



Newsletter

From the Editor

Welcome to the first 2026 Edition of the AAA Newsletter!

Many of you gathered for our summer festival in Conshohocken, PA last year and I'm sure you'll agree it was a wonderful success. Featuring outstanding guest artists, educational lectures, multiple Festival orchestras, exhibits and social gatherings, the Festival showcased a diverse array of accordion activities. Plans are already well underway for the 88th Festival which will take place this summer, August 13-16, 2026 in West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania.

My sincere thanks to our Newsletter Publisher, AAA's immediate past 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 next edition of 2026 can be sent to me at 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, however we are unable to increase the quality from smaller pictures. Please send your items as soon as possible to ensure it is included in the upcoming issue.

We thank you in advance for sending in your news items to include in the Newsletter publication and all the best for a musical 2026 ahead.

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



Save the date!

2026 AAA Festival: August 13-16

www.ameraccord.com/festival.php

West Conshohocken, PA (Philadelphia area)

Guest Artists Concerts Workshops
Competitions Museum Display
Orchestras Exhibits Food Functions
...and More!



**Watch ameraccord.com for
hotel discount code and other festival announcements!**

The Passing of Mary Tokarski - message from Don Gerundo, AAA President

It is with deep sadness that I tell you of the passing of Mary Tokarski, our esteemed former president of the American Accordionists' Association. Mary served as AAA President from 2015 to 2018. I recall the day that she told the board after she had been elected that this position was a lifelong dream of hers.

Mary came from a family that had the accordion in its DNA. Her sister, Julie Kasprzyk Cardona, and brother, Walter Kasprzyk, were amazing accordionists in their own right. They formed the well-known "K" Trio which performed in many festivals such as various AAA festivals, the Cotati Festival in California, and in France as guest artists at the 2004 Coupe Mondiale.

Mary represented the United States in the Coupe Mondiale in Belgium (1971) and France (1973). She performed with symphony orchestras, chamber ensembles, and as a soloist. Her many performances, accomplishments, and CD recordings can be "Googled" easily on the internet. Mary had accumulated many, many accomplishments in the musical world. But rather than list them, I wanted to share the many interactions that I was lucky to have had throughout the years with her. I don't believe you can find these things on the internet.

I first met Mary when I was invited to join the Connecticut Accordion Orchestra/Association by the president, Marilyn O'Neil. I had met Marilyn at a testimonial dinner in New York City at Tavern on the Green, which was being held for Faithe Deffner, another past AAA president. Marilyn asked if I would join and play with the CAA Orchestra. I recall going to the first rehearsal in Waterbury, CT and the group was preparing for a Christmas concert. I didn't know any of the members since I was not from that area and did not 'come up' through the usual 'ranks' of the various accordion competitions as a youth. It was the first time I heard Mary and her sister Julie play. We quickly formed a close musical and friendly relationship.

Mary opened up a new world for me. I met an entire community of accordionists and started to perform with many new ensembles and musicians. I also became more active within the AAA and eventually was asked to join the AAA Board. There were many times when the orchestra would rehearse in Mary's music studio in New Haven, CT. She also hosted many AAA Board meetings and social events in her home.

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It was always fun and a thrill for me to listen to Mary play, warm up, and listen to her share her wonderful ability. There were also times before a rehearsal that she would play a duet with her sister Julie, and it was such a great treat to listen to them perform together. As I would listen to them play, it was clear that you could see two accordions playing with "one" mind! Their musical connection to each other was simply amazing. It seemed like they literally 'breathed' together as they played each musical phrase.

I had firsthand experience seeing her work tirelessly at the competitions that were held at the AAA yearly festivals. She would also conduct the Youth Festival Orchestra as well. One memorable experience I had was when Mary was performing with the Westport Playhouse Orchestra for a summer series of performances by Broadway actors/vocalists. Due to Mary's busy schedule, there were several performances that she could not do.

I received a call from the conductor of the orchestra that Mary had recommended me to substitute for her. I was literally honored to be recommended by her. I could not have received a better compliment from a musician that I respected, enjoyed, and honored. I am in the very large musical community of musicians, listeners, students, and colleagues that will miss her terribly!

A service to celebrate the life of Mary Joan Kasprzyk Tokarski was held on March 2 at Aldersgate Methodist Church. In lieu of flowers, the family asks for donations to be sent to The Mary and Frank Tokarski Musical Arts Fund, a foundation very near and dear to Mary's heart: <https://www.cfnh.org/articles/mary-frank-tokarski-musical-arts-fund>

Guinness World Record for Largest Accordion Ensemble

AAA Board Member Kevin Friedrich, Confédération Internationale des Accordionistes (CIA) Ambassador and Chairman of the CIA World Accordion Museum Alliance, was invited in August to attend the 2025 Xin Jiang Tacheng International Accordion Culture and Art Festival and participate in a seminar and meetings with the Tacheng Accordion Museum.

A highlight of the Tacheng Festival featured an attempt to achieve a Guinness World Record for the largest Accordion Ensemble. This historic record-breaking event drew more than 5,000 accordionists performing 'My Motherland' together, conducted by CIA Vice-President Professor Li Cong. At the conclusion of the performance, Guinness Officials certified that the record was established with an incredible 5,282 players.

Kevin and other international guests were invited to present lectures at the International Accordion Culture Exchange Event and Seminars. Guests also included CIA Committee Members Mirco Patarini (President), Li Cong (Vice President), Kimmo Mattila (General Secretary), Harley Jones (Public Relations Manager), and Grayson Masefield (Vice Chairperson of the Music Committee).

Tacheng Museum Director Yulan Ma and CIA World Accordion Museum Alliance President Kevin Friedrich met about future plans and were then part of the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation between the two

organizations. The Tacheng Accordion Museum is the largest accordion museum in China and one of the largest in the world. The Museum comprises almost 2,000 instruments housed in a grand new building boasting multiple floors of display spaces, lecture and concert halls, and a magnificent multi-purpose atrium.



Tacheng is located about six hours flying time from Beijing or Shanghai across China, just a few miles from the Kazakhstan border, and is planned to be the site of the upcoming 2026 Coupe Mondiale. Kevin is pictured with fellow record-breakers Grayson Masefield and Harley Jones.



AAA Concert Extravaganza

The American Accordionists Association invites you to a wonderful afternoon of amazing music on April 26, 2026 at Crystal Hall in Yorktown Heights, NY. It includes the Connecticut Accordion Orchestra conducted by Peter Peluso and directed by Marilyn O'Neil. They will perform the first half of the program.

The second half of the program will present Mario Tacca's ensemble. Mario is a world-renowned accordionist and has concertized throughout the world with his wife, Mary Mancini, who is also a renowned artist.

Guests can purchase tickets online at the AAA website store (www.ameraccord.com/cart.aspx) for \$45 per person. Select "April 26 Concert" from the menu. Prepaid tickets will be held for pickup at the door.

For further information, please email ameraccord1938@gmail.com or call Don Gerundo at 914-261-9320.

An Accordion Extravaganza!

Presented By
The American Accordionists' Association

Sunday, April 26, 2026 at 2:30pm
Crystal Hall, 34 Hillendale Rd, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598
Featuring Performances by:



Connecticut Accordion Orchestra – Peter Peluso, Conductor



Mario Tacca



Beverly Roberts Curnow



Kevin Friedrich



Alex Chudolij



Michael Goetz



**Special Guest Vocalist
Mary Mancini**



Peter Blume

Master of Ceremonies – Kevin Friedrich

Tickets: \$45 per person

Purchase tickets via PayPal or Zelle (ameraccord1938@gmail.com)

Pre-paid tickets will be held for pick-up at the door.

**Meet the artists
after the performance
when desserts and coffee
will be served.**

Questions – Contact The American Accordionists' Association at Ameraccord1938@gmail.com

Visit ameraccord.com Or call Don Gerundo at 914-261-9320.

Ksenija Sidorova with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Ksenija Sidorova will perform “Prophecy” with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paavo Järvi from April 2-4, 2026. “Prophecy” is an accordion concerto exploring the tradition of clairvoyance in various cultures by Estonian composer (and progressive rock veteran) Erkki-Sven Tüür.

Prophecy for Accordion and Orchestra (2007) was commissioned by the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra and Orchestre de Bretagne and premiered on October 11, 2007 at the Turku Concert Hall, Finland by Mika Väyrynen (accordion) with the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Olari Elts.

Describing his work, Tüür says: “There are four movements in my accordion concerto Prophecy (2007), all performed attacca. The opening movement follows waveform logic and acts like status nascendi. Alternating processes like congelation and melting, converging and dispersing are the main forces of forming the musical material. The color of accordion fades into string chord, the string chord fades into brass, and so on. Everything is in constant flow. Ascending and descending whirls meet each other and leave a glittering surface behind.



“The second movement gives us the perception of the pulse. Here takes place the dialogue between soloist and orchestra and the development culminates with cadenza which debouches into the slow third movement. The accordion part is figurative and it descends slowly towards the lowest register only to climb up again, forming then a choral-like melodic line. The fourth part is a kind of continuously tension-building surreal dance.

“The title ‘Prophecy’ refers to the extremely long and rich practice of ‘seeing things’ through the history of different cultures and traditions. Let us remember that often these people were met with mixed feelings by the majority of the society. They were respected, disdained, hazardous, and kind of mad. However, they had access to the beyond. Also, the music reflects – from my subjective point of view - the energetic levels of this phenomenon.”

Accordion soloist Ksenija Sidorova is described as “revelatory” (The Telegraph) and “one of the most magnetic soloists you will ever see” (Seen and Heard International). Ksenija Sidorova is widely recognized as the leading ambassador of the classical accordion. Celebrated for her “verve, style, attitude, and impeccable virtuosity” (ZealNYC), she brings a compelling blend of technical brilliance and expressive musicality to every performance.

Her repertoire spans over three centuries encompassing works by J.S. Bach, Astor Piazzolla, Erkki-Sven Tüür, and Václav Trojan, alongside a growing body of contemporary works written specifically for her. A passionate advocate for new music, Sidorova continues to expand the accordion repertoire through new commissions and collaborations. Fazil Say is currently composing a new concerto for Sidorova, which will be premiered in July 2026 at the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival in Germany.

Recent highlights include the world premiere of Dobrinka Tabakova’s Sublime Dreams of Living Machines with Stuttgart Philharmoniker at the Bodensee Festival, where she was Artist in Residence. The work received further performances with the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra and Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, with its UK premiere with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra having taken place in January 2026.

In addition to her Tüür’s Prophecy performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, her 2025/26 season highlights include the Canadian premiere of Tõnu Kõrvits’ Dances with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and a return to Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, all three under Paavo Järvi. She recently made her solo recital debut at Carnegie Hall and performed at Club Musical de Québec and Prager (curated by Gabriela Montero).

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Sidorova in Chicago - continued from previous page

Sidorova has previously appeared with Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra including at the Last Night of the Proms, Münchner Philharmoniker, Orchestre National de France, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Cincinnati Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, and many others. She collaborates with conductors such as Paavo Järvi, Marin Alsop, Thomas Hengelbrock, Vasily Petrenko, Andris Poga, Kirill Karabits, Christian Reif, and Nil Venditti.

Following a successful tour with Thomas Hampson in 2025, including performances at Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Beethovenhaus Bonn, she reunites with him in 2026 for performances of Schubert's Winterreise and Kurt Weill songs at Tonhalle Zürich, Kings Place London, Bergen International Festival, and Kronberg Academy. She also continues touring with SIGNUM Saxophone Quartet and their ANIMA project, with appearances at Munich Prinzregententheater, Harz Classix Festival, Jurmala Festival, and Vienna Konzerthaus.



A dedicated chamber musician, Sidorova also performs regularly with Avi Avital, Benjamin Appl, Goldmund Quartet, Milos, Nemanja Radulović, Andreas Ottensamer, Tine Thing Helseth, Juan Diego Flórez, and Nicola Benedetti. A regular guest at major festivals, she has appeared at Verbier, Rheingau, Ravinia, Cheltenham, (ex) Mostly Mozart, MITO, Gstaad Menuhin and MISA festival in Shanghai.

Born in Riga, Sidorova began playing the accordion at age six, inspired by her grandmother. She studied with Marija Gasele before continuing at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Owen Murray, where she received numerous accolades including the Philharmonia Orchestra's Martin Musical Scholarship, the Friends of the Philharmonia Award, and the Worshipful Company of Musicians Silver Medal. She was named an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in London in 2016 and a Fellow in 2021.

For tickets and further program information for her Chicago Symphony Orchestra appearance: <https://cso.org/>

Akordeonovy Orchestra (Czech Republic) at A World of Accordions Museum

The Akordeonovy Orchestra (Czech Republic Accordion Orchestra) performed a series of concerts in the USA in August as part of their summer tour. The unique ensemble of 20-plus young musicians from Rice Lake's (Wisconsin) Sister City Zamberk, Czech Republic, performed classical, historical and festive cultural music in the Rice Lake area during the week of August 18-24, 2025.

"We are pleased to welcome this outstanding group of talented musicians to our community and region," said Rice Lake Mayor Harlan Dodge. "I attended one of their performances in our sister city and was thoroughly entertained and impressed by their extraordinary abilities and showmanship."

Accompanying the musicians were several officials from the Pardubice region who toured area firms and government offices as part of a sister city exchange.

The orchestra has charmed and inspired audiences throughout eastern parts of the country for many years. Its unique sound was founded on the musical roots of the Peter Eben Basic Arts School of Zamberk. The school is a leading example of musical talent in the Czech Republic and eastern Europe. In addition to their concert at World of Accordions Museum in Superior, they also performed at Music in the Park at the Rice Lake Bandshell and at Ceska Opera House in Haugen.



"We are delighted and honored to have these exceptional accordion musicians, regional officials, and cultural historians share their talents and gifts with us as part of the expanding sister city relationship with Zamberk," said event co-chair Susan Wojtkiewicz.

Results of the 78th Coupe Mondiale in East Sarajevo

The 78th Coupe Mondiale and 154th CIA International General Assembly of Delegates Congress was recently held in East Sarajevo, Rep. of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Attracting more than 100 contestants from around the world as well as Delegates and members of the International Jury from more than 30 countries, the weeklong festival showcased some of the world's finest young accordionists as well as guest artists who performed on the many concerts.

Competitions were held in seven categories and after three rounds of competition requiring an array of repertoire including polyphonic works, original compositions, and a concert program, Konstantin Ryabin from Russia emerged the overall winner of the Coupe Mondiale. Other winners were as follows:

78th Coupe Mondiale

1st: Konstantin Ryabin, Russia
2nd: Vitor Pastor, Portugal
3rd: Alexey Mykitenko, Russia

Masters Coupe Mondiale

1st: Cătălin Gușevatii, Moldova
2nd: Lev Solomonovich, Moldova
3rd: Petr Yارينenko, Russia

Junior Coupe Mondiale

1st: Rostislav Gorianskii, Russia
2nd: Djordje Kristivojevic, Serbia
3rd: Vojin Blagojević, Serbia

Int'l. Competition for Virtuoso Entertainment Music

1st: Lev Solomonovich, Moldova
2nd: Haris Kaltak, Bosnia and Herzegovina
3rd: Jean Panisson, Brazil

Junior Int'l. Competition for Virtuoso Entertainment Music

1st: Djordje Perić, Bosnia and Herzegovina
2nd: Davide Di Giacomo, Italy
3rd: Paolo Torreggiani, Italy

Int'l. Competition for Ensemble Music - World Music

1st: Trio "Obayanie" - Russia
Nikolai Zhigalov, Mikhail Bovkun, and Nikita Zolkin (accordions)
2nd: Duo Djordje Perić and Amar Ćosić - Bosnia and Herzegovina
Djordje Perić and Amar Ćosić (accordions)
3rd: Duo Bulgaria - Bulgaria
Tsvetelin Dimitrov (accordion) and Petko Dobrev (bagpipe)

Int'l. Competition for Ensemble Music - Classical Music

1st: Trio "Obayanie" - Russia
Nikolai Zhigalov, Mikhail Bovkun, and Nikita Zolkin (accordions)
2nd: Amoroso Duo - Bosnia and Herzegovina
Vehbija Hodzic (accordion), Senka Slipac (violin)
3rd: Musica In Fiore - Germany
Juliana Kraus, Michael Ziegler, Nils Aebersold (accordions) and
Karla Gvozden Rizvic (bass accordion)

Plans are well underway for the 79th Coupe Mondiale, which will be held August 23-28, 2026 in Astana, Kazakhstan hosted by the CIA member The Kazakh National University of Arts.

To view videos of all contestants and concerts from East Sarajevo, visit: accordions.news/2025coupemondiale-video



Ksenija Sidorova at Carnegie Hall

Accordionist Ksenija Sidorova recently gave her Carnegie Hall debut in New York City. On November 5, 2025 Ksenija Sidorova, a Latvia-born classical accordianist, renowned as one of the world's leading ambassadors for the instrument, presented a magnificent variety of works including original composition and transcriptions that showcased her expressive musicality and impressive virtuosity. Her program was as follows:

- Opening from Glassworks by Philip Glass, arr. K. Sidorova
- Adagio in d Minor, BWV 974 by J. S. Bach, arr. K. Sidorova
- Sketch III by Sergey Akhunov
- Chorale Prelude on "Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ by J. S. Bach, arr. Sidorova
- Beyond Bach by Gabriela Montero, arr. George Morton and K. Sidorova
- 3 Ballads by Fazil Say, arr. K. Sidorova
- Asturias by Isaac Albéniz
- Chau Paris by Astor Piazzolla, arr. K. Sidorova
- Fantasie on a Theme of Piazzolla 'Chiquilín de Bachín' by Franck Angelis
- Revelation by Sergei Voitenko
- Cinderella by Alexey Arkhipovsky, arr. Alexander Poeluev
- Revis Fairy Tale by Alfred Schnittke, arr. F. Lips and K. Sidorova

Ksenija Sidorova Carnegie Hall Debut – Review

Almost the entire program was arranged by Ksenija and friends, overflowing with respect for the works, musicians, and friends. As a result, the pieces were deeply connected, and Sidorova's world transcended time and style, unfolding through the accordion.

The program encompassed a wide range of genres, from American minimalism to Bach and numerous folk pieces, imitating a variety of instruments and voices, including organ, folk instruments, orchestra, and voice. The final piece was Schnittke's polystylism, the opera of satire and humor.

This was my first time experiencing an accordion solo in a concert. Ksenija exudes the unique aura of the great performers I've experienced. It reminds me of Jansons' Shostakovich, Mutter's violin, and the precision of Trifonov.

The lights dimmed, and the performance began with a piece written in the 1980s by the renowned American minimalist Philip Glass, who introduced his work. The light reflected off the wall shimmered softly, and when I opened my eyes, I saw an accordion playing, almost like an orchestra peering down from above.

The following arrangement of a Bach concerto offered a clear sound, almost like a human singing voice or a glass harp, supported by a rippling ostinato. The way each hand gripped the keys of the accordion was clearly visible, giving a clear understanding of Bach's instrument's structure. The instrument has many valves, and I felt that understanding their structure further enhanced the enjoyment of listening. Ksenija slowly adjusted the width of the bellows, allowing Bach's music to fill the venue.



Sergei Akhunov's Sketches III was a hybrid of Glass and Bach. Characterized by arpeggio development, it evoked the minimalist regularity of Glass and the beauty of Bach, while also possessing a unique sound. These three pieces were played consecutively, creating the impression of a cohesive piece spanning three movements.

The following Bach piece, BWV 639, allowed the music to breathe freely, with a dynamic range more flexible than that of the organ. Ksenija spoke through the notes. It was an experience that went beyond the organ. Bach's music was breathing, as if I were inside the organ. With each breath drawn through the bellows and the buzzing of the reeds, it was as if I were experiencing Bach within the space of the organ. What I was listening to was not an accordion, but something beyond the organ.

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Sidorova at Carnegie Hall - review continued from previous page

Pigini's four-octave accordion created an organ-like resonance. Occasionally, deep bass tones reminiscent of a contrabassoon evoked the feeling of listening to a large cathedral. Montero's improvisation, *Beyond Bach*, was born out of a deep respect for Bach, as the structures and melodies of Bach created new sounds and developments that emerged from his free interpretation. This resulted in a musical experience that transcended the boundaries between past and present, composition and performance.

In three ballads by pianist Fazil Say, the accordion spoke and sang as it spun its melodies. In a work dedicated to the poet Nazım, the Turkish composer skillfully depicted contrasts between light and dark, as well as between low and high notes. In *Kumru (Dove)*, music conveys love, peace, hope, and affection as it quietly flies across the sky. Meanwhile, in *Seveners*, he addresses loved ones, expressing elation, conflict, and farewell.

Isaac Albéniz's *Asturias, Leyenda* (from *Suite Española*) evokes the raw energy of northern Spain's coastal region rather than flamenco guitar or Andalusia. "Asturias is a mountain," Ksenija once said. The accordion's bellows were finely tuned, rapidly opening and closing in contrast to the long strokes of the previous piece. The guitar's flutter, relentlessly punctuated like an orchestral tremolo, was as powerful as waves crashing against a cliff.

Piazzolla's bandoneon work epitomized cosmopolitan tango, and Ksenija's playing was truly characteristic. The bellows vibrated, weaving together sounds without long strokes. Piazzolla's unique style was so captivating that Nadia Boulanger once remarked, "Your music is tango." It's as if Dohnányi urged Bartók, who was studying in Vienna, to "write Hungarian music," and his teacher's words gave the expression back its strength. This is music tinged with the sourness of life, different from the Piazzolla I had imagined in my twenties. The emotion of an adult turning his back on the glamorous city and walking forward, carrying the bittersweet memories of a night, seeps through the gaps in the music. Ksenija depicts the floating world with the accordion, similar to Pollini's Chopin.



And then there's *Bachin' Boy*, dedicated to Ksenija by Frank Angelis. This piece was the highlight. Ksenija, the performer and musician, and why she ended up on the Carnegie stage? Everything was condensed into this piece. The heartbeat of the accordion. Her facial expressions and the sound of the accordion. It was as if violinist Mutter were playing Penderecki, or Rostropovich playing Shostakovich. This piece was pure sadness. A darkness that shattered all hope.

Her performance became even more fulfilling with Slavic Piazzolla, Sergei Voitenko's *Revelation*, which evokes the structure of Bach, the minimal regularity of Glass, and the emotional impact of Piazzolla. Using the bayan, the piece weaves long, sweeping melodic lines, ornate ornamentation, and a restrained, often trembling accompaniment. A starry, delicate revelation is woven.

Aleksei Arkhipovsky's *Cinderella for balalaika* tells the story of a melancholic maid growing into a princess. Cinderella's personality, experiences, inner changes, and emotions are expressed in every movement of Ksenija's fingers as she presses the keys and plays the melody, resonating like a breath of life.

Finally, Schnittke's polystylism. Based on Gogol's story, *Tchitchikov's Childhood*, the narrative depicts growth and ambition, as well as the hopes and anxieties that lurk at the beginning of life. "Bureaucrats" featured a procession of bureaucrats running around, carrying various items. It was Gogol's social satire, mixing humor and instability reminiscent of Shostakovich's *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth*. "Ball" was a twisted waltz, and "Overcoat" vividly depicted humor and pathos, blending comedy and unease - truly opera.

Note on the reviewer: classicasobi is a Japanese writer and classical music critic whose work bridges cultural insight with a profoundly personal approach to listening. His open online reviews are distinguished by their balance of cultural context, analytical acuity, and attention to the listener's experience, offering reflections that illuminate both the artistry of performance and its human dimension.

Kevin Friedrich 20th Anniversary Concert

New York-based accordionist Kevin Friedrich celebrated his milestone 20th Anniversary Concert at the Dargaville Museum in New Zealand on November 16, 2025. The popular concert series titled 'An Afternoon of Music with Kevin Friedrich and Friends' sold out weeks in advance and featured an impressive lineup of talent. This year's theme 'From Baylys to Broadway' followed Kevin's musical journey that took him from the tiny beach side community of Baylys Beach near Dargaville to his home in New York with a side trip to France, where Kevin studied the accordion in Paris.

Joining Kevin for his milestone 20th anniversary fundraising concert were an impressive lineup of guests including the 25-member North Shore Accordion Orchestra, which opened the concert with renowned New Zealand composer and conductor Gary Daverne conducting his composition "Song of the Far North" for accordion and orchestra with Kevin Friedrich as soloist. The orchestra was also conducted by the Dargaville Museum Weekend Manager, Christine Johnstone, as guest conductor before the baton was turned over to the regular conductor Lian Jones who led the orchestra in a program featuring vocal soloists Alanah Jones and Lionel Reekie, then concluding with a rousing rendition of the "Overture to the Marriage of Figaro".

When the Dargaville Museum added the new wing to accommodate Kevin's accordion collection in 2006, the manager at that time, Pene McKenzie, requested that once in a while, the instruments would be used if possible. In keeping with this tradition, for this concert, Kevin showcased a variety of instruments including the oldest one, a 6-key flutina from 1830, a Frosini keyboard, an extremely rare Alfred Arnold bandoneon with the buttons in a piano keyboard configuration, a recently-donated Scandalli butterfly accordion, the world's first Kauri accordion, and more.

THE DARGAVILLE MUSEUM
PRESENTS
from Baylys
to BROADWAY
the 20th Anniversary Afternoon of Music
with Kevin Friedrich and Friends!

16 November 2025
1:00 PM

Adults: \$30.00
Youth (15 & under): free

... a family Variety Show taking you on a musical journey from Baylys Beach all the way to the Big Apple and beyond!

The program featured a variety of guests ranging from vocalists to an African Drum team. In addition to the North Shore Accordion Orchestra, many of the artists have been guests at AAA Festivals over the years, including Gary Daverne, Lionel Reekie, Maurice Jones, Grayson Masefield, and more.

Making her Dargaville debut was the acclaimed harpist Ingrid Bauer (Principal Harp of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra), who included a Piazzolla work with her fellow orchestra member and concertmaster, renowned violinist Andrew Beer. Andrew later joined World Accordion Champion Grayson Masefield to present a set that highlighted their incredible virtuosic and musical skills before the concert concluded with world's southernmost accordion group, the Christchurch Accordion Orchestra.

The regular fundraising concerts have helped support the Dargaville Museum tell the stories of the Kaipara region as well as support the only public accordion exhibition in the southern hemisphere, Kevin's "Accordion Gems, A Master Collection of Accordions Through Time."



Save the Date - AAA Festival 2026

The American Accordionists' Association is pleased to announce that the 2026 88th Festival will take place August 13-16, 2026 in the Philadelphia, PA area. It will include educational, entertaining, and fun-filled days of accordion-related activities with something valuable for everyone at any level. The venue is the Marriott Philadelphia West, 111 Crawford Avenue, West Conshohocken, PA.

The 88th AAA Festival will be based on an extensive history of success, and everyone in attendance can expect to experience educational and entertaining days, including inspiring and enjoyable accordion artists in concert, fascinating workshops, and non-stop accordion camaraderie.



We invite you to visit www.ameraccord.com for the latest information as plans, guest artists, and activities are confirmed.

Dr. William Schimmel at the New York Public Library

Improving on Berlioz, by Dr. William Schimmel, was recently presented at New York Public Library for the Performing Arts - Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York, NY. Dr. Schimmel and his musical associates presented new takes, constructions, de-constructions as well as homages to the great master, Hector Berlioz, where the accordion will be the catalyst.

The distinguished team included Will Holshouser, Dr. Denise Koncelik, Erica Mancini, Dan Cooper, Benjamin Ickies, Corn Mo, Dr. Robert Young McMahan, Emanuel Borowski, Brian Dewan, Mimi Hsu, Dr. Hugo Goldenzweig, and Dr. Schimmel.

William Schimmel is an American musician and composer, who plays the accordion and is a promoter of the philosophy of "Musical Reality" (composition with pre-existing music). He holds Bachelor of Music, Master of Science, and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in composition from the Juilliard School, along with a diploma from the Neupauer Conservatory of Music in performance/composition. He is a major popularizer of the accordion, performs music in many genres, has commissioned and premiered hundreds of new works, has composed over 4,000 works in every medium, has written a number of books and articles, and has made numerous recordings and videos.

His music has been featured in a number of films, most notably *Scent of a Woman* starring Al Pacino, where he appears in the famous Tango Scene with The Tango Project, of which he is a founding member, and television shows such as *The Good Fight*, *Ray Donovan*, *Quantum Leap*, and more.

He is a prolific composer with many commissions from concert music to Broadway and off-Broadway. He has written countless accordion pieces for himself and others including, a test piece for the Coupe Mondiale, the accordion's most prestigious world competition. His *Portrait No I* for orchestra was conducted by the late Leopold Stockowski.

For further information: accordionbill@gmail.com



Chicagoland Accordion Academy Showcases Sawyer and Venglevski

On November 16, 2025, the Chicagoland Accordion Academy under the artistic direction of Mary Ann Covone, presented "Music of Two Masters," an evening of original compositions by renowned accordionists and composers, Amy Jo Sawyer and Stas Venglevski.

The concert in Lagrange, IL, included all of Mary Ann's students performing solos and duets, plus all three of her accordion groups. Stas wrote a piece – "Ducklings at Breakfast" – for the kids' group and Amy Jo created a Christmas medley - "Swingin' Christmas Medley" – for the rest of the combined accordionists.

Works composed by Stas Venglevski that were performed were: Ducklings At Breakfast, Midnight Waltz, A Dream Song, Sunshine's Return, October Rondo, Children's Animal Suite, Love Comes Softly, Cat's Ball, Summer Sunshine, Swing into Spring and Party in Kansas. Works composed by Amy Jo Sawyer presented on the concert were Dreaming, Tango Romantico, Carousel Waltz, Circus Parade, Little Cuckoo, Skipping Along, Waltz for Erin, Snow Flakes Are Falling, Just Swing It, and A Swingin' Touch of Christmas.



An Accordionists & Teachers Guild International Hall of Fame inductee, Amy Jo Sawyer has devoted much of her musical career to the accordion. Her concertizing, composing, arranging, and administrative activities have enhanced recognition of the accordion as a concert and popular/jazz instrument. She earned BA Degrees in Composition and Keyboard Performance, and an MA in Jazz Keyboard Performance. Her Jazz CD "According to Amy" and her Classical CD "Classically Amy" demonstrate her virtuosity and the versatility of the accordion.

A former Coupe Mondiale contestant, Amy Jo has written music for – and performed with – the University of Missouri at Kansas City Accordion Orchestra, under the direction of Joan C. Sommers, on four international tours. She has performed with the Sacramento and St. Louis Symphonies, including accompanying tenor Luciano Pavarotti.

Her original tango, "Juntos" (Together), was performed in Castelfidardo, Italy in 2011 by the Frank Marocco Orchestra while her original accordion orchestra composition, "Recuerdos" (Memories), was performed by the World Accordion Orchestra at the 2018 Coupe Mondiale in Lithuania.

Stas Venglevski is a bayanist, composer, conductor, arranger, entertainer, and teacher, and his extensive repertoire includes his original compositions and a broad range of classical, contemporary, and ethnic music. He has toured extensively as a soloist throughout the former Soviet Union, Canada, Europe, the United States, and most recently in South Africa. Numerous US performances include performances with Doc Severinsen, Steve Allen, and Garrison Keillor on the Prairie Home Companion Show.

He has performed with symphony orchestras in Europe and throughout the United States, including the Anchorage, Grand Florida, and Detroit symphony orchestras in the opera production of Frida, and with the University of Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra in 2003 for the official world premiere of the "Concerto No. 2 in D Minor." It marked the first time the piece had been performed in its entirety with a symphony orchestra. He has performed the concerto on multiple occasions since, with the Tacoma, Colorado Jefferson, and Racine symphony orchestras, and with that of Nuremberg, Germany.

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Chicagoland - continued from previous page

In 2023, he established the Stas Venglevski Music Foundation, SVMF. The aim is to revolutionize the world of accordion by inspiring young people to embrace the fine arts, empowering them to create music, honing their performance skills as soloists and with orchestras, and giving them opportunities to compose and debut new music. In addition to the core mission, the foundation is committed to expanding public knowledge of art and music and supporting impactful cultural initiatives worldwide. In February 2025, Stas performed at the prestigious Carnegie Hall.

The Chicagoland Accordion Academy embraces that the accordion is gaining popularity again, attributing it to the fact that it is such a versatile instrument lending itself well to ethnic, folk, popular, and jazz music, as well as classical music. The accordion is both a solo instrument and is in great demand in all genres of musical groups.

Chicagoland Accordion Academy classes are geared toward adults who want to learn to play for their own enjoyment. Students learn to read music, listen to music, and adapt it to the accordion. Academy students have expressed a variety of reasons why they want to play the accordion such as: they like the sound of the instrument; they have an older relative who played; they inherited an instrument; they want to play with an ethnic group; they want to play music of their heritage; they played as a child and want to resume learning; they played the piano but want to learn accordion because it is portable; and they know that playing the accordion provides an outlet from the stress of everyday life.

Whatever your reason for wanting to play the accordion, the Chicagoland Accordion Academy works with the students to achieve their goals!

For further information about the Academy or upcoming projects and concerts, please email maryann@chicagolandaccordionacademy.com



Hanzhi Wang makes her debut at the Met in NYC

Hanzhi Wang presented her debut concert at the Met Gallery Astor Chinese Garden Court on October 10, 2025. For her Met debut, Wang performed a recital of new and original compositions. Works included compositions by Danish composer Martin Lohse alongside pieces by Wang herself, which tell of her hometown of Suzhou, China.

Hanzhi was the first accordionist to win Young Concert Artists International Auditions, was named Musical America's "New Artist of the Month," and was featured on WQXR Radio's Young Artists Showcase.

Composers Martin Lohse, James Black, and Sophia Gubaidulina have written and dedicated works to her. Her awards include first prize in the 40th Castelfidardo International Accordion Competition in Italy.

Hanzhi earned her Bachelor's degree at the China Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. She completed her Master's degree and Soloist Diploma at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen with the renowned accordion professor Geir Draugsvoll, where she also served as an assistant teacher.

Upcoming recitals include the Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota and a concert with YCA saxophonist, Steven Banks, at The Morgan Library & Museum in New York, NY.

Hanzhi has appeared as soloist with the Oregon Music Festival, Victoria Symphony, Cantori, Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle, Sinfonia Gulf Coast, Iris Orchestra, and with the Hawaii Symphony, Erie Philharmonic, and Reno Chamber Orchestra.



Stas Venglevski in Concert

A World of Accordions in Superior, WI is honored to present well-known accordionist Stas Venglevski in concert on April 24, 2026.

Performing in the magnificent Hanni Strahl Concert Hall located at 1401 Belknap Street, Superior, WI, Stas will present a variety of repertoire ranging from the world premiere of six of his new original works to popular and transcribed pieces.

An accordionist, composer, conductor, arranger, entertainer, and teacher, Stas' wide repertoire includes his original compositions and a broad range of classical, contemporary, and ethnic music. He has toured extensively as a soloist throughout the former Soviet Union, Canada, Europe, and the United States, including numerous performances with Doc Severinsen and Steve Allen, and with Garrison Keillor on Prairie Home Companion. He has performed with symphony orchestras in Europe and throughout the United States including the Anchorage, Grand Florida, and Detroit orchestras.


For the past five years he has been the Artistic Director of the Houston Accordion Orchestra Retreat and in 2021 he was named Artistic Director of A World of Accordions (AWAM) in Superior, WI. He is a past president of the Accordionists and Teachers Guild and currently serves on its board. Most recently, he has joined the faculty of the Music Department of the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

Stas

in Superior

Harrington Arts Center

A World of Accordions Museum is excited to showcase Stas Venglevski in concert! World premieres of six new original compositions for solo accordion by Stas and performances of beloved classical and traditional melodies



**Friday
April 24
2026
5 pm**

Admission: \$20

Contact Curator:
Helmi Harrington, Ph.D.
☎ 218-393-0245
✉ aworldofaccordions@gmail.com

The Seminars 2025 in NYC

Dr. William Schimmel and his distinguished team presented their 31st smash year of The Accordion Seminars, titled in 2025 “A Bellows Pleated World Full of Ins and Outs.”

Presentation topics included: The Accordion as Supreme Enjoyer; Yodeling through the Accordion; The Filmic Reality; Framing and Squeezing Space; The Global Sense; Tapping the Pleasure Zone; Tapping the Pain Zone; The Folklore Dimension; The Mini Orchestra; The Envelope Sound; The Direct Sound; and many others.

Participants included: Micki Goodman, Paul Stein, Will Holshouser, Dr. Denise Koncelik, Dr. Robert Young Mc Mahan, Bachtopus, Michael Schimmel, Corn Mo, The Main Squeeze Orchestra, Carl Riehl, Mary Spencer Knapp, Godfrey Nelson, Lorraine Nelson Wolf, Melissa Elledge, Doug Makofka, Rita Davidson, Erica Marie Mancini, Benjamin Ickies, Dan Cooper, Katia Righetti, Cam Goldberg, Olivia Goldberg, Luigi Righetti, Walter Di Vecchi, Dr. Thomas Massucci, Gene Pritsker, Peter Flint, Mike's Place, Jeanne Velonis, Bob Goldberg Mayumi Miyaoka, Robert Duncan, David Stoler, Pat Stoler, David First, William Komaiko, Sari Kalin, Jack di Bennidetto, John Foti, Dr. Hugo Goldenzweig, Brian Dewan, Abby Swidler, Lee Mc Clure, Quentin Tice, Peter Jarvis, Elliott Sharp, Hanzhi Wang, Milica Paranosic, Rachi, id Eladlouni, Dave Soldier, Michael Century, Benjamin Niemczyk, Dr. Schimmel, and others.

Dr. Schimmel recounts: “In 1994, a new perspective came to me: What if the accordion never went out of style? After all, I heard it in about 75% of the movies I attended, both American and European. Before electronic keyboards, the accordion was in many Broadway pits played by talented musicians. Although anonymous players, they were making a good living. I set out to find out who they were.

“Another perspective came to me: Things are different today. Perhaps there are a group of musicians and artists who would be able to see the accordion in new angles: without the old baggage. No contests, no headliners, ideas over finger fodder, including musicians who played other instruments in orchestras - particularly keyboards - and discovered they could double with the accordion, actors who were coming to me for lessons to play in theatrical productions from off-off to off-and on-Broadway, and visual artists, video artists who were fascinated by the accordion.

“It was provocative and engendered lots of discussion. Initially, I gathered a bunch of students and former students, many of them mine as well as colleagues and composers and the Accordion Seminars were born.

“What attracted Artists to it? ART- made with, around and because of the accordion. The result was an accordion community in New York with a global sensibility which has morphed into the Accordions Global Association (AGA).

“We are inclusive of genre and style and don't turn our back on virtuosity, and in addition, we continue to visit our accordion ancestors while welcoming everyone who loves the accordion.”

Hosted and curated by Dr. William Schimmel, the Seminars have been presented virtually since the pandemic. For information on upcoming activities, please email accordionbill@gmail.com.



Anthony Galla-Rini, an AAA Founding Member

By Joan Grauman Morse, AAA Historian. Readers who have any historical information or additional information pertaining to the AAA are invited to submit items for consideration to: graumanjoan98r@gmail.com

Anthony Galla-Rini was one of the greatest “gifts” the accordion world has ever experienced. Not only did he compose, teach, write teaching method and exercise books, create excellent arrangements of popular and classical music, help design the Stradella bass system, and conduct accordion orchestras - he also lived more than a century with a clear mind and an endless desire to do more for his beloved instrument. In Galla-Rini’s documentary “Sharing the Joy,” created when he was 90 years old (you can view this through the ATG website or YouTube), he said, “I always had plenty of motivation and I still have that motivation today.” Along with motivation was an uncanny musical brilliance and a desire to - as the documentary is titled - “Share the Joy.”

More about the great Galla-Rini momentarily. I want to let everyone know how this enormous musical treasure has become available through the ATG Musical Archives at eMusicForAccordion.com. The Governing Board of ATG (Accordionists and Teachers Guild International) is very fortunate to have two of Galla-Rini’s former star students on the Board: Joan Cochran Sommers and Esther Lanting. Both of these women remained close to Galla-Rini from the time they were in their early teens until his passing at the age of 102 in July 2006. They also stayed in touch with Donald Balestrieri, who owned the rights to the “Galla-Rini Collection” that Balestrieri published for decades through his Ars Nova and Music Graphic Press businesses. Impressed with the ATG’s efforts, Balestrieri instructed his nephew Jon Maniscalco to donate the entire Galla-Rini collection to ATG before Balestrieri passed away in 2023. ATG President Mary Ann Covone secured the rights to all of the intellectual property to Galla-Rini’s collection, allowing Jon Maniscalco to pack and send 14 large boxes filled with music and manuscripts to the current ATG President, Kenn Baert. Kenn’s wife Susan went to work scanning and cataloging over 1,100 pieces -

some had orchestra parts, some were books - I can’t imagine how many separate pages Susan had to scan! Susan and Kenn then worked with Harley Jones to make all of this available internationally at eMusicForAccordion.com. Whew! There you have it!

How exciting that this day has come! In Joan Sommers’ words, “It is a remarkable collection of music for both smaller ensembles, larger orchestras, and many solos,



THE ATG IS PROUD TO PRESENT
ANTHONY GALLA-RINI
ACCORDION ARRANGEMENTS
 FOR SOLO & ENSEMBLE EXCLUSIVELY AT
 ATG MUSICAL ARCHIVES
emusicforaccordion.com

duets, trios and other valuable musical material. The new site allows you to purchase with credit card and download the pdf file to your computer, so there’s immediate delivery and no cost of postage.”

Now, a little more about Anthony Galla-Rini - but not a lot, as so much has been written about this amazing man. The most remarkable and important thing to note:



Anthony Galla-Rini’s entire formal education consisted of six months of public school in the first grade! His father took him out of school to tour with their family vaudeville group, consisting of his father, his two older sisters, and himself. By age seven, “Tony” was performing solos on a chromatic accordion. He switched to the then-new piano accordion and at age 11, was playing such solos as “Sameramide Overture” and “Light Cavalry,” along with numerous popular and light classics with his family, always to tremendous applause! Tony mastered, in rapid succession, the cornet, piccolo, flute, saxophone, trombone, euphonium, clarinet, bassoon, oboe, and French

horn. Thankfully for the accordion world, in 1932, Tony gave up all other instruments and focused totally on the

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piano accordion. In his words (in the documentary "Sharing the Joy"), "My favorite instrument NEEDED all of my attention. I found that I NEEDED the accordion."

Esther Lanting described Tony, her teacher and lifelong friend, as "funny, gentle, and soft-spoken." He had a way of helping and correcting you without making you feel stupid or incompetent." (That's a great gift from a teacher!). Esther was the last accordionist to visit with Tony. She brought a six-inch stack of his arrangements with her to the nursing home and he chose "Malagueña," "Come Back to Sorrento," "The Lord's Prayer," and one of his signature arrangements "Rhapsody in Blue." With his very weak hand, he conducted Esther as she played each piece. Anthony "Tony" Galla-Rini passed away nine days later on July 30, 2006.

Joan Cochran Sommers started studying with Tony when she was 14, and her beloved teacher also became her lifelong friend. Joan recalls: "He was so good to me. He watched me grow up!" Tony and his first wife Dina would visit with Joan and her first husband Cecil Cochran. They were all close friends. "When I was a young bride and was making breakfast for all of us, Tony taught me the proper way to cook bacon!" Joan Sommers has so many wonderful memories of their friendship and also of performing and conducting his terrific arrangements through the decades. She speaks about his work (and remember - Anthony Galla-Rini was completely self-taught!). "I don't ever find mistakes in his works - not even a wrong octave!" At the end of this article, you will find information on several excellent articles on Galla-Rini written by Joan Sommers.

There's so much more to say, but I will end this with a list of "firsts" by Anthony Galla-Rini as listed in "History of the Accordionists and Teachers Guild, International, Part Two 1990-2003" compiled by Stanley Darrow. *Note: This list was compiled many decades ago, so some of the information might not reflect current research, data and findings.*

Before I write this list, two more very important firsts need to be mentioned: Galla-Rini was one of the founders of the American Accordionists' Association in 1938, and in 1939 he founded the Accordion Teachers Guild, now the Accordionists and Teachers Guild International. *(Note: Updates added by Esther Lanting.)*

1. First to eliminate the perfect 5th interval from the dominant 7th chord button in the Stradella system by opening up the bass board of his instrument and filing off the pin causing that interval to respond. This occurred in 1924.
2. First to adopt the practice of playing two chord buttons simultaneously in the left hand and, consequently, explained in his Accordion Method Book, published in 1931.
3. First to write an article with a chart revealing the actual pitch of the five sets of reeds in the bass and chord buttons of the Stradella system. This article was included in the Accordion Magazine published in New York City, 1936.



GALLA - RINI

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4. First to write the chord inversions in FULL-CHORD NOTATION as actually sounding in the Stradella system chord buttons. This was adopted in his Accordion Concerto in G minor and published by Carl Fischer in 1941. Galla-Rini was also the first to perform an accordion concerto as soloist with two major symphony orchestras, namely Detroit (twice) and Denver. *Note: The 1941 World Premiere was performed with the Oklahoma City University Symphony conducted by James Neilson with Anthony Galla-Rini as soloist.*
5. First to give formal solo concerts in halls such as: Philharmonic Auditorium, Los Angeles, 1945 and 1946; Shrine Auditorium, Detroit, 1947; Civic Opera House, Chicago, 1947; Temple Shalom, Chicago, 1949; Town Hall, New York City, 1949.
6. First American accordionist to be presented in concerts in Europe (e.g. England, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, and Italy), 1950. Adrian Dante, Impresario from London, organized the tour.
7. First to conceive converting the chord buttons in the Stradella system into single tones in order to achieve a free-bass convertor system (known today in many parts of the world as the quint free bass, initially for Titano), 1953. *Note: The quint free bass system's long term development and subsequent method book teachings, has been attributed to the work of Dr. Willard A. Palmer in conjunction with the Titano accordion manufacturing company.*



8. First to recommend the circle and dots as the logical register symbols for both keyboards. Presented at a joint meeting of the ATG and AAA committees and accepted as the standard in Chicago, 1955.

9. First to present an annual accordion camp, consisting of workshops and a concert, starting in Silver Falls, Oregon, 1990. It has already been presented 10 times (and many more years after 2003).

10. To date, it has been practically confirmed that, of all accordion concerti composed by anyone, his have been given the greatest number of performances with various soloists and orchestras - 44 times: in Canada, England, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Spain, and the USA. *Note: since this information was compiled, numerous additional performances have been presented in the USA, New Zealand, Germany, and other countries. For example, more recent performances in the US include those featuring soloist Stas Venglevski with Dr. William Morse conducting the Jefferson Symphony Orchestra in 2021 and the Racine Symphony Orchestra in 2022.*

11. First accordionist to teach and conduct accordion at Interlochen Center for the Arts, in Interlochen, MI, a world-renowned summer camp and educational institution for students in grades 3-12.

For more info on Anthony Galla-Rini: Article in March, 2025 AccordionUSA.News: "Historic Accordion Catalog of Galla-Rini Music Released Online" (article on Galla-Rini by Joan Sommers); The documentary "Sharing the Joy" Anthony Galla-Rini, YouTube; Book "Anthony Galla-Rini" by Ove Hahn; Article "Anthony Galla-Rini: Legacies, Répétiteurs and Accordion Symphonies" in March 2012 AccordionUSA.News; ATG Festival Journal 2015 (article on Galla-Rini by Joan Sommers); ATG Festival Journal 2016

UMKC Community Accordion Ensemble

The University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Community Accordion Ensemble directed by Joan Cochran Sommers has recently been involved in a project to record the works of Stas Venglevski.

Stas has written numerous works for the UMKC Community Accordion Ensemble ranging from full multi-movement concert repertoire to lighter show pieces. This began early in 2026 in Kansas City and will be completed over the coming months.

This past summer, they performed two concerts in Kansas City as part of the leadup to their appearance at the ATG Festival in Lisle, IL (Chicago) in July. They are now preparing to be featured in concert in Kansas City on June 27 and 28 prior to their guest appearance in Salt Lake City as part of the Accordionists and Teachers Guild, International annual festival, which will be July 8-12.

Most of the players of The UMKC Community Accordion Ensemble are alumni of the University of Missouri-Kansas City and former members of the renowned UMKC Accordion Orchestra. The players make their living in various careers, but each has remained devoted to promoting the accordion and its varied repertoire, including transcriptions, commissions, and other original works.

Over the last years, they have performed in San Francisco, Kansas City, the 80th Anniversary of the American Accordionists' Association (AAA) in Alexandria, VA, Superior, WI at A World of Accordions Museum, and at recent ATG festivals such as the 2024 event in Kansas City celebrating the 90th Birthday of ensemble director Joan Cochran Sommers. In addition,

they have participated in the USA contributions to World Accordion Day events, when videos of their performances were broadcast during the live presentations.

Director Joan C. Sommers has held numerous positions in several music organizations, including the Accordionists and Teachers Guild International (ATG) and the Confédération Internationale des Accordéonistes (CIA – IMA-UNESCO) where she was awarded lifetime Honorary Membership upon her retirement from office. Joan C. Sommers was awarded the title of Professor Emerita upon her retirement from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music (USA), where she established and taught the accordion degree program for 40 years. She has arranged innumerable works for both accordion orchestra and chamber ensemble over many years, works that have been performed around the globe.

Today, she enjoys performing with fellow accordionists in duo, with other instrumentalists, with the UMKC Community Accordion Ensemble, and as guest conductor with various orchestras around the world, including founding and leading the magnificent World Accordion Orchestra in many countries around the world, including the USA, Scotland, New Zealand, Croatia, Canada, Austria, and Lithuania and twice in both China and Italy.

The University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC) Community Accordion Ensemble players under the musical direction of Joan C. Sommers pictured are Madalynn Neu, Ron Barrow, Kevin Friedrich, Ron Dake, Mary Ann Covone, Samantha Wagner, Jane Christison, and Sherry Carroll.

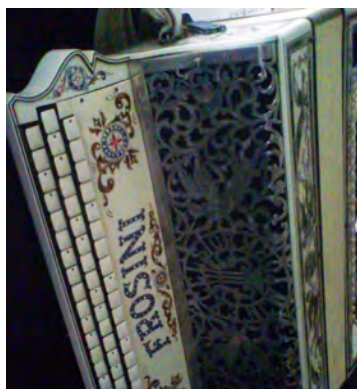


Variations on a Theme by C. Demian – Variation 1

With the 200th anniversary of the accordion just around the corner, we will take a fun look back at some of the variations found during the development of the accordion. This will be part of an ongoing series in AAA Newsletters.

Variation 1: The Frosini Keyboard

One of the first variations on the accordion theme is fondly called the Frosini Keyboard accordion. Maestro Pietro Frosini arrived in the USA from Italy in the early 1900s, playing his button keyboard accordion.



Recruited by the Orpheum Vaudeville Circuit as Frosini launched into the entertainment world, he saw audiences were more familiar with the piano accordion. Around 1915, to capitalize on this popularity, Frosini was helpful in creating a keyboard that from a distance, while on the concert stage, looked like a piano accordion. However, on closer look, one could see that it was in fact his button accordion. What “appears” to be the piano keyboard is in fact either additional rows of buttons, duplicate rows, or sometimes just decoration keys. It showed how far people would go to win over an audience.

Here, we can see pictures including a button accordion without the piano accordion illusion, Frosini with his “Frosini Keyboard” accordion, and two additional examples of the Frosini Keyboard accordion.

On a quick glance, one might think it was a piano accordion. When we look closer, we see that in fact there are also the main elements of a 3-row button keyboard with additional rows disguised as piano keys.

There is also an example of a 5-row button instrument. To further trick the audience into thinking it was a piano accordion, on the row of buttons, activated by what looks like the black keys from a piano keyboard, to keep the appearance of the back keys being in groups of 3 then 2 like on a piano keyboard, some of the disguised button keys were made white, so that they were not visible from a distance.



This keyboard variation was popular for a number of years, but as the vaudeville show popularity faded and transitioned to the era of motion pictures, manufacturing of these models also faded out. Luckily, there are still some fine examples of the Frosini style keyboard to showcase this important part of our accordion evolution.

