November, 2026

San Francisco Accordion Club Newsletter

NO MEETING IN NOVEMBER

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



SFAC Holiday Party Potluck and Holiday Jam Session

December 13th in Millbrae 2:00pm - 4:30pm PT

Reminder – The Club is taking a Thanksgiving break to lighten the load for our hardworking volunteers.

Our next meeting will be on Sunday, December 13th, in Millbrae and via Zoom.

Let's celebrate the season together! **Our December Accordion Club meeting will feature a Shared Dish Celebration** — a time to enjoy music, good food, and great company. Please bring a favorite dish or treat to share. No alcohol. The Club will provide coffee (with spill-safe lids), paper plates, napkins, and flatware, but serving utensils are always welcome. We're also looking for a few volunteers to help with setup and cleanup — thank you for helping us keep the space tidy and wrapping up on time.

- How to Sign Up: email Ken at kenneth.e.schwartz@gmail.com to volunteer, or regarding your potluck shared dish

At this **Holiday Jam Session** we will play from our Club's Holiday Jam books. Please email us at info@sfaccordionclub.com to obtain a PDF copy in advance for practicing. Get ready, get set!



2025 Holiday Jam



2024 Holiday Jam

*The San Francisco Accordion Club is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization [EIN 94-3148553] 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*

Oktoberfest at the SFAC

By Ken Schwartz

The Club's East Bay Accordion Circle meetings continue to grow in popularity. We celebrated Oktoberfest, once again, at the Piedmont High School historic Student Center Building.



The jam session was led by **Joseph Martin**, who now comes with a full amplifier/speaker setup and Oktoberfest party hats for distribution. Joseph also provided historical vignettes on some of the songs. We were fortunate to enjoy informal impromptu performances by some of our members:



Colette Ogata and **Jane Tripi** performed a terrific duet of *Sway*! Thank you, Colette and Jane!

Next, **Roy Zheng** wowed us with renditions of *Indifference* and a finger buster entitled *Tanzende Finger.* Not surprisingly, Roy recently placed first in his age category at the Leavenworth Accordion Festival. **Anand Joseph** equally wowed us with his rendition of *Winter from The Four Seasons* by Vivaldi. One could hear a pin drop in the room while he played this so flawlessly. **Joel Weber** entertained us with his terrific medley of *Tony's Polka* followed by *Beer Barrel Polka* on his impressive accordion. Thank you, Joel! Finally, **Joseph Martin**, who multitasked at this meeting, played *Almost Like Being in Love* (from **Brigadoon**), which required merging of scores from 3 sources. It was terrific. And, finally, his lovely rendition of *As Time Goes By* (Herman Hupfeld, 1931), which is timeless and remains a contemporary classic.









Thanks to **Rosemary Busher** and **Linda Lonay** for tasty snacks, including wildly addictive cupcakes, **Roy Zheng** for audio/visual, **Randy Hicks** for manning the door, **Elaine** and **Robert Cooperstein**, who created the original Oktoberfest jam books, and to **Everyone**, for making this month's Circle such a success!





A Visit to Castelfidardo

By Roy Zheng



View from the dashboard as I head towards Castelfidardo

I had the amazing opportunity to visit Castelfidardo in November and am writing this to share and to remember my experience. Castelfidardo is an Italian municipality *(comune)* in the Province of Ancona, Marche region of central-eastern Italy, globally famous as the "City of the Accordion".

My journey begins with a 5-hour drive from Naples. The highway cuts through mountains lush with greenery, and it is a peaceful voyage. The endless toll booths make me grateful to be an American (tolls racked up over $70 round trip). I pull into the town at 3pm. The contrast with Naples is stark. Where Naples is chaotic, the atmosphere at Castelfidardo is like Saratoga where most of the town is on a hill, and every street had a billboard for an accordion factory.



I too think that the accordion is too quiet of an instrument, and that we should all install horns on the grill to make them louder

For someone who loves the accordion, Castelfidardo feels unreal, like Disneyland is to a child. Coming from the US, it is surreal to be in a place where the word *Fisarmoniche* (Italian for accordions) permeates the entire town.

My first stop is the International Accordion Museum. Admission is cash only and grants access to many halls of fascinating instruments. A few that stand out to me are a bandoneón played by Astor Piazzolla, a Paolo Soprani diatonic from the 1870s, and a piano accordion played by one of the Deiro brothers. They also had a high-end Zero Sette piano accordion available for anyone to play, which I eagerly did as I hadn't had access to an accordion for many days.

There are no fancy hotels left in Castelfidardo as I have arrived years late to the party. The accordion-themed Hotel Parco permanently closed its doors in 2021. I check into a comfortable and economical bed and breakfast, then head to dinner at 7pm. Italians eat dinner late so when I greet the owner, he has on a confused expression and asks me what I was doing there. He is amused when I reply "dinner" and I am given a seat. Silly Americanos.

By 9pm it is me and another party. I overhear them repeating the word *fisarmoniche*. The wine and curiosity get the better of me so I attempt to strike up a conversation. He does not speak English but the restaurant owner is kind enough to help translate. Apparently he is a tuner and bass reed maker for the Maxim group factory. We have a pleasant exchange and he invites me to visit his factory and gives me an address. A conversation like that would be hard to stumble into outside of Castelfidardo. It goes without saying, the food in Italy is fantastic and I highly recommend Trattoria Dionea to future travelers.

The next day starts early with an appointment at Beltuna which is the main reason for my travel as I had ordered an accordion from them about a year ago and in October they said that it is ready. I am greeted by Francesco Mengascini, the general manager and the son of the founder. He is an affable fellow who invites me to lunch, and I spend most of the day at the showroom. The building is two floors with diatonics on the first floor and chromatics on the second, with the factory in the back. There is a wide range of instruments ranging from small Studio models to their top-of-the-line Matrix. I was able to try many of these instruments. I offer a laundry list of changes for my accordion, and I head out at 5pm. The process took an entire day because of the extensive configurable electronics in my accordion, which I will

Editor's comment: We welcome photos and stories of SFAC members' experiences sharing the joy of the accordion.

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write about in a future newsletter. It is unfortunate that we don't have more dealers on the West Coast, that one must travel to Philadelphia or Castelfidardo to try out the diverse set of models from a company like Beltuna.



Francesco & my new accordion

As the sun starts to set, I rush to squeeze in as much as I can. I stop by Victoria Accordions, but unfortunately they are sold out due to the recent accordion festival. I then visit Maxim group and reconnect with the technician from the previous night. I try a new Sonola SS4, and was given a tour of the factory.



Testing the Nova

My final stop before dinner is Castelfidardo Música. I purchase a souvenir and try a new Scandalli Super VI Extreme priced at over 18,000 euros. The day has been magical and sleep comes easily.



Giancarlo showing me his Guinness World Record-holding accordion

My final day at Castelfidardo starts with a tour of the Pigini factory. Their factory is the largest I have seen, and I meet many hard-working technicians at their stations building various components. There are bellows, grills, and pieces piled on shelves everywhere. In one room, there is a fully automatic reed tuner which uses a robotic arm to tune a set of reeds and place the completed set into a tray. I am impressed with this technical achievement and hope we can get more automation, freeing artisans to focus on the fine adjustments that bring out the magic of these instruments. They happen to have a top-of-the-line Nova available to test and I spend an hour running the instrument through its paces. The sound is delightful, aesthetics elegant, and price eye-watering. I am given some free souvenirs including a bag, some literature, a reed, and a polishing cloth.

My next stop is CARINI DE.NA., an accordion parts store. There I purchase an entire set of 41/120 accordion valves for 42 euros and 50g blocks of wax for 1.38 euros each. The answer to my inquiry about whether they ship is that they can but it's so expensive you probably wouldn't want to. I will have to bring larger luggage next time.

As I check my map to find my next destination, by chance I see that Fismen accordions is just a block away. For those unfamiliar, Fismen is known for alpine style accordions and used to partner with Lanzinger. They do not have the MHST model I am hoping to try but they have a different model with Helikon bass and the sound is very rich and boomy. Where else but Castelfidardo could you accidentally find the workshop of a world-famous accordion builder?

Lunch is a carafe of wine, a cooked vegetables appetizer, and a generous portion of seafood skewers. The cost is 20 euros. Try getting that for less than $50 in the Bay Area.

The final stop for the trip is the well-known home of the world's largest accordion. I meet Giancarlo, who built the accordion, and he lets me play his instrument. It really is big. I should put one on the roof of my house - if my fiancée doesn't kill me.

Castelfidardo is the Disneyland of the accordion and the trip was an unforgettable experience. I expected to see factories and sales pitches, but I left with conversations and connections to the people who build and preserve this instrument. I am grateful to the people of Castelfidardo for their kindness and generosity, and hope to visit this hallowed town again in the future, perhaps during its annual accordion festival.

*Special thanks to fellow SFAC member **Tseli Wu** who shared her experience in Castelfidardo and helped me build my itinerary.*

West Coast Squeezers Attend Gordon Kohl's Weekend Accordion Workshop

by Pamela Tom, Accordionist



For 2½ days, October 30-November 1, Gordon Kohl's Accordion Workshop focused on a variety of accordion genre styles and techniques. His hands-on program was fast-paced and designed for intermediate to seasoned accordionists. Over 20 attendees (including SFAC members **Matt Cooper, Chris Boris** and **Pamela Tom**) traveled from various western states to improve their accordion knowledge, skills and stage presence. Gordon's talks and handouts contained comprehensive and advanced accordion theory and practical advice for the serious accordionist. There was an emphasis on chords and scales. Overall, Gordon's talks and handouts covered decades of shared professional knowledge and tips on how to be a more-rounded performer.

The attendees sight read and ran through numerous standard arrangements by Gordon. He invited Pat, the drummer from his band, to accompany tunes rehearsed by the attendees and Gordon's versatile performance of classic popular accordion standards that he arranged into jazz renditions. My revelation from the workshop was that learning the ins and outs of the accordion was not for sissies.

Gordon designed his workshop to be fun …and it was. Gordon has performed professionally since he was a teenager at Disneyland. He also taught secondary school before focusing on a career in music. He has a lot of knowledge that comes through experience and diligent practice. Gordon's thoughtfully prepared reference sheets loaded us down with more information than we could possibly imagine. Sadly, we were told that in the US today it is nearly impossible to find a steady career as a classical or jazz accordionist. The jobs in demand are for ethnic accordionists. I departed craving for more and highly motivated. Next year's workshop is already on my calendar, November 5-7, 2027 somewhere in San Diego County.

Contact Gordon Kohl (e-mail: gkohl5890@gmail.com) for further information.

Membership Report

Robert Cooperstein

As of this writing, I am happy to report a little over 85% of our members have paid their 2026-2027 dues, and I am confident that number will continue to grow. I would like to thank our members who renewed their membership promptly. It has taken me a decade or more to refine the spreadsheet I use to track everything, and I can say with some confidence it performs as well as a self-driving Tesla. For the members who have not yet paid their dues, please understand this is the last newsletter that you will receive. If you are an accordion teacher or performer-around-town that has been featured in the newsletter, that benefit of membership will no longer be provided.

Did You Know?!

The Club offers a **lending library of music books** available to SFAC members in good standing. It includes the two classic accordion sets, **Sedlon Accordion Method Books** 1-A through 4-B, and **The Palmer Hughes Accordion Course** Books 1-11. Any aspiring accordionist who would like to borrow one or both of these time-tested collections would need to arrange to pick them up at a Club meeting. And of course, arrange to have them returned for the next person ready to expand their repertoire. One rarely goes wrong with the classics, how about giving it a try?!

For further information: info@sfaccordionclub.com.

The newsletter staff continues to seek volunteers to assist with writing our monthly event summaries. Please contact info@sfaccordionclub.com to volunteer to write up the December event for our January newsletter.

SFAC Scholarships

Your Club has scholarship funds available to support accordion students studying with teachers who are SFAC members in good standing. Contact **Mike Zampiceni** eclecticguy@comcast.net for a scholarship application.



Appreciation for our Donors!

Sincere Thanks *to those who generously donate to support the SFAC. These members have made donations during our current (October 2026 – September 2027) membership year:*

Paul Aebersold, Scott Anderson, Anthony Bologna, Ron Borelli, Rosemary Busher, Gail Campanella, Elizabeth Casey, George Chavez, Elaine & Robert Cooperstein, Edward Crnich, Tony David, Xavier & Candace de la Prade, Heidi Hansen, Lorraine Inaudi, Arleen Johnson, Joan Kram, Linda Lonay, Franco & Susan & Lorenzo Lucchesi, Michael A. Marotta, Jr.; Colette & Casey Ogata, David Perry, Diana Montoro Prurucker, Richard Rauschmeier, Don & Mary Savant, Kenneth Schwartz, Bill & Gloria Tapogna, Pamela Tom, Jane & Frank Tripi, Barbara Winter

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

SFAC Board & Key Club Functions

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Newsletter: Elaine & Robert Cooperstein, Pamela Tom, Rosemary Busher, Ken Schwartz *(and credited contributors each issue)*

Accordion Rentals: Rosemary Busher

Live Meeting Sound & Amplification: Paul Cain

Live Meeting Zoom Camera & Sound: Ken Schwartz, Roy Zheng

Membership: Robert Cooperstein

Event Photography: Steve Mobia





In November, SFAC member **Joseph Martin** (accordion) and friend Steve Marshall (bass) performed with the San Francisco Banjo Band at the Magnolia of Millbrae, a senior retirement home.



SFAC Newsletter Ad Policy

Members may place 1/8-page (business-card size) free of charge for one month each year.
Additional ads are $10/issue or $100/year.

Monthly ad prices **for members**:
1/8 page: $10
1/4-page: $25
1/2-page: $50
Full-page: $100
Non-member rates are double.
Contact info@sfaccordionclub.com

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ACCORDION INSTRUCTION

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- **Sam Reider** www.samreidermusic.com
  sam@samreidermusic.com

East Bay

- **Joel Weber**
  www.joelseastbayacordionlessons.weebly.com/
- **Mike Zampiceni*** www.mikezamp.com

Peninsula/South Bay

- **Mike Zampiceni*** www.mikezamp.com

Outside the Bay Area

- **Bonnie Birch*** www.bonniebirch.com (Seattle)
- **Gail Campanella*** GailCampanella@gmail.com
  (805) 895-0457 (Santa Barbara)
- **Pamela Tom*** accordionpam@gmail.com (Davis)

** = remote lessons (Zoom, Facetime) available*



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Upcoming Events — Mark Your Calendar:

- *November* NO MEETING—**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**
- *December 13 [Second Sunday]* **Accordion Circle—Holiday Edition - Millbrae** *[See p. 1 for details]*
- *January 24, 2027* **Steve Albini— Live** at the Chetcuti Community Center

Sunday, December 13

❄ **Holiday Accordion Circle** ❄

SFAC Sunday Meeting

❄ **Second Sunday in December** ❄

$10 members / $15 non-members
Youth free with parent
-Exact change appreciated-

Come join us for fun and great music!
BYOS (bring your own music stand!)
SFAC members will receive ZOOM link via email
See December email for details, or
contact info@sfaccordionclub.com

https://www.facebook.com/SanFranciscoAccordionClub/

SFAC member to-do list



- ☐ Sign up for the December potluck (see page 1)
- ☐ Be sure your 2026–27 dues have been paid
- ☐ Notify us if you've decided not to renew your membership
- ☐ Request a holiday jam book PDF to practice the holiday tunes (see page 1)
- ☐ Get ready for some squeezing on December 13!