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Works Commissioned by the American Accordionists' Association
1957-2018

Siegmeister, Elie	Improvisation, Ballad and Dance (1962)	Sam Fox Publications
Serebrier, Jose	Danza Ritual (1967)	O. Pagani & Bro.
Serebrier, Jose	Passacaglia and Perpetuum Mobile, for Accordion, Strings, Brass and Percussion (1974)	Peer International Publications
Soldier, Dave	Sontag in Sarajevo, for Accordion, Melody, Chordal, and Bass Instruments, and Drums (n.d., 1993?)	Ernest Deffner Music
Still, William Grant	Aria (1960)	Sam Fox Publications
Still, William Grant	Lilt (1967)	Pietro Deiro Publications
Surinach, Carlos	Prelude to the Sea (1965)	Alfred Music Co., Inc.
Surinach, Carlos	Pavana and Rondo (1959)	Alfred Music Co., Inc/reprint ED
Tcherepnin, Alexander	Invention (1968)	O. Pagani & Bro.
Tcherepnin, Alexander	Partita (1962)	O. Pagani & Bro.
Tcherepnin, Alexander	Tzigane (1968)	Pietro Deiro Publications
Thompson, Timothy	Growth Cells (n.d., 1976?)	Ernest Deffner Music
Thompson, Timothy	Keyworld (n.d., 1977?)	Ernest Deffner Music
Thompson, Timothy	Rossiniland (n.d., 1977?)	Ernest Deffner Music
Thomson, Virgil	Lamentations (1960)	Pietro Deiro Publications

Most O. Pagani and Pietro Deiro publications available through Ernest Deffner Music.

A Brief History of the American Accordionists' Association Composers' Commissioning Committee

Dr. Robert Young McMahan, Chair, CCC

In the mid-1940s a newly married young woman, accordionist Elsie Bennett (nee Blum), moved with her groom from her native Detroit to his native Brooklyn, where they settled and she established a music school. Elsie had been pursuing a bachelor's degree in Music Theory back home at Wayne ~transferrable courses in orchestration and composition at Columbia University. Soon thereafter, she pursued a Master's degree at Columbia and was allowed to use accordion as her principal instrument. However, she had to rely on classical transcriptions of major works by composers of the past for most of her "traditional" repertoire, which she was allowed to do, given the lack of reputable original works for accordion from the nineteenth century (when the instrument was invented and still going through its early evolutionary stages).

Regarding contemporary repertoire, the problem was even greater, and she found it difficult to find acceptable original or transcribed compositions by notable composers of the twentieth century to satisfy that part of her final recital requirements. To help solve this problem for Elsie and future aspiring classical accordionists, her principal professor and advisor, distinguished composer and electronic music pioneer Otto Luening, informed her that the accordion would probably never gain a sizable original repertoire of significance from recognized composers unless the latter were commissioned and paid to write for it. Having recently joined the governing board of the then fifteen-year-old AAA, she invited her mentor to speak at its next meeting with the aim of convincing its members to recognize this need and commence to commission worthy composers. After much heated debate, the majority of the board voted to create a composers' commissioning committee, with Elsie as its chair.

Elsie took on the charge with great passion and three years later, in 1957, succeeded in persuading the internationally famous composer Paul Creston to produce the AAA's first commissioned composition, Prelude and Dance, Op. 69. Many great composers and accordionist-composers were to follow in the ensuing decades. Elsie held this post for the remainder of the twentieth century and into the beginning of the twenty-first, only retiring from it and conferring the title to this writer a short time before her passing in 2005. During this half century of dedicated and all-consuming service, she achieved the amazing feat of having commissioned 33 composers who wrote 55 works collectively. They will always stand as a significant and pioneering part of the core of now well over a thousand and still increasing concert compositions for or including accordion worldwide. In recent years, rising commissioning fees and shrinking budgets have yielded only five additional works by five composers. A list of all the commissioned works can be found on the AAA's recently updated website at <http://ameraccord.com/aaacommissions.php>.

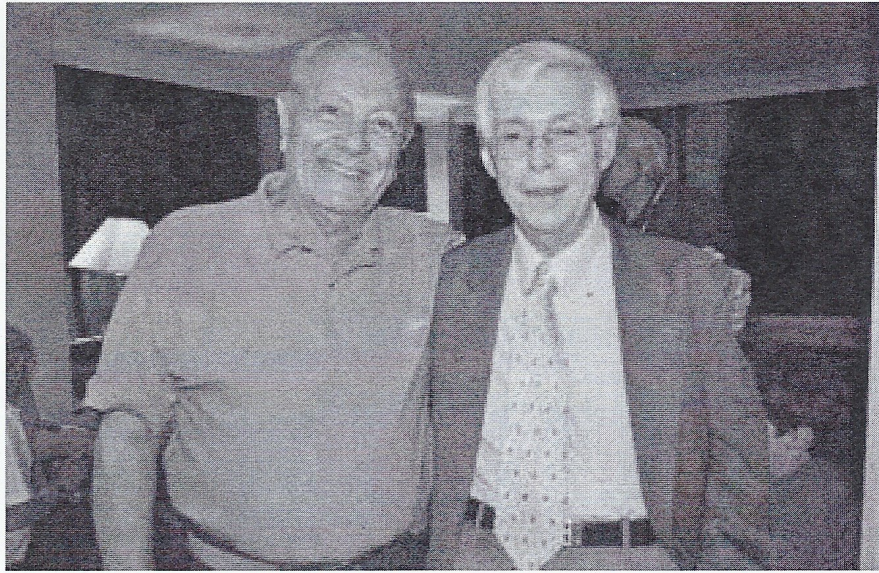
The CCC welcomes donations from all those who love the classical accordion and wish to see its modern original concert repertoire continue to grow. The American Accordionists' Association is a 501(c)(3) corporation. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law. For additional information, please contact Dr. McMahan at grillmyr@gmail.com.

Lou and Me: A Personal Memoir and Tribute

By Robert Young McMahan

To begin, allow me to apologize for the largely autobiographical nature of this article. It is a necessary evil to serve as the setting for what I have to say about the man who shaped my life in incalculably crucial ways.

As best I can recall after sixty-one years, I first met Lou Coppola on a chilly fall evening sometime in October 1957, and in a rather dimly lit band rehearsal room and/or recording studio in one of the numerous military buildings and residences alongside the wide crisscrossing runways, now gone, of Bolling Air Force Base. Located in southwest Washington DC and joined by the Naval Air Station just to the north of it, both installations occupy a vast open plain along the Potomac shore as the river continues its own long journey from western Maryland and West Virginia southward past the fall line and the Nation's Capitol to the Chesapeake Bay. Immediately east of this government property high wooded hills and bluffs rise abruptly to a plateau in the southeast sector of the city that encompasses St. Elizabeth's Hospital, established by Dorethea Dix during Lincoln's time to administer to the mentally ill (now largely occupied by various federal offices), remaining breastworks of two of seventy-two defensive forts that encircled the city during the Civil War, and my home neighborhood, appropriately named Congress Heights. Not a tourist destination, 1950s Congress Heights was populated by a broad variety of middle- and working-class homeowners and apartment dwellers, not to mention many military families. DC natives



such as myself were in the minority, with most residents, including my North and South Carolinian parents and many aunts, uncles, and older cousins, having left their home states in their younger years to seek secure and decent paying employment in the federal government. Like a good number of our neighbors, my father worked in the US Navy Yard, a few miles away on the north shore of the Anacostia River, where he was a supervising machinist in the Naval Gun Factory. He also picked at the guitar a bit and at some point curiously taught himself how to play by ear "Silver Threads Among the Gold" on the piano, preferring to "fake" it in G-flat major (like Irving Berlin liked to do). In short, while not sophisticated folk, Dad, as well as Mother, loved music of almost any kind and had participated in it in some limited way across their lives.

The three of us had come to the mutually agreeable decision that when I turned eight I would take piano lessons, as had my mother when she was a girl back on the farm in North Carolina. I truly looked forward to this soon-to-be new chapter in my life. But one evening a stranger knocked at our door toting a large, boxy, and rather cumbersome piece of luggage

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of some sort. Yes, he was a solicitor for an accordion studio downtown which turned out to bear the high-flown title of "Guild Institute of Music" (where I was to discover decades later Carmelo Pino had also taken lessons as a kid). After seeing the salesman play a few notes on this strange breathing contraption and encouraging me to touch the keys and experiment with the register switches, I was hooked. Out went the plans for piano lessons and the chance for a more "normal" and generally "approved" musical avocation in the judgment of most musical pundits, and in came a whole different and incredibly more culturally diverse musical journey that would always be difficult to explain or "justify" to serious musical traditionalists and more privileged classes who would certainly divert their children away from such a "non-standard" instrument. Already my life was destined to be that of an often frustrated, but nonetheless proud,

performer and advocate/defender of an "outsider" instrument, especially as it applied to classical music.

So we signed up on the spot and immediately commenced to make the weekly trip downtown to the Guild for a couple of months. By then Dad had tired of lugging the heavy instrument several blocks from wherever he could find a parking place to the walk-up suite of small studios on either side of a narrow hall (somewhat reminiscent in appearance to Tin Pan Alley in New York) on F Street. He thereby decided to look for a teacher who would be willing to come around to the house each week. He soon found a very pleasant, alert young man in his 30s, Charles Cook, who was a government employee in the Commerce Department and played and taught accordion on the side. He was very encouraging over the next four years and I made considerable

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*To the greatest teacher of anything
I have ever pursued:*

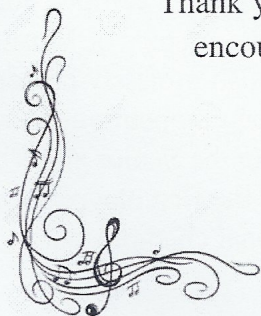
Congratulations, Lou!

Any successes I have had or any accomplishments I have made, be it with the accordion or any other area of music I have entered, all lead back to the high standards and hard and methodical work you so patiently instilled in me at an early age through your teaching and your example as an outstanding and highly disciplined artist.

Thank you for your lifelong support,
encouragement, and friendship.

I owe all to you

Bob McMahan



progress, though, unknown to both amateur teacher and student, I had developed a number of poor technical habits. By then, however, a major part of my identity and self respect had become eternally fused with the accordion. I received high compliments in amateur talent shows in various DC venues and from relatives in whose living rooms I would play popular tunes and favorite hymns (we took the accordion everywhere we went). I also often took first place in local talent contests. Yes, the accordion and I were by then inseparable for life.

To his great credit, Mr. Cook concluded that after four years of teaching me all he could and seeing how much the accordion, for better or worse, had become an indelible part of this now thirteen-year-old's self identity, it was time to find a true professional to advance me forward. After some enquiries around town, he was finally led to the excellent quarry of armed services musicians that populated the many bases in and around Washington; and at nearby Bolling he found the recently recruited accordionist with the Air Force Strolling Strings, Master Sergeant Lou Coppola, fresh from Bridgeport, Connecticut, and the protégé of the great teacher Rudy Molinaro. I was to be his first student in our Nation's Capital. Thus began a new phase in my musical journey: reality, complicated by sudden identity crisis!

Expecting the usual high praise to which I was accustomed, my first lesson with Lou was anything but that—the hand positions were wrong, the straps needed proper adjustment, my performing posture was off and in dire need of a backstrap, bellowing was poorly coordinated with slurred phrases, finger technique was non-existent, rhythms were inaccurate, etc., etc. My pre-teen pride and self image were in peril! The next two years were

the musical equivalent of a drug rehabilitation program, with ups and downs and occasional spurts forward countered by disappointing reversals. But finally things broke through due to Lou's dogged determination to make all things right, and he quickly became a combination of something like a devastatingly honest but caring big brother (we are only six years apart in age) and most definitely master mentor for life. The greatly organized, but also instinctual and flexible, teaching of a highly intelligent, talented, and definitely tough teacher, who was a master accordionist both technically and musically, instilled in me the absolutely indispensable foundation for survival and accomplishment in all other musical pursuits, including composition and research, that were to follow in college and my general vocational life. I learned from Lou what it took to become a true professional. It wasn't easy but, to my astonishment, there was something dogged in me, too!

Our student/teacher relationship continued for more than a decade, through high school, college, and the early years of Anne's and my marriage (fifty years ago this September!). In addition, Lou employed me during my college years as a teacher in his Suitland, Maryland, home (as he was also to do for Anne in piano for the first couple of years of our marriage), and actively got me many gigs with combos in the numerous military NCO clubs in and around Washington, thus supplementing my classical training with on-the-job, paid skills in fakebook reading and improvisation—all while I was pursuing the first two of my three degrees in music theory and composition at the Peabody Conservatory of Music, one city north of DC. He also tirelessly prepared me for the AAA national competitions in which I often placed first in the Senior and Virtuoso divisions and got into the first playoffs a couple of times for the national championship. He did the

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same for at least three of his other outstanding high school level students, every bit my equal, but who eventually went into other impressive non-music fields in college and beyond. I know they would say many of the same things about Lou that I have here.

In addition to being a master teacher of accordion, Lou also felt the necessity to make sure his students had a good grounding in the fundamentals of music theory and even taught a class in the subject for a few months in his earlier abode in Congress Heights. Knowing which way I was heading as a composer during my late high school years, he sent me to one of the outstanding composer/arrangers at Bolling for more advanced training in that discipline prior to my conservatory audition. As a result of this action, my first year of music theory courses at Peabody was a breeze. (This was in the years before high schools routinely offered classes in AP Music Theory, which gives a

similar boost in that subject for college-bound music majors today).

I can say much more about Lou, but I am sure many others will do so during this Festival in which he is the much-deserved recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award. Lou was born with the AAA and will forever be hailed as the three-time winner of the first three years of its national competitions. For that and many other reasons I believe all of us can agree that he is our generation's AAA standard bearer and was in many ways the carrier of the mace as the accordion in America journeyed through both bright and dark periods during the second half of the twentieth century and continues to do so down to the present.

Thank you, Lou, for everything. May you and the AAA have many more years of good health and prosperity!



American Accordionists' Association Lifetime Achievement Award Recipients

2002	Carmen Carrozza	Colonial Terrace, Cortlandt, NY
2003	Dick Contino	Fiesta – Wood Ridge, NJ
2004	Charles Nunzio	Fiesta – Wood Ridge, NJ
2005	Tony Dannon	Dearborn, MI
2006	Frank Marocco	Wood Ridge, NJ
2009	Faithe Deffner	Tavern on the Green, NYC
2012	Joan Sommers	Charleston, SC
2016	Mario Tacca	Colonial Terrace, Cortlandt, NY
2018	Lou Coppola	Holiday Inn, Alexandria, VA