertina collector and restorer) and observe his actions while tuning concertina reeds.

Since the article is long, it will be published in this newsletter in at least two installments.

# Concertina Tuning and Maintenance

by Don Nichols

#### Determining the proper pitch.

The first thing that you should know is that the pitch produced by a reed outside the instrument will not be the same as that with the reed in an assembled instrument. If you have a tuning meter which will tell you how many cents in error the reed is while inside the instrument, take another reading of the reed outside the instrument and tune it to a pitch determined by adding the error within the instrument to the observed pitch outside the instrument.

#### Needed tools.

The tuning will be much easier if you have or fabricate a tuning fixture to sound the reeds outside the instrument. Since the reed carriers (the brass feet) are dovetailed into the reed-pan, it is possible to produce a box with a dovetailed slot to accept the reed and carrier, attach it to a vacuum source located in another room and connected by a long hose to keep the sound of the pump from interfering with the process of measuring the pitch of the reeds. You should insert a needle valve in the vacuum line to allow you to regulate the flow of air through the reed. It is advantageous to include a floating-ball air flow meter to allow you to verify the sensitivity of the reed. You can use the concertina itself for driving the reeds under test, but this results in an inordinate amount of disassembly and reassembly of the instrument and slows you greatly.

To tune the reeds, you will need some method to remove metal from them. For tuning a single instrument, you may use a swiss needle file (half-round preferred). If you are tuning more than one instrument or a steel-reeded instrument, you may wish to use an electric driven, small diameter grinding wheel. The grinder should have a method for controlling its speed, since high-pitched reeds will change pitch greatly even though only a small amount of metal has been removed. One very workable system is the Dremel flexible-shaft tool with a foot-operated speed control and a green silicon-carbide stone. Rounding the edges of the stone with an industrial diamond is recommended and is best done while the stone is mounted and rotating at high speed. This will reduce the chance of leaving a step in the length of the reed during grinding. Changes of thickness must be gentle, or there will be an increased chance of metal fatigue at the step after many hours of reed use.

#### Why the reed is not properly tuned.

There are several reasons why the reed may be out-of-tune, and sometimes a combination of these reasons causes the problem. If all reeds are very sharp, the instrument is probably tuned to the Salvation Army, old outdoor brass band pitch of A-456. If only the D# and Eb reeds seem to be off from modern, it may be that the instrument was tuned acoustically. This will produce very pure chords in C-major or A-minor, but as the key goes into more sharps or flats, these notes will sound worse and worse. Most brass-reed instruments seem to have been tuned this way (but in old pitch.) A steel-reed instrument can condense water on the reeds when played in



# **Tuning and Maintenance**, cont. D. Nichols

air which is warmer than the interior of the instrument. This moisture will lead to rust, which will shift the pitch, and in extreme cases, cause reeds to stick or rasp.

The first step in this case is to scrape all visible rust off the flats and edges of the reeds. To do this use a good jeweler's screwdriver blade as a scraper and support the reed with shim stock as in tuning. Be sure to remove any rust from the bottom of the reed as well. To do this, invert the reed, place it on a hard surface such as a table top, with the clamp bar over the edge and the entire length of the reed in contact with the hard surface.

After scraping off all the rust, use a compressed-air duster (available from photo stores) to blow away all rust. If the rust has built up on the edge of the reed, or a piece of dust has become wedged between the edge and the carrier, the pitch of the reed will shift sharply upward. Remove the dust particle by sliding the shim-stock between the reed and its carrier in a vertical position. In the case of brass reeds, if a reed is very flat and shortly after re-tuning, shifts flat again, it has a hairline crack in the underside.

To verify this, press down on the tip of the reed, while examining the top with magnification. You will see a point at which the curvature of the reed is more pronounced than at other locations. This reed must be replaced, as there is no way to keep it in tune, and the reed will soon break with continued playing. If a reed sounds on-pitch at moderate pressure levels, but shifts very sharp at high pressures, it is possible that it is hitting the edge of the slot in the reed pan. This is cured by a careful surgical removal the wood where it hits. To locate this, press the reed inward with a jeweler's screwdriver until it bends.

Next month: How to tune, Where to tune, Slow-starting reeds, Setting of reed.

## PICNIC NEWS!!!

The BAAC fourth annual summer picnic will again be held this year at the Palo Alto Elk's Club. The date is Sunday, JUNE 5, and the address is 4239 El Camino Real. We'll publish an abbreviated map for you in the May newsletter. Our tentative schedule for the picnic is:

10 AM - 11 Free strolling accordion music.

11 - 12:30 Stage players - 4 twenty min. sets

12:30 - 1:30 Picnic, free strolling, door prizes.

1:30 - 4:00 Stage performances

Looking forward to hearing the New BAACBAND and featured soloists. Please remember that there will be no catered food or drinks this year. The club will provide charcoal for barbeque. If you have any items to donate as door prizes, contact Frank Montoro at 574-4757, or Algis Ratnikas at 587-9910, or leave a message on our club phone at 415-9749210. If you wish to play as a featured soloist, contact a program committee member, Ed Massolo or Frank Panacci.

### **BLAKE PARKER**

As I was having coffee early one morning at a Starbucks cafe on 24th St, I was surprised to see someone opening an accordion case. It happened to be our very own Blake Parker of Noe Valley, Domenic Saso's 10-year old student.

While he set up, I asked him a few questions. He said he comes to Starbucks, goes on to Spinelli's, then to the courtyard deli to entertain and earn a little money.

Blake has been taking lessons for 1 1/2 years and does great renditions of *Beer Barrel Polka, Lady of Spain,* and the *Caissons,* among others. He started off with a 48 bass but has now stepped up to a 140 bass Corda-vox.

If you're in the mood for a cuppa, someday, I suggest stopping at Blake's hangouts so you might cheer him on. Keep up the good work, Blake!

Cindy Tuculet

### GALLA-RINI WORKSHOP LECTURES

Music Graphics Press of San Diego announces the publication of Volumes I through IV of Anthony Galla-Rini's workshop lectures.

The notice quotes Tony as follows: "During the past number of years I have had the occasion to conduct many accordion workshops. This necessitated preparing many new subjects as lectures since I was returning to these cities each year and did not want to repeat subject material.

The result was that I had prepared and used 35 new lectures. I feel that all of the lectures might be of interest to anyone involved with the accordion.

The subjects covered include the most important details of the accordion along with much pertinent elements of Theory of Music."

Order any or all of these workshop lectures by check made payable to Music Graphics Press. Cost for all four volumes is \$39.95. For any two volumes (minimum order, 2 volumes), cost is \$25.90. In California, add 7 3/4% Sales Tax to all orders. Also add shipping, which is \$3.00 for any order.

Send your check to Music Graphics Press, 121 Washington St. San Diego, CA 92103

# **Impressions**

by Enio A. Huhtala

A strange phenomenon invariably affects most of us, young or old, as we prepare to perform before an audience. Some symptoms may be sweaty palms, quavering voice, dry mouth, rapid heartbeat, and flushed appearance. You may experience others.

The experts in these matters advise us that it is a natural reaction for mankind as well as for animals to bristle and show angry defiance when sensing danger. This reaction in a mild form experienced by the performer is commonly called stage fright.

This nervousness usually tends to place a person on alert, and he becomes more sensitive, reactive, and responsive to stimuli. Consequently, experienced performers have learned to make a little of this stage fright work for, rather than against, them. That's the theory. What actually can happen in practice?

I had a request to play a couple of numbers for a women's club, and, on arrival, was ushered into their small meeting room, where I was to stand at one side of the room, while their fifty or so members stood in a semi-circle around me. After playing a few bars, I remembered my teacher's instruction, "Don't watch your keyboard; look up at the audience!" So, I looked up, and directly in front of me was a beautiful lady with a huge smile on her face and a wicked glint in her eye. She gave me the biggest wink I had ever seen! With my fingers running over the keyboard, the accordion went momentarily silent. I had forgotten to squeeze the bellows! Oh boy! An extra shot of adrenaline didn't help that time.

## MIDI Help Column

1. I have found a MIDI foot controller which works with any sound module and allows the user to program 4 channels and change all channels at the same time. The company which makes it, DIGI-TECH, calls it a MIDI CONTROLLER PEDAL PDS3500. It is quite small, about 5' x 8' and a couple inches thick. It provides for up to 64 programs and each program can send up to 32 commands to your sound module. If you wish, you can also make changes to one channel at a time each time you hit the pedal.

The DIGI-TECH pedal isn't quite as sophisticated as that of the ELKA MIDI II+ since it won't remember volume or octave changes, but that hasn't proven to be of any consequence for me, though. It does allow for a variable foot pedal to be hooked up to the device which can be used for many different purposes such as sustain, portamento, pitch bend, etc. Most sound modules don't have provisions for a foot pedal so this can be a big help. Another advantage is that it allows you to address 128 sounds rather than only the first 100 like the ELKA MIDI II+.

The device is not a sequencer, just a MIDI controller. Depending on your sound module, you may need a MIDI merger/patch bay if you only have one MIDI IN.

I have found only one negative: the instruction manual is very confusing and has some incorrect in-

formation about programming the device. Give me a call or look me up at a meeting and I can explain further.

2. If you have an ELKA MIDI II+ accordion and have had problems with occasional unexplained changes of sounds, program numbers changing in readout without your input, etc., you may have a problem with voltage drop through your MIDI/power

### Another Berta???

Bob Berta's curiosity has been piqued. Bob writes: "The book 'Golden Age of the Accordion' makes reference to a professional accordionist A. Berta who was a user of Colombo accordions. Gordon says that he believes the musician lived in Santa Barbara and his first name might have been Alberto. Since my last name is Berta, and there aren't a whole lot of Bertas in the US, I would be interested in knowing a little more history of Mr. A. Berta. He apparently has passed away, but I thought some of the BAAC members might remember him. If you know of him and can relate some history, I would appreciate a call at (415) 756-8309."

cord and/or interference from the connecting plug. This is the cord which goes between your accordion and the power supply. I discovered this by accident after experiencing the same symptoms in two different MIDI accordions. I have built cords which are 30 feet long and have had no further problems.

The solution is as simple as getting the correct MIDI power cord and MIDI plug fittings. If you are experiencing this problem, I can help you solve it.

Bob Berta (415) 756-8309

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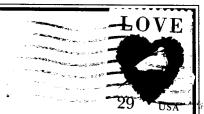
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NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY APRIL 5, 1994

7:00PM

285 ABBOTT AVE DALY CITY

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PLAY AT A MEETING, CALL JOE AT 510-832 -6938 OR ED AT 415-589-8409

Conductor Marian Kelly <u>Banker</u> Frank Montoro Teller Rusty Bartoli <u>Scribe</u> Josephine Hornbrook