

A World of Accordions Museum

November, 2006

Newsletter for Members

Editor, Helmi Strahl Harrington, Ph.D.

*We wish you a memorable holiday season
and all good fortune in the New Year.*

My Note to Members

An unusually active few months have passed for us at the Museum. I hope you will be as amazed as I am at the significant events.

In advance of three momentous rapid-fire events, we produced our first-ever TV commercial, aired 10 times on Duluth Channel 21 (NBC). The 30-second spot showed three accordionists: 6-yr-old Brett Borg, teenagers Clare Hanson and Derek Smith, Audrey and Emil Meitzner. Between each set were screens advertising Friedrich Lips Concert, Forro For All Concert, and German Accordion and Harmonica Traveling Museum Displays. I was very happy with the product, though I can't say we had much increase in attendance as a result. Chris Lynch (business name "Crinch"), one of my students, produced the spot. It was video-taped by Andrew Meitzner who has recorded most of our recent events.

Friedrich Lips (Moscow) and **Stas Venglevski (Milwaukee)**, as just mentioned, were presented in Concert on September 24. Lips is just phenomenal and Stas deserves to share the stage! Many people commented on their delight at his audience-friendly pieces and showmanship. I know both men to be fine gentlemen and great artists. I am proud of their friendship and their repeated appearances at HARTS.

The German Harmonica and Accordion Museum (Trossingen, Germany) produced a Travelling Museum that has exhibited in China, throughout Europe, and the USA. Among their American sojourns were Chicago, Washington State, Superior, and Fort Meyers. Accompanying the exhibit was Holger Daub, a professional "harper" with skills unlike anything I've ever seen or heard.

We hosted the exhibit for two weeks and consider it one of our most important events--ever! Despite a harrowing move-in and move-out (in which several of our reliable friends helped out: Len Meitzner, Rob Dingmann, David Ford, John Susnik, David Hagemann), the displays were of enormous significance to all free-reed aficionados.

A few weeks later we were honored to receive a visit by **Dr. Martin Haeffner**, Curator and Director for the German Museum. The Travelling Exhibits were his brainchild—excellently and intelligently prepared. We spent many hours talking accordion history, antique through modern constructions, and planning conjoined projects and events. I very much look forward to our future exchanges.

"Forro for All" (Brazil) was brought to us by Jose Curbelo, the third in a series of South American ensembles to perform at HARTS. As with previous groups, the audience was enthralled. The performers were enthralled with the Museum instruments which they played for the days of their stay with us.

Concurrent with both the German Travelling Museum and "Forro," was an invitation by the **Ordway Theater** to present our Travelling Museum at their "World Music" fest. This was my first introduction to their annual event, this year featuring "Forro" in concert, and in the foyer, acrobats with music, crafts and foods. Of course, I think we were the most appropriate element—we showed about 40 instruments from all over the

globe while I played and explained them. Audrey Meitzner was infinitely valuable in overseeing things while hundreds of people pressed in on our tables. Many thanks to Jose for establishing the contacts that made this presentation possible. I hope it will find its way onto our annual calendar!

Early in October, the producer of **Michael Feldman's** radio program "**Whadda Ya Know**" called to chat about my being on the program. It was confirmed a couple of days later, so on Oct. 7, Carolyn Carver and I appeared at the DECC to perform. Unfortunately, I was not given much chance to talk about the Museum—or anything else—but at least some good accordion music was presented.

Speaking of Carolyn, we are in the process of creating a new CD. And I'm also producing one that features the Museum instruments. So, be sure to look for new offerings in the Gift Shop.

Sometimes things occur in waves. **Mike Simonson** of radio fame called to ask if I would play for a WWII Armistice documentary to be aired on WPR and KUWS, Dec. 15. He mentioned that he also needed a guitarist and singer and requested I bring them along. I asked Sue Spencer and Jim Ofsthun (of "Willowgreen" and "McInnes Kitchen" fame). Couldn't have chosen better! The premise for our part in the documentary was taken from a head-line photo in the Superior newspaper that showed an accordionist and guitarist leading the celebration parade through the city. We were to be part of the sound effects, and also to speak a few lines as characters. Now that was a really fun, first-time-ever outing.

We are always particularly pleased when an opportunity to cooperate with local music establishments presents. Such was the case when the DSSO used HARTS for auditions. Actually, that weekend was exciting enough, but got a bit more harrowing when I fell down our outside stairs and opened a 16-stitch gash over my eye. Well, a little more "character" ornaments my face now.

Noteworthy Acquisitions

Jim Eisenschenk from Cold Springs, MN, has brought us donated and partially-donated accordions for several years. November found him bringing us a new batch which included the two shown below:



Art Puffer "Novelty Orchestra," tortoise shell



Haegstrom Alvadalen

Previously owned by Art Puffer and played in his "Novelty Orchestra" (which we have pictured), the "tortie" is the first of this celluloid pattern that we have, and the Haegstrom is the oldest of this Swedish maker. Both are beautiful additions. We thank Jim for his efforts on behalf of the Museum—the highest and best usage for museum-quality instruments.

Some years ago I sold a Hohner Diatonic "Cajun" button diatonic accordion, only to find out later that the model had been discontinued and I could no longer acquire one for the Museum. The owner died recently and his family resold his cherished accordion to the Museum. We are grateful to **Mrs. Choumard** and daughter, who facilitated the transaction, and we express condolences for their loss.

During our “Midwest Regional Free Reed Festival” we were honored by **Yvonne Marts’** presentation of her original compositions for accordion. Yvonne is a certified repair person fondly called “The Accordion Lady of Fergus Falls.” She was impressed by the performances of John Bispala (Minneapolis) and Paul Vargason (Superior) and invited them, along with Carolyn and me duetting, to perform in a Fergus Falls Concert she organized for us. It was a splendid event which many folks hope will become another annual scheduling for us and the music lovers of her area.

Coming Activities

We are currently moving displays of the Museum’s main floor to prepare for expansion into an undeveloped area that will house the instruments with electronic sound production components. **Sue Spencer** and her crew of relatives and friends have promised to provide the expert manpower to make this new room possible. It will be an important addition to our regular tours, and will allow the sounding of instruments that lead up to MIDI popularity.

Special Thanks

Len Meitzner has begun the installation of a new alarm system, and has completed the electrical rewiring of the main workshop to meet fire-code regulations.

Harrington Arts Center Publications

Charles Magnante: America’s Great Accordionist, Third Edition. Second Printing. CD of 21 Magnante performances included. \$45.00.

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.

Bohemian Button Diatonic Method. Books One through Five. Supplemental Books One, Two, Three. \$12.00 each.

Chemnitz Concertina Books: Five Easy Pieces. Books One, Two, Three, Four. Five Medium Pieces. Books One, Two. Five Medium-Difficult Pieces. Books One, Two. \$6.95 or \$7.95 each.

Club System (Regular Keyboard) Button Diatonic Method. Book One. \$12.00.

Club System (Expanded Keyboard) Button Diatonic Method. Book One. \$12.00.

Hymns and Sacred Music. (for Piano- or Chromatic Accordions). Coming soon.

The Texas Book (for Piano- or Chromatic Accordions). Coming soon.

Away from home Appearances

AWAM Travelling Museum. October, 2007. Green Bay, WI, Accordion Club.

Upcoming Events

Henry Doktorski Concert. Sunday, April 15, 2007. 2:00 PM

Watch www.accordionworld.org for new announcements !