

# A World of Accordions Museum

January, 2005

Newsletter for Members

Editor, Helmi Strahl Harrington, Ph.D.

## *My Note to Members*

I hope your holidays were happy and memorable, and that the New Year will provide enhanced successes in all aspects of life. We at the Museum encourage you to visit often, attend the concert series, and enjoy your musical interests in every way. Please help me keep our “family” of friends informed by letting me know YOUR news.

I’m considering putting our Newsletters on the website ([www.accordionworld.org](http://www.accordionworld.org)), sending them to you by email, and/or continuing with regular mail services. Please let me know your preference(s).

## *Ongoing Restoration*



Roger Schmitz (Hutchinson, MN) began restoration of an unusually large English Concertina presumed to be a Wheatstone. It was in devastated condition when acquired—treble plate broken and segments lost, bellows frames warped, some reeds lost, and more problems that came to light during restoration. Roger purchased, cured, and stained a piece of instrument-quality rosewood, which he then carefully scroll-cut to match the pattern from the bass plate and partial treble. Button holes were then leather-lined and the exacting alignment process begun. This is all very delicate and precise work for which Roger is eminently suited. When finished, I plan to use the instrument in regular shows and performances for the Museum. The instrument was purchased from Greg LaSchum (see following section).

You will recall that Roger and Joy Schmitz, both engineers, designed and built our enlarged concert stage. They also bought quarter-cut oak, beveled and stained the pieces to fit the existing surroundings. Everyone who sees the stage is amazed at its beauty and perfection.

Joy and Roger also donated a bedroom set for our Guest Artist rooms. The double bed, bedding ensemble, and chest of drawers with mirror will make the stay of our guests much more comfortable and attractive.

Cecelia Marie joined the Schmitz family in June, 2004, red-haired and charming like her mom. Congratulations !

## *Noteworthy Acquisitions*



Busson (France) ca. 1830s

Greg LaSchum, occasional volunteer, sold the majority of his accordion and concertina collection in September, 2003. Most of the pieces have been added to the Museum, the remainders were placed in line for ARTS course-work. I intend to feature other instruments from this purchase in future issues.

Greg previously donated a beautiful Demian-type Busson, specially displayed in the cabinet with Busson piano accordions. He also provided volunteers at the Museum with a tour of the Lefevre organ building facility in Duluth. Many thanks on all accounts, Greg.

History Note: Busson’s stamp is found on the face of this “Flutina” instrument, extraordinarily ornamented in its scalloped wood body, intricately and heavily painted, shaped bellows, square-ended abalone key-lever covers, inlaid metal forms. Though beautiful and rare, the accordion is unplayable; many stages of restoration are needed, which will likely take several years on the worktable.

The Parisian Busson is best known for, and generally credited with, 1855 invention of the Piano Accordion, though that is disputed in German sources. It is clear that Busson studied the Demian-type “Flutina” in making many models of diatonic accordion. Using this same body style, it was but a small step to modify contemporary table organs (including harmonium) to suit vertical placement on the player’s lap.



Giulietti (Italy) ca. 1960-70s

#### About the Donor:

**Mort Herold** is a renowned virtuoso performer. He has played in prestigious concerts—be sure to read more about him in the materials displayed next to the accordion. He is also a famed “memory” specialist, having appeared on national TV shows amazing audiences with his incredible skills. He has authored books which assure us that we too can learn this special resource. Two of these are also displayed with their author’s signatures and flattering comments: [You Can Have A Near-Perfect Memory](#) (ISBN 0-8092-5943-5) and [You’ll Never Forget A Name Again](#) (ISBN 0-8092-4026-2)

**About the Acquisition:** I first met Mort Herold ca. 1984 at Accordion Teachers’ Guild national competition in Kansas City. In a gesture of impressive generosity he presented each workshop attendee with a recording of his favorite pieces performed on a Giulietti piano accordion with chromatic converter. This recording is regularly used in my accordion history and literature courses. It remains available in the Accordion Resources Library.

In the summer of 2003, at the American Accordionists’ Association Festival in Philadelphia, I enjoyed supper with Mort and his concert pianist/theorist wife Cressida. Both are animated and intriguing conversationalists. During supper, Mort described this accordion with parallel pitch-organization systems and told about HIS design ideas as worked out with the Giulietti Company. With a little help, he came to the decision that AWAM would be the best placement for this unique instrument. It is an important addition for which our many visitors will be ever grateful.

**About the Instrument:** Body size is ca. 15”, black and white celluloid. The treble keyboard encompasses three octaves, two reed-banks controlled by three shifts. The bass section is the truly remarkable part: a piano-type organization is executed in buttons (with a decal indicating keys), free-bass only, similar to Frosini’s instrument. It is the only modern example of this bass design known to me. Its mint condition and efficiency in playing enhance its importance.

**Display and Use:** I intend to use it in performances for the Museum and traveling displays. It is prominently placed in the central “Performance Instruments” display.

*Thank You for your commitment to Accordion History*

#### *Recent Activities Review*

April 24-25 saw our official Grand ReOpening of the Museum. Attending the celebratory events were political dignitaries (Mayors Herb Bergson and David Ross presented recognition plaques) and community leaders. We were particularly honored by the presence and concert performance of Dr. Carmelo Pino, President of AAA. Please look on the website for programs listing artists who donated their concerts and workshops. It was a splendid event, which began our regular hours of operation, open to the public.

June, 2004, saw us represented at Ironworld Discovery Center USA’s, Polkafest, Chisholm, MN. This was our 10<sup>th</sup> annual presentation of Museum instruments, seminars and workshops on accordion topics, student-artist performances, and Accordion Concertina Music Ensemble concerts. Joey Miskulin and other celebrity headliners stopped in to visit and play some more for our audiences. Due to the newly-discovered sink-hole affecting closure of the Interpretive Center building, we were relocated in the Administrative/Forestry building. Be sure to look for us June 24-26, 2005 !

July found us showing the Traveling Museum at the American Accordionists’ Association Festival in Boston. We enjoyed big audiences for the accordion-family-instruments workshops I presented, and the daily display was visited by

virtually everyone in attendance during the five-day event. En route I visited with Mary Tokarski, who donated many historic documents, and a number of instruments for AWAM and ARTS. I also met Frank Gaviani, Jr., who has promised original music from his famed father.

The Museum also displayed at Accordionists' and Teachers' Guild festival in Milwaukee. Again, it was a successful four-day show that attracted attendees as well as visitors from the area. Benjamin Lang represented ACM well and won his competitive categories. A new category was offered allowing him tough critiques for his full program of pieces.

We wish to thank the American Accordionists' Association and its key members for their contributions making possible Museum representation for both organizations.

In August, I traveled to Fredricksberg, Texas, to help my daughter Hanni with her first accordion history show in which she demonstrated performance on all major members of the instrument family. She was invited to "The Battle of Accordions" with participants of the caliber of Robert Atwood! The event was a benefit for Fredericksberg Historical Society.

I am understandably proud of Hanni's evolving skills. Be sure to notice her publicity photos, some taken in the Museum, outside my studio area. On a further personal note, I want to recognize my son Charlie for his continuing attendance and help in my travels to major events. He also performs with Hanni in her accordion group.

In September, two fine Wisconsin newspaper articles about the Museum were published, one by Dennis McCann ("Museum squeezes in history, humor") the other by Mary Bergin ("Superior museum celebrates the accordion").

During the November annual Northeast Accordion Association Festival in Minneapolis, I was honored with a "Lifetime Achievement Award." Considering the prestigious names among those previously recognized, I am greatly flattered. A lovely article about my work, written by Tammy Shockley, will appear in their next Newsletter. I brought about 14 instruments from the Traveling Museum, and discussed their attributes in performances demonstrating accordion history. Dee Langley hosted and planned the two-day festival, which was as successful as those of previous years. Concerts by Dee and Greg were highlights for me, as was the concert by Mira Orch Bez during which Eastern European dance steps were taught to the long line of participants that included me! It was great fun. Be sure to attend their concerts scheduled at HARTS. If fun and great music are motivators, these should be full-capacity events!

Students of Accordion Concertina Music were presented in a December Christmas concert. There were enough students to present three recitals that lasted from early afternoon to evening. Andy Meitzner (Wausau, WI) video taped it all!

### *Special Thanks*

During Former-Senator Florian Chmielewski's first visit to our new location (the Christmas Recital included granddaughter Alexis Devitt) he enthusiastically offered to perform a benefit fundraiser for the Museum. His goal is to raise \$10,000 ! What an event it will be: two Chmielewski Family Concerts, and tours through the Museum every half-hour for only \$10.00 per person. An optional lunch will be available for \$6.00 extra. Be sure to mark your calendars.

Responding to my request, Dave Hagemann (Duluth) volunteered to take "a couple of rolls" of film photographing Museum instruments. As you can imagine, the project expanded to 500+ pictures. He donated not only his time but also the resulting slides and digital-format CDs. I've used the slides in several shows, and I intend to use the digitals in the Guide to the Museum book currently in progress. Photographically documenting instruments of the Museum has been a long-standing necessity. Putting together the publication format is the next issue, for which student Benjamin Lang (Holman, WI) has volunteered and already committed time. This project will be a major contribution to all accordionists.

Gary Harvell (Duluth) has begun the development of our website and serves as webmaster. In addition, Gary continues to help in the workshop and with most other concerns.

Audrey Meitzner (Solon Springs) devotes Mon-Tues-Wed to daily activities of running Harrington ARTS Center, and serves as docent for Museum tours. She is an indispensable, valued friend. Similarly, Emil Meitzner, who constructed about 50 of the Museum's display racks, continues to help with various concerns. This winter he has begun the seemingly endless task of constructing secondary insulation frames for the windows, in hopes of eventually reducing our heating bills.

David Ford (Superior) and Ken Uvila (part-time caretaker) continue to help with snow shoveling; Ron Askegaard is ever willing to lend strong muscles to moving tasks, and wife June Askegaard crochets doilies to enhance our displays. Roberta Leu (Cloquet) has joined Barbara Vargason (Superior) in volunteering hours filing music in the Library. Tough job !

## *New Friends*

Welcome to Michelle Gribbon (Duluth) and her music students featured in recital in our Concert Hall. She also offered an outstanding concert with her ensemble of artist-friends. I hope for a long and cooperative relationship with this delightfully personable, high-caliber musical leader in our area.

During their Sister-City visit to the University of Minnesota/Duluth, bayanist Professor Vladimir Solovyev and concert pianist Victor Portnoy toured the Museum and expressed extraordinary enthusiasm--and more than a little surprise at the quality and extent of our facility. They were so delighted with the Concert Hall, they offered to perform and to present workshops at HARTS during their next visit to the region. They are Rector and Vice-Rector (respectively) of the great Russian Petrozavodsk State Glazunov Conservatory, which sponsors Russia's largest, prestigious annual accordion competition. I was invited to attend/adjudicate and bring students to the 2006 event. After their performance at UM/D, they donated a rare, autographed copy of "Young Accordionist Album" by Albin Repnikov, which I have framed for display. The duo had just presented concerts in China, and promised to acquaint me with a music instrument museum curator evolving his accordion collection. Sometimes I am amazed at the flurries of activities that just drop in on us !

After the ATG Festival, Dr. Herbert Scheibenreif (Vienna, Austria) traveled with me to visit the Museum. During his several days here, this famed musicologist offered many insights. With mutual respect supported by years of light acquaintanceship, we agreed to pursue a conjoined project--an accordionist's history calendar. Upon receiving his well-organized materials, I see that our research was conducted in nearly mutually-exclusive directions, predicting a comprehensive work better than either would have been without the other. Subsequent to the visit, Herbert generously has sent many recordings and books for the Library, historic documents and posters, and greatly added to the Friedrich Lips display being assembled in the Duane Sellman Special Exhibits Area.

Henry Doktorski, well known in the accordion world, renewed his friendship with the Museum during his Spring, 2004, visit. Not only are we looking forward to his April 3, concert and workshops on music of the Vaudeville era, but he really came through for us with the promised delivery of two accordions from Guido Deiro. These instruments provide incentive to enhance the status of our Deiro Family display by relocating it to the Special exhibits Area.

## *Harrington ARTS Center Publications*

With substantial pride I can say that our in-house publications are in full swing. We now offer the following books:  
Charles Magnante: America's Great Accordionist, Third Edition in progress. 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.

## *Be Sure to Look For:*

Ronnie Setniker with daughters Susan and Shelby on their new CD. Its cover was photographed at the Museum. The Setnikers love accordions--Ron plays a Slovenian 4-row and a Half-Chromatic, Shelby plays a 4-row Slovenian and a piano accordion. Sophia (Shelby's 4-year old) is already accustomed to being on-stage--with her toy accordion!  
Accordion Stars of the North (Rounder Records) with cover photography by Phil Nusbaum at the Museum, containing "Modern Love Waltz" (by Philip Glass) performed by Accordion Concertina Music Ensemble.

## *Upcoming Events*

February 18-20 Accordion Tuning Workshop. Although I had intended a January date, I am pleased to offer it now. No prior

experience or skill is required. Bring your project instrument (not your best if it's your first project) or learn on one at ARTS. Call/write for details and registration. \$200.00 per person.

- April 3 Henry Doktorski, Lecture/demonstration on Vaudeville Accordion Music plus installation of Guido Deiro Accordions, \$10.00. Concert, \$15.00 .
- April 9 "Just Du-et" -- Dee Langley and Greg Dagoumas. These favorites return for their third appearance. \$15.00.
- April 23 Florian Chmielewski celebrates 60 years of accordion music "Across the Generations," Tours of A World of Accordions Museum on the hour and half-hour, \$10.00. Optional Lunch, \$6.00.
- May 21 Mira Orch Bez. Unique in the region! Eastern European music, singing, dancing. Must See! \$15.00.
- August First Mid-West Regional All-Accordions and All-Concertinas Festival. Here at HARTS ! Plan to come, play, attend workshops, participate in competitions, 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 !

### *Away-from-Home Appearances*

- May 16 AWAM Traveling Museum and workshop for Chicago Accordion Club. Contact them for location.
- May 17 AWAM Traveling Museum and workshop for Milwaukee Accordion Club. Contact them for location.
- June 24-26 Ironworld Polkafest, Chisholm, MN, three days of workshops, performances and AWAM Traveling Museum .

*Watch [www.accordionworld.org](http://www.accordionworld.org) for new announcements !*