

April 2024

Sunday, April 21, 2024

♪ ♪ **SFAC Accordions Live!** ♪ ♪

LIVE & In-Person!

Steve Albini

THE SFAC "JAM BAND" WILL GATHER
BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

ALL ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE

Chetcuti Community Room - Millbrae, CA

2:00 pm Doors Open for Club Jam Band

Steve Albini's Performance at 3:30 pm

\$10 members / \$15 non-members

Youth free when accompanied by a parent

*SFAC Members will receive **ZOOM** link via email*



Steve Albini is a musician and singer from the San Francisco Bay Area. His live performances span Italian, world, jazz and Latin American genres. He has performed throughout the U.S. and Europe. His southern Italian roots are strongly reflected through his music.

As a studio musician, Steve is often called by producers and artists to add his touch to their projects. He has performed at events for many famous celebrities and politicians.

Steve also works together with accordionist Tatiana Semichastnaya. Their current project is the World music group IL SOLE. Steve is also a Roland Artist and Clinician.



Another Tour de Force by Alicia Jo Straka

Robert Cooperstein

As I point out every time I volunteer to write up an SFAC musical program review, I am not a musician and do not read sheet music. I still remember from the 1960s how to recognize and play guitar chords and identify common progressions; but not so much for French musette pieces, like the ones Alicia Jo Straka so blissfully played for us in March, her self-said favorite type of music.

Therefore, this program review cannot and will not read like ones written by SFAC musician-authors – nothing about glissando, registers, crescendo, and the like. Alas, I do at least know what a bellows shake is, but I don't think Alicia used that particular crowd-pleaser. Twice she called attention to the fact she had ended songs with her bellows out! **Um, I was shocked!** She made fun of herself for having done so, stating this was a "lack of showmanship, but I'm not competing anymore!"

That's a good thing for the competition accordionists out there, since they won't have to trump Alicia Jo Straka. Having seen her play for the SFAC no fewer than 3 times prior to this month, I can testify she only competes with earlier versions of herself. An accomplished accordion player since childhood, it's Alicia's singing that to my ears has gone through the most stunning evolution. I will point out examples of this when I actually get to her performance.

Because it was Saint Patrick's Day, Alicia started out with a medley of three standard Irish tunes, two of which were jig



tunes (*Castle Donovan* and *Merrily Kiss the Quaker*). Another tune inserted in the middle (*Shebag Shemore*) was slow and peacefully wistful. Having paid respect to St. Patty's Day, it was obvious she couldn't wait to get to what she "really likes", French music. She started out with a jazzy *Que reste-t-il de nos amours*, which was familiar to me as the Sinatra recording *I Wish You Love* (many others have also recorded this version). The original French version was



popularized by Charles Trenet, "the French Sinatra" according to Phillippe, a French student of mine in the 1980s who made me aware of Trenet. Alicia's polished singing was on full display in this song, full of artful inflections and unexpected cadence changes. I heard so much Billie Holiday in her voice, maybe a hint of Cab Calloway. My father once told me that he had met Holiday at the Apollo Theater in New York.

One good musette deserves another, hence Alicia's next selection, *Le Balajo*. When I see a French word I do not know (which is most of them, since I studied French in grade school so long ago), I just gotta look it up – so I did.

*The rue de Lappe, a stone's throw from the Place de la Bastille, is one of the most iconic streets for Parisian nightlife. The **Balajo**, situated at No. 9, has been there since 1935 and remains an institution for all night owls and dance lovers!*

I was so happy we got a polka next (*Tyrolean Echoes*, first recorded on New Year's Eve, 1909!), because as Alicia said of polkas, "they are fun and it's an accordion". One reason I was so happy being treated to a joyous polka was because I immediately saw an opportunity to revive a column that intermittently popped up in the SFAC newsletter years ago called "Accordion Encounters". Elaine and I had had a chance to see Mollie B. and her band Squeeze Box play in Pinellas Park, Florida, just a few months ago.



Next was an original, *As Long as I'm with You*, a sweet love song that Alicia dedicated to her husband. It sure sounded like a show tune to me, right out of a Broadway musical, with some knock-out cabaret style chords. This song is featured on a CD she did in a recording studio in Boston at the height of the pandemic. (Later in her program she played another original composition from this CD, *Musette à Paris*, the sheet music for which is available at her web site, <https://www.aliciajostraka.com>).

Next, it was back to Ireland for a medley of *Galway Girl*, "a pop song with folk roots"; and a reel called *Drowsy Maggie*, which I looked up to find that a reel has four beats to a measure with emphasis on the first and third beats. Oh.

I nearly jumped out of my chair (well, emerged from an anti-ergonomic slump on the couch) at the first 2 notes of Alicia's next selection, *Petite Fleur (Little Flower)*. I knew this song well from my early childhood, when it was an instru-

Continued on next page ...



Continued - Another Tour de Force by Alicia Jo Straka

mental hit song heard over and over again on the AM radio. I eventually learned it had been first recorded by the brilliant jazz musician Sidney Bechet in 1952. Alicia performed it with French lyrics that the web told me had been added to the original recording later on.

Alicia was clearly so moved playing her next selection, *Don't Know Why*, that she was



unable to speak for a full 12 seconds (I timed it) after completing it. I looked up the lyrics to better understand why this had been the case, and interpreted the song to be an uber-tragic tale of a romantic connection gone bad. I have put a poignant verse in a textbox to exemplify the depth of composer Norah Jones' despair. As Alicia rendered this song, it was clear that she was not so much playing the accordion as the accordion was playing her. That was obvious throughout her set, but particularly so during this gut-wrenching song.

*Out across the endless sea
I would die in ecstasy
But I'll be a bag of bones
Driving down the road alone
My heart is drenched in wine
But you'll be on my mind forever*

Perhaps to relieve the tension, Alicia followed with an airy, beautiful masterpiece that all accordion lovers love, *La Valse d'Amélie* (Yann Tiersen), from the movie *Amélie*, "getting older but still very fun and the music is amazing." Hearing this I recalled the retired *The Great Morgani's* charming rendition of this song at several Cotati festivals. I also recalled that my wife Elaine and some accordion buddies used to practice this song as a trio and then a duo in our living room - so trust me, I really know this song!

I have inserted a photo to the right of Alicia playing her next song, an original polka called *Pretzel*, which was really cracking her up! Do you think she likes polka? *Pretzel* sheet music is available on her website, notated for solo accordion with Stradella bass. (<https://www.aliciajostraka.com>)



After a lively polka, what comes best is a French tune, if Alicia has anything to say about it. How about *La Vie en Rose*? It started out very Piaf-style (see leftmost photo), but Alicia just can't stray far from jazz for very long – in this case, 85 seconds, after which jazz-style took over (see adjacent photo at left). She finished the song Piaf-style, with English lyrics.

*When you press me to your heart
I'm in a world apart
A world where roses bloom
And when you speak, angels sing from above
Everyday words seem to turn into love songs
Give your heart and soul to me
And life will always be
"La vie en rose"*



Alicia's show closer was a fast one, *El camino de que*.

The Zoom meeting was skillfully hosted by SFAC President Ken Schwartz. Thanks Ken!

Mr. Lou Jacklich

Donation to the San Francisco Accordion Club



Mr. Lou Jacklich, longtime Club member, distinguished accordionist, electronic accordion innovator, and beloved teacher has made an extremely generous donation to the Club, in recognition of its achievements and programs. Mr. Jacklich's donation will enable the Club to continue its efforts to enhance appreciation of the accordion within the membership and throughout the general public with outreach, education, and scholarship programs.

Many thanks, Mr. Jacklich, for all that you have done, and for all whose musical lives have been touched by your wisdom and many accomplishments!

*The San Francisco Accordion Club is a **501(c)(3)** tax-exempt charitable organization whose purpose is to enhance, promote and stimulate an appreciation for the accordion within the membership and throughout the general public.*

*Donations are tax-deductible and gratefully accepted by using the **Donate** button at www.sfaccordionclub.com*

SFAC Scholarships

Your Club has scholarship funds available to support accordion students studying with teachers who are SFAC members in good standing. Preference is given to students who demonstrate dedication to pursuing the study of the accordion. Contact Mike Zampiceni for a scholarship application. eclecticguy@comcast.net 408-569-2579

Searching for Lou Soper's Easy Musical Chord Retention Method, Volumes One & Two

If your collection of sheet music includes these volumes, please let us know. It would be greatly appreciated.

info@sfaccordionclub.com



«Accordion Star International 2024»
4th International Competition/Festival

June 7-14 online on Facebook, YouTube

International Jury Members From All Over The World!!! 

Cash Prizes for the Winners in ALL Categories

Full Information/Submission: accostarfest@gmail.com

Application Deadline June 1, 2024

Renowned Accordionist Gary Blair and an Evening of Scottish Dance

Friday, June 14, 2024 at the United Irish Cultural Center, San Francisco

Concert 7–7:45 pm, Cèilidh: 8–10:30 pm.

See the UICC website for details and ticket sales: <https://irishcentersf.org/event/gary-blair-scottish-ceilidh/>

This Cèilidh (kālē) features participatory and social dances from Scottish traditions, with live music featuring the renowned accordionist, Gary Blair, with dance caller Summer McCall. No experience is necessary – all dances will be taught and led by Summer.

“Today, the term Cèilidh dance refers to an informal way of dancing socially in Scotland. Cèilidh dancing offers an excellent way of becoming familiar with the common social Scottish dances and dancing to Scotland's amazing music, so why not have a go and dance Scottish!” - *Royal Scottish Ceilidh Dance Society*



Gary Blair Scottish Cèilidh
with caller Summer McCall
Friday, June 14, 2024 | 7 pm



www.irishcentersf.org

March President's Report

Ken Schwartz



We have a busy upcoming spring schedule and are already working on fall scheduling, so please don't hesitate to reach out with your comments, suggestions, and recommendations.

- ◆ **April 21:** Live in Millbrae with jam session and featured guest artist Steve Albini.
- ◆ **May 12th** (2nd Sunday in May, Mother's Day): Live in Millbrae with jam session and members playing individual solos. Time to start practicing!
- ◆ **Festa Italiana:** Sunday, June 2nd in North Beach, San Francisco. This will be our 2nd year of participation at this entertaining festival. We had 200 visitors at last year's event, and expect a repeat performance this year!
- ◆ **Picnic:** We'll be hosting our annual picnic on Sunday, July 21st in San Mateo. This has become a fun-filled event, with lots of Club members gathering together for wonderful, impromptu accordion-playing and great food. So please mark your calendars!
- ◆ **Cotati Accordion Festival:** August 16-18. We'll be there as usual, in force. The Club will again be awarding a student scholarship. This will be a great opportunity to meet fellow accordionists from all over!
- ◆ **East Bay Meetings:** After the stunning success of our first-ever East Bay Meeting in January, we immediately began planning a return. We will announce dates once we can secure a venue.



New Member

Ronny Michael Greenberg

Ron is a trained classical pianist and vocalist who lives in Oakland. He's in the process of adding Klezmer accordion music to his repertoire.

To learn more and see his accomplishments please check out this [link](https://www.ronnymichaelgreenberg.com/about):

<https://www.ronnymichaelgreenberg.com/about>

Welcome to 'the Club' Ronny, we hope you will join in the jam sessions again sometime soon!

Thank You, Donors!

Sincere Thanks to those who generously donate to support the SFAC. These members have made extra donations during our current membership year (October 2023-September 2024):

Paul Aebersold; Lorna Anderson; Scott Anderson; Ron Borelli; Rosemary Busher; Gail Campanella; Raymond Celentano; George Chavez; Elaine & Robert Cooperstein; Edward Crnich; Xavier & Candace de la Prade; Ed Gorzynski, Jr.; Lou Jacklich; John Lister; Linda Lonay; Franco & Susan & Lorenzo Lucchesi; Ed Massolo; James Murdoch; Laura Jean Niland; Colette & Casey Ogata; Paul Pasquali; David Perry; Robert D. & Dil Pisani; Nadia Poskatcheeva; Don Savant; Kenneth Schwartz; James Shoemaker; Bill & Gloria Tapogna; Pamela Tom; Jane & Frank Tripi; Frank Venturelli; Carol Whitehead; Barbara Winter; Mike Zampiceni; Marlen Zhagel

If you have donated and your name doesn't appear here, please contact elainedc@sbcglobal.net. We greatly appreciate the support and want to be sure you are recognized.



Ron Borelli, Accordionist

Contact information:

- Email: RONBORELLI@AOL.COM
- WEBSITE: RONBORELLI.COM
- TEXT/PHONE: 415-203-6700

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Elaine & Robert Cooperstein, Pamela Tom, Rosemary Busher (and credited contributors each issue)

Accordion Rentals: Rosemary Busher

Live Meeting Sound & Amplification: Paul Cain

Live Meeting ZOOM camera & sound: Ken Schwartz

Membership Drive & Recordkeeping: Robert Cooperstein

Set List Tips for Themed Gigs

By Pamela Tom

Occasionally I am hired to play my accordion during happy hour at a local senior living site. Recently I received an unusual request for Chinese-themed music to celebrate the Lunar New Year. I'd never heard of a Chinese set list. I had to be ready in less than two weeks!

A successful set list for a gig, I've learned, requires a majority of tunes that your audience relates to. An entire set list of traditional Chinese tunes could put my audience to sleep. Some of the Chinese-sounding tunes use parallel fourths, fifths, octaves, and minor thirds. A broad set list incorporates a wide variety rhythms and melodies to create interest. Choosing familiar US hits helps hold the listener's attention. To engage my audience, I prepare and distribute my musical program.

Tip 1: Experience. Growing up in SF, I heard and remembered Chinese songs (including *Rose, Rose, I Love You*) and American hits performed by a SF Chinatown band.

Tip 2: Research. I pored over standard lead line books from the early 1900s to the 60s looking for titles and lyrics referring to China or Chinese. *Chinatown, My Chinatown* (1906) is considered an early jazz standard that features the fourth and fifth sounds in the tune. I also discovered *On a Slow Boat to China*. A Google search resulted in *Moon Represents My Heart*, a classic Mandarin pop song.

Tip 3: Referrals. SFAC club member Joseph Martin informed me of a popular traditional Chinese tune, *Butterfly Lovers*. Ironically, two accordion buddies introduced Chinese-themed tunes to me on different occasions. Mario Pedone gifted me his arrangements of *Jazmin* and *Step by Step*, and Lou DiMaggio played *China Boy* for me.

Tip 4: Broadway, Movie Themes and Pop. Musicals are a great source for finding supportive theme tunes. I hit the jackpot with eight accordion suitable titles from the *Flower Drum Song*. (I have a *Night in Paris* 4-hour gig coming up. Along with musettes and traditional tunes, fillers for my French-themed gig includes selections from **Les Misérables**, **Phantom of the Opera**, **Amélie**, and **Gigi**.)

Tip 5: Tie-ins. *Chinese Dance (Nutcracker Suite)*, *Polka Chinoise* and *China Nights* (Japanese origin) stretched the set list titles. I also incorporated tunes related to San Francisco and California because San Francisco has the largest Chinatown outside of China. And these tunes are played at SF Chinese events.



Pam at her Lunar New Year gig.

2024 AAA and ATG Festivals in July

Submitted by Pamela Tom

The 86th **American Accordionists' Association Festival** takes place July 12-14, 2024 at the Marriott Philadelphia West in Conshohocken, PA. Accordionists to date include Hanzhi Wang, Joseph Natoli, and Dallas Vietty. The AAA Festival Orchestra conductor is Frank Busso, Sr. More performers will be announced as plans firm up. Follow the AAA [website](http://www.ameraccord.com) (www.ameraccord.com) for hotel discount code, guest artist releases, and other festival announcements.

The Accordionists & Teachers Guild, International meets July 23-27, 2024 at the Marriott Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, MO. This year's Festival celebrates the 90th birthday of Joan Cochran Sommers, (renowned accordionist, conductor, and Professor Emerita of University of Missouri-Kansas City). Guest accordionists include Gorka Hermosa, Grayson Masefield, Michael Bridge, Nikolay Bine, UMKC Community Accordion Ensemble, Mirco Patarini, Stas Venglevski, Das Kollektiv Duo, and the ATG Festival Accordion Orchestra (directed by Ms. Sommers). For details on the ATG Festival [visit https://www.atgaccordions.com/2024-festival](https://www.atgaccordions.com/2024-festival).

Both the AAA and ATG Festivals offer concerts, workshops, competitions (and prizes!), orchestras, exhibits, meals, socializing and more.

Coming in the May Newsletter:

What NOT to do While Playing ...

By Laura Niland



SFAC COMING EVENTS

Mark Your Calendars!



April 21, 2024 – Steve Albini
(Live at Chetcuti Community Center!)

- ◆ **May 12, 2024 - Accordion Circle**
Live at Chetcuti Community Center
- ◆ **SFAC at Festa Italiana, Sunday, June 2nd** in Little Italy, San Francisco. (Details in May newsletter)



June 16, 2024 - Gary Blair in person at Chetcuti Community Center!



July 21*, 2024 - SFAC Club Picnic, San Mateo, Beresford Park (*Date corrected)

SFAC Members Performing Around the Bay

RON BORELLI San Mateo - RonBorelli@aol.com
www.ronborelli.com

JOE DOMITROWICH South Bay -
www.alpinersusa.com
or www.capricious-accordion.com

ED GORZYNSKI, JR. East Bay - edspol-kas@yahoo.com

PAMELA TOM Yolo & Solano Counties
accordionpam@gmail.com

MIKE ZAMPICENI East Bay & South Bay
eclecticguy@comcast.net, www.mikezamp.com



ACCORDION INSTRUCTION

East Bay

- ◆ Lou Jacklich 510-317-9510
- ◆ Joel Weber www.ioelseastbayaccordionlessons.weebly.com/
- ◆ Mike Zampiceni* www.mikezamp.com

Peninsula/South Bay

- ◆ Joe Simoni* jsimoni2000@gmail.com, 650-867-1122
- ◆ Mike Zampiceni* www.mikezamp.com

Outside the Bay Area

- ◆ Gail Campanella* GailCampanella@gmail.com 805-895-0457 (Santa Barbara)
- ◆ Bonnie Birch* www.bonniebirch.com (Seattle)
- ◆ Pamela Tom* accordionpam@gmail.com (Davis)
- ◆ Lorna Anderson* 910-215-5757 (Pinehurst, NC)

* = remote lessons (ZOOM, Facetime, Skype) available



Kimric Smythe

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Accordion Happenings

Rose City Accordion Camp

Conductors: Gabe Hall-Rodrigues & Gail Campanella

Instructors: Jamie Tischler & Courtney von Drehle

June 2 - 7, 2024

rosecityaccordionclub.org

Leavenworth International Accordion Celebration

Northwest Accordion Society

June 20 - 23, 2024

Leavenworth is Washington's "Bavarian Village"

www.accordioncelebration.org

Accordionists & Teachers Guild International (ATG)

2024 Festival—Honoring Joan C. Sommers

Kansas City, Missouri

July 23 - 27, 2024

<https://www.atgaccordions.com/2024-festival>

Cotati Accordion Festival

LaPlaza Park, Cotati, California

August 16 - 18, 2024

<https://cotatifest.com/>

Online/Virtual Events:

Monthly: 1st & 3rd Monday - Joseph Natoli

JANPress University - Topics vary monthly (\$)

janpressmusic@yahoo.com

Monthly: 2nd Tuesday 4:30-6:30 PM (free)

Hosted by Laura Niland LauraJNiland@outlook.com

Monthly: 3rd Sunday - Gordon Kohl Workshop

Topics vary (\$) gkohl5890@gmail.com

Members - If you know of an accordion-centric festival or event in 2024 that your fellow SFAC members may be interested in, please contact us at info@sfacaccordionclub.org



Event Reviews:

Volunteers are *very much* needed to assist with the monthly event summaries. This is a great opportunity to express your creative writing skills while assisting your Club! Please volunteer to write up a meeting review for an upcoming newsletter.

Contact: Kenneth.E.Schwartz@gmail.com



Rose City Accordion Club Camp

Register Now

Spots fill up quickly for the Rose City Accordion Camp, which will be held June 2-7, 2025 at Alton Collins Retreat Center in Eagle Creek, OR. Participants are reminded to secure their orchestra slot and room at the lodge early. This year marks the 25th anniversary for the RCAC. RCAC conductors are Gabe Hall-Rodrigues and SFAC Member, **Gail Campanella**. Courtney Von Drehle and Jamie Maschler are the RCAC workshop instructors. A non-refundable deposit of \$300 is required to hold your space. Contact Delette Huffman, RCAC Camp Director, if you have questions. E-mail: huffv0421@gmail.com



2023 RCAC Orchestra

Friends of SFAC— Accordion Groups/Clubs

Check websites or contacts to verify meeting schedules

Accordion Club of the Redwoods¹ (Santa Rosa)
Meetings 3rd Wednesdays—Cibo Rustico Pizzeria
(707) 318-0474, dcdacapo@gmail.com

Accordion Lovers Society International (ALSI)¹
2nd Sundays—Mt. Miguel Covenant Village
Spring Valley, CA
gkohl5890@gmail.com (619) 395-0454

Friends of the Accordion (FOTA)
formerly Accordionaires of Los Angeles
MeetUps in North Hollywood & Long Beach, CA
dnorferi@aol.com or <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1045691515515866/>

Northern California Accordion Society (NCAS)¹
2nd Saturdays—Roseville, CA
Lutheran Church of the Resurrection
Jerry Kiefer, President (916) 652-0836

San Antonio Accordion Society
2nd Tuesdays online³ - Meetings on last Tuesdays¹
Chester's Hamburgers, San Antonio, TX
LauraJNiland@outlook.com

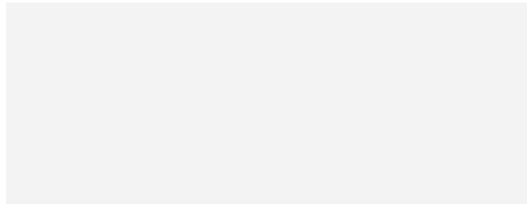
Silicon Valley Accordion Society (SVAS)¹
1st Sundays
Christ Episcopal Church, Los Altos, CA
www.svasociety.org

¹ In person meeting only

² mixed: in-person and ZOOM meeting

³ ZOOM only meeting

FIRST CLASS POSTAGE



*Upcoming: **April 21 Steve Albini** - Live, In-Person (Millbrae) & ZOOM
May 12 Accordion Circle - Live at the Chetcuti Community Center!
June 16 Gary Blair (UK) - Live, In-Person at the Chetcuti Community Center!*

SFAC Sunday Meeting

Accordions Live!

Steve Albini

Sunday, April 21, 2:00 pm

Join us in Millbrae for fun & great music!
SFAC members will receive ZOOM link via email
Watch your email for details, or contact
info@sfaccordionclub.com

There's no substitute for live performance! Please plan to attend this event in person: \$10 for members; \$15 for non-members, 18 years and under free with parent. Doors open at 2:00 pm. Featured performer 3:30 pm. The Event will also be simulcast via Zoom, access for Club members only.



Millbrae Chetcuti Community Room

Civic Center Plaza/Library Plaza

450 Poplar Avenue, Millbrae, CA

SFAC Monthly Meetings:

Plenty of free parking in Library lot

Accessible location

Close to public transit

fb.com/sanfranciscoaccordionclub

