

PRESS RELEASE

Helmi Strahl Harrington, Ph.D., was named “Honored Friend of the Accordion” by the *Confédération Internationale des Accordéonistes*, meeting in Alexandria, VA, August 13-18, 2007. This is one of the highest international awards given in the industry. In the 60-year history of the CIA its list of honorees includes fewer than 100 scholars, educators, performing artists, and spokespersons worldwide whose accomplishments are deemed significant contributions, and who are considered of outstanding influence in supporting and promoting the accordion.

Harrington’s award was actually conferred in 2006 (in Finland), but presentation was postponed until the 2007 meeting in Alexandria, cohosted by *American Accordionists Association* (Faithe Deffner, Coordinator) and *Accordionists and Teachers Guild* (Joan Sommers, Chair). The CIA meets annually, usually in Europe, to plan international accordion events, competitions, and festivals. It has been 26 years since their last meeting in the USA.

A featured event was Harrington’s presentation of “**A World of Accordions Travelling Museum,**” in which 30+ instruments were explained in terms of chronological, aesthetic, and cultural developments. Each was sounded in a performance/demonstration workshop at which attendees overflowed the room, sat on the floor and stood crowded around the room. Many people returned during the next days to discuss, question, and learn more. A slide-show of 645 instruments of the Museum alternated with a 45-min. movie showing Helmi performing on 19 different types of accordions during all exhibition hours. Some renowned friends of long-standing (like Mort and Cressida Herold) drove many hours with primary goal being this workshop/exhibit.

Harrington was commended for her groundbreaking work in accordion history research and for founding and operating “**A World of Accordions Museum,**” believed to be the world’s largest and most comprehensive group of collections related to accordion-family instruments. 1,200 piano-, button chromatic-, button diatonic-, unique and hybrid accordions, concertinas, bandonions, and their predecessors are displayed on the main floor in **Harrington ARTS Center**, Superior, WI. She has hosted visits to the Museum by leading educators, curators, researchers and scholars like Dr. Marion Jacobson (NY), Dr. Herbert Scheibenreif (Austria), Dr. Martin Haeffner (Germany), and is frequently consulted by specialists and curators of musical instrument museums in the USA and abroad. Harrington is a national/international adjudicator at accordion competitions.

In 2005 the *Midwest Travel Writers Association* presented her and the Museum with their “**GEMmy**” award for excellence as a regional attraction.

Harrington ARTS Center also presents a concert series named after Helen and Theo Miller (NJ) in its acoustically ideal concert hall. The “Hanni Strahl Concert Hall,” named after Harrington’s mother, with whom she emigrated from post-WWII Germany, has attracted performances by world-renowned artists from Russia, Scandinavia, Europe, South America, and the USA.

This large former church also houses “**Accordion Resource Center Libraries,**” which contain the musical estates of several great accordionists, hundreds of thousands of documents, artifacts, recordings, manuscript and printed music. It also houses the complete output of Frank Gaviani (composer and arranger), *Deiro Publications*, *Pagani Publications*, and the near-complete output of many other publishers and composers.

Harrington is a renowned teacher and performer whose **Accordion Concertina Music** studio operates in Burnsville, MN, as well as in Superior. Her students have won many national awards. She has authored 29 method and repertory books for accordion family instruments that previously had none. These are available from **Harrington ARTS Center Publications**. As a performing artist, she has presented concerts worldwide, recently in Moscow at the “**Alfred Mirek Russian Accordion Museum**” and in European tour with Michelle Gribbon (violinist) of Duluth.

As educator, Harrington developed the curriculum and was lead instructor for Red Wing Technical College’s Accordion and Concertina Repair Department. She subsequently founded “**Accordion-concertina Repair and Technicians’ School,**” (ARTS) now located at Harrington ARTS Center. The curriculum with its total-proficiency standard has attracted students from England, Bulgaria, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Columbia, Russia and from throughout the USA. She also has been a member of music faculties at various colleges and universities in Texas, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. She regularly offers seminars, workshops, and festival events in Superior and elsewhere, notably for major national accordion organizations, for the *American Musical Instrument Society*, and for *Ironworld Discovery Center* (Chisholm, MN).

She wrote accordion-related articles for Groves Dictionary of Music (2000) and is a curriculum contributor to the Royal College of Music (Toronto). Among her other scholarly accomplishments are numerous published articles, a definitive reference book on Charles Magnante, an important composer-arranger-performing artist pioneer in establishment of American virtuoso techniques, whose musical estate resides in ARCL. Harrington’s book on Pietro Frosini is in process, pending receipt of his musical estate. She is currently engaged in cooperative publications with three European scholars, and expects to publish the first volume of her three-volume accordion history book (15 yrs. in research) by end-2007.



Pictured with CIA President Kevin Friedrich (NY) and Harley Jones (New Zealand)