

AAA Overview of July 2010 Festival

By Mary Tokarski, Contest Chairperson

Welcome! The AAA sincerely hopes you will join us for the FUN and terrific musical events we have planned for you at the Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel, 4500 Lindle Road in Hershey, Pennsylvania from July 14-18, 2010. Hotel rates are \$109 (plus tax) per night (single, double, triple, or quad), and can be reserved at www.sheraton.com/harrisburg or by calling 717-564-5511.

Below is a general overview of each event, so you can plan to take part in as many as you can. **MASSED BAND** at Hershey Park – Join the AAA in presenting the accordion to the general public in this performance of “Candy Kisses” (in honor of Hershey’s Kisses, of course) right AT Hershey Park. AAA Vice President and Comptroller, Frank Busso, will conduct the Massed Band and coordinate the concert in the park. There will also be a concert event planned for some time during the day (details to be announced). The AAA has arranged for special ticket prices for our participants to spend the entire day at Hershey Park. Make your reservations right away!

FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA – This year, Dr. Emilian Badea will be our Guest Conductor for the Festival Orchestra. Dr. Badea is a bassoonist, accordionist, musicologist, conductor and educator with a master of music and doctor of musical arts degree from Boston University. He graduated from one of Romania’s most prestigious music academies. We look forward to some great rehearsal sessions, and a rewarding concert experience as the Festival Orchestra entertains at the AAA Banquet on Saturday evening, July 17th. The selections this year will include; “Libertango”, “Spanish Rumors”, “One of Those Songs”, and “Winter” by Vivaldi featuring soloist Chris Gorton.

COMPETITION CATEGORIES for Festival – Categories for competition are as varied as there are ways of playing the accordion! Here are a few distinguishing thoughts about the categories: **Open Solos** are for those students who prefer to choose their own music for performance. The music can be classical or any standard edition of accordion repertoire. **Original Solo Divisions** are ONLY for music selections that are WRITTEN specifically for Accordion. For the **Ethnic divisions**, the performer may include music of any ethnic origin, i.e. (but not limited to) polka, tango, mazurka, Balkan, etc. **Age divisions** for all Open Solos are as noted in the rules and regulations.

Standard Solo divisions are included for those students who prefer to perform one of the pieces off the “Music List for Standard Categories”. These divisions are by level, rather than by age. This way, students can compete at the study level he/she is currently working in, allowing even the beginning student a chance to participate in the Festival. This also allows students to hear other performers who are more advanced, creating an incentive for improvement. **Duet, Ensemble and Band categories** are included on both the Open and Standard levels. Students who compete in the Open Solo Divisions are not allowed to enter standard categories. **Memorization** is required for all solo divisions, but NOT required for Evaluation, Duet and Ensemble or Band categories.

There are also specialized categories available to the contestant. They include the **U.S. Piano Accordion Solo** and the **U.S. Virtuoso Solo**, which are stepping stones for entering the **CIA Coupe Mondiale (World Championship)**. Requirements are more demanding than the Open Solo divisions. The contestant must perform a program of music for these divisions (see specific rules, as times and requirements differ).

The Elsie M. Bennett Composition Competition allows the “composer” in each of us the opportunity to submit original music in any genre. The general purpose of this competition is to encourage students of the accordion (and those who would like to work with and explore the many voices of the accordion) to create literature for accordion, either as a solo instrument, or with other instruments. There is no directive for the style of the composition, ONLY that it is written for the acoustic accordion, not electronic accordion.

The Maddalena Belfiore Entertainment Competition for Female Accordionists is sponsored by the Greco Family in memory of Maddalena Belfiore. Please note, one of the following selections must be included in the program – Jolly Caballero or Olive Blossoms, both by Frosini.

This year will also feature the U.S. Electronic Entertainment Division, for those who perform on the myriad of electronic instruments that are out there. Music for these divisions is for Entertainment purposes – and fun!

Cash prizes are awarded for the U.S. Piano Accordion Competition, the Elsie M. Bennett Composition Competition, the Maddalena Belfiore Entertainment Competition for Female Accordionists and the U.S. Electronic Entertainment Division. See rules and regulations for specific amounts.

Don't miss the excitement – and by all means, come play for us!

THE EXHIBITS: Exhibitors will bring their wares for us to peruse and try. Exhibits will officially open on Wednesday, July 14th and will be followed by the Press and Squeeze Party. The newspapers, radio and TV have all been invited to attend this gala and receive press kits containing the highlights of the Festival. All registered participants are encouraged to bring their accordions and perform at the Press and Squeeze which will be followed by a Jam Session. So come on down, bring your accordion and jam away!

The event will feature numerous performance venues including a CABARET night on Thursday evening; Luncheon Concert on Friday; Gala Concert on Friday evening; Awards Concert on Saturday afternoon and of course, the Gala Banquet on Saturday evening. Some of the scheduled performers will include The Alex Meixner Band, Vladimir Mollov, accordionist with Duquesne University's famous Tamburitzans, a world premiere performance of a brand new AAA Commissioned work by Roger Davidson written for accordion, flute, piano and cello featuring Contest Chairman, Mary Tokarski, The Busso Trio, Beverly Roberts Curnow, young accordion artist and winner of the 2009 Piano Accordion Competition and Elsie M. Bennett Composition Competition, Martynas Levickis from Lithuania. And these are just a few of the outstanding performances we have planned.

WORKSHOPS are always an important part of the AAA Festival. This year's agenda will include: “Inside The Judges Head” – a panel of teachers and adjudicators to answer those nagging questions – what is the judge looking for?; The Life of Art Van Damme, presented by Ray Oreggia – a look at the life of Art Van Damme who recently passed away; “An Accordion! What Is That?” – newly released early childhood reader all about our beloved instrument, presented by author Karen Malan-Uribe, illustrator Joan Geller Grauman and narrator and accordionist Mary Tokarski.; and MORE

On Friday morning, the AAA will host a group of children from the Hershey School to enjoy a fun-filled morning featuring the accordion. A hands-on session to try instruments as well as a mini lesson is planned. The youngsters will also participate in the "An Accordion! What Is That?" workshop and will visit competition and exhibit rooms.

The music-filled week will conclude with Saturday evening's Gala Banquet featuring the performance of the Festival Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Emilian Badea. There will be an Open meeting of the American Accordionists' Association following Sunday's Breakfast, where observations, suggestions and participation from everyone is encouraged to help us "fine-tune" future events.

If you have any further questions, please check out the AAA website at www.ameraccord.com , or contact Contest Chairperson, Mary Tokarski, at mary.tokarski@comcast.net .