



# AAA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary

*Compiled by Faithe Deffner, Joan Grauman and Linda Soley Reed*

## **Our Mission and Goals**

From its inception, the American Accordionists' Association's (AAA) mission has been to elevate accordion standards of education, musicianship, performance, and repertoire, while providing the public and media with information to stimulate an increasing awareness of, and appreciation for, this remarkable instrument. To accomplish these and other such lofty goals, AAA has consistently attracted the most outstanding educators, concert artists, manufacturers, music publishers, professionals, students and accordion enthusiasts to work together.

Today, seven decades after it was founded in 1938, the organization continues to enjoy an enviable position as a foremost accordion organization of both national and international scope. It holds a prestigious position within the renowned Confederation Internationales des Accordeonistes (CIA), with affiliations to UNESCO and the International Music Council (IMC).

While modest membership dues provide some of the operating income for the association, major funding is derived from competitions, concerts, scholarship dinners, artist testimonials, seminars, journals, general membership activities and tax-free donations.

The officers and board members together constitute the governing board, which carries out the AAA's myriad of accordion-related projects, donating personal services according to the association's needs. These include adjudication at regional, national and international competitions, concert performances, committee functions, workshops, etc., as well as efforts to facilitate and coordinate the various segments of the accordion world.

Conforming to the organization's bylaws, officers and governors receive no compensation for the work they do. The organization is tax exempt and encourages donations from accordion aficionados.

## **AMERICAN ACCORDIONISTS' ASSOCIATION FOUNDED 1938**



THE FOUNDERS - Left to right, front row: Pietro Frosini, Abe Goldman, Sidney Dawson  
Center row: Anthony Galla-Rini, Charles Magnante, Pietro Deiro, Sr., Charles Nunzio  
Back row: Gene von Hallberg, Joseph Biviano.  
Not shown in photo: John Gart, Sam Roland, Byron Streep



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### MARCH 9, 1938 M I N U T E S - AMERICAN ACCORDIONISTS' ASSOCIATION MEETING

The first meeting of a group of New York accordionists was called for 8 P.M. Wednesday evening, March 9, 1938. The subject under discussion at this meeting was to determine whether or not an association for accordionists should be formed.

The meeting was attended by the following: Charles Magnante, Abe Goldman, Joe Biviano, Pietro Deiro, Pietro Frosini, Gene Von Hallberg, Anthony Galla-Rini, Charles Nunzio, Sydney B. Dawson, Sam Roland and Byron Streep.

This meeting was presided over by Sam Roland, who introduced the plan of the association to the previously mentioned men. A lengthy report was read covering the object of such an association, and the report of a survey was given also by Mr. Roland, which covered the recognition of the accordion in 48 states. The survey showed that it is not recognized in any states as far as high school competition is concerned. Whenever the accordion is used in competition, it must be sponsored by a private school or dealer.

A motion was made by Abe Goldman and seconded by Joe Biviano to the effect that this group should form an accordionists' association and that this group plus John Gart should form the charter membership. The motion was carried unanimously. A motion was made by Sydney Dawson that the name of this association will be The American Accordionists' Association." This was seconded by Charles Magnante, carried unanimously. A motion was made by Anthony Galla-Rini, seconded by Pietro Frosini, that the officers of the association shall consist of President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Sergeant-at-Arms.

Frosini under the nomination for President, suggested that because of Pietro Deiro's record and reputation as "The Daddy of the Accordion," he be nominated and elected by acclamation as the first President of the association. Although nominations do not require a second, it was seconded by Galla-Rini and others. He was elected unanimously. The following nominations were made for vice president: Joe Biviano nominated by Abe Goldman; Frosini nominated by Biviano; Galla-Rini by Nunzio; Nunzio by Galla-Rini; Magnante by Deiro. Charles Nunzio was elected vice president. The election of secretary-treasurer: Sam Rowland was nominated by Joe Biviano; motion made by Abe Goldman, seconded by Pietro Deiro that the election be by acclamation. Rowland was elected by acclamation. Motion was made by Sydney Dawson to the effect that that the one receiving the second highest number of votes in the election for vice president be given the sergeant-at-arms office. This was seconded by Abe Goldman. The motion was carried. Frosini was elected sergeant-at-arms. A motion was made by Abe Goldman that the members of the board of directors would not be eligible for the Academy Award as distributed year to year by the association. This was seconded by Dawson and carried. Rowland was instructed at the close of the meeting to prepare a model constitution and by-laws for acceptance, correction, amendment, or rejection at the next meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for April 6th. The meeting was adjourned at 10 P.M.

Association Office  
117 West 48th Street  
New York City

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## The Early Years - 1938-1950

On March 9, 1938, a distinguished group of New York accordionists gathered in a 48th Street office in Manhattan for the purpose of forming the American Accordionists' Association. Each was an accordion icon or a significant member of the accordion world: (alphabetically) Joseph Biviano, Sidney Dawson (public relations guru), Pietro Deiro, Sr., Pietro Frosini, Anthony Galla-Rini, John Gart, Abe Goldman, Gene Von Hallberg (well known for writing jingles), Charles Magnante, Charles Nunzio, Sam Roland and



Pietro Frosini

The accordion was a relatively new addition to the musical instrument family of that day. Not much was yet standardized and little music had been written for the accordion. Most was informally jotted down without much concern for proper notation. The accordion's popularity was largely related to the popularity of vaudeville throughout this period when several accordionists became prominent in this medium.

Standardization was sorely needed in a number of areas if the instrument was to achieve the greater popularity and respect in music circles, which it deserved. At the time, music for *both* hands was written in treble clef. The founders unanimously agreed that left hand notation should be in bass

Byron Streep. Soon after the organization was founded and the constitution and bylaws adopted, Pietro Deiro, Jr. joined the original group.



Charles Nunzio



Anthony Galla-Rini

clef. There were some ideological differences in choosing single note notation over the full chord notation and publishers, resisting single note notation because of existing inventories, further complicated matters. Eventually, AAA's support for single note notation made it the standard we use today in the US and throughout the world.

During the war years, many accordionists served their country as entertainers and some of AAA's standardization efforts were tabled. But, in the following years, members worked diligently to create the standard notation, which became known as the AAA-notation for writing accordion music. Additionally, the organization pioneered standardization of accordion sizes, register markings, sequence and reed configurations that produced combinations and other concepts, eventually accepted by the industry as well as educators and other fraternities worldwide.

With the growth of accordion popularity, more music was needed for both instructional and popular use. Biaggio Quattrocioche of Steubenville, Ohio was one of the very first publishers to issue Frosini's music. Archive published the first accordion method in America through Carl Fischer Publications. Pietro Deiro, Sr. set about to prepare the "Pietro Method" in collaboration with Ottavio Pagani of Pagani publications. Later, both Deiro and Pagani issued their own methods. These were followed by the world famous Palmer-Hughes Courses and supplementary material issued by the Alfred Music Publishing firm.

Theresa Costello of O. Pagani was a longtime, and important, member of AAA's board, who contributed greatly to development, standardization and publication of accordion music. Frank Gaviani, a prolific composer and arranger, later joined her in the firm. O. Pagani & Bro. and Pietro Deiro Publications were heavily committed to publishing music written for accordion, using AAA-notation. Many of these early compositions by Biviano, Deiro, Frosini, Galla-Rini, Gart, Gaviani,



Theresa Costello



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International Competition 1962 – Carnegie Hall Backstage  
 Left to Right: William Cosby - 3rd Place; Stephen Dominko - 2nd Place and  
 Mario Tacca - 1st Place



AAA Board Congratulations Mario Tacca (center)  
 Left to Right: Anthony Ettore, Pietro Deiro, Jr., Carmen Carrozza,  
 Charles Magnante, Louis Iorio and Joseph Biviano

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Magnante, Nunzio and Palmer form the nucleus of accordionists' repertoire in this country and are also commonly esteemed abroad.

By 1945, the AAA turned its attention to teacher members and the standardization of accordion pedagogy by creating a teacher certification program. Successful completion of the exam qualified a musician to receive an American Accordionists' Association Teacher Certificate and membership pin. This important certification committee was under the guidance of Charles Magnante & Marcello Roviario.



Charles  
Magnante

Shortly thereafter, the AAA began to organize

student competitions. The early ones were unrestricted, allowing contestants to play selections of their own choice. Before long, criteria were added to reflect age and ability levels.



Marcello  
Roviario

These successful competitions drew participants from nearby states. The one-day events were held at New York City high schools, where classrooms and auditoriums were utilized. Soon the handful of participants grew beyond 1,000, necessitating the creation of regional events as the play-off venues.

AAA members attended the New York State Music Teachers conventions, which were held in the Catskills, and there they created displays and distributed literature about the accordion and the advantages of using the instrument in elementary and high schools.

Concerts and workshops broadened the appeal of these events and helped to standardize accordion education to follow that of other longtime established musical instruments.

## 1950-1960

The American Accordionists' Association's competitions grew steadily through the dedicated efforts of accomplished teacher-members whose educational and musical standard were advancing significantly. The students developed their musicianship and technical skills, achieving a high level of excellence. Accordion schools were everywhere and instrument popularity was boundless.

## PRESIDENTS OF THE AMERICAN ACCORDIONISTS' ASSOCIATION

Pietro Deiro, Sr. ....	1938-39	Elsie M. Bennett .....	1973-74
Charles Magnante .....	1940-41	Maddalena Belfiore .....	1975-76
Joseph Biviano .....	1942-45	Carmen Carrozza .....	1977-78
Eugene Ettore .....	1946-47	Maddalena Belfiore .....	1979-80
Joseph Biviano .....	1948-49	Frank Busso .....	1981
Charles Magnante .....	1950-51	Addie Cere .....	1982-84
Pietro Deiro, Jr. ....	1952	Faithe Deffner .....	1985-86
Eugene Ettore .....	1953-54	Anthony Ettore .....	1987-88
Charles Magnante .....	1955-56	Carmen Carrozza .....	1989-91
Louis Iorio .....	1957-58	Frank Busso .....	1992-94
Pietro Deiro, Jr. ....	1959-60	Faithe Deffner .....	1995-96
Joseph Biviano .....	1961-62	Faithe Deffner .....	1997-98
Eugene Ettore .....	1963-64	Faithe Deffner .....	1999-2000
Carmen Carrozza .....	1965-66	Carmelo Pino .....	2001-2002
Joseph Biviano .....	1967-68	Carmelo Pino .....	2003-2004
Charles Magnante .....	1969-70	Linda Soley Reed .....	2005-2006
Maddalena Belfiore .....	1971-72	Linda Soley Reed .....	2007-2008

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By 1955 the AAA was ready to enter the esteemed Confederation Internationale des Accordeonistes so that advanced students could compete in the Coupe Mondiale. Founded in Paris in 1935 as the Association Internationale des Accordeonistes, the "Confederation Internationale des Accordeonistes" (CIA) was reconstituted under its present name in May 1948 at a well-attended meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland. Our first contestant was Louis Coppola, a student of Rudy Molinaro in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Lou competed in 1955 at Brighton, England and Pietro Deiro, Jr. accompanied the young man. Our first entrant did not win the coveted prize, but it was an educational experience for the contestant as well as the AAA.



Louis Coppola

From its inception, one of CIA's primary aims has been to elevate the status of the accordion in the world arena of music, paralleling those important goals of AAA. Players were nominated by many of the participating countries to compete in the "Coupe Mondiale", which soon became internationally recognized as the highest distinction an accordionist could achieve. The United States, under the AAA banner, was ready to assume a major role in international events.

In 1956, John LaPadula won the Coupe Mondiale in Bienne, Switzerland. In 1957, the United States representative, Ronald Sweetz, a student of Frank Alfidi, received the award at the competition held in Saarbrücken, Germany.

About this time, the AAA began to direct its attention toward the institutions of higher learning -- colleges and universities -- where accomplished young accordionists might pursue degrees using their instrument. The dearth of original music written for the accordion was a serious stumbling block. A repertoire of transcriptions did not satisfy college and university requirements.

The Composers' Commissioning Committee was formed under the guidance of board member Elsie

M. Bennett who chaired this group until the year before her death in 2005. Ms. Bennett worked tirelessly throughout the years to seek new commissions to enhance the accordion's prestige within the music community. Contemporary composer Paul Creston was the first to accept an AAA commission and his *Prelude and Dance* was premiered by Carmen Carrozza with the Boston



Paul Creston is pictured with Chairman of Composers Commissioning, Elsie M. Bennett and concert artist, Carmen Carrozza work through the details of *Prelude and Dance*.

Pops Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. This was one of the greatest achievements for the American Accordionists' Association and the beginning of an expensive, but very meaningful, ongoing program of repertoire building which today boasts more than 50 works by well-known contemporary composers. (See list of commissioned works)

In 1959, under the presidency of Pietro Deiro, Jr., the AAA hosted its first Coupe Mondiale in New York City. This spectacular event was highlighted with a Carnegie Hall concert that featured the U.S. Navy Band and AAA members Charles Magnante, Daniel Desiderio and Carmen Carrozza performed with the band. The AAA members were enthralled with the Coupe Mondiale competition and they had the opportunity to "hear this high caliber competition first hand." Marianne Probst of Germany won the coveted prize that year.



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Joe Biviano and Charles Magnante



Millie Martignone was Secretary of the AAA for many years. She is pictured here (left) with Addie Cere.



The boys from DC  
 Left to right: Carmelo Pino, Sid Kowalczyk and Lou Coppola



Always the picture of elegance,  
 Maddalena Belfiore is pictured with Charles Magnante



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## Music Commissioned by the American Accordionists' Association

Adler, Samuel  
Bennett, Robert Russell  
Bennett, Robert Russell

Biviano, Joseph  
Brant, Henry  
Brickman, Joel  
Cowell, Henry  
Cowell, Henry  
Creston, Paul

Creston, Paul  
Creston, Paul  
Creston, Paul  
Diamond, David  
Diamond, David  
Diamond, David  
Flagello, Nicholas  
Foss, Lukas  
Foss, Lukas  
Franceschina, John  
Franceschina, John  
Fremar, Karen

Gordon, Louis

Halac, Jose

Krenek, Ernst  
Lockwood, Normand  
Luening, Otto  
McMahan, Robert Young  
Pisk, Paul

Pisk, Paul  
Riegger, Wallingford  
Schimmel, William  
Schimmel, William  
Schimmel, William  
Seigmeister, Elie  
Serebrier, Jose  
Serebrier, Jose

Still, William Grant  
Still, William Grant  
Soldier, David

Surinach, Carlos

Tcherepnin, Alexander  
Tcherepnin, Alexander  
Tcherepnin, Alexander  
Thompson, Timothy  
Thompson, Timothy  
Thompson, Timothy  
Thomson, Virgil

Canto XVIII  
Four Nocturnes  
Quintet (Psychiatry), for Accordion  
and String Quartet  
Quintet in G, for accordion and string quartet  
Sky Forest, for four accordions  
Prelude and Caprice  
Concerto Brevis, for Accordion and Orchestra  
Iridescent Rondo  
Concerto for Accordion and Orchestra

Embryo Suite  
Fantasy for Accordion and Orchestra  
Prelude and Dance  
Night Music, for Accordion and String Quartet  
Introduction & Dance  
Sonatina  
Introduction & Scherzo  
Curriculum Vitae  
Triologue for Violin, Cello and Accordion  
Concerto for Accordion and Orchestra  
Scaramouche  
Introduction and Allegro, for Accordion and  
Synthesized Tape  
Aria, Scherzo and Finale, for Accordion and  
Orchestra or Band  
Accordion Shadow, for Accordion, Flute  
and Percussion  
Toccata  
Sonata Fantasy  
Rondo  
Apparitions, for Flute and Accordion  
Adagio and Rondo Concertante, for Two  
Accordions and Orchestra  
Salute to Juan  
Cooper Square  
Fables  
Remembering a Legend: Charles Magnante  
Variations in Search of a Theme  
Improvisation, Ballad and Dance  
Danza Ritual  
Passacaglia and Perpetuum Mobile, for  
Accordion, Strings, Brass and Percussion  
Aria  
Lilt  
Sontag in Sarajevo, for Accordion, Melody,  
Chordal, Bass Instruments and Drums  
Pavana and Rondo

Invention  
Partita  
Tzigana  
Growth Cells  
Keyworld  
Rossiniland  
Lamentations

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Pietro Deiro Publications\*  
Pietro Deiro Publications\*  
Mills Publishing Co.  
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Southern Music  
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Ernest Deffner Publications  
Pietro Deiro Publications\*

\* The libraries from these firms are available from Ernest Deffner Publications.

\*\* Commissioned in 2002 and dedicated to Elsie M. Bennett



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## 1960 - 1980

The years 1963, 1964 and 1965 again brought us Coupe Mondiale winners: Skeets Langley, student of Larry Malmberg, represented the AAA in Baden Baden, Germany; Stephen Dominko, student of Rudy Molinaro, won in Toronto, Canada and Beverly Roberts, student of Carmen Carrozza, brought home the top prize at the 1965 event in Valetta, Malta. The Coupe Mondiale exposure has been significant in establishing continually rising standards of performance.

The New York World's Fair in August of 1964 attracted thousands of visitors from around the world. The AAA competition that year was held at



the Hotel Commodore in New York City. Joe Biviano, Pietro Deiro, Jr., Carmen Carrozza, Charles Magnante, Anthony Ettore and Lou Iorio are pictured at the Singer Bowl during the World's Fair. Performers at the World's Fair included Anthony Galla-Rini, Art Van Damme and Carmen Carrozza.

The 1960s saw the rapid growth of state organizations and regional competitions. By the end of the decade, there were well over 20 state organizations, most of which were AAA affiliates.

In 1969, Charles Magnante served as president and the AAA again hosted the Coupe Mondiale which was won by Valeri Petrov of the USSR. The event attracted throngs of accordionists and enthusiasts and the concert and performances enthralled the crowds.

Competitions soared in the 70s. The introduction of the United States Band Championship in 1970 attracted orchestras from near and far. The winner of the first AAA U.S. Band Championship was the UMKC Accordion Orchestra (University of Missouri-Kansas City) directed by Joan C. Sommers, playing Rimsky Korsakov's *Scherzade*. In 1972, the Molinaro Accordion Orchestra under the direction of Linda Soley (Reed) performed Debussy's *Les Fetes* and was awarded the first place award.

In 1971, Maddalena Belfiore became the first female president of the American Accordionists' Association.

Eastern Cup competitions held during the traditional Accordion Week Celebration in November each year brought many new faces to



Pictured at the World's Fair Singer Bowl are left to right: Joe Biviano, Pietro Deiro, Jr., Carmen Carrozza, Charles Magnante, Anthony Ettore and Lois Iorio.

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the competitions. The Eastern Cup championships were held in the greater New York area and bands, ensembles and soloists competed to qualify for the United States Championship categories. The AAA now added United States Championships for soloists in all age categories as well as ensembles and bands.

Diane Schmidt, our representative to the Coupe Mondiale in 1970 won top honors at the competition, which was held in Salzburg, Austria.

In 1976, Maddalena Belfiore was again president and the American Accordionists' Association again hosted the Coupe Mondiale competition in the historic Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC while the nation celebrated its bicentennial. The event was chaired by Maddalena Belfiore and Carmelo Pino.

In 1978 the AAA celebrated its 40th Anniversary at a competition held at the Americana Hotel in New York City. The organization's pride was reflected in the message from then-President

Carmen Carrozza..."In celebrating the 40th anniversary of the American Accordionists' Association, we look back proudly on the great strides that the accordion has made and AAA's significant contribution to these advancements. Accordion enthusiasm is growing continuously -- no longer as the fad or novelty instrument of the 50s, but as a legitimate musical instrument of formidable stature. Today, accordionists are featured soloists and concert performers with levels of artistic achievement parallel to those of other noteworthy musicians..."

In 1979, president Maddalena Belfiore staged an accordion extravaganza in Nashville, TN, where the annual festival was held. Several hundred accordionists played *The Tennessee Waltz* outdoors and were conducted by Maddalena in a "cherry picker". Later, the group presented an award to PeeWee King at the Grand Ol' Opry.

## 1980 - 1990

During the 1980s the AAA's festival format was refined. Competitions continued to grow, Composers Commissioning flourished and before long we were celebrating our 50th Anniversary.

In 1985 Faithe Deffner was elected president and took the AAA festival to Disneyworld in Florida.



Maddalena Belfiore and  
Carmelo Pino  
Co-Chairmen 1976



AAA Governing Board - 1973

1st Row: Theresa Costello, Addie Cere, Elsie Bennett, Maddalena Belfiore, Linda Soley, and Faithe Deffner  
2nd Row: Marcello Roviario, Aldo DeRossi, Julio Giulietti, Emil Baldoni, Louis Iorio, Carmelo Pino, Frank Busso,  
and Carmen Carrozza Top Row: Charles Magnante, Sal Sava and Sid Kowalczyk  
Absent from photo: Joseph Biviano, Tony Dannon, Pietro Deiro, Jr., Anthony Ettore, Eugene Ettore,  
Michael Fernino, Paul Leone, Anthony Mecca and Jacob C. Neupauer.



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There, all the participating accordion orchestras and bands concertized throughout Disney's Magic Kingdom, to be seen and heard by more than 40,000 daily visitors. Disney rewarded the performing musicians with free passes to the rides and shows. A spectacular accordion exposure was the Disney Orchestra's evening concert performance of Accordion Concerto by Francis Ford Coppola, Sr., which featured Donald Hulme (an earlier Coupe Mondiale winner) as accordion soloist.

Special judges for the AAA accordion competitions were Gaby and Fernand LaCroix of Switzerland and AAA members Addie Cere and Aldo DeRossi. During the same year, Mrs. Deffner appointed Dr. William Schimmel to be moderator of a yearly weekend series of lectures and concerts, which have become an ongoing



AAA Board Members attended the 2008 Master Class and Concert Series, Dr. William Schimmel, Moderator. Left to right; Mary Tokarski, Joan Grauman, Linda Soley Reed, Faithe Deffner and Kevin Friedrich.

testament to AAA's farsighted programs and have resulted in annual *New York Times* publicity.

In 1986, President Faithe Deffner arranged an incredible Accordion Fantasy Cruise aboard the ss Galileo to Bermuda. Six hundred accordionists were on deck playing Anchors Aweigh as the liner slipped past the Statue of Liberty in the New York harbor. Bars, function rooms and reception halls were all converted to accordion contest rooms as young participants filled the ship with accordion music all day long. In Bermuda, the many participating accordion bands played in public venues throughout the island. This was the first accordion event to take place aboard a cruise ship, long before such events were popularized for groups.

That same year, the American Accordionists'

Association held an elegant Testimonial Dinner and Dance on May 14, 1986, honoring four distinguished board members. Honorees were Joseph Biviano (Carmelo Pino, presenter), Theresa Costello (Maddalena Belfiore, presenter), Charles Magnante (Carmen Carrozza, presenter) and Jacob Neupauer (Faithe Deffner, presenter). This memorable event took place at the Imperial Manor in Paramus, New Jersey, with Douglas Ward as toastmaster and music by the Billy Costa Trio.

## 1990 - 2000

The 1990s began the resurgence of the accordion as the instrument was being seen in "Rock" bands and with popular musicians of the decade including Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Hootie and the Blow Fish, to name a few. Accordion clubs began springing up throughout the country and enthusiasts were eagerly searching for new music and thirsting for performers to attend their meetings.

From 1992 to 1994, Frank Busso was president and the annual festivals took place in Washington, DC and twice in Lake George, New York, respectively.



The "K" Trio

The AAA added "Ac- cordion Day" to the Eastern Cup Festivals. Accordion Day honored such greats



The late Pietro Deiro, Jr. presented an Accordion Day display honoring his dad, Pietro Deiro, Sr., "The Daddy of the Accordion."



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as Joseph Biviano, Charles Nunzio, Pietro Deiro, Sr. Pietro Frosini and Frank Gaviani for their contributions to the AAA and the accordion. Performers included the Accordion Pops Orchestra directed by



Above: AAA officers, Frank Busso, Linda Soley Reed, and Faithe Deffner in New Orleans; left, AAA President, Faithe Deffner is pictured with the late Pietro Deiro, Jr.



Daniel Desiderio, Carmelo Pino, Eddie Monteiro, Carmen Carrozza, Maddalena Bel-fiore, Marcello Roviario and the "K" Trio.

In the mid-90s, Faithe Deffner again became president of the American Accordionists' Association for six consecutive years during three terms, ably assisted by Frank Busso, Linda Reed, and the late Pietro Diero, Jr. in various administrative capacities. This new administration accepted the challenge to change, innovate, and introduce new concepts:

In 1995, AAA honored accordion great, Bill Palmer, in Houston, Texas, recreating the famed Palmer-Hughes Orchestra in a breathtaking performance; the first Massed Band conducted by Joan Cochran Sommers was publicized in



Frank Busso entertains honoree, Myron Floren in Philadelphia;



Bill Palmer was honored at the 1995 Festival. He is pictured here with his wife, Ruby.

Michal Shapiro (Planet Squeezebox) is pictured with Faithe Deffner and 1996 honoree, Myron Floren.



newspapers and TV coast to coast; participants played out for TV publicity at the Transco Water Wall, AAA's performers entertained in the streets of Galveston, and we initiated the Endless Performance Ballroom in the Club Pub. Publicity

was emphasized to bring the association's activities to the attention of the public.

In 1996, we honored accordion legend, Myron Floren, in Philadelphia with a Concert Tribute (featuring Mat Mathews, Peter Soave, Carmelo Pino, Maddalena Belfiore, The "K" Trio, and Lionel Reekie), and president Faithe Deffner introduced the exciting "Press and Squeeze" Party for the media, Myron Floren concertized with the Tim Laushey Orchestra, the Massed Band and Rosita Lee Studio Showstoppers played at Independence Park while TV cameras rolled.

We celebrated 1996 as "The Year of the Accordion," and were seen on "Good Morning America" (ABC-TV). "The Year of the Accordion," resulted in a bevy of publicity for the instrument, including mention by Charlie Brown in Charles Schultz's syndicated cartoon,

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In 1997, we honored AAA board members for distinguished service. Left to right: (1st row) Aldo DeRossi, Maddalena Belfiore, Elsie M. Bennett, and the late Pietro Deiro, Jr. (top row) Anthony Ettore, Louis lorio, and Marcello Roviario. Absent from photo was honoree Carmen Carrozza.

“Peanuts.” Additionally that year we paid homage to Michal Shapiro for her contributions to accordion recognition through her CD trilogy, Planet Squeezebox that mentioned the promotional efforts of AAA through its president, Faithe

Deffner.

In 1997, we honored eight AAA board members (Maddalena Belfiore, Elsie M. Bennett, Pietro Deiro, Jr., Carmen Carrozza, Aldo DeRossi,



The United States Army Strolling Strings, accordion, Manny Bobenreith, top left.



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Anthony Ettore, Louis Iorio and Marcello Roviario) in Washington, DC. The Tribute Concert featuring performers Eddie Monteiro, Carmelo Pino, Peter Soave, Mario Tacca and Mary Mancini, The "K" Trio and Lionel Reekie.

The Testimonial Banquet was outstanding! Festive balloons and glitter adorned the ballroom at the Sheraton City Centre Hotel in Washington, DC. Entertainment included strolling musicians

Cabaret Night was introduced as an annual event. Hundreds of accordionists play *en masse* in front of the Capitol building and Fox TV broadcast live from the midst of the festival during their two-hour morning show with Tony Perkins interviewing our participants and featuring accordion performances.

In 1998, Faithe Deffner was president when the AAA celebrated its 60th Anniversary Jubilee in

Joan Cochran Sommers conducts the massed band at the 1998 New Orleans Festival celebrating the 60th anniversary of the American Accordionists' Association.



throughout the evening, the Massed Band conducted by Joan Cochran Sommers, the Staten Island Accordion Orchestra under the direction of Frank Busso performed "Americana" and the highlight of the evening was a performance by The United States Army Strolling Strings with accordionist Manny

New Orleans where the Massed Band played in Jackson Square, the Jubilee Concert featured Art Van Damme, Mat Mathews, Carmelo Pino, the UMKC Accordion Orchestra, The "K" Trio, and Ray (Elvis Presley) Rue, and the Battle of the Bands (with accordion) was introduced and won by Dwayne Doopsie's Cajun Band.

Later that year the "Search for the Hottest Accordionist" again brought young Cajun artist Dwayne Doopsie to the forefront with his energetic performance in Branson, MO. The AAA in conjunction with the Lawrence Welk Organization sponsored this event.

A special 60th Anniversary party took place at the Beatrice Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village. The Beatrice has hosted many AAA meetings from the 1960s until this restaurant closed many decades later.

In 1999, President Faithe Deffner brought the



Bobbenrieth.



# AAA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary



Dr. Helmi Harrington gives a workshop in front of "A World of Accordions Museum" display in Nashville.

festival to Nashville where we honored "America's Polka King" and Grammy winner, Frank Yankovic, with a Tribute Concert featuring the Don Lipovac Ensemble, Tony Dannon, the Jeff Lisenby Trio, Accordion Concertina Music Ensemble, The "K" Trio, and LynnMarie Rink. The Massed Band performed at the State Capitol in Nashville drawing considerable press coverage.

Recognizing the historic importance of an accordion museum, the AAA became affiliated with the World of Accordions Museum and a traveling display of these historic instruments has since become part of our festival, brought annually by founder and curator Dr. Helmi Harrington.

### 2000-Present

In 2000, AAA's Millennium Festival took place in Washington, DC where the US Army Band, featuring accordionist, Manuel Bobenrieth, performed. The Millennium Festival Orchestra was led by symphony



Harley Jones  
Accordions  
Worldwide

conductor, Gary Daverne. The Massed Band garnered publicity in front of the Capitol Dome. Helmi Harrington's World of Accordions Museum displayed a fascinating array of instrument history. The "Press and Squeeze" Party, Cabaret Night, the Millennium Concert, the Endless Performance Ball-room, and an Accordion Sum-mit Meeting all contributed to the festival excitement and success.

A special award was presented to Harley Jones of New Zealand, the founder and director of Accordions Worldwide. This mammoth site has grown to be the cyberspace voice for all bellows-driven instruments and instrumentalists.

At the end of her term, President Faithe Deffner told the participants, "It is gratifying to see the success of our efforts as the accordion soars to new heights of pop-ularity. Our efforts to bring this



Dr. Carmelo Pino

# AAA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary

magnificent instrument to public attention have been fruitful, but it is the accordion's diversity which has made it a living presence in the traditional, the contemporary, and the cutting edge of music around the world."

Dr. Carmelo Pino ascended to the presidency and the 2001 festival moved west to Cleveland where the first PolkaFest drew a capacity audience. In addition, many other regular festival events took place.

In March 2002, president Pino conceived the idea for AAA to present Lifetime Achievement Awards, the first of which went to Carmen



Magnante exhibit opens at A World of Accordions Museum

Museum," for the opening of the Charles Magnante Exhibit. (The Magnante family has donated the Charles Magnante musical legacy to the museum. It is a "must see" for every accordionist.)

More surprises were in store for the festival attendees as the Skeets Langley Ensemble entertained at our Gala Banquet. An all-star concert was held on Sunday. It featured performances by Carmelo Pino, Peter Soave, Dee Langley and The "K" Trio.

In September of 2002 we were honored to have noted Russian accord-ionist, Friedrich Lips, perform in concert.

In 2003 the AAA cele-brated its 65th anniversary at the Philadelphia festival featuring the Polkafest



Friedrich Lips



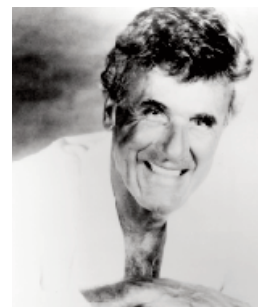
2002 AAA Festival in Minneapolis brought Larry Malmberg to perform at the Luncheon Concert, above - The Skeets Langley Trio performed for the Gala Banquet, and far right Dee Langley coordinated an all-star concert.



Carrozza. A cash gift from Steve Stolaruk was turned into the Carmen Carrozza Scholarship Fund to establish an ongoing program.

Moving further west, president Carmelo Pino held the 2002 festival in Minnea-polis and appointed Faithe Deffner as contest chair, to organize the event.. What a warm wel-come we received as the accordionists of Minnesota embraced the AAA! Larry Malmberg (teacher of Skeets Langley) performed at our Lunch-eon Concert. The highlight of the Festival was a trip to Duluth/Superior to visit Dr. Helmi Harrington's "A World of Accordions

under the presidency of Carmelo Pino. Accordions filled Independence Park as the Massed Band played in front of the Liberty Bell. This celebration featured several concerts with top-notch performers including Lou Coppola and the Stereo Strings, and the Accordion Pops Orchestra, under the direction of Daniel Desiderio.



Dick Contino



# AAA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary



Magnanini Winery - 2003 Carrozza Scholarship Dinner, annual fundraiser

In November, the AAA presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to Dick Contino, an ever-popular accordionist. The CUNY Program of Contemporary Works took place October 10, 2003 at the CUNY Graduate Center in Manhattan.

The first fundraiser for the Carmen Carrozza Scholarship Fund took place in March, 2003 at the Magnanini Winery in New York where it met with great success and subsequently became an annual AAA event.

In 2004, a Master Class and Concert Series was held at the Tenri Cultural Center in NYC, presented by Dr.



Vyacheslav Semyonov premiered *Divertimento* dedicated to Faith Deffner

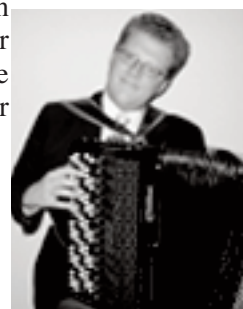


William Schimmel. The AAA also presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to founding father, Charles Nunzio.

Russian concert artist and world acclaimed accord-ionist-composer Vyacheslav Semyonov was featured in a concert at the Greenwich House School of Music on Barrows Street in New York where he premiered several pieces including one he had written for Faith Deffner



Frank Marocco (top) and Alexander Poeluev (center) were guest artists at 2004 Festival. Left - Havard Svendsrud of Norway winner of the Stolaruk Entertainment Competition.





# AAA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary



Above: Frank Busso conducts the 2004 AAA Massed Band at Quincy Market in Boston.

Right: Aldo DeRossi was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award.



in honor of her many successful terms as AAA president.

skills. Thanks to the generosity of Steve Stolaruk, twelve thousand dollars in prize money went to winners in the Stolaruk International Entertainment Competition.



Linda Soley Reed conducted the Massed Band in Frankenmuth, MI in 2005.

Far left, AAA member Linda Lee Brown helped coordinate the visit to the Bavarian Village.

The festival, held in Boston, brought music to famous Quincy Market. Jazz accordionist Frank Marocco, Coupe Mondiale champion Alexander Poeluev, and many others delighted the audiences daily with their superb



Steve Stolaruk presents International Entertainment Competition prizes. Top right: Julian Labro of Michigan was the top prize winner.

President Dr. Carmelo Pino presented a Lifetime Achievement award to Aldo DeRossi, a member of AAA since it was founded in 1938.

Linda Soley Reed presided over AAA's 2005 festival in Dearborn, Michigan. The addition of the International Entertainment Competition brought contestants from everywhere. The \$15,000 in prize money for this category



Tony Dannon received AAA's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005.



Frank Busso, Jr. selected accordionist for the US Air Force. Young John Moceo appeared with Ellen Degeneres

## AAA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary



Eddie Monteiro and Frank Marrocco jammin' it up at the Lifetime Achievement Award Banquet at LaFiesta in New Jersey.

was donated by our friend and supporter, Steve Stolaruk in memory of his wife, Vivian Vivio Stolaruk. Concert performers included Linda Lee Brown, Stella Allison and Joan Grauman, Ray Battani, Bart Beninco, Helmi Harrington and Carolyn Carver at the Luncheon Concert. The Gala Concert featured, Dick Contino, Carmelo Pino, The "K" Trio, Peter Soave, Tony Dannon and Joe Cerrito and Madeleine Soave. The premiere of a work commissioned for the accordion, written by John

Franceschina in honor of Elsie Bennett, was performed by Peter Soave at the concert.

AAA paid homage to one of its outstanding members, Michigan's own jazz giant and teacher, Tony Dannon. He received the coveted AAA Lifetime Achievement Award.

In the spring of 2005, two young accordionists from Staten Island, NY made the news. Frank Busso, Jr. was selected as the accordionist for the United States Air Force Strolling Strings, and 12 year old, John Moceo, a student of Frank Busso, Sr., was a featured guest on the *Ellen Degeneres Show* on TV.



Gary Daverne



Mary Tokarski

Music filled the air as guests honored the legendary Frank Marrocco on June 4, 2006 in New Jersey. Many traveled from as far as California to pay



2006 Massed Band at Niagara Falls conducted by Frank Busso





## *AAA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary*

*These photos were all taken at the 2007 Coupe Mondiale*



Faithe Deffner and former CIA General Secretary,  
Walter Maurer (Austria)



Faithe Deffner, Heather Masfield (New Zealand),  
Frank Busso, Jr., Frank Busso, Sr., and CIA President  
Kevin Friedrich



The 2007 Massed Band appeared before the State Capitol Building in Washington, DC during the Coupe Mondiale.  
Pictured in forefront are Faithe Deffner, 2007 Coupe Mondiale Coordinator and Frank Busso, conductor.



## AAA Celebrates its 70th Anniversary



Linda Soley Reed, Faithe Deffner and Joan Cochran Sommers at Coupe Mondiale 2007 breakfast meeting

homage to the great musician as he received the AAA Lifetime Achievement Award. Guests included other Lifetime Achievement honorees, Carmen Carrozza, and Charles Nunzio. President, Linda Reed hosted the event.

The spectacular Niagara Falls were the backdrop for the Massed Band at AAA's annual festival of 2006, which took place in Buffalo, NY. Symphony conductor, Gary Daverne, of Auckland, New Zealand conducted the AAA orchestra which included featured soloist, Mary Tokarski. As at every AAA festival, excellent workshops were given by noted accordionists. That year's workshop leaders were Dr. Robert Young McMahan, Sid Kowalczyk, Eddie Monteiro, Karen Adam, Joe Cerrito, and Tony Lovello.



In 2007, every effort was directed at the Coupe Mondiale

Maddalena Belfiore



Frank Busso and Linda Soley Reed perform Maddalena's Pan Polka

which we hosted in the year of the 60th Anniversary of CIA, in August in Alexandria, VA. The AAA, ATG, and CIA pooled their resources to make this an amazing success (see separate article). AAA President Linda Soley Reed, ATG President Joan Cochran Sommers, and 2007 CIA Honorary Vice President and Coupe Mondiale Coordinator, Faithe Deffner, did an outstanding job to make this event spectacular. Special thanks to the Washington Metropolitan Accordion Society for their assistance throughout the Coupe Mondiale week, and for hosting the well-attended International "Afterhours" party for all attendees.

As the American Accordionists' Association embarked on its 70th year in 2008, one beautiful celebration of this anniversary took place in June at the Westchester Community College in New York. This celebration, "Accordion Extravaganza," dedicated to the memory of Maddalena Belfiore, was filled with music and warm memories of years spent working to fulfill the dreams of the founders of our inspirational organization. Maddalena's endless, enthusiastic support of the AAA has greatly helped to make it what it is today. Entertainers at this memorial concert included: Master of Ceremonies, Frank Busso, Sr., AAA President Linda S. Reed, the Accordion Pops Orchestra, under the direction of Daniel Desiderio, Bob McMahan, Beverly Roberts Curnow, Joe Cerrito, Mary Tokarski, Mario Tacca and Mary Mancini, Bill Schimmel, "The Amazing Accordion Kings" (Angelo DiPippo, Frank Toscano, Manny Corallo), with dinner entertainment provided by Dominic Karcic and the Continental Sounds Orchestra.

Further celebration of this special anniversary will take place in Arlington, Virginia in August at the AAA's 2008 festival. We wish to thank all who continue, year after year, to support our efforts to bring the accordion honor and prestige in all areas of music.

It is our firm belief that the most meaningful accordion accomplishments are only possible through the expanded scope of national organizations such as the American Accordionists' Association. Too often we ask what the accordion associations have done for us, while the more pertinent question of what we have done for our organizations is ignored. Organizations are not more than the cumulative muscle of their members.

National organizations are simply vehicles to initiate and sustain programs of collective magnitude, beyond the limited scope of individuals or clubs. National



# AAA 70th Anniversary Celebration

## *Accordion Extravaganza*

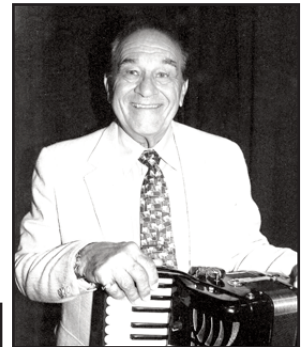
*70th Anniversary Celebration dedicated to the memory of  
Maddalena Belfiore Greco*



Mario Tacca &  
Mary Mancini



The Amazing Accordion Kings  
Frank Toscano, Angelo DiPippo and Manny Corallo



Joe Cerrito



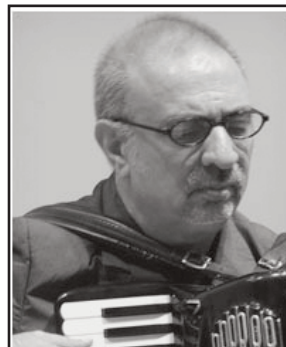
The Accordion Pops Orchestra, Conducted by Daniel Desiderio



Mary Tokarski



Beverly Roberts Curnow



Dr. William Schimmel



Dr. Robert McMahan

*Saturday, June 21, 2008 • 2:00 p.m.  
Academic Arts Theatre at Westchester Community College  
75 Grasslands Road • Valhalla, NY 10595*