



AMERICAN ACCORDIONISTS' ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

The official membership publication of the American Accordionists' Association

Autumn 2024

From the Editor

Welcome to the Autumn 2024 Edition of the AAA Newsletter!

We hope you had the chance to enjoy some of the many incredible accordion events that have taken place over the recent months, and we are excited to highlight some of them for you in this newsletter, and to give you a look ahead!

My sincere thanks to our Newsletter Publisher, AAA President Frank Busso Jr. As always, I would also like to thank our secretary, Rita Barnea, for her outstanding work in helping source accordion events and news items to include in our Newsletter publications.

Items for the December 2024 AAA Holiday Newsletter can be sent to ameraccordnewsletter@gmail.com. Please include 'AAA Newsletter' in the subject box, so that we don't miss any items that come in. As always, text should be sent within the email or as a Microsoft Word attachment if possible. Pictures should be sent as a high quality .jpg file (or similar) and the larger the file size the better. We can always reduce/crop the picture if necessary, but we are unable to increase the quality from smaller pictures. Please send your items as soon as possible to ensure they are included in the upcoming issue.



We thank you in advance for sending in your news items to include in the Newsletter publication and look forward to a year of exciting accordion activities ahead.

Sincerely,
Kevin Friedrich, AAA Newsletter Editor - ameraccordnewsletter@gmail.com

From the President

Happy Fall to my fellow AAA members!

As we approach the holiday season, the AAA Board of Directors looks forward to finishing off 2024 with a bang, to include reporting on some phenomenal events from the past few months and preparing for an exciting 2025 filled with music, camaraderie, virtual presentations, live accordion events, and more! Details will be posted on www.ameraccord.com and in future AAA Newsletters as they are announced.



Please join me in thanking our Newsletter Editor, the incomparable Kevin Friedrich, for producing another robust edition of the AAA Newsletter, giving you a look back at a busy 2024 in the accordion world and a peek ahead at what the new year will bring.

Finally, a hearty THANK YOU to all of our dedicated AAA members. Your membership plays a key role in the promotion of our beloved accordion, and we would not be able to move our organization forward without you. If you know any accordion enthusiasts who may wish to join the AAA, please invite them to visit www.ameraccord.com/information.php.

I look forward to seeing you online and live at future events!

Very best musical wishes,
Frank Busso, Jr.
AAA President

The 2024 AAA Festival

AAA Board of Director Rita Barnea reports, "The 86th Anniversary American Accordionists' Association (AAA) Festival, held July 12-14, 2024 in West Conshohocken, PA, was filled with an array of accordion music and accordionists. There truly was something for everyone. It was wonderful to note how much the children enjoyed the presentations and it was encouraging to hear their wonderful performances."

"What I particularly enjoyed and am proud of is how friendly and respectful everyone was of participants' varying abilities and specific interests. I was so happy to see that people were willing to share their expertise, experiences, and love of the accordion. The exhibit room gave accordionists the opportunity to try out and learn about the different brands of accordion, again, all in a collegial and non-competitive environment. The luncheons and gala dinner were delightful and delicious! Hearing some of our favorite accordionists helped to enhance the experience."

Featured performers included Hanzhi Wang, Joe Natoli, Nikolay Bine, and Dallas Vietty. Rita goes on to say, "I strongly suggest that if you have never attended an AAA festival or, perhaps, had not been to one in a few years, please consider joining us next year. I have attended AAA festivals for many, many years, and always come away learning new things about the accordion and making new friends who love to share their accordion stories." The festival Exhibit Room included Ernest Deffner Affiliates, JANPress Music, and Music Magic USA, as well as historical displays highlighting the AAA's rich history.

This year's festival featured several concerts and dining experiences, including:

- Friday's Kickoff Luncheon with Nikolay Bine and Dallas Vietty
- Friday's Pasta Night with Frank Busso Sr, Frank Busso Jr, and Dee Langley
- Friday's Gala Concert featuring Hanzhi Wang and Joe Natoli
- Saturday's Luncheon with Nikolay Bine and the Westmont Philharmonia Accordion Orchestra led by Joanna Darrow
- Saturday's Awards Concert with trophy presentations
- Saturday's Cocktail Reception & Gala Banquet, featuring Don Gerundo, Trio Called Leonard (with Dallas Vietty on accordion) and the AAA Festival Orchestra conducted by Frank Busso Sr

Workshops were presented by Nikolay Bine, Dee Langley, Dallas Vietty, and Joe Natoli. For new-to-the-accordion adult hobbyist attendees, the AAA offered a Beginner Adult Band, led by Joanna Darrow.

For a full review of the 2024 Festival, including photos and videos, please visit the Daily Reports pages found on the AAA website:

- Day 1: <https://www.ameraccord.com/festival2024-12.php>
- Day 2: <https://www.ameraccord.com/festival2024-13.php>
- Day 3: <https://www.ameraccord.com/festival2024-14.php>



The ATG Celebrates Joan C. Sommers

The Accordionists & Teachers Guild, International (ATG) held its 82nd Festival July 23-28 in Kansas City, MO. This celebration of Professor Joan Cochran Sommers' 90th birthday and her contributions to the accordion drew a showcase of talent from around the USA and the world.



On Wednesday, Joan Cochran Sommers was honored with a red-carpet entrance and special presentations from the ATG, the AAA and a surprise 55-minute video presentation of people from around the world sharing their memories, greetings, and appreciation of Joan and her lifelong career in the accordion.

The AAA took the opportunity to recognize Joan for her lifelong, tireless work, and generous contributions to the accordion world. The AAA created a plaque for Joan, in honor of her 90th birthday, and the governing Board Members at the festival including President Frank Busso Jr, Frank Busso Sr, Kevin Friedrich, and Joan Grauman Morse, were delighted to have the opportunity to present this award to Joan during her special celebration. During his speech, AAA President Frank

Busso Jr. shared the AAA's appreciation of the dedication and support she has provided them since the 1950s, including serving as an adjudicator, festival orchestra conductor, workshop leader, conductor of many "massed band" performances, and for her continuous encouragement of all participants. In closing, Frank stated that Joan is considered to truly be a gift to the accordion world.

Later that afternoon, attendees were treated to the ATG premier of "A World of Accordions Museum, A Harrington Legacy." Sponsored by the ATG, the documentary showcases the one-of-a-kind collection of accordion family instruments preserved at the museum in Superior, WI, along with the knowledge and research of the founder and curator Helmi Harrington, Ph.D. Members from the World of Accordions Museum Board of Directors in attendance included President Helmi Harrington, Vice President Kevin Friedrich, and Secretary Jane Christison.

During the festival, there were competitions running for all ages and experience for soloists, duets, and ensembles. It culminated in the ATG World Cup Championship, where the playing was at such a level that the monetary prize pool was increased to include all four competitors. Results were as follows:

- 1st Place: Radu Ratoi (Moldova) \$5,000
- 2nd Place: Leonid Florin Muravjov (Sweden) \$3,000
- 3rd Place: Joaquin Munoz Donoso (Chile) \$500
- 4th Place: Elijah Clements (USA) \$300



Kevin Friedrich, Dr. Helmi Harrington, Jane Christison

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Elijah Clements



Radu Ratoi

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Daily master classes offered a diverse array of presentations from Gordon Kohl, Dr Michael Bridge, Nikolay Bine, Grayson Masefield, Gorka Hermosa, Cory Pesaturo, Ted Piechocinski, and Dallas Vietty with TeachTalk.

Spectacular evening concerts were held at White Recital Hall at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) campus, where Joan Cochran Sommers founded the university's accordion program in 1961. Upon her retirement, Joan was awarded Professor Emerita status and still leads a dedicated group of alumni in weekly rehearsals and performances.



Wednesday night showcased Stas Venglevski, Nikolay Bine, and Gorka Hermosa. Thursday had Joan take to the stage to conduct her UMKC Community Accordion Ensemble, followed by Mirco Patarini with the Kansas City Symphony String Quintet. Friday evening's guest artists were Gorka Hermosa, Michael Bridge, and Grayson Masefield, who collaborated with the popular local group Ensemble Iberica. The grand finale concert on Saturday showcased the World Cup Championship with performances by first runner-up Leonid Florin Murayjov and winner Radu Ratoi, Michael Bridge, and the concert closed with the magnificent 80-piece ATG festival orchestra and choir conducted by Joan Cochran Sommers.



For further information please visit www.atgaccordions.com.



Helmi Harrington, Ph.D., Awarded Citizen of the Year in Superior, WI

On May 30, 2024, Helmi Harrington, Ph.D., founder and curator of A World of Accordions Museum (AWAM), was named Citizen of the Year by the City of Superior, WI.

During the ceremony, Helmi was given a key to the city by Mayor Jim Paine. The award has only been given out a few times and the team at A World of Accordions is so proud of the recognition bestowed upon their President Helmi Harrington for her tireless efforts over the years, building the incredible collection of accordion family instruments housed at AWAM.

In the State of the City address given by Mayor Jim Paine, he recognized Dr. Helmi Harrington: "She is a teacher, a musician, an historian, an artist, and a storyteller. She attracts visitors and admirers from around the world. She already has a building named for her," said Paine. "Thanks to her, Superior, Wisconsin is nationally and globally recognized as a center of art, music, learning, and timeless beauty. She is, quite possibly, our greatest storyteller and now counts among her lifetime honors the title: Citizen of the Year."

Founded in 1993, the Museum is dedicated to educating the public about the importance of accordion-family instruments' contributions to cultures of the world by displaying and preserving historic instruments, music, recordings, documents, and artifacts. World-class artists are sponsored in public concerts, and scholars are encouraged to research related disciplines.



A World of Accordions Museum is nationally and internationally recognized as holding the world's finest and most comprehensive collection of accordion-family instruments shown in 130+ displays organized to show chronological evolution, countries of origin, specific usage, and quality classifications.

Of the more than 2,000 displayed instruments, about 60 instruments are identified for the AWAM Traveling Museum that offers demonstration workshops at national conventions and festivals. Decorative art and artifacts shown throughout the building emphasize the pervasive presence of the instruments' image in society.

Related cultural and historic documents, recordings, and books are preserved in the Accordion Resource Center Libraries. Its two rooms include periodicals, music studies texts, accordion patents, accordion histories, world history, manufacturing sources, general references, and arts and technology texts.

For more information, please visit www.worldofaccordions.org.

Vladimir Mollov with Itzhak Perlman and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Accordionist Vladimir Mollov performed at the Gala Opening of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra on September 21, 2024. Conductor Manfred Honeck led the ensemble in a one-night-only extravaganza of film music favorites featuring the infinite charms of legendary violinist Itzhak Perlman, performing live as they honored his commitment to music education and encouraging the next generation of musicians. All proceeds from the Opening Night Gala help fund the PSO's Learning and Engagement Programs.

Vladimir shares, "It was my greatest honor to be on stage with these titans of classical music! What an unbelievable experience!"

Vladimir comes from a family of self-taught wedding musicians. He was inspired by the sounds of the accordion since early childhood. At 18 months old, he "played" his little accordion alongside his father at weddings. At age 7, he started taking formal accordion lessons with the nationally recognized pedagogue Nadejda Nicheva in Kazanluk, Bulgaria. At his later stages of musical development, he studied with Dr. Peter Marinov at the National Music Academy, internationally recognized accordion artist Hristina Danova, and Nedelcho Dimitrov, a laureate of national and international accordion festivals and competitions.

Vladimir has won many accordion competitions. At the age of 13, he placed fourth in an accordion competition in

Vladivostok. Two years later, he placed first in the International Competition for Accordion and Guitar in Asenovgrad, Bulgaria and received fourth place in the World Accordion Competition in Castelfidardo, Italy. Since then, Vladimir has been recognized at several national and international accordion competitions, including first place at the 2002 National Competition for Variety Music and Jazz in Novi Pazar, Bulgaria, and second place with a special award for virtuosic performance of folk music in the National Accordion Competition 2000 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

In 2002, Vladimir joined the Duquesne University Tamburitzans and performed more than 350 shows with the ensemble over four years. He continues to arrange dance and instrumental music for the Tamburitzans. In 2009, Vladimir released his first album, "Dreams," featuring all original instrumental pieces combining Balkan folk, jazz, and fusion styles. He is a founding member of the Argentinean tango quintet, Cuidado, with which he recorded an album featuring traditional and modern tangos as well as two of his original compositions. Vladimir has performed with the Kruno Spisic Gypsy Jazz Ensemble, Bulgarika, and numerous other bands. He is featured as a guest on Babik's 2008 gypsy jazz album, "American Gypsy."

For further information: vmollovmusic@gmail.com.



Julia Williams Performs New Experimental Music

Accordionist Julia Williams shares, “I’m so happy to announce this project! I’ll be playing new and experimental music for accordion and other instruments in two concerts with the Fonema Consort ‘*Día de los Muertos*.’” ‘*Fuego Ceremonial*’ was November 2 in Chicago, and ‘*Accordion Unbound*’ will be November 23 in Omaha. Julia continued, “I’m excited to dig into these challenging, avant garde programs co-curated by One Thirteen Composers Collective.”

Williams received an accordion performance degree with Joan Cochran Sommers at the University of Missouri Kansas City (B.M.) and Music Literature/Musicology degree at the University of Colorado Boulder (M.M.) with additional graduate study in ethnomusicology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As a young player, she won numerous competition honors including the US national championship for the Accordionists and Teachers Guild (ATG). Julia plays and teaches piano accordion and chromatic button accordion. Originally from Minnesota, she currently resides in Lincoln, NE and teaches accordion at Blue Raven Music Studio.

Julia is a versatile, talented, and very busy accordionist and has more than 25 years experience performing solo and with groups in a wide gamut of styles. In spring 2024, she performed with the Omaha Symphony, the Sioux City Symphony, the Kenny Janak Orchestra, and other musical groups. In 2018 with the Omaha Chamber Music Society, she performed the North American premiere of “*Neotango Concerto*” by contemporary Basque composer Gorka Hermosa. Also in 2018, she was a soloist with the Western Kentucky University Symphony for the concert “*Orchestra Exotica*” featuring music for accordion and orchestra by Alan Hovhaness, Gorka Hermosa, and Dmitri Shostakovich.

In 2021, Julia was a guest chamber player with the University of California San Diego Graduate Contemporary Music program. Her theater experience includes actor-musician roles in productions of “*A Three-Penny Opera*,” “*A Doctor in Spite of Himself*,” “*The Government Inspector*,” “*Cabaret*,” and “*Morozko*.” Most recently, she appeared in “*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*” at Bluebarn Theatre in Omaha, and “*Indecent*” at American Stage Theatre in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Julia said, “‘*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*’ was awarded an Omaha Entertainment and Arts Award for Best Sound Design by Olga Smola. Smola is the violinist/composer with whom I performed in that show.

This was the second play premiere that I’ve done with Smola and our brilliant director/playwright Jill Anderson. The first was ‘*Morozko*’ in 2019. Our work in ‘*Sleepy Hollow*’ was fascinating because the entire soundscape was performed live without pre-recorded sound effects. It was a treat to have that work recognized by the OEA Awards.”

In September and October of 2023, she was in Saint Petersburg, Florida as a member of the cast of “*Indecent*” at American Stage Theatre. She enjoyed the tremendous experience of working with such a great group of professionals there. “Co-composer Lisa Gutkin, who plays with The Klezmatics and was the violinist in the Tony-Award winning Broadway production, came to see a couple of our performances, affording the opportunity to meet the composer.”

2023 Omaha Symphony concerts were: “*Beauty and the Beast*” original animated film with live score and “*Concert of Lights*” with guest conductor Francesco Lotoro.

The program *Fuego Ceremonial: Homenaje a Javier Álvarez* November 2 was held at the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center (SRBCC) in Chicago, IL. Guests were invited to celebrate the day of the dead with an evening of bold, experimental music. The concert featured the accordion with works by Javier Álvarez, Mesías Maiguashca, Canela Palacios, and Francisco Corthey, blending tradition with experimentalism in a deeply immersive musical experience.

The show *Accordions Unbound* in Omaha on November 23, 8:00 PM and 10:00 PM (venue to be determined) invites guests to join for an evening of avant-garde exploration as the musicians delve into the uncharted realms of accordion music. Featuring performers Julia Williams on accordion, Kathryn Schulmeister on bass, and Kyle Hutchins on saxophone, this concert showcases a range of experimental new works that push the boundaries of the accordion and its interactions with other instruments. Music by Saunders, Carrizo, Soper, Czernowin, Chin, and Corthey.

For further information please contact juliawilliams0789@gmail.com.



Mario Tacca and Mary Mancini Celebrate Italian Heritage Month

Mario Tacca and Mary Mancini entertained at Rini's Restaurant on Saturday, October 5. Celebrating Italian Heritage Month, the evening featured Italian Culture, a wide variety of live music, and great dining. As always, this dynamic duo presented an eclectic repertoire that provided something for everyone!

AAA Board of Director Mario Tacca, born in Italy, moved with his family to the Alsace Lorraine region of France where he began his musical studies. This is where his love and intense desire to play the accordion began. He loved the sound! He would pick up the accordion and imitate some of the songs his mother used to sing. The desire and love never diminished, despite having to walk three miles weekly to his teacher with his instrument strapped to his back!

In France, he was the winner of many regional and national accordion competitions. He became a world champion, winning the World Cup of Italy, the Grand Prix of Paris, the US National Competition, and the International Accordion competition held at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Mario Tacca dazzles audiences across the US and around the world with his unmatched virtuosity on the accordion and his exciting interpretations of international music, the classics, and pop.



Mario has recently been on MTV in a commercial for a pilot Italian Food program. He was seen on the Food Network in a commercial for "Throwdown with Bobby Flay." His latest recording, "Journey Through the Classics," features great classical melodies.

Internationally acclaimed vocalist Mary Mancini has been featured in the New York Times, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, and the Journal News and has performed in a variety of venues around the world. Able to sing in eight different languages, she is adept at pop, show tunes, operatic arias, and sacred music and has received worldwide acclaim. Le Republicain Lorrain, in Alsace-Lorraine, France, writes that the "purity of her voice, the ease with which she interpreted the most difficult pieces showed that she is a great artist."

Mary has headlined numerous concert halls and festivals in North America, Europe, and China. She has performed at the Garden State Arts Center, Resorts International Casino Hotel, Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, and Mohegan Sun Resort Casino in Connecticut. Mary, with Mario Tacca, completed two concert tours of China. As guests of the China Ministry of Culture, they toured five cities in three weeks and performed with three symphony orchestras. Joining them on their tour was highly acclaimed Chinese tenor, Douglas Song. In addition to performing with the symphony orchestras, some of the most memorable moments included a performance held at the 1,600-seat True Color Jazz Supper Club in the booming city of Shenzhen and in the 3,500-seat Golden Opera House.

In addition to a busy concert schedule, Mary also maintains an active recording career. On "Canzoni dal Cuore," her CD of Italian love songs and arias, Mary sings with passion many of the classic songs from the Italian repertoire. The album also includes her own composition, "Preghiera, Ninna-Nanna," set to the music of Pietro Mascagni. Together, Mary and Mario have just released their latest duet CD, "Ricordi," a collection of Italian melodies. The Red Cross selected Mary's original composition, "With Open Arms," to accompany its video tribute to September 11 victims. Mary was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Order of the Sons of Italy in America for her ongoing outstanding musical contribution to the arts.

Regular performers at this popular establishment, be sure to check to see where their next evening will be held at Rini's Restaurant and Wine Bar in Elmsford, NY. Mary and Mario are also available for concert and show performances, church weddings, piano and accordion lessons, wedding receptions, special events, corporate events, and in-home/private performances. For further information: manciniandtacca@gmail.com.

Dr. William Schimmel: What's Tango About the Classics?

On November 18, 6:00-7:30pm, Dr. William Schimmel, a classically-trained accordionist, returns to perform classic repertoire he learned in conservatory with an inflection of tango influence.

William Schimmel holds BM, MS, and DMA degrees Doctorate from The Juilliard School. He performed with virtually every ensemble in New York from The New York Philharmonic, The Metropolitan Opera, Jazz at Lincoln Center, most contemporary ensembles, and Broadway, as well as numerous European tours.

His Tango Project CDs have reached #1 on the Billboard charts along with Stereo Review Album of the Year and Grammy nominations. He has performed in many movie soundtracks and can be seen and heard in *Scent of a Woman* starring Al Pacino, who received an Oscar. His recent CD, *The Theater of the Accordion*, features trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and has reached number 2 on the Amazon charts. They perform a six-minute version of Mahler 9.) He has performed with rock stars as diverse as Sting and Tom Waits who stated: "Bill Schimmel doesn't

play the Accordion; He IS the Accordion." NPR regarded him as "The World's Greatest Accordionist" and The New Yorker named him: "Gotham's Happy Warrior of the Accordion."

Dr. Schimmel resides in New York City and along with his wife, Micki Goodman, a dancer/choreographer and video artist, he has produced numerous videos that can be seen and heard on YouTube. Dr. Schimmel's works are currently being archived at the Lincoln Center Performing Arts Library.

For this upcoming performance, Dr. Schimmel returns to the stage in a solo concert of classical favorites played as tangos. Dr. Schimmel's accomplishments in the tango genre were made famous through his Tango Project albums.

The program will be held at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center, Bruno Walter Auditorium. The Library is located at 40 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York, NY 10023.



Report on the 2024 Coupe Mondiale in Castelfidardo, Italy

The Confédération Internationale des Accordéonistes (CIA) recently held their 77th Coupe Mondiale and the 152nd CIA International General Assembly of Delegates Congress in Castelfidardo, Italy. The event was hosted by the CIA member Italian Accordion Culture (IAC) September 6-10.

Marking the first time the Coupe Mondiale had been held in the renowned accordion-centric Castelfidardo, the CIA Coupe Mondiale is an international competition for accordionists held in seven categories ranging in both classical and entertainment genres. The CIA was founded in 1935 in Paris, France and is a proud member of the International Music Council (IMC), an NGO official partner of UNESCO.

The 152nd General Assembly of Delegates was held in the Castelfidardo City Hall “Salone degli Stemmi” in the center of Castelfidardo, Italy. Items presented and discussed included things such as: Reports of the President, General Secretary/Treasurer, Public Relations Manager, Ambassador as well as general reports from member organizations.

A large amount of work was undertaken on the adoption of the new EU Statutes whereby the European Union requires a current and official registration and set of statutes that meets EU legal requirements. These EU statutes were adopted, and the CIA will maintain their own Internal Rules, which are documented in their current statutes. These can be adjusted over time, but the EU legal entity statutes filed in Helsinki, Finland will remain the same.

Several presentations were reviews of recent events (in the USA, North Macedonia, and more) as well as for upcoming events including the Winter Congress (Plovdiv, Bulgaria) and Coupe Mondiale (East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Coupe Mondiale 2026 in Stockholm, Sweden and the acceptance of the Coupe Mondiale 2027 (80th Coupe Mondiale) to be held in Switzerland. For a full 2024 Coupe Mondiale report: www.coupemondiale.org.

Winners of the 2024 Coupe Mondiale Categories were as follows:

Junior Virtuoso Entertainment

- 1st: Zuopeier Wu - China
- 2nd: Djordje Perić - Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 3rd: Miguel Coelho - Portugal

Int'l. Competition for Chamber Music - World Music

- 1st: Shanghai Breeze Duo - China
- Shen Zhiyao & Feng Jingrui (accordions)
- 2nd: Duo - Russian Federation
- Alexey Loganov & Daria Sakharova (accordions)
- 3rd: Duo - Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Djorde Peric & Nemanja Kalajdzic (accordions)

Int'l. Competition for Chamber Music - Classical

- 1st: Duo - Russian Federation
- Alexey Loganov & Daria Sakharova (accordions)
- 2nd: Accordion Trio - Russian Federation
- Nikolai Zhigalov, Mikhail Bovkun & Nikita Zolkin (accs.)
- 3rd: Two Systems - Belgium
- Louis De Backere, Lowie Vercammen (accordions)

Junior Coupe Mondiale

- 1st: Balaban, Petar - Montenegro
- 2nd: Dobrin, Vasilii - Russian Federation
- 3rd: Kristivojevic, Djordje - Serbia

Senior Virtuoso Entertainment

- 1st: Nikita Kuznetsov - Russian Federation
- 2nd: Olzha Nurlanov - Kazakhstan
- 3rd: Yelzhan Zhetpis - Kazakhstan

Masters Coupe Mondiale

- 1st: Leonid Florin Muravjov - Sweden
- 2nd: Vitor Pastor - Portugal
- 3rd: Petar Besovic - Serbia

77th Coupe Mondiale

- 1st: Zhouyang Zhai - China
- 2nd: Yelzhan Zhetpis - Kazakhstan
- 3rd: Naixin Zhang - China



Harley Jones, Kevin Friedrich, Alexander Selivanov, Federica Celesti, Mirco Patarini, Kimmo Mattila, Zorica Karakutovska, Li Cong, Jörgen Sundeqvist



Zhouyang Zhai

Radu Ratoi Wins at 2024 Susan Wadsworth International Auditions

World Champion accordionist Radu Ratoi (Moldova) joined Austrian pianist Kiron Tellian as one of only two winners of the 2024 Young Concert Artists (YCA) Susan Wadsworth International Auditions in New York City. The results were announced at the conclusion of the final round of 12 outstanding artist auditions at the Merkin Concert Hall in New York City. Narrowed down from 37 musicians advancing to the semi-finals in New York City, Radu was the only accordionist selected from 180 initial applicants. Radu and Kiron were featured at the Winners Concert the following day at New York's Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum.

Renowned for identifying and investing in musicians of “exceptional caliber” (The New York Times), the competition, based on a preliminary round of live auditions in New York and Los Angeles, and virtual auditions via video submission, 38 artists including Radu, were selected to advance to the semi-final round.

To give you an idea of the field of musicians Radu triumphed over, the semi-finalists were: pianists Derek Wang, Hoi Leong Cheong, Hyojin Shin, Jihyung Youn, Jonathan Mak, Kiron Tellian, Saehyun Kim, Tom Zalmanov, Yang (Jack) Gao, Yuval Hen, Zitong Wang; violists Nicolas Garrigues, Emad Zolfaghari; violinists Elli Choi, Emmanuel Coppey, Haram Kim, Julian Rhee, Karisa Chiu, Koshiro Takeuchi, Leonard Fu, Rino Yoshimoto; accordionist Radu Ratoi; oboist Jamie Yoojin Lee; bassoonist Jakob Peäske; flutists Blue Shelton, Rafael Mendez; saxophonist Maria Torres-Melgares; ensembles Terra String Quartet, Erinys String Quartet, Paddington Trio, Trio Azura, baritones Gregory Feldmann, Shavon Lloyd, mezzo-soprano Ruby Dibble; sopranos Alexandra Hotz, Maggie Kinabrew, Shelén Hughes.

Anchored by YCA founder Susan Wadsworth and YCA President Daniel Kellogg, the jury for the semi-final and final rounds was comprised of pianists Inon Barnatan and Angela Cheng, violist Nokuthula Ngwenyama, violinists Barry Shiffman and Pamela Frank, flutist Marya Martin, soprano Dawn Upshaw, and conductor Constantine Orbelian; along with Cristina Rocca, VP of Artistic Planning at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Donald Palumbo, Chorus Master at the Metropolitan Opera; and Abhijit Sengupta, Director of Artistic Planning at Carnegie Hall. The jury makeup of artists, managers, concert presenters, and conductors reflects YCA’s broad connections throughout the classical music world, which in turn is one of the key benefits for the young artists accepted into its three-year YCA Jacobs Fellowship.



Named for a generous gift from Joan and Irwin Jacobs, the YCA Jacobs Fellowship offers artists selected through YCA’s famously rigorous audition process a holistic system of support and opportunities, including artist management services, an expanded digital portfolio, dedicated mentorship, community engagement training, and unparalleled performance opportunities, helping them develop their unique artistic voices. This Fellowship is

recognized as the world’s most comprehensive, innovative, and well-resourced incubator for the brightest and most promising young artists, preparing these rising stars to lead the future of classical music.

YCA Jacobs Fellows join an illustrious legacy of YCA alumni that includes such luminaries as Emanuel Ax, Julia Bullock, Anne Akiko Meyers, Jeremy Denk, Ray Chen, Anne-Marie McDermott, Richard Goode, Dawn Upshaw, Mason Bates, Zlatomir Fung, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Kevin Puts, Pinchas Zukerman, Randall Goosby, and Sasha Cooke. Jurors Nokuthula Ngwenyama, Marya Martin, and Dawn Upshaw are YCA alumni as well.

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...continued from previous page - Radu Ratoi

Radu Ratoi started accordion at the age of 6 and his performance career started already at 7, being on stage for concerts and contests. He attended “Alexei Starcea” School of Arts in his hometown, Chisinau, in the Republic of Moldova. Afterwards, he continued his undergraduate studies at the Centre of Excellence in Artistic Education “Stefan Neaga.” Still in Moldova, he started to participate in well-known international competitions. At 18 years old, he won most of the Junior categories, such as Coupe Mondiale, Trophy Mondiale, Castelfidardo, and others. He won these competitions both in Classical Music categories and in Virtuoso/Entertainment Music categories, being the first who achieved both these titles. In 2018, he received the “Excellence Diploma” from the President of the Republic of Moldova.

From there, he attended the “The Royal Danish Academy of Music” in Copenhagen, where he won the Søning Music Prize, one of the most prestigious awards in Denmark. Between 2018 to 2020, he won the six most important competitions in the world – Coupe Mondiale, Klingenthal Accordion Competition, Trophy Mondiale, Arrasate Accordion Competition, PIF Castelfidardo, and Moscow Accordion Competition. In total, he has already won more than 60 national and international awards.

With his transcriptions of J.S. Bach, D. Scarlatti, J.P. Rameau, F. Liszt, and many more, he has reinvented and improved the accordion repertoire. Praised for his originality, versatility, and virtuosity in the Classical and contemporary repertoire, he won the Art Award in the Republic of Moldova “Master in Arts.” In 2022, he received the renowned Moldavian National Distinction “Master in Arts” offered by the President of Republic Moldova. What makes him unique is the way he combines two important musical traditions: the Russian school and the West European school, melting them into a very personal style.



Radu released his accordion CD “Greatest Organ Works arranged for Accordion” in 2022, recording pieces by J.S. Bach and F. Liszt. Playing solo and chamber, having collaborations with various artists and orchestras, Radu is acclaimed for his concerts worldwide, attracting the public with his musicality, technique, and charisma. Since 2024, Radu has been a soloist with The National Chamber Orchestra of Moldova.

In his stellar career as soloist, he performed in some of the most important concert halls in the world: Berlin Philharmonic, Radio Concert House Copenhagen, Victoria Concert Hall, Tivoli Hall Copenhagen, Aram Khachaturian’s Concert Hall in Yerevan, Harbin Concert Hall, and many others.

In 2017, this year's AAA guest artist, Hanzhi Wang was the first ever accordionist to be selected as a winner of the YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. She soon made her New York debut at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall and her Washington, DC debut at the Kennedy Center, opening the 40th Anniversary Young Concert Artists Series, co-presented with Washington Performing Arts.

You can watch archived live stream of the final competition and winners concert at <https://yca.org/auditions/>

Accordions in Bryant Park, New York City

This fall saw an incredible array of accordionists performing in the annual Accordions Around the World celebration held each Monday evening in September. This year's festival opened with a rare New York City appearance by the Louisiana-based, three-time Grammy-nominated Zydeco star and the AAA's Search for the Hottest Accordionist winner, Dwayne Dopsie.

2024 Grammy Award nominee Dwayne Dopsie plays high-energy Zydeco that keeps you wanting more. He hails from one of the most influential Zydeco families in the world. Though inspired by tradition, he has developed his own style that defies existing stereotypes and blazes a refreshingly distinct path for 21st century Zydeco music.

Dwayne attributes his musical abilities to his father, Rockin' Dopsie, Sr., a pioneer of Zydeco music. He has played the accordion since age seven and states, "This is my calling – Zydeco music is in my blood and it is my heart and soul." This singer/songwriter and accordionist has performed in 40 countries and in hundreds of cities across the United States, Europe, Brazil, Panama, and Canada since debuting his band at age 19.

Joining him that evening was the funk-fusion combo Afro Dominicano, which infuses their songs with Afro-Caribbean soul: a blend of Dominican folkloric styles and pop influences that includes merengue, bachata, samba, reggae, punk, and R&B, all filtered through a uniquely New York sensibility. The accordionist in the group, Belony Beniste, plays a crucial role in tying the band's sound to the country's musical traditions. Hailing from the rural northwest of the country, Beniste grew up with folk and Vodou music all around. A highly sought after musician in Port-au-Prince, he also plays with the country's best-known twoubadou singer, Ti Coca, and comes with a deep wealth of knowledge of Haiti's classic repertoire. Beniste represents a growing number of Haitian accordion players who are keeping the vintage twoubadou tradition alive in Haiti.

"The 2024 season of accordion Picnic Performances is our most ambitious yet," Dan Fishman, Bryant Park's vice president of public programming, tells *Time Out New York*. "Bryant Park will host internationally renowned dance companies, Grammy-winning musicians, a fully staged production of *Tosca*, a centennial celebration for jazz vocalist Sarah Vaughan, and a grand finale featuring an all-star lineup of musicians performing the music of James Bond."

The month-long Monday evening concert series showcased an impressive lineup of artists performing on accordion (piano and chromatic), bandoneon, concertina, and digital instruments. Guests for 2024 were Ryan O'Donnell with Sofiya Nayda and Kate Grant, Hugo Sanbone, Shoko Nagai with Satoshi Takeishi, George Saenz, Jody Kruskal, Julie Winterbottom, Maestro Tito Castro, Will Holshouser, T-Klez with Psachya Septimus and Dena Ressler, Sasha Papernik & Justin Poindexter, Original Americana, Smörgåsbandet, Elana Low, Sadys Rodrigo Espitia, Patty Furlong, Zoya Shepko, Felipe Hostins with Chrystal E. Williams, David Hodges, Niall O'Leary, Ilya Shneyveys, Papa Joe De Clemente, Bachtopus, Nathan Rivera with Jessie Andra Smith, Ismail Butera, Phil Passantino, Nikolay Bine, The Egan Sisters, Hasta La Zeta, Ben Batchelder with Iryna Kit, Guillermo Vaisman with Alejo de los Reyes, Rachelle Garniez, and Bob Goldberg performing Ukrainian, Brazilian, Japanese, Americana, Mexican, Jazz, Folk, Argentinian, Scandinavian, Irish, Klezmer, Slovenian, Italian, French, and other genres of music.



David Hodges



Dwayne Dopsie



Nikolay Bine

Works Commissioned by the American Accordionists' Association

AAA Board of Director Dr. Robert Young McMahan has published an extensive addition to his series of articles on the works commissioned by the American Accordionists' Association. The latest series profiles Wallingford Riegger's Cooper Square, Virgil Thomson's Lamentations, and Paul Creston's second of four AAA Commissions, Concerto for Accordion and Orchestra

Dr. McMahon states this is one of the longest and most historical and analytical ventures of this series, owing to the great accomplishment of Elsie Bennett to have persuaded three of America's most famous and celebrated composers of the early and mid-20th century to contribute to the accordion's growing classical repertoire. The three works are as diverse and unique as were their disparate styles of composition.

Creston was in his usual virtuosic, syncopated, modal, jazzy, and somewhat Debussyian element in his creation of perhaps the most frequently performed and highly virtuosic concerto for accordion and orchestra.

Riegger, one of America's earliest exponents of atonal composition, and pegged as one of the "American Five" of ultra-modern music stemming from the 1920s (the other four controversial luminaries of the group being Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, John Becker, and Henry Cowell, the last fated to become a two-time contributor to the AAA Commissioned Composers repertoire decades later), chose to write a rather curious, abstract kind of tango named after New York's Cooper Square, where many musicians of note hung out during the mid-20th century.

Thomson, normally a more tonal, less dissonant composer than either of the above, opted to write a short but extremely dissonant, rather terrifying and highly virtuosic set of variations on a chilling, crashing processional that comprises the opening theme.

As is the purpose of the series, this article offers thoroughly researched historical and theoretical information on the compositions and their creators, along with interesting historical photos from Elsie Bennett's large photo collection. Please enjoy the full article at www.ameraccord.com/aaacommissions22.php.



New England Digital Accordion Orchestra

The New England Digital Accordion Orchestra enjoyed a busy summer of activities with several performances in Massachusetts, including July 19 at the Brookfield Summer Concert Series and July 31 at the Hitchcock Summer Concert Series at the Brimfield Town Common Gazebo.



The New England Digital Accordion Orchestra (NEDAO) is the nation's first-ever digital accordion orchestra and is a leading force in the evolution of the accordion. The orchestra is comprised of players using Roland digital accordions, instruments which first appeared in 2004.

The orchestra performs popular songs from a wide array of genres. The NEDAO was formed in 2015 and is conducted by internationally recognized accordionist and music educator Anselmo (Sam) Falcetti, of Wilbraham, MA. The NEDAO is available for performances at summer concert series, fairs, holiday celebrations, and special events. To arrange a performance or for further information, please contact Sam Falcetti at 413-204-5522 or samfalcetti@gmail.com.

30th Anniversary of “The Seminars”

The Seminars, a three-day series of master classes and concerts moderated by Dr. William Schimmel, celebrated their 30th year from July 26-28, 2024. An exciting weekend with an incredible lineup; the event covered virtually every dimension of accordion culture in the New York accordion scene and beyond. The Seminars were sponsored by The Accordion Global Association.

Topics included were: The Art of Audience Participation/The Sing-a-Long; Embracing the Maximalist Dimension (The Art of Clutter); Faking/Improvising - are they the same?; Working In the Video Dimension; The Varieties of The Mexican Hat Dance and The Hokey Pokey; Classical or Classic; Cassettes are back - giving “Ye Olde Accordion Sound” a return; The Artificial Intelligence of the Accordion before Artificial Intelligence; the Pot of Gold at the end of The Rainbow; Practicing by Real Time Continuity; The Five Minute Ear Training Course; Klezmer from a Non-Jewish perspective, and more.

With an extensive cast of presenters, the anniversary celebration featured Micki Goodman, Paul Stein, Will Holshouser, Dr. Denise Koncelik, Dr. Robert Young McMahan, Corn Mo, The Main Squeeze Orchestra, Bachtopus, Carl Riehl, Mary Spencer Knapp, Godfrey Nelson, Lorraine Nelson Wolf, Melissa Elledge, Doug Makofka, Rita Davidson Barnea, Erica Marie Mancini, Benjamin Ickes, Dan Cooper, Dr. Thomas Massucci, Gene Pritsker, Peter Flint, Mayumi Miyaoka, Robert Duncan, Jeanne Velonis, Bob Goldberg, David Stoler, David First, William Komaiko, Sari Kalin, Jack Di Bennidetto, John Foti, Dr. Hugo Goldenzweig, Brian Dewan, Lee Mc Clure, Peter Jarvis, Elliott Sharp, Hanzhi Wang, Milica Paranosic, and others.

If you missed the event, it is not too late to enjoy the weekend of activities online via the following daily links.

- Friday, July 26: <https://youtu.be/rE8SdeE9HG0>
- Saturday, July 27: <https://youtu.be/hw7Popl1BAs>
- Sunday, July 28: <https://youtu.be/nbyOq39UUn4>

Viewers are invited to watch the Seminars on YouTube and donations are always graciously accepted to support this and future events to: Dr. William Schimmel, 345 E 85th St., Apt. 4RE, New York, NY 10038 or via PayPal at accordionbill@gmail.com.



Dominic Karcic Keeps Busy Performance Schedule



Dominic Karcic had an active summer schedule of performances for a variety of functions. Just a few in New York included Italian American Variety Show (July 21 in Sayville), 14th Anniversary of the Long Island Accordion Alliance (August 7 in East Northport), Valtaro Music Celebration (August 25 at the Magnanini Winery in Wallkill), San Gennaro Feast (September 22 in Manorville), and Octoberfest Celebration (September 28 in Huntington). In October, he appeared at the

In the fall, he appeared at the Northport Arts Coalition 'Art in the Park' on October 6 in Northport, Village Park, and at the Italian Charities of America 88th Annual Dinner Dance Gala on October 20.

Accordion music was part of every major social event that Dominic Karcic attended in his youth, so it was no surprise that he began to take lessons at the age of ten. Eventually, his love for the instrument and accordion music became the catalyst for both performing and a career as a music educator in the Long Island public school system. Dominic knew that there were many active and former players of the accordion, but there also existed a lack of local activities and events devoted to its music.

A founder of the Long Island Accordion Alliance, their very first meeting was held on August 3, 2010. The LIAA is made up of both professional and amateur accordionists, and meets regularly with members performing solo, in small ensembles, and as an orchestra and the events often feature visiting guest artists. For information on the LIAA or other upcoming performances, please contact Dominic at dkarcic10@gmail.com.