

A World of Accordions Museum

June, 2005

Newsletter for Members

Editor, Helmi Strahl Harrington, Ph.D.

My Note to Members

Another “first” for us—the Museum has won its **own** award. This is our first non-industry recognition! It is also the first of its kind for Superior, WI.

Last Fall a contingent of travel writers toured Superior and Duluth, and of course stopped in at AWAM. I had no idea that they present awards, but Jan O’Brien of the Superior Visitors and Convention Bureau did! When she came by one Tuesday morning, she said she had been on pins and needles for a couple of months knowing that AWAM might be chosen as a recipient for this year’s “GEMmy” awards. Here’s a segment of her Press Release...

MORE THAN A MUSEUM A World of Accordions museum and its founder, Helmi Harrington, have earned a GEMmy Award from the Midwest Travel Writers Association, the nation’s oldest association of professional travel writers. Virginia Hirsch of Heritage Tours of Bayfield also has been awarded a GEMmy for her nightly “Ghost Walk” tours of the city. The GEMmys were presented at the June 22 “Ballyhoo Night” at Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua, Bayfield.

The honor is given to travel destinations that are judged to be gems. Sites or services are selected because of their uniqueness and the potential to experience another culture or tradition. They also demonstrate the benefits that travelers can gain when they get off of the beaten path.

A World of Accordions, which opened in 2004, has about 1,700 accordions and chronicles the world history of the instrument. Music scholars from as far away as Austria have come to use the museum’s archives. Some of the world’s finest accordionists have performed in the Harrington Art Center’s 1,000-seat concert hall. The building also houses the nation’s only technical college program for accordion and concertina repair.

Helmi Harrington’s mother made a living by playing, repairing and teaching others how to play the accordion. Mother and daughter moved to the U.S. from Germany, shortly after World War II. Helmi, who has a doctorate in musicology, describes the accordion as both a humble and exceedingly complex instrument.

“This is not simply a project or hobby for her, and the music world benefits because of it,” the MTWA’s Bergin said of Helmi, in support of the GEMmy nomination. “She is a living encyclopedia on the instrument,” added travel writer Nancy Baren Miller of Akron, Ohio.

The award was presented at Big Top Chautauqua, June 22. I was allowed to perform on stage and the entire show was broadcast on radio. Warren Nelson made the introduction by recalling anecdotes from my performance with Mason Williams a few years ago. I felt highly honored and thank everyone involved for providing a memorable event.

We profoundly thank the Midwest Travel Writers Association and Jan O’Brien, Superior-Douglas County Chamber of Commerce.

Noteworthy Acquisitions

As I was packing up our display at the 2004 Competition and Festival of American Accordionists’ Association, Frank Gaviani, Jr., approached to talk about accordion matters. Mr. Gaviani is the son of Frank Gaviani, Sr., whose compositions, arrangements, and performances are legendary. With support from our steadfast friend Faithe Deffner, Mr. Gaviani, Jr., was open to the idea of donating *some* music and artifacts from his father’s estate. Well, as it turns out, a nearly-complete opus has been sent and is being classified and filed in our Accordion Resource Libraries. If any of our members have photos, stories, or recordings of Gaviani, Sr., I would appreciate your sharing them with me for the Gaviani reference book I’m planning to publish.

In mid-June AWAM member Jeff Huiras (Roseville, MN) stopped by the Museum with donations that included a 1920s Hohner button diatonic accordion and a Sholer Anglo concertina, a large photo of a young lady holding a 1930s Brindisi piano accordion, and several music books. These welcome additions were followed with a foot-high stack of music (originals, manuscripts, and copies), cassette tapes and 45 rpm recordings, two toy accordions, and LP recordings of Lars Ek and Orville Lindholm. These came about because Jeff mentioned

an informal gathering with Ek, Orville, Wally Rudd that took place many years ago. I jumped at the name Lars Ek because one of the modern (1999) instruments I used to discuss a trend toward nostalgia is a Borsini “Lar Ek—Nostalgic” model. Since the library had no information on Ek, no recordings, and no photo, I was particularly anxious to learn something about him. And so I drove to the Huiras home to pick up dubbed recordings and beg simple photocopies of record-fronts, when I was happily surprised with the originals. Additionally, Jeff played segments of several recordings while he told me about the lifelong accordion activities of Orville Lindholm and explained other photos included in the donations.

It is through donations like these that familiar and unfamiliar names take a measure of immortality in the resources of the Museum. *Thank you Jeff for your foresight, and for caring about preservation of history.*

Scholar visits AWAM for Research

Dr. Marion Jacobson (Albany, NY) visited the Museum June 5-7 in order to do research for her projected publication on the 1950s accordion boom. Dr. Jacobson, ethnomusicologist, teaches an Humanities course at Albany College of Pharmacy. We wish her well, and judging from her intelligent enthusiasm, believe her work will be landmark. Marion is a scholar of amazing breadth; I'm not sure which of us learned more from the other.

I requested information and suggestions on the development of displays on Klesmer and Jewish music. Marion immediately expanded the topic to include Mediterranean Gypsy, Moorish Spain, and Eastern European influences. She mentioned resources, books, and other scholars. I also want to call on the expertise of our membership—can YOU help with artifacts, personal histories, or display development?

Previously, in 2002 Henry Doktorski spent time in research at AWAM, and in 2004 Dr. Herbert Scheibenreif (Austria) was our first international scholar-visitor.

Recent Activities

“All the things people say need to be done to further and promote the accordion, you have done.”

Cressida Herold (Chicago, May 16, 2005)

Events that leave me feeling as if I'd received some magnificent award: audiences at the Chicago Accordion Club and Milwaukee Accordion Club rose to their feet in ovations following the Traveling Museum presentations of mid-May. These two groups provide particular distinction—here are aficionados who have already heard the best artists of our time, who have achieved status and recognition as performers—a select audience indeed. The comments I received were incredibly flattering and all-encompassing—like those from Mort Herold and his wife Cressida (see our previous Newsletter), who dropped their plans in order to drive to the Chicago meeting. Thanks also to the many attendees who voiced their enthusiasms or mentioned additional information. A few even gave us contributions for AWAM.

The questions that followed evidenced that all had paid careful attention and had understood the content: 1) the interrelated evolution of all the instruments of the accordion family, 2) the earth-sweeping popularity of accordion-family-instruments, 3) the symbiotic relationship of cultures of the world on development of accordions. Knowledge of history engenders pride in world-affirmation and its impact on arts and culture, and proves relevance to Everyman. The passion for music of different types has produced the most complex assortment of varieties in any musical instrument organology. This is what we need to remember—well beyond personal preferences of chromatic or diatonic types, beyond systems of pitch ordering that causes arguments about better or lesser performance, beyond brand-names and features.

Carolyn Carver, our wonderful violinist-contributor to the musical representations that make my show effective, and Audrey Meitzner accompanied me on the trip. Thanks to Audrey, we could offer for sale a few items from the gift shop—we sold out!

Rob Steinhofner, president-elect of MAC, worked hard to make the arrangements. (Rob was a participant in ARTS' month-long introduction to accordion repair in 2000, and has remained both a friend and a promoter of AWAM and ARTS.) Congratulations to Rob who is performer, repairer, instructor and leader in the accordion community.

We are grateful to Rob and his lovely wife Denise, Stas Venglevski, Shirl Barry, Rex Clayton and his lovely wife Lois, the board members of Milwaukee Accordion Club and Chicago Accordion Club who made us

feel so very welcome and hosted us with grace and generosity. Thanks also to Peter Giacalone and Barbara Schlechter for memorable late-night hours of conversation.

Joe Petosa, Sr., Memorial Fund

Our sincere condolences have been sent to the Petosa Family and the Petosa Accordion Company following the death of founder Joe Petosa, Sr. He contributed to the building of a business that has influenced America, and his promotion of artist-accordionists has been legendary. AWAM is honored to found the "Joe Petosa, Sr., Memorial Fund," the first contributions having been made by the Florida Accordion Association, headed by Karen Adam.

See Moscow in December

Stas Venglevski notified me that an invitation to attend the Moscow Competition and Festival will be forthcoming. The combination of events is held only every five years, and will include a visit to the Alfred Mirek Museum. I have long ago developed deep respect for this scholar and have modeled much of my work on his. If we act quickly, we can hire a company to provide a tour-guide, hotels with meals, interpreter, and other benefits. Depending on the number in our party, the cost for airfare and a 10-day stay would be \$2,000-\$3,000. More details are forthcoming, but let me know right away of your interest.

Special Thanks

Daryl Missall (Antioch, CA) graduated from Red Wing Technical College's program as a Certified Technician in the class of 1992, has developed a successful repair business, and is active in California accordion circles. When unusual instruments come to his hands he often suggests they be donated to AWAM, which has resulted in the following acquisitions of special importance:

1. Soprani Common Accordion; 3-row treble and 2-row bass; ca. 1890 (Donated by Joe Mazzola)
2. G. Galeazzi & Sons, San Francisco, Calif.; 1925 piano accordion (Donated by Otto Saltenberger)
3. G. Galleazzi & Sons, San Francisco Calif.; Chromatic button accordion with Wheatstone basses; ca. 1920s
4. Bonvincini Chromatic button keyboard on floor stand; ca. 1950s (Donated by Sophie Giezendanner)
5. Egidio Galvan Borgo Swiss Oergli; ca. 1880s (Donated by Tony Raymann)
6. Tanzbaer automated player concertina; 1930s (Partial donation by Earl Campini)
7. Guerrini piano accordion, 144 bass (18 x 8) with adjacent minor-counterbass and augmented-chord row; ca. 1930s (Donated by Mary Messenger)

WE appreciate you Daryl! Keep up the good work!

New Friends

ARTS offered an apprenticeship program for four special students this summer. They are learning many practical chores through hands-on sequences of instruments. The practicum is accelerated and if they are not dismayed by complexities beyond the scope of this program, may result in future students for the ARTS curriculum leading to certification as accordion-family instrument technicians.

All are helping to reorganize the library files room and to install an accordion sales room next to the gift shop. Their strong muscles and organizational skills are making quick work of the projects.

Next we will begin on the anechoic chamber I envision on the top floor. I expect landmark research to result from the completed chamber. Do you have expertise to share?

Wisconsin Public Radio Interview Aired

Jennifer Simonson recorded an interview at the museum that was aired on Friday, May 6 at 4:30, "Around the Town" (simulcast on 91.3 and 89.9), a half-hour show on AWAM and HARTS. Mike Simonson

(her husband) will try to market it to national. Wouldn't that be just splendid!

News Flash

Just as I prepare to finish this newsletter I hear that my daughter Hanni Van Zandt and her students including my son Charlie won First Place trophies for their competitive entries at the Accordionists' and Teachers' Guild Festival in Dallas! Congratulations, Dear Ones!

Harrington Arts Center Publications

Charles Magnante: America's Great Accordionist, Third Edition. CD of 21 pieces included. \$40.00.

Helmi's Handouts (2004). ca. 150 p. with indexed divisions. \$25.00.

Selected Favorites for Free-Bass Accordion: Quint- Converter Edition (2004). 17 pieces, 33 p. plus Appendices. \$15.00.

Christmas Carol Favorites for Quint Converter (2004). 19 pieces, 33 p. \$15.00.

A Look Inside the Accordion (2005) ca. 23 p. \$12.00

Button Diatonic Accordion Method for "Bohemian System" (2005). Book One, ca. 50 p. \$15.00

Away from home Appearances

June 24-26 Ironworld Polkafest, Chisholm, MN, three days of workshops, performances and AWAM Traveling Museum . Be sure to see the complete schedule on our website.

July 6-10 American Accordionists' Association International Competition and Festival, Dearborn, MI. AWAM Traveling Museum and workshops.

Upcoming Events

August 20-21 **First Annual Mid-West Regional Free-Reed Festival (All-Accordions and All-Concertinas)**

Here at HARTS ! Plan to come, play, attend workshops, participate and meet new friends in all the instrument-family styles and disciplines. Dee Langley and I are working together to coordinate participation by the Minnesota Accordion Club, New Prague Concertina Club, Glencoe Button Box Club, and studio students, among others. Help us make the event successful and informative for our region !

Read the enclosed schedule of events and you'll see that this is a **not-to-be-missed weekend event!** In other conventions, people pay hundreds of dollars to attend, to learn from experts, to enjoy concerts and to participate in jam sessions and informal music-making. We are asking for only \$10.00 per person per day—just think of it—all day accordion activities and national artists for only \$10.00. This is a real bargain!

Watch www.accordionworld.org for new announcements !