

26th Annual National Accordion Convention Summary

Westin Park Central Hotel - Dallas, Texas - March 7-9, 2013

It was another great year for the **26th Annual National Accordion Convention held in Dallas, Texas at the Westin Park Central Hotel on March 7-9, 2013**. NAA President, **Norman Seaton**, and NAA Officers and Board Members did a superb job of organizing and managing this fun-filled 3-day adventure with workshops, concerts, vendor demonstrations and more. We were pleased to have **Yiru Liu** as honored guest as the Chinese Accordion Ambassador. She is an accomplished bayan and piano accordion player and represented China at the 2011 Coupe Modiale.

Thursday activities included the now famous **Accordion Band Camp** with the **NAA Youth Band** and **Recreational Fun Band** directed by **Dick Albreski**, the rock and roll celebration of American Bandstand music directed by **Gordon Kohl**, and the light classical accordion band led by **Jessica Faltot**. The all-day band practice was punctuated by the evening performances. The Youth Band has shown much improvement over the years, with more of the kids playing solos. The youth participants included: **Bria Smith, Hannah Swiney, Becca Smith, Isaac Elliott, Timothy Granger, Job Elliott, Abigail Bringham and Madz Smith**. The group performed: *This is our Song for You, Polish Medley, Que Sera Sera, The Accordion March and Dark Eyes*. Each of these young individuals exhibited growth in their performance skills undoubtedly encouraged by their teachers: **Dick Albreski and Greg Klugiewicz**. Albreski and Klugiewicz have done a remarkable job working with these young folks. Albreski continues to teach in Oklahoma, continuing his life's work with young accordionists.

In addition to the Youth Band, **Albreski directed the Recreational Fun Band** (with about 60 participants) with light music he arranged including *Dill Pickle Rag, My Angel Polka, Gospel Medley, Just Because Polka, Schneewalzer, and Western Medley*. Participants remarked how much fun they had being with their friends and playing their favorite tunes.

Gordon Kohl's Rock-n-roll Band performed music from the great American Bandstand era with tunes including: *Ring of Fire, Rock Around the Clock, Chantilly Lace, Special Angel, Go Away Little Girl, Proud Mary, Blue Suede Shoes, Bad Leroy Brown, and All I have to Do is Dream*. Kohl created all of the musical arrangements and directed the group. The band included keyboard, guitar and drums to round out the rock-n-roll sound. Thanks go to Gordon Kohl for his dedication to our accordionists.

Jessica Faltot introduced a Light Classical ensemble which performed: *Dance of the Buffoons* by Rimsky-Korsakov and *The William Tell Overture* by Rossini. Faltot's direction was light-hearted and fun and the audience enjoyed hearing the ensemble's performance. **Rebecca Rafliff** gave a workshop on Accordion ABC's teaching folks to play with more feeling and dynamics. Later that evening, Faltot moderated the **Circle of Champions** which featured a number of accordionists performing including: **Jessica Faltot and Rebecca Ratliff (duet), John Kovach, Eleanor Boyd, Sharon Fox, Lou LeBrun, Gordon Kohl, Mario Pedone, Mario Pedone with Laura Niland, Gregory and Elena Feinstein, Joe Recchia, Debra Peters, and Alvaro Barsi, and Yiru Liu of China**, among others. Later **Debra Peters** continued with her popular ensemble playing easy listening music at McNelly's pub each evening throughout the convention with **Sharon Seaton** on keyboard.

Friday was filled with excitement that began with accordion exhibitors: Debra Peters and Accordion Things, Castle Accordion, Hohner, Petosa, and Giullietti Accordions. **Joe Petosa** and **Nick Ballarini** were very busy showing some of the latest accordion styles including "lightweight models". The support of vendors and dealers is greatly appreciated. Roland was busy with workshops throughout the day on Friday and Saturday which was conducted by **Ian Fries** and **Richard Noel** and well as **Joe Recchia**. **Dan Orza** presented "Conducting Techniques", **Richard Noel** continued with his "Musicality Workshop" while **Alvaro Barsi** from Florida showed off his "Public Awareness" workshop. **Tony Lovello** showed off his latest soundtracks and later Friday evening present his own Lovello Concert as only the "Sultan of Shake" can do! **Shelia Lee** and **Robert Rodriguez** presented workshops on Conjunto, cumbia, huapango, and Tex-Mex music. Shelia works with youth in the Houston area and continues to promote accordion music through regional workshops and competitions. **Nick Ballarini** presented a jazz workshop with Dave Brubeck style jazz. **Jessica Faltot** presented a very popular workshop on 60s and 70s music, demonstrating bass styles, transitions and rhythms suited to your level of play. **Joe Recchia** presented a Jazz workshop while **Nick Bratkovich** made us work hard on our "timing" with odd rhythms of Serbian and Croatian music. Bratkovich continued with dance music in typical Croatian style and taught us several popular tunes to add to our repertoire. During the entire convention **Arlyn Visentin** was monitoring the *Fifteen Minutes of Fame* in the hallways with a rotation of different accordion players just having fun.

Amy Jo Sawyer was skillful with her presentation on Jazz music, demonstrating subtle changes in a basic music piece which can change the style from simply embellishment to a full-out jazz free-style. Amy Jo is a smaster accordionist known for her smooth jazz style. **Kim Clowe** presented a workshop on Southern Gospel music, while Flash

Mob Dance Training with **Kaitlin McMaryion** to the tune of "Sugartime. It was a first-time performance for the flash-mob. The Convention was also featuring You-tube performances and gearing up for internet presentations. The evening ended with the **National Polka Show** and music provided by **Texas Sound Connection** and dancing throughout the evening. Participants had time to relax, talk and enjoy the dancing while gearing up for Saturday.

Saturday workshops began early with **Patricia Bartell** presenting the Hohner music program: *Simply Music for Accordion*. This new method of teaching bridges the gap with students of all ages, using a kinesthetic approach to teaching. Students are able to see, hear, touch and play music learning with patterns transitioning to reading music and eventually leading to performance. You can learn more about this exciting new program by contacting Hohner Accordion. **Charlie Crittenden** demonstrated his favorite style with Polka Power in his workshop. **Laura Niland** moderated the first *Women and the Accordion Workshop*. The discussion panel included: **Amy Jo Sawyer, Sharon Seaton, Judy Dillard, and Debra Peters**. Talking about their experiences as women accordionists. The workshop began with a historical perspective of women and the accordion including such greats as **Alice Hall** (jazz accordionist) and **Viola Turpeinen**, known as the first recorded woman accordionist in America. **March 8th is hailed as International Women's Day**, and what better way to celebrate than to recognize the contributions women have made to the World of Accordion.

Mario Pedone presented a Workshop on playing with backtracks. **Joel Guzman** presented a fabulous workshop on Xtreme Diatonic Accordion with audience participation. MECCA, represented by **Dr. Daniel Kott**, was present all-day with youth participation in Texas Gospel music, Bluegrass music, Clogging, a youth parade and jam session. **Joel Guzman** and our own Zydeco gal, **Debra Peters** presented a popular workshop on zydeco and Texas style dance music. **Dick Albreski** showed off his latest young accordionists with the Youth Show. Later **Gordon Kohl** presented two workshops on Klezmer music demonstrating how to change musical styles. Gordon Kohl did a phenomenal job at the convention this year with his work with the Rock-n-Roll band and numerous workshops and concerts supporting the NAA Convention.

Debra Peters continued working her magic with Zydeco Play-Along, while **Tony Lovello** demonstrated his "showmanship" workshop with the usual flair. The Youth Parade and Show continued in the afternoon. Meanwhile, competitions continued for the JamFest with both adult and youth competitors. This year's winner of the Roland accordion was **Rebecca Huck**. Rebecca loves playing the accordion and has a natural affinity to playing accordion music. Congratulations to all the competitors. **Dr. Ian Fries** continued to work with Roland accordionists and Patricia Bartell continued with Intense Training using *Simply Music for Accordion*. Hohner provided a pizza party for the kids in honor of their participation at NAA this year.

The Saturday evening banquet was delicious as always and **Lou LeBrun** did her best to keep us entertained with her bouncy style. We heard many accordionists and ended the banquet with "the accordion train" sounding the end to a wonderful weekend. The Post-Concert and all night Party began with a magnificent concert. We heard **Patricia Bartell and Joel Guzman** with duet tango performances. **Joel Guzman and Sarah Fox** (vocals) playing huapango rhythms and Guzman playing *Besame Mucho* and *Neuvo Laredo*. **Joel Guzman and Debra Peters** performed a vallenato style. **Gordon Kohl** played songs from Cold Play including "Clocks" as well as polkas, Western music and Misty demonstrating his wide-range musical virtuosity. **Amy Jo Sawyer** soloed Astor Piazzola tango and music for the late jazz accordionist, Frank Moracco, *A Ballad for Frank*, written by Sawyer. Her performance of "Two Ladies Gossiping" was memorable with Sawyer's own interjected comments. Later, **Nick Braktovich** wowed us with his Serbian and Macedonian musical wonders keeping our feet tapping. **Richard Noel** presented his version of *Sound of Music* and *In the Mood* as well as *Pink Panther* and *Phantom of the Opera* on the Roland V-Accordion. Noel's mannerism with the Pink Panther tune gave the audience a chuckle as it was thoroughly fun to watch. **Mario Pedone** presented his Atomic Dance song and played some sing-along music. **Jessica Faltot and Rebecca Ratliff** played duet pieces. The quintet group with **Jessica Faltot, Rebecca Ratliff, Amy Jo Sawyer and John Kovach** on accordion accompanied by a keyboard player and drummer performed fantastic musical sections for the Grand Finale complete with a spectacular light show to end the evening concert. It was a phenomenal performance that brought the audience to a standing ovation. Later, **Yiru Liu** of China returned to play a final selection to end our 26th Annual National Accordion Convention. The evening continued with jam sessions in the hallways as we said our goodbyes to new-found friends.

We wish to thank the Board members of the National Accordion Convention: **Norman Seaton, Greg Klugiewicz, Judy Dillard, Nick Ballarini, Susie Thennes, Louise and Bill Kucera, Sharon Seaton, Chett Warzusen, Nancy Bernstein, and Tom Faulkner** for their work to make this convention successful. Much thanks go to all the workshop presenters, vendors and participants who made the Convention a memorable experience for all. We thank the Westin Park Central Hotel staff for their support of our Convention. Every year is a learning experience which we cherish. Each of us has brought home a wealth of information and knowledge to share with our fellow accordionists. We all look forward to another year with our dear friends and hope to see everyone at the **27th Annual National Accordion Convention on March 5-8, 2014**.



The 2013 National Accordion Association Youth Accordion Orchestra is led by Dick Al-breski. This year's participants include: Bria Smith, Hannah Swiney, Becca Smith, Isaac Elliott, Timothy Granger, Job Elliott, Abigail Bringham and Madz Smith.

This year, two students received accordions donated by patrons of the National Accordion Association. Congratulations and enjoy your accordion!



Left: Job Elliott, NAA Youth Orchestra member, performs a solo .

Right: Laura Niland, moderator for the Women and the Accordion Workshop. Panel participants include: Sharon Seaton, Amy Jo Sawyer, Debra Peters and Judy Dillard



Left: At the far right is Edith Kneupper of San Antonio enjoying her Fifteen Minutes of Fame with fellow NAA musicians.