

The Thirty-fourth and Thirty-fifth Commissioned Works
of the American Accordionists' Association
Composers Commissioning Committee:

William Schimmel: *Fables*
John Franceschina: *Scaramouche*

No. 22 of an Ongoing Series on the
Commissioned Works of the AAA

2022 update and expansion of the original version that appeared in the 2019 *AAA Festival Journal*

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As mentioned in the previous article (no. 21, originally in the 2018 *AAA Festival Journal*), the year 1972 marked the beginning of AAA commissions for composers of the “Baby Boomer” generation, beginning with Joel Brickman’s solo, *Prelude and Caprice*, the thirty-third commission since the Composers Commissioning Committee was established in the 1950s. Interestingly, the next four selected composers were also of that generation, beginning in 1974 with William Schimmel (*Fables*), and, continuing through 1976, John Franceschina (*Scaramouche*), Schimmel again (*Variations in Search of a Theme*), Timothy Thompson (*Growth Cells, A Bagatelle*), and Karen Fremar (*Prelude and Allegro*, for accordion and synthesized tape), before an older, established figure, Lukas Foss, accepted the thirty-ninth commission, his *Curriculum Vitae*, also in 1976. Three of the four were already established professional accordionists (Thompson being the exception) and rising composers in their own right. In addition, the four (plus Foss) were to receive later AAA commissions as well, all of which will be discussed in future articles. This writing will concentrate on the first contributions of Schimmel and Franceschina.

William Schimmel: *Fables* (1974)

William Schimmel hardly needs an introduction to those in the accordion world likely to be reading this article. A native of Philadelphia, he studied accordion and composition there with Jacob Neupauer at the Neupauer Conservatory of Music, after which he eventually graduated from the Julliard School of Music with a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition. His teachers were a veritable who’s who of twentieth century American composers, including Elliott Carter, Vincent Persichetti, Roger Sessions, Hugo Weisgall, Luciano Berio, and Paul Creston.

Dr. Schimmel performs music in many genres. He has commissioned and premiered a myriad of new works, written a number of books and articles, made numerous recordings and videos, been the subject of a number of scholarly dissertations, books and articles, received grants from the American Music Center, Meet The Composer, and 1-Park, and, during his student years at Juilliard, two teaching fellowships, two Rodgers and Hammerstein Scholarships, and the Dr. Albert Szmarin Scholarship. His two Nonesuch LP albums of tango music (*The Tango Project*) from the early 1980s were hugely popular, best sellers, and played continuously on every classical radio station in the US for a long time. The group, as well as Schimmel alone, also appear or are heard in the 1992 classic film, *The Scent of a Woman*, starring Al Pacino.

Regarding the AAA, like many of the Baby Boomers in the commissions list, Schimmel was a long-time participant in that organization, both as a youth in its competitions and, in later years, a frequently commissioned composer, and a member of the AAA Governing Board, during which tenure he held one of two honorary seats as Resident Artist and founded the annual Master Class and Concert Series, held for many years at the Tenri Cultural Institute in New York City until the Covid pandemic required it be presented “virtually” online (hopefully temporarily as of this writing). Space does not permit more listings of Dr. Schimmel’s vast and diverse accolades, but one may visit billschimmel.com for further information. Attention must now be paid to his first of four AAA commissions, *Fables*.

Schimmel received his first invitation to write a work for the AAA from the Composers Commissioning Committee Chair and founder, Elsie Bennett, in the form of a contract dated August 5, 1974, which, considering its strong similarity to the one Franceschina received that June, was considerably standardized for the time. In both instances, the conditions were that it be for “an unaccompanied accordion solo of not less than 6 minutes or more than 8 minutes” in



William Schimmel showing Elsie Bennett his recently completed score of *Fables*. Bennett home in Brooklyn, New York, August 15, 1974. Bennett photo album.

length and must be written for “both the stradella and the Free Bass Systems.” (*sic*) Furthermore, the work could be of any “nature of [the composer’s] choosing, but should be of high caliber to show off all the possibilities of the instrument and the technique and musicianship of the performer.”

Both composers were also offered the standard AAA reimbursement for a solo in a range between \$150 and \$250, depending upon the notoriety of the composer, with half paid up front and the rest upon receipt of the score. Schimmel’s deadline was September 1, 1974, less than a month away.

Publication appears to have been delayed for at least two years, however, for its first of two printings, by Ars Nova, and even four years if one goes by the copyright date of the second one, by Ernest Deffner Music.

Schimmel described the work in an article he wrote entitled “Schimmel on his `Fables’” for the short-lived periodical *Accordion Arts*, edited by California accordionist James Nightingale (v. 2, no. 1, first half 1976), quoted here in full:

Fables was written in the Summer of 1974 as a commission from the AAA. Its purpose was to be a solo piece playable on any system accordion. I found this a good challenge and accepted it. The work was to be about six to eight minutes in length (competition test piece length) and was to deal with various aspects of accordion music both traditional and exploratory.

My concepts in the construction of *Fables* are the following: time manipulation and time distortion. In other words, to create the feeling of a considerable time span in a few short minutes—seven and a half to be exact. The process is quite simple. The music always returns to a focal point which is always slightly altered to create the illusion of a new section, which, in reality, it isn't. As a result, constant development yet similarity are always simultaneously creating, once again, time manipulation and time distortion.

Fables consists of short fragments, each complete in itself yet making up a homogeneous whole. As they reappear they are in a new context—expressing a new point of view. Any reference to rondo or variation form is to be considered purely nostalgic. Imagine going on a journey or pilgrimage and upon returning once again, finding things very much the same yet quite different. This, because it is a new person experiencing the old things.

The fragments are entitled: Cosmic Tune (to be interpreted in the folk style of the performer's nationality), Eternal Fall, Cosmic Tune Again, Almond Clusters, Of Ageing and Youth, Chicago Rhonda-vu, Possible Mission, Cluster Clouds, and Cosmic Tune Once More. The work is dedicated to the memory of Henry Cowell in keeping with the Bicentennial Spirit. It is published by Ars Nova Publications, San Diego, CA.

Much of the last two paragraphs also appear on the inside cover of the Deffner publication.

Dr. Schimmel informed me that he gave the premiere performance of *Fables* as an encore played in conjunction with another of his pieces, *Parousia*, on a solo recital he organized entitled “An Accordion for Our Time” that was produced by the acclaimed composer, scholar, author, and impresario Eric Salzman through his Quog Musical Theater. The program consisted entirely of premieres of new works for accordion by Schimmel, Stuart Isakoff, William Komaiko, Eric Koper, Andrew Thomas, Eric Salzman, and Timothy Thompson (who was soon to be another AAA commissioned composer of that period) and took place at the Washington Square United Methodist Church, in New York, on March 29, 1975. Schimmel also recalls that another

noted AAA commissioned composer, and friend of Timothy Thompson, George Kleinsinger, was in the audience in the company of Elsie Bennett.

The opening section, “Cosmic Tune” (Andante molto), sets the mood in some ways for the whole composition. It first appears as a full, one-page piece in four-bar phrases with distinct cadential endings, hymn-like in its mostly homophonic texture, and cordial, though somewhat stalwart, in demeanor. Its phrases tend to vacillate between the related key centers of B and D, often suggesting B-minor or B aeolian mode and D major.

COSMIC TUNE

Andante molto ♩ = 80

Phrase 1: Phrase 2:

Standard stradella **B minor:** **D major or B aeolian:** **B minor:**

Free bass

D major or B aeolian: **B minor:**

Example 1. Measures 1-8 of opening section of *Fables*: “Cosmic Tune.”

Its two later incarnations, “Cosmic Tune Again” and “Cosmic Tune Once More,” occurring between the second and fourth sections and at the end respectively (where it will therefore be heard as a wistfully reminiscent coda), are far shorter but easily identifiable melodically, and serve in a way to “bring us home” or perhaps remind us of “where we came from” (hence the composer’s invitation to “interpret” them in the “folk style” of his/her “nationality” and thus take some liberty with them).

The other sections are quite different from the Cosmic Tune theme and from each other, often featuring syncopated rhythms, changing meters, fast tempi and finger work, occasional modern harmonies, and a considerably high level of virtuosity and rhythmic prowess in general.

Though the harmony is often rather free, the sense in most movements is of a strong tonal centering, evidenced in the continuous and rapid B minor arpeggios in “Eternal Fall” and the two-sharp key signature (Example 2); the marching and unrelenting left-hand E/B dyad pedal point rhythms in “Of Ageing and Youth” versus the lively triplets constituting much of the right-

hand theme (Example 3); and the similarly endless tromping left-hand ostinato accompaniment of parallel perfect fifths in “Possible Mission,” setting the stage for the right-hand theme in 10/8 meter whose rhythms constantly shift between two groupings of three eighth notes and two of two eighth notes (Example 4).

L'istesso tempo

Notes in parenthesis are for free bass.

Example 2. Beginning of second section, “Eternal Fall” (measures 27-30 of entire work)

Vivo (♩ = 130)

sempre bassi soli

Example 3. Beginning of fourth section, “Ageing and Youth” (measures 106-109 of entire work)

Animato (♩ = 95-100)
3 + 3 + 2 + 2

Example 4. Beginning of sixth section, “Possible Mission” (measures 184-191 of entire work)

Despite the strong sense of traditional tonality of all the movements, concessions to modern dissonances result from occasional polychords, particularly noticeable in “Chicago Rhonda-vu,” (Example 5) and the tone clusters in “Almond Clusters,” accomplished by applying the right-hand fist on the white keys within approximate boundaries of direction up and down in the score against the rather fragmented melody in the left-hand part (Example 6).

Example 5. Measures 40-44 of sixth section (measures 172-175 of entire work), “Chicago Rhonda-vu,” Allegro con vivo segment. Polychords: measure 40: A-major (left hand)/F-major-minor 7 (right hand; C# of the assumed free bass A-major triad, omitted, perhaps accidentally); remaining measures: B-major-minor 7 (left hand)/F-augmented triad (right hand).

Moderato (♩ = 85-89)

* Closed fist on white keys only. The area in the clusters in relation to the notes on the staff are to be regarded as approximate, the effect being laudazical.

Register indications are for stradella

Example 6. Beginning of forth section, “Almond Clusters” (measures 52-60 of entire work)

Fables is a highly entertaining and “accessible” modern work well within the technique of the advanced accordion student on either the stradella or free bass system; and, unlike many AAA works now out of print and that the writer is presently trying to track down so that they may once again be available to the accordion community, *Fables* is still purchasable through Ernest Deffner Music, at www.accordions.com/dffnrm/solo. (The same can be said for Franceschina’s *Scaramouche*, to be discussed next.)

Shortly after its creation and premiere, *Fables* and a later AAA Schimmel commissioned solo, *The Spring Street Ritual*, were included among the required repertoire for accordion majors at the conservatory in Madrid. One may also hear a performance of *Fables* by Nerea Rodriguez Nunez recorded in 2011 on YouTube. Schimmel himself also recorded the piece along with many other works for Finnadar Records in a 1984 LP album titled "Accordion Revisited," which includes Salzman's *Accord* (which was premiered at the 1975 New York concert mentioned above) as well as four other AAA commissioned works discussed in previous installments of this series, Luening's *Rondo*, Riegger's *Cooper Square*, Cowell's *Iridescent Rondo*, and Surinach's *Pavana and Rondo*.

A highly prolific composer, Schimmel is tied, as of this writing, with Paul Creston in holding the record for the most AAA commissions, namely four in number. The remaining three Schimmel works to be discussed in future installments of this series are the aforementioned *Variations in Search of a Theme* (1976), *The Spring Street Ritual* (1979), and *Remembering a Legend: Charles Magnante* (1987). Happily, the last two of these are also still available through Ernest Deffner Music. The four Creston commissions preceded those of Schimmel and Franceschina and have already been discussed in previous installments of this series: Nos. 2 (1998), 15 (2012), and 20 (2017).

John Franceschina: *Scaramouche*

An accordion prodigy of long time AAA Governing Board member Sam Falcetti, John Franceschina, like William Schimmel, has had a long and brilliant career, but it moved in decidedly different directions during his college years from that of his colleague and most other esteemed accordionists. Though an outstanding accordionist in his youth, Franceschina's interests soon turned more to the literary and theatrical worlds, as might first be observed in his education, which, though it includes a certificate in composition from Hartt College (where Mr. Falcetti received his music education as well), was followed by a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting from The Catholic University of America, in Washington DC. A succession of academic posts followed, beginning with the position of instructor of arranging and counterpoint at Hartt, and continuing with more diverse roles at Florida State University, Syracuse University, and the Pennsylvania State University.

All these literary kudos observed, however, Franceschina never abandoned his chosen instrument as a composer and an advocate. He has served as composer-in-residence for Accordion Ensemble Opus 2 in the Netherlands for which he composed *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (a triptych including 3 tonal poems: *Pellucidar*, *Zanni*, and *Antinous*); *Houtebeen* (a cantata for accordion orchestra, string orchestra, and male chorus); *Carnival* (a concerto grosso for accordion orchestra and wind ensemble); and *Scenes from Tarzan and the Apes* (an opera) that received its world premiere on May 19, 2019. Among his other compositions for the accordion are three concertos for solo accordion and orchestra, one of which was commissioned by the AAA in 1987, a mass for vocal soloist, mini choir, and accordion orchestra, written for and introduced by the Springfield Accordion Orchestra under the direction of Sam

Falcetti, and a third AAA commissioned solo, *For Elsie*, for the celebration of Elsie Bennett's eightieth birthday in 2004.

In addition to his compositions for accordion, Franceschina has written a concerto for saxophone and wind ensemble, a symphonic overture commissioned by Philippe Entremont and the New Orleans Symphony Orchestra, several operas, musical theatre scores, and over a hundred incidental scores for theatre plays and films. He has also been composer-in-residence at the Asolo State Theatre in Sarasota, Florida (1976-1993), and musical director/composer at the National Theatre Company, Arena Stage (Washington, DC), the Mark Taper Forum (Los Angeles), Geva Theatre (Rochester, NY), the Pittsburgh Public Playhouse, Syracuse Stage, Cleveland Playhouse, Coconut Grove Playhouse (Miami), Center Stage (Baltimore), Olney Theatre, and the Moscow Art Theatre. Finally, he is the author of over a dozen books, including *Duke Ellington's Music for the Theatre*, *Music Theory through Musical Theatre*, and *Incidental and Dance Music in the American Theatre*.

The circumstances under which Franceschina's first AAA commission took place were quite new for Elsie Bennett compared to those of the previous thirty-three she had made over the preceding seventeen years, as her letter of June 7, 1974, to him will illustrate. After mentioning that Falcetti had highly recommended him to her, she wrote

It is not my usual procedure to make an offer to a composer upon recommendation. I usually like to meet with the composer to explain the accordion and have a good interview. [However,] I feel that since we are parted by many miles, and time is of the essence, I will offer you this commission by mail.

Attached to her note was a contract that was, as pointed out above, identical in form and remuneration to the one she would send to Schimmel that August, but with a deadline of August 1, barely eight weeks away. In addition, she indicated that the piece would possibly serve as the required test piece for the 1975 Coupe Mondiale. To this end, she insisted that the composer consult with Madeleine Belfiore as soon as possible to be briefed on what was expected by the CIA for such a contest project, and that he would then next have to consult with Carmen Carrozza, as was the custom of all commissioned composers at that time, so that the maestro could examine and play through the piece for any further suggestions prior to publication.



John Franceschina and Elsie Bennett, AAA National Contest, Marriott Hotel, Chicago, July 1974. Elsie Bennett photo album.

Franceschina was indeed “parted by many miles” from Bennett since he was not in his Chicopee Falls, MA, home, but rather lodging much further away in Warsaw, Indiana, where he was serving as associate musical director of a musical entitled *Best Foot Forward* (music and lyrics by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blaine) at the town’s summer stock theater Wagon Wheel Playhouse (now the Wagon Wheel Center for the Arts). In any event, the piece was completed on time, and possibly as early as July since he apparently found the time to visit Elsie Bennett at the 1974 AAA Festival held at the Marriott Hotel in Chicago that summer (see photo). In addition, it was ultimately approved by the CIA to be used

as a test piece in the 1975 Coupe Mondiale in Helsinki.

Regarding a premiere of *Scaramouche*, or at least early performances of it as well as its CIA history, I will let the composer’s own recollections I received in email exchanges with him hold forth here:

I believe Magnante was actually the first to do a reading of the piece prior to the Coupe Mondiale. I first performed it in public at an actors' benefit concert in Warsaw Indiana soon after I composed it. The concert involved many on the faculty of Carnegie Mellon University as well as some of the graduates who were involved with the revered and rather outstanding summer stock theatre called "Wagon Wheel." The first private performance of the piece occurred at Notre Dame University in late July--I was in residence there orchestrating a new Broadway-bound musical that I had conducted in Washington DC the previous April, for a summer tryout in (of all places) Peoria! (Not untypically, the show never made it out of Illinois.)

Of course, every contestant at the Coupe Mondiale had to perform it in the top category; I subsequently learned that the piece was very popular in Russia where, among accordion students, I became very well-known. The latest, or I should say, most recent, performance of the work is by Antoine Geisen of the Netherlands who performs it on a button accordion, which he tells me, makes it easier (in many cases) to play. I know that Anthony Falcetti [Sam Falcetti’s son] has played the piece at various junctures of his career, as did Danny Dobeck, and the brilliant virtuoso Peter Soave.

Regarding the work itself, Franceschina offered a brief description for Bennett to use in her press release:

The work is a sonata in one movement and explores the melodic and virtuosic potential of the solo accordion. Stylistically, *Scaramouche* is pan-modal with soaring melodic lines and exiting rhythmical figures. It gives the accordion artist every possibility of letting the instrument sing through a myriad of register and dynamic changes and reinforces the composer's belief that the accordion is, in fact, a melodic instrument. Contrapuntal in texture, *Scaramouche* places a distinct emphasis on the left hand of the accordion and coaxes it into dramatic interplay with the right. The melodies of the piece have a jazzy, almost bluesy quality and thus lend the work a truly American flavor. The title is borrowed from the *Scaramouche* character of the *commedia dell' arte* (that braggart soldier who always pretended [to be] more than he ought to be), and defines the anapest as the chief rhythmical pattern of the composition.

The work does, indeed, follow the classic sonata formula developed in Haydn's and Mozart's time to a large degree, as is immediately obvious in the first section of this modern adaptation of the form. Known as the "exposition," which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries usually presented at least two, and often three main melodic ideas, with the first two themes bridged by a key-changing transitional section, this twentieth-century adaptation, with its modern harmony and counterpoint, dismisses those outdated principles, though still offering similar contrasts in other ways between principal thematic ideas.

As the composer mentions in his description, the left hand often carries the main melodic idea. This is certainly true of the first of two distinct themes in his exposition in which the principle rhythmic motif is immediately presented in the left-hand part of this movement in 4/4 time: eighth rest, followed by a bold upward sweep of three eighth notes, C-F-B flat, in consecutive intervals of the fourth, constituting an arpeggiated "quartal" chord (which in Mozart's time would have likely been cast in thirds instead, and thus would have been a "tertian" structure, suggesting traditional major or minor triads chords formed by those intervals). This motif will go through many transpositions and rhythmic variations throughout the piece. See Example 7.

Allegro ♩ = 100-120

Free Bass

Stradella

Example 7. The bold beginning of *Scaramouche*, “attacking” at the outset with no introduction. The left-hand part carries the main theme, which is dominated by a three-note arpeggiated quartal harmony, C-F-Bb, forming two ascending perfect fourths. This is strongly punctuated by two other quartal harmonies, consisting this time of four notes, and in sharply accented block form. They are properly spelled in their basic root forms from bottom to top as D-G-C-F and E-A-D-G though their notes have been rearranged somewhat in the score.

This assertive figure, indeed following the anapestic rhythmic formula encountered through the ages in poetry and music alike, and suggesting the bullish though somewhat eccentrically comic personality of the arrogant, strong-headed Scaramouche stereotype, dominates the contrapuntal interplay between right and left hands throughout the entire work; but it is especially the incessant identifying feature of theme 1, which persists for 52 of the 203 measures of the work before the more lyrical, song-like second theme arrives (see Example 8), this time occupying the right hand treble part and taking the listener to the end of the exposition at measure 72.

Inverted quartal chords

(C)	(A)	(C)
G	E	G
D	B	D
A	F	A
E	C	E

E \flat M7

E \flat quartal triad (automatically inverted in stradella version due to that system's limited range of only 11 chromatic pitch classes that usually, but not always, start on C)

A Little Slower

GM7 inverted

Pitches in parantheses above result from the use of the stradella chordal buttons, if played, thus expanding the chords by yet another 4th

CM7 am7 GM7 em7 CM7 F11 Inverted quartal chords E \flat M7 DM9 D11

(C)	(A)
G	E
D	B
A \flat	F
E \flat	C

Example 8. Measures 51-58. Last two measures of the initial segment of the exposition carrying the rambunctious first theme of the exposition (displayed in Example 7); and beginning of the strongly contrasting, more lyrical 2nd theme. These eight measures alone display the prevalence throughout *Scaramouche* of both quartal and “jazzy” extended tertian harmony, common in much classical and popular music of the twentieth century.

In terms of twentieth century harmony, the first-theme motif described above and displayed in Example 7, sets the harmonic tendency of the whole piece, which, mentioned above, largely follows the structure of chords built in intervals of the fourth rather than the third. The former is usually referred to as “quartal,” “quintal,” or “quartal/secundal” harmony, as opposed to pre-twentieth century “tertian” harmony (harmony built in 3rds) that evolved over the previous 600 years in western European music.

Like traditional triads, quartal chords may be inverted, thus changing the interval content to some degree without destroying the effect of its quality. To explain, in tertian triads, inverted

3rds turn into 6ths and 5ths turn into 4ths, but the pitch classes do not change despite their reordering. The result is that the listener perceives the chord to be of the same quality though it is varied in a subtle way. This is true of quartal harmony as well, i.e., 4ths become 5ths and the outer interval of, say, two stacked 4ths, which will be a 7th, will shrink to a 2nd. The general aural quality of the chord is, again, identifiable, though subtly changed in effect.

Even though quartal harmony permeates *Scaramouche*, such structures are intertwined to a more or less equal amount with extended tertian harmonies, most of which are the many varieties of seventh chords that can be built on all seven degrees of the standard major and three types of minor scales. These harmonies, along with quartal ones are quite common in the so-called “neoclassical” concert works of many prominent composers of the first half of the twentieth century as well as in popular music and jazz of the same time and beyond. These harmonies are the main contributors to what the composer refers to in his quotation above as the “jazzy, almost bluesy quality” and “American flavor” of the piece. Example 8, alone, has an abundance of these harmonic elements that I have marked for the reader’s observation and is representative of the entire work’s harmonic texture. (Revisit Example 8.)

To return to the eighteenth century sonata model, following the exposition, a large middle section, termed by music scholars the “development,” would follow the exposition which would in turn put one or more of the latter’s original themes through many vicissitudes, including new juxtapositions with each other, variations in rhythm, and key changes, to name just a few choices—a real harmonic and contrapuntal “adventure”—before moving into a return of the original themes in their more normal forms, and now all in the original beginning key. Oftentimes the composer would then follow the recapitulation with a usually brief but exciting concluding “add-on,” called the “coda” to more conclusively bring the movement to a convincing end. Franceschina does all these things in his piece, but again in twentieth century harmony and rhythm.

In *Scaramouche*, a very exhilarating development section, with rapid scale passages and a strong presence of the theme 1 motif and syncopated variants of the same, begins at measure 73 and whirls through 47 measures, mostly in the prominent 4/4 meter of the piece (though at times the composer will interject triple, and quintuple-beat measures, both in this section and elsewhere).

Example 9. Measures 69-76. Concluding four measures of the exposition and Theme 2 and abrupt onslaught of the faster, stormy development section, employing rhythmic variants of Theme 1's main theme at the outset.

This subtly leads into the recapitulation at measure 122. It is a truncated and considerably altered version of the exposition and its two themes that barrels into what may be heard as an extended and very exciting coda finish in which the theme 1 motive is even more assertive than before and more frequently "escapes" into the treble.

Example 10. Measures 177-201. Dramatic concluding measures of the Coda, employing strong melodic motifs from Theme 1 and ending on a cacophonous E-flat major authentic cadence consisting of a Bb-Eb-Ab quartal dominant functional chord that resolves to an Eb major ninth tonic, Eb-G-Bb-D-F, thus differing from the implied key of F major (with flirtations with the mixolydian mode due to intermittent E-flats in the opening bars) that began the piece.

To conclude, *Scaramouche* is a highly attractive work which new listeners to modern music should find very appealing and fun, even on first hearing. The composer exhibited a highly developed command of contrapuntal and harmonic skill and the truly conscious aural awareness and musical sense so necessary to make a considerably complex work such as this communicate well to the audience. I found this to be especially true when I performed it myself in one of several concerts of contemporary original music for or including accordion I produced through the AAA at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) between 2003 and 2005. The composer was present, and I regret that it was the only time we have had the opportunity, brief though it was, to meet in person.

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As a footnote to the above, a second contract, dated June 16, 1975, for a second solo by Franceschina mysteriously exists in the Bennett files. As correspondence between composer and commissioner reveals at that time, funds were not available for any more commissions that year, and the composer was offering to write the piece for free. This happened a few other times with other composers over the history of the Composers Commissioning Committee, and to legalize such transactions the AAA created contracts offering the nominal fee of \$1 to

complete the agreement. Bennett and Franceschina signed the contract, but for some reason, the solo never made the official list of AAA commissions nor became available to the public in any other way. In fact, the only known copy resides in the John Franceschina Papers in the library of the University of California Riverside, where he has archived all of his musical and theatrical papers and works in order for them to be available to researchers. Once again in the composer's own words (in a letter to me), this is how he believed the overlooked commission, which was entitled "County Fair," came about:

The commission for "County Fair," the second piece, was probably due to Faithe Deffner who published it. At the time, I was working for Faithe at her office in Mineola [NY, former location of the Titano accordion office] and like the old studio system in films, I got a weekly stipend whether it was for doing editorial work on her various publications, or writing an accordion solo, or an accordion orchestra piece for Joan Cochran Sommers and her group at the University of Missouri Kansas City. I wrote a Passacaglia and Fugue for her group which Faithe published and Joan premiered and which subsequently has been played fairly consistently nowadays in Europe. Don't know why it's so popular. Back in the 1970s, due to their associations with Titano, Faithe and Sam Falcetti were very close friends, I think. He may have suggested to her to have me compose "County Fair."

Be that as it may, Franceschina has contributed three important works to the AAA. Of these, his first, *Scaramouche*, should especially continue to be a popular and accessible choice for concert accordionists well into the future, as is equally true of Schimmel's *Fables*. Both are true classics of the genre and deserve to be performed in perpetuity.

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