

# October General Meeting

by Bob Berta

The October 3rd general meeting provided a special treat for all of us. **Bonnie Birch**, a special guest artist from the Northwest Accordion Club, was on hand to participate in our exchange program. This is a new program which will allow us to exchange talent with other clubs and gain a wider perspective on other gifted artists.

Prior to the evening's entertainment, President Frank Montoro reminded everyone of the special retirement and recognition dinner for Gordon Piatanesi of Colombo Accordions to be held Sunday, October 23rd at the Spanish Cultural Center in San Francisco. This promises to be a great event honoring a very special person who has meant so much to the accordion, especially for those of us in the Bay Area.

Our very own Master of Ceremonies, **Domenic Saso**, took the stage to announce the evening's entertainment. I wish to publicly ask for **Domenic's** forgiveness here for a major omission in the last newsletter. While I praised the playing of young **Blake Parker** last month, I forgot to mention that Blake is one of **Domenic's** students. Hey, I'm

# NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE

Effective immediately, door fees at our General Meetings have been raised to \$2.00.

The membership voted to approve this increase at our September meeting, but since no mention of the change was made in the September newsletter, the decision was made to delay implementation of the new policy until November.

The Board recommended this increase because we are paying more than three times as much rent at Donworth Hall as we were paying at the House of Parties, and on many evenings, the collection at the door does not cover the rent for the evening

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A secondary membership list will be available at the November meeting. That list will consist of current members who did not indicate to us that they wished their names omitted from the circulated list. The list will contain a statement saying that it is not to be used for commercial purposes.

There will be a charge of 50 cents for the list to cover copying costs.

cont. on p. 4



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

October 23rd, Sunday. Testimonial dinner for Gordon Piatanesi. Spanish Cultural Center on Alemany Blvd., S.F.

October 26th, Wednesday. MIDI workshop at Bob Berta's, 4 Park Manor Dr, Daly City. Please RSVP, to (510) 450-5766. 6:00 PM.

November 2nd, Wednesday. BAAC Board Meeting, 7:30 PM. Ed Massolo's, 612 Lassen, So. S.F. Guests Welcome. (415) 589-8409.

November 7th, Monday. BAAC General Meeting, 7:00 PM. Donworth Hall, 21st & Eucalyptus, San Francisco. Featured performers include: Lisa Chen, Algis Ratnikas, Lee Woodall/Val Kieser/Mary-Alice Eldon, Brian & Marlene McBride, Peter Di Bono.

November 18-20th, Friday-Sunday. Polka Weekend in the Catskills. Granit Hotel-Country Club, Kerhonkson, N. Y. Call 215-677-1774.

November 18-20th, Friday-Sunday. Polka Party. Fun, Food, lots of Dancing. Kahler Hotel, Rochester, Minnesota. Call 1-800-533-1655.

**December 5th, Monday**. BAAC Christmas Meeting. San Francisco Accordion Ensemble + ??.

## October General Meeting, Cont.

not perfect...just close! I would also like to take the time to recognize **Domenic** for his great job every month as the MC. In fact, I am actually starting to laugh at some of his jokes!

Lou Casalnuovo, Don Nurisso

Before we get to our guest artist, though, we must mention the others who made our October meeting so special. **Don Nurisso** and **Lou Casalnuovo** on accordions joined **Mark Henchman** 

on drums for a selection of great tunes which included "Perdido," "You're Just In Love," "Three Little Words," "698 Or-

ange St.," "Idaho," and "Out of Nowhere." The audience was

particularly appreciative of "698 Orange St.," which Lou wrote. The name came from the address of his house!

Next up was Bob Delgado who told us of some of his recent personal accomplishments, such as winning a first place at the N or the rn Teacher's Senior Open and performing with Barbara Ann Martindale at

Cotati. Bob played "Rose Room,"
"Carolina In the Morning," "Jealousy," "Poor People of Paris," "Godfather
Theme," and "Espana Cani." After much

appleause, he asked **Jim Boggio** to join him in a selection of Cajun/Zydeco numbers.



Bonnie Birch

After a brief intermission, our guest from the Northwest Accordion Society, Bonnie Birch, joined us for a delightful selection of numbers which included "Roman Guitars," "Cumana," "Ah, Marie," "Zing Went the Strings of My Heart," "Carnival in Brazil," "La Bella Bruna Polka," "Witchcraft," "Torna a Sorrento," Chopin's "Valse in C# Minor," "Spanish Eyes," "What is This Thing Called Love?," "Caprice Italienne," "Flight of the Bumblebee," "My Heart Belongs to Daddy," "Butterfly," and "Persian Garden." WOW! Bonnie impressed us with her fine musical ability and her charm. I am certainly looking forward to further visits from Bonnie! Our first exchange program participant did her parent club proud! A special thanks to the Northwest Accordion Society!!



Jim Boggio, Bob Delgado

## More About Bonnie Birch

by Your Editor

Since we didn't know Bonnie Birch, we were curious to learn a bit more about her. She obligingly answered quite a variety of questions.

In the first place, she wants us all to know that she had a wonderful experience as the first guest artist on our exchange program. This was the longest concert she had played, and she admits to having been rather nervous. But she found the whole group warm and enthusiastically receptive, and after the first couple numbers, her nervousness had all but disappeared, she says. Since she returned to Seattle, she has phoned Ed to tell him again how delighted she was with the members of our club and the warm reception that she received.

Bonnie is a fine example of a closet accordionist. She had a wonderful grounding in music as a young girl, studying accordion with Thorild Swanson in Seattle. She says that he was a musician rather than an accordionist per se, and that he taught her to be a musician, too, with a strong emphasis on classical music. He went through everything with a fine tooth comb, she relates, emphasizing accents, phrasing,

musical dynamics, and bellows control. The young Bonnie may not have appreciated such attention to detail, but the more mature Bonnie recognizes the value and is thankful.

As an adult, Bonnie put away her accordion and devoted herself to family, career, and dancing.

Then, 3 or 4 years ago, she did what many of us have done., pulled her accordion and related memories from the closet and began to practice again. She asked Ken Olendorf for direction, and he has obliged by showing her how to create her own arrangements by adding chords and improvisation to the basic pieces. We heard many examples of her and Ken's arrangements in her playing...see the list in Bob's report of the meeting.

Even though she still has a demanding career as a systems programmer in a bank in Seattle, and even though she still keeps dancing in the forefront of her life, she nevertheless practices daily. That wasn't true when she first went back to Her Instrument, but things have changed in the past six months. At the very least, she says she practices for 1/2 hour, but more normally, she plays for 1 to 2 hours a day.

We could see and hear the result. She is playing out more than she had evern done before, at parties and events mostly, and says that the public exposure feeds the necessity to practice and vice versa.

Bonnie has a travel suggestion for those of us who need to carry our accordions on a plane. She stowed her accordion in Alaska Airline's overhead compartment. She planned ahead by calling the airline, to determine the size of the compartment. They gave her height, width, and length measurements, and told her there was a 50 lb. weight limit. She measured her accordion and decided that it would fit. Then she went to a luggage store with the accordion and found there a duffel bag which, she says, fit perfectly. It has a large flap and a shoulder strap, and it completely unzips. When she carried the accordion onto the plane she had padded the duffel bag a bit by stuffing paper into its pockets. She says that it worked beautifully and that she found it much easier and more reliable than the standard method of packing the case in a big box with styrofoam and sending it as cargo. Sounds like a great idea!



Clyde Forsman, Lou Soper, Bonnie Birch, Reno Pucci, Jim Boggio, Bob Delgado

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#### ACROSS THE EDITOR'S DESK ...

August 13th, 1994

Dear Editor:

After the last meeting, which was another rich experience with fine playing and warm comraderie, I got to reminiscing about our "BAAC." So much has been accomplished that as we approach the completion of the 5th year, it is valuable to recall the road here thru a perspective of history so that we may not take things for granted. I'd like to read about some of the anecdotes and individual experiences involved in the evolution of the Club.

I looked back thru my copies of the "BAAC Page" (as it first was called) and the "BAAC Newsletter" (as it became Dec. 1992), and am amazed at the progress, the many great events, and the growth in membership. So I thought it might be interesting to send a copy of the June, 1990 "THE BAAC PAGE" listing the election of very early, if not the first officers and noting the origin of the name suggested by Mary Casey. Also listing the original charter members of which there were 38 of us. Wow! How far we've come!

Thank you all for a wonderful job. And an extra thank you Marian for such a professional job with our newsletter which resonates beautifully for all of us and reflects our pride in our beloved accordion.

Well done! Thank you.

Eldo Bianchi

#### NOTICES, cont. fr. p.1

We will print 100 such lists and sell them at future meetings as long as they are available.

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To all members: the table at the door at our membership meetings is for collection of door fees and club business *only*. Persons manning that table will not sell or distribute merchandise for members or guests, and are not responsible for anything left on or near that table.

## CONCERTO — Now Available

CONCERTO is a new product of Accordions International, owned and operated by Paul Pasquali of Salt Lake City, Utah. Paul is proud to share with all accordion enthusiasts a new exciting concept in MIDI for the accordionist. Concerto features several new technical achievements for the accordion such as Optical sensing of the treble keyboard (there are no traditional springs or mechanical contacts to alter the delicate touch of the accordion).

Concerto is a quality custom made Italian accordion featuring artisan style wood construction. The electronics of CONCERTO are made in the USA and is the result of 18 months of research and development employing a team of engineers

and software designers. The result is a compact, easy to use instrument with great sound and versatility.

You are cordially invited to hear why accordionists of all levels, including world renowned virtuoso Gervasio Marcosignori, are excited about playing CONCERTO. The DEMO will be 2:30 PM Sunday afternoon November 6th at the Hyatt Regency — San Francisco Airport, Bayside Room — 1333 Bayshore Highway, Burligame. Featured artist at the San Francisco DEMO will be Mike Zampiceni!

Other California Demos will be Thursday 7:00 PM November 3rd at Venturi House

of Music — 1706 Howard Road, Madera, CA and in Southern CA Tuesday 7:30 PM November 8th with ABC Music at Roland Corporate Headquarters in the new Roland Training Building Auditorium at 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA.



#### Paul Pasquali

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Tel/FAX (801) 278 - 1160

# October Board Meeting Synopsis

- •The Treasurer reported \$8274 in our combined accounts. He also distributed a detailed summary of our revenue and expenses to date in the fiscal year '94-95.
- •We will use our telephone tree (organized by Mary-Alice Eldon) to remind members of the testimonial dinner on October 23rd for Gordon Piantanesi.
- Lou Soper, with colleague Griff Bryan, presented his plan for a 5-hr music workshop on chord theory. The board decided to support his workshop by offering him 1/2 page in a newsletter for one time to help with promotion. The Club will not aid him financially.
- The Board approved a donation of \$150 to Bonnie Birch from Seattle, who was such a successful guest artist at our October general meeting.
- Effective November 1, the Club will print a secondary mailing list of members who did not indicate that they wished their names to be omitted from the list. That secondary list will be sold at meetings for 50 cents, to cover the cost of duplication.
- The Board wants all members to understand that the Club is not responsible for selling your tapes or merchandise at our meetings. If you have something to sell, we will allow you to display and sell it so long as you remain out of the way of the collection of door fees and distribution of badges.

That's the title of a great 3-page article in Music Merchandising Review for October, 1994. Music Merchandising is sent to music stores, manufacturers, and distributors, and has a wide circulation. Joe Petosa, Jr. says that the magazine contacted them, asking for a story.

The result is a delight and an encouragement to anyone interested in promoting the accordion as an instrument well suited to today's musical scene. The secondary heading on the article asks, "Can squeeze boxes coexist with SMPTE? Is Lawrence Welk Compatible with Sir Mix-A-Lot?" And then answers, "For one Seattle company, the surprising answer is 'yes'."

For a flavor of the article, here are a few more quotes:

The Petosa family has managed to combine two seemingly incompatible pursuits: 1990s' retailing of cutting-edge digital music products and a three-generation love affair with the accordion. Sounds bizarre, but it works.

The tale begins with Carl Petosa, founder of the company....served an apprenticeship with Guerrini in San Francisco....establishment of his own basement workshop in 1922. In 1955, moved to the site of today's 5,500 square foot operation. Carl and son Joe worked together until Carl's death in 1959.

As Joe's sons joined the company in the late 1960's, the popularity of the accordion had waned considerably, while the flourishing of rock 'n' roll was hard to ignore.....We began to bring in gui-

# Petosa High-Tech Retailing And....Accordions?

tars, amps....our emphasis shifted to keyboards...(This early emphasis) has evolved into the store's current position as a specialist in digital music, recording equipment, music software, computers and other high-tech products.

It's quite a contrast to walk from one department of the Seattle store to another. Your trip takes you from the Petosa Accordion Museum to a roomful of brandnew digital workstation products, and on to the accordion workshop of Joe Petosa and master accordion builder Giuliano Bugari. Then again, sometimes the contrast between Petosa Accordion and Petosa Music isn't as great as it appears. One of the company's most popular accordion models these days is bellowssensitive and velocity-sensitive Petosa MIDI Accordion. As Carl Petosa points out, "Just plug it into an E-Max or a Proteus and away you go."

Also a part of the article is this aside:

### The Enigmatic Accordion

Prominently displayed on the wall at Petosa Music is a signed cartoon by Gary Larsen of "The Far Side" comic-strip fame. It shows a group of people entering the kingdom of Heaven receiving their harps. Those consigned to Hell are given accordions.

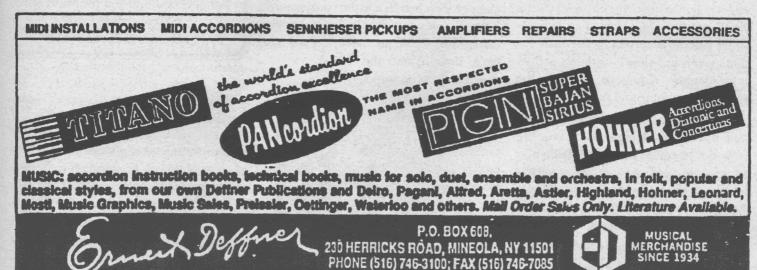
That about sums up the image problem the accordion has endured in recent years. Comedian Robert Klein suggested the instrument might be fine in a prison or on a pirate ship, but added "there's no place for it in civilized society."

This sardonic attitude toward the accordion is beginning to change in the 1990s, as the accordion is finding acceptance with the bands of such high-profile artists as Bruce Hornsby, Billy Joel, John Cougar, and even Keith Emerson.

"The strange thing is, people still make fun of the accordion, but it's happening at the same time, and in all different directions," points out Petosa Music's Carl Petosa. "You see it on MTV, zydeco bands feature the accordion prominently, and it's used for background music in television commercials quite a bit. A Seattle band, Ranch Romance, which tours with k.d.lang, has an accordion player," he notes. "I went to the New Orleans Jazz Festival and there were accordions everywhere you turned. And, of course, in Europe it never lost any of its popularity."

Petosa feels the long hiatus in the accordion's stateside popularity has to do with what he terms "the Lawrence Welk thing."

He explains, "It's no knock against Lawrence Welk,, but it took a lot of years to get over that image and young players of the last few decades wanted nothing to do with accordions. Kids coming up today don't know anything about all that music history, and they are again embracing it as an instrument for popular music."



# Music Review: New Works for a Square but Hip Instrument

New York Times, Monday, September 5, 1994

The American Accordionists' Association, which has been fighting the good fight in behalf of its chosen instrument since 1938, presented an unusual variety show on Saturday evening at Playhouse 91. The first part of the program was given over to new works, a conventional display piece by William Schimmel and an avant-garde essay by David Soldier. The second part was a showcase for the Air New Zealand Accordion Orchestra, which played everything from Mozart and Rossini to Buddy Holly and Bob Seger.

Mr. Schimmel, who was the evening's host, began by explaining that the association's two missions are to develop an American virtuoso school and to commission new works. He went on to describe "the built-in ironic duality of the accordion" which he said was both "hip and square, beautiful and ugly." Perhaps one had to be a player to appreciate the full picture. But Mr. Schimmel seemed not to be preaching only to the choir. An unscientific poll of the audience revealed that quite a few listeners were not accordionists.

Mr. Schimmel's own "New Manhattan Concerto," which he performed as an accordion duet with Anne De Marinis, is a tribute to Eugene Ettore, who composed the original "Manhattan Concerto" in the 1950's. One might expect a 1994 musical rendering of the city to evoke its harsh, grating edges as well as its grandeur. But the accordion is not made for that. Even in its most virtuosic and its most densely chromatic sections, the piece was amiable and quaint.

There was, on the other hand, a reasonable evocation of New York as a big stew pot in which influences from afar never quite meld. A tarantella reared its head near the end of the work, and earlier there were stretches that evoked Paris and even Hollywood.

Mr. Soldier's "Sontag in Sarajevo" is a more sober, ambitious work inspired by

Susan Sontag's 1993 trip to Sarajevo, where she staged a production of "Waiting for Godot" using war detritus for props. Scored for accordion (Ms. De Marinis), melodica (a blown toy instrument, played by Mr. Schimmel) and piano (William Komaiko), the work's first movement, "Fluor, Phosphor, Lumen and Candle," begins with a tentative rock obligato that quickly gives way to melancholy, spare-textured rumination.

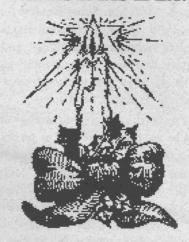
But after the first movement set the bleak stage, the finale, "Dance for the Tetragrammaton," shattered the eerie mood with robust, mildly dissonant and steadfastly makeshift music through which a triumphant current emerged.

Both works made an odd prelude to the performance by the Air New Zealand Accordion Orchestra, a youth ensemble (the players are 13 to 22) from Auckland that includes 19 accordionists and a drummer. That these young musicians can play their instruments cannot be denied, and now and then there were some eyebrow-raising virtuoso solo turns. The most astonishing performance of the evening, in fact, was a note perfect rendering of the finale of Bach's "Italian" Concerto by Campbell Betteridge.

Mostly, though, the performance had a spooky 1950's wholesomeness. During Bert Kaempfert's "Swingin' Safari," the players swayed, snapped their fingers and clapped their hands, and the vocal soloists, Lionel Reekie and Wendy Robinson, were drilled in Las Vegas moves. They sang

well, though, and the ensemble played works like Mozart's "Magic Flute" Overture and Buddy Holly's "Rave On' with eagerness and energy. Gary Daverne, who arranged most of the music, conducted his own "Pocket Overture." Fay-ellen Schaw conducted the rest of the program.

#### **CHRISTMAS IDEA!!!**



Here's a great idea (courtesy of Frank Montoro) for Christmas.

Give a 6-month membership in BAAC for only \$10, half the regular price. Send \$10 to Glenn, our "Teller", with the recipient's name and address, and Glenn will not only sign 'em up, but will also send to either of you a note from BAAC announcing your thoughtfulness.

This is a terrific way to spread the word about Your Favorite Accordion Club, to spread some Christmas cheer, and to increase our membership roster all at the same time. Everybody wins!

Send checks for \$10, made payable to BAAC, to Glenn McClelland at 872 N. Central, Campbell, CA 95008.

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# Upgrading the Squeeze Box

from the Wall Street Journal, September 1, 1994

Nancy Marano and Eddie Monteiro have this little image problem: he plays the accordion.

Never mind that their fans include the likes of George Shearing and Tony Bennett. Or that they were enthusiastically profiled last year by the New Yorker, the New York Times and CBS-TV's "Sunday Morning." Or that "Double Standards," their second CD for Denon Records, is getting the kinds of rave reviews that make starving musicians' stomachs rumble with envy. Or that Monteiro's new instrument, a MIDI Controller Cavichord accordion, is a state-of-the-art accordion-synthesizer hybrid that is to polka-band squeeze boxes what cruise missiles are to peashooters. ("I call it my Stealth accordion," the gadget-loving Monteiro says gleefully.)

All this notwithstanding, Marano and Monteiro are forever running into unenlightened dullards whose image of the accordion comes from evenings spent watching Lawrence Welk blow bubbles. "They just can't imagine that the accordion is good for anything other than 'La Vie en Rose,' "Nola" or "Roll Out the Barrel,' says Monteiro, who once stalked out of a "Sesame Street" taping when asked by the producers to play "Lady of Spain." "I want to tell them, 'Stop listening with your eyes—listen with your ears!"

Needless to say, Marano and Monteiro don't do polkas. Their carefully chosen repertoire consists of untarnished jazz and pop standards ("A Sleepin' Bee," "Joy Spring," "Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry"), newer songs by first-class writers (Johnny Mandel, Duncan Lamont, Dave Frishberg, the Bergmans), and a generous sprinkling of Brazilian tunes by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Milton Nascimento, the latter usually sung by Monteiro in the original (both of his parents were Portuguese) and by Marano in the beautifully poetic English versions of lyricist Gene Lees.

But it's what Marano and Monteiro add to the songs they sing that makes them the most exciting two-piece group in jazz. Their iridescent, richly textured sound is as personal as a fingerprint. Marano has a warm, buoyant voice with an unexpectedly rueful edge; Monteiro pulls out of his "stomach Steinway" glowing pastels that suggest a cross between the Hi-Los and the Nelson Riddle Orchestra. In addition to supplying all the instrumental parts, Monteiro sings backup for Marano, winding elaborately contrapuntal voice-and-accordion lines around her swinging lead. The result is an ear-opening blend of jazz and cabaret in which high gloss and joyous, catch-me-if-you-can improvisation are seamlessly woven into a breathtaking whole.

"It's like a marriage," Marano says of the collaboration. "It's not the similarities that make it work—it's the differences." There are plenty of those: he's loose and funny, she's cautious and precise. "I enhance her negatives," Monteiro says, "and she enhances mine."

Marano and Monteiro, both of whom live in New Jersey, met a decade ago while working with Peter Duchin's society band. "Because I played piano," Marano recalls, "I understood what Eddie was up to musically, and he liked the fact that he couldn't throw me that easily with his substitute chords. People started to tell us how well we blended together, and my ex-husband had the idea that we ought to work together regularly as a team. Eddie didn't think it was such a good idea at first — he was worried about the prejudice people feel



Eddie Monteiro, Nancy Marano

towards the instrument. But I saw it as a way we could stand out. Besides, Eddie's such a brilliant player, I always figured audiences would eventually realize that he wasn't just some idiot playing accordion."

In 1986, Marano found the duo a onenight-a-week gig at a sports bar in Orangeburg, NY., and they gradually began to develop their unique sound. "No matter how hard you rehearse," Monteiro explains, "it's only when you do your stuff live and under pressure that it really starts to jell - this works, that doesn't work." Year by year, they built up a loyal following (their fans are passionately loyal) and inched toward the big time. Success finally came with the publication last spring of Whitney Balliett's New Yorker profile of the duo, which persuaded Gil Wiest to book them into Michael's Pub, one of New York's most prestigious nightclubs. Balliett's piece also boosted the sales of "A Perfect Match," their first CD for Denon, leading the company to sign them for a sequel. "Whitney got us out of the eggshell," Monteiro says gratefully.

In this noisy age of rap and grunge, of course, a sophisticated act like Marano and Monteiro can only hope for so much in the way of fame: modest-selling albums for medium-sized labels, one-night stands on the summer jazz-festival circuit, occasional gigs at big-city nightspots. "It's a constant struggle to get work in New York," Marano says. "You keep reading in the paper how the baby boomers are discovering jazz, but I don't know how much of it is hype. People keep telling us we're going to make a lot of money now, but it always seems to be just around the bend. I've got to think that all the publicity we got last year will make a difference. Things have to get better."

The easygoing Monteiro is more sanguine: "Hey, look, I'm never going to be wealthy. My lifelong ambition is just to change the image of the accordion. I want people to say, 'I've heard accordion players — but not like you."

#### AD POLICY

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**NEXT MEETING: MONDAY** 

Nov. 7, 1994 7:00 PM

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